

Perception towards inclusive education: a comparative study of teachers teaching nondisabled and special need children

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Abstract

The current research paper studies the perception of teachers towards Inclusive Education in Bhutan. The investigators compare the perception of teachers teaching nondisabled (n-group teachers) and special need children (e-group teachers) in regular classrooms of Bhutanese school. A sample of 31 teachers comprising of 18 n-group and 13 e-group teachers, were drawn from Changangkha Middle Secondary School, Thimphu, Bhutan through convenience sampling technique. Results revealed that n-group and n-group teachers differ partially in their perception towards inclusive education.

Keywords: *Inclusive Education, Perception, Middle Secondary School, Nondisabled and Special Need Children.*

Introduction

In the past years, Inclusive Education movement was initiated primarily for people with learning difficulties and disabilities. Later, it expanded to embrace those that are at risk of marginalizing or exclusion (Ainscow et al., 2006). It was more or less an approach that seek to address the barriers to participation and learning, and at the same time provide resources to support learning and full participation, be it extra co-curricular or academics, which would increase the capacities of concerned school to meet the diversity (Booth and Ainscow, 2002). According to British Psychological Society (2002), Inclusive Education is rethinking and restructuring policies, culture and practices, curriculum and methodologies, and learning environment followed in schools to meet the diverse learning needs, whatever the nature and origin and the degree of needs of the individuals.

Thus, Inclusive Education is a process which involves schools making and modifying changes in the curriculum and teaching strategies, a means to accommodating a wide range of needs and abilities among the pupils. It's a body where it builds the capacity to welcome all the pupil from all walks of life who wishes to attend and in doing so, it reduces the notion of exclusion.

Therefore, it is the prime duty of the teachers to have a sound perception towards pupil with or without disabilities in successful implementation of the inclusive education in our modern education system. According to Dema (2017) the standards for inclusive education were endorsed in the Annual Education Conference which aims to provide quality inclusive education to children with disabilities and improve the quality across all the schools and for all the children in Bhutan. This standard will act as a guideline or supporting tools for the school to reflect, plan and take relevant actions in becoming more inclusive in nature. It will also cater to the enhancement of participation in education and quality of learning. The standard also mentioned that children with disabilities and special need will have full access to the curriculum, participation in cultural and extra- curricular activities, artistic, recreational and other leisure activities.

To further support the standards and implementation of inclusive education, the Government of Bhutan has drafted the First National Policy for Person with Disabilities in 2018. The idea of inclusiveness for differently abled students in mainstream education not only aims to provide quality education that caters to their individual needs, abilities and aptitudes but also to equip them with life skills for the real world and life by living and learning together with non-disabled children.

Reviews of Related Literature

Dorji et al. (2019) conducted a study on the attitude of Bhutanese teachers towards inclusive education through online survey. The findings revealed that most teachers had favorably positive attitudes towards inclusion but at the same time, they felt the earnest need to improve pupil teacher ratio, accessibility of toilets, playground and more training of teachers and more support staff. The researchers also made aware of the importance of future policies and advancement of successful implementation of inclusion in Bhutanese schools.

Mngo & Mngo (2018) also carried out a study on teachers' perception of inclusion in a pilot Inclusive Education Program in Northwest Region of Cameroon. Their findings revealed that some teachers still prefer separate special education institutions to cater to special needs children. Those teachers who had training on teaching students with disabilities, more experienced and highly educated teachers found to have positive attitude and more supportive but felt that they are inadequate in preparedness than those without having access to such experiences. The less experienced teachers were found to be less or not seem to have known the benefits of inclusion, and therefore they lacked the ability to manage integrated classrooms and to teach disabled children. It implies that more training be given to teachers, and institutional support system should be strengthened and inclusion policy must be firm in place in education system itself.

