

# 5

## Teacher Attitude and Inclusion in Primary Education

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### Abstract

*Inclusion is a term recently brought into use in education all over the world. This idea has evolved from the concept of equal educational opportunity to all children without any discrimination. It is an approach to bring all children including Children with special needs 'together under the same umbrella for educational purposes, so that children with disabilities can participate as fulltime learners in any neighbouring school with adequate support systems. However, teachers' positive frame of mind is essential for making inclusion effective and successful. In this paper an attempt has been made to study primary Teachers's Attitude Towards Inclusive Education (TASTIE).*

### INTRODUCTION

Disability is a ubiquitous occurrence in societies around the world. It is not constrained by a particular nation, race, religion or class rather a universal fact. Recently people are coming to realise that disability is universal and can happen to anybody and anytime. Keeping this consideration in mind one and all have to be sensitive enough about the various issues faced by disabled persons.

Inclusion is an approach adopted in education most recently in the world. After the UNESCO World

Conference on Special Needs Education held at Salamanca, Spain in 1994, inclusion became the most popular word in education. This idea has evolved from the concept of equal educational opportunity to all that allows children with disabilities to participate as full time learners in any school of the neighbouring community which was previously done by integration or segregation. But inclusion is a wider approach than integration or segregation in the educational field. The basic idea of inclusive education is to enable

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all children to participate together in society that develops confidence in the minds of disabled and creates opportunities for the non-disabled to share academic and non-academic matters with their peers. UNESCO urges schools to accommodate all children irrespective of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic and other conditions. More frankly, it talks about bringing all children irrespective of their degree of ability or disability under the same umbrella for educational purposes.

Inclusive education is a new educational approach that seeks to address the learning needs of all children. It is the process of strengthening the capability of the education system to reach out all learners together with an appropriate network of support services. Inclusive education is concerned with removing all barriers to learning, and with the participation of all learners vulnerable to exclusion and marginalisation (Devpura, 2020). In inclusive education, all students with or without disabilities are included in the mainstream education system with the feeling of belonging and respect among other students, teachers and support staff. Now education is made as a fundamental right to all children under the provisions of Right to Education Act, 2009. As a result, classrooms have been filled with more diverse students in terms of their needs and abilities. So, more and more classrooms are now witnessing the presence of children

with disabilities (Bharti, 2014). It is an approach to address the learning needs of all children, youth and adults with all specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion (Chandran, 2020). Therefore, teachers have to transform their methodologies in the classrooms to address these diverse issues including their attitude.

### **Teacher and Inclusiveness in Education**

Teachers are the backbone of a nation as the destiny of a country is being shaped in the hands of teachers. They are considered as genuine architects of moulding our growing generations in classrooms. They have to play multifaceted roles in the field of education in general and inclusive education in particular. Teachers have to take utmost care and dedication for making inclusive education effective, pragmatic and successful.

Apart from multifaceted roles of teachers, their favourable attitude towards inclusive education is the need of the hour for successful implementation of the idea of inclusion. While talking about the teachers' responsibility on inclusive education it has been noticed that there is a great shortage of trained special teachers who can assist children with special needs in schools. National Education Policy 2020, is aiming to prepare an additional group of special teachers for certain areas of education specially for school level. Keeping the shortage of special teachers in mind, it is the

need of the hour to make all teachers capable of meeting the needs of special children along with other children and so, special training programmes should be arranged for reaching the needs of special children. National Education Policy, 2020 envisages that special emphasis should be on training and recruiting of teachers who will be able to teach in an inclusive classroom (Mishra, 2021).

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

While investigating the problem, the following related literature has been reviewed.

Farida Kurniawati et. al., (2012) found that teachers are in favour of inclusion and their attitude seems to be related to their teaching experiences and training in special education.

Shane Costello and Christopher Boyle (2013) found that pre-service secondary teachers held positive attitudes towards inclusive education; however, there was a significant decline in positive attitudes through the years of study. Pre-service secondary teachers enrolled in postgraduate programmes were more inclusive than those enrolled in undergraduate courses.

