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## Teacher's attitude towards inclusive education: A literature review

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### Abstract

Teachers are the key persons to implement the inclusive education in our society. In various studies researchers have argued how positive attitudes of teacher influence the concept of inclusion and inclusive education. This study is conducted to investigate teacher's attitude towards inclusive education, variables related to their attitude and if social participation of students with special needs in mainstream schools get influenced by these variables. A review of 31 literature that involve 2213 teacher's, revealed that the majority of teachers hold positive attitude towards inclusive education. Although their attitude towards the inclusive education is positive in terms of disability type (e.g. orthopaedically impaired, visually impaired, hearing impaired, gifted or creative and deprived children.). Some studies also reported negative or neutral attitude towards inclusion. No studies reported clear or complete positive attitude in their findings. Different definitions of the term 'attitude' can be found among the selected studies. The implication of teacher's attitude towards inclusive education has been discussed.

**Keywords:** Teacher's attitude, inclusion, inclusive education, special educational needs, mainstreaming school, student with disabilities

### Introductions

After the UNESCO Salamanca statement 1994, Spain the practice of educating children with all types of disabilities has been a reality in many countries for more than two decades. These positive changes to keep pupils with disabilities in mainstream educational setting instead of referring them to special schools is described appropriately with the term "inclusion". Education system across the world has changed drastically in the last few decades as different stakeholders of education system across the world expressing positive attitude towards the education of children with special needs.

However after so many years of implementation still a lots of challenges are there for example (1) lack of vision and understanding towards inclusive practices (2), An unwillingness to embrace a philosophical views towards inclusion or rigidity to stick into the existing education practice, (3), Limited investment in training and inadequate curriculum of teachers training program causes the absence of skilled teaching personnel, (4), lack of funding as well as materials, equipments, infrastructure, and technology to achieve the desired environment for inclusive classroom, (5), improper planning and government initiatives, (6), attitudes of educators and high level authorities towards inclusion and (7), understanding between the stakeholders. In short Inclusive Education is educating all children with all types of disabilities according to their age appropriate regular classrooms in their neighborhood school with adequate infrastructural facilities, skilled teaching faculty, positive attitude and a collaborative as well as respective school culture.

Inclusion is a change process rather than an event and attitude can be defined simply as like and dislike. With regards inclusive education the term 'attitude' refers to the way how the teachers think of it, how they feel about it and how they behave or act towards it. The positive attitude of teachers towards inclusion leads the concept of an authentic inclusive classroom in a more successful way than it was before.

Many researchers have examined the attitudes of educators towards inclusion; they explored responsible behaviour instead of negative attitude that support the successful inclusion. This paper tries to investigate teacher's attitude towards inclusion, variables which influence their attitude and the effects of teacher's attitude on social participation of the students with special needs.

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## Research question

A review study was set up to investigate

1. Teachers attitude towards inclusion
2. Variables which relate to the attitude
3. The effects of teacher's attitude on the social participation of pupils with special needs

## Method

In order to present a recent and complete overview of empirical studies published in the last 15 years, a systematic and thorough literature review was set up using qualitative method. The procedure used to search for references from various source to select appropriate and necessary studies (top cited, consisted of empirical data and procedure and published between 2006 and 2019) and to analyse the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education.

## Procedure

To search for relevant studies a methodical and comprehensive search was performed using Google Scholar. This academic search engine includes many databases such as Taylor & Francis, ERIC, Elsevier ro.ecu.edu.au, go.gale.com, Researchgate.net, SAGE, pdfs.semanticscholar.org, Wiley online library Cambridge.org, IASSR from where references of this article were collected. Some journals such as IJDS-International Journal of Disability Studies, International Journal of Inclusive Education, Journal of Education and Educational Development, Academicus-International Scientific Journal, Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs - JORSEN, Teaching and Learning, European Physical Education Review-EPER, International Association of Social Science Research-IASSR, SAGE open, Australian Journal of Teacher Education, International Journal of Special Education, Higher Education Studies, European Journal of Special Needs Education, Journal of Behavioral Science were also hand searched for appropriate and relevant research paper to construct this review article.

## Selection of the study

The term 'teachers attitude' was combined each time with the following terms such as inclusive education, inclusion, PWD, children with disability to search and collect the proper, useful and relevant data which resulted more than 350 references from which the following criteria deployed to select the potential and relevant references.

