

PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Attitude as a concept is concerned with an individual way of thinking, acting and behaving. Inclusive education stands for improvement of schools in all dimensions to address the educational needs of all students. The study aimed to examine Prospective Teachers' attitude towards inclusive education in Faridabad district of Haryana. Inclusive classroom is a scheme for social improvement creating happier learning environments for all students including students of special needs. Inclusive education requires change in the curriculum and changes in teaching and learning which can be helpful for all the students in an inclusive class system. The basic need of inclusive education is to create infrastructure for inclusive system and inculcate the feeling of inclusiveness among teachers, students and in society. A pilot study was carried out selecting a sample of 120 (60 male and 60 female) prospective teachers studying in teacher education colleges located in urban area of Faridabad. The finding revealed that attitude of male prospective teachers towards inclusive education was found to be more positive in comparison to female teachers.

Keys words: Inclusive Education; Attitude; Prospective Teacher.

INTRODUCTION

Attitude is a complex mental state involving beliefs and feelings and values and dispositions to act in certain ways. An attitude is a hypothetical construct that represents an individual's degree of like or dislike for something. Attitudes are generally positive or negative views of a person, place, thing, or event. The general education system is yet to be fully sensitized to the educational needs of students with disabilities and therefore the general system needs the assistance of specialist teachers for occasional help to make inclusive education work. The major support for inclusive education came from the 1994 World conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, Spain which emphasized that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. Teachers required to be psychologically and practically prepared to take on the dynamic role of inclusive educator, while being aware that making physical provision for students with disabilities is not as important as making attitudinal changes resulting in the removal of barriers to physical and educational access.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education is about how we develop and design our schools, classrooms, programs and activities so that all students learn and participate together. Inclusive education provides the places and the catalyst through which general and special teachers, students and parents come together to create quality democratic schools.

A successful inclusive learning community fosters collaboration, problem solving, self-directed and critical discourse, which allows students with extra-ordinary gifts and talents to move at their natural learning rate, to move at the best of their ability, specific learning challenges to receive creative and effective support to maximize the success.

All students benefit from inclusive education. It allows them to:

- Develop individual strengths with high and appropriate expectations for each and every child to work on individual goals while participating in the classroom activities with other students of their own age.

- Involve the parents in their wards' education and the activities organized in an institution.
- Foster a school culture of respect and belongingness. It provides opportunities to learn about and accept individual differences, lessening the impact of harassment and bullying.
- Positively affect both their school and community to appreciate diversity and inclusion on a broader level and develop friendships with a wide variety of other students, each with their own individual needs and abilities.

Inclusive schools put the values upon pluralism, tolerance, and equality into action where teachers provide appropriate individualized supports and services to all students without the stigmatization that comes with separation.

FACTORS INFLUENCING PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

There are several factors which may influence the Prospective Teachers' perception towards inclusive education. Many teachers view the philosophy of inclusive education as an exciting challenge, the stresses associated with its introduction being seen as life-sustaining, enjoyable and beneficial. Positive attitudes are considered to encourage the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular classrooms, while negative attitudes support low achievement and poor acceptance of students with disabilities into mainstream settings. Inclusive education can only be successful if teachers are part of the team driving this process. It is important to examine Prospective Teachers' attitude toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular settings as their perceptions may influence their behavior toward and acceptance of such students. Negative perceptions of inclusive education may become obstacles, as general education teachers attempt to include students with disabilities. The following are some of the factors that may influence a prospective teacher's attitude toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into mainstream settings.

Teachers' Training with Special Education: Teachers who have not undertaken training regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities, may exhibit negative attitudes toward such inclusion (Van Reusen et al., 2001), while increased training was associated with more positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities (Powers, 2002; Van Reusen et al., 2001). So it is necessary to impart inclusive education to prospective teachers for their future job.

Gender: Several studies support the view that there is no correlation between a teacher's gender and their attitude toward inclusive education (Avramidis et al., 2000; Van Reusen et al., 2001). However, other studies that investigated that female teacher are inclined to have more favorable attitudes (Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001). Contrary to this, other studies found that male teachers were either significantly more confident than females, in their ability to teach students with disabilities (Jobe, Rust, & Brissie, 1996).

