

Teachers' Attitude towards Inclusive Education in Paschim Medinipur District, West Bengal

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Abstract:

From the last half of the 20th century inclusive education has become an important issue for establishing equity and equality in education. Inclusive education is a kind of 'zero rejection' policy where no one student is refuted or neglected by the school in any ground. The main purpose of the study was to find out the level of attitude of secondary school teachers towards inclusive education and to compare in terms of gender, and teaching experience. For finding the attitude towards inclusive education a survey based descriptive research were conducted on conveniently selected 242 secondary teachers from 26 randomly selected schools under WBBSE and WBCHSE in the geographical area of Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal. The researcher finds out that there is alacuna in favorable attitude towards inclusive education and teachers with <10 years of teaching experiences have greater favorable attitude than the teachers with ≥10 years of teaching experiences. So, teaching experience is not an influencing factor for making favorable attitude towards inclusion. The researcher also finds out that female and male secondary teachers don't differin their attitude towards inclusion. The findings suggest that various in-service programmes and courses on inclusive education should be introduced to the general school teachers. Inclusive education should be included in the curriculum of teacher education program on a compulsory basis. The significant difference in attitude suggests that teachers with ≥10 years of experience (older secondary teachers) need to provide in-service program for making favorable attitude towards inclusive education.

Key Words: Inclusive Education, Secondary School Teacher, Attitude, Gender, Teaching Experience

Introduction:

The problem is not how to wipe out the differences but how to unite with the differences intact.

-Rabindranath Tagore

Inclusive education is an important contemporary issue over the world that has mostly emerged in the last half of the 20th century. Inclusive education is a kind of 'zero rejection policy' in the education system but it is not enough for defining inclusion. Inclusive education has great meaning and purpose; it implies heterogeneous grouping, appropriate support service provided for the needy child, teacher concerned on decentralized instructional models, all the teachers having strongly positive attitude towards inclusion, no student feels isolate or segregate from mainstream environment, every people have opportunity to potential development etc. In the word of Anita Julka (NCERT, 2005), "Inclusive education means all learners, young people—with or without disabilities being able to learn together in regular pre-school provisions, schools and community educational settings with appropriate network of support services. An inclusive class may have amongst others, children who are disabled or gifted, street or working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children belonging to religious, linguistic minorities or children from scheduled tribes, scheduled castes or other backward classes." Inclusive education means including not only children with disabilities in the classroom but all children with diverse background and abilities (Sharma and Pradhan, 2010). Inclusion includes physical integration, social integration, and access to normalized educational, recreational, and social activities that occur in school (Ryndack & Alper, 2002).

India has an important appeal of inclusive education from independence. In the articles no. 15, 21A, 45, 46, 51A(k) of the independent Indian constitution has clearly defined about no discrimination in taking education. From the guidance and direction of the constitution, there have various commissions, policies, schemes, projects for implementing education for all. For inclusive education to successfully attain, it is essentially important that principals, teachers and other stakeholders of education maintain a highly positive attitude towards inclusion. Even if inclusive education is mandated by law, strategies and other documents, it will never succeed without the enthusiastic support of its practitioners (Asabella, 2016).

The teacher is an important component of education system who acts in grass-roots level of education. Actually, teachers are the original practitioners of the governmental educational policies, schemes and programmes, e.g. inclusive education as stressed by World Conference on EFA-1990, is not achieved, may be due to lack of competent teacher (Sharma, 2011, p. 18). Here, competent teacher means a teacher with sufficient knowledge, skills, concerns and attitude about inclusive education. So, the attitude of the teacher toward inclusion is a very important factor because their performance in inclusion is very much affected by that factor. Attitude is a feeling about anything that determines the acceptance or dejectedness of that thing. An attitude is a kind of value about a thing. In the word of Anastasi, "An attitude is often defined as a tendency to react favourable or unfavourable towards a designated class of stimuli, such as a national or a racial group, a custom or an institution." According to Avramidis et al. (2000), "Professionals' attitudes may act to facilitate or constrain the implementation of policies.....the success of innovative and challenging programs must surely depend upon the cooperation and commitment of those most directly involved."

