

Extension of Inclusive Education Practices in Nagaland: Reflections from Tribal School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This article, titled 'Extension of Inclusive Education Practices in Nagaland: Reflections from Tribal School Teachers,' is an empirical study based on the primary data collection of twenty representative tribal schools in Nagaland. Nagaland is a small northeast state of India with rich, multi-cultural, and multilingual regions. The primary research focus of the study is to explore the reflections and perceptions of tribal school teachers about inclusive educational practices. The methodology used for the present research study is descriptive in nature, and the survey technique is used to collect the data. Teachers Perception of Inclusive Education Scale was used to collect data from 275 tribal teachers using a simple random sampling technique. The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) results indicate that teachers are generally positive and invested in inclusive education practices. However, they may need additional support, such as access to resources, collaboration opportunities, and professional development focused on differentiation and supporting diverse learners. The role of the teacher is critical to the success of inclusive education. Findings suggest that teachers may need additional support in areas such as access to resources, collaboration, and professional development focused on differentiation and diverse learners. Further research explores these connections and experiences through qualitative studies for the extension of the inclusive educational practices in Nagaland in particular and in North-East India in general.

Keywords: Extension, Inclusive Education, Tribal school, Nagaland

INTRODUCTION

Education is an essential instrument for achieving social justice and equality. It plays a vital role in promoting and achieving an inclusive and equitable society in which each and every child, irrespective of his/her ability and disability, has the right to learn, thrive and contribute to the development of the community. It is also regarded as a cornerstone in developing the potentialities of children, more so children with special needs. Inclusive education means the education of all, irrespective of their differences in background and abilities, by making necessary arrangements to adapt to the needs of every child. It aims to promote equal opportunity and provide quality education to all. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016 defines inclusive education as a 'system of education wherein students with and without disabilities learn together, and the system of

teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities.'

Children with special needs have different needs that require special attention and services compared to other children and are often denied their rights due to their differences and lack of infrastructure and support resources. To ensure their full participation and inclusion in the school, it is necessary to provide appropriate accommodations and resources tailored to their needs and potential. Resources play a vital role in an inclusive classroom environment as they help to promote learning and support diverse needs. Barrier-free access, assistive devices, appropriate teaching-learning materials, technology-based tools, special educators, curriculum and co-curricular activities, vocational skills/education, appropriate resources, etc., must be made available

to help children with disabilities to be able to deal with their limitations, with his peers and teachers in the classroom.

The goal of inclusive education is to provide equal access to opportunity and participation to every child to enable them to reach their full potential and to prepare them for life with appropriate teaching and learning environments and resources. Inclusion reinforces the idea that uniqueness and differences are accepted and respected. Inclusion is equally important in promoting understanding, reducing social prejudice and strengthening social integration.

Reflections from Literature Review

Alam, *et al.* (2004) stressed the importance of creating an inclusive learning environment and appropriate approaches tailored according to the needs, limitations and requirements of students with exceptionalities. Kanmani (2023) concluded that technical aids and assistive equipment immensely enhance the teaching-learning process. In the context of an inclusive classroom, he further stressed the rehabilitative and adaptive aspects of technology. Khan & Behlol (2014) concluded that the accessibility of the school's infrastructure normally caters to the needs of all students, but the curriculum, teaching & learning aids, equipment, and assessment method need to be modified. It should cater to the needs of students with disabilities. He indicated that despite instruction to include students with disabilities in the mainstream, it was not up to expectation due to insufficient support resources. Simorangkir (2021) stated that not all-inclusive elementary schools have the facilities and infrastructure as per the rules and regulations of the government. Pravash & Vaishali (2022) opined that architectural facilities for Children with special needs were good on physical and teaching learning facilities; however, independent living facilities were on an average level for CWSN to include them in the mainstream. Each child with special needs has different types of needs for facilities and infrastructure based on their distinct disabilities. In addition, it was learnt that various infrastructure facilities could be prepared for other types of children with special needs

characteristics, such as rooms, equipment, media, and student learning resources (Azzahra *et al.*, 2022).

Significance of the study

India has witnessed the rise of the inclusive education movement, which aims to ensure that quality education is provided to all students regardless of their ability or background (Haug, 2017). It is essential to recognize that tribal schools in Nagaland play a vital role in the closing of educational inequalities, but the success of inclusive education depends on the attitudes and support of teachers (Bolourian *et al.*, 2022). This research article focuses on assessing the perceptions, attitudes, and knowledge of teachers regarding inclusive education in their school settings, as well as their understanding of current practices in the schools where their children are enrolled. Moreover, the report will also examine the opinions of teachers towards inclusive education, as well as any objections they may have about it. The specific objective of this study is to identify gaps in teachers' perceptions of inclusive education in Nagaland's tribal schools, develop customized strategies for addressing particular problems, and increase their participation in the study.

RESEARCH QUESTION

For Nagaland's tribal schools to be successful in developing an inclusive learning environment, it is essential to map out teachers' perspectives, and this will lay the foundation for a more successful implementation, enhancing the educational experiences of all learners. This survey aims to learn teachers' perceptions of inclusive education in tribal schools in Nagaland's Kohima and Dimapur districts. Hence, the research question of the present study is entitled:

How about teachers' perceptions of inclusive educational practices among the tribal schools in Nagaland with respect to the following factors?

