



ATTITUDE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

One of the most significant stipulations that allow for successful inclusion of special education students is the attitude of the general education teacher regarding the inclusion of special education students into their classroom. Classrooms are now becoming more diverse with respect to students abilities, therefore, sensitivity awareness and commitment towards teaching profession on the part of general education, teacher is essential to promote successful inclusion. Given that one key factor in success of inclusive education lies in the general educator's attitude and willingness to accommodate students who have disabilities. It is the teacher who can help disabled persons break out into the world and embark on the path of self-realization and self-expression. In this case its implementation is not an easy task; it needs thorough investigation, understanding, aims and principles and taking consistent and appropriate measures to make it successful. The purpose of this study was to investigate the inclusion of disabilities or special needs within a traditional classroom environment. Particularly an attempt was made to study teacher's beliefs, attitudes and instructional practices including disabled student's views and other associated factors which are believed to make the practice of inclusive education successful. Survey method was conducted on a stratified random sample of 600 primary school teachers in 5 districts of West Bengal state. Data was analyzed by using t-test. Result found that there is significant difference in attitude towards inclusive education of primary school teachers with regard to gender. Finding also indicated that there is no significant difference in attitude towards inclusive education of primary school teachers with regard to locality.

KEY WORD: Inclusive Education, Special Children, Primary School Teachers.

INTRODUCTION

In our country every child has an inborn right to education on the basis of equality of opportunity. No child can be excluded or discriminated within education on the basis of his caste, color, sex, language, religion, political, national or social origin disability, poverty or other status. Most of the stakeholders which are directly or indirectly concerned with the field of education have been grappling with the serious question of what kind of education should be provided to the children especially in the context of different abilities of the students. Generally education is broadly classified into two types, namely, General Education and Special Education.



The General Education is a program of study which provides the basic knowledge, skills of expressions, attitudes and perspectives that help the students to achieve their aims of academic and social life in future. Regular school education is the foundational of education with experience of all round learning and it includes the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that are needed for further higher education and career of child. The term Special Education is mostly used in practice in last few decades and it has now come to signify the education of children

with special educational needs. It had been believed earlier that children with different needs and especially those with special needs must be given education separately. Owing to lack of knowledge, educational access and technology, disabled or challenged children were therefore initially segregated from other children. This had led to the rise of general schools on one hand and on the other, the establishment of 'Special Schools' for the disabled or the challenged children. Since the last three decades this segregation in the education field has come under severe criticism and now a consensus has begun to emerge that instead of continuing with segregated education, inclusive education must be provided. Thus, in recent times there has been a shift towards having children with disabilities attend the same schools as to disabled ones. The educationists now feel that each child should be allowed to learn in his own way along with his peer group.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusion is an approach to educate students with special educational needs. Under the inclusion model, students with special needs can spend most or all of their time with normal students. Implementation of these practices varies. Most frequently schools use them for selected students with special needs which enable students to use in and out of the classroom.

Advani and Chadha (2003) states that, "Inclusive education aims to provide a favorable setting for achieving equal opportunity and full participation for all thus bringing children with special needs well within the purview of mainstream education. It recognizes the diverse needs of the students and ensures equality education to all through appropriate curricula, teaching strategies, support services and partnership with the community and parents".

Inclusive Education provides disabled students within the regular education system some extra support (i.e. resource room, resource teacher etc.). The children with special educational needs can be allowed to get education along with regular students and the concept of inclusion is about school system changes to improve the educational system for all students. It means changes in the curriculum, changes in how teachers teach and how students learn, as well as changes in how students with and without special needs interact with and relate to one another. Inclusive education therefore involves changing culture of contemporary schools with emphasis on active learning, applied curriculum, appropriate assessment methods, multi-level instructional approaches, and increased attention to diverse student needs and individualization. Inclusive schools are no longer providing 'regular education' and 'special education'. As a substitute, the inclusive schools provide an inclusive education which results as students are able to learn together.

