

## Self-efficacy of General and Resource Teachers in Education of Children with Disabilities in India

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### Abstract

*A prerequisite for espousal of inclusive beliefs, values and practices in schools is the involvement and coordination of both general and specialised resource teachers. Since buoyancy in tackling educational challenges stems from the knowledge and experience, self-efficacy of both the groups of teachers is imperative for inclusive education. With this as a rationale, a study was undertaken to compare the self-efficacy of general and resource teachers in education of children with disabilities in India. Bandura's 'Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale' (TSES, n. d.). was used for the survey-based descriptive study. Opinion of 60 general and 60 resource teachers from the mainstream schools in Mumbai was collated. The schools were under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) meaning 'Education for all'- a flagship program of Govt of India. Results indicate a significantly greater self-efficacy of resource teachers as compared to general teachers in educating children with disabilities. This was specifically found in the tasks of influencing decision making, use of school resources and enlisting parental and community involvement for education of children with disabilities.*

**Keywords:** *Inclusive Education, Self- Efficacy, Teachers*

### Introduction:

Equity and equality in education are essential aspects of modern day education. These have resulted in the change in philosophy of education and hence, different models such as segregated, integrated and inclusive education have evolved. The current

trend of including children with disabilities in the mainstream schools is a global phenomenon and India has endorsed it. In fact, India is one of the many countries who have ratified the UNCRPD (United Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities) in 2007. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) (2002) a flagship program of Ministry of Human Resource Development under the Government of India, has a 'zero rejection' policy and is suggestive that each child with special needs be provided appropriate environment so that children receive meaningful and quality education. According to the Synopsis of Inclusive Education of SSA (2007), about 29.57 lakh children with special needs have been identified, out of which 24.77 lakh children with special needs (83.78%) have been enrolled in regular schools.

Lindqvist, (1999) stated that a dominant problem however, in the disability field, is the lack of access to education. Though physical access has been ensured by way of legislations and policies, children need to be learning and participating in schools. In many instances, there is a dramatic difference in the educational opportunities provided for the disabled and the non-disabled children. With this situation it will simply not be possible to realize the goal of 'Education for All' (as cited in Peters, 2004). Inclusive education as a movement and a philosophy has the potential to address many such issues if the essential aspects such as infrastructure, environment, teacher's attitude & skills and resource support in schools is adequately provided. Way back UNESCO (1970) had recommended "inclusive education as a cheap alternative" to other special education programs, specifically for developing countries. Further, the 'Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action' (1994) had emphasised that regular schools with inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discrimination, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving 'Education for All'. Further the Delor's commission (1996) had reiterated that the fundamental principle of inclusive schools is that all children should 'learn together' so that they 'live together in order to foster an inclusive society. Hence, wherever possible regardless of any difficulties or differences that children may have, education must be inclusive. Inclusive schools must recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality education to 'all' through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnerships with their communities. There should be a range of support and services to match the continuum of special needs encountered in every school. The concept of inclusion is based on the right of every child to have enabling learning environments. It is a well-documented fact that children with disabilities benefit more in regular school environment by interacting with the diversity in the classroom. Hence, India has been undertaking proactive steps through: Schemes such as Integrated Education of the Disabled Child (1974,2014) revised in 1992 and further replacing this by Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) in 2009-10, Acts like Right to Education (2009), programmes like SSA & Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) (2009) and the recent recommendation of NITI Aayog (2016) to improve the potential abilities of children with disabilities through inclusive education

In spite of these positive measures, India continues to face challenges in implementing the provisions of inclusive education especially with reference to socio economic and cultural, governmental policy and educational and teacher training issues (Sharma & Das, 2015). Inclusive education connotes 'students with disability attend general education in mainstream schools primarily under the accountability of

regular teacher'. The resource teachers are appointed to provide supportive role for the fulfilment of special needs of these children in resource units under SSA (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004, p.7). Both general and resource teachers play a pivotal role in realising the goals of inclusive education in mainstream schools. These teachers need to work collaboratively and share the responsibility of teaching students with special needs arising out of disability. Keeping this in view, some states in India have mandated appointment of resource teachers in mainstream schools to facilitate inclusive practices. Jones & Fuller (2003) (as cited in European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2010) stated that "research has evidence to show that teachers are the key to success of inclusive education". Teachers' beliefs, practices and attitudes are important for understanding and improving educational processes (OECD, 2009).

