

Teachers' Attitudes and Self-Efficacy Towards Inclusive Education: A Study on the Elementary School Teachers of Damdama Cluster of Hajo Block of Kamrup (R) of Assam

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Abstract

Inclusive education has become a key priority in modern educational systems that aims at providing equal learning opportunities for all students, including those with diverse learning needs and disabilities. The success of inclusive practices largely depends on teachers' attitudes and their sense of self-efficacy in managing diverse classrooms. This study examines teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education and explores the level of self-efficacy they possess in implementing inclusive teaching practices selecting Damdama Cluster of Hajo Block of Kamrup(R) of Assam as sample. The research investigates how teachers perceive the inclusion of students with special educational needs in regular classrooms and the factors that influence their confidence in addressing diverse learning requirements. Data were collected from 120 teachers selected through stratified random sampling through a structured questionnaire. The findings indicate that while many teachers hold generally positive attitudes toward inclusive education. Teachers reported high confidence in adapting lessons and modifying instructional methods to suit different learners. Moreover, the study establishes a positive relationship between attitudes and self-efficacy: as teachers' confidence increased, so did their support for inclusive education. Strengthening teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy is essential for the successful implementation of inclusive education and for ensuring that all learners receive equitable and meaningful educational opportunities.

Key Words: Diverse learners, Inclusive Education, Teachers' attitude, Self efficacy.

1. Introduction

In the amphitheater of contemporary education of the global social order, inclusive education is considered as a means or tool to achieve the multifaceted goals for the holistic development of personalities of the learners to help them become fit for life and knowledge market. Inclusive education is an educational approach that is based on the principle that all students, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or circumstances should learn together under one rooftop. All learners must receive the same supportive and welcoming environment with equal dignity in schools and in all learning situations. It believes that every child has unique potentialities, needs, capabilities and ways of learning and as such, the school system must adapt to the learner, not the learner to the system. Inclusive education rejects the idea of separating students with special needs into special schools or segregated classrooms based on their disability, learning difficulties, or social differences or unique characteristics. Rather, it is a philosophy that emphasizes on equal access, participation and meaningful learning with human dignity and uniqueness for every student within mainstream education.

The idea that variety enhances the educational process lies at the heart of inclusive education. Differences in aptitude, culture, language, gender, or socio-economic background are not seen as obstacles but rather as chances to create a classroom community that is more understanding, cooperative and accepting. Every student who participates in inclusive education feels appreciated, respected and welcomed. Students' academic achievement, emotional health and social growth all depend on this feeling of belonging. A number of fundamental ideas form the foundation of inclusive education. The first is equity, which emphasizes on giving every student the tools, encouragement and instructional techniques they require to succeed as per their own uniqueness. Equity guarantees that every student receives what is suitable for them, whereas, equality offers everyone the same thing.

Participation is another element that guarantees students' equal partaking and involvement without any feelings of discrimination. Every student who remain present in the classroom have the equal opportunity to actively participate in academic and social activities without any difference. In order to make lessons accessible to everyone, educators must employ flexible teaching strategies, differentiated instruction and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles so that students can get the chance to learn as per their own potentialities and pace.

Collaboration is the third principle of inclusive education. Teachers, school administrators, special educators, parents and occasionally therapists or community organizations must work together to implement inclusive education for overall development of varied categories of students as per their own specialties. Thus, working together in the system basically guarantees that students' needs are comprehended from many angles and that customized plans are successfully carried out for the planned growth of personalities without any feeling of difference. Here in this context the roles of the families are especially important because they provide information about the learners' preferences, difficulties and abilities.

Human rights frameworks and international agreements, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which mandates that educational systems of the nations be inclusive at all levels, are also in the line with inclusive education for helping all categories of learners get equal opportunities of learning as per their own capabilities and specialties. It upholds the notion that every kid has the right to an inclusive education and equal chances to realize their full potential.

The foundation of inclusive education is the idea that all students, regardless of disability, background, or learning challenges, have a right to a high-quality education in regular classrooms. Although this idea is outlined in rules and philosophies, teachers are the ones who really implement inclusive education in the classrooms. Their attitudes, self-assurance and abilities have direct impact on pupils' feelings of inclusion, challenge and support.

Teachers' responses to diversity are shaped by their positive attitudes, which makes them crucial. Teachers are more willing to accept students with diverse needs and devote time to modifying lessons when they see inclusion as advantageous and think that every student can learn. Patience, empathy and a willingness to try to learn new things are all encouraged by an optimistic outlook. Negative attitudes, on the other hand, might erect obstacles that hinder successful inclusion, such as the notion that a disability is a burden or that inclusive education reduces academic standards.