ATTITUDE

Attitude is the tendency to react favorable or unfavorable toward a designated class of stimuli such as national or social group, a custom or an institution. In other words attitude may also be defined as an enduring pattern of evaluative responses towards a person, object or issue. It is a more or less consistent pattern of affective, cognitive and conative or behavioral responses, towards a psychological object. Attitudes have great influence on people's behavior. Attitudes represent relatively stable knowledge, emotions and reactions towards people, phenomena and situations (Rot, 1994). For an example, if someone knew the attitudes towards children from marginalized groups, he/she would be able to predict whether teachers would have any feeling of pleasantness or unpleasantness when meeting children with disability. The component of willingness of an attitude includes readiness for a greater or smaller engagement. Thus, attitude is as a mental state of readiness; organize to through experience which exerts a directive or dynamic influence on the responses on individual to all objects and situations with which the individual is related.

Teacher's Attitude towards Inclusive Education

Teachers are seen as key persons to implement inclusive education. A positive attitude is therefore argued as playing a considerable role in implementing this educational change successfully. Even the awareness about inclusive education in schools of India is still at infancy stage. The success of such education

of students with special educational needs has been a big challenge for the administrators, who are skeptical about imparting education to both normal & disable children in the same class room. They are facing many challenges such as preparedness of teachers for inclusive education, imparting of training to teachers to handle successfully such students, lack of flexibility in the course curriculum, classroom size, bullying of such children, and need of extra attention from the teacher to such children & consequently promoting an environment, where personal development, social skills & students' participation to be strongly encouraged. The negative attitude of teachers toward inclusive education may be attributed to teacher's lack of skill, fear of handling such students. On the contrary there is a wealth of literature, which focused upon the favorable attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education. Almost positive attitude towards inclusive education depends upon teacher's efficacy, experience, training, adequate flexibility in course curriculum and type of disability, class size i.e. appropriate setting along with optimum teacher student ratio i.e. 6:1 etc.

Need and Significance of the Study

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. Responding to each student based on need is the meaning of fairness. As general education classrooms include more and more diverse students, teachers realize the value of accepting each student as unique. Inclusive education is a process of enabling all children to learn and participate effectively within mainstream school systems. It does not segregate children who have different abilities or needs. This, in other words, is to indicate the shift of thinking from an unnatural segregated setting toward inclusive education must be given the due attention it deserves if inclusive education is to be favored and practiced as educational modality. 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. Implications from this review suggest the need to the availability of training, adapted curriculum, positive attitudes and utmost responsibility of the teachers. One of the most significant stipulations that allow for successful inclusion of special education students is the attitudes or attitudes of the general education teacher regarding the inclusion of special education students into their classroom. So the researcher studied the attitude of primary school teachers towards inclusive education.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To find out the attitude of primary school teachers towards inclusive education.
- To study the significant difference in attitude towards inclusive education of primary school teachers with respect to gender and locality.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in attitude towards inclusive education of primary school teachers with respect to gender.
2. There is no significant difference in attitude towards inclusive education of primary school teachers with respect to locality.

METHODOLOGY

Survey method is used for this investigation. Population for the present study consists of teachers teaching in primary schools of 5 districts of West Bengal. The sample for the present study comprises of 600 teachers from different primary schools.

Table 1: District wise Classification of the Sample

District	Total Sample	Rural	Urban	Male Rural	Female Rural	Male Urban	Female Urban
Purba Bardhaman	120	60	60	30	30	30	30
Paschim Bardhaman	120	60	60	30	30	30	30
Kolkata	120	60	60	30	30	30	30
South 24 Pargana	120	60	60	30	30	30	30
Hooghly	120	60	60	30	30	30	30
Total	600	300	300	150	150	150	150

Tool

- Teacher Attitude Scale towards Inclusive Education (TASTIE) by Dr. Vishal Sood & Dr. Arti Anand.

