

## Understanding the Attitude of Teachers, Peers, and Parents Towards Inclusive Education in Bhutan

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### Abstract

This study explored the attitudes of Bhutanese teachers, parents, and general students (other than children with SEN) towards inclusive education. A cross-sectional survey questionnaire was used as the main instrument to collect data from teachers (n= 20), children (n= 70) from the inclusive classroom, and parents (n= 34). The findings of this study showed there were no statistically observed differences in teacher attitude in terms of teacher gender, experience, and qualification. However, there was a statistically significant difference in teacher satisfaction when teacher training in relevant fields was considered. Further, the results of simple linear regression showed that teacher training in the relevant field of special education accounted for 54% variance in teacher satisfaction. The result of this study showed that peers and parents were satisfied with inclusive education. The findings have implications for policy planners, curriculum developers, teachers working in SEN schools and parents.

### Keywords

Attitudes  
Inclusive education  
Mainstream classroom  
Special educational needs

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### Introduction

Recent developments in the field of inclusive education have led to a renewed interest in children with learning disabilities in schools. There are children with different disabilities who are put together in mainstream classrooms as part of an inclusive education programme, also called Special Educational Needs (SEN) and this has become a general trend all over the world (Boer et al., 2010). The need to include all children in schools is a priority for all forms of governments around the world (Paseka & Schwab, 2020). Inclusive education is therefore the call to the answer, where children with disabilities also have equal rights and access to educational attainments (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2021).

The first SEN programme in Bhutan was introduced in 2002. “The long-term objective of the SEN programme is to provide access to general education in regular schools for all children with disabilities, including those with physical, intellectual and other types of impairments” (MoE, 2021, p.47). Currently, in Bhutan, there are 1025 SEN children enrolled in 39 schools spread across the country (Ministry of Education and Skills Development [MoESD], 2023). As an increasing number of mainstream schools in Bhutan are being

converted into inclusive schools that accommodate children with disabilities due to increasing enrolment, it remains important to understand the attitudes of teachers, parents, and peers towards inclusive education. A previous study conducted by Paseka and Schwab (2020) in Germany also emphasised the need to include various stakeholders, such as parents, peers, and teachers in a better understanding of the implementation of inclusive education. Furthermore, the need to understand and gain better insights from various stakeholders was also recommended (Boer et al., 2010). As a result, many studies have been undertaken in the past to evaluate the impact of inclusive education in the mainstream school system (Engelbrecht, 2015; Florian & Linklater, 2010; Hanssen & Erina, 2021). However, many of these studies were representative of Western understanding and scholarship. In Bhutan as well, it is not a new topic of interest, several studies have been carried out, for instance, Bhutanese pre-teachers and teachers' perspectives on inclusion (Dorji et al., 2019; Chhetri, 2019; Chhetri et al., 2020; Kamenopoulou & Dukpa, 2017); parents' perspective (Jigyel et al., 2018; Jigyel et al., 2021), and school leaders' perspective (Subba et al., 2019). However, there are limited studies concerning students' (peers) perceptions towards inclusion, and most of the past studies in Bhutanese contexts did not study these three different perspectives such as that of parents, peers, and SEN teachers together.

Unlike past studies, this study reports on the perceptions from three groups namely, SEN teachers, peers, and parents, which according to Boer et al. (2010) is an important success indicator of an inclusive school system. The inclusion of these three important stakeholders may substantiate the understanding in the field of inclusive education, from the perspective of a developing country context. Hence this remains an area of inquiry to uncover how SEN teachers, peers, and parents' attitudes towards children with disabilities matter. The context of this current study is Changangkha Middle Secondary School (CMSS), where the SEN programme was introduced in 2002 'to integrate children with disabilities into mainstream schooling' (MoE, 2021). The school currently has 105 students identified with varying disabilities, from mild to severe forms requiring support.

The findings of this study contribute to knowledge of participant school's existing situations of inclusive programmes, particularly in the field of effective inclusive classroom practices and plan for further improvement. Likewise, studying the general students' acceptance of students with SEN and the attitude of the parents toward the acceptance of their children with SEN by teachers and students without disabilities is expected to further improve inclusive classroom practices. In addition, this study makes a small but original contribution to the knowledge of SEN and inclusive education programmes in Bhutanese schools in two ways. Firstly, owing to the limited studies and literature on inclusive classrooms, this study intends to add knowledge to a better understanding of Bhutanese schools by finding out the current situation and practices in the classrooms. Secondly, with the aim to examine the teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, it is expected to contribute to reforming teacher development strategy in schools with SEN programmes and support in devising innovative measures to enhance quality education for both students with and without disabilities. Parents believed that there was sufficient care given to their children by the teachers, and similarly,

parents expressed satisfaction while the need to build teacher expertise was felt (Jigyel et al., 2018). Therefore, in order to get a deeper understanding of the existing situation of inclusive classrooms at CMSS, a need to study was felt in the areas of teachers' attitudes towards inclusive classrooms, general students' (other than children with SEN) acceptance of children with SEN in their classrooms and; the perspectives of parents, teachers and then peers of children with SEN towards inclusive education. Hence, the following eight questions were examined for further analysis:

