

## A Study on Attitude of Mainstream Primary School Teachers' Towards Inclusive Education

Dr. Syed Ishfaq Ahmad Shah  
Assistant Professor (Education)

Directorate of Distance Education, University of Kashmir  
Surieyah Ashraf

Research Scholar, Dept of Education, Central University of Kashmir

### **Abstract:**

*The study was undertaken to study the attitude of mainstream primary school teachers' towards inclusive education. 100 primary school teachers both male and female, from both government and private schools were selected as sample by using multistage-cum-simple random sampling technique. For assessing their attitude towards inclusive education, Peng Yan's Questionnaire of Mainstream Primary School Teachers' Attitude Towards Inclusive Education was used to collect data. Mean, S.D & t-test were used as statistical techniques to analyze the data to get results. It was found that male and female primary school teachers don't differ significantly in their attitude towards inclusive education. Teachers from both genders believe that inclusive education provide students with opportunities for mutual communication which makes them to understand and accept individual diversity. Study also reveals that government and private school teachers differ in their attitude towards inclusive education. Private school teachers believe that children with special needs should be taught in special/separate settings while government teachers believe them to be taught in togetherness with normal children.*

**Key words:** *Attitude; Mainstream Teachers; Inclusive Education & Primary School Teachers*

### **Introduction**

From last many decades efforts are being made to educate the children with special needs not only in developed but also in underdeveloped countries. Such efforts are like equalization of educational opportunities, special schools for children with special needs etc. Children given segregation can exhibit unhealthy risk taking behavior (Shah & Khan, 2014). Children with special needs were taught in special settings but it resulted into many negative repercussions like inferiority complex, disinterest among these children etc. As a result the trend changed and it turned into the demand of teaching children with special needs in a regular class in togetherness with their normal counterparts. As a result concept of inclusive education came into existence.

The UNESCO convention against Discrimination in Education (2008) and other international 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, ability, etc. (Dapudong, 2014).

Inclusive education seeks to address the learning needs of all children with a special focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion (UNESCO, 2003). Instead of segregating students with special needs in special classes and schools, the inclusive education is about fitting schools to meet the needs of all students (Al-Zyoudi, 2006). The educational system is responsible for including students with special needs for appropriate education for all. The idea

of inclusion seems to be a major challenge in many countries (Hughes, Schumm & Vaughn, 1996; Synder, 1999; & Flem and Keller, 2000).

Inclusion however doesn't occur in vacuum. It requires number of factors to be in place before a successful outcome is possible (Bhatnagar & Das, 2014). One of these factors is the acceptance of inclusive education by teachers working in the mainstream schools in shape of their attitude towards it. Hence this idea of studying attitude of mainstream teachers was taken up for research. Research literature is filled with examples emphasizing regular classroom teachers' positive attitudes and acceptance of inclusive education programmes as cardinal to its successful implementation (Ross-Hill, 2009; and McFarlane & Wolfson, 2013). Teachers are perceived to be integral to the implementation of inclusive education (Haskell, 2000). Research indicates that teachers who hold negative attitudes towards inclusion tend to employ less effective instructional strategies, which results in increasingly poor performance of students with disabilities included in regular education classroom (Nutter, 2011).

Research communicates the view that teachers are the key to the success of inclusionary programmes (Cant, 1994), as they are viewed as linchpins in the process of including students with disabilities into regular classes (Stewart, 1983; and Whiting & Young, 1995). Other studies acknowledge that inclusive education can only be successful if teachers are part of the team driving this process (Horne, 1983; and Malone, Gallgher, & Long, 2001). The research studies stated above highlight the importance of teachers' attitude towards inclusive education. This attitude is expected to be influenced by the type of school and the factor like gender, hence merits an exploration.

#### **Operational Definitions of the terms used**

The operational definitions of the terms used in the present study are as:

**Attitude:** Attitude in the present study refers to the scores obtained by sample subjects on Peng Yan's questionnaire of Mainstream primary school teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education.

**Mainstream Primary School Teachers:** These in this study refer to the teachers teaching upto 5<sup>th</sup> standard working in general government and private primary and elementary schools of the state with at least one student with special needs enrolled in the school.

**Inclusive Education:** This term in present study refers to the type of education in which normal children and children with special needs are taught together in the general/regular/normal classroom.

#### **Objectives of the study**

1. To study attitude of male and female mainstream primary school teachers towards inclusive education.
2. To study attitude of government and private mainstream primary school teachers towards inclusive education.

#### **Hypotheses of the study**

1. There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female mainstream primary school teachers towards inclusive education.
2. There is no significant difference in the attitude of government and private mainstream primary school teachers towards inclusive education.

### Plan and Procedure

Descriptive method of research was used in order to determine the present status of the problem. Two hundred (200) teachers of primary and elementary schools teaching upto 5<sup>th</sup> standard working in mainstream schools of District Kupwara of Jammu & Kashmir state were randomly selected with equal distribution of hundred (100) male and hundred (100) female teachers. Out of each hundred 50 were selected from government and 50 were selected from private schools. Selection of district, schools and sample subjects was done by using multistage-cum-simple random sampling technique.

### Tools used

Peng Yan's questionnaire of Mainstream primary school teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education (2009) was administered on sample subjects to study their attitude towards inclusive education.