Sneh Bansal (2016) found significant differences in the attitude level of teachers with particular reference to school type, educational qualifications and professional experiences. It has also been found that there is a significant positive

correlation between the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education and professional commitment. The correlation value of total attitude towards inclusive education with dimension-wise professional commitment for teachers also indicates more or less similar trends, though the correlation value of commitment to basic human values with total attitude towards inclusive education is not significant.

Anil Kumar (2016) noticed a significant difference in the attitude of teachers in relation to their teaching level, gender, residence and experience. The findings suggest that the university and female teachers appeared to hold more positive attitudes as compared to school and male teachers.

Kumar and Singh (2020) observed a moderate to favourable level of attitude among teachers towards inclusive education. Pre-service and urban teachers had a more positive attitude towards inclusive education in comparison to the attitude of in-service and rural teachers, respectively. No significant difference has been found between the attitude of male and female teachers towards inclusive education.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Disability is common to humans and yet disabled are considered as inferior. Over the years disabled were kept away from the normal education system and put in some

designated special schools. Thus, they were not equally treated as other children in the society particularly for educational purposes. In recent times inclusion has become known in education to teach all children together in a common platform without any discrimination where teachers have to play a very prominent role in making inclusion effective and successful. For attaining the goals of inclusion apart from normal duties, teachers have to alter their mental makeup on disabled as the most challenging responsibility of inclusion. In this study a sincere investigation has been undertaken to look at the mental framework of primary teachers towards inclusive education.

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The problem of the present study is 'Teacher Attitude and Inclusion in Primary Education.' Here, primary teachers implied those who are working in different lower primary schools in Nagaon sub-division.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To study the attitude level of primary teachers towards inclusive education.
- To study the attitude towards inclusive education in terms of teachers' qualification.
- To compare the attitude of primary teachers towards inclusive education in terms of experience.
- To study the gender difference on various aspects of inclusive education, i.e.,

- (a) Behavioural and psychological aspects
- (b) Social and parents related aspects
- (c) Curricular and co-curricular aspects, and
- (d) Administrative aspects

### **HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY**

- Attitude level of primary teachers towards inclusive education is favourable.
- There is no significant difference in attitude towards inclusive education in terms of teachers' qualifications.
- There is no significant difference in attitude towards inclusive education in terms of teachers' teaching experience.
- There is no significant gender difference in attitude of teachers towards different dimensions of inclusive education, i.e.,
  - (a) Behavioural and psychological aspects
  - (b) Social and parents related aspects
  - (c) Curricular and co-curricular aspects, and
  - (d) Administrative aspects

### **DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

- This study is restricted to lower primary teachers only.
- This study is confined to Nagaon sub-division only; hence the findings can't be generalised to other areas.

- It is restricted to the attitude of lower primary teachers towards inclusive education.
- This study is restricted to academic qualification of teachers, teaching experiences and gender on inclusive education.

with three alternatives each in four areas altogether. The areas are— i) psychological and behavioural, ii) social and parents related, iii) curricular and co-curricular and iv) administrative. The scale was found to have content and intrinsic validity. The test-retest reliability coefficient was found 0.82.

## METHODS

### Sampling Procedure

A total of 198 primary teachers were selected randomly from various lower primary schools of Nagaon sub-division among whom 92 male and 106 female teachers. From these 88 teachers have more than 5 or years teaching experience and 110 have less than five of them, 115 were graduates and 83 were senior secondary qualified teachers.

### Research Tool Used

The research tool used in this study was Teacher’s attitude scale towards inclusive education (TASTIE) prepared by Dr. Vishal Sood and Dr. Arti Anand. The scale has 47 items

### Data Collection

Descriptive survey method was applied to collect data for this study. The investigator personally approached the sampled teachers and asked them to respond to all items as per the guidelines attached therewith.