1. What is the teachers' attitude towards contextual background and current practices of inclusive classroom teaching?
2. What are the levels of teacher's job satisfaction working with SEN children?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference in teachers' attitudes towards contextual background, current practices, and teacher job satisfaction based on gender?
4. Is there a statistically significant difference in teachers' attitudes towards current practices and teacher job satisfaction based on teaching experience and teacher qualification?
5. Is there a significant relationship between teacher job satisfaction and teacher training in a special education-related field of study?
6. Can training and specialisation in a special education-related field of studies predict a teacher's level of job satisfaction?
7. What is the general students' acceptance of children with SEN in the inclusive classroom?
8. What is parents' attitude towards the acceptance of their children with SEN by teachers and students in the inclusive classroom?

Therefore, understanding the perspectives of three important stakeholders in inclusive education is necessary.

## Literature Review

The education system in Bhutan encourages education for all (Chhetri et al., 2020). Inclusion is defined as an ongoing process and the search for new ways to respond to diversity, the identification and eradication of barriers through breakthroughs in policy and practice; the presence, involvement, and success of all students (UNESCO, 2005).

There are 39 inclusive schools in Bhutan, where children with unique educational requirements are accommodated in regular classrooms (MoESD, 2023). For the implementation of inclusive education in classrooms, numerous aspects such as teachers' attitudes, physical context, students' attitudes in general, and parents' attitudes toward inclusive practices are crucial (de Boer, 2015). In addition, the class size, teachers' competence, and financial and curriculum constraints have a direct impact on effective inclusive classroom practices, according to Engelbrecht (2015). Similarly, the concern of teachers regarding the inclusion of children with SEN in the general classroom is a determinant of the effectiveness of inclusive classroom practices. However, in the Bhutanese education system, the rigid curriculum, the lack of collaboration amongst education stakeholders, and the lack of financial

resources are significant obstacles to inclusive education (Chhetri et al., 2020; Dorji, 2015; Schuelka, 2012).

### **Teacher attitudes towards inclusive education**

Important indicators of inclusive education achievement are teacher competence and education (Dukpa, 2014; Kurniawati et al., 2017). Among numerous potential predictors and variables on teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education, previous research has revealed that teachers' attitudes appear to be one of the most influential aspects on the performance of an inclusive classroom (Sarurai, 2017). For example, Kurniawati et al. (2017) reported in their comprehensive literature review of 26 research publications that, in general, teachers had a more negative than favourable attitude toward inclusive education. Similarly, Kurniawati et al. (2017) proclaimed that teachers had neutral or negative opinions toward the inclusion of students with special needs in their normal primary education. On the other side, Bhutan was stated to have a contrasting stance toward inclusive education (Chhetri et al., 2020). The survey conducted with pre-service and beginning teachers in Bhutan reported a favourable attitude toward inclusive education.

Besides teacher attitude, several other factors were found to be associated with teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. Past research has demonstrated that teacher experience and attitude toward inclusive education vary. For example, the more experience and training a teacher has, the more positively they see inclusive education, and vice versa (Saloviita, 2020). In addition to teaching experience, a substantial positive correlation has been recently found between teacher training and student academic attainment (Chhetri, 2019), also claimed by several other studies (Alghazo & Naggar-Gaad, 2004; Glaubman & Liftshitz, 2001).