- Published between 2006 to 2019
- Consist of empirical data and method
- Peer reviewed internationally
- Using standardized tools and instrument
- Top cited
- Measuring and related to teachers attitude and perspective towards Inclusive Education
- Published in an international and scientific journal.

From only reading the abstract 96 articles were rejected. After the first filtering 51 remains for further analysis. However some of these articles were rejected because they did not satisfy the selection criteria. This led to a final selection of 29 studies.

## Result and Discussion

### Results 1: Teachers attitude towards inclusion

Numerous studies in several countries revealed various

attitudes of general and special educators towards inclusive education. Some of these studies reported that general educators have positive attitude towards inclusion, such as Ballhysa and Flagler <sup>[4]</sup> in Albania, Lindsay <sup>[6]</sup> historical review, Khan, Hasmi and Khanum <sup>[7]</sup> in Pakistan, Goddard and Evans <sup>[8]</sup> in Australia, Sharma, Shaukat and Furlonger <sup>[9]</sup> in Pakistan, Zoudi <sup>[11]</sup> in Jordan reported a positive attitude although their attitudes were strongly influenced by the nature of severity of the disabling condition of the children, duration of teaching experience and training. Also Costello and Boyle <sup>[13]</sup> recommended a greater emphasis on teachers training program to improve attitudes towards inclusive education across all years of study.

On the other hand multiple studies reported teachers least positive or negative attitude towards the inclusion of children with severe disabilities, such as Su, Gao and Wang <sup>[5]</sup> in China, O'Toole and Burke reported less positive attitude of pre-service teachers attitude towards the inclusion of children with behavioral and emotional difficulties, Bothma, Gravett and Swart <sup>[24]</sup> in Africa reported a strong negative attitude of primary school teachers towards inclusion of children with disabilities in regular class room settings.

By contrast there was a study conducted by Galovic, Brojcin and Glumbic <sup>[25]</sup> reported in general neutral attitude of teachers towards inclusion and more positive expectations regarding the outcomes of inclusion.

Comparative study among countries was conducted by Sharma, Jessie Er and Desai <sup>[10]</sup>. They found that pre service teachers in Australia are more in favour of including students with disabilities into the regular class room settings compared to their Singaporean counterparts another study by Sharma, Forlin, Loreman and Earl <sup>[12]</sup> reported that western countries (Canada and Australia) tended To have more positive sentiments and attitude towards students with special needs and more concern than their Eastern (Hongkong and Singapore) counter parts.

Other studies compared teacher's attitude based on their educational qualifications. Kuini and Mangope <sup>[26]</sup> found significant difference among the five groups (B.Ed. primary, B.Ed. secondary, B.Ed. special education, Graduate diploma, under graduate diploma.

Which shows teacher's attitude towards inclusion varied according to their educational moreover, Su, Gao and Wang reported that academic subject teacher (M=46.18, SD =8.28) produced significantly lower scores than preschool teachers (M=50.62, SD= 4.94) which means preschool teachers are held more positive attitude towards inclusive education.

Sharma, Shaukat and Furlonger <sup>[9]</sup> reported that general B.ed. graduate has significantly more positive attitude (M=3.04) towards inclusion than participants in B.Ed. special education in the other hand M.Ed. special education participants attitudes were significantly more positive (2.76 than the participants in the B.Ed. special education (M=2.44)

There are a few studies revealing attitude components such as for instance a study conducted by Kurniawati, Minnaert, Mangunsong and Ahmed <sup>[27]</sup> revealed that even though teacher had les in favour (cognitive component) they showed eager willingness (Behaviours component) to including pupils with disabilities in general classrooms. Another study conducted by Donna, Jeremy and Kielblock investigate the attitudes based on its component which are cognitive, affective and behavioral. Several authors

mentioned that attitude of teachers towards inclusive education is a significant factor in the implementation of successful inclusive education but unfortunately most of these studies do not clearly define the concept of attitudes on the basis of its component (I.e. cognitive effective and behavioral) also they do not investigate the attitudes based on its component. Consequently it is difficult to analyse the result of the study and make conclusions based on the findings as there were only a few studies which clearly investigate and examined teacher's attitudes towards inclusion based on its components.

