

ATTITUDES OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS TOWARDS MAINSTREAMING

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ABSTRACT

Mainstreaming, in education is a practice of teaching handicapped children in regular class rooms with non handicapped children to the fullest extent possible. Such children may have orthopedic, intellectual, emotional, or visual difficulties or handicaps associated with hearing or learning. The practice is also called inclusion. Mainstreaming has been of increasing interest since the late 1960s in response to researches showing that many handicapped students learned better in regular than in special classes. The aim of present study is to assess the attitudes toward mainstreaming in which the sample of the study consisted of 100 teachers (50 Special Education Teachers and 50 Regular Class Teachers) and 79 students (29 disabled and 50 normal students). Mainstreaming Attitude Scale (Likert- type) was used as a tool of data collection and ANOVA method was applied for analysis. The obtained results were discussed in view of existing literature and the study was concluded with recommendations for further research on the subject.

Key words: *Mainstreaming, inclusion.*

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INTRODUCTION

Mainstreaming, in education is a practice of teaching handicapped children in regular classrooms with normal children to the fullest extent possible. Such children may have orthopedic, intellectual, emotional, or visual difficulties or handicaps associated with hearing or learning. The practice is also called inclusion. In fact, the terms mainstreaming and inclusion are often used interchangeably in education to day. Mainstreaming has been of increasing interest since the late 1960s in response to a number of factors: research showing that many handicapped students learned better in regular than in special classes.

Mainstreaming has worked well with those segments of the special student population, whose disabilities is compatible with a classroom setting and is felt in general to better prepare special students socially for life after school. It has also helped other school children gain a greater understanding of those with disabilities. It has been controversial, however, with students who have emotional or behavioral difficulties that may be disruptive to the entire class. In addition, some worry that children with special needs cannot be given adequate attention in an integrated class. Thus people vary in their thinking towards specially disabled population as for as mainstreaming is concerned. It becomes essential to understand the psyche of specially those people who are to be involved in mainstreaming/ inclusive education system.

In fact, attitude of teachers and students is paramount to the successful implementation of inclusive education which is complex and vary from one person to another. It plays an important role in determining how people react to a situation and helps in predicting human behavior. Literature (Gormly, 1992 HOITocks, 1964, Magn'e, 1985, Ragland& Saxon, 1985, Sears, Freedman & Peplau, 1985) defines attitude as an internal state that moderates the choices of personal action made by an individual and as such it is an expression of a person's feelings about a thing or situation. This includes a total subjective sum of a person's fears, inclinations, wishes, prejudices, notions, ideas and convictions. This is said to be a result from the impact of the environment, past and present, acting upon the personality of a person.

The variation in attitude of people towards mainstreaming may be because traditionally, children with Special Education Needs (SEN) have been segregated into separate learning environments. This practice is now being questioned by teachers/ professionals who believe it is an infringement of the rights of children with SEN. The proponents of the philosophy of

Mainstreaming are of the opinion that including students with disabilities into general classrooms with other students would maximize their learning experiences. The present study will be an effort to examine the attitudes of teachers and students towards mainstreaming.

Review of Literature

Recommendations to send children with disabilities to mainstream schools were first made in the Sargent Report in 1944, and again in 1964 by the Kothari Commission (Julka, 2005). Despite this, change has been slow specifically in India, with segregation in special schools dominating the scene until recently. Several education acts and promises have been passed or mooted by central government in India in the past years, although they do not seem to tackle the roots of attitudinal barriers to inclusion. For example, in 1993 the Delhi Declaration on Education for All promised to "...ensure a place for every child in a school according to his or her capabilities" (cited in Mukhopadhyay & Mani, 2002). This issue of 'capabilities' is key to the varied interpretations of 'inclusivity' and the focus on the child's abilities is diverting attention away from inadequate teaching methods (Singal, 2005). This is perhaps true for some teachers, but the continued development of government and NGO teacher training programs would also appear to show awareness of the need for pedagogical change.

