

Attitude of Secondary School Administrators and Teachers of Himachal Pradesh towards Inclusive Education

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Abstract

In the present paper, an attempt has been made to find out the attitude of school administrators and teachers in secondary schools of Himachal Pradesh towards inclusive education. Inclusive education is an approach that promotes human development by valuing diversity as an essential component of the teaching and learning process. The idea behind inclusive education is to place students with special needs in the same classroom as other students of their age, who do not have special needs. Children with special needs learn more in regular classroom settings if they receive the necessary assistance and support in and out of the classroom. It is regarded as a novel strategy for educating children with special needs along with children who are normal under the same roof with the aim to meet the educational needs of all. Inclusive education shifts the responsibility for adaptation from the individual student to the educational system. In order to study the attitude of school administrators and teachers towards inclusive education, two districts of Himachal Pradesh i.e. Shimla and Kangra were selected as more CWSNs were enrolled in these two districts during the session 2019-20. All the school administrators and teachers constituted the population of the study but in the present study, 48 school administrators and 144 teachers were considered in the sample. The descriptive survey method was used by the researcher as it best suited the nature and objectives of the study. The findings of the study revealed that both female school administrators and teachers have favorable attitude towards inclusive education as compared to male administrators and teachers.

Key words: Attitude, Secondary school, School Administrators, Teachers and Inclusive Education



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INTRODUCTION: Everyone, regardless of disability, has the right to education. The motive behind education is not only to provide certificates but also to provide the quality

education required for survival in society. The child has to adjust not only to the demands of the school environment but also to the fact that the school has to provide facilities according to the individual differences of the students. The Salamanca Declaration advocates that all children, irrespective of their physical, social, emotional, intellectual, linguistic, or other variability, should be accommodated in inclusive settings. "Children with disabilities and giftedness, those living on the streets and in the workforce, those from nomadic or distant communities, those from linguistic, ethnic, or cultural minorities, and those from other underprivileged or marginalised locations or groups should be considered." (UNESCO, 1994, Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, p. 6). The Planning Commission of India incorporated a programme of integrated education into its plan when the benefits of enrolling children with disabilities in regular schools were becoming more widely recognized. The Government of India launched the Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) initiative in 1974. The main aim of this initiative was to provide education to children with special needs (CWSN) in normal schools. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was started by the Union government in the year 2001 to achieve the Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in the country. All children between the ages of 6 and 14 should have access to UEE and must enroll in it. One of the salient features of this Abhiyan was the zero-rejection policy to guarantee every child receives a basic education. A National Action Plan for the Inclusion of Children and Youth with Disabilities in Education was implemented by the HRD Ministry in 2005 and was renamed as "Inclusive Education of the Disabled at the Secondary Stage" in the year 2009–10 with an aim to provide inclusive education to disabled children in the 9th and 10th grades. This initiative has been a part of the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) since 2013. The Education 2030 Framework for Action adopted by the global education community emphasizes the importance of addressing all forms of exclusion and marginalization. It specifically calls for efforts to enable education systems to serve all learners, with a focus on those who have traditionally been excluded from educational opportunities, such as students from low-income families, ethnic and linguistic minorities, indigenous people, and people with disabilities (UNESCO, 2017, p. 12).

CONCEPT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The term Inclusive Education refers to education of all children without discrimination of attainment, gender or disability into the regular school. It is based on the principles of equalization of educational opportunity and responds to the diversity of children's needs and abilities including differences in their ways and pace of learning. It is an

education system where schools become centers which prepare children for life and ensure that all children, especially the differently-abled, children from marginalized sections and children from different circumstances get the maximum benefit of critical area of education. Inclusive education is that approach which aims at providing education to all children in normal education setup. It is child-centered and places the responsibility of adaptation on the education system rather than on the individual child. The aim of an inclusive education environment is to ensure that all students are treated fairly and get equal opportunities. It is a dynamic process because it addresses all aspects of child development - emotional, intellectual, creative physical, social etc. It is about respecting diversity and transforming the rigid school system in order to fulfill the requirements of all children and promotes social equality. The Human Resource Ministry prepared a draft scheme on inclusive education in 2003, which defined inclusive education as "all students and young people, including those with and without disabilities, can learn together in traditional pre-school settings, schools, and community educational settings with the proper network of support services." (Draft of Inclusive Education Scheme, Ministry of Human Resource Development, MHRD, 2003).

