

ATTITUDE OF GOVERNMENT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN MIZORAM

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ABSTRACT

The goal of universalization of elementary education cannot be achieved without the education of children with special needs. The inclusion of children with special needs in general education settings has been one of the priorities in India and their successful inclusion is greatly determined by the attitude of teachers who are working in the schools since they are directly responsible for the education of children with special needs. The present study is to reveal the attitude of elementary teachers working in Government schools of Mizoram. It was conducted in four districts of Mizoram, covering 125 schools and 430 teachers. The study reveals that teachers with positive attitude towards inclusive education are more in number as compared to those teachers with moderate and negative attitude towards inclusive education.

KEYWORDS: *Inclusive Education, Teachers, Attitude, Gender, Locale.*

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive Education is defined as a process of addressing the diverse needs of all learners by reducing all barriers to, and within the learning environment. Inclusive Education means enabling schools to serve all children and creating schools which welcome all learners regardless of their characteristics, disadvantages or difficulties.

The Draft Action Plan for Inclusive Education of Children & Youth with Disabilities (as cited in Arya, 2013), defines inclusive education, as: An approach, that seeks to address the learning needs of all children, youth and adults with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion... It aims at all stakeholders in the system (learners, parents, community, teachers, administrators, policy-makers) to be comfortable with diversity and see it as a challenge rather than a problem.

According to NCERT (2014), "Inclusive education refers to education of all students, where all the students are equal participants in the learning process. Provision of inclusive education involving students with disabilities is based on the

belief that those with disabilities should not have to depend on specialised services alone, to benefit from educational resources, activities and practices that are otherwise available to all. Inclusivity is maintained when all members of a group are able to participate in its activities, which means, provisions made are considerate of all members and not just those from specific groups or, with special abilities, disabilities, and/or needs."

UNESCO (2009) define inclusive education as "Inclusion is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all children and the youth, through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications to content, approach, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children." (UNESCO, 2009)

A glimpse into the attitude of society towards people with disability over the past few decades clearly reveals the importance of society’s attitude and its impact on the lives of such individuals - as change in attitude leads to change in services provided to people with different forms of disability.

For successful implementation of inclusive education, the attitude of teachers played a very important role as positive attitude may foster the level of acceptance of children with special needs in an inclusive settings and the commitment towards inclusive education may be determined by the attitude possessed by teachers.

NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The government of India gives special importance for the education of Children with Special Needs and their inclusion in general school. There are a number of projects and schemes initiated by the Government of India for the education of CWSN. The Government of India also laid down a good number of policies and legislations to achieve the goal of education for all.

According to the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE, 2000) ‘Segregation or isolation is good neither for learners with disabilities nor for general learners without disabilities. Societal requirement is that learners with special needs should be educated along with other learners in inclusive schools, which are cost effective and have sound pedagogical practices’ (NCERT, 2000).

Though the Government initiated a good number of schemes, policies and legislations for the inclusion of children with special needs in the general education settings, there are a number of issues and challenges in implementing these schemes and policies. One of the biggest challenges for successful implementation of inclusive education is the attitude possessed by teachers. It is important to study the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education as teachers are directly involved and responsible for inclusive education and their attitude can greatly determine the success of inclusive education practices.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the attitude of elementary school teachers towards Inclusive education.
2. To compare the attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education with reference to their locale.
3. To compare the attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education with reference to their gender.
4. To compare the attitude of elementary school teachers towards Inclusive Education with reference to their age.

HYPOTHESIS

1. There is no significant difference between rural and urban elementary school teachers in their attitude towards inclusive education.
2. There is no significant difference between male and female elementary school teachers in their attitude towards inclusive education.
3. There is no significant difference between the young aged and middle aged elementary school teachers in their attitude towards inclusive education.
4. There is no significant difference between the young aged and old aged elementary school teachers in their attitude towards inclusive education.
5. There is no significant difference between the middle aged and old aged elementary school teachers in their attitude towards inclusive education.

SAMPLE

The sample consists of 430 teachers from 125 Government elementary school. The teachers were selected from 4 districts of Mizoram, namely, Aizawl, Lunglei, Champhai and Kolasib.

TOOL FOR DATA COLLECTION

The attitude scale towards inclusive education, developed by the investigator was used for data collection. The attitude scale consists of 26 items. Of which, 14 items are negative statements and 12 items are positive statements. The scale is constructed following Likert’s five point scale and the maximum possible score is 130 while the minimum possible score is 26. The criterion related validity of the scale is 0.78 (coefficient correlation). The reliability of the test was 0.82 (split-half) and 0.83 (test-retest).

