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Attitude of teachers towards inclusive education at elementary level of Golaghat District, Assam (India)

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Abstract---In recent years Inclusive Education has emerged as one of the most dominant issue in education. However, inclusive education can be defined as a system where children with special needs and children without special needs from a given community learn together in the same school, it helps both the children with or without disability. In India various policies were implemented for making the process successful. But in reality there are number of students with special needs who are segregated from the system of inclusive education and one of the barrier in the practice of inclusive education is presented by the teacher's attitude towards inclusion. In order to take the process of inclusion into an educational system as a part of a social process, the teacher should realize its importance to a great extent. So the researcher wants to examine to which extent teachers in elementary schools accept the notion of inclusion of children with special needs. Moreover, the researcher also wants to explore the other challenges and barriers towards the implementation of Inclusive Education in elementary education. To make education as a birth right to all, Inclusive Education is absolutely should be the need of the hour.

Keywords---inclusive education, CWSN, attitude, teacher, elementary education.

Introduction

To bring social change and elevate our society, we should take education as the most important consideration. That is why education is our birth right. However, “Education is not simply about making schools available for those who are already able to access them. It is about being dynamic in identifying the barriers and challenges that learners experience for accessing quality education, as well as

in removing those barriers and challenges that lead to exclusion.” (Federico & Alfredo, 2013)

Shiba et al. (2020) endorsed India as a democratic country ensures equality of all citizens is one of the core characteristics of its Constitution. To achieve this, India needs to provide equal educational opportunities to all individuals irrespective of those differences such as their socio -cultural and economic background, their gender and their special needs. In this regard Inclusive Education is the need of the hour.

In almost every country, a few children and adults are being eliminated from school. However, some of those who go to school do not complete because the school system is not sensitive to their learning styles and backgrounds. Some students are categorized as special needs children and placed in special school. Sneha (2016) endorsed that this creates two separate system of education within countries regular and special education. However, in recent years the rationale for having two parallel system of education has been questioned and the concept of integration has replaced by inclusive education.

Moreover in Indian education system, the concept of Special School, Integrated Education was existed. According to a 2007 review by Kumar and Khagendra , NPE (1986) favoured inclusion of children with mild disabilities in mainstream classrooms, while advocating separate education of children with moderate to severe disabilities in segregated schools followed by some other commission such as, PWD act,1995, DPEP, SSA 2000-2001, and RTE,2009 which provides for free and compulsory education to all children between the ages 6-14 years.

Theoretical Background

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is the education system which provides educational experiences to the children with special needs in their neighbourhood school with mandatory support and supplementary aids for both students and teacher. It includes children with special needs and children without special needs from a given community and learns together in the same school. As a general point of view “Inclusive education is found to be ethically acceptable, psycho-socially sound, pedagogically commendable and cost effective compared to segregated education” United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 1994).The focal point of this educational programmes is not the accommodation of exceptional children into a general education setting, but concentrating on the restructuring of school to accept and provide adequate support for all students.

Teacher’s attitude towards inclusive Education

Attitudes are conceptualized as relatively stable constructs cognitive, effective and behavioural components and having positive attitude towards inclusion practice can make the process easier and successful. Teachers are the main leading force in the process of successful inclusion as they are the backbone and core of the

whole education system. Rita (2008) endorsed if the teachers are having negative attitude towards inclusive education, then the goal of inclusion cannot be achieved. Again, if it is vice versa it will be the driving force towards successful inclusion. Naturally, the process of inclusion may create problem for regular education teachers, because it is a very tough challenge to deal with the students with special needs and students without special needs in the same classroom and fulfil their varied needs. Research studies by Krisna (2014), and Tskiridou and K. Polyzapoulou (2014) have revealed that one of the most significant factors determining the success of inclusion is the positive attitude of teacher towards inclusion.

Rational of the study

In Assam it has been seen that large numbers of people live with special needs and it is clear that very little attention has been done for the CWSN. Due to the ignorance of people and apathy of the Government limited facilities are available for education and training of the CWSN in Assam. Mina (2013) endorsed people also have negative attitude and misconception for CWSN; even most of the parents are hesitate to acknowledge that their children as special need.