It is necessary that teachers who teach and manage the classroom are sensitized and made aware of the philosophy of inclusive education and oriented to the different kinds of adjustments that schools have to make in terms of infrastructure, curriculum, teaching methods and other school practices to relate teaching to the needs of all learners (NCFTE, 2010).

Some Relevant Concepts:

Some people mixed up the concept of integration, inclusion and mainstreaming as one but these are not same. Basic difference lies there.

Integration: In the process of Integration, the learner should be made to learn to adopt the school environment. So, in integration process school systems have no change and it prepares the child for adjusting to traditional unchanged regular school (Nagpal, 2015). Integration programs aim to involve children with diverse abilities into the existing classes and structures within a school. They endeavor to 'normalize', to help a child fit into a pre-existing model of schooling (Loreman, Deppeler and Harvey, 2004, p. 2).

Inclusive education: Inclusion is a process where school system and the environment should be changed or modified for adopting the different child. So, in inclusion process a school system should be changed according to the diverse nature of the child (Nagpal, 2015). Inclusion differs in that it assumes that all children are a part of the regular school system from the very beginning of school (Begum, A., 2017). One goal of inclusion is for every school to be ready in advance to accept children with diverse abilities (Loreman, Deppeler and Harvey, 2004, p.2).

Mainstreaming: Mainstreaming is a process of mobilizing differently able child from special education to integrated education and integrated education to inclusive education.

Review of Related Literature:

Making segregated education as inclusive education is an appeal of the modern world. Post independent India has a great effort for making education as inclusive. Basically, during the past three decades, there has been a movement from segregated education through integration to a point where inclusive education is central to educating the children with disabilities. At present a lot of studies in India and foreign countries have been conducted on inclusive education, but present study was only focused on teacher's attitude toward inclusion.

A study in the USA by **Vaughn et al.** (1996) find out that, the majority of mainstream and special teachers, who were not currently participating in inclusive programmes, had strong, negative feelings about inclusion and felt that decision makers were out of touch with classroom realities (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002).

Avramidis et al. (2000) revealed that the student teachers show positive attitudes toward the inclusion.

A survey on the teachers of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh by **Reddy and Sujathamalini** (2005) show that the school teachers possesses moderate and low attitude and awareness with moderate competency towards including disabled children in the normal school (Balasundaram, 2014).

Regarding inclusive education the teachers' positive attitude was found in Malaysia by a survey study of **Mohammad et al.** (2006).

A study of Mukhopadhyay et al. (2009) in Botswana schools' special education teachers finds out that many student teachers demonstrate unfavourable attitudes and also they complained about the student's deficit.

The study of Chhabra et al. (2010) finds out negative attitudes with some concern of Botswana teachers towards inclusion of disabled students.

Balasundaram (2014) conducted a study in Salem district and finds out highly favorable attitude of teachers towards education of CWSN and teaching in inclusive schools but moderate to low attitude is found towards inclusive schools.

Galovic et al. (2014) revealed that teaching experience is not an important factor in teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education.

Nagpal (2015) conducted a study teachers in Haryana state and findings indicate that a good percentage of teachers have positive attitude towards inclusive education.

Various studies on teachers' attitude towards inclusion indicate inconsistent result. It means that there have some research with findings of positive attitude as well as have some research with findings of negative or moderate attitude towards inclusion. Also, those studies accept 'teacher's attitude' as an important factor for making education with inclusive nature. So, review suggested that the needs of investigation of teachers' attitude towards inclusion over the world and indicating those teachers who have positive and negative attitude and appropriate action should be taken by the educational authorities.

Statement of the Problem:

The major purpose of the study is to measure the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education and area of the study is Paschim Medinipur District in West Bengal. So, the problem may be stated as *"Teachers' Attitude towards Inclusive Education in Paschim Medinipur District, West Bengal"*.

Objectives of the Study:

- 1) To study these secondary school teachers' level of attitude towards inclusive education.
- 2) To compare the attitude of secondary school teachers towards inclusive education in terms of gender differences.
- 3) To compare the attitude of secondary school teachers towards inclusive education in terms of differences in teaching experience.

