

Teachers' Self-efficacy, Attitude, and Concern towards Inclusion of Children with Special Needs: Lessons from Literature

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Abstract:

Inclusive education is a philosophy based on human rights and social justice movement. It aims to offering quality education for all the students with or without special needs and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination. There are several factors that are accountable for successful implementation of inclusive education in school. However, among all, teachers related factors as their attitude, self-efficacy and concern towards children with special needs play pivotal role for their total inclusion in mainstream schools everywhere. Researches confirmed that students' leaning and inclusion depend on self-efficacy and positive attitude of the teacher at large extent. It is the knowledge, beliefs, values, and concern of the teacher that are brought to bear in creating an effective learning environment for pupils, making the teacher a critical influence in education for inclusion and the development of the inclusive school. Whatever policies, legislations and schemes are to be laid down in the ultimate analysis these have to be interpreted and implemented by the teachers through their attitude, self-efficacy, knowledge, and concern. The present paper makes an attempt to; 1) explain the need of inclusive education in India, 2) review exiting literature in order to form a strong theoretical base regarding why teachers' self-efficacy, attitude, and concern should be given due emphasis for successful inclusion of children with special

seeds in school education, and 3) make recommendations based on the findings to ensure successful inclusive education in India.

Key words: Teachers' Self-efficacy, Attitude, Concern, Children with Special Needs, Inclusion.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has gained popularity and great attention and has come to the forefront of educational debate in almost all the developed and developing countries around the world. Inclusive education has now gained the acceptance of the global development agenda all over the world. The Post EFA 2015 (UNESCO, 2013) and the Post MDG 2015 (UNSDSN, 2013) goals have also considered inclusive education as a viable strategy to reduce exclusion in the society. Inclusive education is a “process aimed to offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and different needs and abilities, characteristics, and learning expectations of the students and communities eliminating all forms of discrimination” (UNESCO, 2009). Human rights movements, international declarations and conventions have made significant contributions in endorsing and promoting inclusive education worldwide. India being a democratic and republic country is committed to provide quality education to its all citizens without making any discrimination on any grounds. In this context inclusive education is the only viable option before govt. of India to ensure the fundamental rights to education for every citizen as it includes all and excludes none.

NEED OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIA

To have a clear perception of “why” inclusive education is an extreme need for a country like India, the reality in Indian context should be reviewed. The census 2011 has covered only 8

types of disabilities and reported that India has 2.21% (26,810,557) certified disabled population. The country's disabled population has increased by 22.4% between 2001 and 2011. The number of disabled, which was 2.19 crore in 2001, rose in 2011 to 2.68 crore. It also reported that rural areas have more disabled people than urban areas. A leading Indian disability NGO, The National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) argues that 5 to 6% of Indian population has a disability. World Bank (2007:12) notes that “the real prevalence of disability in India could easily be around 40 million people, and perhaps as high as 80-90 million if more inclusive definitions of both mental illness and mental retardation in particular were used.”

Almost 90% of disabled children do not receive any form of education and children with disability are five times more likely to be out of school than scheduled caste or scheduled tribe (SC/ST) children. (World Bank report ‘People with Disability in India: From Commitments to Outcomes’, released in New Delhi on December 3, 2008). Moreover, when children with disability do attend school they rarely progress beyond the primary level, leading ultimately to lower employment chances and long-term income poverty. 38 percent of children with disability aged 6-13 years are out of schools. Almost three quarters of children with severe disabilities (75%) are illiterate and do not attend school. Close to one third of the children with mild disabilities (30%) are not in school (Source: All India Survey of Out-of-school Children of Age 6-13 Years and Age 5, Commissioned by Social and Rural Research Institute, a Specialist Unit of IMRB International, New Delhi). Spending share on inclusive education in SSA is very low, at only 1% of its total budget under this scheme nationally (NSS, 58th round). A position paper drafted by NECRT (2005) notes that “the office of the chief commissioner of persons with disabilities stated that not more than 4 percent of children with disabilities have access to

education". Some of the most important facts with regard to the need of inclusive education in Indian scenario are as follows:

Human Rights

1. Excluding children with special needs from mainstream set up means violation of their fundamental rights. Therefore, inclusive education is the only option to ensure their rights by making a stronger effort towards the right to education for persons with disabilities, in keeping view with Article 24 of the UN Convention of the Rights for Persons with Disabilities.
2. It is about "ensuring that educational policies and practices reflect rights-based approaches and recognize the uniqueness of every learner; and encouraging individual and community-level engagement with people who face discrimination to claim their rights through inclusion in community-based development." (Florence Migeon, a UNESCO Specialist in Education).
3. Disabled adults and special school survivors are demanding an end to segregation.
4. Kids being together have advantages for everyone. They need not be protected from each other.