Existing literature showed conflicting results in terms of teacher teaching experience, teacher qualification and gender of teachers towards inclusive education. As per Alghazo and Naggar-Gaad (2004), positive and statistically significant differences between teachers with one to five years of teaching experience held significantly more positive attitudes towards the inclusion of students with SEN compared with teachers with six to 11 years of teaching experience and those with 12 or more years of experience,  $F(2, 149) = 10.3, p = 0.05$ . Glaubman and Liftshitz (2001) also found that teachers with fewer years of teaching experience (1-10 years) were significantly more positive than their counterparts with more experience (>11 years),  $F(1, 108) = 4.73, p < 0.05$ . In contrast, the Kruskal-Wallis tests found no statistically significant results for the variable years of teaching experience  $\chi^2(3) = 1.65, p = 0.65$ . In addition, no significant result was reported for the influence of experience with SEN students in classrooms ( $\chi^2(3) = 5.90, p = 0.12$ ) (de Boer, 2012). Likewise, no differences in teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education scores were observed between teachers' qualifications in a study conducted in Finland with 824 classroom teachers, 575 subject teachers, and 365 special education teachers (Saloviita, 2020). The result of their study found statistically significant differences between male and female teachers towards inclusion. The female teachers showed a slightly more positive attitude than their male counterparts. Contrarily, de

Boer (2012) did not find significant results in terms of gender ( $U = 150.0$ ,  $z = -0.85$ ,  $p = 0.39$ ). According to a study conducted by Yadav et al. (2015), teachers were concerned about student achievement and feared that their children would receive low test scores. In addition to academic problems, teachers' lack of confidence in their ability to teach students with special educational needs was reported. Conversely, research conducted in the past has consistently demonstrated that inadequate teacher training leads to low job satisfaction among teachers. It was also discovered that teachers did not consider themselves capable and confident enough to instruct children with special needs (Kurniawati et al., 2017).

### **Students' attitudes towards inclusive education**

Positive peer relationships are crucial indications of a child with a disability's successful growth (Schwab, 2015). Literature has also demonstrated that, in addition to teachers, the attitude of students (peers) plays a significant role in the effectiveness of inclusive education (de Boer, 2012). Further, it has also been found that students with disabilities often experience difficulties in being accepted by peers (Symes & Humphrey, 2010). While there is a dearth of literature to substantiate our claim yet few studies exist and have examined the student (peer) attitude towards students with disabilities (de Boer, 2012; Malinen & Savolainen, 2008; Schwab, 2015). Hence, peer attitudes towards children with SEN remains understudied. Also, these studies are not recent and, as such remains to be further investigated.

The findings of Schwab (2015) in Austria involving 115 pupils identified as SEN showed that students with SEN scored lower on four identified sub-themes of social participation (friendships, interactions, peer acceptance and self-perception of social integration) while students without SEN, friendships and peer acceptance were significantly higher in inclusive classes than in regular classes. Furthermore, the results of a review of the literature suggests that peers of students with disabilities, in general held a neutral attitude towards students with disabilities (de Boer (2012d). However, a study of 523 university students in China revealed negative attitudes towards inclusion and suggested that these students were reluctant to accept students with disabilities (Malinen & Savolainen, 2008).

### **Parents' attitudes towards inclusive education**

The attitude of parents toward inclusive practices in the classroom is an additional factor that must be addressed when determining the success of inclusive education (Paseka & Schwab, 2020). Moreover, it seems to be of equal relevance to know parents' perspectives on inclusive behaviours. According to Dimitrios et al. (2008), more than sixty per cent of Greek parents of children with disabilities supported inclusion and the notion of mainstreaming. The survey results of 198 parents (51 mothers and 68 fathers) living in Thessaly concluded that 65 percent of the parents considered inclusion helped their children prepare for the transition to the real world, while 63.9 per cent stated that it affords them the chance to engage and connect with other classmates. However, with regard to parents' satisfaction, only 27.3 per cent had been satisfied with the service of special classes that alarmed the parents' approval of special education in the Greek setting.



According to Jigyel et al. (2018), parents' perceptions of how inclusive education impacts their children have raised many crucial issues. Positive social impacts, increased care and assistance in schools, and greater emphasis on mobility and speech development for kids were reported. When parents were no longer required to constantly worry about their children, they felt relief. Due to these findings, it is crucial to promote inclusive education via a programme that educates individuals about the origins and impacts of disability.

## Methods

### Research Design and Participants

In this research, a survey design was adopted as it supports finding a quantitative or numeric report of attitudes, views or trends by studying a sample of the intended group of population (Creswell, 2014). The data for this study were collected from 70 students, 34 parents of children with special educational needs, and 20 teachers teaching in the inclusive classroom. The sample size was generated using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula with a confidence level of 95%. Students were selected based on stratified random sampling, which represented each class level and parents were selected using a simple random sampling. All teachers teaching inclusive classrooms (Pre-Primary-VI) were included.

