

Creating Identity for Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Classroom through Teacher's Attitude Change

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the importance of teacher's attitude in creating identity of children with disabilities in inclusive classroom. The study aims to assess the teacher's attitude towards inclusion of children with disabilities. This is an explorative study explored the teachers attitude through Attitude questionnaire. The teacher's response revealed that the teacher's attitude is moderate and the study gives scope to provide training for teachers to increase the positive attitude towards inclusion of children with disabilities. The study implies the need for attitudinal change which motivates the students with and without disabilities enrolled in the inclusive classrooms. The study insists the need for optimistic approach by teachers to ensure barrier free environment, value the dignity of diverse learners and celebrating diversities in inclusive classroom. Also, the study suggests that to make sure creating identity for children with disabilities in inclusive classroom the teachers attitude plays vital role and the teachers with right attitude can provide rich inclusive learning experiences to children with disabilities more effectively.

Keywords: Teacher's Attitude, Students with disabilities, Inclusive Education

INTRODUCTION

Article 21 A of the Indian constitution upholds education as a fundamental right of all the citizens in India. Therefore, every individual in India has equal rights to access quality education. In this line, providing education to the normal individuals in the main stream schools is partially achieved through implementing several policies and plans. But, mainstreaming the individuals with disabilities is a big challenge to the policy makers, educational planners and teachers. Indian government has taken several attempts to provide quality education for all children enrolled in schools. For instance, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is Government of India's flagship programme for achievement of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) this program aims to give free and compulsory Education to the Children of 6–14 years age group. The Equal Opportunities and Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 1995 was comprehensive breakthrough legislation that provided for children with disabilities. The Salamanca Declaration (UNESCO Citation 1994) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

(UNCPRD 2007) were introduced. UNCPRD 2007 can be seen as a key policy document outlining a global vision of inclusive education around the world. Although the policies and plans have introduced many reforms in the field of education, it remains within the framework of wide policy gaps in the education of children with disabilities. The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 rightly observed that, "Education is the single greatest tool for achieving social justice and equality" which has implications for development of an inclusive community and society at large. To realize this statement, educational barriers, facilities and services for Children with Special Needs (CwSN) must be addressed. The NEP 2020 has rightly pointed the importance of developing inclusive community. For decades, educational development has also increasingly shifted towards the direction of inclusive education. Throughout the nation and other parts of the world, growing numbers of students who have been identified as having a disability are attending regular schools instead of being educated in isolated schools or special schools. Still, according to research and practice, teachers' attitudes are seen as the most important key factor for its successful implementation and creating identity of children with disabilities. Therefore, there is an ongoing process of researchers investigating teachers' attitudes towards inclusive schooling.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous studies have involved teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and the results vary. Teachers have moderate to a favorable attitude towards inclusive education this is due to might be the result of the inclusion of inclusive education in pre-service teacher programs and in-service teacher programs (Shiba Singh et al., 2020). Gender difference and subject specialization (Science and Art) have least influence on the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education (Nepal Paramanick et al., 2018).

Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education are key factors influence the success of Inclusive education programme. (for a review see Avramidis and Norwich, 2002). For example, they could vary as a function of educational policy in a country (Takla et al., 2012., Saloviita and Schaffus, 2016), academic support (Urton et al., 2014), or the grasp of inclusive education policy of educators (Krishler et al., 2019). Additionally, students' type of disability also strongly influences these attitudes. Reviewing the scientific literature, Boer de et al. (2011) presented studies showing that students with emotional and behavioral difficulties as well as those with profound and manifold learning difficulties are perceived as the most difficult to include. In the same vein, Benoit (2016) showed that the attitudes of teachers were more negative for students with behavioral difficulties or sensory disability (e.g., deaf and blind students), especially when compared with those with learning difficulties. The researcher concluded that teachers perceived some disabilities as harder to overcome than others and therefore comparatively more reluctant to include students with such perceived difficulties. Therefore, the attitudes of teachers may depend on the extent to which instructional practices could be easily modified to accommodate the curricula (Center and Ward, 1987) as well as the severity of students' disability.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To study the attitude of mainstream school teachers towards inclusive education.
2. To study the significant difference if any in the mainstream school teacher's attitude towards inclusive education with regards to their gender, age, educational qualification and teaching experience.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the mainstream school teachers' attitude

towards inclusive education with regards to their gender difference.

Ho3: There is no significant difference in the mainstream school teachers' attitude towards inclusive education with regards to their age difference.

Ho4: There is no significant difference in the mainstream school teachers' attitude towards inclusive education with regards to their educational qualification.

Ho5: There is no significant difference in the mainstream school teachers' attitude towards inclusive education with regards to their teaching experiences.

MATERIALS & METHODS

Methodology

Descriptive survey method was followed in this study. The main goal of this study is to examine the attitude of the mainstream teachers towards inclusive education. The study also like to find out the role of gender difference, Age, educational qualification and teaching experience of the teachers on their attitude towards inclusive education. Snowball sampling technique was followed to collect data from different districts of Tamilnadu. District Educational officers, Deputy Educational officers, Principals of District Institute of Education and Research and Training (DIET) and School Headmasters were contacted for gathering data. In the first stage, the education departments of state were contacted and collected their teachers' contact details. From their list the teachers of inclusive schools were contacted and from them the information regarding nearby school teachers were collected. Therefore 381 teachers of inclusive education settings were willing to participate in this study. The data for this study was collected through both online and offline mode. Google form was used to collect data through online mode. The investigators personally met 261 teachers in different occasions and collected data for this study. 120 teachers were responded through Google form.