However, various policies were implemented for making the process successful. But in reality there are number of students with special needs who are segregated from the system of inclusive education and one of the barrier in the practice of inclusive education is presented by the teacher's attitude towards inclusion. In order to take the process of inclusion into an educational system as a part of a social process, the teacher should realize its importance to a great extent. So in the present study researcher want to examine to which extent teachers in elementary schools accept the notion of inclusion of CWSN in Golaghat district of Assam. The present study is based on attitude of elementary level teachers, as elementary level is the basis or foundation of any education system; it has great influence on an individual's academic life. If the foundation or basis of an individual is strong, it will make the life of an individual successful. Therefore, to make the process of inclusion successful, it is necessary to include the CWSN from the beginning of formal education system. It will help the students to cope up with real challenges of life with their peers of without disability.

The result of this study is significant as it will give the information about the attitude of teachers towards effective practice of inclusive education. Again the findings of the study could help in creating awareness among policy maker, practitioners, and other stake holders of the practical scenario of inclusion of children with special needs in general education classrooms. Finally this study may inspire teachers in research setting to revisit their understanding of the notion of inclusive education.

Objective of the study

- To study the level attitude of school teachers towards inclusive education.
- To study the attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education, in relation to their
 - a. gender (Male/Female)

- b. Personal Experience with special needs children.
- c. Professional qualification

Delimitation of the study

- The study is delimited to inclusive education of students with special needs only.
- The study is delimited to the elementary school teachers.
- The study is confined to Golaghat district only.

Methodology

For the present study 'descriptive survey method' is applied to study the attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusion and depending upon the objectives of the study, this method seems appropriate.

Population and Sample of the Study

For the present study school teachers of Golaghat district has been taken as population. And a sample of 73 elementary schools teachers consisting of 43 females and 30 males has been taken from 10 schools of Golaghat district as per the convenience of time and money of the researcher. For selecting the sample the researcher employed 'simple random sampling technique' because here each and every sample has an equal chance of being selected.

Table: 1

The sample students from different schools in Golaghat district

Name of the school	No. of Males	No. of Females	Total
Town Hindi H.S School	4	10	14
Kacharihat Jatiya Vidyalaya	6	3	9
Golaghat Jatiya Vidyalaya	0	7	7
Mahatma Balya Bhawan	3	6	9
Kamarbondha Jatiya Vidyalaya	3	7	10
Kamarbondha H.S School	6	3	9
New Girls M.E School	1	4	5
Borgan Ajoy M.E School	2	2	4
Panka M.V School	5	1	6
Total	30	43	73

Tools Used For gathering the data for this present study researcher used standardized tool named "Teacher Attitude scale towards Inclusive Education" developed by Dr. Vishal Sood and Dr.(Mrs.) Arti Anand.

Data analysis and Interpretation

The present study is based on quantitative technique and the data collected by using TASTIE – SA have to be analyzed according to accepted standards. This process of interpretation including classifying and tabulating the information for a

clear picture about the study on Attitude of Teachers on Inclusive Education at Elementary level. The present study deals with the analysis and interpretation of collected data with the help of statistical techniques such as Mean, S.D, T-Test etc. and reports on and discusses the findings of the study in the light of the set of objectives so as to lead to conclusions and forward recommendations.

Analysis of the Objective 1

Objective 1: To study the level attitude of school teachers towards inclusive education.