### Research Instrument

The research instrument selected for this research was adapted from de Boer et al. (2012a) study called Attitude Survey Towards Inclusive Education (ASIE). All three groups (teachers, parents, and peers) completed this survey. The teacher questionnaire contained three parts. Part A contained the background information of the teacher respondents addressing the highest qualification; number of years in teaching; educational background on Special Education, grade level of teaching; class strength and number of children with special educational needs in their classes. Similarly, Part B contained the teachers' attitude towards contextual background where inquiry on the physical ambience and resources in the classroom was made. Part C contained the current practices in teaching inclusive classrooms.

The questionnaire for students covered two parts. Part A covered the background information of the respondent addressing the class and gender, and part B dealt with students' attitudes towards the acceptance of children with SEN in their classroom. The parents' survey also contained two parts. Part A contained the parents' attitude to the acceptance of their children with SEN by a teacher in the inclusive classroom. Part B contained the parents' attitude to the acceptance of their children with SEN by other general students in inclusive classrooms. The responses for teachers Part B and Part C, students questionnaire part B and parents questionnaire Part A and Part B were measured with the construction of a five-point scale, which identifies different scales of opinion level from Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5).

Prior to gathering data from participants, approval was sought from the school research committee, and written consent letters were sought from students and parents. Table 1 contains demographic information about the teacher participants.

**Table 1**

*Teacher Participant Demographics*

		Frequency	Percent
Qualification	PTC/ZLT	2	10
	Diploma	2	10
	Bachelors	13	65
	Masters	3	15
Teaching experience	Less than 5 years	3	15
	6-10 years	4	20
	11-15 years	2	10
	16-20 years	7	35
	21 years and above	4	20
	Total	20	100

Note: PTC (Primary Teaching Certificate); ZLT (Zhungkha Language Teaching-National Language Teaching)

**Results**

**Descriptive analyses**

Following the normal range for the skewness-kurtosis value of  $\pm 2.58$ , all the dataset items were normally distributed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Therefore, the data in this study appear to be sufficiently univariate and normally distributed. The skewness and kurtosis indices ranged from 0.19 to -1.49 and -0.10 to 2.67, respectively. The internal consistency reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ). The cut-off value for the contextual background was .83 (6 items); current practices (7 items [.88]); job satisfaction (6 items [.73]); General students' attitude towards acceptance of children with SEN in their classroom (5 items [.75]); Parents' attitude towards the acceptance of their special needs child by other students in the inclusive classroom (6 items [.72]); Parents' attitude towards the acceptance of their special needs child by teachers in the inclusive classroom (8 items [.79]). As shown, for all the variables, the ( $\alpha$ ) values exceeded the cut-off value as per the recommendation of Kline (2016).

**Teachers' attitude towards the contextual background and current practices of inclusive classroom teaching**

All the 20 teacher participants showed that the resources and infrastructure needed are low. Overall, Table 2 indicates that the teacher respondents are moderately satisfied with the physical ambience of their classroom setting with a mean score of 3.1. They are satisfied with the appropriateness of the classroom location, classroom size; and requirement of a teacher assistant with mean scores with mean scores all above 3.45. The number of students in the classroom and child-friendly furniture in the classroom are rated to be moderate (see Table 2). However, teachers have expressed their dissatisfaction with the availability of enough appropriate teaching-learning materials for children with SEN.

**Table 2**

*Teachers' Attitude Towards Contextual Background*

Sl. No	Statement	M	SD	Meaning
1	My classroom location is appropriate for inclusiveness.	3.55	1.00	Satisfied
2	My classroom size is spacious for the children with SEN.	3.45	1.15	Satisfied
3	The number of students is manageable for me in my inclusive classroom.	3.30	1.03	Moderate
4	There are enough and appropriate teaching learning materials to be used for children with SEN.	1.95	.61	Unsatisfied
5	The furniture in my classroom is child friendly for my children with SEN.	2.70	1.03	Moderate
6	I need a teacher assistant to assist my children with SEN in my inclusive class.	4.05	1.23	Satisfied

Note: 1.00-1.80=Very Unsatisfied, 1.81-2.60=Unsatisfied, 2.61-3.40=Moderate, 3.41-4.20=Satisfied, 4.21-5.00=Very Satisfied

Similarly, findings showed the average mean ( $M= 3.56$ ;  $SD= 0.38$ ) for the theme teachers' attitude towards current practices, and the overall mean ranged from [2.86-4.14]. Further, Table 3 presents teacher attitudes towards current practices in teaching SEN children. From 20 responses received, six teachers (30%) felt the current practices fell in low, while eight teachers (40%) fell under average and another six teachers (30%) responded as high.

