

Attitude of Teachers towards Inclusive Education in Akkaraipattu Education Zone

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Abstract

Introduction of Inclusive Education is a milestone in the path of redesigning the national school curricula in Sri Lanka. In this context, teachers can play big role in implementing inclusion in education in schools. The attitudes of teachers are important to find out how they can work for inclusion of the new approach in education. The objective of the present study is to find out the attitude of teachers towards Inclusive Education in Akkaraipattu Education Zone. 100 teachers working in Akkaraipattu Education Zone were selected as sample by using the technique of stratified sampling. Data were collected from the sample using the tools of Attitude Scale on Inclusive Education and Personal Data Sheets. The findings of the study revealed that most teachers have favorable attitude towards inclusive education. There are significant differences in the attitude teachers towards inclusive education based on gender, locale of the school and type of school.

Keywords: Attitude; Inclusive Education; Teachers.

Introduction

Education is the most powerful and effective instrument for building robust nation. It should be reachable to one and all. Equality in education has become prominent in the system of education. In this context, inclusion in education has become an important aspect in education. Inclusive education means that all students attend and are welcomed by their neighborhood schools in age-appropriate, regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the life of the school. It is about how we develop and design our schools, classrooms, programs and activities so that all students learn and participate together. Neighborhood schools are the heart of communities and culture in Sri Lanka (Jazeel, 2017).

Education is the process through which an individual is developed into a holistic personality. In

this line, the effective support and enhanced learning are major factors that can contribute to sustain democracy and minimize inequality in education, because equity and equality are connected as inseparable features of good education provision. The ability to foster quality and equality requires awareness of the obstacles that an individual faces in achieving their potentiality in education.

It is reported that a considerable percent of school aged children show evidences of specific learning disabilities and they are be considered as children with special needs (Saravanakumar, 2015). Children with Special Needs are those who deviate mentally, socially, educationally, physically or culturally from normal children. Such children need special educational care and their learning problems need to be tackled in a special manner. Educating these differently abled children is a challenging task in schools.

Children with special needs have always been segregated from their peers. Parents of those children were discriminated and humiliated. That is why; those children with disabilities should be included in main stream education system (Ibid). Every child has the right to be accessible to basic quality education and no child regardless of special circumstances, may

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Recived on 26.03.2018, **Accepted on** 04.05.2018

be denied this right. Many national and international initiatives have been made in this regard during the last fifty years to reiterate the concept of Inclusive education in the national curriculum of the country.

World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca recommendations were based on the principle of inclusion. In the report of conference it was stated that, 'School should accommodate all children of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups.

Inclusion is a concept that sees children with diverse abilities as full time participants in and as members of their neighborhood schools and communities (Hanees, Jazeel, and Saravanakumar, 2013). Inclusive education, therefore, involves all children learning together with their peers in the same environment. Inclusion is a more precise and refined form of mainstreaming and integration. In the process of mainstreaming and integration, it is the child who adapts himself/herself according to the environment of the school. Inclusion is a child-centered policy. It aims at reforming school environment rather than characteristics of children. The focus of inclusion is not only on learning but also on giving them enough psychological and emotional spaces.

Inclusive education extends the scope of the school so that it can include a greater diversity of children. It promotes the value of equality. Students without special needs can learn more about their potentiality and perseverance. The peer tutoring situations can help them to get mastery over the subject matter.

In this context, the roles of teachers are so important in promoting inclusive education for the benefits of the students who were deprived of opportunities for learning as other students. They need to develop their professional skills in handling these students in their schools. They can plan and conduct various tasks for attracting these students and given them a familiar and pleasant environment in schools. For successful Inclusion to take place, there need a team approach among teachers and parents. Teachers have the capacity to work within a collaborative framework to meet the universal needs of inclusive education.

On the whole, the successful implementation of inclusion in education depends largely on the attitude of teachers. They are the key players in reshaping the life of the students, if they are disabled or not. By considering all these factors, investigators decided to

find out the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education in Akkaraipattu Education Zone.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are

1. To find out the extent of attitude of teachers towards Inclusive education.
2. To find out whether there exist any significant difference in the attitude of the teacher towards inclusive education based on gender, locality, and type of schools.

Hypothesis of the Study

1. Most of the teachers do not have positive attitudes towards inclusive education
2. There exists significant difference in the attitude of teacher trainees towards Inclusive education based on gender, locality, and type of schools.

Method of the Study

In this study, survey method was adopted.

Population of the Study

Population of the study consists of all the teachers serving in Akkaraipattu Education Zone.

Sample of the Study

The participants selected for the study consists of 100 teachers from schools in Akkaraipattu Education Zone. The sample was selected by using stratified sampling technique. The strata for selection were based on gender, locality, and type of schools.

Tools for the Study

In this study, the following tools were employed by the investigator to collect necessary data for the study

1. *Attitude Scale on Inclusive Education*: This attitude Scale was developed by moderating the Scale of Reena and Bindhu (2012). It is a Likert type five point Scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). In the case of positive items, the scoring 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 have been given while in the case of the negative items, the scoring were, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. It consists of 40 item under three dimensions such as fundamentals of inclusive education, benefits of

inclusion in education, and government policies on inclusive education. For validating the tool, the test-retest reliability co-efficient was obtained as 0.87 and content validity established.

2. *Personal Data Sheet*: In this instrument, the sample of teachers filled in their personal details such as gender, locality, type of schools, etc. The personal Data sheet was validate using experts opinion.

Procedure for the Study

After selecting of the sample, the investigators made necessary arrangement for the administration of the instrument. The investigators sought permission from the heads of the selected training institutions for administering the instrument. The investigator met the teachers and explained the nature and confidentiality of the study. The Scale and Personal Data Sheets were distributed to them for responding to the items and collected.

