

## The Acceptability Level of Ordinary School Teachers towards the Inclusion of Children with Visual Impairment

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### Abstract

The central purpose of the study was to know the level of acceptability of ordinary school teachers towards the inclusion of children with visual impairment and making them aware of the inclusion of these children. The type of research was descriptive. The population included all teachers serving in the regular schools in Punjab. Researchers conveniently selected a sample of 100 ordinary school teachers to collect data for this quantitative investigation. A close ended questionnaire was used as an instrument. Three point Likert type scale was used to get the responses of the teachers. Frequencies and percentages of responses were calculated. The acceptability level of majority of ordinary school teachers was high. Few of the teachers agreed that visually impaired children could get better education in special schools. Conclusions were drawn and recommendations to School Education Department and Special Education Department were made.

**Key words:**Inclusion, children with visual impairment, ordinary school teachers, acceptability level

### Introduction

The concept of inclusive education refers to including children with disabilities in the regular classes as full time students in the nearest schools for nondisabled students (Peters, 1999). The advocates of inclusive education are of the view that special need students can be instructed in the regular classrooms using adapted curriculum and instructional devices (Haider, 2008). According to Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden (2000), inclusive education is to restructure academic facilities for the promotion of ownership. It implies that all students in a school think themselves to be a part of a community comprising all those having some sort of disabilities (p.278).

Development of any country is mainly dependent on education. Underprivileged communities can produce prospects for

socioeconomically deprived, backward, excluded, and disadvantaged individuals through education to combat poverty. The individuals equipped with education can promote peace and guide towards affluence. It is ironical that countries strive to educate their citizens imparting knowledge, skills, attitudes and proficiencies irrespective of difference on the basis of gender and capability to work on social and economic level to the development of the nation. In this scenario, persons with disabilities and women are still being treated with biasness in many countries and Pakistan is not an exception.

Pakistan is the sixth largest country of the Islamic world, having a population of more than 180 million. There are 7.3 million out of school primary school age children. This figure is more than any other country in the region. Recently, there has been a significant movement of placing special education needs students from segregated settings into general education classrooms. This shift is fostered due to many international declarations including Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Jomtien World Conference on Education for All (1990), The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, The Dakar Framework for Education of All (2000), and most recently the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). Inclusive education is now top priority for Pakistani Government.

Visual impedance is the umbrella idea incorporating all degrees of visual misfortune. It restrains the capacity of the individual to perform undertakings that require sight (Arditi and Rosenthal, 1998). Persons with visual impairment are normally ordered into two categories i.e., visually impaired and low vision. The blindness refers to an aggregate or high level of vision trouble that is sufficiently serious to interfere with the capacity to perform regular tasks or exercises and that any remaining vision is not useable in performing visual tasks (Corn & Lusk, 2010). Low vision is a term that for the most part refers to an extreme visual impedance additionally having usable vision. Children with low vision can benefit from outside intervention to learn by furnishing them with optical gadgets like amplifying glasses, expansive size print materials and great lighting environment (Corn & Ryser, 1989).

In addition to educating the students, schools are an essential place of socialization and normalization. School offers different kinds of integration including normative, communicative and cultural integration (Josee, 2008). Many previous research studies have explored that children with visual impairment develop socialization strategies similar to those

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of sighted students (Veiga, 1997). They consider themselves integrated in their group and are accepted by their classmates in all activities involving the educational environment. They also develop social skills which are required for their social adjustment in life by mixing with sighted peers.

However, according to Veiga, (1997 as cited in Josée, (2008), placing students with visual impairment in regular schools may also cause some problems both for visually impaired students and teachers. They may experience a certain degree of isolation, irregular relationships with sighted peers and inferiority complex.

Teachers are perceived to be main person in the implementation of inclusive education (Haskell, 2000). Many previous research studies narrate that teachers are the key to the success of inclusionary programs (Cant, 1994; Stewart, 1983; Whiting & Young, 1995).Some other studies acknowledge that inclusive education can only be successful if teachers are part of this process (Horne, 1983; Malone, Gallagher, & Long, 2001).