**Table 3**

*Teacher Attitude Towards Current Practices*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low	6	30	30	30
	Average	8	40	40	70
	High	6	30	30	100
	Total	20	100	100	

Table 4 shows the level of satisfaction with the practices of inclusive classroom instruction. Inclusion of children with SEN in the general group, designing of simplified test question papers; and encouragement of general students to help children with SEN seem to be satisfied with mean scores all above 4.25. Planning differentiated lessons, keeping the children engaged and paying individual and extra attention to the children with SEN are rated satisfied with mean scores above 3.55 (see Table 4). The lowest score is 3.35 for the preparation of separate teaching-learning materials for children with SEN.



**Table 4**

*The Current Practices of Your Inclusive Classroom Teaching*

Sl. No	Statement	M	SD	Decision
1	I always plan differentiated instruction in my lessons for children with special educational needs.	3.55	.76	Satisfied
2	I never keep the children with SEN idle while other general students are actively engaged in learning activities.	4.15	.81	Satisfied
3	I include children with SEN in the general groups.	4.35	.94	Very Satisfied
4	I prepare separate teaching learning materials (worksheets, charts etc) for children with SEN.	3.35	.75	Moderate
5	I pay individual and extra attention to the children with SEN in my classroom while teaching.	4.20	.77	Satisfied
6	I design separate simplified test questions for children who have learning difficulties.	4.25	.79	Very Satisfied
7	I encourage general students to help children with SEN do learning activities in my inclusive classroom.	4.55	.61	Very Satisfied

**Levels of teacher’s job satisfaction working with SEN children**

The overall teacher satisfaction of teaching SEN children was average (M= 3.15; SD= 0.31). Furthermore, out of 20 responses received, 45% said they have low job satisfaction, 40% moderate satisfaction; and only 15% indicated having high job satisfaction.

The level of teacher job satisfaction in working with children with SEN and making it an inclusive classroom is presented in Table 5. Out of 6 items, the highest score is 4.50 for the expression of the requirement for more training. On the other hand, the lowest score is for competency in handling children with SEN, with the mean score of 2.60. Teacher respondents do not seem to be happy with what they are doing to make their class an inclusive one, as the mean score is 3.15 indicating neutral. Also, teachers seem unsure about achieving their lesson objectives for different learners, with a mean score of 3.15. With a score of 3.95 and 3.65, the teachers are satisfied with the support of parents and management.

**Table 5**

*Level of Your Job Satisfaction in Working with Children with SEN*

Sl. No	Statement	M	SD	Decision
1	The parents of children with SEN are supportive.	3.95	.83	Agree
2	I am able to achieve my lesson objectives for different learners.	3.15	.88	Neutral
3	I feel I am competent enough to handle children with SEN in my class.	2.60	1.00	Disagree
4	I need more trainings and education to manage inclusive class	4.50	1.05	Strongly Agree
5	I get enough support from management.	3.65	.67	Agree
6	I am happy with what I am doing to make it an inclusive classroom.	3.15	.99	Neutral

### The difference in teachers' attitudes towards contextual background, current practices, and teacher job satisfaction based on gender

Firstly, an independent-sample t-test was conducted to determine if there were differences in teacher attitude towards three identified variables in terms of gender (contextual background, current practices; and then job satisfaction). There was no statistically significant difference for all three variables in terms of gender, for details see Table 6. There were three male and 17 female teacher participants. In the data, there was no presence of missing and outliers. The scores were normally distributed, as shown by Shapiro-Wilk's test ( $p > .05$ )

**Table 6**

*Differences in Contextual Background, Current Practices; and then Job Satisfaction by Gender*

	Gender	N	M	SD	SEM	t	df	p
Contextual background	Male	3	3.52	0.44	0.25	0.63	18	0.53
	Female	17	3.35	0.35	0.08			
Current practices	male	3	3.33	0.59	0.34	-1.14	18	0.26
	Female	17	3.61	0.34	0.08			
Job satisfaction	Male	3	3	0.01	0	-0.95	18	0.35
	Female	17	3.1	0.33	0.08			

### Differences in teachers' attitudes towards current practices and teacher job satisfaction based on teaching experience and teacher qualification

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if there were differences in teacher demographic variables, such as teacher qualification and teaching experience, for two variables current practices and job satisfaction. There were no observable statistically significant differences in both of these variables (current practices and job satisfaction) when compared by qualification and experience (see Table 7 for details).