### Statistical Techniques Used

Collected data were analysed by applying descriptive as well as inferential statistics. Statistical techniques like simple percentage, Mean (M), Standard deviation ( $\sigma$ ) and ‘t’ tests were applied to test the hypotheses.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study are illustrated in the following tables—

**Table 1**

**Attitude Level of Primary Teachers Towards Inclusive Education**

	<b>Extremely favourable</b>	<b>Most favourable</b>	<b>Above average favourable</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Below average unfavourable</b>	<b>Most unfavourable</b>	<b>Extremely unfavourable</b>
Percentages of teachers	3.03	27.27	48.99	20.71	0	0	0

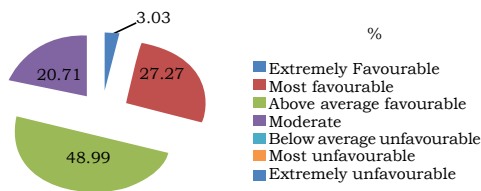


Figure 1: Graphical representation of attitude level of primary teachers towards Inclusive Education

From the table and figure above, it has been revealed that the attitude level of primary teachers towards inclusive education has been found moderate to extremely favourable.

Altogether 3.03 per cent of the teachers have shown extremely favourable attitude towards inclusive education whereas 27.27 per cent have shown most favourable attitude, 48.99 per cent have shown above average favourable attitude, and 20.71 per cent have shown moderate attitude. However, not a single teacher exposes a negative or unfavourable attitude towards inclusive education. Similar findings have also been found by Singh et al., (2020), Kurniawati et al., (2012) Belapurkar & Phatak (2012), Costello & Boyle (2013).

**Table 2**  
**Significance of Difference in Attitude Towards Inclusive Education of Primary Teachers on the Basis of their Teaching Experience**

Teaching Experience	N	M	'σ'	df	't'	Sig. (2-tailed)	Remark
Less than 5 years	110	110.48	7.96	196	0.72	1.97	NS
More than 5 years	88	111.32	8.38				

Significant level is at  $P < 0.05$

The 't' value while comparing the significance of difference in attitude towards inclusive education between the group of primary teachers having more than five years and less than five years of teaching experience is found 0.72 ( $t = .72 < .05$ ), which is lower than the table value at 5 per cent level of significance and therefore, cannot reject the null hypothesis. It indicates that there is no significant difference in attitude of teachers towards inclusive education

between the groups based on their teaching experiences. Therefore, it can be said that primary teachers have similar kind of attitude irrespective of their length of services towards inclusive education. This might be the cause of teaching inclusive education as an important content in various short and long-term teacher and training programmes from which teachers develop some positive vibes towards inclusive education.

**Table 3**  
**Significance of Difference in Attitude Towards Inclusive Education Among Primary Teachers Based on their Qualification**

Qualification	N	M	'σ'	df	't'	Sig.(2-tailed)	Remark
Senior Secondary	83	110.67	8.72	196	1.15	1.97	NS
Graduation	115	112.07	8.06				

*Significant level is at P<0.05*

Table 3 shows the mean scores and 't' value of attitude towards inclusive education of primary teachers having senior secondary and graduation as their academic qualification. It is apparent from the results that there is no significant difference ( $t = 1.15 < .05$ ), in attitude towards inclusive education between

the group of teachers based on their academic qualification at 5 per cent level of significance. Therefore, it can be said that primary teachers having senior secondary and graduation as their academic qualifications have a similar kind of attitude towards inclusive education. This result resembles the findings of Bansal (2016), Kern (2006), etc.

