

ATTITUDE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The research undertaken attempted to study the concept of inclusive education and the attitude of secondary school teachers towards inclusive education with respect to gender and locale. A sample of 200 teachers was selected using random sampling technique. Self-made questionnaire was used to collect data. It was found that there is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female teachers but there was significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education on the basis of school's location.

Key Words: Attitude, Inclusive Education and Gender.

INTRODUCTION:

One of the greatest problems the world is facing today is the growing number of persons who are excluded from the meaningful partnership and economic, social, political and cultural life of the communities. Such a society is neither sufficient nor safe. Inclusive education is a stepping stone towards building an inclusive society and it is a process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all children, youth and adults to increasing participation in learning cultures and communities and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. "Inclusive education seeks to address the learning needs of all children with special focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion"(UNESCO, 2003). It implies all learners with or without disabilities being able to learn together through access to common pre-school provisions, school and community education setting with an appropriate network of support services.

Inclusive education means that schools should accommodate all children regardless of the physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from linguistic, ethnic or

cultural management minorities and children from other advantaged or marginalized areas or groups (Dakar World Education Forum, 2000).

Inclusive education differs from previously held notions of integration and mainstreaming which tended to be concerned principally with disability and 'special education needs' and implied learners changing and becoming 'ready for' deserving of accommodation by the mainstream. By contrast, inclusion is about the child's right to participate and school's duty to accept the child. Inclusion rejects the use of special schools or classrooms to separate students with disabilities from students without disabilities. A premium is placed upon full participation by the students with disabilities and upon respect for their social, civil and educational rights. Inclusion gives students with disabilities skills they can use in and out of the classroom.

Inclusion requires changes in how teachers teach as well as changes in how students with or without special needs interact with and relate to one another. Inclusive education practices frequently rely on active learning, authentic assessment practices, applied curriculum, multilevel instructional approaches and increased attention to diverse students needs and individualization. Inclusive education is based on the belief that people work in inclusive communities with people of different races, religion, aspirations and disabilities. In the same vein, children of all ages should learn and grow in environment that they will eventually work. It justifies the dictum, "children who learn together, learn to live together".

Lately a number of initiatives (RCI Act, 1992; PWD Act, 1995; SSA, 2002; IECYD, 2005) have been taken in India to establish and promote inclusive education. All these programs remain meaningless if administrators, teachers and members of the community do not have positive attitude towards inclusive education.

Webster's dictionary defines attitude as a hypothetical construct that represents an individual's degree of like or dislike for an item. Attitude is a predisposition or a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person or situation. Attitude influences an individual's choice of action, response to a challenge, incentives and rewards. "A mental and natural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic

influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situation with which it is related". (Allport, 1954). The four major components of attitude are:

Affective: Emotions or feelings

Cognitive: Belief or opinions held consciously

Conative: Inclination for action

Evaluation: Positive or negative response of stimuli.

Success of any program depends upon teachers' attitude. This attitude depends upon various factors and can change with the passage of time. Research has shown varied results regarding teachers' attitude towards inclusive education. Studies by (Bayiss and Burden, 2000; Wishart, 2007; Elliott, 2008; Combs et al., 2010; Macfarlane and Woolfson, 2013) reported positive attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education. Studies by (Etenesh, 2000; Mostert et al., 2002; Coutsocostas and Alborz, 2010; Boer and Piji, 2011) reported negative attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education. A majority of studies focused on conditions and factors which affected attitudes or brought a change in attitudes (Smith and Mary, 1995; Eavramids & Brahmnorwich, 2002; Sakeena, 2004; Crishna, 2008; Johnstone and Chapman, 2009; Angelides and Avreemidou, 2010). Therefore the investigator thought of investigating the kind of attitude teachers have towards inclusive education.

The study undertaken attempted to achieve the following objectives:

1. To study the concept of inclusive education
2. To study the attitude of secondary school teachers towards inclusive education
3. To compare the attitude of male and female secondary school teachers towards inclusive education
4. To compare the attitude of rural and urban secondary school teachers towards inclusive education.

In accordance with the above objectives the hypotheses framed were:

1. Secondary school teachers have positive attitude towards inclusive education.
2. There is no significant difference between male and female secondary school teachers' attitude towards inclusive education
3. There is no significant difference between rural and urban secondary school teachers' attitude towards inclusive education

The study was descriptive in nature. A sample of 200 government secondary school teachers was drawn from 16 schools of Jalandhar district, Punjab. Self constructed questionnaire was used for collecting data. The questionnaire consisted of 40 statements based on various aspects like concept, admission, infrastructure, support, facilities, government policies, sufficient time, problems faced by teachers and financial aspects.

It was found that secondary school teachers have favourable attitude towards inclusive education. Therefore the first hypothesis was accepted.