The 1995 Persons with Disability Act (PDA) states that disabled children should be educated in integrated settings where possible, although it seems that the lack of implementation may be due to there being no enforcement agency for this legislation. In fact, section 71 of the PDA protects the government and local authorities from prosecution (Alur, 2002). As Peters (2004) succinctly points out, "...legislation and policy concerning inclusive education (IE) must be evaluated in the context of progress toward implementation as well as the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation." However, as IE outcomes in developing contexts are such an undeveloped research area (Peters, 2004) it is almost impossible to discover to what extent and how these legislative acts are implemented or not, and what kind of impact they may have at the grass-roots level. Despite the promotion of IE, government documents focus on IE as being about including children with disabilities in the *education system*, but not specifically the mainstream (Singal, 2005).

Literature on the issue of mainstreaming and inclusion is both in favor and against. Jennifer Campbell, Linda Gilmore and Monica Cuskell (2003) conducted an attitudinal study on 247 students and noticed positive attitude towards educational policy of inclusion. Pearl and Umesh Sharma (2005) also conducted similar study on teachers and found positive attitude towards inclusion of students with disabilities in regular education classroom. On the contrary Emad M. Alghazo (2002) found educators having negative attitudes for special students being included in the mainstream. Bowman (1986), in her 14-nation UNESCO study of approximately 1,000 teachers with experience of teaching children with Special need Education (SEN), reported a wide difference in teacher opinions regarding integration. The countries surveyed were Egypt, Jordan, Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela, Botswana, Senegal, Zambia, Australia, Thailand, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Norway and Portugal. The teachers were found to favor different types of children for integration into ordinary classes. Interestingly, Bowman noted that in countries which had a law requiring integration, teachers expressed more favorable views. Teachers from countries which offered the most sophisticated segregated educational provision were less supportive to integration

Leyser, Kapperman and Keller (1994) undertook a cross-cultural study of teacher's attitude towards integration in the USA, Germany, Israel, Ghana, Taiwan and the Philippines. Their findings showed that there were differences in attitude to integration among these countries. Teachers in the USA and Germany had the most positive attitudes. Positive attitudes in the USA were attributed to integration being widely practiced there as the result of Public Law 94-142. The positive views expressed by the German teachers were seen as surprising at the time of the investigation. In fact, Germany had no special education legislation, their teachers were not provided with special education training, their children with SEN were educated in segregated settings and integration was being practiced only on an experimental basis. This finding goes against a simple relationship between legislative system and inclusive attitudes as Bowman's study had suggested. The authors speculated that the positive views expressed by the German teachers represented an overall sensitivity of Germans towards minorities and, thus, towards disabled people. Teacher attitudes were significantly less positive in Ghana, the Philippines, Israel and Taiwan. The authors reasoned that this could probably be due to limited or non-existent training for teachers to acquire integration competencies; the limited opportunities for

integration in some of these countries; and the overall small percentage of children who receive services at all (none of these countries had a history of offering children with SEN specially designed educational opportunities).

Other attitudinal studies from the USA have suggested that general educators have neither developed an empathetic understanding of disabling conditions (Berryman, 1989; Horne and Ricciardo, 1988), nor do they appear to be supportive of the placement of special needs learners in their regular classrooms (Bacon and Schulz, 1991; Barton, 1992). This can be explained by the fact that integration had often been effected in an *ad hoc* manner, without systematic modifications to a school's organization, due regard to teachers' instructional expertise or any guarantee of continuing resource provision. Center and Ward's (1987) Australian study with regular teachers indicated that their attitudes to integration reflected lack of confidence both in their own instructional skills and in the quality of support personnel available to them. They were positive about integrating only those children whose disabling characteristics were not likely to require extra instructional or management skills on the part of the teacher.

However, a UK study by Clough and Lindsay (1991), which investigated the attitudes of 584 teachers towards integration and to different kinds of support, revealed a wider positive view of integration. Their research provided some evidence that attitudes had shifted in favor of integrating children with SEN. They argue that this was partly the result of the experiences teachers had: whether they had developed some competence and if they had not been 'swamped', as some had feared at the time of publication of the Warnock Report (1978). Nevertheless, again responses appeared to vary according to the educational needs presented.

Finally, Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) in their meta-analysis of American attitude studies, which included 28 survey reports conducted from at least 1958 through 1995, reported that although two-thirds (65 per cent) of the teachers surveyed (10,560 in total) agreed with the general concept of integration, only 40 per cent believed that this was a realistic goal for most children and responses, again, appeared to vary according to disabling conditions. Another important finding was that there was no correlation between positive attitudes towards inclusion

and date of publication, suggesting that teachers' views have not substantially changed over the years.

