

Assessing the Implementation and Preparedness for Inclusive Education in Schools: A Comprehensive Teacher Perspective

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Abstract

This study utilizes a quantitative approach to examine the correlation between teachers' understanding of inclusive education principles and their successful integration of inclusive practices. It also investigates a potential inverse relationship between teachers' beliefs about challenges in including students with disabilities and their reported frequency of implementing inclusive strategies. The research employs a stratified random sampling method to collect data from a diverse group of educators across different educational settings. Statistical analyses, including correlation coefficients and regression, will be employed to determine the strength and direction of relationships between variables. The study aims to provide detailed insights into the factors influencing effective implementation of inclusive education, informing targeted interventions and policy considerations.

Keywords: Inclusive education, Inclusive practices, Effective implementation, Targeted interventions, barriers, teachers' beliefs.

Introduction

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education, a global paradigm shift in educational philosophy, strives to provide equitable opportunities for all learners, regardless of their diverse abilities, backgrounds, or disabilities. It emphasises the significance of fostering an inclusive society through education, promoting the idea that every individual has the right to quality education within mainstream classrooms.

At its core, inclusive education adheres to the principles of equity, diversity, and social justice. It represents a departure from traditional models that often marginalises students with special needs and discourages segregating students based on their abilities and instead promotes the integration of diverse learners into mainstream classrooms. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) defines inclusive education as a process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners, acknowledging that educational systems must adapt to accommodate various learning styles and abilities.

Some characteristic principles of inclusive education include adapting teaching methods, curriculum, and environments to cater to various learning styles and abilities, ensuring every student has the right to participate and thrive within the educational system.

Benefits of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education offers a multitude of benefits for children with disabilities. Children with disabilities refer to children with varying abilities, challenges, and needs. Disabilities may encompass physical, cognitive, sensory, or emotional impairments. These students often require additional support, accommodations, or specialized services to engage effectively in the learning process (UNICEF). Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are common tools used to tailor educational strategies and support services to meet the unique requirements of each child. Enhanced social interactions, positive peer relationships, academic progress and improved self-esteem are among the psychological and social advantages (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Moreover, inclusive education prepares children with disabilities for real-world interactions and fosters a sense of belonging and community.

Children without disabilities, often referred to as typically developing or neurotypical children, play a crucial role in the inclusive education dynamic. They contribute to the diversity of the learning environment and, through interaction with peers with disabilities, develop empathy, understanding, and appreciation for differences. Exposure to inclusive settings helps break down stereotypes, fostering a more inclusive and tolerant society in the long run.

The benefits for typically developing children in inclusive education settings are substantial. Exposure to diversity enhances their social skills, empathy, and communication abilities (Carlberg & Kavale, 1980). Typically developing children in inclusive environments also exhibit increased understanding and acceptance of individual differences (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). These experiences prepare them for a world that values diversity and promotes inclusivity. Effective collaboration among educators is integral to the optimal implementation of inclusive education and to reap its benefits for students.

Collaboration among Educators

Inclusive education, with its focus on accommodating diverse learning needs, necessitates a collaborative approach among teachers. The significance of collaboration lies not only in the effective implementation of inclusive practices but also in creating a supportive and enriching environment for all students.

Collaboration among teachers allows for the sharing of expertise and knowledge. In inclusive classrooms, students with diverse needs require specialized support and interventions. Collaborative efforts facilitate the sharing of effective strategies for adapting teaching methods and materials to meet the individual learning requirements of students.

Resources such as assistive technologies, specialized materials, and support personnel are crucial in inclusive education settings. By sharing tools and materials, educators also ensure that students with diverse needs have access to the necessary resources (Gupta, Singh, & Parween, 2018).

Collaboration also contributes to effective classroom management in inclusive settings. Co-teaching, a collaborative practice where general and special education teachers work together, allows for the seamless integration of diverse learners. This approach enables educators to address individual learning styles, manage behaviour effectively, and create a positive and inclusive classroom culture (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Razalli et al., 2020).

Collaboration is fundamental in the development and execution of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities. Teachers collectively contribute to the creation of meaningful IEPs that address the unique learning goals, accommodations, and support services required for each student (Razalli et al., 2020).

Engaging in collaborative practices exposes educators to diverse perspectives, teaching methodologies, and innovative strategies. The learning process contributes to the professional development of teachers and allows for the adherence to best practices in inclusive education (Razalli et al., 2020).

Inclusive education, which aims to address the diverse needs of all learners, requires educators to possess specialized knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Professional development for teachers plays a crucial role in equipping them with the competencies needed to create inclusive learning environments. Collaboration and effective implementation of inclusive education is accompanied by their own set of challenges.

