SCHOOL TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Indu Rathee

Associate Professor, Tika Ram College of Education, Sonipat (Haryana)

Abstract

This article explores the school teachers' attitude towards inclusive education in relation to type of schools and their professional experience. The study was conducted on a sample of 60 secondary school teachers from residential and non-residential schools who were selected randomly from two districts i.e., Sonipat and Panipat of Haryana. Participants were administered an attitude scale namely- Teacher Attitude Scale toward Inclusive Education, developed by Sood , Vishal and Anand, Arti (2011) to determine teachers' attitude about the inclusion of students with special needs into mainstream settings. The data were analyzed by using Means and Standard Deviations. However t-test was also applied to compare the groups. Result of the present study indicates that there is a significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education in relation to the type of schools but they do not differ significantly on this issue in relation to their professional experience.

Keywords: Teachers' Attitude, Inclusive Education System, professional experience

Introduction

Inclusive education is the need of todays Indian society as it intends to bridge the gap between special education, integrated education and general system of education. Classrooms are now becoming more diverse with respect to students abilities, therefore sensitivity and awareness on the part of general education teacher is essential to promote successful inclusion. The goal of inclusive education is to break down the barriers that separate general and special education and make the included students feel like, and actually become an active member of general education classroom. Many inclusive education policy has been introduced in India, however the concept is in its infancy. It is fact that one of the greatest problems the world is facing today is the growing number of persons who are excluded from the meaningful partnership in the economic, social, political and cultural life of their communities. Inclusive education is a step forward from integrated or special school system. An inclusive education system welcomes all students irrespective of disability, community background, sexuality, ethnic background etc. Inclusive education means a philosophy of

education that promotes the education of all pupils in regular schools. Inclusive schools have been defined as schools in which all children learn together, receiving quality education and support through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, use of resources and partnership with their communities (UNESCO, 1994). Inclusion provides children with special need; an opportunity to learn by example from non-disabled peers. Since schools are a social arena, inclusion allows exceptional learners to be a part of their school community and identify with peers from whom they would otherwise have been segregated (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004). Generally, support for inclusion rests on the following two basic presuppositions: the right of children to inclusion in regular schools, and the fact that inclusive education is more effective than segregated education (Lindsay, 2003).The National Curriculum Framework on School Education provides guidelines for making those with disability in both cognitive and non-cognitive areas. According to Kozleski et al. (2011) and Loreman et al. (2011), inclusive education is considered to be a multi-dimensional concept that includes the celebration and valuing of differences and diversity and equal opportunities, as well as of a social model of disability. Inclusion essentially allows the special education student more opportunity for social acceptance and friendships, in addition to the benefits of higher learning (Salend & Duhaney, 1999). Vaughn, Elbaun, Schumm, & Hughes (1998) found that students with learning disabilities made significant gains on peer ratings of acceptance and overall friendship quality after being placed in inclusive education situations. The empirical evidences in the area of inclusive education clearly indicate that teachers' attitudes are the key factor for making inclusive education, a real success. Eagly and Chaiken (1998) They are viewed as linchpins in the process of including students with disabilities into regular classes (Stewart, 1983; Whiting & Young, 1995).

Teachers are perceived to be integral to the implementation of inclusive education (Haskell, 2000). Research communicates the view that inclusive education can only be successful if teachers are part of the team driving this process (Horne, 1983; Malone, Gallagher, & Long, 2001). According to Neary & Halvorsen (1995), "the best environment for learning are those in which students are motivated, learning is active and information is presented in a manner that recognizes the diversity of each student". As with any issue in education, inclusion is both criticized and praised. Arguments against inclusion include the possibility that students with special needs may be tormented or ridiculed by classmates; that teachers may not be prepared for inclusive education; that teachers may not be capable of appropriately servicing special needs students; and that every classroom may not be equipped with the proper

services (Mastro pieri & Scruggs, 2004; Zionts & Callicott, 2002; Salend & Duhaney, 1999). Studies of Singh (2001), Jha (2002) and Mastropieri & Scruggs (2004) indicated that majority of the teachers who were participating in inclusive programs had strong negative feelings about inclusion. The teachers identified several factors that would affect the success of inclusion such as class size, inadequate resources, lack of adapted curriculum and lack of adequate training. Teachers who personally support inclusive practice and accept the concept of inclusion can more readily adapt the learning environment to the diverse needs of students and use a variety of approaches and teaching strategies (Ryan, 2009).