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The analysis and interpretation is done according to the objectives as follows:

Objective No. 1: To study the attitude of elementary school teachers towards Inclusive education.

Using the attitude scale developed by the investigator, the attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education was studied. The following table shows the scores obtained by the respondents in the attitude scale towards inclusive education.

Table 1
Attitude of elementary school teachers towards Inclusive Education with respect to overall, gender and locale.

Respondents	Highly Positive	Positive	Moderate	Negative	Highly Negative
Overall (N=430)	42 (9.77%)	129 (30%)	94 (21.86%)	120 (27.91%)	45 (10.47%)
Male (N=188)	16 (8.51%)	57 (30.32%)	46 (24.47%)	50 (26.6%)	19 (10.11%)
Female (N=242)	26 (10.74%)	72 (29.75%)	48 (19.83%)	70 (28.93%)	26 (10.74%)
Rural (N=186)	24 (12.9%)	58 (31.18%)	32 (17.2%)	57 (30.65%)	15 (8.06%)
Urban (N=244)	18 (7.38%)	71 (29.1%)	62 (25.41%)	63 (25.82%)	30 (12.3%)

As shown in the above table no. 1, out of all the 430 respondents, 42 i.e. 9.77% have highly positive attitude, 129 (30%) have positive attitude towards inclusive education. At the same time, there were 94 (21.86%) respondents with moderate attitude towards inclusive education. While 120 (27.91%) respondents have negative attitude, 45 (10.47%) possessed highly negative attitude towards inclusive education.

Among the 188 male respondents, 16 (8.51%) have highly positive attitude towards inclusive education. At the same time, 57 (30.32%) have positive attitude towards inclusive education. There were 46 (24.47%) respondents with moderate attitude. 50 (26.6%) male respondents have negative attitude towards inclusive education and 19 (10.11%) have highly negative attitude towards inclusive education.

Out of 242 female respondents, 26 (10.74%) have highly positive attitude and 72 (29.75%) have positive attitude towards inclusive education. 48 (19.83%) of the female respondents possessed moderate attitude towards inclusive education. On the other hand, there were 70 (28.93%) females who have negative attitude and the rest 26 (10.74%) female respondents have highly negative attitude towards inclusive education.

Among the 186 rural respondents, 24 (12.9%) possessed highly positive attitude towards inclusive education and 58 (31.18%) have positive attitude. 32 (17.2%) have moderate attitude towards inclusive education. Meanwhile, there were 57 (30.65%) rural respondents who possessed negative attitude and 15 (8.06%) respondents have highly negative attitude towards inclusive education.

Out of 244 urban respondents, 18 (7.38%) have highly positive attitude towards inclusive education. 71 (29.1%) have positive attitude towards inclusive education. There were 62 (25.41%) respondents with moderate attitude and 63 (25.82%) have negative attitude. There were 30 (12.3%) urban respondents with highly negative attitude towards inclusive education.

It can be concluded from table no. 1 that among the overall respondents, the amount of teachers with positive attitude are more in numbers than teachers with negative attitude towards inclusive education. Similarly, among male, female and rural teachers more teachers have positive attitude than negative attitude towards inclusive education. However, among the urban teachers there are more teachers who have negative attitude rather than positive towards inclusive education.

Objective No.2: To compare the attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education with reference to their locale.

To compare the attitude of rural and urban teachers towards Inclusive Education, the mean and standard deviation of the two groups were calculated separately. The mean difference of rural and urban teachers was tested by applying t-test and the details are presented in the following.

Hypothesis no. 1. There is no significant difference between rural and urban elementary school teachers in their attitude towards inclusive education.

The following table no. 2 shows the comparison of the attitude of rural and urban elementary school teacher towards inclusive education.

**Table 2
Comparison of rural and urban elementary school teacher with respect to their attitude towards Inclusive Education**

Group	N	Mean	SD	SED	t-value	Sig. Level
Rural	186	87.94	10.03	0.95	1.97	0.05
Urban	244	86.07	9.45			

The data depicted in the above table no. 2 reveals that the calculated value of ‘t’ is greater than the critical value of ‘t’ with the degrees of freedom (df) 428 at 0.05 level. This indicates that there is a significant difference between the attitude of rural and urban teachers towards inclusive education. Therefore, the null hypothesis “There is no significant difference between rural and urban elementary teachers in their attitude towards inclusive education is rejected at 0.05 confidence level. A look at the mean score of both the groups indicated that the difference is in favour of rural teachers. This means that the rural teachers have a more positive attitude towards inclusive education than the urban teachers.