Challenges of Effective Implementation of Inclusive Education

Implementation of inclusive education is challenging. One of the primary challenges in inclusive education is the persistence of attitudinal barriers and societal stigma. Negative attitudes and stereotypes about individuals with disabilities can impede the acceptance and integration of these learners into mainstream classrooms (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

Effective implementation of inclusive education requires adequately trained and prepared teachers. However, many educators may lack the necessary training, knowledge, and skills to address the diverse needs of students with disabilities (Singal, 2019).

Inclusive education often demands additional resources and support services to cater to the diverse learning needs of students. Unfortunately, educational institutions may face resource constraints, including a lack of specialized personnel, assistive technologies, and adapted materials (Gupta, Singh, & Parween, 2018). Students in inclusive classrooms present a wide spectrum of learning needs, ranging from mild to severe. Adapting teaching methods and materials to accommodate this diversity can be challenging for educators (Bhatnagar & Das, 2014).

Resistance to change within educational systems and institutions poses a formidable challenge to the widespread adoption of inclusive education. Systemic barriers, including rigid policies, bureaucratic hurdles, and a lack of commitment to inclusive principles, hinder the transformation of educational environments. Implementing inclusive education in a vast country like India poses even greater challenges, as overcoming parental and societal stigma, despite existing laws and adequate training, remains a formidable obstacle.

Implementation of Inclusive Education in India

India has made significant strides in the direction of inclusive education. The Right to Education Act (RTE) of 2009, a landmark legislation, mandates free and compulsory education for children aged 6 to 14, emphasizing the need for inclusive practices (Government of India, 2009). However, the practical implementation of inclusive education in India is a multifaceted challenge, given the socio-economic diversity, resource constraints, and varying educational infrastructures across the country.

According to the “State of the Education Report for India: Children with Disabilities, 2019” utilized data from the 2011 census, 61% of children with disabilities aged 5 years to 19 years attend educational institutions. Approximately 12% of children with disabilities drop out of school and 27% of children with disabilities have never attended any educational institution.

The challenges in implementing inclusive education in India are rooted in several factors. One critical aspect is the inadequacy of infrastructure and resources. Many schools, particularly in rural areas, lack the facilities and trained personnel necessary to cater to the diverse needs of students with disabilities (Singal, 2019). Additionally, financial limitations hinder the provision of assistive technologies and specialized

support services, posing barriers to the effective inclusion of students with disabilities (Bhatnagar & Das, 2014).

Large class sizes further increase the challenges faced by teachers attempting to implement inclusive education. The volume of students in classrooms, especially in urban and densely populated areas, makes individualized attention and tailored instruction difficult. These factors, along with attitudinal barriers among teachers and societal misconceptions about disability can contribute to resistance against inclusive practices and further contribute to negative attitudes of teachers toward the implementation of inclusive education (Gupta, Singh, & Parween, 2018).

Teachers, as key stakeholders in the inclusive education framework, play a pivotal role in shaping it. Poor infrastructure, financial constraints, and large class sizes as significant concerns identified by teachers that negatively affect the effective implementation of inclusive education (Bhatnagar & Das, 2014). Despite teacher satisfaction with the services provided, barriers such as the lack of an inclusion policy and fear of academic decline still hinder the realisation of inclusive education goals (Bhatnagar & Das, 2014). Emphasizing attitudinal shifts, adequate resources, and specialized support services is crucial to fostering an inclusive culture that benefits all children, regardless of their abilities.

It is vital to assess the current implementation of inclusive education and teacher preparedness in schools in India. The current study aims to explore the understanding of inclusive education principles and goals, among teachers and the effective implementation of inclusive practices in their classrooms. The study also aims to highlight the relationship between teacher beliefs about the challenges of including students with disabilities in classrooms and their reported frequency of utilizing inclusive practices. Understanding the comprehensive factors that influence the effective implementation of inclusive education, will provide insights on developing informed and targeted interventions and policy decisions for the education sector which will contribute to teacher development and student growth. Inclusive education stands as a foundation for empowering educational systems. By embracing diversity, fostering positive attitudes, and providing necessary support, inclusive education promotes an environment where every learner can reach their full potential. The movement towards inclusivity signifies a commitment to building a more just and compassionate society through education. The transformative power of inclusive education lies in the positive impact it has on academic outcomes and in its ability to shape a generation that values diversity, and inclusivity.

