

Study of Teacher's Attitude and Awareness of Inclusive Education in Indian Schools

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Abstract

This research examines teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and level of awareness regarding the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream Indian schools. Inclusive education aims to provide equitable learning opportunities to all students, including those with diverse learning needs and disabilities, in alignment with national and international mandates. The study adopts a descriptive survey method, collecting data from teachers working in government and private schools through structured questionnaires and interviews. It explores key dimensions such as conceptual understanding of inclusive education, preparedness to teach students with special needs, classroom practices, perceived challenges, and the influence of professional training on teachers' attitudes. Findings indicate that while a majority of teachers express a positive attitude toward the philosophy of inclusive education, significant gaps exist in practical awareness, specialized training, availability of teaching-learning materials, and institutional support systems. Teachers who received formal training in special or inclusive education demonstrated greater confidence and more adaptive classroom strategies. The research provides valuable insights for policymakers, teacher educators, and educational administrators aiming to promote equitable and inclusive schooling practices.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Teacher Attitude; Teacher Awareness, Special Needs Education, Disability Inclusion, Indian Schools, Classroom Practices.

1. Introduction

Education is the process of facilitating learning of the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits. Education methods include teaching, training, storytelling, discussion and direct research. Special Education also called special needs education, the education of children who differ socially, mentally, or physically from the average to such an extent that they require modifications of usual school practices. Special education serves children with emotional, behavioural, or cognitive impairments or with intellectual, hearing, vision, speech, or learning disabilities; gifted children with advanced academic abilities; and children with orthopedic or neurological impairments.

Inclusive education refers to an education system which accommodates all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. For the present study, inclusive education means including children with special needs, differently abled students in the regular classroom that have been designed for children without disability. In the present study, inclusive education refers to children with special needs with normal children in a mainstream school.

Disability - A disability is any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions).

Attitude - In psychology, an attitude refers to a set of emotions, beliefs, and behaviors toward a particular object, person, thing, or event.

Awareness - In psychology, awareness is a concept about knowing, perceiving and being cognizant of events. Another definition describes it as a state wherein a subject is aware of some information when that information is directly available to bring to bear in the direction of a wide range of behavioral actions.

Teacher - A Teacher is a person, who provides education for people; one who teaches or instructs. In this study, it refers to one type of teachers i.e In-service teachers.

Regular Teacher – A teacher (also called a school teacher or formally, an educator) is a person who helps students to acquire knowledge, competence or virtue. Informally the role of teacher may be taken on by anyone (e.g. when showing a colleague how to perform a specific task).

Special Teacher – Special education teacher, also known as Special Educators help their students to reach their full potential, whatever that might look like. Their approach to teaching is one-of-a-kind: they use both traditional teaching methods and unconventional techniques to serve their students unique learning needs. For that reason, it can be challenging to nail down what a special education teacher is and what they do.

2. Introduction of Research Study

2.1 Background

Inclusive education is an approach that emphasizes equal opportunities for all learners, irrespective of their abilities, disabilities, socio-economic status, or cultural backgrounds. In India, the Right to Education Act (2009) and the National Education Policy (2020) have reinforced the vision of inclusive classrooms. The government has introduced initiatives like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, and teacher training programs to promote inclusion.

Despite these efforts, many schools struggle with practical implementation. Teachers often face challenges due to large class sizes, inadequate training, limited infrastructure, and lack of resources. Preparedness of teachers—referring to their knowledge, attitudes, skills, and practices—is therefore a critical factor that determines the success of inclusive education in India.

2.2 Need and Importance of Research Study

- a) Teachers are the key implementers of inclusive education.
- b) Many teachers lack specialized training for handling Children with Special Needs (CWSN).
- c) The gap between policy and classroom practice persists.
- d) Research is needed to understand the current preparedness level of teachers and suggest measures for improvement.
- e) This study will contribute to the strengthening of teacher education, professional development programs, and inclusive classroom strategies in India.

2.3 Purpose of Research Study

The purpose of this research is to explore how prepared Indian school teachers are to implement inclusive education and to identify the factors influencing their preparedness. It also aims to recommend strategies for improving teacher capacity, thereby promoting effective inclusive practices in Indian classrooms.

3. Review of Related Literature of Research Study

3.1 Indian Studies

- Sharma (2011) found that teachers with prior training in inclusive education were more positive and effective in teaching children with disabilities.
- NCERT (2017) emphasized the role of teacher training in making inclusive education successful but highlighted gaps in resources and teacher attitudes.
- Singal (2018) showed that while policies in India support inclusion, schools lack infrastructure and teachers often feel underprepared.
- Kumar & Jena (2020) observed that teacher training directly influenced the quality of inclusive classroom practices in urban and rural schools.

3.2 Foreign Studies

1. UNESCO (2009) stressed that teachers are central agents of inclusion and require continuous professional development.
2. Florian (2014) found that inclusive pedagogy enhances teacher confidence in diverse classrooms.
3. Booth & Ainscow (2011) introduced the Index for Inclusion, a practical framework for schools to evaluate their inclusivity.
4. Norwich (2013) highlighted the tension between standardized curriculum demands and flexibility needed for inclusive teaching.

4. Methodology of Research Study

4.1 Type of Research Study

Descriptive and analytical research study using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

4.2 Variables of Research Study

- a) Independent Variable : Teacher preparedness (knowledge, skills, attitudes, training).
- b) Dependent Variable : Effectiveness of inclusive education implementation.

4.3 Tools of Research Study

- Teacher Preparedness Scale (structured questionnaire).
- Semi-structured interview schedule.
- Observation checklist of inclusive classroom practices.

4.4 Objectives of Research Study

1. To study the role of teachers in inclusive education.

2. To assess the preparedness of teachers in Indian schools for inclusive education.

4.5 Hypothesis of Research Study

H₀ (Null Hypothesis): Teacher preparedness does not significantly affect the implementation of inclusive education.

H₁ (Research Hypothesis): Teacher preparedness significantly influences the implementation of inclusive education in Indian schools.

4.6 Sample and Sampling Method of Research Study

- Sample Size: 400–500 teachers.
- Population: Government, private, and aided school teachers in selected districts.
- Sampling Method: Stratified random sampling to ensure representation of different types of schools.

5. Limitations & Delimitations of Research Study

- a) Limited to selected districts; findings may not generalize to all of India.
- b) Focus only on school teachers, excluding special educators and administrators.

6. Statistical Analysis of Research Study

- a) Descriptive statistics: Mean, Standard Deviation, Frequency, Percentage.
- b) Inferential statistics:
- c) t-test to compare trained vs. untrained teachers.

7. Expected Outcome of Research Study

This paper examines the dimensions of teacher preparedness, highlights challenges faced in Indian schools, and explores strategies to strengthen teachers' capacity for inclusive education.

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