

Attitude of Pre-service Teacher-trainees towards Inclusion of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) into General Education

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Abstract: Education is the fundamental right of each child irrespective of his or her age, sex, caste, religion, ethnicity, language or any special needs. It emphasizes that children with special needs can be included in general school system without any demarcation and differentiation. Without segregating them, provisions can be made for children with special needs so that they can also get opportunity to learn with other general students having equal facilities. In the last few decades, there has been a paradigm shift in Indian Education system to promote Education for all. That's why instead of segregating students with special needs in special classes or schools, the ideology of inclusion is to benefit schools to meet the needs of all students. However, for achieving this goal, first of all you have to know teachers' attitude towards inclusive education. NCTE has prescribed inclusive education as a compulsory paper in B.Ed. curriculum. The present paper is based on a study of attitude of pre-service teacher-trainees towards inclusion of children with special needs into general education. The sample consists of 100 pre-service trainees undergoing D.El.Ed. and B.Ed. courses in different private teachers' training colleges. Pre-service teachers' attitude towards Inclusion Scale developed by Fathi Rezk El-Ashry (2009) had been used to collect responses from participants. Collected data was analysed through MS Excel-2000 and SPSS 20.0. The study revealed that gender had no significant impact on making a difference in trainees' attitude towards inclusive education. But training programme and experience of social contact with differently-abled persons had significant impact on differentiation of trainees' attitude towards inclusive education. Moreover trainees were more interested to teach hearing and visual impaired students in general classroom than other types of children with special needs.

Key Words: Attitude, inclusion, pre-service, teacher-trainees.

1. INTRODUCTION:

In the last few decades, there has been a paradigm shift in Indian education system towards inclusive education to promote Education for all. It acknowledges that every child has right to receive equal educational opportunity irrespective of their abilities, ethnicity, caste, gender, age etc. with other students under a common roof. Students with disabilities have been increasingly receiving special education services in general education classrooms (McLeskey & Henry, 1999; McLeskey, Henry, & Hodges, 1999). Inclusion is the contemporary term that refers to "the practice of educating students with moderate to severe disabilities alongside their chronological age peers without disabilities in general classrooms within their home neighborhood schools" (Alper, 2003, p. 15). UNICEF's Report on the Status of Disability in India 2000 states that there are around 30 million children in India suffering from some form of disability. In 2011, Census of India estimated that about 2.21% of total population had disability of which about 25% were children of school going age. Although the govt. of India over the years initiated and implemented a number of programmes such as Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC), Project on Integrated Education for Disabled (PIED) funded by UNESCO and NCERT (Yadava, 2013). NCERT in the year 2000 gave special importance to inclusive schools for all students without any reference to pupils with disabilities. This is being supported by the project like Sarva Siksha Aviyan (SSA) taken by the Department of Elementary Education in 2000 to increase enrolment and retention of disabled children who have been integrated in mainstream institutions. The successful inclusion of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) into General Education system depends on many factors, including the attitudes of teachers and the quality of instruction they offer their students. More specifically, teachers' attitudes about inclusion have been found to be a crucial factor that has an impact on the implementation of inclusion of children with disabilities (Bender, Vail & Scott, 1995). It has been reported that teachers with more positive views on inclusion have more confidence in their abilities and commitment to accommodate students' needs in inclusive settings by adapting appropriate classroom materials and related procedures (Campbell, Gilmore, & Cuskelly, 2003; Norwich, 1994). Monsen and Frederickson (2004) reported that teachers who have strongly-positive attitudes to inclusion are perceived by the pupils as higher in satisfaction. Costello and Boyle (2013) reported that pre-service teachers were positive in their attitudes towards inclusive education. Kiriungi et al. (2014) observed that male teachers were more positive to teach learners with hearing impairment than their female counterparts. Hence, it is very essential to explore the attitude of pre-service teacher-trainees to inclusion education.

2. OBJECTIVES:

- **O₁:** To know the level of attitude of teacher-trainees towards inclusive education.
- **O₂:** To find out whether gender has any impact on making a significant difference in teacher-trainees' attitude towards inclusive education.
- **O₃:** To find out whether training programme has any impact on making a significant difference in the attitude of teacher-trainees towards inclusive education.
- **O₄:** To study whether experience of social contact of teacher-trainees with person with disability plays any significant role on making a significant difference in their attitude towards inclusive education.

3. HYPOTHESES:

On the basis of above objectives the researcher formulated following hypotheses-

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between male and female teacher-trainees in their attitude towards inclusive education.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between B.Ed. and D.El.Ed. teacher-trainees in their attitude towards inclusive education.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference between teacher-trainees having social contact with differently-abled persons with those having no contact in their attitude towards inclusive education.

4. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:

Sample: Stratified random sampling technique had been used for selection of sample. 100 teacher-trainees were selected from four private teachers-training colleges under West Bengal University of Teachers' Training, Educational, Planning and Administration (WBUTTEPA). Their distribution by gender was thirty five males (35%) and sixty five females (65%). Fifty four trainees (54%) are pursuing diploma course (D.El.Ed.) and Forty six trainees (46%) are pursuing bachelor degree course (B.Ed.). Ages of samples varies from 18 to 35 years.