Teachers' Qualifications, Age and Experience: There are several studies which have investigated that older teachers appear to foster less positive attitudes than younger teachers. Whiting and Young (1995) are of the view that older, more experienced teachers are uncomfortable with inclusive practices, because they face an intrusion into their rooms by support personnel.

Class Size: Large classes may be viewed as an obstacle to the successful implementation of inclusive education. Class sizes cannot exceed 20 if there is one student with a disability in a mainstream class (Cornoldi et al., 1998). Consistency in terms of class size has to be more supportive of inclusive education.

Level of Confidence: Teachers, who perceive themselves as competent inclusive teachers, often have more positive attitudes toward inclusive education. Inadequate knowledge with regard to instructional techniques and curricular adaptations, which contributes to decreased confidence, may be factors which influence a teacher's attitude toward inclusive education (Coleman, 1997).

The Severity of a Student's Disability: The study by Elkins (1994) found that teacher attitudes were less favorable about including students with multiple and physical disabilities into the regular class. While Avramidis et al. (2002) found that students with emotional and behavioral disorders attract the least positive attitudes from teachers within inclusive classroom.

Support from Administrative Staff: Administrative support has also been cited as a significant factor in determining teacher attitudes toward inclusion, as the teacher feels reaffirmed if the school principal fosters a positive learning

environment for both teachers and students (Larrivee & Cook, 1979).

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Inclusive education is a process of enabling all students to learn and participate effectively within mainstream school systems. It does not segregate students who have different abilities or needs. The central purpose becomes more challenging as schools accommodate students with increasingly diverse backgrounds and abilities. As we strive to meet these challenges, the involvement and cooperation of teachers, parents, and community leaders is vital for the creation of better and more inclusive schools. If a teacher does not have proper training or support to work in an inclusive setting, they may not have positive attitudes towards inclusion. In turn, this may affect their ability to teach in an inclusive environment and affect students' success.

Today it is widely accepted that inclusion maximizes the potential of the vast majority of students, ensures their rights, and is the preferred educational approach for the 21st century. Our thinking and acceptance has evolved rapidly over the last century, and continues to evolve, in response to federal and state law, along with our changing social and political beliefs. When compulsory public education began near the turn of the century, no public school programs existed for students with disabilities.

In general Teachers' attitudes were found to be influenced by the nature and severity of the disabling condition, training of the teacher, experience, gender and availability of support. So the researcher carried out a pilot study under the title, Prospective Teachers' Attitude of towards Inclusive Education. This study provides some information regarding prospective teachers' current feelings, challenges and concerns regarding inclusion of students with diverse abilities and disabilities.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A study is entitled as "*Prospective Teachers' Attitude towards Inclusive Education*".

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study prospective teachers' attitude towards inclusive education.
2. To study male prospective teachers' attitude towards inclusive education.
3. To study female prospective teachers' attitude towards inclusive education
4. To compare between male and female prospective teachers' attitude towards inclusive education.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. Male and female prospective teachers do not differ significantly in their attitude towards inclusive education.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The study was delimited to Prospective Teachers' only.
2. The study was delimited to the teacher education colleges located at Faridabad district of Haryana.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was a descriptive survey which aimed at analyzing Prospective Teachers' attitude towards inclusive education of Faridabad district Haryana.

Population and Sample of the Study: Population for the present study comprised of prospective teachers studying in teacher education colleges located at Faridabad district of Haryana state. The sample consisted of 120 teachers randomly selected from four teacher education colleges of Faridabad district. There were equal numbers of male and female Prospective Teachers.

TOOL USED IN THE STUDY

Teacher's attitude scale towards inclusive education by **Vishal Sood and Arti Anand** was used for the collection of data.

