

## **A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS ACCORDING TO GENDER, NATIONALITY AND TEACHING EXPERIENCE AT THREE SCHOOLS IN BANGKOK, THAILAND**

**Manika Dahuja<sup>1</sup>**

**Surapee Sorajjakool<sup>2</sup>**

**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to find out about the attitude of teachers towards inclusion of children with special educational needs according to demographics at three schools in Bangkok. The objectives of this research are (a) To identify the level of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of children with special educational needs according to gender, nationality and teaching experience at three schools in Bangkok, Thailand (b) To compare the significant difference of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of children with special educational needs according to demographics at three schools in Bangkok, Thailand. The study was conducted using a survey at three schools in Bangkok. The researcher studied teachers attitude towards the topic at hand under five subscales, teachers' understanding of general philosophy of IE; classroom behaviour of students with disabilities; classroom management; impact of inclusion on academic and social growth of students with disabilities; and teachers' perceived ability to teach students with disabilities, according to demographics. Analysis of the data showed that the teachers attitude towards the five subscales, were positive with the highest positive attitude towards impact of inclusion on academic and social growth of students with disabilities and the lowest positive attitude towards and teachers' perceived ability to teach students with disabilities. The analysis of the t-test showed the p value to be more than 0.05 for the effects of gender and teaching experience, which led to the conclusion of no significant difference in the teachers' attitude towards the five subscales according to gender and teaching experience. The analysis of from the t-test that compared the nationality's influence on teachers' attitude towards IE program, showed a p value of less than 0.05 for the attitude towards teachers' understanding of general philosophy of IE and classroom behaviour of students with disabilities, which led to the conclusion of a significant difference in the teachers' attitude towards the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> variable with teachers of Asian descent had a more positive attitude towards the understanding of general philosophy of IE and while the results showed that teachers of non- Asian descent had a more favourable attitude towards classroom behaviour of students with disabilities. The P value of the t test of the other variables mentioned above was more

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<sup>1</sup> M.Ed. Candidate in Curriculum and Instruction, Graduate School of Human Sciences, Assumption University, Thailand.  
pawinee99@hotmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Ph.D. Graduate School of Human Sciences, Assumption University, Thailand.  
sorajjakool@gmail.com

than 0.05 which led to a conclusion of no significant difference in teachers' attitude towards the variables according to teaching experience. Further research can be done on the influence of nationality on the teachers' attitude towards the IE program.

**Keywords:** Inclusion, Special Educational Needs, Attitude, Mainstream Classroom.

### **Introduction**

Teachers' attitudes towards teaching is very important for the education of children, therefore teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of children with disabilities is very important for the successful education of students in such environment. There is a need for teachers who are qualified to teach children with disabilities and a curriculum to support such an education more than ever in Thailand. Thai law mandates that students complete 12 years of free education with 9 years of compulsory education (National Education Act, 1999), with this law, more and more children are being enrolled in mainstream educational system; some of these children have some type of learning disability or handicap ranging from mild to severe (Office of Education Council, 2004). In the past the education of children with disabilities in Thailand were carried out by different organizations, which were mostly non-profit (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Bangkok, 2004). The treatments and education of children with disabilities were limited to the health department such as hospital and clinics (Chrontawonpanit, 2002), they were not introduced into schools or any other mainstream areas. In the year 1999, the Thai government passed the National Education Act, calling it the year of educating people with disabilities (Asia- Pacific Development Center on Disability, 2003). According to the Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability, the National Education Act mandated the education of all children with special needs, with a goal of allowing all children to benefit from equal opportunity of education. The concept of inclusion of children with disabilities into mainstream classroom is fairly new in Thailand; it needs a lot of hard work and commitment from all the people involved in the school to make the inclusion program a success. There are people who support the inclusion classroom setting and there are some who don't, the remaining populations are confused about the concept of an inclusion program (Cipkin & Rizza, 2011). When a teacher has limited knowledge of the concept of inclusion, it can affect the quality of education obtained by children (Cipkin & Rizza, 2011). The attitude of the teachers towards the inclusion program can affect the success of educating children with disabilities (Kauffmann, Hallahan & Ford, 1998).