Hypotheses:

Ho₁ There is no significant difference between the attitude of secondary school female teachers and male teachers toward inclusive education.

Ho₂ There is no significant difference between the attitude of secondary school teachers with <10 years of teaching experiences and teachers with ≥ 10 years of teaching experiences toward inclusive education.

Ho₃ There is no significant difference between the attitude of secondary school female and male teachers with <10 years of teaching experiences towards inclusive education.

Ho₄ There is no significant difference between the attitude of secondary school female and male teachers with ≥ 10 years of teaching experiences towards inclusive education.

Delimitation of the Study:

- 1) Only secondary school teachers in the geographical area of Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal were taken for the study.
- 2) Only the secondary schools under West Bengal Board of Secondary Education and West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education were taken for the study.
- 3) Only the secondary teachers those who are engage in teaching class IX to XII were taken for the study.
- 4) The sample size was delimited to 242 teachers at secondary level (82 females & 160 males) for the study.
- 5) The study was delimited to regular or general secondary school teachers only.

Method:

The present study was carried out with the descriptive survey method followed by the quantitative data analysis technique.

Population, Sample and Sampling Technique:

In the present study, all the secondary school teachers of Paschim Medinipur district under West Bengal Board of Secondary Education and West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education were included as a population. From that population, 242 secondary teachers were included as sample. The researcher has been selected 242 secondary teachers from 26 secondary schools Sabang block and Medinipur municipality. The sample was selected through using simple random sampling technique.

Tool Used:

A standardized attitude scale entitled “Teacher Attitude Scale Towards Inclusive Education (TASTIE) (Sood & Anand)” and developed by Vishal Sood and Arti Anand was used as a tool in the present study to collect data.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data:

After collecting the data from the 242 secondary school teachers about their attitude towards inclusion on TASTIE the researcher analyzed the data by using various statistical methods and Microsoft Excel 2007 program. Data was distributed at seven levels of attitude followed by z-scores transformation of raw scores and other statistics- Mean, Standard Deviation, Percentage, and t-test also used for data analysis and interpretation.

1. Analysis of Data Pertaining to 1st Objective:

[To study the secondary school teachers' level of attitude towards inclusive education.]

Table-1.1: Attitudes Distribution at Seven Levels in terms of Gender and Overall Sample

Levels of Attitude ↓	Overall		Female Teachers		Male Teachers	
	N(242)	% of Teacher	N(82)	% of Teacher	N(160)	% of Teacher
E.F	5	2.07%	1	1.22%	4	2.50%
M.F	10	4.13%	5	6.10%	5	3.13%
A.A.F	28	11.57%	11	13.41%	17	10.63%
M.A	51	21.07%	16	19.51%	35	21.87%
B.A.U	90	37.19%	32	39.02%	58	36.25%
M.U	52	21.49%	13	15.85%	39	24.37%
E.U	6	2.48%	4	4.88%	2	1.25%

N= No. of Teachers

E.F= Extremely Favorable, M.F= Most Favorable, A.A.F= Above Average Favorable,

M.A= Moderate Attitude, B.A.U= Below Average Unfavorable, M.U= Most Unfavorable,

and E.U= Extremely Unfavorable

The table-1.1 representing attitude level at three dimensions—

- On the basis of over all data, there is 17.35 percentage of secondary teachers who have favorable attitude towards inclusion, 21.07 percentages of secondary teachers who have moderate attitude and 61.58 percentages of teachers who have unfavorable attitude towards inclusion.
- At second dimension, on the basis of overall female teachers representing that there is 20.73 percentage of secondary female teachers who have favorable attitude towards inclusion, 19.51 percentages of secondary female teachers who have moderate attitude and 59.75 percentages of secondary female teachers who have unfavorable attitude towards inclusion.
- At third dimension, on the basis of overall male teachers representing that there is 16.26 percentage of secondary male teachers who have favorable attitude towards inclusion, 21.87 percentages of secondary male teachers who have moderate attitude and 61.87 percentages of secondary male teachers who have unfavorable attitude towards inclusion.