### **Self-Efficacy of Teachers**

Confidence about one's own ability to achieve predetermined results is termed as 'Self-efficacy'. Teachers' self-efficacy influences the students' outcome and has been an important predictor to teachers' performance in the classroom (Ahsan, M. T., & Burnip, L. (2007). Bandura's (1977) Self Efficacy theory supports these findings. The theory is based on Social Cognitive theory by Bandura (1986). According to Social Cognitive theory human behaviour is correlated with personal and environmental factors

(Malinen, 2013.p.27).

Self-efficacy affects human behaviour through cognitive, affective, motivational, and decisional processes. It determines whether people think optimistically or pessimistically and in self-enabling or self-disabling ways. Self-efficacy influences behaviour both directly and indirectly (Bandura, 1977). Soto and Goetz stated, self-efficacy as "the beliefs that individuals hold about their abilities and about the outcome of their efforts powerfully influence the ways in which they behave"(as cited in Schwarber.L,2006.p.1).

Self-efficacy has a more direct influence on behaviour than the self-concept (Bandura, 1977). Teachers' self-efficacy is defined as the teachers' own belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully achieve a specific task in a particular context (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998: 233). It is known to create a positive impact on students' progress. According to Woolfolk (2007), evidence shows that teachers' self-efficacy has an impact on students' academic achievement. To sum up teachers' self-efficacy seems to be the key element influencing one's confidence to apply their knowledge/skills in differing situations (Gorrell & Capron, 1994)

### **Rationale for the study:**

Achieving the objectives of inclusive education poses multiple challenges in the Indian context. Prominent among these are the multi-lingual and a multi-cultural

nature of the country. According to UNESCO (2001) lack of awareness and synergy amongst the various bodies involved, so also the task of capacity building of teachers in inclusive set ups are some of the issues in facilitating inclusive education. Rao (2003) observed that mainstream schools refuse to admit children with special needs. Myreddi and Narayan (2000) argued that general teachers' limited knowledge about practical strategies of dealing with disability as the reason for such refusal. To address these issues pertaining to the teachers, the SSA in India has undertaken sensitization of general teachers, parents and community (Yadava, 2013). The training of teachers varies in duration.

About 88.46% percent general teachers have received less than one week of training and 0.46% percent have received around three months training in inclusive education. The specialised resource teachers who have been trained in the single disability also receive cross disability training under SSA. The initiatives undertaken by National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) (1985,2016) and the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) (as cited in NPE,2016) both statutory bodies of Govt. of India are noteworthy. NCTE under the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has introduced a special course on 'Inclusive Education' at the pre- service teacher training of general education program and similar efforts have been initiated by RCI under Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MSJE). In its two years teacher training course RCI has also included cross disability and 'Inclusive Education' course. From such initiatives it can be assumed that the long term and shortterm trainings would have enhanced teachers' self-efficacy in dealing and handling educational issues of children with disabilities and consequently their attitude towards these children. This is hypothesised on the justification of Banduras' self-efficacy theory (1977) which suggests that knowledge is linked with self-efficacy which further has a direct influence on behaviour.

The present study has its rationale rooted in the trainings of general and resource teachers. Until recently the general teachers were trained to teach the non-disabled children and the resource teachers were trained in single category training i.e. specialised to teach any 'one category' of disabled children. However, both these teachers are currently handling diverse learners in inclusive classrooms. Assuming that general teachers would have attended foundation courses in teaching children with disabilities and the resource teachers would have attended short term courses in teaching other disabilities, the question arises how confident do both of them feel in handling educational issues in inclusive classrooms. A study was hence undertaken to comparatively study the self-efficacy of general and resource teachers with reference to the parameters given in the Bandura's Instrument of 'Teacher Self-efficacy Scale', so that specific recommendations can be charted based on the needs of the teachers.

**Review of Literature :**

Bandura (1977) introduced the concept of self-efficacy through “Theory of Self Efficacy based upon unifying Theory of Behavioural Change”. He further elaborated this theory as Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001). Accordingly self-efficacy is related to one’s self judgement of competencies used under different conditions. In the social cognitive theory self-efficacy concept is at the ground level ‘(Bandura, 2001)’, if a person has positive self-efficacy then he can do any activity confidently (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998: p.233). Gibson & Dembo (1984) recognised two types of self-efficacy specific to teachers: personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy. Personal Teaching Efficacy (PTE) represents a teacher’s belief that he/she possesses the skills and abilities to facilitate student learning, that is, it is the teacher’s overall sense of his/her own teaching effectiveness. General Teaching Efficacy (GTE) represents the belief that teaching (as an organisational form of education) can affect pupils positively, even in light of external factors or conditions such as low motivation or poor home environment.