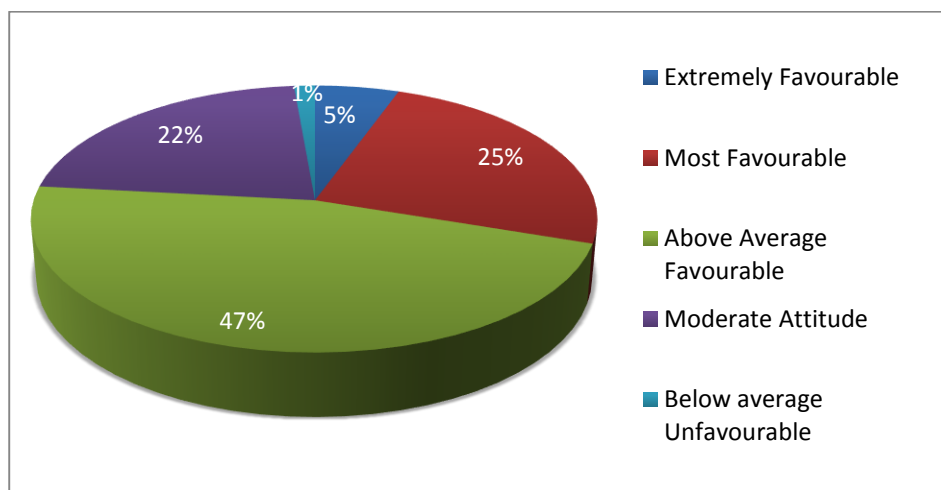
In order to study the attitude of school teachers towards inclusive education, the total scores obtained by teachers were divided into seven categories: Extremely Favourable, Most Favourable, Above Average Favourable, Moderate Attitude, Below Average Attitude, Most Unfavourable Attitude and Extremely Unfavourable Attitude.

The results of the study have revealed that almost half of the teachers (46.57%) have above average favourable attitude towards inclusive education and 24.65 % of teachers have most favourable attitude towards inclusion. On the other hand 21.91% of primary teachers have moderate attitude and only 1.36% of primary teachers have below average unfavourable attitude towards inclusive education. It shows that most of the primary school teachers have positive or favourable attitude towards the inclusion of children with special needs.

Table: 2
Levels of Teachers' attitude towards inclusive education

	Levels of teacher's attitude	N	Percentage of Teacher
1.	Extremely Favorable	4	5.47%
2.	Most Favorable	18	24.65%
3.	Above Average Favorable	34	46.57%
4.	Moderate Attitude	16	21.91%
5.	Below average Unfavorable	1	1.36%
6.	Most Unfavorable	0	0.00%
7.	Extremely Unfavorable	0	0.00%

Graph 2.1: The Percentage of elementary teachers against the level of attitude towards inclusive education



Analysis of the Objective 2

Objective No. 2 (a) To compare the attitude of elementary school teachers in relation to their gender (male/female) towards inclusion. In order to compare the attitude of elementary school teachers in relation to their gender (male/female) towards inclusion, independent sample 't' has been used.

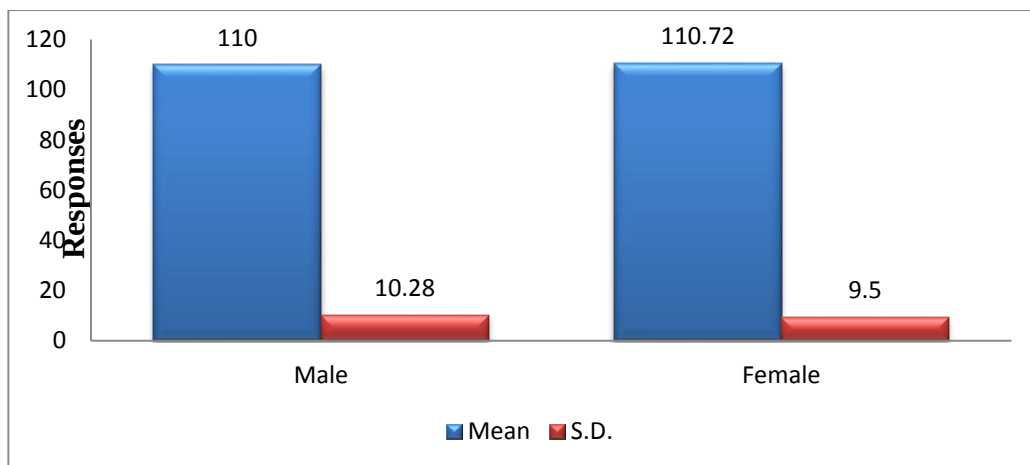
The result on table 3 illustrates that the mean & S.D. of attitude of male primary school teachers is 110 and 10.28. While that of female primary school teachers is 110.72 and 9.50 respectively towards inclusive education. The t-test analysis shows that calculated 't' value is 0.30 which is less than critical t value ($t=1.99$) at df 71 at .05 level of significance. Since the calculated 't' (0.30) is less than the critical t (1.99) it means that the mean difference between male and female teachers attitude towards inclusive education is not significant. , it can be said that attitude of school teachers towards inclusive education is not significantly influenced by gender. The reason might be "both male and female teachers are having awareness about policies and commissions in the field of inclusive education and agreed that inclusive education has become need of the hour." (Mina, 2013)