Table-1.2: Attitudes Distribution at Seven Levels in terms of Teaching Experience

Levels of Attitude ↓	Teachers with <10 years Experience		Teachers with ≥10 years Experience	
	N(115)	% of Teacher	N(127)	% of Teacher
E.F	3	2.61%	2	1.57%
M.F	6	5.22%	4	3.15%
A.A.F	16	13.91%	12	9.45%
M.A	31	26.96%	20	15.75%
B.A.U	38	33.04%	52	40.94%
M.U	19	16.52%	33	25.98%
E.U	2	1.74%	4	3.15%

N= No. of Teachers

E.F= Extremely Favorable, M.F= Most Favorable, A.A.F= Above Average Favorable,

M.A= Moderate Attitude, B.A.U= Below Average Unfavorable, M.U= Most Unfavorable,

and E.U= Extremely Unfavorable

The table-1.2 represents two attitudinal indices at seven levels in term of Teaching Experience.

- In the first index representing 21.74 percentages of secondary school teachers with <10 years of experience of Paschim Medinipur district have attitude in favorable level, 26.96 percentages have moderate level and 51.30 percentages have unfavorable level towards inclusion.
- In the second index representing 14.17 percentages of secondary school teachers with ≥10 years of experience of Paschim Medinipur district have attitude in favorable level, 15.75 percentages have moderate level and 70.07 percentages have unfavorable level towards inclusion.

Table-1.3: Attitude Distribution at Seven Levels in term of Gender for Teaching Experience

Levels of Attitude ↓	Teachers with <10 years Experience				Teachers with ≥10 years Experience			
	Female		Male		Female		Male	
	N(49)	% of Teacher	N(66)	% of Teacher	N(33)	% of Teacher	N(94)	% of Teacher
E.F	1	2.04%	2	3.03%	0	0.00%	2	2.13%
M.F	3	6.12%	3	4.55%	2	6.06%	2	2.13%
A.A.F	7	14.29%	9	13.64%	4	12.12%	8	8.51%
M.A	11	22.45%	20	30.30%	5	15.15%	15	15.96%
B.A.U	18	36.73%	20	30.30%	14	42.42%	38	40.43%
M.U	7	14.29%	12	18.18%	6	18.18%	27	28.72%
E.U	2	4.08%	0	0.00%	2	6.06%	2	2.13%

N= No. of Teachers

E.F= Extremely Favorable, M.F= Most Favorable, A.A.F= Above Average Favorable,

M.A= Moderate Attitude, B.A.U= Below Average Unfavorable, M.U= Most Unfavorable,

and E.U= Extremely Unfavorable

The table-1.3 represents four attitudinal indices at seven levels in term of sex for two Teaching Experience groups.

- In the first index representing 22.45 percentages of secondary school female teachers with <10 years of experience of Paschim Medinipur district have attitude in favorable level, 22.45 percentages have moderate level and 51.10 percentages have unfavorable level towards inclusion.
- In the second index representing 21.22 percentages of secondary school male teachers with <10 years of experience of Paschim Medinipur district have attitude in favorable level, 30.30 percentages have moderate level and 48.48 percentages have unfavorable level towards inclusion.
- In the third index representing 18.18 percentages of secondary school female teachers with ≥10 years of experience of Paschim Medinipur district have attitude in favorable level, 15.15 percentages have moderate level and 66.66 percentages have unfavorable level towards inclusion.

- d) In the fourth index representing 12.77 percentages of secondary school male teachers with ≥ 10 years of experience of Paschim Medinipur district have attitude in favorable level, 15.96 percentages have moderate level and 71.28 percentages have unfavorable level towards inclusion.

2. Analysis of Data Pertaining to H_{01} :

[H_{01} : There is no significance difference between the attitude of secondary school female teachers and male teachers toward inclusive education.]