Analysis of Data

The Scale responded were scored according to the scoring key prepared for the purpose which ranged for 1- 5 for positive answers in the five options Likert type Scale. Statistical techniques, 't' test and percentage were used for analyzing data according to the objectives of the study.

Results and Discussion

From the data collected from the sample teachers, the following hypotheses which were formed as per research objectives and tested to find out the result of the research study.

Hypothesis-1

The teachers have positive attitude towards inclusive education.

Table 1: Mean Score of Attitudes towards Inclusive Education among Teachers

Variable	Number of teachers	Maximum Obtainable Scores	Mean Scores
Attitudes towards Inclusive Education	100	40	20.23

Table 2: Extent of Attitude of Teachers towards Inclusive Education

Level of Attitude of Teachers	Range of Scores	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Low	8 -15	23	23
Average	16 -24	52	52
High	25 -32	25	25

The Table 1 shows the mean score of the teachers' attitude towards inclusive education at Akkaraipattu Education Zone. The mean score is 20.23 against the maximum obtainable score of 40. This indicates the teachers have average level of attitude. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and concluded that the teachers have positive attitude towards inclusive education.

From the Table 2, it can be seen that 23 per cent of teachers have low level of attitude, 52 per cent of teachers have average level of attitude and 25 per cent of teachers have high level of attitude.

Hypothesis-2

There exists significant difference in the attitude of teacher trainees towards Inclusive education based on gender, locality, and type of schools.

The second null hypothesis of the study is "there exists no significant difference in the Attitude of these

teachers towards Inclusive education between male and female, between teachers working in national and provincial schools and between teachers working in rural and urban schools". The data collected are tabulated in the tables below.

From Table 3, it can be seen that the 't' value calculated is 2.43 at 0.5 significant level. It is more than the critical value of 1.96. Therefore the null hypothesis rejected. Hence it is concluded that there is a difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education in terms of gender. The mean score of female teachers is higher than that of male teachers, the female teachers have more positive attitude than male teachers about inclusive education.

From Table 3, it can be seen that the 't' value calculated is 1.99 at 0.5 significant level. It is more than critical value of 1.96. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence it is concluded that there is difference in the attitude of teachers towards

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation and t value of the Scores of Attitude towards Inclusive Education in terms of gender, type of schools and locality of schools

No	Teachers	N	Mean	SD	t value
1	Male	68	25.97	8.89	2.43
	Female	32	28.46	8.10	
2	National School	02	32.45	6.42	1.99
	Provincial School	24	23.12	6.08	
3	Urban School	06	20.13	7.32	2.34
	Rural School	20	26.02	3.23	

*p.<0.5

inclusive education in terms of type of school. The mean score of national school teachers is higher than that of provincial school teachers, the national school teachers have more positive attitude than provincial school teachers about inclusive education.

From Table 3, it can be seen that the 't' value calculated is 2.34 at 0.5 significant level. It is more than critical value of 1.96. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence it is concluded that there is difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education in terms of locality of school. The mean score of urban school teachers is higher than that of rural school teachers, the urban school teachers have more positive attitude than rural school teachers about inclusive education.

The Major Findings of the Study

1. Most of the teachers have positive attitude towards inclusive education
2. Twenty three per cent of teachers have low level of attitude, 52 per cent of teachers have average level of attitude and 25 per cent of teachers have high level of attitude.
3. There is a difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education in terms of gender. The mean score of female teachers is higher than that of male teachers, the female teachers have more positive attitude than male teachers about inclusive education.
4. There is difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education in terms of type of school. The mean score of national school teachers is higher than that of provincial school teachers, the national school teachers have more positive attitude than provincial school teachers about inclusive education.
5. That there is difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education in terms of locality of school. The mean score of urban school teachers

is higher than that of rural school teachers, the urban school teachers have more positive attitude than rural school teachers about inclusive education.

Discussion

Many similar studies done also strengthened these results. Nayak (2008) studied on attitude of parents and teachers towards inclusive education. The findings of the study revealed that there most of the teachers have positive attitudes about inclusive education. Conversely, in the study conducted in Solomon Islands, it was found that the teacher educators and pre-service teachers had unfavourable attitude on special education and inclusive practices (Kalvya, Gojkovic, and Tsakiris,2007) studied teachers' attitude of inclusion in education. The results indicated that most of the teachers had unfavourable attitude due to various challenged faced in implementing inclusion.

In the light of these research findings, the investigator found that the degree of success of inclusion depends on several factors, perhaps, the most important being teachers' perception, attitude and opportunity for collaboration (Jazeel, 2016). Teachers' attitude has to be the heart of initiatives for implementing inclusive practices in schools. This necessitates the building competencies of all the teachers in handling the students who are included with mainstream leaning in the classroom. Inclusive education system requires highly skilled teaching force. It is now widely accepted that the most effective way to improve the quality of education programmes in inclusive setting is to train the school teachers and teacher educators for inclusion in education.

Teachers require awareness and attitude on various aspects of diverse abilities of students who are included in studies. Such an awareness and attitude will lead to gaining comprehensive

competencies in teaching. A teacher with positive attitude in handling the affairs of inclusion in education is an asset to the country and to the students who missed education for various reasons.

Conclusion

The findings of the study reveal that the attitude of teachers is favorable towards Inclusive education. However, the difference between favorability and unfavour ability is narrow. By considering the gender, locality of the school and the type of school, there are significant differences observed towards inclusive education.

From the results, it is concluded that the teachers should be given more awareness about inclusive education though most of them have shown positive attitude. It is further concluded that the male teachers, the teachers attending from rural area and the teachers teaching provincial schools should be given training and the importance of inclusive education to upgrade the education in Akkaraipattu education zone.

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