Tool used

The investigator developed Likert scale questions enable teachers to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with a given statement, or neutral response. Likert scale used in this study based on teacher's attitude towards inclusive education. There were two components of the tool that participants completed. The demographic and background information were collected in the first portion of the questionnaire. The researcher gathered demographic data by conducting a quick survey to obtain the following information: gender, age, qualification in teacher education and years of teaching experience in mainstream school. The instrument's second part was a scale that gathered teachers' attitude towards inclusive education programme. Participants then responded to 17 items on a five point scale. The scale asked participants to indicate how much they feel agree with the statement by selecting one of five options: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neither Agree nor Disagree (NANDA), Disagree (DA), and Strongly disagree (SDA). The tool used in the study had split-half reliability coefficient of 0.83. Initially 28 items related to inclusive education were kept the tool and sent for expert's feedback from Special education faculty of central and state universities. According to expert's feedback, 11 items were dropped at final tool preparation. To acquire more insight, survey tool was pre-tested on a small group of teachers prior to its administration to the sample selected for the study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Analysis indicated that 25.7% and 46.7% of the teachers had unfavorable and moderate attitude respectively towards Inclusive education programmes. 27.6% of teachers had favorable attitude towards inclusive education. The finding is similar to the previous study conducted earlier by Shiba Singh et al., (2020), Naru Gopal Dey and Shankar Lal Bika (2023), Nepal Paramanick et al., (2018), Bindhu, C. M., &

Niranjana, K. P.(2014), Kumar, A. (2016) and Hazarika, S. (2020). Professional development program planners in India also need to consider “bottom up” strategy rather than a „top down” process for the determination of training program content and format. The following tables- 1 and 2

show the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education with regards to their background variables. To find the influence of the background variables on their attitude, the investigators applied differential analysis statistics and the results are discussed under the table- 1 and 2.

Table – 1: Influence of gender difference in attitude of mainstream teachers towards Inclusive Education

Gender				t-value	p-value
Male (N= 86)		Female (N=295)			
Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
55.13	6.67	56.58	6.37	1.84	0.067

It is obvious that the t- values of the above presented tables - 1 is 1.84 and it is not significant at 5% level. Hence the formulated null hypothesis -1 “There is no significant difference in the mainstream school teachers” attitude towards inclusive education with regards to their gender difference.” is accepted. From this it is

concluded that female teachers and male teachers have similar level of attitude towards inclusive Education. To find out the influence of background variables on the attitude of the teachers such as age, educational qualification and teaching experience F- test was applied and the result is presented in the following table -2.

Table – 2: Influence of Age difference, Educational Qualification and Teaching Experience on attitude of mainstream Teachers towards Inclusive Education

Background Variables		Mean	SD	F-value	p-value
Age in Years	21- 30	52.13	8.27	2.02	0.11
	31-40	55.95	5.56		
	41-50	56.06	7.09		
	51-60	57.24	6.20		
Teacher Education Qualification	D.T.Ed	57.89 ^b	6.08	5.19	0.06
	B.Ed	55.62 ^a	6.56		
	M.Ed	55.37 ^a	6.30		
Teaching Experience in years	up to 5	56.83	6.54	2.03	0.09
	6- 10	55.92	5.63		
	11-15	55.35	6.79		
	16-20	55.93	6.78		
	above 20	57.81	6.05		

The stated null hypothesis 2, 3 and 4 were tested by applying the F-test. The above table -2 shows that the calculated F-values for Age groups and Teaching experiences are not significant at 0.05 levels. Hence the formulated null hypotheses 2 and 4 are accepted. From this it is concluded that the age and teaching experience of the mainstream teachers have least influence on their attitude towards inclusive education.

Whereas F-value for educational qualification is significant at 0.05 levels and the formulated null hypothesis -3 “There is no significant difference in the mainstream school teachers” attitude towards inclusive education with regards to their educational qualification” is rejected. From this it is inferred that educational qualification of the mainstream teachers has influence on their attitude towards inclusive education. Based on the Duncan Multiple Range Test

(DMRT), teachers with D.T.Ed., qualification are significantly differing with B.Ed., and M.Ed. qualified teachers in attitude towards inclusive education. But, Teachers with B.Ed., and M.Ed., qualification are having same level of attitude towards inclusive education.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, while the results of this study provide useful insights into teachers' attitude towards inclusive education. This study also strongly indicates the importance of providing in-service training to all teachers in inclusive settings. Future research would need to consider conducting reason for the teachers not having favorable attitude towards inclusive education. Teacher's plays key role in implementing inclusive education programmes. Teacher's favorable attitude towards inclusive education is paramount importance for mainstreaming the individuals with disabilities. Responses from other stakeholders including administrators, teacher educators, special education teachers and parents of students with disabilities would also be helpful in enhancing the quality of inclusive education and validating the responses obtained from the school teachers. Factors such as teacher's attitude, class facilities, parent's involvement, workload, diversity nature of the children and government involvement may also have an important role for successful inclusive education. The curriculum followed in the Teacher education programmes need to be revamped with "inclusive education" components.

Declaration by Authors

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