Table-2: Result of 't' test on Gender Groups:

Gender Groups →	Female	Male	Observed 't'-value	Levels of Significant	D.F	Critical 't'-value	Null Hypothesis
M	90.28	91.98	0.82	0.05	240	1.97	Not Rejected
S.D	16.08	14.90					

M=Mean

S.D=Standard Deviation

D.F=Degree of Freedom

Considering the mean attitude scores of two gender group t-test has been applied. The table-2 shows that the calculated 't'-value with respect to the level of attitude between the two gender groups is not significant at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the female secondary teachers of Paschim Medinipur district and male secondary teachers of Paschim Medinipur so far their attitude towards inclusive education is concerned.

3. Analysis of Data Pertaining to H_{02} :

[H_{02} : There is no significant difference between the attitude of secondary school teachers with < 10 years of teaching experience and teachers with ≥ 10 years of teaching experiences toward inclusive education.]

Table-3: Result of 't' test on Teaching Experience Groups

Teaching Experience Groups →	< 10 Years	≥ 10 Years	Observed 't'-value	Levels of Significant	D.F	Critical 't'-value	Null Hypothesis
M	94.23	88.85	2.77	0.05	240	1.97	Rejected
S.D	15.74	14.49					

M=Mean

S.D=Standard Deviation

D.F=Degree of Freedom

Considering the mean attitude scores of two teaching experiences group t-test has been applied. The table-3 shows that the calculated 't'-value with respect to the level of attitude between the two teaching experience groups is significant at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, there is a significant difference between the secondary teachers with < 10 years of teaching experience of Paschim Medinipur district and the secondary teachers with ≥ 10 years of teaching experience of Paschim Medinipur district so far their attitude towards inclusive education is concerned.

4. Analysis of Data Pertaining to H_{03} :

[H_{03} : There is no significant difference between the attitude of secondary school female and male teachers with < 10 years of experiences towards inclusive education.]

Table-4: Result of 't' test on Gender Groups for < 10 Years of Teaching Experiences Group

< 10 Years Group →	Female	Male	Observed 't'-value	Levels of Significant	D.F	Critical 't'-value	Null Hypothesis
M	92.00	95.88	1.32	0.05	113	1.98	Not Rejected
S.D	15.83	15.46					

M=Mean

S.D=Standard Deviation

D.F=Degree of Freedom

Considering the mean attitude scores of two gender groups for <10 years of teaching experiences group t-test has been applied. The table-4 shows that the calculated 't'-value with respect to the level of attitude between the two gender group for <10 years of teaching experiences groups is not significant at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the female secondary teachers with <10 years of teaching experiences of Paschim Medinipur district and the male secondary teachers with <10 years of teaching experiences of Paschim Medinipur district so far their attitude towards inclusive education is concerned.

5. Analysis of Data Pertaining to Ho₄:

[Ho₄: There is no significant difference between the attitude of secondary school female and male teachers with ≥10 years of experiences towards inclusive education.]

Table-5: Result of 't' test on Gender Groups for ≥10 Years of Teaching Experiences Group

≥10 Years Group →	Female	Male	Observed 't'-value	Levels of Significant	D.F	Critical 't'-value	Null Hypothesis
M	87.73	89.29	0.52	0.05	125	1.98	Not Rejected
S.D	16.12	13.85					

M=Mean

S.D=Standard Deviation

D.F=Degree of Freedom

Considering the mean attitude scores of two gender groups for ≥10 years of teaching experiences group t-test has been applied. The table-5 shows that the calculated 't'-value with respect to the level of attitude between the two Gender group for ≥10 years of teaching experiences groups is not significant at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the female secondary teachers with ≥10 years of teaching experiences of Paschim Medinipur district and the male secondary teachers with ≥10 years of teaching experiences of Paschim Medinipur district so far their attitude towards inclusive education is concerned.