Equally important is teachers' self-efficacy, or the conviction that one can effectively instruct a diverse student body. Teachers who have a high level of self-efficacy are comfortable in managing diverse classrooms, utilizing inclusive teaching strategies and attending to the needs of children with disabilities. They are more proactive in looking for resources, working with colleagues and modifying training and they are more tenacious when difficulties emerge. Motivation is also influenced by self-efficacy; self-assured educators are far more likely to solve problems and uphold a supportive learning environment. However, despite the importance of these factors, many teachers still face challenges in implementing inclusive practices. One key barrier is limited training. Many teacher education programmes offer only basic information about disability or inclusive teaching methods, leaving teachers, unsure about how to adapt curriculum, manage diverse classrooms, or support students with complex needs. As such, an attempt has been made by the researchers to explore teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education and the extent to which their self-efficacy influences their instructional decisions.

2. Research Objectives

In all types of research objectives are very important because, research objectives lead every research towards proper direction. Basically, research objectives are the specific, actionable and measurable goals of a particular research which guide the researcher to accomplish the final stage. Research objectives help to determine the nature of research questions or help in hypothesizing the research targets. Thenceforth, the research objectives help in determining the tools for the collection of necessary research data indispensable for analysis and interpretation so as to reach the stage of finding and conclusion of a specific research. Thus, for the systematic study of the present research problem, the objectives are shortlisted as:

1. To examine the elementary school teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education in Mainstream Schools of Kamrup (R) of Assam with special reference to Damdama Cluster of Hajo Block.
2. To evaluate the self-efficacy of elementary school teachers in implementing inclusive teaching strategies.
3. To identify the relationship between elementary teachers' attitudes and their self-efficacy towards inclusive education.

2.1 Research Questions

Research questions mean about the quarries which have close association with the particular research problem. Research questions work as the guiding principles for the hypothesization of a specific research problem for finding out the authenticated results. The formal act or process of forming hypotheses is very important for reaching the goals of a particular research. The process of formation of hypotheses involves assuming premises or setting tentative propositions, often for research, modeling, or investigation purposes. Hypotheses are used to generate ideas, theories, or models based on uncertain, limited, or initial data depending on the research questions. Thus, for the present study the research questions arise in the mind of the researcher are shortlisted as:

1. What are the elementary school teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education in Mainstream Schools of Kamrup (R) of Assam in connection to the Damdama Cluster of Hajo Block.?
2. What are the self-efficacies, i.e. teachers' belief in their capacities to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments of elementary school teachers in implementing inclusive teaching strategies?
3. What are the relationship between elementary teachers' attitudes and their self-efficacy towards inclusive education?

2.3 Hypotheses of the Present Study

Depending on the research questions, the following hypotheses are formed for achieving the objectives shortlisted above. The attainment of the objectives is the pre-requisites for the authentication of the hypotheses and thereby go to the finalization of the findings and suggest remedial measures with proper guidance for further studies.

H1: There is positive stance of the elementary school teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education in Mainstream Schools of Kamrup (R) of Assam in connection to the Damdama Cluster of Hajo Block.

H2: There is affirmative self-efficacies, i.e. teachers' belief in their capacities to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments of elementary school teachers in implementing inclusive teaching strategies.

H3: There is optimistic relationship between elementary teachers' attitudes and their self-efficacy towards inclusive education.

3. Review of Related Literature

Errol, D., Helen, H., Lawrence, I. and Clara, W. (2006) conducted their study entitled as, '*A study that investigated the attitudes of urban and rural teacher in Haiti towards inclusion*' and found that teacher's attitudes towards integration were not associated with year of teaching experience, education was positively associated with attitudes and teacher in rural Haiti did not differ from teachers in urban Haiti. Findings also indicated that variables representing teacher cognition and beliefs were more important in predicting attitudes than variables related to the teacher actual experiences of teaching

Belapurkar M. A. (2012) in a study entitled '*Knowledge and attitude about inclusive education of school teachers*' examined the knowledge and attitude of school teachers in urban and rural pune towards inclusive education. The findings indicated overall positive attitude of school teachers towards inclusive education and the knowledge level of school teachers about inclusive education are significantly low and unclear. They were not clear about Government policies and planning, how to identify different abilities in children and what remedial treatment could be given to different abilities children. MSSV Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol.4 NO.1 (ISSN 2455-7706).

Huanga, C.H. and Chenb, R.K. (2017), conducted a study on '*Attitudes toward Inclusive Education: A Comparison of General and Special Education Teachers in Taiwan*' and found that both the types of teacher education programs and the teaching experience influence the willingness of the participants to include a student with special needs in the regular classroom setting.

Sarkar and Chaudhuri (2017) in their research "*Attitudes of the secondary school teachers towards inclusive education*" intended to explore the attitudes of secondary school teachers of West Bengal towards inclusive education with the major objectives such as - to explain the directions of attitude of secondary level school teachers, attitude of teachers based on gender and the attitude of teachers based on experience following quantitative descriptive survey method and found that teachers with less than 5 years of teaching experience revealed both positive and negative attitude with 70% to 30% respectively. The teachers with teaching experience of 5 years and above also shown positive and negative attitude with 46.7% and 53.3% respectively.