**Table 4**  
**Significance of Difference in Attitude Towards Different Dimensions of Inclusive Education Between Male and Female Primary Teachers**

Dimensions	Male (N=92)		Female (N=106)		't' value	Remarks
	M	'σ'	M	'σ'		
Behavioural/ Psychological	24.87	3.77	25.59	3.17	1.47	NS*
Social and Parents Related	30.03	3.94	30.57	3.16	1.06	NS*
Curricular and Co-Curricular	28.78	4.15	30.75	3.05	3.72	S**
Administrative	26.48	4.83	24.68	3.18	3.05	S**

*\*Significant level is at P<0.05*

*\*\* Significant level is at P>0.01*

Table 4 reveals the value of 't' for various dimensions of inclusive education of male and female primary teachers. While comparing the significance of difference of male

and female primary teachers on behavioural as well as social and parents related aspects of inclusive education, the 't' has been found 1.47 and 1.06 respectively ( $t < .05$ ), which

are lower than the table value at 5 per cent level of significance. Thus, it indicates that there is no significant difference in attitude towards behavioural as well as social and parents related aspects of inclusive education between male and female primary teachers. Thus, irrespective of their gender, primary teachers have a similar kind of attitude towards behavioural and social and parents related aspects of inclusive education. It resembles the findings of Singh et al., (2020), Kern (2006), etc.

On the other hand, the 't' values while comparing the significance of difference of male and female primary teachers towards curricular and co-curricular as well as administrative aspects of inclusive education have been found 3.72 and 3.05 respectively ( $t > .01$ ), which are greater than the table value at 1 per cent level of significance. The results indicate that there exists significance of difference in attitude towards curricular and co-curricular as well as administrative aspects of inclusive education between male and female primary teachers. It means that male and female teachers are different in their attitude towards different managerial provisions, administrative commitment, infrastructural facilities, architectural modifications, flexibility in evaluation, overcoming challenges, teacher training provisions and their utility in inclusive education. Thus, gender difference in attitude has been observed with particular reference to curricular and co-curricular and administrative aspects of inclusive

education. This finding resembles the findings of Kumar (2016).

## MAJOR FINDINGS

The major findings of the study are as follows—

- Attitude of primary teachers towards inclusive education is found moderate to extremely favourable.
- The average attitude score towards inclusive education of teachers having more than five years of teaching experience is a bit higher than teachers having less than five years teaching experience.
- The average attitude score of graduate primary teachers towards inclusive education edges over primary teachers having senior secondary qualification.
- No teacher has shown below average unfavourable to extremely unfavourable attitude towards inclusive education.
- No significant difference has been observed in attitude towards inclusive education among primary school teachers on the basis of their teaching experience.
- No significant difference has been found in attitude towards inclusive education among primary teachers on the basis of their academic qualification.
- Regarding behavioural, social and parents related aspects



of inclusive education no significant gender difference has been observed.

- Significant gender difference has been observed in attitude towards curricular and co-curricular as well as administrative aspects of inclusive education.

### **Implications and Suggestions**

From the study the following suggestions and implications can be made—

- This study would be helpful for learning the attitude of primary teachers towards inclusion in education along with its different aspects.
- Inclusive education should be widely and comprehensively included in all forms of teacher training (in-service and pre-service) programmes at various levels of education.
- It would help researchers to go beyond the attitude of primary teachers towards inclusive education.
- Parents, guardians, society and teachers are primarily responsible for making inclusion successful. So, general orientation or awareness programmes should be

regularly arranged for all concerned.

- Special teachers in particular and other teachers in general should learn, understand and develop a positive frame of mind towards inclusive education.

### **CONCLUSION**

Inclusion is one of the most popular words applied in the field of education around the globe in recent years. Previously segregation was the only mode of imparting education to children with special needs, but today that has been replaced by inclusion which aimed to bring all children in a common platform to educate them under the same roof. Teachers' role in educational institutions is very important to make inclusive settings more effective and interesting. So attention should be paid to prepare competent teachers so that they can facilitate inclusive practices in classroom settings. Adequate knowledge and training, competency, problem management skills, collaborative support and most importantly the positive attitude of teachers are very imperative for creating an inclusive culture and cooperative learning environment in schools to make inclusion more pragmatic, otherwise the dream of inclusion will remain far from its objectives.

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