Data Analysis and Interpretation**Table 2: Attitude of Primary School Teachers towards Inclusive Education**

N	Df	Mean	SD	t-value	Standard Error of difference
600	599	109.95	6.30	427.39	0.517

Table-2 shows that the mean is 109.95, SD is 6.3017 and calculated t-value is 427.39 which is more than table value at 0.01 level of significance, which is 2.58. It is further evaluated that standard error of difference is 0.517. Therefore, the attitude of primary teachers is not positive towards inclusive education in West Bengal state.

Table 3: Attitude of Primary School Teachers towards Inclusive Education based on Gender

Gender	Sample	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	Standard Error of difference
Male	300	109.2833	6.6238	2.6235	598	0.512
Female	300	110.6266	5.8971			

From Table-3, the mean and SD values of male and female primary teachers regarding attitude towards inclusive education are 109.2833 & 110.6266 and 6.6238 & 5.8971 respectively. It is further evaluated that standard error of difference is 0.512. The calculated t-value is 2.6235 which is more than table value at 0.01 level of significance is 2.58. Hence, the hypothesis-1 is rejected. It means there exist significant difference in the male and female elementary school teacher's attitude towards inclusive education. Further it is concluded that the mean value of female teachers (110.6266) regarding attitude towards inclusive education is more than male teachers (109.2833). Therefore, it is analyzed that the attitude of female primary teachers is more positive towards inclusive education than male primary teachers. It might be due to the reason that the female teachers are more aware about the inclusive education rather than their male counterparts.

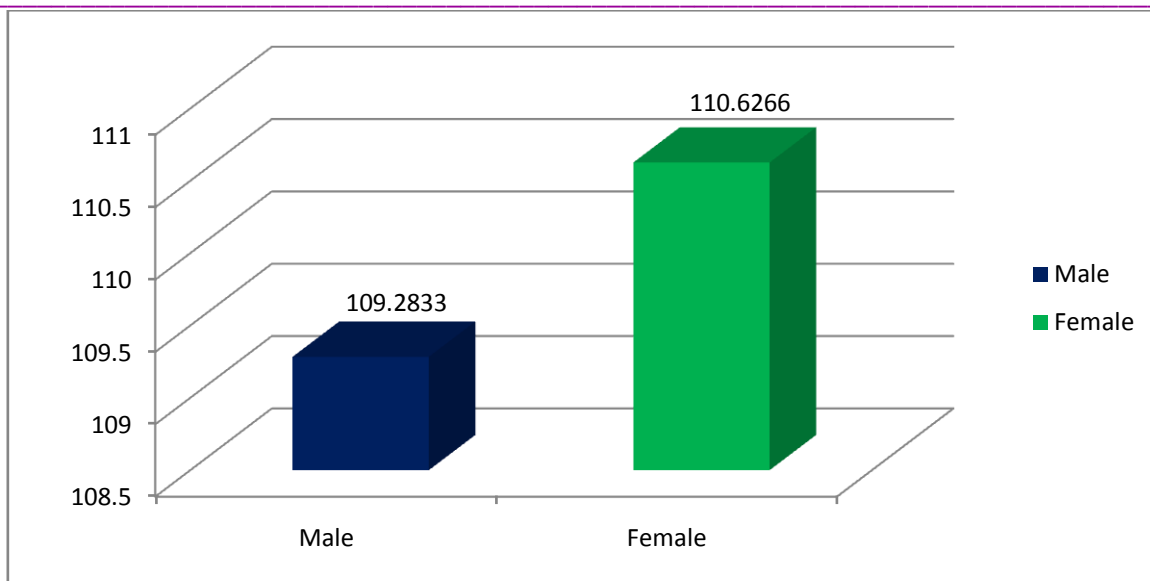


Figure 1: Mean Values of Attitude towards Inclusive Education of Male and Female Primary School Teachers

Table 4: Attitude of Primary School Teachers towards Inclusive Education based on Locality

Locality	Sample	Mean	Sd	t-value	Df	Standard Error of difference
Rural	300	109.9666	6.5166	0.0452	598	0.515
Urban	300	109.9433	6.0919			

Table-4 depicts that the calculated values of Mean, SD of rural and urban primary teachers are 109.9666 & 109.9433 and 6.5166 & 6.0919 respectively. It is further evaluated that standard error of difference is 0.515. The calculated t-value is 0.0452 is less than standard table values at 0.05 level of significance is 1.96. Therefore the hypothesis-2 is accepted and it is interpreted that there is no significant difference between rural and urban primary teachers attitude towards inclusive education.