Table 3
Mean, S.D. 't' value of attitude of Male and Female Primary School teachers towards inclusive Education

Teachers	N	M (Mean)	S.D.	DF	Cal 't' value	Critical t-value	Level of Significance
Attitude of Male School Teachers	30	110	10.288	71	0.308	1.993	Significance

Attitude of Female School Teachers	43	110.720	9.50				at .05 levels.
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Graph 3.1: Difference of the Mean & S.D. value of attitude score between male and female primary school teachers towards inclusive education



Objective No.2 (b) To compare the attitude of elementary school teachers in relation to their Personal Experience with CWSN

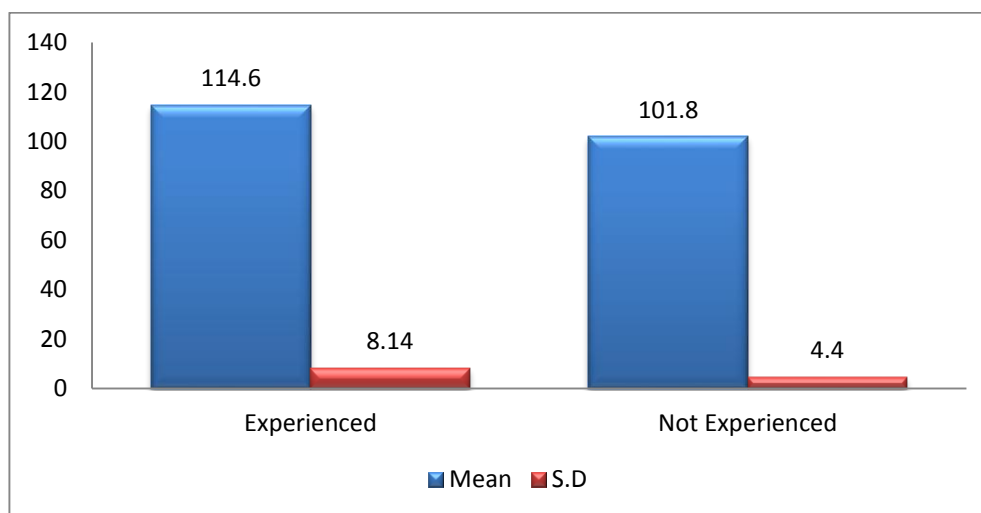
In order to compare the attitude of elementary school teachers in relation to their personal experience (experienced/ not experienced with CWSN) towards inclusion, independent sample 't' has been used. Result on table 4 illustrates that the mean & S.D. of attitude of experienced (personal experience with CWSN) primary school teachers is 114.6 and 8.14 respectively. While that of not experienced (personal experience with CWSN) primary school teachers is 101.8 and 9.92 respectively towards inclusive education. The t-test analysis shows that calculated 't' value is 2.24 which is greater than critical t value ($t=1.99$) at df 71 at .05 level of significance.

Since the calculated t (2.24) is greater than the critical t (1.99) it means that the mean difference between experienced and not experienced teachers with CWSN attitude towards inclusive education is significant. Further, the result also indicates that the mean score of experienced teachers (114.6) is greater than that of not experienced teachers (101.8). So it suggested that the teachers who have personal experienced in teaching CWSN have significantly more favourable attitude towards inclusive education when compared to the teachers who does not have personal experience in teaching CWSN. The reason might be the practical experiences the teacher has which help him/her to understand the need of CWSN.