**Table 7**

*ANOVA Results Based on Demographic Variables*

Demographics	N	Current Practices					Post Hoc	Job Satisfaction				
		ANOVA	df	f	p	ANOVA		df	f	p	Post Hoc	
Qualification	PTC	2	Between	6	0.43	0.58	Between	7	0.51	0.81	Within	12
	Diploma	2	Within	11								
	Bachelors	13										
	Masters	3										
Teaching Experience	below 5	3	Between	8	1.64	0.21	Between	7	1.04	0.45	Within	12
	6-10	4	Within	11								
	11-15	2										
	16-20	7										
	21+	4										

\*Note: PTC=Primary Teaching certificate

### Relationship between teacher satisfaction and training received by teachers

The Pearson product-moment correlation was used to determine the relationship between PD and stress levels (see Table 8). Preliminary analyses showed the relationship to be linear, with both the variables normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test ( $p > .05$ ), and there were no outliers. There was a statistically significant, strong positive association between those teachers who received specialised training,  $r(.538) = .73$ ,  $p < .005$ , with training accounting for a 54% variation in teacher satisfaction.

**Table 8**

*Correlations Statistics Between Satisfaction and Training*

		Training	Job satisfaction
Training	r	-	.73**
Job satisfaction	r	.73**	-

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### Level of satisfaction predicted by specialised training in special education and the related field of study

A simple linear regression was conducted to examine the effect of specialised training on teacher satisfaction. As required, the multicollinearity assumptions were tested as recommended by Kock (2015). Similarly, a variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance were calculated using the SPSS for contextual background, current practices, and teacher job satisfaction. A VIF and tolerance are both measures of checking multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2010). According to Hair et al. (2010), the VIF values accepted threshold is  $< 5$ . Further, a composite score for each of these variables did not present issues and were all within the accepted threshold, near the value of 1, suggesting low multicollinearity. The effect of training was statistically significant,  $F(1, 18) = 20.96$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.538$ , and teacher training in the related field of SEN accounted for 53.8% of the explained variability in teacher job satisfaction. The regression equation that predicted teacher job satisfaction =  $3.98 + -0.488 \times (\text{Training})$ . Also, the regression coefficients and standard errors indicated that training of teachers in the field of SEN was a statistically significant predictor of teacher job satisfaction,  $p < .001$ . Hence, the question of the effect of teacher training on teacher satisfaction was rejected because there was a statistically significant relationship between teacher training in SEN and the levels of teacher job satisfaction [ $\beta = -.488 > .001$ ].

Thus, the regression model can be expressed as follows:

$$\text{Teacher job satisfaction} = b_0 + (b_1 \times \text{Specialised training})$$

### General Students' Acceptance of Children with SEN in their Classroom

The background information of the students was analysed in terms of percentage. Out of 70 respondents, 27.1% were from class IV, 42.9 % were from class V and 30% were from class VI. The sample had 50% boys and 50% girls, constituting 35 respondents each.

An overview of general students' attitudes towards acceptance of children with SEN in their classroom is presented in Table 8. The overall acceptance of the children with special educational needs in the inclusive class by the general students was at the satisfied or agreed level (M= 3.48; SD= 1.19). The comparative analysis of the mean result reveals that the children's lowest score = = 3.00; SD= 1.38) with special educational needs distract the general students frequently during classroom teaching and learning. However, on the contrary, children with special educational needs are found to be encouraged and accepted to be in the inclusive classrooms (M= 3.79; SD= 1.27), which was the highest score among the five items.

**Table 9**

*General Students' Attitude Towards Acceptance of Children with SEN in their Classroom*

Sl. No	Statement	M	SD	Decision
1	I feel safe sitting next to a child with SEN.	3.27	.99	Neutral
2	The children with SEN are not disturbing me while I am learning.	3.00	1.38	Neutral
3	Children with SEN are as same as any other children	3.79	1.27	Agree
4	I always help children with SEN when they are in need.	3.73	.96	Agree
5	Children with SEN do not bully me.	3.61	1.35	Agree
<b>Average</b>		<b>3.48</b>	<b>1.19</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>

Note: 1.00-1.80=Very Unsatisfied, 1.81-2.60=Unsatisfied, 2.61-3.40=Moderate, 3.41-4.20=Satisfied, 4.21-5.00=Very Satisfied

### Parents' attitude towards the acceptance of their special needs child by other students and teachers

Tables 10 and 11 show the parents' attitude towards the acceptance of their children with SEN by other general students and teachers in the inclusive classroom, respectively. The overall parents' attitude towards the acceptance of their children with SEN in the inclusive class by other general students is at a satisfied level with (M= 4.09; SD= 0.99) while 'Teachers provide an equal opportunity to my child to participate in the classroom' was shown to be the highest (M= 4.35; SD= 0.98) Parents' attitude towards the acceptance of their special needs child by teachers in the inclusive classroom. The result reflects that other general students accept the children with SEN and support them during difficult times. Moreover, most of the time, they are also given the opportunity to participate share their views, and as a result, most of the parents are satisfied with the way their children with SEN are included in the inclusive class.