There is some evidence that teacher efficacy is related to academic achievement and teacher behaviours known to foster academic achievement (Ashton & Webb et al. as cited in Coladarci, 1992, p.326);. Self-efficacy is also said to be an integral part of success of our life. It is developed through our belief about how we feel, think, motivate ourselves and behave. Self-belief produces diverse effects through cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes. It has a strong sense to enhance human accomplishment and personal wellbeing in many ways. Hence, the Social Cognitive theory (1986) related to self-efficacy theory (1977) has been used in teaching too. A teacher is a good agent to improve students’ performance (Klassen & Lynch, 2007). Tschannen-Moren & Woolfolk Hoy (2001) defined teachers efficacy as “Teacher’s judgement of his or her capabilities to bring about anticipated outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated” (p.783). Mojavezi & Tamiz (2012) found that teacher self-efficacy has a positive influence on the students’ motivation and achievement (Muijs & Reynolds, 2001; Tournaki & Podell, 2005). Similarly Akbari & Allvar (2010); Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca & Malone (2006); Moore & Esselman (1992) & Ross (1992) have reported that teachers’ self-efficacy is found to be an important factor influencing student attainment. Moran & Hoys (2001) ideas also elaborated that teacher self-efficacy is powerfully related to many meaningful educational outcomes

such as teacher persistence, enthusiasm, commitment and instructional behaviour, as well as student outcomes such as achievement and motivation (p.783). Shreve (2006) further observed that teachers' self-efficacy mediated by academic achievement predicts students' social skill development.

Positive self-efficacy is also known to be directly affecting actions and efforts taken to teach children with disability. According to Abdul Rahim (1994), some prerequisites are important for the success of inclusive education. These prerequisite are understanding, acceptance and the capability of teachers to implement inclusive education (Hashim, Ghani, Ibrahim & Zain, 2014). The adaptation of the learning process requires creativity of teachers as per the time provided for teachers to teach in inclusive schools. However, many teachers are not able to change their classroom instructional style of involving students with special needs (Baker & Zigmond, 1995, Hashim, Ghani, Ibrahim & Zain, 2014).

A study conducted by Ibrahim (1998), concluded that a total of 66.9% of mainstream teachers have negative perceptions of inclusive education. Weaker strategies are reflections of low self-efficacy which further impact teachers' attitudes and behaviour in inclusive classroom (Baker & Zigmond, 1995). As against this teachers with high self-efficacy put in more efforts in teaching children with disability which results into positive student outcomes.

Research documents that many teachers lack confidence in their abilities to teach students with special needs in their inclusive classrooms (Bender, et al., 1995; Buell, et al., 1999; Jordan & Stanovich, 2004; Poulou, 2005). As seen already, teachers' Self Efficacy is a significant factor which affects children's achievements. Hence it can also be assumed that teachers with different self-efficacy will impact children's learning differently. With respect to inclusive education both general and resource teachers are accountable for many essential functions in the classrooms. Hussien and Qaryouti (2014) investigated general education teachers' preference of the best educational settings for the students with disabilities and their attitudes toward inclusive education settings. It was found that general education teachers had lower levels of self-efficacy than special education teachers.

Training as a means of improving self-efficacy has also been indicated in the literature (Schwarzer and Fuchs, 2009; Horne and Timmons, 2009). Some researchers have studied whether mere training and professional programs will be effective without providing adequate support to inclusive teachers (Hashim, Ghani, Ibrahim & Zain, 2014). Bandura's theory states that self-efficacy is not fixed but constantly changes with their experiences and information (Bandura, 1977; Pajares, 2003). Consequently, it is derived that self-efficacy is not static, it is dynamic and changes with experience. In the present day Indian context, it is known that the objectives and hence the training content and the knowledge imparted about handling children with disabilities is different in the training of both general and resource teachers. So the question arises that since the awareness is different whether the experience in handling helps to build self-efficacy? Studies addressing such issues need to be undertaken for the knowledge of planners of inclusive education.

Since no published report in the Indian context was available, the present research hypothesised that 'there is no significant difference between general and resource teachers' self-efficacy in education of children with disabilities'. Further, for the purpose of analysis sub-hypothesis on each of the subscale of the tool were also formulated.