## Results 2: Variables related to teacher's 'attitude'

### Educational degree

Regarding educational degree Kuyini and Mangope [26] reported statistical significant difference (at  $p < .05$  level at CIS scores) the 5 groups of B.Ed. secondary, B.Ed. primary, graduate diploma, undergraduate diploma and B.Ed. special education. Another study conducted by Costello and Boyle [13] reported that post graduate teacher's perceives more positive attitude towards inclusive education than under graduate teachers.

### Self-efficacy

Malinen, Savolainen and Xu [29] reported that self-efficacy is a critical and practical component for implementing inclusive education. Another comparative study conducted by Shaikat, Sharma and Furlonger [14] reported that Pakistani pre-service teachers had higher level of perceived teaching efficacy to teach children with disabilities particularly in relation to manage pupils in appropriate behaviour than Australian pre-service teacher. Sharma Shaikat and Furlonger [9] constructed TEIP scale which shows that higher scores on this scale means respondent is relatively more efficacious about teaching students with diverse learning needs inclusive educational setting.

Uttor and willburth [31] reported that Self-efficacy not only had a positive influence on attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education but also it was the sole provable influence on attitudes towards social integration and thereby on the willingness to integrate students with special needs into general schools.

### Training

Heming and Woodcock [8] conduct a content analysis which showed inadequacy of teacher training as a hindrance to successful inclusion as well as lack of teacher's knowledge. Another study conducted by Bradshaw and Mundita [17] reported that trained in special education students are more favourable to Inclusive education than general group. In their research Thaver, Lim and Liau showed how trained in special education and experienced with pupils with disabilities displayed more positive attitude towards inclusion.

On the contrary Sharma Shaikat and furlonger [9] reported that pre-service teachers without training in special education expressed significantly more positive attitude ( $M=2.83$ ) towards educating child with disability than their counterparts who had some ( $M=2.58$ ) or high ( $M=2.83$ ) level of training in special education. Another study reported a positive attitude of pre-service teachers to word inclusive education before and after the training program but training can improve the attitude of teachers in more positive way Tailor and Ringlaben [16].

## Teaching experience

Researcher shows how teaching experience influence the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education. Su Gao and Wang [5] tried to explore if the number of service year can influence the teachers attitude. Anova revealed statistically significant differences between teachers in five service year groups (0-1, 1-5, 6-10, 10-20, and 20<). Further Tukey test indicates that teachers experience between 10 to 20 year group produced lowest average School ( $M=44.31, SD=9.71$ ) which is significantly lower than the teachers whose service time belonged to the 1-5 year group. Another study conducted by Al-Zoudi [11] reported that experience with students with special needs have positive influence on Teachers attitude. The study of Costello and Boyle [13] indicate that pre-service teacher held a positive attitude however a significant decline in positive attitude through the years of study have been noted.

## Gender

Sharma Shaikat and Furlonger [9] found a significant difference in participants attitudes based on gender. Pre service male teachers held significantly more positive attitudes ( $M=2.91$ ) towards including students with disabilities in mainstream schools compared with their female counterparts ( $M=2.73$ ).

On the contrary in his study Al-Zoudi [11] reported a little difference between the opinions of female and male teachers, where female teachers were more positive than their male counterparts. Al Mahdi and Bukamal [19] also reported that female respondents attitudes are more positive than their male counterparts.

## Student's differentiation and types of disabilities

Su, Gao and Wang [5] study indicates a least positive attitude of class room teacher's of China towards the inclusion of children with ASD. In his study Khan, Hasmi and Khanum [7] revealed that although teachers believe that all learners in spite of their disabilities should be in regular classrooms but they showed more favourable attitude towards children with mild disabilities and less optimistic about children with severe disabilities. Almost half of the teachers have negative attitudes towards the inclusion of children with speech difficulty and epilepsy. Another study conducted by Al-Zoudi [11] reported that there is a strong influence of types of severity of disabling condition on teacher's attitude towards inclusive education. AlMahdi and Bukamal [19] reported teacher's positive attitude towards inclusion but least positive about including children with behavioral and communicative disorder.

