



**A STUDY ON THE ATTITUDE OF THE TEACHERS TOWARDS EDUCATION OF
CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN INCLUSIVE SETTINGS OF COIMBATORE
DISTRICT**

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ABSTRACT

Education is a vital factor in the overall development of children with disabilities. Education of children with disabilities was once neglected and now it is a rights issue. The latest approach is Inclusion, where the general education system needs to play a crucial role in the education of the children with disabilities. Article 45 of the Constitution enjoins that “the State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years”. The success of District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) has snowballed into a far more ambitious programme of quality universal elementary education through Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). Achievement of set goals in Inclusive Education depends on various factors, of which teacher’s attitude towards the education of children with disabilities play a key role. The success of inclusive education depends on number of factors and one of the vital factors is the attitude of the teachers towards the education of children with disabilities. In this regard, the investigator attempted to study the attitude of the teachers towards the education of children with disabilities in inclusive setting of Coimbatore district. The sample for the present study consisted of 25 regular teachers, 25 special school teachers, 25 special educators and 25 head masters working in the general and special schools of Coimbatore district. Percentage analysis was used to analyze the data. The findings of the study revealed the favorable attitude of teachers towards education of children with disabilities in inclusive settings. This favourable attitude towards the inclusion of children with disabilities is the indicator of the success of the inclusion programme in Coimbatore district.

Keywords – Attitude, Teacher, Education, Children with Disabilities, Inclusion.

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INTRODUCTION:

Education is a vital factor in the overall development of the children with disabilities. Education of children with disabilities was once neglected and now it is a rights issue for the marginalized members of the society. The latest approach is Inclusion, where the general education system needs to play a crucial role in the education of the children with disabilities. Education being the instrument of social change, the world in general and India in particular has realized the importance of educating all the children of school going age. In order to achieve the mission of universal elementary education, alternative systems, besides the formal school structure, may be promoted, because the education system needs to adapt itself to the requirements of the young learner. The modern principle states that if the children do not reach the schools, the school should reach them. Recognizing that education is vitally linked with the totality of the development process, the reform and restructuring of the educational system was accepted as an area of State intervention. Article 45 of the Constitution enjoins that “the State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete

the age of fourteen years”. Along with other provisions and safeguard, special care of the economic and educational interests of the under-privileged sections of the population is also a Constitutional obligation. The National Policy on Education 1986, its companion document Program of Action and consequent centrally sponsored schemes marked a recharged initiatives in universal basic education. The Jomtien Conference in 1990 further strengthened the national resolve. The introduction of a centralized district based approach to universal basic education through partially international funded District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) was a major new initiative. The success of DPEP has snowballed into a far more ambitious programme of quality universal elementary education by 2010 through Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). Achievement of set goals in Inclusive Education depends on various factors, of which teacher’s attitude towards the education of children with disabilities play a key role. The success of inclusive education depends on number of factors and one of the vital factors is the attitude of the teachers towards the education of children with disabilities.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**Parents Attitude:**

The success of inclusion depends on the attitude of the people involved in its implementation. The research literature indicates that there is a wide range of opinion amongst parents related to the placement of children in educational settings. Some parents prefer and advocate for inclusive placement, while others favour separate placement (Grove & Fisher, 1999). As the trend towards inclusion grows, one of the chief concerns of parents is the protection of support services for their child. Daniel and King (1997) found that parents were more concerned about the degree to which their child's individual education plan (IEP) actually addressed the needs of their child when the child was being educated in an inclusive setting, as opposed to a segregated setting. It may be difficult for parents to find schools with personnel who are sufficiently knowledgeable about inclusive educational goals in order to provide appropriate services to their child (Grove & Fisher, 1999). Concerns about socialization were also expressed by parents in a study conducted by Freeman and Alkin (2000), who investigated parents' attitudes to socialisation and inclusion. Parents who participated in that study believed that students with severe disabilities who were

included in regular classroom settings would be rejected socially. Even when parents believed inclusion to have beneficial social implications, they still maintained that those with severe disabilities would be rejected.

Peers Attitude:

Another group which influences the success of inclusion is "Peers". It is a fact that the attitude of the persons of disabled students as far as inclusion in mainstream settings is concerned influences their behaviour, acceptance and their successful social inclusion (Norwich, 1994; Nikolarazi & de Reybekiel, 2001). Vlachou (1997) reports that non-disabled students separate people into two categories, the "normal" and the "disabled". Studies concerning these attitudes have revealed controversial results. Peer acceptance is influenced by the kind of disability; the more severe and prominent the disability, the less the acceptance of the child (Lewis, 1995; Nikolarazi & de Reybekiel, 2001). Younger children seem to be more willing to interact with their disabled peers whereas older children prefer the company of non-disabled students (Kourea & Phtiaka, 2003), although other researchers found that negative attitudes may be formed at an early age (Favazza & Odom, 1997 in Nikolarazi & de Reybekiel, 2001).