Quality Education

5. Kids learn better academically and socially in inclusive settings. "Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving educational for all ..." (Article 2, Salamanca Statement)
6. Nearly 90% of children with special needs reside in rural areas whereas most of the schools are located in urban areas. Here there is a gap between the demand and the availability. In this circumstance, inclusive education is the most viable option for covering one and all. Many

regular schools are available within the reach of few kilometers which can include one and all.

7. The education for children with special needs started in India almost one and half century ago, however still it could hardly reach to 10% of population. The slow coverage is indeed a serious concern. When India is committed to provide quality education for all, it must include even children with special needs. Education for all can be made possible when the children with special needs will be included in regular schools under inclusive education to increase the coverage.
8. Any teaching that can take place in segregated school, can also take place in regular school.
9. There is a dearth of specially trained manpower to promote improvement and implementation of special education policies. As a result majority of children with special needs are out of schools. Inclusive education is the only viable option to bring all such children in schools which can give them ample opportunities to grow and improve the quality of their lives.
10. The focus of Inclusive education is on the child's abilities, not disabilities.
11. Given commitment and supports, inclusive education is a more efficient use of educational resources.

Ensure Social Inclusion

12. Segregation teaches kids to become fearful, ignorant and breeds to prejudice.
13. All kids need an education that helps them to develop relationships and prepare them for life in mainstream.
14. Only inclusion has potential to reduce fear and build friendship, respect and understanding.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Due to formation and implementation of numbers of policies, legislations, conventions, schemes and acts, like NEP, 1986; PWD, 1995; UNCRPD, 2006; SSA, 2001; IEDSS, 2010; and RTE Act, 2009 it has become mandatory for all the states and Union Territories in India to provide compulsory free and quality education to all children with special needs at neighboring regular schools without any discriminations. Inclusion represents a revolutionary departure from existing organizational structures and systems of service delivery in education (Murphy, 1996). There are several variables that are accountable for successful implementation of inclusive education. However, among all, teacher related variables like their attitude, self-efficacy, and concern towards children with special needs play pivotal role for their total inclusion in mainstream schools everywhere. Educators' beliefs and attitudes regarding inclusion have been found to be closely linked with the acceptance of children with a disability (Forlin, Hattie & Douglas, 1996; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996) and the success of inclusion (Coates, 1989; Semmel, Abernathy, Butera & Lesar, 1991). Bender, Vail and Scott (1995) have indicated that teacher attitude toward students with disabilities can be critical to the quality of their inclusive instructional strategies. Idol, Nevin and Paolucci-Whitcomb (1994) argued that general education teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward students with disabilities are among the most important issues influencing collaborative efforts between special and general educators. It has also been argued that negative attitudes to disability lead to low expectations of students, and may result in reduced learning opportunities and performance (Gold, 1980). An extensive research studies confirmed that improving teachers' pedagogy is the most effective way to improve equity of student outcomes (Field, Kuzcera & Pont, 2007) and to improve student achievement (Gustafsson, 2003; Hanushek, 2004; Hill & Rowe,

1996). Reynolds (2001) stated that it is the knowledge, beliefs, and values of the teacher that are brought to bear in creating an effective learning environment for pupils, making the teacher a critical influence in education for inclusion of children with special needs and the development of an inclusive set-up capable to meet the diverse needs of students. Whatever policies, legislations and schemes are to be laid down in the ultimate analysis these have to be interpreted and implemented by the teachers through their self-efficacy, attitude, knowledge, and concern.

SUPPORTIVE REVIEWS ON NEED OF TEACHERS' SELF- EFFICACY, ATTITUDE, AND CONCERN FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

There are numbers of researches that have been conducted in national and international level using both qualitative and quantitative techniques to investigate the interrelation and interdependence between teachers' self- efficacy, attitude, and concern and successful implementation of inclusive education. The present paper is an attempt towards highlighting the supportive exiting literatures in order to make a strong theoretical base regarding how teachers' attitude, self-efficacy, sentiment and concern lead to successful inclusion of children with special seeds in school education.

TEACHERS' SELF-EFFICACY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Among all the educational stakeholders, teachers have a critical role to play in incorporating the principles of inclusive education (Forlin et al., 2010; Savolainen et al., 2012). Teachers' self-efficacy is considered an important catalyst for the success of inclusive education. It has been argued that teachers with higher self-efficacy include children with special

needs more effectively in regular classrooms (Friend & Bursuck, 2009; Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin 2012). According to Bandura (1997) 'Self-efficacy is the belief of an individual on his/her own capabilities, which in turn triggers successful performance of target behavior to achieve expected results'. He also stated that 'Teacher efficacy affects teachers' thoughts, their actions in teaching process, the effort they put forth, and their perseverance in improving student achievement.