Review of Literature

(Exploring teachers' inclusive education strategies in rural Indonesian primary schools)

F. Kurniawati (2021) explored the teaching strategies employed by general education background teachers and understand their perspectives on inclusive education. Data was collected from 40 classroom teachers from 10 schools, teaching students between 8 years and 12 years of age, with at least one student having special education needs and disabilities. Short interviews and observation were used to analyze the use of differentiation, collaborative learning, and inclusive classroom management strategies by teachers. The research found that only a small number of teachers effectively utilize inclusive strategies, due to factors like limited knowledge and large class sizes. Through the interviews it was found also that most teachers lack confidence in implementing inclusive strategies.

(Preparing Teachers for Inclusive Education in Botswana: The Role of Professional Development)

B. Mangope and S. Mukhopadhyay (2015) conducted a study to understand the beliefs of teachers regarding professional development for inclusive education in Botswana. The study involved 86 primary and secondary school teachers from two educational administrative region, and a mixed-method research design was used. The questionnaire was administered on all teachers during a three-day inclusive education workshop. In-depth interviews were conducted with 12 teachers who were experienced in teaching learners with special educational needs. The findings indicate that while participants acknowledge the importance of professional development for implementing inclusive education, there is scepticism regarding effective lasting changes in classroom practices. This study emphasised on the importance of continuous and professional development methods, instead of isolated workshops to increase the teachers' competence in implementing inclusive education.

(Collaborative Teaching between Special Education Teachers and Mainstream Teachers in Inclusive Education Program)

A. R. Razalli, A. T. Hashim, N. Mamat, and A. Ariffin (2020) explored the collaborative teaching practices between special education teachers and mainstream teachers to implement inclusive education in schools. The investigation focuses on three specific aspects: knowledge, attitudes, and willingness for teaching collaboration. The study was conducted on 70 teachers from Malaysia, who were selected through purposive sampling. Descripted statistics were used to analyze the data collected through questionnaires. It was found that there is a high need for collaboration among teachers in terms of knowledge and willingness, whereas teacher attitudes were found to be medium. The findings suggest that enhancing collaboration in knowledge, readiness, and attitude will contribute to effective implementation of inclusive education in schools.

(Understanding teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy in inclusive education: Implications for pre-service and in-service teacher education)

In a comparative analysis, Savolainen et al. (2011) utilized a sample of 319 South African and 822 Finnish primary and secondary education teachers who answered a questionnaire containing a scale that measured attitudes, sentiments and concerns on inclusive education and also measured teachers' self-efficacy in implementation of inclusive education. Finnish teachers had slightly more positive overall attitudes, and were more positive in sentiments and attitudes towards inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. However, South African teachers showed lesser concerns about including children with disabilities in their own classes. At a general level, teachers seemed to have positive sentiments towards persons with disabilities but were more critical towards including children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Self-efficacy, specifically efficacy in collaboration, was correlated to overall attitudes towards inclusion. The findings suggest that pre- and in-service teacher education programmes need to emphasise more on collaboration skills in addition to courses on pedagogy and behaviour management.

(Implementing Inclusive Education in early childhood settings: The interplay and impact of exclusion, teacher qualities and professional development in Ghana)

This qualitative study by Ackah-Jnr & Udah (2021) collected data from individual interviews with teachers and headteachers in a large early childhood and school setting in Ghana, The findings suggest that inclusive education is characterized by exclusionary practices which result from teachers' decisions

and resistance, which is often due to beliefs such as a child's disability is due to their misdeeds or a child with disability is difficult to teach. Resistance to inclusive education limits learning, engagements and social opportunities for children, especially those with disabilities. Moreover, they also identify that effective teacher qualities, especially passion, and professional development enhance the provision of quality inclusive early childhood education. The results suggest that teachers need to be properly supported to demonstrate desirable qualities and acquire key skills from professional development programs to efficiently enact inclusive practices, since they form the backbone of inclusive education.

(Regular school teachers' concerns and perceived barriers to implement inclusive education in New Delhi, India)

Bhatnagar and Das (2014) investigated school teachers' concerns and perceived barriers in implementation of inclusive education in an Indian Context, with respondents being secondary school teachers in Delhi that were involved in teaching special needs children. There were two focus group interviews and 20 individual semi-structured interviews for collection of data that helped identify three concerns and eleven main barriers to implementation of inclusive education. The concerns were poor infrastructure, financial barriers and large class sizes, while perceived barriers included lack of inclusion policy, lack of trained teachers, fear of poor academic achievement etc.