Objectives

1. To study the significance difference in attitude of teachers towards inclusive education in terms of residential and non- residential schools (type of school).

2. To study the significance difference in attitude of teachers towards inclusive education in terms of more experience and less experience (professional experience, having more than 10 years and less than 10 years of experience).

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated in light of available literature:

H 1. There would be no significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive Education in terms of residential and non- residential schools (type of school).

H 2. There would be no significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive Education in terms of more experience and less experience (professional experience, having more than 10 years and less than 10 years of experience).

Sample

The study was conducted on a sample of 60 secondary school teachers from Government and Private schools who were selected randomly from two districts i.e., Sonipat and Panipat of Haryana.

Methodology

Descriptive survey method was used to gather data from the subjects.

Tools Used

Teacher Attitude Scale toward Inclusive Education by Sood , Vishal and Anand, Arti (2011) was used to measure the attitude of school teachers towards inclusive education.

The scale has four broad areas for attitude (both favourable and unfavourable) which are based on different vital aspects of inclusive education, including Psychological/Behavioural aspects of inclusive education (5 favourable and 5 unfavourable), Social and Parents- Related Aspects of Inclusive Education, (9 favourable and 3 unfavourable) Curricular and Co-

curricular aspects (8 favourable and 5 unfavourable) and Administrative aspects of Inclusive Education (7 favourable and 5 unfavourable). Respondents indicated the extent to which they agree/disagree/undecided

with each statement about themselves using 3 point scale. The sum of scores on all statements of the scale is considered as respondent's total attitude score. The higher total score on the scale reflects favourable attitude and vice-versa. The product moment correlation 'r' for the complete scale was 0.82 and correlation co-efficients between total score on the scale and score on each of the four areas of the scale representing internal consistency were 0.68 for psychological, 0.74 for social and parental, 0.67 for curricular and co-curricular and 0.81 for administrative aspect.

Analysis Of The Results

The response received was analyzed through statistical applications using t-test for comparison of the attitude towards Inclusive Education of school teachers in the light of objectives.

Table 1: Showing the mean standard deviation and t ratio of residential and non-residential school teachers' attitude towards Inclusive Education

Variable	Teachers of Residential schools N= 30		Teachers of non-Residential schools N= 30		t- value	Remark (.05 level of significance)
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
Attitude towards Inclusive Education	114	6.01	108	8.64	3.12	Significant

Table 1 shows that t-value between mean scores of attitude of residential and non-residential school teachers towards inclusive education is 3.12. Obtained t value is greater than the table value at 0.05 level ofsignificance, hence it is significant. This shows attitude of residential and non-residential teachers towards inclusive education differ significantly. Scores of residential teachers is more than that of non-residential teachers. So, it can be interpreted that the residential teachers' attitude is more positive towards inclusive education as compared to their counterparts. It might be due to the reason that the residential teachers are more concern and aware about their students because they spend more time with them in residential schools. Hence hypothesis -I, "There would be no significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive Education in terms of residential and non- residential schools (type

of school)" is rejected.

Table 2: Showing the mean standard deviation and t ratio of more experience and less experience school teachers' attitude towards Inclusive Education

Variable	Teachers Having More Experience (+10 years) N= 33		Teachers Having Less Experience (_ 10 years) N= 27		t- value	Remark (.05 level of significance)
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
Attitude towards Inclusive Education	112.15	6.50	109.96	9.69	0.94	Not Significant

Table 2 indicates that the mean score of the more experienced teacher and less experienced school teachers is 112.15 and109.96 respectively. Whereas the SD of more experienced teacher is 6.50 and the SD of less experienced school teacher is 9.69. Higher the mean score higher the positive attitude of teachers towards inclusive education system. The calculated t value is less than the table value. Therefore, it may be concluded that although there is a difference in the attitude of the more experienced and less experienced teachers but the difference is not significant. So the hypothesis 2, There would be no significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive Education in terms of more experience and less experience (professional experience, having more than 10 years and less than 10 years of experience) is accepted".

Conclusion

It has been found from the present study that the teachers are already aware about the
of inclusion of disabled children in the regular classroom. The study reported a positive attitude of school teachers towards inclusive education. Attitude of teachers towards inclusive education differ significantly with regard to their educational institution (i.e. residential and non- residential schools). Residential school teachers have more positive attitude towards inclusive education. However, there exist no significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education with respect to the years of teaching experience. To conclude it can be said that 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. The goal of achieving universalization of education is incomplete without inclusive and integrated education of the challenged group of students.

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