Table 4
Mean, S.D. 't' value of attitude of experienced Teachers and not experienced Teachers With CWSN towards inclusive Education

Teachers	N	M (Mean)	S.D.	DF	Cal 't' value	Critical t-value	Level of Significance
Attitude of Experienced Teachers (with CWSN)	19	114.6	8.14	71	2.2426	1.993	Significance at .05 levels.
Attitude of not Experienced Teachers (with CWSN)	54	101.8	9.92				

Graph 4.1: Difference of the Mean & S.D. value of attitude score between experienced and not experienced primary school teachers towards inclusive education



Objective No. 2 (c) To compares the attitude of elementary school teachers in relation to their Professional Qualification

In order to compare the attitude of elementary school teachers in relation to their professional qualification (with/without) towards inclusion, independent sample 't' has been used. The result on table 5 illustrates that the mean & S.D. of attitude of qualified (having professional degree) primary school teachers is 116.1 and 8.52. While that of not qualified (not having professional degree) primary school teachers is 107.94 and 9.27 respectively towards inclusive education. The t-test analysis shows that calculated 't' value is 3.56 which is greater than critical t value ($t=1.99$) at df 71 at .05 level of significance. Since the calculated t (3.56) is greater than the critical t (1.99) it means that the mean difference between professionally qualified and professionally not qualified teachers attitude towards inclusive education is significant. Further, the result also indicates that the mean

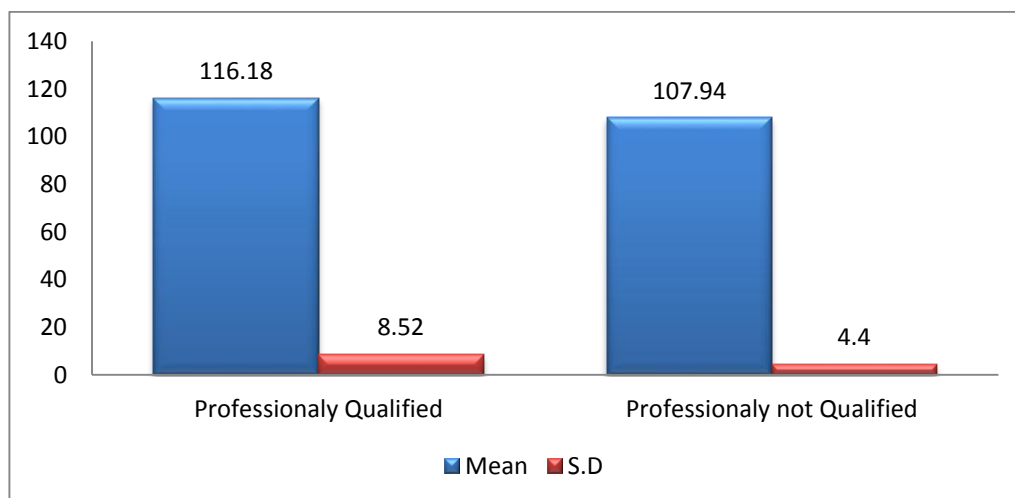
score of professionally qualified teachers (116.1) is greater than that of professionally not qualified teachers (107.94). So it suggested that the teachers who have professional qualification (B.Ed/ D.El.Ed degree) have significantly more favourable attitude towards inclusive education when compared to the teachers who does not have professional qualification

Table 5

Mean, S.D. 't' value of attitude professionally Qualified Teachers and Attitude of professionally Not Qualified Teachers Primary School teachers towards inclusive Education

Teachers	N	M (Mean)	S.D.	DF	Cal 't' value	Critical t-value	Level of Significance
Attitude of professionally Qualified Teachers	22	116.18	8.52	71	3.56	1.993	Significance at .05 levels.
Attitude of professionally Not Qualified Teachers	51	107.94	9.27				

Graph 5.1: Difference of the Mean & S.D. value of attitude score between professionally qualified and professionally not qualified primary school teachers towards inclusive education



Major Findings of the Study

- The results of the study have revealed that almost half of the teachers (46.57%) have above average favourable attitude towards inclusive education and 24.65 % teachers have most favourable attitude towards inclusion. On the other hand 21.91% primary teachers have moderate attitude and only 1.36% primary teacher have below average unfavourable attitude towards inclusive education. It shows that most of the primary

school teachers have positive or favourable attitude towards the inclusion of children with special needs.