The acceptance of ordinary school teachers toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular settings is significant due to many reasons. The willingness of teachers influences the overall acceptance of visually impaired students in the inclusive settings. (Hammond & Ingalls, 2003; Sideridis & Chandler, 1996; Van Reusen, Shoho, & Barker, 2001; Sokal & Sharma, 2014). Inclusive education program may be at risk if ordinary or regular classroom teachers would have negative perceptions about the inclusion of students with special needs (Horne, 1983; Van Reusen et al., 2001).

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study was conducted to achieve the following objectives.

1. To know the level of acceptability of ordinary school teachers for the inclusion of children with visual impairment.
2. To make the ordinary school teachers aware of the inclusion of children with visual impairment.
3. To compare the acceptability level of teachers of different schools.

### **Procedure of the Study**

It was a descriptive type of research. A survey research design was used to explore the acceptability level of school teachers about inclusion of students with visual impairment. The population of the study consisted of teachers working in the regular schools in Punjab. The

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sample of study included 100 teachers teaching at the public sector schools of Lahore, the capital city of the Punjab. The educational qualification of the teachers was graduation and post graduation. The age of the teachers ranged between 22- 55 years. The respondents were selected from 10 schools of Lahore city using simple random sampling technique. From each school 10 teachers were selected using balloting technique. A structured questionnaire (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.85) consisted of 32 items on three point scale (Yes, No, to some extent) was used to obtain the information from the teachers. Researchers personally visited all schools. Teachers were free to give their real views on the given statements.

### **Data Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20. Frequency distribution of teachers' responses were calculated which are being presented in tabular form. Independent sample *t*-test was used to see the significant difference between the acceptability of male and female teachers teaching in inclusive schools. Pearson correlation was used to see the relationship between educational qualification and level of acceptability.

### **Table 1**

*Frequency distribution of teachers' responses*

Sr.No	Statements	Acceptable	Not acceptable	Acceptable to some extent
<b>Education</b>				
1	Inclusion is suitable for the education of students with visual impairment	58%	14%	28%
2	Inclusion is a better educational system for children with low vision.	42%	34%	24%
3	It is a right of visually impaired children to receive education in a regular school.	42%	22%	36%
4	Visually impaired children can get better education in regular school.	44%	18%	38%
5	Visually impaired children can get better education in special schools?	24%	54%	22%

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6	The learning skills of the students with visual impairment are improved in regular school.	40%	34%	26%
7	The learning experience of visually impaired children will improve after studying with regular children.	36%	30%	34%
8	The education of visually impaired children with sighted children is mandatory for the successful life of visually impaired children.	88%	4%	8%
9	Inclusion is appropriate solution to the educational problems of visually impaired children.	62%	8%	30%
10	Visually impaired children should be taught regular curriculum in regular schools.	88%	4%	8%
<b>Social</b>				
11	Visually impaired children are able to have friendly relations with sighted children.	58%	26%	16%
12	The attitude of non-teaching staff working in schools would be positive with visually impaired children.	18%	26%	56%
13	Visually impaired children can take part actively in social activities by studying with regular peer.	24%	28%	48%
14	Inclusion of visually impaired children will make them useful citizens of society.	74%	2%	24%
15	Social skills of visually impaired children will be increased by studying with sighted children.	52%	20%	28%
<b>Teachers</b>				
16	The inclusion of visually impaired children will create behavior problems for sighted children.	58%	18%	24%
17	Visually impaired children will require extra time from ordinary teachers to			

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	solve educational matters.	26%	44%	30%
18	Teachers in regular schools need special training for teaching visually impaired children.	70%	16%	14%
19	Visually impaired children may face difficulties in educational matters due to inattention of teachers.	68%	8%	24%
20	The visually impaired children may face attitudinal problems by the regular education teachers in inclusion.	28%	30%	42%
21	The teachers will face no problems in the inclusion of visually impaired children.	22%	48%	30%
22	The regular school teachers treat sighted and visually impaired children equally.	32%	18%	50%
23	The overall behavior of visually impaired children will be improved in inclusion.	36%	24%	24%
<b>Psychological</b>				
24	Visually impaired children can learn good moral values by getting education in regular school.	30%	20%	50%
25	The low vision lab/resource room is necessary for the inclusion of visually impaired children in regular schools.	66%	22%	12%
26	Inclusion is important for the balanced personality of visually impaired children.	28%	30%	42%
27	Getting education in ordinary schools will have better effect on the psychological well being of visually impaired children.	46%	24%	30%
28	Getting education in ordinary school will have better effect on the social development of visually impaired children.	50%	20%	30%
29	Including children with visual			