Teachers Attitude:

Teachers' and head teachers' attitudes are a determining factor in the success of disabled students' inclusion in the mainstream school (Norwich 1994; Padeliadu & Lamproboulou, 1997). It seems that disabled students' difficulties arise from the teachers' negative attitudes (Lampropoulou, 1997). Miller and Savage (1995) argued that a teacher's beliefs may affect their commitment. They suggested that if a teacher was highly committed to something and also believed that they understood the problem then they were likely to ensure its success and actively seek resources to help them to cope with it. Commitment to a policy of inclusion which is a significant change in educational issues may be a reflection of educators' beliefs about the philosophical bases upon which inclusion is grounded and their appraisal of the circumstances surrounding its implementation. Researchers mention that although teachers may agree on a theoretical level with inclusion, they have negative attitudes as far as its implementation is concerned (Cool, Semmel & Gerber, 1999). Teachers' negative attitudes towards disability lead to low expectations from their students which result to decreased learning opportunities and low academic performance (Carrington & Brownlee, 2001). Teachers'

attitudes are influenced by the kind and the severity of the students' disability, variables which refer more to the child rather than them (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; Vlachou, 1997). Lortie (1975) wrote about the sociological aspects of becoming a teacher, contending that one's personal predispositions were at the center of becoming a teacher. This is further supported by Malouf and Schiller (1995) who suggest that attitudes and beliefs of teachers about education are formed before they enter a teacher preparation program.

Services for Persons with Disabilities:

Disability existed from the time immemorial, but the services for persons with disabilities are roughly a century old. Services for persons with disabilities have undergone various transitions, from rejection to acceptance which lead way to emergence of legislations at the international and at national levels. All the legislations enacted at the international and national levels stress on inclusion of persons with disabilities in the society. Achievement of inclusive society depends on various factors. International bodies, national bodies and nongovernmental organisations are working at their own levels to bring all the children with disabilities under the umbrella of education.

Attitude of Teachers towards the Education of Children with Disabilities:

Achievement of set goals in Inclusive Education depends on various factors, of which teacher's attitude towards the education of children with disabilities play a key role. The Education of children with disabilities is catered under special schools, integrated schools and the inclusive schools. The three models of education of children with disabilities differ at different levels. In special schools, the educations of children with disabilities are taken care of by the special teachers. In integrated schools the education of children with disabilities are taken care of by the resource teachers. In inclusive schools education of children with disabilities are taken care of by the regular teacher with the assistance of the special educators. In case of the special teacher and the resource teacher, they have preservice training in special education which makes them easy to handle the children with disabilities, but the regular teacher who is responsible for the education of children with disabilities in the inclusive settings has no previous training in special education which may create a hurdle in teaching the children with disabilities. If there is a positive attitude among such teachers towards the education of

children with disabilities, then attainment of "Education for All" may become a reality.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The success of inclusive education depends on number of factors and one of the vital factors is the attitude of the teachers towards the education of children with disabilities. In this regard, the investigator attempted to study the attitudes of teachers towards the education of children with disabilities. The title of the present investigation is "A Study on the Attitude of the Teachers towards Education of Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Settings of Coimbatore District". The study attempts to find the attitudes of teachers involving in teaching the children with disabilities in the inclusive settings of Coimbatore district.

NEED FOR THE STUDY:

Success of any system depends on the sincerity and commitment of the individuals concerned. Inclusion, being an approach involving the marginalized section of children with disabilities, its success depends solely on the attitude of those associated with the system. Since an ideal inclusive setting warrants the regular teachers to shoulder most of the responsibilities, their favourable attitude towards the education of children

with disabilities is a significant factor. Hence in this context, an attempt has been made to study the mindset of the teachers in accepting children with disabilities in Inclusive settings. The findings of the study may certainly pave ways for enhancing the inclusive education system.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The following are the objectives of the present study:

1. To elicit the attitudes of the regular teachers, head teachers towards the education of children with disabilities in inclusive settings.
2. To elicit the attitudes of the special educators and special school teachers towards the education of children with disabilities in inclusive settings.
3. To find the need of in-service training for teachers to serve the children with disabilities.