(Teachers' views of their preparation for inclusive education and collaboration)

Zagona et al (2017) utilised a mixed method of survey and interviews, with 33 general educators and 10 special educators across six elementary schools in the United States responding to the survey and semi structured interviews being used with two special educators and one general educator. The special education teachers and general education teacher described similar areas in which they felt confident and were successful, including communicating with other teachers and parents and providing support to students with disabilities to be integrated as true members of the classrooms. However, all of them described their challenges in meeting the individual needs of learners. Both the special educators who were interviewed also mentioned additional challenges of not having enough personnel and having a large caseload.

Methodology

Hypotheses

- Hypothesis 1: Teachers with a deeper understanding of inclusive education principles and goals are more likely to effectively implement inclusive practices in their classrooms.
- Hypothesis 2: There is a negative correlation between teacher beliefs about the challenges of including students with disabilities and their reported frequency of utilizing inclusive practices.

Sample

The sample consisted of 38 teachers out of which 2 were male teachers and 36 were female teachers.

Variables

Predictor Variable: Teachers' beliefs about inclusive education and its challenges.

Dependent Variable: Frequency of Implementation of inclusive practices.

Tools

A self-reporting questionnaire was used to assess both the variables.

Statistical Analysis

The present study is a quantitative study where linear regression and Pearson product moment correlation was applied to the obtained data to prove the hypotheses.

Research Design

The present study is a correlational study with a quantitative method.

Results and Discussion

Table 1

Basic Demographic Details of the Sample of the Study

Sample Demographics	
N	38
Male	2
Female	36

The table shows the basic demographic details of the sample taken for the study. A total of 38 teachers participated in the study. There were a total of 2 male teachers and 36 female teachers.

Table 2

Normality Scores for variable under study

Shapiro-Wilk Tests of Normality	
Teacher Beliefs	.061
Reported Frequency	.237

The above table indicates the normality scores for the variables under study. According to the table, the data, scores of both variables, that is the beliefs of teachers regarding inclusive education and their reported frequency is normally distributed. The significance value for teacher beliefs is 0.061 ($p > 0.05$), and for reported frequency is 0.237 ($p > 0.05$). The collected data is normally distributed, hence, fulfilling the assumptions for the parametric test for correlation (Pearson’s correlation coefficient).

Table 3

Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient score for the beliefs of teachers regarding inclusive education and their reported competence and frequency of applying it in their classrooms

Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance
0.715	.000

The given table indicates a relationship between the beliefs of teachers regarding inclusive education and their reported competence and frequency of applying it in their classrooms. The Pearson’s correlation coefficient (r) value of teacher beliefs and reported implementation frequency is 0.715, which suggests a

strong positive correlation between teachers’ beliefs of having inclusive classrooms and their competence and frequency of implementing inclusive education effectively in classrooms. A positive correlation means that as one variable increases, the other also increases, and vice versa. So, as the positive beliefs of teachers regarding inclusive classrooms increases, there tends to be a higher reported frequency of effective implementation of inclusive educations and strategies by them. The significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0.01$) indicates that the positive correlation between the variables is statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

This relationship indicates that when teachers have a positive attitude towards inclusive education and believe that all students and have the right to participate in regular classrooms, regardless of their abilities, they tend to report a clear understanding of the principles and goals of inclusive education. They also tend to feel confident in adapting their teaching methods to meet the needs of individual students and are also familiar with various types of disabilities and their impact on learning. In the present study, it can be observed that when teachers have a negative belief regarding inclusive education and its challenges, they report lower competency and frequency of effective implantation of inclusive education in their classrooms.

The findings suggest that the hypothesis that states there is a positive correlation between teacher beliefs about the challenges of including students with disabilities and their reported frequency of utilizing inclusive practices is retained.

Table 4

Linear Regression Analysis for the beliefs of teachers regarding inclusive education (predictor) and reported frequency of applying it in their classrooms (dependent variable)

Linear Regression Analysis	
Regression Significance	.000
R Square (R²)	0.511

The given table shows a regression study between the beliefs of teachers regarding inclusive education and their reported competence and frequency of applying it in their classrooms. The significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0.01$) indicates that teacher beliefs regarding inclusive education significantly predicts the reported frequency of its implementation by teachers in classrooms. The R2 value of 0.511, indicates that 51.1% of the total variation in the dependent variable (Reported Frequency), can be explained by the independent variable, (Teacher Beliefs).

This indicates that positive attitudes of teachers towards inclusive classrooms and a belief that all students benefit from inclusive education, tends to predict a higher understanding and confidence among teachers in adapting and implementing a variety of strategies for supporting students with different learning styles and abilities.