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	impairment in regular school will cause anxiety in sighted peers.	18%	62%	20%
30	Inclusion will play positive role in the personality development of visually impaired children.	40%	24%	36%
31	Visually impaired children will learn independent living skills through receiving education with sighted children.	46%	20%	34%
32	Getting education in segregated system provides restricted educational facilities to the visually impaired children.	72%	10%	18%

### **Findings of the Study**

Table 1 shows that a vast majority of the regular school teachers (58%) accepted that inclusion is suitable option for the education of children with visual impairment and for 28% teachers, it was acceptable to some extent. According to 42% teachers, the inclusion is the right of persons with visual impairment. According to (88%), placing the students with visual impairment in a regular school is essential for them and according to (52%) of teachers inclusion will improve their social skills. A major portion (70%) of the teachers also accepted that they need training for the inclusion of students with visual impairment in regular schools. According to 66% teachers, the inclusion will also require a resource room and labs in the schools. Moreover 62% teachers also reported that inclusion is the appropriate solution to solve the educational problems of students with visual impairment to some extent.

A reasonable number (44%) of the teachers showed acceptability on the statements regarding the role of inclusion in personality development of students with low vision, learning of independent living skills (46%), providing students with visual impairment the regular curriculum, learning of moral skills, improvement in social and psychological skills and improved behaviour in an inclusive setting. A good number of teachers felt that the inclusion of visually impaired children will not require extra teaching time and will not cause problems for their sighted peers in an inclusive classroom.

### **Conclusion**

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On the basis of the findings of the study it can be concluded that majority of the teachers accepted the right to inclusion of the children with visual impairment, however, they felt that students with visual impairment may remain socially excluded. They can be physically included and for their academic inclusion, teachers will have to perform some extra duty.

### **Discussion**

Due to the global move towards implementation of inclusive education as basic human rights, in Pakistan the debate of inclusive education is at its peak point. The findings of this study have also revealed that majority of the teachers were accepting that children with visual impairment should be placed in inclusive settings to some extent. The teachers have showed reluctance in full acceptance. The findings of this study are in conformity with the findings of the study conducted by Wall (2002), Westwood and Graham (2003). The teachers also accepted that inclusion of visually impaired children will improve the self-concept, confidence and social skills of these children. However, a vast majority of the ordinary school teachers said that they need training to teach visually impaired students in inclusive settings. A study conducted by Annette - Hux, Shaw & Williams (2017) has same findings. It was mostly in the case of teachers who were not highly qualified and/or less experienced in teaching in inclusive settings (Hofman & Kilimo, 2014).

### **Recommendations**

There is a dire need to train the teachers on the curriculum adaptation, use of latest pedagogies and instructional strategies for teaching students with special needs in an inclusive classroom. Workshops, seminars and conferences should be arranged to provide knowledge and share information related to inclusive classroom management with the ordinary classroom teachers. An awareness campaign must be raised regarding the inclusion of students with visual impairment at national level (particularly teachers) to enlighten the people about the philosophy of inclusion and its importance.

An important finding of the study reflects that majority of the ordinary school teachers opined that the attitude of non-teaching staff working in schools would not be very much cooperative with the children with visual impairment. This finding would pose a serious implication because most of the children with visual impairment need assistance from the support staff for their mobility, riding the vehicles, going to toilets, taking their meals etc. The non-cooperative behaviour of

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the assistants would create many problems for these children. The recent incidences of harassments in the special education schools in Punjab have made the situation more problematic. So it is recommended that training programs for the support staff should be arranged and they should be sensitized about the special needs of children with visual impairment. The study will be helpful in modifying curriculum according to the social, emotional, and educational needs of children with visual impairment. The sighted children in regular schools would also need guidance from teachers and parents about the special needs of children with visual impairment.

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