### Methodology:

The study adopted the descriptive research design and the data was collected using Bandura's Teachers' Self Efficacy Scale (TSES, n.d.). TSES is a nine point Likert scale consisting of 30 items having Cronbach's Alpha 0.861. It has seven subscales namely Efficacy to influence Decision making, Efficacy to influence School Resource, Instructional Self-Efficacy, Disciplinary Self Efficacy, Efficacy to enlist parental involvement, Efficacy to enlist community involvement and Efficacy to create positive school climate. For the present study some subscales were combined. The Instructional and Disciplinary self-efficacy (IDE) items were combined to form one subscale. This is because items pertaining to some aspects of Disciplinary self-efficacy were found to be overlapping with items covered under Instructional self-efficacy. Secondly, Efficacy to Enlist Parental and Community Involvement (EPCI) were also combined because parents are a part of the community and hence while enlisting community involvement, automatically parental involvement is also solicited. The finalised tool comprising of five subscales namely Self Efficacy: to influence decision making; to influence school resources; to create positive school climate; to enlist parental and community involvement; and to influence disciplinary and instructional activities were studied. Data was collected by administering the TSES to 60 general and 60 resource teachers identified randomly from mainstream schools under SSA.

**Table 1: Result of t- test comparing the self-efficacy of general & resource teachers**

Parameter	Group	Mean	SD	N	df	M1-M2	t - cal	t - table	Significant level at .05
Efficacy to Influence Decision Making	*G T	10.00	4.0	60	118	2.88	3.81	1.98	Yes
	**RT	12.88		60					
Efficacy to Influence School Resources (ESR)	G T	06.12	2.83	60	118	1.21	3.07	1.98	Yes
	RT	07.33		60					
Instructional and Disciplinary Self-efficacy (IDE)	G T	80.75	18.50	60	118	3.68	1.25	1.98	No
	RT	84.43		60					
Efficacy to Enlist Parental and Community Involvement (EPCI)	G T	40.11	12.75	60	118	8.68	5.26	1.98	Yes
	RT	48.08		60					
Efficacy to Create a Positive School Climate	G T	56.15	11.46	60	118	1.6	0.97	1.98	No
	RT	57.75		60					

(ECPSC)									
Total self- efficacy in education of children with disabilities	GT	193.33		60					
	RT	211.2	32.42	60	118	18.06	3.41	1.98	Yes

\*GT=General Teachers &\*\* RT=Resource Teachers

### Inference from the Table 1

(i) There is a significant difference between resource and general teachers' self-efficacy to influence decision making (IDM) (obtained t' value  $3.81 > 1.98$  table 't' value' at 0.05 level). The Mean of resource teachers' IDM i.e. 12.88 is significantly greater than mean of general teachers' IDM which is 10. It is therefore, inferred that the resource teachers have greater efficacy to Influence Decision Making than general teachers.

(ii) There is a significant difference between resource and general teachers' self-efficacy to influence School Resources (ESR) ( $3.07 > 1.98$  at 0.05 level). The Mean of resource teacher ESR (7.33) is significantly greater than mean of general teachers' ESR (6.12). It is therefore inferred that the resource teacher have greater efficacy to influence school resource than general teacher.

(iii) There is a no significant difference between resource and general teachers' Instructional and Disciplinary Self-efficacy (IDE) ( $1.25 = 1.98$  at 0.05 level). The mean of resource teachers' IDE (84.43) is not significantly different than the mean of general teachers' IDE (80.25). It is therefore inferred that resource teacher have not significant at the level of 0.05 for instructional and disciplinary self-efficacy than general teacher.

(iv) There is a significant difference between resource and general teachers' self-efficacy to Efficacy to Enlist Parental and Community Involvement (EPCI) ( $5.26 > 1.98$  at 0.05 level). The mean of resource teachers EPCI (48.08) is not significantly different than the mean of general teachers' EPCI (40.11). It is therefore inferred that self-efficacy to enlist parental and community involvement of resource teacher equally with general teacher.

(v) There is a no significant difference between resource and general teachers' Efficacy to Create a Positive School Climate (ECPSC) ( $0.97 = 1.98$  at 0.05 level). The mean of resource teachers' ECPSC (57.75) is not significantly different than the mean of general teachers' ECPSC (56.15). It is therefore inferred that efficacy to create positive school climate of resource teacher have equal with general teacher.

