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ATTITUDE OF STUDENT TEACHERS TOWARDS IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AS A PART OF THE PRESENT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Abstract

Inclusive education, as an approach, seeks to address the learning needs of all children, youth and adults with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. Objectives of the study were to find out the overall attitude of the student teachers towards inclusive education, to find out whether there is any difference in the attitude of student teachers towards inclusive education according to gender, to find out whether there is any difference in the attitude of student teachers towards inclusive education according to the optional subject chosen. In order to achieve the objectives of the present investigation survey method was adopted. The sample consisted of 150 student teachers from 3 training colleges of Alappuzha district. Tool used for the study was Attitude towards Inclusive Education Scale by Ahmed Bawa Kayini (ATIES). After the detailed analysis the investigator came to know that the overall attitude of student teachers towards inclusive education is unfavorable. Male and female student teachers differ significantly in their attitudinal scores and male student teachers show more unfavorable attitude towards inclusive education than female student teachers. The study revealed that there is significant difference in the attitude scores of student teachers who have taken science and arts as their optional subject.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education, as an approach, seeks to address the learning needs of all children, youth and adults with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. It implies all learners, young people - with or without disabilities being able to learn together through access to common pre-school provisions, schools and community educational setting with an appropriate network of support services. This is possible only in a flexible education system that assimilates the needs of a diverse range of learners and adapts itself to meet these needs.

Research has shown that Inclusive education results in improved social development and academic outcomes for all learners. It leads to the development of social skills and better social interactions because learners are exposed to real environment in which they have to interact with other learners each one having unique characteristics, interests and abilities. The non-disabled peers adopt positive attitudes and actions towards learners with disabilities as a result of studying together in an inclusive classroom. Thus, inclusive education lays the foundation to an inclusive society accepting, respecting and celebrating diversity.

Inclusion has two sub-types the first is sometimes called regular inclusion or partial inclusion, and the other is full inclusion. In a "regular inclusion" setting, students with special needs are educated in regular classes for nearly all of the day, or at least for more than half of the day. Whenever possible, the students receive any additional help or special instruction in the general classroom, and the student is treated like a full member of the class. However, most specialized services are provided outside a regular classroom, particularly if these services require special equipment or might be disruptive to the rest of the class, and students are pulled out of the regular classroom for these services. In the "full inclusion" setting, the students with special needs are always educated alongside students without special needs. Some educators say this might be more effective for the students with special needs. At the extreme, full inclusion is the integration of

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all students, even those with the most severe educational and behavioral disabilities, into regular classes and the elimination of special, segregated special education classes. However, this approach to full inclusion is controversial, and it is not widely applied. Much more commonly, local educational agencies provide a variety of settings, from special classrooms to mainstreaming to inclusion, and to assign students to the system that seems most likely to help the student achieve his or her individual educational goals.

In principle, several factors can determine the success of inclusive classrooms:

- > Family-school partnerships
- > Collaboration between general and special educators
- > Well-constructed plans that identify specific accommodations, modifications, and goals for each student
- > Coordinated planning and communication between "general" and "special needs" staff
- > Integrated service delivery
- > Ongoing training and staff development

Ten Reasons for Inclusion

Human Rights:

1. All children have the right to learn together.
2. Children should not be devalued or discriminated against by being excluded or sent away because of their disability.
3. Disabled adults, describing themselves as special school survivors, are demanding an end to segregation.
4. There are no legitimate reasons to separate children for their education. Children belong together – with advantages and benefits for everyone. They do not need to be protected from each other.

Good Education:

5. Research shows children do better, academically and socially in integrated settings.
6. There is no teaching or care in a segregated school, which cannot take place in an ordinary school.
7. Given commitment and support, inclusive education is a more efficient use of education resources.
8. Good Social Sense
9. Segregation teaches children to be fearful, ignorant and breeds prejudice.
10. All children need an education that will help them develop relationships and prepare them for life in the mainstream.

Only inclusion has the potential to reduce fear and to build friendship, respect and understanding.

Inclusion means:

1. Educating all children with disabilities in regular classrooms regardless of the nature of their disabling condition(s).
2. Providing all students enhanced opportunities to learn from each other's contributions.



3. Providing necessary services within the regular schools.
4. Supporting regular teachers and administrators (e.g., by providing time, training, teamwork, resources, and strategies).
5. Having students with disabilities follow the same schedules as non-disabled students.
6. Involving students with disabilities in age-appropriate academic classes and extracurricular activities, including art, music, gym, field trips, assemblies, and graduation exercises.
7. Students with disabilities using school cafeteria, library, playground, and other facilities along with non-disabled students.
8. Encouraging friendships between non-disabled and disabled students.
9. Students with disabilities receiving their education and job training in regular community environments when appropriate.
10. Teaching all children to understand and accept human differences.
11. Placing children with disabilities in the same schools they would attend if they did not have disabilities.
12. Taking parents' concerns seriously.
13. Providing an appropriate individualized educational program.