Abdul Rahim (1994) holds some prerequisites to be considered for the success of inclusive education in Malaysia. These requirements are understanding, acceptance, and the ability of teachers to implement inclusive education. The challenge for teachers in inclusive education programs is increasing. Before this teacher just focuses on mainstream students only in class, but with the inclusion of students with special needs, it will increase their workload. According to Barco (2007), the primary responsibility of educating students with special needs in inclusive education program is the responsibility of mainstream teachers. This statement is supported by Cook (2002) when he stated that mainstream teachers often need to restructure the teaching methodologies and practices to meet the needs of academic, social, cultural and special needs students. It is found that modification of the learning process requires creativity teacher because the time provided for teachers to teach in inclusive education class is the same as mainstream classes. But many teachers are not able to adapt their classroom teaching involving students with special needs (Baker & Zigmond, 1995). This opinion is consistent with studies of Eiserman et al. (1995), which states that many teachers think that they are not able to teach in inclusive education classes. However, research confirmed that teachers with a high sense of efficacy have a strong conviction that they can influence student learning, even the learning of those students who may be more challenging (Guskey & Passaro, 1994). These teachers are open to new ideas and are more

willing to experiment with and try new teaching strategies to better meet their students' needs (Ghaith & Yaghi, 1997; Guskey, 1988). Overall, efficacious teachers tend to engage in more productive, quality teacher behaviors (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Gibson & Dembo, 1984). In contrast, teachers with low efficacy feel they only have minimal influence on student achievement. These teachers give up more easily when confronted with a difficult situation, are less resourceful, and oftentimes feel that students cannot learn because of the extenuating circumstances (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Bandura, 1997). Due to the selection of more effective and positive teaching behaviors, efficacious teachers tend to have high student achievement, whereas teachers with low efficacy tend to have low student achievement. There are also researches that reveals that teachers with high level of self-efficacy being open to new ideas and methods and being less reluctant to consider students' individual needs (Leyser, Zeiger, & Romi, 2011) and using different behavior management techniques (Woolfolk, Rosoff, & Hoy, 1990).

Only a few studies explored the relationship between teachers' self efficacy and their attitude towards inclusion of children with special needs. A study conducted by Mailmen, Savolainen, and Xu (2012) involving 451 primary and middle school teachers from 132 different schools of Beijing, China, found that teachers' efficacy in collaboration significantly predicted their attitudes. Another study conducted by Weisel & Dror (2006) with 139 teachers from 17 elementary schools in Northern Israel found teachers self-efficacy as the single best predictor of their attitudes. Similar results were found by Soodak, Podell, & Lehman (1998) in their study of 188 general educators of New York. According Haniz Ibrahim (1998), a total of 66.9% of mainstream teachers have negative perceptions of inclusive education in Kedah. In addition, low self-efficacy for a number of teachers has also contributed to this situation (Eiserman et al., 1995). Low teacher self-efficacy is associated

with weakness strategic used by teachers to teach in inclusive classes (Baker & Zigmond, 1995). According to Baker and Zigmond (1995), low self-efficacy of teachers will have an impact on attitudes and behavior in the classroom with students with special needs. Without adequate support through training and professional programs which are accountable for developing self-efficacy of teachers the successful implementation of inclusive education programs will be difficult.

TEACHERS' ATTITUDE AND CONCERN AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

According to Rajecki (1982), attitudes are very important aspect because they influence so much of our personal lives. He explains that attitudes include desires, convictions, feelings, views, opinions, beliefs, hopes, judgments and sentiments. Similarly, Mushoriwa (1998) has also talked about the importance of attitudes because there is a general believe that human behaviour and actions are influenced by attitudes, whereby attitudes are seen as the cause and behaviour is the consequence. Teachers' attitude towards children with special needs is considered as an important factor for initiating and sustaining inclusive practices in regular classrooms, (UNESCO, 2010). It is also argued that positive attitude of a person predisposes favorable responses and negative attitude predisposes unfavorable responses (Eagly, & Chaiken, 1993). Therefore, researchers have a strong stand that success of inclusion of students with disabilities depends on positive attitude of teachers towards inclusion (Romi & Leyser, 2006).