Objective No. 3. To compare the attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education with reference to their gender.

To compare the attitude of male and female teachers towards Inclusive Education, the mean and standard deviation of both the groups were calculated separately. The mean difference of male and female teacher was tested by applying t-test and the details are presented in the following.

Hypothesis no. 2. There is no significant difference between male and female elementary school teachers in their attitude towards inclusive education.

The following table no. 3 shows the comparison of the attitude of male and female elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.

**Table 3
Comparison of male and female elementary school teachers with respect to their attitude towards Inclusive Education**

Group	N	Mean	SD	SEM	t-value	Sig. Level
Male	188	87.23	9.397	0.884	0.704	Not significant
Female	242	86.61	10.01			

A perusal of the above table no. 3 reveals that the difference between male and female teachers attitude towards inclusive education is not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis “There is no significant difference between male and female elementary teachers in their attitude towards inclusive education.” is accepted.

Objective No. 4: To compare the attitude of elementary school teachers towards Inclusive Education with reference to their age

Comparison of attitude towards inclusive education among elementary teachers was also done with reference to their age.

Classification of age group: To compare the attitude of teachers towards Inclusive Education by age, the investigator classified the teachers into three age groups viz. Young aged (34 and below), Middle aged (35 – 47) and Old Aged (48 and above). Taking 22 years and 60 years as the lowest and highest possible age range respectively, the investigator categorized the lowest 30% (34 and below) as Young aged teachers, the middle 40% (35-47) as Middle aged and the highest 30% (48 and above) as Old aged teacher. For comparison, the mean and standard deviation of the three age groups were calculated and the mean difference were tested by applying ‘t’ test.

Comparison of the attitude of young aged and middle aged elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.

Hypothesis no. 3. There is no significant difference between the young aged and middle aged elementary school teachers in their attitude towards inclusive education.

The following table no. 4 shows the comparison of the attitude of young aged and middle aged elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.

Table 4

Comparison of the attitude of Young aged and Middle aged elementary school teachers towards Inclusive Education

Category	N	Mean	SD	SEM	t-value	Sig. Level
Young aged teachers	126	86.75	11.04	1.21	.08	Not Significant
Middle aged teachers	183	86.85	9.72			

A comparison of the attitude of young aged and middle aged elementary school teachers towards inclusive education as depicted in the above table no. 4 shows that there exist no significant difference between the two groups. Therefore, the null hypothesis “There is no significant difference between the young aged and middle aged teachers in their attitude towards inclusive education” is accepted.

Comparison of the attitude of young aged and old aged elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.

Hypothesis no. 4. There is no significant difference between the young aged and old aged elementary school teachers in their attitude towards inclusive education.

The following table no. 5 shows the comparison of the attitude of young aged and old aged elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.

Table 5

Comparison of the attitude of Young aged and Old aged elementary school teachers towards Inclusive Education

Category	N	Mean	SD	SEM	t-value	Sig. Level
Young aged teachers	126	86.75	11.04	1.24	.27	Not Significant
Old aged teachers	121	87.08	8.3			

The details shown in table no. 5 indicated that the comparison of the attitude of young aged and middle aged teachers towards inclusive education is not significant. Hence, the null hypothesis “There is no significant difference between the young aged and old aged teachers in their attitude towards inclusive education” is accepted.

Comparison of the attitude of middle aged and old aged elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.

Hypothesis no. 5. There is no significant difference between the middle aged and old aged elementary school teachers in their attitude towards inclusive education.

The following table no. 6 shows the comparison of the attitude of middle aged and old aged elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.

Table 6

Comparison of the attitude of Young aged and Old aged elementary school teachers towards Inclusive Education

Category	N	Mean	SD	SEM	t-value	Sig. Level
Middle aged teachers	183	86.85	9.72	1.04	.23	Not Significant
Old aged teachers	121	87.08	8.3			

A perusal of the comparison of the attitude of middle aged and old aged elementary school teachers towards inclusive education shown in table no. 6 reveals that there exist no significant difference between the two groups. This means that the null hypothesis “There is no significant difference between the middle aged and old aged teachers in their attitude towards inclusive education” is accepted.

CONCLUSION

Though teachers with positive attitude towards inclusive education were more in numbers as compared to those teachers with moderate and negative attitude towards teachers in Mizoram. It is important to know that it is quite low in terms of percentage and this is a serious issue that needs to be addressed as it can be a serious threat for successful implementation of Inclusive education. Since attitude of

teachers played a very significant role in successful implementation of inclusive education, there is urgent need of training and sensitization program for teachers in the field of inclusive education.

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