Dukpa & Kamenopoulou (2017) explored on the perspectives of Bhutanese teachers, the concept of Disability and Inclusion associated with the children with disability. The researchers found out that most of the responses were related to genetic inheritance, due to accidents or some medical conditions. Some teachers held negative views that it is the karma (Bad fate) and parents are responsible for their own disabled child. The study also revealed the conflicting views on the concept of inclusion, because most of the teachers felt that implementation of inclusion is not ready in the country, due to the lack of trained teachers. The investigators further made recommendations on strengthening of teacher preparation and narrowing the gap between practice and policy. For the successful implementation of inclusive education in the mainstream education system, inclusion policies should be taken into consideration. And to uplift this, attitude and self-efficacy of teachers are crucial (Kuittinen, 2017).

In addition, Rodriguez et al. (2017) studied the perception of teachers on the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom in Ecuador, South America. The study was conducted before the development of a programme of specialization on post graduate studies for special educational needs. The study found out that majority of the Ecuador teachers are of the view that academic career training on the issue of inclusion and accessibility demands more support in carrying out the teaching assignments and materials adapted to cater to the needs of the students. Beside the lack of inclusion and architectural barriers, teachers literally felt that they are not prepared fully to teach students with disabilities in regular classroom, and strongly felt the need of deeper special educational need training.

Bailey et al. (2015) researched on the perspective of inclusive education on 300 teachers in Malaysian primary schools. Most of the teachers expressed positive views towards inclusion principle. However, teachers lacked common consensus about the benefits of inclusion, expressed about the lack of teachers' skill in teaching special children and therefore often uttered negative opinion about the children with disabilities in their family and as well as in school, despite common professional development educational needs are felt. The team commented that the insufficient teacher educators in the field would hinder government's aim of operating inclusive education which would remain behind as an outlying goal.

Hussan et al. (2015) conducted the study in Jazan University to examine the influence of some variables on attitudes of general and special education teachers towards inclusion of autism students in regular setting. The team found out that there existed no significant differences in attitudes of special education teachers towards inclusive setting in relation to interaction with disable students and class size, but there do exist significant differences with respect to teachers' qualification and training courses offered to them. Since the result was positive, the researcher

further recommended that when students attend classes that reflect similarities and differences of learners in the real world, they recognize the value of diversity, develop respect and understanding among themselves, learn to accept others culture and enjoying learning through fun. The investigator also believed that school is the vital place for the children to develop friendship and social skills, where by internalized their learning from their immediate environment is meaningful for them in a natural way. Children with and without disabilities better learn from and with each other in inclusive classes, and learn to render help without condition.

Avramidis & Norwich (2010) assumed that the successful accomplishment of inclusive policy of inclusion of children with special educational needs in the mainstream school is the educator's positivity towards inclusive education. The researcher's examination of teacher's attitudes towards inclusion seemed to be influence not only by the nature of the severity of disabling condition at their disposal but also the availability of physical and human related support which is largely associated in inclusion itself.

Statement of Problem

Perception towards Inclusive Education: A Comparative Study of Teachers Teaching Nondisabled and Special Need Children.

Objective

To explore the perception differences of teachers teaching nondisabled (n-group) and special need children (e-group) towards inclusive education.

Hypothesis

There exists no difference in perception of n-group and e-group teachers towards inclusive education.

Design of the Study

In the present study, descriptive survey method was used to collect the data. A sample of 31 teachers comprising of 18 n-group and 13 e-group teachers, were drawn from Changangkha Middle Secondary School Thimphu, Bhutan through convenience sampling technique.

Tool

Teachers' Attitude to Inclusion (TATI) scale adapted from PATI scale by Palmer et al. (2001) was used by the investigators to measure the perception of n-group and e-group teachers towards inclusive education in inclusive classrooms of Bhutanese schools.

Delimitation

The present study was delimited to

- Changangkha Middle Secondary Schools, Thimphu, Bhutan.
- n-group and e-group teachers only.

Statistical Techniques

The objective and hypothesis of the study have been tested by using frequencies and percentages.

Results and Discussion

Analysis of data, result and interpretation of findings has been done keeping in view the objective and hypothesis of the study.

Results pertaining to difference in Perception of N-Group and E-Group Teachers towards Inclusive Education

The objective was to explore the perception differences of teachers teaching nondisabled (n-group) and special need children (e-group) towards inclusive education. After administrating the Teacher Attitude to Inclusion Scale; frequencies and percentages of the n-group and e-group teachers have been presented in table 1 as per their opinion corresponding to every statement.