The research was conducted at Rasami British International School, Trinity International School and Prasarnmit Primary International Programme. The researcher surveyed all the current teachers to study their attitudes towards the inclusion of children with special educational needs according to demographics. The attitudes of the teachers were surveyed to understand them believes and understanding of IE under 5 subscales, teachers' understanding of general philosophy of IE; classroom behaviour of students with disabilities; classroom management; impact of inclusion on academic and social growth of students with disabilities and teachers' perceived ability to teach students with disabilities. The teachers' attitudes

were influenced by their knowledge of the subject therefore it is cognitively based attitude according to the three-component attitude model.

### **Research Objective**

There are two objectives:

1. To identify the level of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of children with special educational needs according to gender, nationality and teaching experience at three schools in Bangkok, Thailand.
2. To determine if there is a significant difference of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of children with special educational needs according to demographics at three schools in Bangkok, Thailand.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Attitudes are a person's feelings and beliefs that affect their behaviour towards an issue or concepts (Triandis, 1971). Attitude differs from person to person; a person reacts to different phenomena based on their personal experiences and knowledge of the phenomenon at hand (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). For the survey of the attitudes of teachers towards inclusion of Special Educational needs children according to gender, nationality and teaching experience, the tripartite or the three components model was used. According to this model, attitude is classified in to three components (Panjawani, 2012):

#### *Affectively Based Component*

Affectively based attitudes are those that rise from emotional reactions towards an attitude object. An affectively based attitude can be formed through classical conditioning, operant conditioning or through exposure (Hogg & Cooper, 2003)

#### *Behavioral Based Component*

Behavioral based attitudes are the physical reaction that a person has towards an attitude object (Panjawani, 2012).

#### *Cognitive Based Component*

Cognitively based attitudes are those that rise from beliefs and knowledge that a person has about the attitude object (Panjawani, 2012). In this study the researcher is surveying the teachers to understand and see their attitude towards IE of SEN according to gender, nationality and teaching experience. The researcher will compare the teachers' attitude and see if their demographics affect their attitude towards teachers' understanding of general philosophy of IE; classroom behaviour of students with disabilities; classroom management; impact of inclusion on academic and social growth of students with disabilities and teachers' perceived ability to teach students with disabilities. For this survey the cognitive based component of the three-component model was used. The theory states that in the attitude of a person towards an attitude object is affected by believes and the knowledge the respondents have towards the 5 sub scales being measured.

## Method

### *Population and Sample*

The population in this study was all the teachers in RBIS, TRIS and PPIp. These three schools were the focus of this research because the teachers in these schools have interactions with SEN students in the mainstream classroom and have to teach them any help from a SEN department and without any support. The sample for this survey is a population sample, the researcher distributed surveys to all homeroom and subject teacher during the final term of the school as teachers have now almost finished teaching the school year and have experienced some kind of inclusion during the course of the year. Below is the table showing the frequency of the respondents from each school. RBIS had 25 respondents, TRIS had 14 respondents and PPIp had 11 respondents, 50 respondents in total.

### *Instrument*

The instrument used in this study was a survey that was adapted from the 1979 of the Attitude towards Mainstreaming Scale (ATMS). The survey was divided into two sections, sections A contains questions that collect the demographic information of the participants and section B consists of 29 indicators which describes teachers' attitude towards inclusion. The 5 sub- scales used in the ATM survey was used in the survey to measure teachers attitudes, namely: (i) Teachers' understanding of general philosophy of IE; (ii) Classroom behaviour of students with disabilities; (iii) Classroom management; (iv) Impact of inclusion on academic and social growth of students with disabilities; and (v) Teachers' perceived ability to teach students with disabilities.