Findings:

- 1) The researcher finds out that there is a lacuna of favorable attitude towards inclusive education in the secondary school teachers of Paschim Medinipur district. Overall data represent that only 17.35 percentage of secondary teachers who has favorable attitude, 21.07 percentages of secondary teachers who has moderate attitude and 61.58 percentages of teachers who have unfavorable attitude towards inclusion.
- 2) A heterogeneity nature was found within the teachers in terms of attitude towards inclusive education. That means there have teachers' attitudinal controversy for including diverse students in the general or normal school.
- 3) The female secondary school teachers of Paschim Medinipur district are not significantly different from the male secondary school teachers of Paschim Medinipur district with respect to the average attitude towards inclusive education.
- 4) The researcher finds out that the secondary teachers with <10 years of teaching experiences have greater favorable attitude towards inclusive education than the secondary teachers with ≥10 years of teaching experiences.
- 5) The female secondary teachers with <10 years of teaching experiences is not significantly differ from the male secondary teachers with <10 years of teaching experiences with respect to the average attitude towards inclusive education.
- 6) The female secondary teachers with ≥10 years of teaching experiences is not significantly differ from the male secondary teachers with ≥10 years of teaching experiences with respect to the average attitude towards inclusive education.

Discussion and Conclusion:

From the analysis and findings, it is clear that there is a poor condition in the attitude of secondary school teachers towards inclusive education. Most of the teachers revealed their attitude towards inclusion in unfavorable level. Also, there are some secondary teachers with favorable and moderate attitude towards inclusion, but it is not enough for implementing inclusive education. It indicates that there is a great dispersion in the secondary teachers in terms of their attitude towards inclusive education. Interesting that in the same school there are teachers with favorable attitude, moderate attitude and also unfavorable attitude towards inclusive education. Obviously, for progressing Indian education system into inclusive education some existing teachers' favorable attitude towards inclusive education can be used as reinforcement. So, it is important to preserving and improving that favorable attitude towards inclusive education within the regular teacher by the government. The researcher tested that, is there any significant attitude differences in terms of gender, and teaching experience and find out a significance attitudinal difference between the secondary

teachers with <10 and ≥ 10 years of teaching experiences at 0.05 level significance. It indicates that gender (female and male) is not a matter for differentiating attitude towards inclusion and the teachers with <10 years of teaching experiences they are more favor in inclusion than those secondary teachers who are with ≥ 10 years of teaching experiences. So, young teachers have more favorable attitude than older teachers and it also indicated that teaching experience is not a matter for making favorable attitude towards inclusive education because secondary teachers with <10 years of teaching experiences has more favorable attitude towards inclusion than secondary teachers with ≥ 10 years of teaching experiences.

Success in any work depends on mental setup and knowledge about this work. The teacher should have positive attitude and mental setup to deal with the differently able students. The teachers have a great role to make curriculum, to transact curriculum, to maintain discipline and to create an environment in the education system. A great appeal of democratic education is to make education as inclusive nature and it is possible when the teachers have favorable attitudes toward inclusive education.

Finally the researcher concludes that, India has adopted inclusive education to a great extent. However, if the government of India can grow the teachers' knowledge of inclusive education, their professional skills and favorable attitude towards inclusive education, the researcher believed that, India will be reckoned as the best country to make education as inclusive nature.

Recommendations:

India has various efforts to make education as inclusive nature. There have different commissions, committees, programmes, schemes, policies where have various recommendations on making education as inclusive. But there are not remarkable changes in the recommendations advanced by different commissions, committees, programmes, schemes, policies on inclusion. The researcher finds out that there is a lacuna of teachers' favorable attitude towards inclusive education. Overcoming negative attitudes presents an enormous challenge, but it is the key to providing inclusive education (Save the Children, 2002, p.27). In this regard the researcher recommended that—

- 1) Inclusive education should be incorporated in both pre- service and in-service teacher education programme on compulsory basis.
- 2) Both the pre-service and in-service teachers should be exposed to gain knowledge about inclusive education.
- 3) In every school one special teacher should be allotted.
- 4) More and more seminar, workshop, conference should be organized on inclusive education.
- 5) Diploma course, refresher course, summer course etc. should be introduced on inclusive education.
- 6) Those teachers who have favorable attitude towards inclusive education should be identified and used them as a resource person for awareness generation.
- 7) Equal importance should be given to the teachers along with what should be done (curriculum), how should be done (teaching strategies), where should be done (environment) with reference to inclusive education. So, the teachers' mindset should be developed about inclusive education.

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