- Another findings of the study is that there exists no significant difference between attitudes of male and female elementary school teachers towards inclusive education because the calculated 't' value is less than the standard table value at .05 level of significance. Shiva and Saurav (2020) also supported this finding, as they also found that attitude of elementary school teachers on inclusive education is not influenced by gender.
- There exists a significant difference in the attitude of primary teachers towards inclusive education in respect of personal experience with CWSN. The teachers having personal experience with CWSN have more favourable attitude towards inclusion in comparison to the teachers who do not have personal experience with CWSN.
- Study also revealed that teachers having professional qualification (B.Ed/D.El.Ed degree) have more favourable attitude towards inclusion than the teachers who does not have professional qualification. Similarly studies by Mamta (2019) compared B.Ed and D.El.Ed qualified teacher's attitude on Inclusive Education but could not find any significant difference on their attitude towards Inclusive Education.
- As a secondary source the researcher found that there is 1328 numbers of CWSN enrolled in elementary schools of Golaghat District at present.

Conclusion

The existence of the special needs is not a problem for any society. The special needs are the citizen of the country and are able to contribute for the society; hence they are termed as differently able children. As a citizen of the country, they should have every right to get proper education according to their needs and abilities because every individual has an inherent right to education on the basis of equality of opportunity. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Govt., society, educational institution as well as teachers of this democratic nation to take care of these children. In conclusion, it can be said that inclusive education is a mandate today. Indeed, it is the need of the hour. It becomes a crucial issue in the field of education. To cope up with the 21st centuries' challenging world, our schools need to provide inclusive educational environment in which every child has received equality of education opportunities and individualized instruction where they have the possibility of increasing their performance. So, successful implementation of inclusive education also required proper support such as training, desired teaching-learning materials and also collaboration of administration, policy-makers and government for teachers.

Implications of the Study

- The present study has some empirical implication for teachers. It has been found from the present study that the teachers are already aware about the essential of inclusion of children with special needs in the regular classroom, but still there is need to spread the awareness regarding inclusion of special need children in the regular classroom, because the teachers with no professional qualification and not experienced with CWSN

exhibit less positive attitude towards inclusive education in comparison to professionally qualified and personally experience teachers with CWSN.

- The present study provides implications for the parents and the community members. Special needs are no more considered differently able. The parents of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) children should express positive attitude for the education of their children in the regular classroom along with children without special needs, rather than placing them in separate educational setting, which meant for a particular disability. The parents should also discuss about the children openly if he/she is experiencing any kind of issue, instead of trying to hide their disability. So that the teacher can take effective measures to bring the children to mainstream setting.
- Society plays a crucial role in the process of inclusion. It is the society, who exasperates the condition of the children with special needs by labelling and stigmatizing them, which in turn develops poor self-concept and confidence among children. The present study has its implication for members of the society and they should try to understand that these children are not burden on the nation rather they are the strength of the nation, which can be proved by giving them equal opportunity in every field.
- The present study also has the implications for the administrators or policy makers. The administrators and policy makers should frame policies and laws, where maximum opportunities should be made available for the special needs children. Policies should be framed in such a way that the special needs children can have access to regular classroom, where they get maximum of opportunities to utilize their potentialities to the fullest possible extent.
- Again the present study has implications for the government. Administrators simply can form the policies, but it is duty of the government to execute and implements those in the practical aspects. Government should allot more funds to implement the policies that are framed on behalf of special needs and necessary support service for the teachers.

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