**Table 10**

*Parents' Attitude Towards the Acceptance of Their Special Needs Child by Other Students in the Inclusive Classroom*

Sl. No	Statement	M	SD	Decision
1	My child is given an equal opportunity to participate in classroom activities by other general students.	3.96	1.22	Satisfied
2	My child is accepted by other general students in the class	4.43	.90	Very Satisfied
3	General students are supportive during the difficulties faced by my child in the class.	4.17	.83	Satisfied
4	My child gets to share his/her views in the group discussion.	3.83	.98	Satisfied
5	Other general students respect my child's views.	4.04	.98	Satisfied
6	I am satisfied with how my child is being treated by other general students.	4.09	1.00	Satisfied
<b>Average</b>		<b>4.09</b>	<b>.99</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>

Note: 1.00-1.80=Very Unsatisfied, 1.81-2.60=Unsatisfied, 2.61-3.40=Moderate, 3.41-4.20=Satisfied, 4.21-5.00=Very Satisfied

**Table 11**

*Parents' Attitude Towards the Acceptance of their Special Needs Child by Teachers in the Inclusive Classroom*

Sl. No	Statement	M	SD	Decision
1	Teachers provide an equal opportunity to my child to participate in the classroom	4.35	.98	Very Satisfied
2	Teachers provide differentiated (separate and simplified) activities to encourage learning of my child in the class.	3.70	.97	Satisfied
3	Teachers accept the responses given by my child in the classroom teaching and learning	4.00	.95	Satisfied
4	Teachers prepare separate Teaching Learning Materials for my child in the classroom.	3.70	1.11	Satisfied
5	The teaching learning materials used while teaching are user friendly to my child.	4.13	.97	Satisfied
6	My child gets accommodation and modifications during unit tests and examinations.	4.09	1.16	Satisfied
7	Teachers make an effort to attend to the needs of my child	4.09	1.13	Satisfied
8	I am satisfied with how my child is included in the classroom by the teachers.	4.22	1.09	Very Satisfied
<b>Average</b>		<b>4.04</b>	<b>1.04</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>

Note: 1.00-1.80=Very Unsatisfied, 1.81-2.60=Unsatisfied, 2.61-3.40=Moderate, 3.41-4.20=Satisfied, 4.21-5.00=Very Satisfied

### Discussion and conclusion

This study examined the attitudes of teachers, students, and parents towards inclusive education in one of the SEN schools in the capital city of Bhutan. The results of this research

indicate that teachers' attitudes about contextual background varied. For instance, teachers were generally satisfied with the classroom location and physical ambience, which was in contrast to the findings of Engelbrecht (2015) carried out in South Africa. However, teachers expressed dissatisfaction over the availability of enough learning resources in the classroom, which corroborates with the findings of Chhetri et al. (2020). Correspondingly, teachers' perceptions of current practices for teaching SEN students were found to be of moderate level. This moderate rating may be a result of a lack of teacher training and continuous professional development programmes for SEN teachers.

In general, the results indicate that teachers found planning differentiated lessons, maintaining student engagement, and providing individualised and additional attention to students with SEN to be difficult and time-consuming. This shows that Bhutanese teachers teaching in SEN schools need further training and continuous professional development programmes to be effective and competent SEN teachers. Engelbrecht (2015) also pointed out that teachers in South Africa did not have the required professional knowledge to deal with SEN children while in the classroom. The findings from this study support the earlier findings of Dorji (2015) and Chhetri et al. (2020) a similar study carried out in the context of Bhutan. Moreover, similar concerns were also raised by the past literature (Engelbrecht, 2015; Yadav et al., 2015).