H₀: There exists no significant difference in perception of n-group and e-group teachers towards inclusive education.

Table 1. Frequencies and Percentages of E-Group and N-Group Teachers towards Inclusive Education

Statement No.	Opinions	E-Group Teachers		N-Group Teachers	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Disagree	2	15.38	10	55.56
	Agree	11	84.62	8	44.44
2	Disagree	9	69.23	14	77.78
	Agree	4	30.76	4	22.22
3	Disagree	6	46.15	13	72.22
	Agree	7	53.85	5	27.78
4	Disagree	4	30.76	9	50.00
	Agree	9	69.23	9	50.00
5	Disagree	3	23.08	12	66.67
	Agree	10	76.92	6	33.33
6	Disagree	1	7.69	15	83.33
	Agree	12	92.31	3	16.67
7	Disagree	3	23.08	1	5.55
	Agree	10	76.92	18	94.45
8	Disagree	10	76.92	10	55.56
	Agree	3	23.08	8	44.44
9	Disagree	3	23.08	17	94.4
	Agree	10	76.92	1	5.6
10	Disagree	9	69.23	15	83.33
	Agree	4	30.77	3	16.67
11	Disagree	s2	15.38	4	22.22
	Agree	11	84.62	14	77.78

Interpretation of each statement is given below:

Statement#1- The more time special need children spend in a regular classroom; the more likely it is that the quality of their education will improve.

Table 2. Frequencies and Percentages of E-Group and N-Group Teachers towards Inclusive Education

Statement No.	Opinions	E-Group Teachers		N-Group Teachers	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Disagree	2	15.38	10	55.56
	Agree	11	84.62	8	44.44

Interpretation

Table 2 shows that majority (84.62%) of **e-group teachers** are of the opinion that there is significant improvement in the quality of education in special need children when they spend more time in the regular classroom whereas majority (55.56%) of **n-group teachers** disagree with the opinion of **e-group teachers**. The reason for the same may be the **e-group teachers** are of the view that special need children get equal exposure to various teaching techniques, materials and buddy support and get inspired by the nondisabled children performances. Special need children are also provided with scaffolding to maximum level by the teachers.

Statement#2- The more time special need children spend in a regular classroom, the more likely it is that they will be mistreated by other nondisabled children in that room.

Table 3. Frequencies and Percentages of E-Group and N-Group Teachers towards Inclusive Education

Statement No.	Opinions	E-Group Teachers		N-Group Teachers	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
2	Disagree	9	69.23	14	77.78
	Agree	4	30.76	4	22.22

Interpretation

Table 3 shows that both **e-group** (69.23 %) and **n-group teachers** (77.78%) strongly stand by the view point that special need children in the regular classroom are well treated by the nondisabled children.

Statement#3- The more time special need children spend in a regular classroom, the more likely it is that would end up feeling lonely or left out around the regular education children.

Table 4. Frequencies and Percentages of E-Group and N-Group Teachers towards Inclusive Education

Statement No.	Opinions	E-Group Teachers		N-Group Teachers	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
3	Disagree	6	46.15	13	72.22
	Agree	7	53.85	5	27.78

Interpretation

Table 4 shows that majority of **e-group teachers** (53.85%) in the regular classroom are of the view that special need children feel lonely and left out in the regular classroom, whereas **n-group teachers** disagree (72.22%) to the point that they would end up feeling lonely or left out from rest of the nondisabled children in the regular classroom. From the above table, it is concluded that **e-group teachers** do agree to the statement because they have the experience of teaching special need children and practically witnessed the real scenario in actual classroom situation, whereas **n-group teachers** have no idea of the practical situation and its assumed perspectives because they have never been in the inclusive classroom where psychological and social constraint are felt by the special children.

Statement#4- When students with severe disabilities are enrolled in regular education classrooms, the positive benefits to the regular education students outweigh any possible problems that this practice may present.