More recent studies have been of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Early American studies on 'full inclusion' reported results which were not supportive of a full placement of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools. A study carried out by Coates (1989), for example, reported that general education teachers in Iowa did not have a negative view of pullout programs, nor were they supportive of 'full inclusion'. Similar findings were reported by Semmel *et al.* (1991) who, after having surveyed 381 elementary educators in Illinois and California (both general and special), concluded that those educators were not dissatisfied with a special education system that operated pullout special educational programs. Another American study by Vaughn *et al.* (1996) examined mainstream and special teachers' perceptions of inclusion through the use of focus group interviews. The majority of these teachers, who were not currently participating in inclusive programs, had strong, negative feelings about inclusion and felt that decision makers were out of touch with classroom realities. The teachers identified several factors that would affect the success of inclusion, including class size, inadequate resources, the extent to which all students would benefit from inclusion and lack of adequate teacher preparation. However, in studies where teachers had active experience of inclusion, contradictory findings were reported; a study by Villa *et al.* (1996) yielded results which favored the inclusion of children with SEN in the ordinary school. The researchers noted that teacher commitment often emerges at the end of the implementation cycle, after the teachers have gained mastery of the professional expertise needed to implement inclusive programs. Similar findings were reported by Le Roy and Simpson (1996) who studied the impact of inclusion over a three-year period in the state of Michigan. Their study showed that as teachers' experience with children with SEN increased, their confidence to teach these children also increased. The evidence seems to indicate that teachers' negative or neutral attitudes at the beginning of an innovation such as inclusive education may change over time as a function of experience and the expertise that develops through the process of implementation. Pearl subbam and Dr Umesh Sharma (2005) investigated that Victorian teachers are positively inclined towards the philosophy of inclusive education. F kurniawati, A Minnart, F Mangunsong, and W Ahmed (2012) investigated that teachers are in favor of inclusion and their attitudes seem to be related

to their teaching experiences and training in special education. J C -Johnson ,Y H-Johnson and Norissa G.L. Newton (2014) noticed that teaches generally have positive attitudes towards inclusion. However, lack of funding, administrative support and minimal opportunities for training and development were identified as negative influential factors on teachers attitudes investigated.S Vaz, N Wilson, M Falkmer, A Sim, M Scott,R Cordier and T Falkmer (2015) the effect of age , gender, teaching efficacy and training on teachers attitude towards inclusion.

AIM

To measure and compare the attitude of normal teachers, special educators, special students and normal students towards mainstreaming.

METHOD

Hypotheses

There is no difference in the attitude of four different groups towards mainstreaming

Design

This study explores attitude of teachers and students towards Mainstreaming in education. The data had been collected from Bhopal district and the subjects are divided in four groups i.e 50 normal teachers, 50 special educators , 50 normal students and 29 special students which resulted a total of one hundred and seventy nine sample group that participated in the study.

The descriptive statistics tables that follow present the full distribution of frequencies and percentages of the study sample according to gender.

Procedure

For this study an instrument titled Attitudes Towards Mainstreaming Scale (ATMS) by Green, K. & Harvey, D. (1983). has been used. This scale items were translated in Hindi and given to five judges for evaluation and correction. It consists of 23Likert-type attitudinal statements to which respondents indicate whether they agree or disagree with the statement using a five-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The research instrument was divided into two sections. Section A required the respondents to provide their biographical

information, section B was the research statements or items starting from statements 1 to item 23 presented in a 5-point format (strongly agree to strongly disagree).

The scale (ATMS) was administered individually and as well as in group also. The doubts raised by the subjects were clarified and special emphasis was given to obtain genuine responses. The scoring was done manually. Minimum and maximum possible score range on the scale is 23 to 115. The score up to 46 is considered to be indicator of positive attitude towards mainstreaming.

RESULTS

The descriptive statistics results presented in table 3 above reflect mean and SD of the four groups which suggested normal teachers, normal students and special educators have positive attitude towards mainstreaming. Special students have negative attitude towards mainstreaming in comparison to rest of the three groups.

The obtained value in Table 4 is highly significant, which suggested that there is no homogeneity in the four groups.

Table 5 presents analysis of variance (ANOVA) results which suggested that the means of all the four groups differ significantly.