Table 1: Showing Mean Scores, S.D., t-Ratio on Attitude of Secondary School Male and Female Teachers Towards Inclusive Education

Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	S.ED	T
Male	100	57.41	8.032	1.083	0.415
Female	100	56.96	7.260		

Fig 1: Graphic Representation of Attitude of Male and Female Secondary School Teachers Towards Inclusive Education

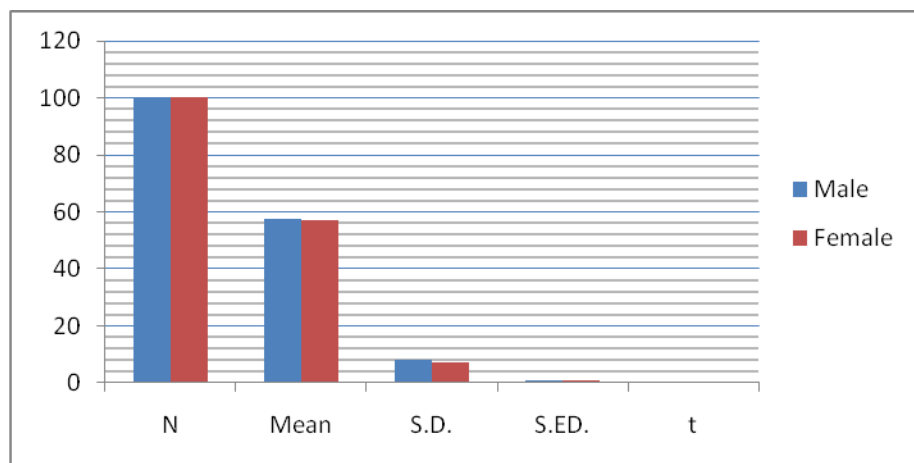


Table 1 and corresponding figure 1 show that male teachers had mean of 57.41 with S.D. 8.03 whereas female teachers had mean of 56.96 with S.D. 7.26. 't' value calculated was 0.415 which was found to be not significant at 0.05 level of confidence. So there was no significant difference between male and female secondary school teachers with respect their attitude towards inclusive education. Therefore the null hypothesis (H_2) was accepted.

Table 2: Showing Mean Scores, S.D., t-Ratio on Attitude of Rural and Urban Secondary School Teachers Towards Inclusive Education

LOC	N	Mean	S.D.	S.ED	T
Rural	100	59.21	6.379	1.044	3.879
Urban	100	55.16	8.267		

Fig 2: Graphic Representation of Attitude of Rural and Urban Secondary School Teachers Towards Inclusive Education

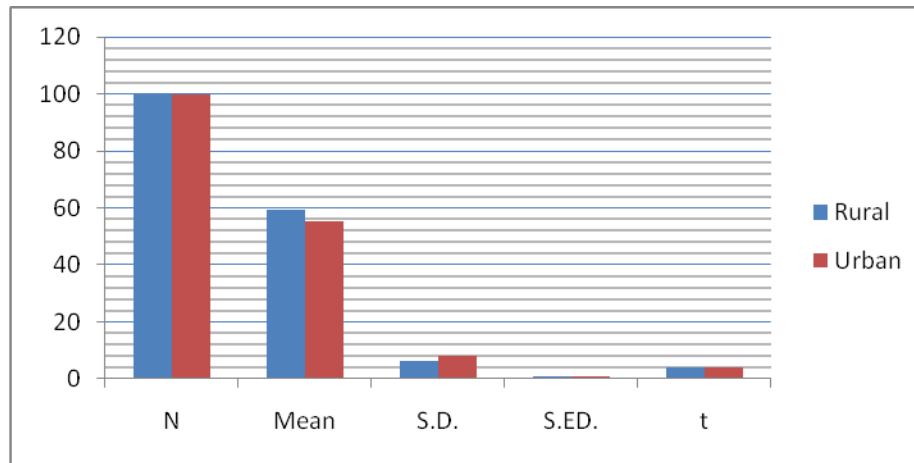


Table 2 and corresponding figure 2 show that rural teachers had mean of 59.1 with S.D. 6.379 whereas urban teachers had mean of 55.16 with SD of 8.267. 't' value calculated was 3.879 which was found to be significant at 0.05 level of confidence. So it was concluded that there was significant difference between rural and urban secondary school teachers with respect to their attitude towards inclusive education. Therefore the third null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between rural and urban secondary school teachers attitude towards inclusive education was rejected.

To conclude we can say that inclusive education should be reconceptualized as a school quality issue then only it can bring a significant educational change. The practitioners and policymakers need to design programs to intervene negative attitude and to control factors contributing towards negative attitudes. Above all, government policies should be strict regarding the successful implementation of inclusive education.

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