## Results 3: The effects of teacher's attitude on pupil's social participation

The third Research question of the study was aimed to investigate the effect of teacher's attitude on the social participation of peoples with special needs however no such studies were found in which this aspect was examined consequently no definite results can be reported for this section

## Discussion

Twenty nine studies related to teacher's attitude towards inclusive education were closely examined in this review in which 2000 teachers were involved. The majority of teachers have positive attitudes towards educating peoples

with special needs in regular educational settings. This finding is contradiction with Bothma, Gravett, Swart <sup>[24]</sup> which indicated that teachers had negative attitudes towards inclusive education. Also Galovic, Brojcin and Glumbic <sup>[25]</sup> reported neutral attitude of teachers towards inclusive education. However the results presented in this paper are difficult to be generalised because not all authors clearly analyse the three components of attitude (i.e. cognitive effective and behavioral) best on the review and important point can be noted regarding the implementation of inclusive education. A paradigm shift can be found over past two decades. The studies shows how teacher's perspective sifted from child's disability towards the necessity of inclusion and social interaction though teacher's attitude has not shifted to the desired point. As teachers are the key persons to implement inclusive education in our society they have to be knowledgeable, competent, sensitive towards the children with special needs also they should gain particular skills to enhance their competency. They should have positive attitudes and a deep understanding of the Idea of inclusion which reflect the way they think (cognitive), feel (affective) and act (behavioral) particularly in relation to inclusion.

Additionally professional development and proper teachers training programs, are necessary for success inclusion of children with different types of disabilities and special needs.

Furthermore a strong needs of favourable policy implementation and government initiatives which consider severity and types of disabilities, different educational needs of this children, diverse learners and individual differences in our society.

In general it is for sure that teacher's attitude towards inclusion is mostly positive although sometimes types of disabilities creates a less favourable attitude among them. However they need sufficient external and motivational support which can help them to create a desired inclusive classroom.

### Conclusion

This review tried to investigate the teacher's attitude towards inclusion, which reveals predominantly favourable and positive attitudes of teachers in most of the countries across the world. This study also aims to explore the variables which influence the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education and the effects of teacher's attitude on social participation of pupils with special needs.

Regarding the first research question of this study it can be concluded that in general teachers attitude towards inclusion in most of the cases are positive. On the contrary some of these studies reported less positive, neutral and negative attitude of teachers towards inclusive education. However the causes of this less favourable attitude is types of disabilities. Teachers who possessed negative attitude are either have a misconception or lack of understanding towards inclusion. Also some teachers have least or zero experience with children with special needs as a result their attitude towards inclusion was neutral.

With regard second research question, this study revealed that educational degree and field backgrounds, self-efficacy, years of teaching experience, training, gender and students differentiation are related the teachers attitude. One thing is clear that teachers with less years of teaching experience hold more positive attitude towards inclusive education.

Furthermore it can be concluded that female teacher's attitude towards inclusion is more positive than their male counterparts. Although a few studies reported male teachers held more favourable attitude towards inclusion than female teachers. Additionally teacher's attitudes seem to be related to the types of disability.

Regarding the last research question it can be concluded that none of these selected studies reported clear results related the effects of teacher's attitude on social participation of the pupils with special needs in general educational settings. Consequently, no conclusion can be drawn regarding this aspect.

### Limitations

In this study the three component theory of Eagly and Chiken (1993), is used to define the term 'attitude'. They consider attitudes have three components. Which are cognitive (beliefs and/or knowledge), affective (feelings) and behavioral (predisposition to act). Unfortunately most of the research papers didn't define the concept of attitude properly as a result no generalized conclusion can be drawn. Moreover in some studies the term 'attitude' was replaced by 'perception' <sup>[7]</sup>, perspective <sup>[4]</sup>, views <sup>[8]</sup> which results an inaccuracy.

### Suggestions

With regards the factors that may affect the teachers attitude towards inclusion, the review highlights the following points, which are teachers experience with children with special needs, students differentiation and training.

Therefore this review suggests that stakeholders of educational sector across the world should consider trainee teachers attitude towards inclusion as a pivotal component to achieve and implement inclusion in a general educational setting. Therefore right policies, necessary resources, adequate training for pre-service and in-service teacher is strongly recommended.

### Recommendations for future research

One of the aim of this study was to explore the effects of teacher's attitude on social participation of pupils with special needs. However this question remains unanswered for lack of availability of adequate research article related to this topic.

Consequently it is not possible to conclude if teacher's attitude towards inclusion is effective for social participation of students with special needs. Hence, in relation to the belief that teachers attitude has an effect on inclusion, further questions regarding the impact of teachers attitude on students social outcome should be explored.

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