Table 6 reflects comparison among groups. No significant difference was noticed between normal teachers and special educators as far as attitude towards mainstreaming is concerned. There was a significant difference between normal teachers and students (both groups) which suggested normal teachers have more positive attitude towards mainstreaming in comparison to normal students and special students. There was no significant difference between special educators and normal students in their attitude towards mainstreaming. There was a significant difference between special educators and special students which suggested special students are having more negative attitude towards mainstreaming. There was a significant difference between normal students and special students which suggested normal students are having more positive attitude towards mainstreaming.

DISCUSSION

The nature of attitude according to descriptive statistics (table No. 3) regarding mainstreaming differs in all the groups which is further supported by analysis of variance results (table no.5) . Hence the hypothesis that there is no difference in attitude towards mainstreaming in four groups is being rejected. However positive attitude was noticed in normal teachers, normal students and special educators for mainstreaming in education, which is partially supported by Pearl Subban and Umesh Sharma (2005). They carried out a study on teachers and noticed positive attitudes towards inclusion. Similar study was carried by Emad M. Alghazo (2002) but noticed negative attitudes of educators towards inclusion of disabled students in regular education classroom. The study conducted by Jennifer, Campbell, Linda Gilmore and Monica Cuskelly (2003) on students found positive attitude towards educational policy of inclusion. The findings further more suggested that being in the same classroom with special students improves the knowledge and they became more positive in their attitude towards special students. No significant difference was noticed in attitude of normal teachers and special educators(table No.6) towards mainstreaming though the reviewed studies (Barnatt Kabzems, 1992, & Minke *et al.*, 1996) reveal that the teachers who have more experience with disables and are older in age have more favorable attitudes towards integration of students with learning disabilities into regular classroom.

Significant difference was noticed between normal teachers and normal students though both have positive attitude towards mainstreaming. This may be due to age (the teachers were older than students) as noticed in the above mentioned review study. Significant difference was noticed between normal teachers and special students. Special students have negative attitude towards mainstreaming and significantly differ with rest of the three groups (normal students, normal teachers and special educators). They (special students) were interviewed individually and the opinions were collected as a group also to ascertain the reasons of negative attitudes towards mainstreaming. The findings of individual interview and as a group opinions were similar. They believe and have apprehension that normal students may make fun of them and can cheat also. They also expressed that normal teachers and special educators may differentiate them in the normal classroom. All special students were in favor of separate schooling for them.

No significant difference was noticed between special educators and normal students both have positive attitude towards mainstreaming which is supported by studies mentioned above.

CONCLUSIONS

1 Normal teachers, Special Teachers and normal students are having positive attitudes towards mainstreaming.

2 special students are having negative attitude towards mainstreaming.

3 Normal teachers are having more positive attitude in comparison to normal student and special teachers comparatively.

4 special teachers are having more positive attitude towards mainstreaming in comparison to normal students.

RECOMMENDATION

There is need to carry out a study on larger sample of special students to understand their psyche because they have revealed a negative attitude towards mainstreaming in education.

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Table 1: Gender

Respondents	Frequency	Percent
Male	84	46.9
Female	95	53.1
Total	179	100.0

Table 2: Groups

	Frequency	Percent
Normal Teachers	50	27.9
Special Educators	50	27.9
Normal Students	50	27.9
Special Students	29	16.2
Total	179	100.0

Table 3: Descriptive ATMS Scores

Respondents	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Normal Teachers	50	44.2200	12.65925
Special Educators	50	49.1000	13.97994
Normal Students	50	52.4600	9.45496
Special Students	29	69.0000	6.77179

Table 4: Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
10.053	3	175	.000

Table 5: ANOVA

ATMS Scores	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	11836.69	3	3945.563	29.899	.000
Within Groups	23093.50	175	131.963		
Total	34930.19	178			

Table 6: Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: ATMS Scores

Dunnett C

(I) Groups	(J) Groups	Mean Difference (I-J)
Normal Teachers	Special Educators	4.8800
	Normal Students	8.2400(*)
	Special Students	24.7800(*)
Special Educators	Normal Teachers	4.8800
	Normal Students	3.3600
	Special Students	19.9000(*)
Normal Students	Normal Teachers	8.2400(*)
	Special Educators	3.3600
	Special Students	16.5400(*)
Special Students	Normal Teachers	24.7800(*)
	Special Educators	19.9000(*)
	Normal Students	16.5400(*)

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.