Table 5. Frequencies and Percentages of E-Group and N-Group Teachers towards Inclusive Education

Statement No.	Opinions	E-Group Teachers		N-Group Teachers	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
4	Disagree	4	30.76	9	50.00
	Agree	9	69.23	9	50.00

Interpretation

Table 5 shows that **e-group teachers** (69.23%) strongly agree to the statement whereas **n-group teachers** neither agree nor disagree that the positive benefits outweigh the issues and problems. **E-group teachers** do have the clear idea of what things work and what do not since they have been dealing with the special children for longer period of time whereas **n-group teachers** held neutral attitude because they have never had the opportunity to work with special need children.

Statement#5- It is possible to modify most lessons and materials in a regular classroom to meet the needs of these children.

Table 6. Frequencies and Percentages of E-Group and N-Group Teachers towards Inclusive Education

Statement No.	Opinions	E-Group Teachers		N-Group Teachers	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
5	Disagree	3	23.08	12	66.67
	Agree	10	76.92	6	33.33

Interpretation

Table 6 shows that **e-group teachers** (76.92%) think that lesson can be modified as per the requirement of special need students. This is because teachers know that the different kind of accommodation is given to the special need children, such as respond accommodation-students are allowed to response either in a oral or written form which is easier to them; setting accommodation-students are allowed to work or take test in a quiet room with few or no distractions; time accommodation- students are allowed to complete their work in their own pace; organizational skills accommodation-students are allowed to use alarm with time management, mark the text and receive study skill instruction. 66.67% **n-group teachers** disagree that lesson

can't be modified. Those have the contrasting agreement because they have never tried working with the special need children in the regular classroom.

Statement#6- If special need children were to spend a lot of time in a regular classroom, they would end up not getting extra help they need.

Table 7. Frequencies and Percentages of E-Group and N-Group Teachers towards Inclusive Education

Statement No.	Opinions	E-Group Teachers		N-Group Teachers	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
6	Disagree	1	7.69	15	83.33
	Agree	12	92.31	3	16.67

Interpretation

Table 7 shows that **e-group teachers** i.e. 92.31% agree that special need children do not get extra time in the regular classroom whereas **n-group teachers** disagree that special need children extra help in the regular. **E-group teachers** agree to the statement due to the fact that they have practically implemented inclusion in their classrooms and they know what goes well and what does not. They have to deal with the special children all by themselves without class support services and itinerant teacher services.

Statement#7- If special need children were to spend much of their day in a regular classroom, they would end up becoming friends with nondisabled students in that classroom.

Table 8. Frequencies and Percentages of E-Group and N-Group Teachers towards Inclusive Education

Statement No.	Opinions	E-Group Teachers		N-Group Teachers	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
7	Disagree	3	23.08	1	5.55
	Agree	10	76.92	18	94.45

Interpretation

It is concluded from the table 8 that both **e-group teachers** (76.92%) and **n-group teachers** (94.45%) are on the positive side that special need children make more friends if they spend lot of time in the regular classroom. **N-group teachers** favour more that they believe nondisabled children are much aware about the disabled children in integrated classroom. And nondisabled student are often reminded to help others any time anywhere is a noble deed. Values like empathy, kindness, love, respect and responsibility is taught in the value classes.

Statement#8- The quality of regular students' education is enriched when students with severe disabilities participate in their classes.

Table 9. Frequencies and Percentages of E-Group and N-Group Teachers towards Inclusive Education

Statement No.	Opinions	E-Group Teachers		N-Group Teachers	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
8	Disagree	10	76.92	10	55.56
	Agree	3	23.08	8	44.44

Interpretation

It is concluded from the table 9 that majority of **e-group teachers** i.e. 76.92% and **n-group teachers** i.e. 55.56% strongly disagree with the statement that the quality of the nondisabled children education is improved when special need children are enrolled in the mainstream classroom. **E-group teachers** mostly disagree because they believe that providing accommodation and modification itself is a slow pace for learning of both type of children i.e. special need and nondisabled children. Teachers feel that accommodation itself is a distraction for the nondisabled children without itinerant teacher support in the regular classroom. One untrained teacher handling both kinds of children is a distressful task.

Statement#9- If special need children were to spend much of the day in a regular classroom, they would end up not getting all the necessary special services that would be provided in the special educations classrooms.