Elements of Inclusion

1. All students with disabilities are members of their neighborhood school.
2. All students are assigned to age-appropriate grades in heterogeneous classrooms.
3. Students grouping and regrouping during the course of the day is based on the individual interests and skills of all students, and not on disability labels.
4. Related services (e.g., physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy) are delivered in regular classroom settings and other school environments.
5. Supports and services are provided in the classroom and coordinated with ongoing instruction.
6. The provision of supports for students (instructional, curricular, behavioral, etc.) is viewed as a school-wide need.
7. Effective teaching strategies and differentiated instruction are used to meet the needs of every child and accommodate the learning styles of all children in the class.
8. The general education instruction and curriculum is used as the base for accommodations and modifications to meet IEP goals.
9. The instructional materials used for typical students are modified for assignments, homework, and tests.
10. Planned and structured activities are in place to promote social inclusion and friendship development.
11. Students without disabilities are supported in welcoming students who have disabilities.
12. Collaboration among general educators, special educators, and other school personnel occurs on an ongoing basis.



OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out the overall attitude of the student teachers towards inclusive education.
2. To find out whether there is any difference in the attitude of student teachers towards inclusive education according to gender.
3. To find out whether there is any difference in the attitude of student teachers towards inclusive education according to the optional subject chosen.

METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve the objectives of the present investigation survey method was adopted. The sample consisted of 150 student teachers from 3 training colleges of Alappuzha district. Tool used for the study was Attitude towards Inclusive Education Scale by Ahmed Bawa Kayini (ATIES). Random sampling techniques were used in the study for the selection of samples. The tool was administered on the sample and data were collected. Appropriate statistical techniques were used for analysis and interpretation.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

1. The overall attitude of student teachers towards inclusive education.

The attitude of student teachers towards inclusive education was found out using an attitude scale. The details of the data collected and the results obtained are given in table 1.

Table 1. Attitude of Student Teachers towards Inclusive Education

Attitude	No of student teachers	Percentage
Unfavorable	104	69
Neutral	3	2
Favorable	43	29

Among the 150 student teachers who responded to the attitude scale, 104 scored less than 96 i.e. is 69% of the total sample showed unfavorable attitude, 3 scored 96 i.e. only 2% showed neutral attitude. The other 43 scored greater than 96 i.e. 29% of the total sample possessed a favorable attitude towards inclusive education. Hence it is interpreted that the overall attitude of student teachers towards inclusive education is unfavorable.

2. To find out whether there is any difference in the attitude of student teachers towards inclusive education according to gender and optional subjects.

The attitude scores of student teachers with respect to Gender and optional subject were collected to find out whether the groups differ significantly or not. The details of the data collected and the results obtained are given in table 2.



Table 2. Data and Result of Test of Significant Difference in Mean Attitudinal Scores of Student Teachers with respect to Gender and Optional Subject

No	Group		Sample size	Attitude scores			Level of significance
				AM	SD	CR	
1	Gender	Male	20	92.87	14.18	2.02	0.05
		Female	130	87.92	14.76		
2	Optional subject	Science	80	90.54	13.96	2.42	0.05
		Arts	70	85.71	14.03		

As per table 2, mean and standard deviation of attitude scores of male student teachers are 92.87 and 14.18 and that of female student teachers are 87.92 and 14.76. Critical ratio obtained is 2.02. Hence it is significant at 0.05 levels. It indicates that male and female student teachers differ significantly in their attitudinal scores and male student teachers show more unfavorable attitude towards inclusive education than female student teachers.

The mean standard deviation of attitude scores of student teachers who have taken science as their optional subject are 90.54 and 13.96 and those who have taken arts as their optional subject are 85.71 and 14.03. The critical ratio obtained is 2.42. It reveals that there is significant difference in the attitude scores of student teachers who have taken science and arts as their optional subject.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

After the detailed analysis the investigator came to know that the overall attitude of student teachers towards inclusive education is unfavorable. Male and female student teachers differ significantly in their attitudinal scores and male student teachers show more unfavorable attitude towards inclusive education than female student teachers. The study revealed that there is significant difference in the attitude scores of student teachers who have taken science and arts as their optional subject.

Educators generally say that some students with special needs are not good candidates for inclusion. Many schools expect a fully included student to be working at or near grade level, but more fundamental requirements exist: First, being included requires that the student is able to attend school. Students that are entirely excluded from school (for example, due to long-term hospitalization), or who are educated outside of schools (for example, due to enrollment in a distance education program) cannot attempt inclusion. Additionally, some students with special needs are poor candidates for inclusion because of their effect on other students. For example, students with severe behavioral problems, such that they represent a serious physical danger to others, are poor candidates for inclusion, because the school has a duty to provide a safe environment to all students and staff.

Finally, some students are not good candidates for inclusion because the normal activities in a general education classroom will prevent them from learning. For example, a student with severe attention difficulties or extreme sensory processing disorders might be highly distracted or distressed by the presence of other students working at their desks. Inclusion needs to be appropriate to the child's unique needs. Most students with special needs do not fall into these extreme categories, as most students do attend school, are not violent, do not have severe sensory processing disorders, etc. The students that are most commonly included are those with physical disabilities that have no or little effect on their academic work, students with all types of mild disabilities, and students whose disabilities require relatively few specialized service.



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