

Attitude of Prospective Teachers towards Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities In Relation To Gender and Academic Stream

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to investigate the attitude of prospective teachers towards inclusive education in relation to gender and academic stream. The respondents were teacher trainees of district Mohali of Punjab. A sample of 100 B.Ed students (N=50 boys and 50 girls) by employing simple random sampling. Descriptive survey method was employed; attitude towards inclusive education scale was used, Analysis of Variance and for the significant F-ratio, the t-test was used for testing the significance of difference between the mean scores different groups on variables under study. The study revealed that (a) There exists significant differences in attitude of prospective teachers towards the concept of inclusive education for children with disabilities with respect to gender (b) There exists no significant differences in attitude of prospective teachers towards the concept of inclusive education for children with disabilities with respect to academic stream and (c) There exists no significant differences in attitude of prospective teachers towards the concept of inclusive education for children with disabilities with respect to interaction effect of academic stream and gender.

Keywords: *Inclusive Education, Prospective Teachers, Gender, Academic Stream*

Inclusive education is a pairing of philosophy and pedagogical practices that allow each student to feel respected, confident and safe so he or she can learn and develop to his or her full potential. It is based on a system of values and beliefs centered on the best interests of the student, which promotes social cohesion, belonging, active participation in learning, a complete school experience, and positive interactions with peers and others in the school community. These values and beliefs will be shared by schools and communities. Inclusive education is put into practice within school communities that value diversity and nurture the well-being and quality of learning of each of their members. Inclusive education is carried out through a range of public and community programs and services available to all students. Globally, children with disabilities count for one-third of all children out-of-school. In

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developing countries, the numbers are even more staggering, with 90% of all children with disabilities out-of-school. Although it is imperative that children with disabilities receive an education, it is also being recognized by bodies around the world that the type of education that children with disabilities receive is just as important. Inclusive education means "that students with disabilities are served primarily in the general education settings, under the responsibility of a regular classroom teacher. When necessary and justifiable, students with disabilities may also receive some of their instruction in another setting, such as a resource room" (Mastropieri and Scruggs, 2004).

Inclusive Education and Teacher Attitude

All areas of education have changed during the past decades, with major changes to the role of teachers, together with the introduction of new approaches to the curriculum and assessment. In addition, the legislation has seen changes in how difficulties in learning are conceptualized from special educational needs to additional support for learning. These changes have involved the development of new understandings about the interactive nature of children's needs and a shift in focus from 'what is wrong with the child?' to 'what does the child need to support their learning?' Such developments have substantially affected the professional identity as well as the roles and responsibilities of many teachers. It also has implications for how teachers are trained and supported in their professional development.

Teachers are crucial in determining what happens in classrooms and there are those who would argue that the development of more inclusive classrooms requires teachers to cater for different student learning needs through the modification or differentiation of the curriculum (Forlin, 2004). Most mainstream teachers do not believe that they have the skills and knowledge to do this kind of work and that there is an army of 'experts' out there to deal with these students on a one-to-one basis or in small more manageable groups.

Sharma, Ee, and Desai (2003) indicated that Australian pre-service teachers were more in favour of including students with disabilities into the regular school compared to their Singaporean counterparts. Lambe and Bones (2006) found that attitudes of pre-service teachers towards the philosophy of inclusive education were generally positive, with more than 80% of participants believing that all teachers should experience teaching children with special education needs. Kalyva, E. Gojkovic, D, and Tsakiris, V. (2007) found that Serbian teachers held overall slightly negative attitudes towards the inclusion of children with SEN, with teachers with experience in teaching children with SEN holding more positive attitudes towards inclusion in comparison to teachers without such experience. No differences were observed in teachers' attitudes towards inclusion according to their years of teaching experience. Malinen and Savolainen (2008) revealed that students majoring in behavioural science (psychology, special education, education or early childhood education) had the most negative general attitude towards inclusive education, while the attitudes of students majoring in social sciences were most positive. Avarmidis, Bayliss and Burden (2009) revealed that students completing their teacher training course at university school of education had

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positive attitude towards general concept of inclusion but their perceived competence dropped significantly according to the severity of children's needs. Zyoudi, Sartwai and Dodin (2011) indicated that there were no significant differences due to gender. The study suggested that most in most instances pre-service teachers have more positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and inclusion, when they have had additional training and knowledge with people with disabilities. McKay (2012) suggested that there were no differences in Belize District teachers attitudes toward inclusive education as related to experience of contact, gender, ethnicity, age and educational qualification. Costello and Boyle (2013) revealed 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. Galovića, D. Brojčinb, B. and Glumbić, N.(2014) established the correlation between these attitudes and gender, education level, teaching experience, formal training in the special education field, and the duration and quality of work experience with children with special education needs. Varcoe and Boyle (2014) revealed that overall, studying an elective unit on inclusive education had a positive influence over pre-service teachers' attitudes. It was found that teaching experience had a significantly negative impact on pre-service teachers' attitudes