Table 10. Frequencies and Percentages of E-Group and N-Group Teachers towards Inclusive Education

Statement No.	Opinions	E-Group Teachers		N-Group Teachers	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
9	Disagree	3	23.08	17	94.4
	Agree	10	76.92	1	5.6

Interpretation

It is concluded from the table 10 that 76.92 % of **e-group teachers** held the opinion that special need children have limited access to services in the regular classroom than in the special education classroom if they have to spend more time with nondisabled students. **N-group teachers** do not favor the statement that special need children are often left out in the corner of the classroom because it is the responsibility of the concern teacher caters to rest all 45 children (average number of students in Bhutanese classroom) in the regular classroom. If teachers don't do this than the meaning of inclusion would in total failure.

Statement#10- Regular education classrooms provide more meaningful opportunities for special need children to learn than special education classrooms.

Table 11. Frequencies and Percentages of E-Group and N-Group Teachers towards Inclusive Education

Statement No.	Opinions	E-Group Teachers		N-Group Teachers	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
10	Disagree	9	69.23	15	83.33
	Agree	4	30.77	3	16.67

Interpretation

It is concluded from the table 11 that 69.23 % of **e-group teachers** and 83.33% of **n-group teachers** are having same notion that the regular education classroom does not provide meaningful learning opportunities to the special need children as it is done in special education classrooms. Teachers are of the view that individual needs and interest of the special children are not meet due to the large class size, lack appropriate resources which could meet the requirement of the special need children and of course the untrained teachers in the regular classroom.

Statement#11- The more time special need children spend in regular classrooms, the more likely it is that they will be treated kindly by the nondisabled students in those rooms.

Table 12. Frequencies and Percentages of E-Group and N-Group Teachers towards Inclusive Education

Statement No.	Opinions	E-Group Teachers		N-Group Teachers	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
11	Disagree	2	15.38	4	22.22
	Agree	11	84.62	14	77.78

Interpretation

It is concluded from the table 12 that 84.62 % of **e-group teachers** and 77.78% **n-group teachers** are having strong opinion that the special need children gain more love and care when they spend more time with nondisabled children in the regular classrooms. **E-group teachers** have more positive attitude than teachers teaching nondisabled children because teachers teaching integrated classroom have already witness how the nondisabled children treat the special need children. Moreover, due to the constant reminder exposure to the help create better awareness among the nondisabled children.

It shows that **e-group** and **n-group teachers** differ partially in their perception towards inclusive education.

Hence, the stated hypothesis that there exists no difference in teachers' perception towards inclusive education with respect to **e-group** and **n-group teachers** is partially rejected or accepted.

Finding of the Study

1. Majority of **e-group** and **n-group teachers** did not differ in their perception with respect to the statements-special needs children would make friends with regular children; regular children would treat special need children more kindly; positive benefits outweigh any possible problem; special need children would not be mistreated by nondisabled children; inclusion would not increase the quality of regular children education; and inclusive education would not increase learning opportunities.

2. **Majority of e-group and n-group teachers** differ in their perception with respect to the statements-improvement in educational quality of the special need children if they spent more time in a regular classroom; special need children feel less lonely or left out around the regular education children if they spent more time in a regular classroom; possibility to modify most lessons and materials in a regular classroom to meet the needs of these children; special need children would not getting extra help as required if they were to spend a lot of time in a regular classrooms; and special need children would not getting all the necessary special services that would be provided in the special education classrooms if they were to spend much of the day in a regular classroom.

The above discussion resulted that **e-group and n-group teachers** differ partially in their perception towards inclusive education.

Conclusions

To ensure inclusive education as successful, it is paramount that teachers' attitude are positively favourable along with relevant resources such as appropriate learning materials, assistive technology, adaptive instruction, proper training facilities, barrier free environment, good architectural design which would cater to the needs of the diverse learners. For the successful implementation of inclusion in regular school setting, the policy needs to be in firm place. Support from the school administration, Ministry of Education, communities and other relevant agencies are some of the crucial factors in the successful implementing of inclusive education. To ensure quality inclusiveness education, proper monitoring and necessary follow up must be carried out time to time so that it does not get compromised with the motive of education for all.

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