Rubee Mamgain (2018) conducted a study on- "*Attitudes and Self-Efficacy of Primary School Teachers towards Inclusion in District Gwalior, India*" and found that gender does not affect teachers' attitude significantly. In the specific study the participants were found generally positive in their beliefs and had reasonable level of teaching self-efficacy to teach in inclusive classrooms

Prakash, Jai & Hooda, Sushma (2018) carried out a study entitled as 'A comparative study of attitude of primary and secondary school teachers towards inclusive education' and found that there exist significant differences between attitude of primary and secondary school teachers towards inclusive education as the mean value of attitude of secondary school teachers is greater than primary school teachers. MSSV Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Vol.4 NO.1 (ISSN 2455-7706).

4. Methodology of the Present Study

Methodology of a particular research very simply means about the way of conducting the research depending on particular principles and methods so as to complete the analysis and interpretation of the research data and report the findings. For the present research, Survey Method has been used. The population consisted of elementary teachers in mainstream primary schools of Hajo Block of Kamrup of Assam. 120 teachers have been selected through stratified random sampling procedure from Damdama cluster. For the collection of necessary Data, Attitude Scale toward Inclusive Education and Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale have been used. The Self-structured Attitude Scale ranged from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. Again, self -efficacy scores ranged from 1 = Not Confident to 5 = Very Confident have been included in the Scale. Reliability of both the scales were measured with the help of Split-half method which basically measures a test's internal consistency reliability by splitting it into two halves (e.g., odd/even items), administering it once and calculating the correlation between the halves. A high correlation indicates high reliability, often adjusted using the Spearman-Brown formula. The reliability of Attitude Scale (15 items) through Cronbach's Alpha was found to be 0.89 and for Self-Efficacy Scale (12 items), it was found to be 0.86. Collected data were analyzed through descriptive statistics and Pearson Correlation for the interpretation of the results.

5. Analysis of the Data and Interpretations of Results

The results of the present research have been reported as per the objectives of the study as specified:

Objective 1: To examine the elementary school teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education in Mainstream Schools of Kamrup (R) of Assam with special reference to Damdama Cluster of Hajo Block

Table 1: Mean Score of Attitude Score

Variable	Mean	SD
Attitude Score	3.78	0.63

Interpretations:

A mean score of 3.78 on a typical 5-point scale indicates that teachers generally hold positive attitudes toward inclusive education. This indicates that the majority of educators favor inclusive practices and understand the benefits of integrating diverse students into regular classrooms. It might also demonstrate a willingness to modify instructional strategies, work with colleagues and accommodate children with various needs. However, the standard deviation of 0.63 interpret that teachers do not feel uniformly positive. Rather, the group's attitudes clearly differ from one another. While some people may be neutral or even unsure, others may have very strong positive opinions. This variation is significant because it draws attention to underlying disparities in the attitudes, experiences, educational backgrounds and perceived preparedness for inclusion of instructors.

Table 2: Distribution of Attitude Levels

Attitude Level	Range	Frequency	Percentage
Low	1.00-2.49	16	13.3%
Moderate	2.50-3.49	31	25.8%
High	3.50-5.00	73	60.8%

Interpretations:

According to the analysis, there is widespread support for integrating diverse learners into mainstream classes, with the majority of instructors (60.8%) having strong positive attitudes toward inclusion. This implies an environment that is generally conducive to adopting inclusive practices. On the other hand, there is comparatively little opposition to inclusion, as just a small minority (13.3%) show negative or resistive attitudes. Though rare, these opposing viewpoints may nevertheless have an impact on school culture as a whole and emphasize the necessity of ongoing teaching, awareness-raising and assistance to guarantee more widespread acceptance of inclusive education.

Objective 2: To evaluate the self-efficacy of elementary school teachers in implementing inclusive teaching strategies.

Table 3: Mean Score of Self-Efficacy of Teachers

Variable	Mean	SD
Self-Efficacy Score	3.42	0.70

Interpretations:

Teachers with a mean score of 3.42 have moderate levels of self-efficacy, which means, they are somewhat but not entirely confident in their capacity to use inclusive approaches. Teachers' confidence levels vary greatly, as evidenced by the comparatively high standard deviation of 0.71, some feel very competent, while others feel unsure or unprepared. The necessity for focused professional development to assist those with reduced self-efficacy is highlighted by this heterogeneity.