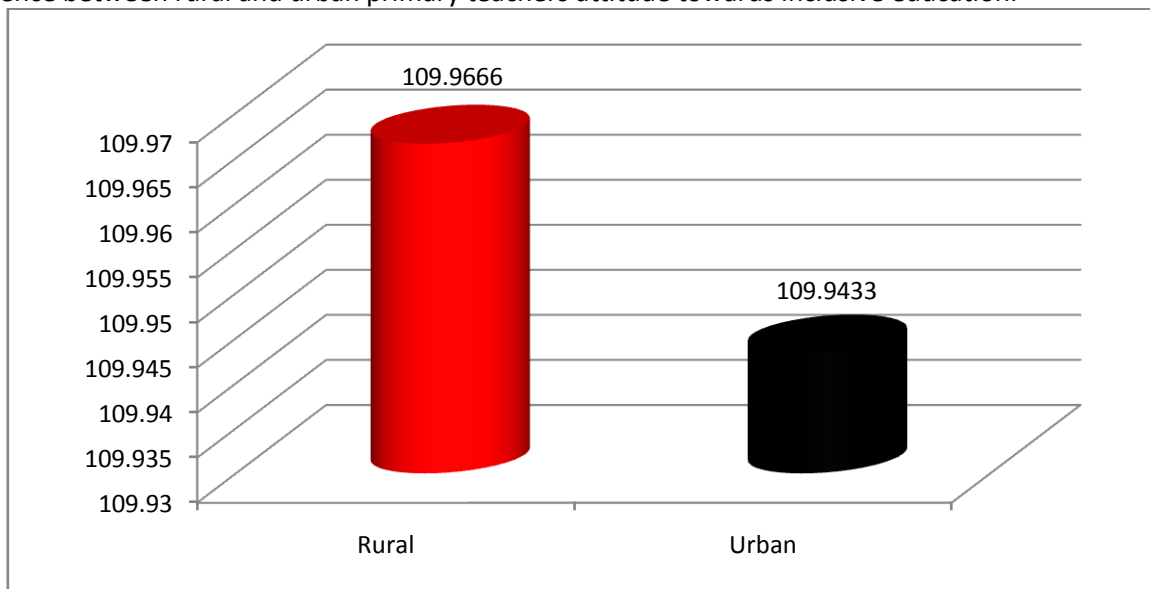


Figure 2: Mean Values of Attitude towards Inclusive Education of Rural and Urban Primary School Teachers

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education could be formed and developed in the context of an educational system which can provide some specific conditions in order to have a good practice in this field. Those conditions refer to a restructure of the curriculum, more support from teachers, and more time for preparing the educational activities, decreasing the number of students in one class, creating and developing opportunities for interactive partnerships between teachers-students, teachers- parents and so on. The reform of the curriculum should be made in parallel with a proper training for teachers regarding their knowledge of inclusion and its principles. The difficulties are inherent to any change or reform, but it is necessary to develop an educational system which can properly respond to all the needs, characteristics and individual differences of all children in school. The separate teacher education programs for regular and special education do not prepare teachers with an integrated knowledge of the expected roles, functions and responsibilities to meet the diversity of learning needs in the classroom. A need is being felt for a new standard for the preparation of teachers. There exists the need for teacher educators of regular and special education at all levels of teacher education to develop a 'whole faculty approach' in facilitating an inclusive pre- service teacher education curriculum embedded across all discipline areas.

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