Internationally, a large number of studies have been conducted on pre-service and in-service teachers' attitude, sentiment and concern towards inclusive education. Research shows that teachers have a mixed attitude towards inclusion of children with disabilities. Changpinit, Greaves, and Frydenberg

(2007) explored the attitude and concern of 702 in-service teachers of Thailand and found that teachers who had positive attitude towards children with special needs had lower level of concern. In contrast, a comparative study conducted on 319 South African and 822 Finnish primary and secondary teachers found that although teachers from both countries expressed positive attitude and sentiment they had much concern towards inclusion of children with special needs (Savolainen et al., 2012). Therefore, the findings suggest that there is a complex relationship between teachers' attitude, sentiment and concern towards the inclusion of children with disabilities. In addition, there is also evidence of significant relationship between teachers' attitude and their self-efficacy. The same study (Savolainen et al. (2012) revealed an association between self-efficacy and attitude of teachers. The study found that the teachers who had more positive attitude towards children with disabilities, had greater self-belief in their own ability and therefore showed to be more supportive of the inclusion of children with disabilities. Similar results were found in another study conducted on 100 teachers of 10 inclusive primary schools in Tanzania which reported that teachers' with positive attitude towards children with special needs had increased level of self-efficacy (Hofman & Kilimo, 2014). Research shows that different background and demographic variables have an impact on teachers' attitude towards inclusion of children with disabilities (Forlin, Loreman, Sharma, & Earle, 2009). A survey carried out with 300 general educators of Mumbai, India, found significant difference in teachers' attitude towards children with special needs based on age and years of teaching experience (Parasuram, 2006). The study revealed that youngest and oldest teachers and teachers with least and most years of teaching experience showed positive attitude towards children with special needs than other groups. Similar results were found for these two variables in a survey conducted on 194 public elementary school teachers from 65 public schools of

seven cities in Turkey, where inclusive education was recently introduced in the country (Rakap & Kaczmarek, 2010). This study found slightly negative attitudes of teachers' towards students with severe disability. However, teachers showed willingness to learn new skills through training and collaboration with families to accommodate students with disabilities in regular classrooms. Research also revealed that the main factor that has been identified as the root mean of negative attitude and less self-efficacy is that teachers do not have the knowledge and adequate training to deal with students with special needs in inclusive setup (Tappendorf Leyser, 2001). On the other hand, it was also found that people who have had high levels of contact with individuals with disabilities have been found to hold more positive attitudes toward children with special needs (Hastings, Hewes, Lock & Witting, 1996).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above discussed matter the following recommendations can be made to ensure successful inclusive education in India -

1. Research reveals that the mainstream teachers are not confident and do not have the knowledge to handle students with special needs. In order to overcome this problem, there is a need to ensure that teachers are trained enough to be successful in catering students' varying needs and abilities in inclusive setting.
2. Most self-efficacy studies show that there is a significant positive relationship between teachers' self efficacy and teachers' attitudes (Bradshaw & Mundia, 2006) and the successful implementation of inclusive programs is largely dependent on the teachers who are positive and have a high level of self-efficacy. Therefore, an effective professional development program should be designed to

meet the specific needs of the school, community, including teachers.

3. Specific professional development programme must address concerns about the implementation of inclusive education as teachers experience in mainstream settings and implement an appropriate approach results from studies that have been performed. Hence, it can be urged to not only provide the basic training of handling special needs students, but professional training undertaken must be focused on student' disability and implemented intensive stages.
4. The development of appropriate inclusive education policies, legislations, schemes, and practices is an important step towards advocating the education of children with special needs in the mainstream education system, which would have impact on the teachers' attitudes towards the education of children with special needs.
5. Studies revealed that environmental factors help in forming teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of children with special education needs (Myles & Simpson, 1989). These authors respectively stated that one factor that has consistently been found to be associated with more positive attitudes is the availability of support services. Here, support could be seen as both physical (resources, teaching materials, restructured physical environment etc.) and human (learning support assistants, special education teachers, and speech therapists). Therefore, the availability of support services must be ensured for successful inclusive education.
6. There is a dearth of local research that should identify not only the challenges inclusive education but also the potential local solutions for how to overcome them. Therefore, research should be highly encouraged in this regard in country like India.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, it can be stated that, still, today, millions of children, youth and adults without disabilities, continue to experience exclusion within and from education around the country. The Right to Education Act-2009, the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960) and other international human rights treaties prohibit any exclusion from or limitation to educational opportunities on the bases of socially ascribed or perceived differences, such as sex, ethnic origin, language, religion, nationality, social origin, economic condition, disability etc. However, if the right to education for all is to become a reality, we must ensure that all learners have access to quality education that meets basic learning needs and enriches lives. This will only be possible if the notion of inclusive education gets implemented in its true spirit. And for the proper implementation of inclusive education which includes all and excludes none the need of developing teachers' self-efficacy, attitude, and addressing their concern must be taken under considerations.

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