METHODOLOGY :**The Sample of the Study:**

The sample for the present study consisted of 25 regular teachers, 25 special school teachers, 25 special educators and 25 head masters working in the schools of Coimbatore district. The investigator followed simple random sampling procedures to collect data from the sample.

Method of Data Collection:

The present study had the aim at investigating the attitudes of the teachers on the education of children with disabilities in the inclusive settings of Coimbatore District. The investigator wanted to ensure the objectivity in collecting data. The Heads of Institutions, Regular teachers, Teachers working in Special Schools and Special educators were contacted. They were assured that the data collected would be used only for research purpose. The investigator collected the data on a one-to-one basis. Each teacher was given the attitude scale to respond to the statements listed. All the samples were requested to read the entire statements one after the other and give their responses by choosing any one of the three choices such as Strongly Agree, Agree and Disagree which they feel correct. All the samples were explained about the purpose of the study and what is expected in the scale given to them. They were requested to avoid mutual consultations. Whenever they had doubts, the investigator clarified and explained the meaning of the statement. Time was not limited. The respondents were requested not to leave any item unanswered and incomplete. All the teachers and heads of the schools were very cooperative in filling the attitude scale.

Data Analysis Procedure:

For the present investigation, the investigator used the descriptive method of data analysis. The data collected by using the attitude scale was compiled and tabulated under 30 tables and brief explanation of the scores were recorded. Each item of the questionnaire was analysed separately by the percentage analysis method and the interpretation of the investigator is also given simultaneously.

Scheme of Analysis:

The data collected from the sample were analyzed at length statement wise. Percentage analysis was used to analyze the data. Statement wise analysis is made to enhance the result of the present study. The statements are examined and discussed according to the response of the teachers.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:**Age:**

Majority of the sample collected for the study are above 30 years. Among the regular teachers 68% were above 30 and remaining 32% were below 30 years. Among the special school teachers 80% were above 30 and 20% were below 30 years. Among the special educators 56% were above 30 and 44% were below 30 years. In the case of headmasters all the samples were above 30 years.

Gender:

Majority of the sample collected for the study were female. Among the regular teachers 68% were female and remaining 32% were male. Among the special school teachers 92% were female and 8% were male. Among the special educators 56% were female and 44% were male. In the case of head masters 48% were female and 52% were male.

Academic Qualification:

Majority of the sample collected for the study are under graduates comprising of 48% of regular teachers, 80% of special school teachers, 76% of special educators.. In the case of headmasters 44% are under graduates while the remaining 56% are post graduates.

Professional Qualification:

Majority of the sample collected for the study are under graduates professionally comprising of 76% of regular teachers, 76% of special school teachers, 80% of special educators and 80% of head masters.

Statement Findings:

1. Majority of teachers comprising 64% of regular teachers, 44% of special school teachers, 100% of special educators and 68% of head masters opine that inclusion of children with disabilities in regular schools does not affect the

learning pace of education of non-disabled children.

2. Majority of teachers comprising 60% of regular teachers, 68% of special school teachers, 88% of special educators and 56% of head masters strongly opine that inclusion of children with disabilities in regular school will pave way to inclusive society.
3. Majority of the regular teachers comprising 20% men and 60% women and headmasters comprising of 48% of men and 44% of women opine that inclusion of children with disabilities in regular schools increases their workload.
4. Majority of the regular teachers comprising 28% men and 68% women opine that periodical in-service training helps them to serve better. This elicits that regular in-service training should be given to the regular teachers for better service.
5. Majority of teachers comprising 100% of regular teachers, 68% of special school teachers, 80% of special educators and 64% of head masters opine that inclusion is the suitable model to bring all children with disabilities under the umbrella of education.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

With the findings of the present study as the base, the investigator makes the following recommendations.

1. To offer quality academic services to the children with disabilities in inclusive settings, periodical in-service training on issues related to disability may be organized for regular teachers.
2. All pre-service teacher education programs may include a component on disability.
3. Simple specialty training programs in special education may also include a small component on other disabilities since a special educator in an inclusive setting is expected to serve children with all type of disabilities.

CONCLUSION:

Through this study the investigator has attempted to bring into light the attitudes of teachers towards the education of children with disabilities in the inclusive settings of Coimbatore district. The findings of the study in general reveal favourable attitude of teachers towards education of children with disabilities in inclusive settings. This favourable attitude towards the inclusion of children with disabilities is the indicator of the success of the inclusion programme in

Coimbatore. As nations across the globe are striving to achieve the goal of a rights based, barrier free and inclusive society, it becomes imperative that such an atmosphere is created

in the inclusive schools too, which is the need of the hour in the run for achieving the goal of Education For All.

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