The findings suggest that the hypothesis stating teachers who have a positive attitude towards inclusive education are more likely to effectively implement inclusive practices in their classrooms is retained.

Graphical representation:

Scatterplot

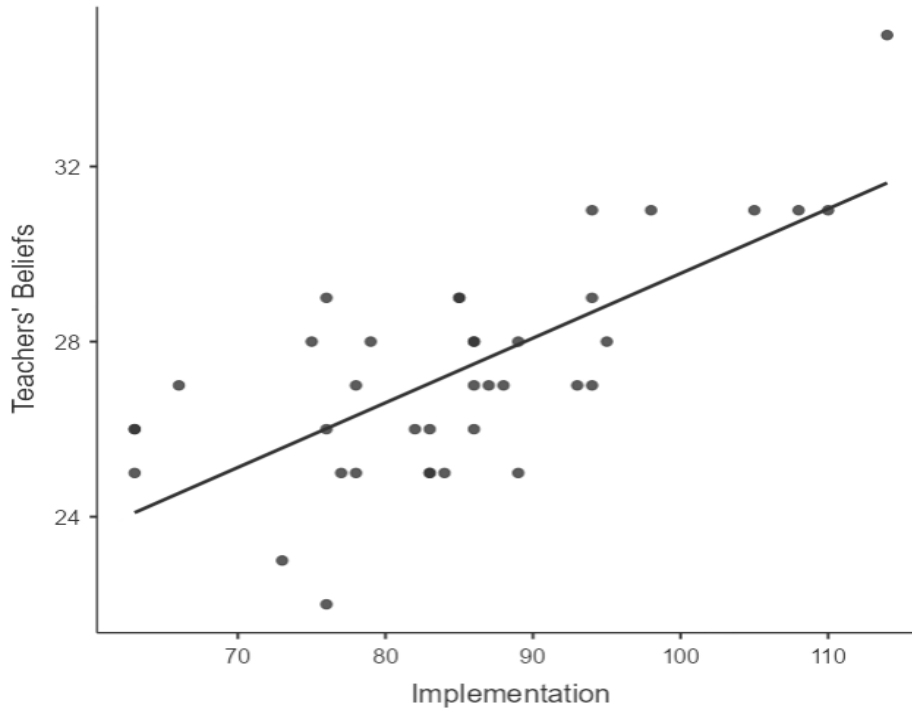


Table 5

Unstandardised Coefficient B for the beliefs of teachers regarding inclusive education (predictor) and reported frequency of applying it in their classrooms (dependent variable)

Unstandardised Coefficient B	
Teacher Beliefs	3.458
Significance	.000

The value of unstandardised coefficient B indicates the amount of increase in the scores of reported frequency of inclusive education implementation that would be predicted by a 1 unit increase in the predictor, that is teacher beliefs about inclusive education. This indicates that for every unit increase in the beliefs of teachers regarding inclusive education, an increase of 3.458 units in the frequency of its implementation is predicted.

Conclusion

Inclusive education emphasises on the idea that every individual has the right to quality education irrespective of their abilities, disabilities, religion etc. Inclusive Education allows students of all backgrounds to learn and grow side by side, to the benefit of all.

The research highlights that when educators embrace inclusive ideals and believe in the right of all students to participate in regular classrooms, they are more likely to possess the knowledge and confidence needed to cater to diverse learning needs. These insights emphasize the role of teachers' attitudes in creating

inclusive learning environments, influencing teaching methods, and ultimately impacting the success of all students, regardless of their abilities.

This study aimed to quantitatively identify the relation between teacher beliefs about the challenges of including students with disabilities and their reported frequency of utilizing inclusive practices. It also focused on how teachers' understanding of inclusive education principles and goals are more likely to help them in implementing inclusive practices in their classrooms.

The Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) value of teacher beliefs and reported implementation frequency is 0.715, which suggests a strong positive correlation between teachers' beliefs of having inclusive classrooms and their competence and frequency of implementing inclusive education effectively in classrooms. Thus, with this result, the 1st hypothesis was accepted.

A regression analysis between the beliefs of teachers regarding inclusive education and their reported competence and frequency of applying it in their classrooms. This indicates that positive attitudes of teachers towards inclusive classrooms and a belief that all students benefit from inclusive education, tends to predict a higher understanding and confidence among teachers in adapting and implementing a variety of strategies for supporting students with different learning styles and abilities. Thus, the second hypothesis was retained with this result.

These findings are crucial as they provide insights on the relationship between teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education and their competency in understanding its principles, adapting teaching methods, and effectively implementing inclusive practices in classrooms.

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