Variables:

1. Dependent Variables:

Attitude towards inclusive education

2. Independent variables:

- Gender – Male & Female
- Training programme- D.El.Ed. & B.Ed.
- Social contact- Having contact with differently -abled persons & having no contact with differently-abled persons

Tool used:

Pre-service teachers' Attitude towards Inclusion Scale developed by Fathi Rezk El-Ashry (2009) had been used for the present study. The reliability of this scale had been tested by Cronbach's alpha and was found to be 0.822.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

General attitude of teacher-trainees towards inclusive education:

The frequency and percentage mean of attitude level of teacher-trainees was calculated to identify their general attitude towards inclusive education. A total of 54 teacher-trainees (54%) showed positive while 46 teacher-trainees (46%) had negative attitude towards inclusive education. Since the scale was in 5 point the mean was found to be 3.747.

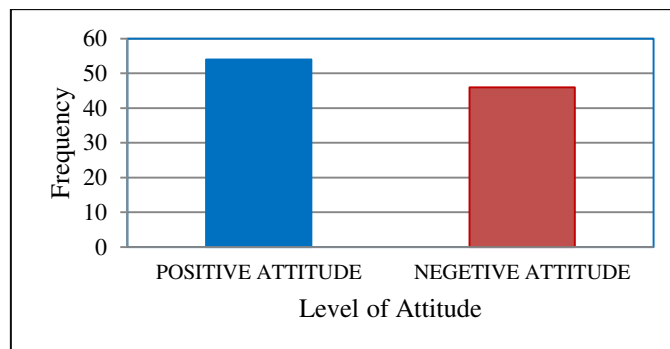


Fig. 1: Distribution samples on the basis of level of attitude towards inclusive education

Type of disability	Learning disabilities	Emotional and behavioural disorders	Hearing Impairments	Visual Impairments	Mentally Retardation
Mean Score	3.62	3.32	3.74	3.78	2.91

From table 1 it is seen that pre-service teacher-trainees are more interested in teaching hearing and visual impaired students than other types of disabled students. Moreover, majority of teacher-trainees are not willing to teach mentally retardation students in inclusive classroom. This is because we generally have a basic misconception that they are not fit for inclusive setup and that makes teacher-trainees inefficacious to handle them in general classroom.

Table 2: Independent Sample Test for Mean differences

Variables	Group Statistics				t test for equality of mean		
	Group	No. of Samples	Mean	SD	df	t value	P value (2 tailed)
Gender	Male	35	104.65	5.95	98	2.828	0.005
	Female	65	100.44	7.64			
Training-programme	D.El.Ed.	46	101.60	8.51	98	-0.389	0.697
	B.Ed.	54	102.18	6.25			
Experience of social contact	Contact	37	102.86	7.22	98	0.985	0.326
	No Contact	63	101.36	7.17			

A. Gender:

From table 2, it is seen that there exist a significant mean difference among trainees belonging to different gender identities ($P < 0.01$). On the basis of this result H_{01} is rejected. Mean score of male trainees (104.65) is higher than that of their counterparts (100.44). So it can be concluded that male trainees have more favourable attitude towards inclusion of children with special needs in general education than female trainees.

B. Training-programme:

Table 2 shows no significant mean difference in the mean score of attitude among trainees belonging to different training-programmes ($P > 0.05$). On the findings of above results H_{02} is accepted. So, it can conclude that training-programmes have no significant impact on differentiation of attitude among the trainees towards inclusion of children with special needs in general education.

C. Experience of social contact:

Moreover, result of t test in table 2 shows that experience of social contact with differently -abled persons has no significant impact on making a difference in the attitude of the trainees towards inclusion of children with special needs in general education. This is because P value is not significant ($P > 0.05$) and on the basis of above findings H_{03} is also accepted.

6. MAJOR FINDINGS:

- 46% of total teacher-trainees had negative attitude towards inclusion of children with special needs in general education.
- Teacher-trainees were more interested to teach hearing and visual impaired children in inclusive classroom than other types of disabled children.
- Male teacher-trainees had more favourable attitude towards inclusive education than their counterparts.
- Training-programme and experience of social contact with differently-abled persons do not play a significant role on making a difference in the attitude of teacher-trainees.

7. CONCLUSION:

From the present study it can be concluded that inclusive education is a mandate today. In fact inclusive education is the need of the hours. It becomes a crucial issue in the field of education. It is a matter of immense pleasure that inclusive education is developing all over the world but still there is room for improvement. In the present study the investigator is trying to find out some personal factors of teacher-trainees, which have an impact on the inclusion of children with special needs in the general education system. The study has some practical implications for teacher-trainees. It had found that the teacher-trainees were more or less aware of the desirability of inclusion of children with special needs in regular classroom. The female teacher-trainees exhibit less favourable attitude towards inclusive education than their counterparts. It suggests that there is a need of training, orientation course related to inclusive education for female teacher-trainees to develop awareness of inclusive education. The present study also claims that education stakeholders or curriculum makers should frame a comprehensive CWSN-oriented (Children with Special Needs) pedagogy based curriculum for teacher-training programmes.

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