Besides that, the results of teachers' job satisfaction when working with SEN children revealed that, out of 20 responses, 45% of teachers reported low job satisfaction, 40% reported moderate satisfaction, and 15% reported high job satisfaction. In this case, teachers who were dissatisfied exceeded the number of teachers who were satisfied, suggesting a negative attitude towards inclusion. The findings regarding gender differences in terms of contextual background, current practices, and job satisfaction did not reveal significant differences comparable to what de Boer reported (2012b). This finding was quite surprising and was in contrast to what was reported by Saloviita (2020), a study carried out in Finland. Saloviita found that female teachers showed a positive attitude compared to males. In this study, teacher attitudes towards inclusive education by teacher qualification and teaching experience did not observe significant differences. This finding adds to already conflicting results where some studies found significant positive attitudes inexperienced teachers (Saloviita, 2020) while an opposite was reported by Alghazo and Naggar Gaad (2004), where young teachers showed more positive attitudes towards inclusion. Young teachers being more positive towards inclusion was also supported by Glaubman and Liftshitz (2001). Besides teaching experience, some studies also reported that qualification did not relate to teacher attitude towards inclusion (de Boer, 2012b; Saloviita, 2020). However, the relationship between teacher satisfaction and training received by teachers was statistically significant. This means that six teachers who reported having relevant training in the field of special education were satisfied compared to the ones who had a general degree and no prior training in special education. In light of this finding, it can be concluded that training in the field of SEN is important for teachers. This finding mirrors the finding of Saloviita (2020), where training was shown to have a positive relationship with teacher attitude.



Similarly, the result of a simple linear regression revealed that training accounted for 54 per cent of the variance in teacher job satisfaction. About 45 per cent of teachers have received training on inclusive education, while 55 per cent have only received the school's orientation programme on special education. Due to this, the majority of teachers struggle to manage their classes and provide the necessary assistance to their diverse student populations. The overall acceptance of the children with special educational needs in the inclusive class by the general students was reported to be satisfactory, which was in contrast to the existing literature (de Boer, 2012d; Schwab, 2015; Malinen & Savolainen, 2008). These sources showed neutral to negative results, although Malinen and Savolainen's (2008) study was conducted in a higher education institution. Further analysis showed that children with SEN were distracted in their learning. On the contrary, children with SEN were encouraged and accepted to be in the inclusive classrooms, again deviating from what was reported by Schwab (2015). The positive level of acceptance in this regard may be due to the fact that Bhutanese live in close connection with one another, it also reflects Bhutan's spirit of compassion and altruism.

Equally, parents reported high levels of satisfaction with other students' and teachers' acceptance of SEN students via this survey. The result reflects that other general students accept the children with SEN and support them during difficult times. Moreover, most of the time, they are also given the opportunity to participate share their views, and as a result, most of the parents are satisfied with the way their children with SEN are included in the inclusive class. Further, the highest was reported on the item 'Teachers provide an equal opportunity to my child to participate in the classroom.' This finding on parents' satisfaction could not support the results of Dimitrios et al. (2008), where only 27% of Greek parents reported being satisfied. This aligns with the findings of Jigyel's (2018) study. In addition, the result indicates that the parents of children with SEN are satisfied with the current inclusive practices in Bhutan. We believe that parent's satisfaction may be attributed to their active engagement in school activities.

The findings of this current study will be of interest to policymakers, school leaders, teachers, and parents with respect to inclusive education in Bhutan and other countries sharing similar cultural contexts. Since the results of this study showed that teachers teaching in this SEN school were not satisfied and did not have expertise in teaching children in an inclusive setting, further training in the form of professional development should be provided. Specifically, hands-on training in the application of differentiated instruction is preferable. This study has shown that trained teachers were somewhat more satisfied compared to teachers who are not, therefore, further courses relevant to special education in the form of short- and long-term studies are desirable. Such training could be facilitated in the form of policy intervention; school leaders and more importantly individual teachers should explore relevant courses.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

This study is not without limitations. The scope of this study is broad as it included many stakeholders like teachers, parents, and peers. Further, this study has a limited sample

size undermining the statistical power. Future studies should perhaps include participants from all 39 SEN schools in the country to improve the power of the study. Likewise, the findings of this study is not generalisable as some questions were only answered with descriptive analyses. Therefore, results must be approached with caution. In order to mitigate this limitation, multivariate testing is desirable. Furthermore, a qualitative method may also be useful in garnering an in-depth understanding of teachers, students, and teachers. There is also scope for future researchers to compare the academic achievement of students taught by trained and untrained teachers which supposedly may be a factor for low satisfaction in our study, this is an interesting area for the future studies to explore. Also, a full-fledged large-scale survey is required to study the overall perception of the Bhutanese populace in general, as literature in the past has consistently shown that understanding general people's perception has a positive impact on the overall success of inclusive education (Dorji, 2015; Schuelka, 2012). Gender differences in parents and students' peers may be useful for future researchers.

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