(vi) There is a significant difference between resource and general teachers' self-efficacy in Education of children with disabilities ( $3.41 > 1.98$  at 0.05 level). The Mean of resource teacher (211.2) is significantly different than mean of general teacher (193.33) for the Total self-efficacy in education of children with disabilities. It is therefore inferred that Total Self-Efficacy of resource teacher have greater than general teacher.

**Discussion:****Efficacy to Influence Decision Making (IDM) and School Resources (ESR)**

Resource teachers are recruited in fewer numbers in inclusive schools under SSA. The appointed resource teachers in a mainstream school are specialised professional who are solely consulted for any requirements pertaining to inclusive teaching learning material, seating arrangement and other adaptations for the children with disabilities. Since all other teachers in the mainstream schools are generalist i.e. have had training in general education, the resource teachers may be considered as the most knowledgeable person for education of children with disabilities in mainstream schools. This may be because as compared to the general education teachers the resource teacher has more in-depth training and hence more experience in education children with disabilities. So, the school management may be giving a free hand to the resource teacher for decision making and also must be taking their views into consideration for all issues pertaining to education of children with disabilities. Hence, the resource teachers in the present study may have reported to have greater efficacy to influence decision making and school resource than general teachers in the Indian context. Similar findings have been documented in other countries by Avramidis et al, (2000) & Avramidis and Norwich (2002). These studies found that teachers with training in special needs education themselves are confident enough to handle students with disabilities in their classroom and appeared to hold more positive attitudes towards inclusive education in general.

**Efficacy for Positive School Climate and Instructional & Disciplinary Self Efficacy**

School climate refers to the quality and character of school life. It reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures (Cohen, J., McCabe, L., Michelli, N. M. & Pickeral, T, 2009). According to Loukas (2007) the school climate includes the physical dimension like appearance of school building infrastructure, school policy of safety etc. The social dimension includes creating cordial relationship between different stakeholders of school. The academic dimension includes student achievements, evaluation and monitoring.

In TSES the components listed for the School climate are an outcome of the Vision, Mission and Quality objectives of the school. These are mostly under the purview of the School Management who is the decision maker and the general and resource teachers are the implementers. Since both the groups of teachers have the same role responsibilities they seem to be at par, hence no significant difference was found among the two groups of teachers in the present context.

**Efficacy to Enlist Parental and Community Involvement (ECPSC)**

In the Indian context, the resource teachers have close collaboration with parents & community. They are required to undertake home visits, undertake door to door surveys and also create awareness about early identification and intervention. Resource teachers are also closely associated with community and health workers for

prevention of disabilities. The nature of their work and their role responsibilities would be adding to their experience in this regard and hence the resource teachers might have exhibited greater self-efficacy in these areas.

### **Total Self Efficacy**

The resource teachers have exhibited higher total self-efficacy in education of children with disability than the general education in the study. This could be attributed partly to the nature of the pre-service training that they get and partly due to the onsite experience that they might have gathered in handling various disabilities. Similar findings have been reported by Hussien and Qaryouti (2015). Their study indicated that a considerable number of general education teachers reported low to moderate levels of self-efficacy than resource teachers in education of children with disabilities. Studies undertaken by Ahsan, Sharma & Deppeler (2012), Das, Kuyini, & Desai (2013), Loreman, Sharma and Forlin (2013) also suggest that participation in training programs in teaching in inclusive classrooms had a positive significant impact on self-efficacy.

### **Conclusion**

Out of the 5 areas of self-efficacy studied, the self-efficacy of resource teachers was found to be more in three areas namely influence decision making, school resources & education of children with disabilities. The overall self-efficacy is also significantly higher of resource teachers than the general teachers in the mainstream schools in the Indian context.

### **Implications& Recommendations:**

The outcomes of this study suggest that it is essential to work towards capacity building of general teachers in order to achieve the goals of inclusive education. Hence, the implications are geared towards drawing attention of both policy makers and curriculum designers to take appropriate measures like appointing resource teachers in all mainstream schools and also give more opportunities for general teachers to learn about diverse learners especially those with disabilities.

It is recommended that certificate courses be made mandatory for both resources and general teachers in inclusive pedagogical practices. Add-on Certificate courses for resource teachers for sensitising in other disabilities other than the ones they have graduated in would increase their self-efficacy in handling educational needs of different disabilities. The present study was limited to schools in the Mumbai district in India. Periodic studies and documentation of teacher's self-efficacy should form a regular feature by all the state education departments. This will be beneficial in enhancing the self-efficacy of teachers and help foster inclusive pedagogical practices.

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