PROCEDURE OF DATA COLLECTION

The purpose of the study was to determine prospective teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. The participants for this study were to be drawn from teacher education colleges located in Faridabad district of Haryana. A sampling frame was constructed by obtaining a list of colleges and the number of Prospective Teachers' in Faridabad. This number was obtained using the website of Haryana Higher Education. This number includes all the prospective teachers of general teacher education and special teacher education colleges. A table of random numbers was used to select colleges from an alphabetical list providing an equal chance to any college in the region to be selected. Twelve schools were selected from the lists. The principal of each selected school was requested to allow the investigator to distribute the questionnaire to the teacher of that school. The teachers were requested to fill all entries of the questionnaire and complete it in all respect.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Comparison between Male and female Prospective Teachers' Attitude towards Inclusive Education: The table 1 shows the descriptive statistics i.e. number of prospective teachers, the mean and standard deviation of the scores of attitude towards inclusive education by administering the attitude scale.

Table 1: Comparison between Male and female Prospective Teachers' Attitude Towards Inclusive Education						
S.N.	Group	N	Mean	S.D.	t-ratio	Level of Significance
1.	Male	60	132.43	26.23	5.12	Significant
2.	Female	60	108.32	24.62		

The mean score of 60 male prospective teachers' attitude towards inclusive education was calculated to be 132.43 with standard deviation 26.23 while the mean score of 60 female prospective teachers' attitude towards inclusive education was calculated to be 108.32 with standard deviation 24.62. The calculated t-value between mean scores of male and female Prospective Teachers' attitude towards inclusive education is 5.12 which is significant at 0.05 & 0.01 level

significance. The findings shows that mean score of attitude of male prospective teachers is more than that of prospective female teachers. So, it can be interpreted that the prospective male teachers were more positive in their attitude towards inclusive education as compared to their counterpart the female teachers. It might be due to the reason that the male teachers are more aware about the inclusive education in comparison to their female counterparts.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- Majority of the Prospective Teachers indicated average level of confidence in their ability to include students with disabilities.
- The prospective teachers of teacher education colleges of Faridabad generally hold positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into mainstream settings.
- The male and female prospective teachers differ in their attitude towards inclusive education as male prospective teachers were found to be more positive in comparison to their counterpart the female teachers. I
- It might be due to the reason that the male teachers are more aware about the inclusive education in comparison to their female counterpart.
- It is evident that the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular classrooms is additionally viewed as nurturing increased feelings of tolerance and respect. Further, the inclusive classroom and its structuring appears to suit the needs of most learners, with each individual being accepted as different, unique beings, each with their distinct abilities and disabilities.

CONCLUSION

To conclude it can be said that inclusive education is a mandate today. In-fact, inclusive education is the need of the hour. It becomes a crucial issue in the field of education, which attracts all concerned. It is a matter of immense pleasure that inclusive education is in a progressive way all over the world, but still there is room for improvement. To remove the gap between inclusion and exclusion, teachers, parents, Society, administrators and government should collectively work to implement the policies of inclusive education and prospective teachers must be educated to work in an inclusive system.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Since the present study is conducted on prospective teachers' attitude toward inclusive education the study has its implications for teachers, parents, administrators and government as given below:

- There is also need to develop awareness about inclusive education among female prospective teachers as they revealed less positive attitude towards inclusive education than the male teachers.
- The parents of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) students should exhibit positive attitude for the education of their students in the regular classroom along with normal students, rather than placing them in segregated setting exclusively meant for a particular disability.
- The parents should also discuss the problem of their students openly instead of trying to hide their disability so that the teacher can take effective measures to bring the students to mainstream.
- The administrators simply can form the policies, but it is the government who executes and implements those in actual sense. Government should allocate more funds to implement the policies that are framed on behalf of disabled.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

- The study may be undertaken from large sample group and conducted various at schools. For better generalization, study may be undertaken from other areas or states on a large sample.
- A comparative study of primary & secondary school teachers towards inclusive education may also be taken. The study may be used to improve the adjustment of teachers in inclusive schools.
- Special teachers should be employed in Government and private schools and general teachers should also be trained to teach the students for special educational needs in inclusive system.

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