Justification of Study

An inclusive philosophy and related practices are not currently part of teacher education programs designed to prepare general education pre-service teachers in India. Given the Ministry of Education's plans related to inclusion, these future teachers will likely face diverse classrooms that many have not experienced in their own schooling. Based on the assumption that teachers' attitudes toward inclusion can have a significant impact on the success of educational policies, and the fact that inclusive studies and practices in the Indian context are almost evolving, the purpose of this study is to examine pre-service teachers' attitudes toward including students with disabilities in general education classrooms in India.

Objectives

1. To find out the attitude of prospective teachers towards inclusive education for children with disabilities.
2. To find out the significant differences among prospective teachers attitude towards inclusive education for children with disabilities in relation to gender, and academic stream.

Hypotheses

- H₁O There exists no significant differences in attitude of prospective teachers towards concept of inclusive education for children with disabilities with respect to :
- i. Academic stream
 - ii. Gender

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H₂O There exists no significant differences in attitude of prospective teachers towards the concept of inclusive education for children with disabilities with respect to interaction effect of academic qualification and gender.

METHODOLOGY

The objective of the study was to investigate to investigate the attitude of prospective teachers towards inclusive education in relation to gender and academic stream. So, descriptive survey method was employed. In the present study, the researcher has selected a sample of 100 B.Ed students of Punjab by employing sample random sampling. For the collection of data, attitude towards inclusive education scale was used. Data was analyzed by using ANOVA.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 : Summary of Analysis of Variance on Attitude Towards Inclusive Education

Dependent Variable	Source of Variation	Sum of Square	df	Mean of Sum of Square	F-ratio
Attitude towards inclusive education	Academic Stream (A)	4.01	1	4.01	0.17
	Gender (B)	82.01	1	82.01	3.65*
	A x B	43.51	1	43.51	1.93
	Error Term	2159.04	96	22.49	

Main Effect

ACADEMIC STREAM (A)

It may be seen from the table 4.1 that F-ratio for difference in mean attitude scores is 0.17, which was found not to be significant even at 0.05 level of significance. This suggested that academic stream effect on attitude towards inclusive education scores was not signified at the specified level. The data could not provide sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis H₁O (i) There exists no significant differences in attitude of prospective teachers towards concept of inclusive education for children with disabilities with respect to academic stream. It may thus be concluded that science and arts teachers do not differ on attitude towards inclusive education.

GENDER (B)

It may be seen from the table 4.1 that F-ratio for difference in mean attitude scores is 3.65, which was found to be significant at 0.05 level of significance. This suggested that gender effect on attitude towards inclusive education scores was signified at the specified level. The data could provide sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis H₁O (ii) There exists no significant differences in attitude of prospective teachers towards the concept of inclusive education for children with disabilities with respect to gender. It may thus be concluded that female teachers (M 36.80) have better attitude towards inclusive education than males (M= 30.28).

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INTERACTION BETWEEN ACADEMIC STREAM AND GENDER ($A \times B$)

It can be observed from the table 1 that the F-ratio for interaction between academic stream and gender is found to be 1.93 which is not significant even at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis H_0 (ii): There exists no significant differences in attitude of prospective teachers towards the concept of inclusive education for children with disabilities with respect to interaction effect of academic stream and gender, stands accepted. It may be concluded that there is no significant difference in the mean scores on attitude towards inclusive education due to interaction effect of academic stream and gender.

CONCLUSIONS

In the present study the researcher aimed to investigate the attitude of prospective teachers towards inclusive education in relation to gender and academic stream

1. There exists significant differences in attitude of prospective teachers towards the concept of inclusive education for children with disabilities with respect to gender.
2. There exists no significant differences in attitude of prospective teachers towards the concept of inclusive education for children with disabilities with respect to academic stream.
3. There exists no significant differences in attitude of prospective teachers towards the concept of inclusive education for children with disabilities with respect to interaction effect of academic stream and gender

Educational Implications

The findings of present study has following educational implications

- 1) Help the curriculum framers to rethink on revising teacher education curriculum to include strategies for developing positive attitude in prospective teachers towards inclusive education.
- 2) Will help the teachers realize their role and importance in the success of inclusive education programmes.
- 3) Help the teacher realize the importance think, plan and implement intervention.

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