- *Teacher Responsibility and Collaboration*
- *Teacher Self-Efficacy and Support*
- *Perceived Support for Inclusive Practices*
- *Teacher Confidence in Differentiation and Support*
- *Teacher Beliefs about Inclusive Education*

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for the present research study is descriptive, and the survey technique is used to collect the data. Teachers Perception of Inclusive Education Scale was conducted in Nagaland with 275 tribal teachers (n=275). Using a simple random sampling approach (Thomas, 2022), 20 schools, ten each from the Kohima and Dimapur districts, were selected for this study. The data analysis employs a 5-point Likert scale and

exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to identify the underlying factors that impact teachers' involvement in inclusive education. To determine the most significant aspects of the Teacher's perception of the inclusive education (TPIE) model, the primary data was analysed using SPSS 26 (Statistical Package for Social Science).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected was analysed below based on the research question postulated for the study.

Table 1
Teachers Perception Factor Analysis

Factors (Cronbach Alpha)	Eigenvalue	Per cent of Variance	Loading
Factor 1(0.819): Teacher Responsibility and Collaboration	5.869	29.347	
Teachers believe they should be trained in inclusive education			0.82
Teachers see themselves as vital for inclusive education success			0.818
Creating a welcoming and inclusive environment is seen as a teacher's responsibility			0.804
Collaboration with other professionals is viewed as important			0.652
Factor 2(0.800): Teacher Self-Efficacy and Support	2.734	13.672	
Having access to resources and information for supporting students with disabilities			0.826
Ability to get support from other professionals			0.729
Feeling equipped with skills and knowledge			0.671
Familiarity with relevant policies and procedures			0.646
Factor 3(0.745): Perceived Support for Inclusive Practices	1.354	6.77	
Feeling supported by the school administration			0.764
Feeling supported by parents			0.740
Feeling supported by colleagues			0.672
Belief in inclusive education for social justice			0.509
Factor 4(0.685): Teacher Confidence in Differentiation and Support	1.151	5.756	
Confidence in creating a positive learning environment			0.783
Ability to modify instruction and assessments			0.749
Confidence in supporting all students			0.454
Factor 5(0.535): Teacher Beliefs about Inclusive Education	1.083	5.417	
Teacher role in tribal areas			0.662
Opportunities for inclusive education in tribal areas			0.637
Belief in benefits for all students			0.512
Belief in all students' right to quality education			0.436

A factor analysis of teachers' perceptions of inclusive education practices is presented in Table 1, which shows that five key factors account for more than 60% of the variance in teacher perceptions. The analysis shows no evidence of a problem with the model fit or overall reliability (alpha 0.861), which indicates that both the model and the data are reliable.

- **Factor 1 (Teacher Responsibility and Collaboration)** indicates the importance teachers place on their role in inclusive education. In addition to training (0.82 loadings), teachers emphasize their contribution (0.818 loadings) and value a positive environment. This element implies that educators prioritize inclusive practices but may require regular support and training.
- **Factor 2 (Teacher Self-Efficacy and Support)** is primarily concerned with the level of confidence and resources that teachers possess. Having the necessary resources and information (0.826 loading) along with support from other professionals (0.729 loading), is considered significant. Teachers should be provided with resources and opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills in inclusive education practices.
- **Factor 3 (Perceived Support for Inclusive Practices)** explores how teachers perceive the support they receive from different parties. Feeling supported by administration (0.764 loadings), parents (0.740 loadings), and colleagues (0.672 loadings) is essential. Schools can promote inclusive practices by creating a collaborative environment where teachers feel supported by the administration, parents and colleagues.
- **Factor 4 (Teacher Confidence in Differentiation and Support)** focuses on teachers' confidence in creating inclusive learning environments and modifying instruction. The loading of 0.749 indicates that teachers are confident in their ability to create positive environments and modify

instruction/assessments. Support for diverse learners and promoting differentiated instruction may be advantageous for teachers.

- **Factor 5 (Teacher Beliefs about Inclusive Education)** concerns the broader notions of inclusive education held by teachers, particularly in tribal contexts (statements with lower loadings may not be pertinent for the general population) In these areas, teachers are aware of the importance of teaching in tribal contexts (0.662 loading) and recognize the potential benefits and opportunities of inclusive education (0.637 loading) It is possible that the survey could be expanded to include more questions that inquire about teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education.

CONCLUSION

The factor analysis of teachers' perception of inclusive education (IE) indicates that teachers are generally positive and invested in inclusive education practices. However, they may need additional support, such as access to resources, collaboration opportunities, and professional development focused on differentiation and supporting diverse learners. Future research could explore how these factors relate to actual inclusive education practices and qualitative studies to provide deeper insights.

This study examines teachers' perceptions of inclusive education practices using survey data collected from teachers. Five key factors account for the variance between these two outcomes: teacher collaboration and accountability, self-efficacy, perceived support for inclusive practices, confidence in differentiation and support, and beliefs about inclusive education. The role of the teacher is critical to the success of inclusive education. Training, creating an atmosphere that fosters collaboration, and providing a welcoming environment for students are all factors that teachers emphasize. It is also important to point out that students have access to resources and support from their school administration, parents, and teachers.

However, it may be necessary for them to increase their confidence in their ability to support all student needs in the future. Teachers know their role in tribal areas and recognize the potential benefits of inclusive education for all students. Findings suggest that teachers may need additional support in areas such as resource access, collaboration, and

professional development focused on differentiation and diverse learners. Further research could explore these connections and their experiences through qualitative studies to extend the inclusive educational practices in Nagaland in particular and in North-East India in general.

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