CHARACTERISTICS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The following are the characteristics of inclusive education:

- Inclusive education accepts the fact that all students are valuable and deserve the same quality of education.
- Every child is entitled to education. Inclusive education recognizes student rights and strives to provide quality education to all students.
- Inclusive education advocates for the removal of social and cultural barriers and teaches students to embrace diversity and respect one another by bringing children from various backgrounds and abilities under one roof.
- It ensures that children with varying levels of ability can learn and develop in the same way as other children by creating the least restrictive learning environment.
- Inclusive education promotes student participation through student-centered activities in which every child has the opportunity to participate and feel included.
- In inclusive education, instruction is designed and delivered to accommodate students of varying abilities and of course, extensive preparation is required by the school for inclusive settings.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Cook et al. (2000) conducted a study to investigate teachers' attitudes toward students with disabilities. Seventy general education teachers from inclusive elementary classrooms selected three of their students to respond to prompts corresponding to the attitudinal categories of attachment, concern, indifference, and rejection. Chi-square analysis revealed that included students with disabilities were significantly underrepresented in the attachment category and significantly overrepresented in the concern and rejection categories, which was consistent with predictions based on a theory of instructional tolerance. More experience teaching in inclusive classes was also associated with higher rates of concern nominations for included students with disabilities.

Khochen and Radford (2012) conducted a study titled "Attitudes of teachers and head teachers towards inclusion in Lebanon" and discovered that students with disabilities in mainstream schools have positive attitudes towards inclusion. However, participants expressed reservations about including all students, particularly those with social, emotional and behavioral difficulties. Other challenges include limited training, availability of qualified specialist teachers and the high cost of supporting inclusion.

Galaterou and Antoniou (2017) investigated teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in relation to demographics (gender and age), and occupational stress levels. The study included 208 primary and secondary school teachers from five Greek prefectures who worked in urban and sub-urban areas. Two scales were used to collect data and Independent variables included teachers' gender, age, and occupational stress. Teachers had marginally positive attitudes toward inclusion that were related to their age. Younger teachers, in particular, expressed more positive attitudes than their older colleagues. However, no distinctions were found between men and women.

Halder (2021) carried out a study to investigate teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in West Bengal and the factors that influenced those attitudes. All general education and special education teachers were surveyed using qualitative research. Fifty teachers from five schools constituted the sample of the study. The findings of the study indicated that 20% of teachers had the most positive attitudes towards inclusive education. 40% had above-average attitudes, 22% had moderate attitudes, 16% had below-average unfavourable attitudes, and only 2% of teachers had the most unfavourable attitude towards inclusive education.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The physical presence of children with special needs in the classroom (physical integration) does not by itself ensure a child's progress and development unless functional and social integration are also provided. Early school experiences create a foundation from which children's views of their own academic abilities are built. As young school children go to school, they are exposed to many situations that help to shape their personal beliefs about their academic abilities. These beliefs, in turn, help to shape their ideas of their abilities to succeed in school. The more positive the early experiences in academic life are, the more likely students will have the confidence and self-esteem to be successful.

As per the census of 2011 census, there are 1,55316 disabled persons in the state of Himachal Pradesh, including 26,076 who are visually impaired, 26,700 who are hearing impaired, 32,500 with ortho-disabilities, 18,536 with multiple disabilities, and 8,986 who are mentally challenged. It indicates that the state has the most ortho-disabled people but the fewest mentally challenged people. The attitude of personnel involved in any scheme/programme decides its future direction. The roles and attitudes of school heads and teachers are central in order to achieve the objectives of inclusive education programme. The present study will contribute in knowledge and help to know about the attitudes of school administrators and teachers who will decide its success in reality. The findings of the study will help the policy makers and government officials to organize training programmes that disseminate awareness about inclusive education and so far help to change the attitudes of stakeholders.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the present study are:

1. To study the difference in attitude of secondary school administrators towards inclusive education with reference to gender.
2. To study the difference in attitude of secondary school teachers towards inclusive education with reference to gender.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The following hypotheses are framed with regard to the objectives of the study:

H₀₁. There exists no significant difference in the attitude of male and female school administrators towards inclusive education.

H₀₂. There exists no significant difference in the attitude of male and female secondary school teachers towards inclusive education.

METHOD

In the present study, the descriptive survey method was used by the researcher as it best suited the nature and objectives of the study. This study intended to study the attitude of school administrators and teachers towards the inclusive education in the state of Himachal Pradesh. The researcher conducted the study in two districts, i.e., Shimla and Kangra, of Himachal Pradesh, to investigate the attitude of school administrators and teachers towards inclusive education.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

In this study, all government secondary schools (Government High Schools and Government Senior Secondary Schools) affiliated to H.P. Board of School Education, Dharamshala where children with special needs were enrolled, all school administrators and teachers of those schools constituted the population of the study. The study sample consisted of 48 school administrators and 144 teachers from Shimla and Kangra districts of Himachal Pradesh.