Table 4: Dimension wise Self-Efficacy

Dimensions	Mean	Interpretation Level
Lesson Adaptation	3.70	High
Management of Inclusive Classroom	3.26	Moderate
Adjusting to Disability	3.12	Low-Moderate
Use of Assistive Technologies	3.69	High

Interpretations:

The results show that teachers feel highly confident in adapting lessons ($M = 3.70$) and using differentiated strategies ($M = 3.69$), indicating strong skills in modifying instruction for diverse learners. Confidence is moderate for managing inclusive classrooms ($M = 3.28$), suggesting some challenges in handling diverse behaviors and needs simultaneously. The lowest confidence is in supporting students with severe disabilities ($M = 3.01$), reflecting a need for more training, resources and specialized support in this area.

Table 5: Distribution of Self-Efficacy Levels

Level	Range	Frequency	Percentage
Low	1.00--2.49	22	18.3%
Moderate	2.50-3.49	47	39.2%
High	3.50-5.00	51	42.5%

Interpretations:

The distribution shows that 42.5% of teachers have high self-efficacy, indicating strong confidence in handling inclusive teaching tasks. However, 18.3% fall in the low range, suggesting notable uncertainty or lack of preparation, particularly when working with students who have special needs. Meanwhile, 39.2% demonstrate moderate self-efficacy, meaning many teachers feel somewhat capable but may still require additional training and support to strengthen their confidence in inclusive practices.

Objective 3: To identify the relationship between elementary teachers' attitudes and their self-efficacy towards inclusive education.

Through the application of Person's r , correlation between elementary teachers' attitudes and their self-efficacy toward inclusive education was found out. The result is shown in table - 5

Table 5:

Correlation between Elementary Teachers' Attitudes and their Self-efficacy towards Inclusive Education

Variables	Pearson' r	Sig. (p-value)	Interpretation
Teachers' Attitude	0.64	$p < 0.001$	Strong and positive relationship
self-efficacy toward inclusive education			

Interpretations:

The correlation coefficient between elementary teachers' attitudes and their self-efficacy towards inclusive education is found to be 0.64. It indicates a strong positive relationship between teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education and their self-efficacy. This means that teachers with more positive attitudes are generally more confident in their ability to implement inclusive teaching practices. The p-value (< 0.001) again shows that this relationship is statistically significant, it means that it is unlikely to be due to chance.

6. Major Findings

On the basis of the above analysis and interpretations, the study reveals the following findings:

A. Attitudes of Elementary School Teachers Towards Inclusive Education:

- Many teachers believe that inclusive education promotes fairness, equal learning opportunities and positive social interactions among students.

- Despite this, teachers raised concerns about large class sizes, which make it difficult to give personalized attention to all learners.
- They also noted insufficient resources, such as teaching materials, assistive devices and support personnel, which limit effective implementation of inclusive education.
- A further concern was the lack of specialized training, leaving some teachers unsure about how to support learners with diverse or complex needs.

B. Teachers' Self-Efficacy:

- Teachers reported high confidence in adapting lessons and modifying instructional methods to suit different learners.
- Their confidence was moderate when managing diverse classrooms, indicating some uncertainty in behaviour management and addressing varied learning styles simultaneously.
- The lowest confidence was in supporting students with severe disabilities, suggesting a need for more training, guidance and specialized resources.

C. Relationship Between Attitudes and Self-Efficacy:

- The data showed a positive relationship between attitudes and self-efficacy: as teachers' confidence increased, so did their support for inclusive education.
- Teachers who felt more capable were also more positive about the benefits of inclusion.
- These confident teachers were more willing to use differentiated strategies, collaborate and adjust their teaching to meet diverse needs.
- In contrast, teachers with lower self-efficacy tended to hold more reservations about inclusion.

Conclusions:

Overall, the study demonstrates that instructors' positive attitudes and confidence in meeting a variety of learning requirements are critical to the success of inclusive education. Even though the majority of educators are in favor of the inclusion philosophy, many still find it difficult to put these ideas into reality in the classroom because of lack of resources, inadequate training and insufficient exposures to students with disabilities. The results confirm that self-efficacy is a major factor in inclusive teaching practices; educators who feel competent are more inclined to modify lessons, employ differentiated instruction and welcome diversity in the classroom. Strengthening teacher preparation programmes, offering ongoing professional development and guaranteeing the availability of classroom support systems are crucial for the transition to truly inclusive schools. In addition to improving instructors' abilities and self-assurance, investing in these areas will help create a more fair and encouraging learning environment for every student. In the end, enhancing teacher preparedness is a vital step in bridging the gap between inclusive education's goals and its actual application, assisting schools in creating inclusive cultures where all students may engage, contribute and thrive.

Inclusive education, thus, is one of the very important developments for the guarantee of equal educational rights and thereby for the transformation of a society to knowledge based society. It is such an idea which emphasized on the assurance of discrimination free educational atmosphere for holistic development of potentialities of each and every children for guaranteeing right to live dignified life as per unique capability.

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