### Analysis of data

After collection of data, it was analyzed through statistical techniques viz: Mean, S.D and t-test in order to arrive at definite conclusions in the light of objectives of the study. The analysis is shown in the tables given below:

**Table 01: Significance of the mean difference between attitude of male and female mainstream primary school teachers towards inclusive education (N=100 each)**

Factor	Groups	Mean	S.D	t-value
Attitude towards inclusive education	Male School Teachers	52.44	5.5	1.04*
	Female School Teachers	51.68	4.8	
*Not Significant				

**Table 02: Significance of the mean difference between attitude of government and private mainstream primary school teachers towards inclusive education (N=100 each)**

Factor	Groups	Mean	S.D	t-value
Attitude towards inclusive education	Government School Teachers	53.79	5.7	3.9*
	Private School Teachers	50.06	4.02	
* Significant at 0.01 level				

### Interpretation and discussion

#### Comparison between male and female mainstream primary school teachers' attitude towards inclusive education (N=100 each)

The perusal of table 01 makes it evident, that male and female mainstream primary school teachers do not differ significantly in their attitude towards inclusive education. Male teachers have the mean score of 52.44 with S.D 5.5 while as female teachers have mean score of 51.68 with S.D 4.8. The obtained t-value (1.04) doesn't exceed the table value even at 0.05 level of significance. As the mean favours both the groups indicating thereby that both male and female mainstream primary school teachers possess positive attitude towards inclusive education. Teachers from both the genders believe that inclusive education provide students with opportunities for mutual communication which makes them to understand and accept individual diversity. The teachers from both the genders are confident of possessing knowledge and skills to educate students with disabilities. They feel comfortable and interested to work with students with

disabilities and their parents. They feel teaching a disabled child in mainstream classes is that type of challenge which will boost and enhance the effectiveness of their own self. The results discussed above are in line with Hannah (1998); Tam & Prellwitz (2001); Al-Zyoudi (2006); Dapudong (2014); and Kaur & Kaur (2015).

Hannah (1998) didn't found difference in attitude of teachers towards inclusiveness education with respect to gender. Tam & Prellwitz (2001) found that gender differences don't exist with regard to attitude of teachers' towards inclusive education. Al-Zyoudi (2006) found little difference between opinions of male and female teachers towards inclusive education. Dapudong (2014) found no significant difference in beliefs and feelings of international school teachers towards inclusive education when grouped according to gender. No significant difference was found between male and female secondary school teachers with respect to their attitude towards inclusive education (Kaur & Kaur, 2015). Therefore, in the light of the above discussion and studies the hypothesis no.1 which reads as:

***“There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female mainstream primary school teachers towards inclusive education”*** stands accepted.

#### **Comparison between government and private mainstream primary school teachers' attitude towards inclusive education (N=100 each)**

The table 02 makes it clear that government and private mainstream primary school teachers differ significantly from each other in their attitude towards inclusive education. Government school teachers have mean score of 53.79 with S.D 5.7 while as private school teachers have the mean score of 50.06 with S.D 4.02. The obtained t-value (3.9) is higher than the table value 2.60 and is significant at 0.01 level of significance. The mean score favours the group of teachers working in the government primary schools indicating thereby that these teachers possess positive attitude towards inclusive education in comparison to private school teachers. Government school teachers believe that children with special needs should be taught in togetherness with normal children while as private school teachers believe them to be taught in special/separate setting. Teachers of government schools believe that inclusive education is like to have positive effect on the social and emotional development of students with special needs as they come in interaction with normal children and try to adapt their habits, morals, traits etc. while as private school teachers believe that inclusive education is likely to have negative effect on these dimensions of special children, as their interaction with normal children can result into inferiority complex among them. The results analyzed in the table 02 and discussed above are in line with: Kaur & Kaur (2015); and Bansal (2016).

Kaur & Kaur (2015) found significant difference between rural and urban secondary school teachers with respect to their attitude towards inclusive education. Bansal (2016) revealed that there is significant difference in attitude of teachers' towards inclusive education with respect to type of school that is government and private. In the light of above discussion and supporting evidences the hypothesis no.2 which reads as:

***“There is no significant difference in the attitude of government and private mainstream primary school teachers towards inclusive education”*** stands rejected.

### Conclusions

From above interpretation and discussion following conclusions were drawn.

1. Male and female mainstream primary school teachers don't differ significantly from each other in their attitude towards inclusive education.
2. Both male and female mainstream primary school teachers possess positive attitude towards inclusiveness education.
3. There exists significant difference in the attitude of government and private mainstream primary school teachers' towards inclusive education.
4. Government mainstream primary school teachers possess high positive attitude towards inclusive education in comparison to their private school counterparts.

### Inferential suggestions

1. Infrastructure facilities should be made available in the mainstream schools to meet requirements of children with special needs.
2. Counselors should be provided to mainstream schools for counselling to students with special needs, to counsel normal children to keep good attitude for special children and teachers to have help in developing positive attitude towards inclusive education.
3. Teachers should be sensitized by the counselors about the positive implications of inclusive education.
4. There should be provision of training the mainstream teachers to understand the educational needs of children with special needs.
5. Teachers both male and female as well as government and private should be awakened about the importance of inclusiveness by fostering in them love, affection, care, concern for the children with some sort of disability.
6. Private school teachers should be provided counselling to develop in them positive attitude towards inclusive education while as government school teachers should be counseled to continue the positive attitude towards inclusive education with continuously enriching it.
7. Laws should be framed to enforce the private schools to put into practice the concept of inclusive education in their schools.

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