TOOL USED

In the present study two tools standardized by the researcher were used. The detail of which is as under:

- Attitude Scale for School Administrators named as School Administrators' Attitude Scale towards Inclusive Education (SAASTIE)
- Attitude Scale for Teachers named as Teachers' Attitude Scale towards Inclusive Education (TASTIE)

DATA COLLECTION

The researcher administrated two tools i.e. one to school administrators and second to teachers of government secondary schools in districts Shimla and Kangra of Himachal Pradesh. For the data collection, the researcher personally visited the high and senior secondary schools in both districts. The researcher personally contacted the school heads and teachers of each sampled school and sought their full cooperation in this endeavour. The purpose of the study was explained to them prior to the administration of tools. They were told that the information provided by them would be kept confidential and would have no impact on their careers.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

After the collection of data, scoring was done as per the set pattern of the tools and scores were arranged in ascending order. In order to analyze the data, to find out the attitude of

school administrators and teachers towards inclusive education ‘t-test’ was employed. The description of which is given as under:

1. Attitude of Male and Female School Administrators towards Inclusive Education

Table 1- (Gender-wise differences in Attitude of School Administrators towards Inclusive Education)

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	SE _D	df	t-value	Significance
Attitude towards Inclusive Education	Male	56	71.37	4.34	0.77	94	2.77	**
	Female	40	73.50	3.20				

*NS = Not Significant at .05 level, ** = Significant at .01 level, * = Significant at .05 level*

Df = $N_1 + N_2 - 2(56 + 40 - 2 = 94)$ and t- values at df 94 are $t_{.05} = 1.99$, $t_{.01} = 2.63$

It is evident from table-1 that t-value for attitude towards inclusive education on attitude scale for male and female secondary school administrators has come out to be 2.77 for df 94, which is greater than the table value 2.63 at 0.01 level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis ‘There exists no significant difference in the attitude of male and female secondary school administrators towards inclusive education’ is not accepted. It is clear from the table that male school administrators have mean score and standard deviation (S.D.) as 71.37 and 4.34 respectively, whereas female school administrators have mean score and standard deviation (S.D.) as 73.50 and 3.20. Since the mean score of attitude of female school administrators is higher than male school administrators, it may be inferred that female school administrators exhibit slightly more positive attitude towards inclusive education as compared to male administrators.

2. Attitude of Male and Female Teachers towards Inclusive Education

Table 2 - Gender- wise differences in Attitude of School Teachers towards Inclusive Education

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	SE _D	df	t-value	Significance
Attitude towards Inclusive Education	Male	93	75.98	5.42	0.68	286	4.93	**
	Female	195	79.33	5.17				

*NS = Not Significant at .05 level, ** = Significant at .01 level, * = Significant at .05 level*

Df = $N_1 + N_2 - 2(93 + 195 - 2 = 286)$ and t- values at df 286 are $t_{.05} = 1.97$, $t_{.01} = 2.59$

Table-2 reveals that t-value for attitude towards inclusive education on attitude scale for male and female secondary school teachers has come out to be 4.93 for df 286, which is greater than the table value 2.59 at 0.01 level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis ‘There exists no significant difference in the attitude of male and female secondary school teachers towards inclusive education’ is not accepted. It indicates that male and female secondary school teachers differ significantly with respect to their mean scores on attitude scale. As it is evident from the table that male secondary school teachers have mean score and standard

deviation (S.D.) as 75.98 and 5.42 respectively, whereas female teachers have mean score and standard deviation (S.D.) as 79.33 and 5.17 respectively. Since the mean score of attitude of female secondary school teachers (79.33) is higher as compared to male secondary school teachers (75.98), it may be inferred that female teachers have shown positive attitude towards inclusive education as compared to male teachers.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study are as under:

- School administrators differed significantly in their attitudes towards inclusive education on the basis of gender at 0.01 level of significance. As the mean of female school administrators was higher than male administrators, it leads us to conclude that female school administrators in districts Shimla and Kangra have shown more favorable attitude towards inclusive education in comparison to male administrators.
- Teachers differed significantly in their attitudes towards inclusive education on the basis of gender at 0.01 significance level, since the mean score of female teachers was higher than that of male teachers, we can infer that female teachers in districts Shimla and Kangra have shown more favourable attitude towards inclusive education as compared to male teachers.

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