### *Validity and Reliability*

Validity is the measurement of the appropriateness of the survey to get the information necessary for the study (Henerson, Morris & Fitz-Gibbon, 1987). The validity of an instrument use to measure depends upon how the concept it is designed to measure is defined. In this study construct, content and external validity was demonstrated (Pham, 2008). Construct and content validity are related to one another, construct validity refers to how well the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure and content validity referred how well the items in the instrument emphasized the various component what it is supposed to measure appropriately. For this survey, Pham (2008) reviewed literature to see the popular findings amongst previous related researches regarding teachers' attitude towards IE. Previous findings showed that teachers were not confident with their understanding of IE, which is a threat to the study. As stated by Henerson, Morris and Fitz-Gibbon (1987) people cannot respond accurately to questions they don't understand and sometimes even though the questions are understood, they may not know their own attitude. The issue needed to be researched further on how teachers reflect their belief (cognitive factor) and their feelings towards inclusion (affective factor) and how react towards inclusion education (behavioral factor). After those researches were done by Pham (2008) the answer for the question "do the teachers mean what they mean" can be valid.

External validity means is the findings can be applied to other situations. External validity was met by this survey conducted by Pham in Vietnam because the sample of the study was randomly selected thus the research findings could be generalized to all population of the same criteria.

The survey used for this research is an adaptation of the ATM survey used in 1979 by Larrivee and Cook, this survey was used to research the attitude of teachers towards mainstreaming of children. The initial reliability of the survey when used in 1979 was 0.92, when used to measure the attitude of teachers towards inclusion education in Vietnam in 2008; the reliability of the survey was 0.79 by estimating Cronbach's alpha coefficient of internal consistency (Pham, 2008). The reliability of the questionnaire for the survey used in this study was 0.774 by estimating Cronbach's alpha coefficient of internal consistency.

### *Procedure*

The researcher distributed the surveys during the final term of AY 2015-2016. The researcher asked for assistance from the school staff in the distribution and retrieval of the surveys. Surveys were distributed at all three schools. 30 surveys were distributed at each school, a total of 90 surveys distributed. 25 teachers from RBIS responded, 14 from TRIS and 11 from PPIp, coming to a total of 50 respondents which is a return rate of 55.5%.

### **Findings**

This study was conducted to determine if a statistically significant relationship existed between teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of children with special educational needs according to demographics at three schools in Bangkok, Thailand.

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents.

**Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Profile**

Demographics	Frequency	Percent
Gender:		
Male	18	36.0
Female	32	64.0
Nationality:		
Asian	24	48
Non-Asian	26	52
Teaching Experience		
0-10 Years	33	66
11 Years and above	17	34

Research Objective 1 is to identify the level of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of children with special educational needs according to gender, nationality and teaching experience at three schools in Bangkok, Thailand. The results showed that overall teachers' attitude towards inclusion of children with special educational needs.

Table 2 below shows the results of teachers' attitudes towards SEN according to gender, nationality and teaching experience.

**Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Teachers' Attitudes According to Demographics**

Dependent variables	M	S.D.	Results
● Teachers' understanding of general philosophy of IE	3.04	.877	Positive attitude
● Classroom behaviour of students with disabilities	2.56	.742	Positive attitude
● Classroom management	2.68	.687	Positive attitude
● Impact of inclusion on academic and social growth of students with disabilities	2.88	.762	Positive attitude
● Teachers' perceived ability to teach students with disabilities	2.30	.706	Positive attitude

Research Objectives 2 seek to compare the significant difference of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of children with special educational needs according to demographics at three schools in Bangkok, Thailand using dependent samples t-test.

**Table 3: The Results from the Dependent Samples T-Test That Compares the Significant Difference of Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusion of Children with Special Educational Needs According to Gender at Three Schools in Bangkok, Thailand**

Variables	Gender	n	M	S.D.	t
Philosophy	Male	18	2.97	0.909	0.4230
	Female	32	3.08	0.866	
Classroom Behaviour	Male	18	2.66	0.687	0.7420
	Female	32	2.5	0.754	
Classroom management	Male	18	2.78	0.631	0.7460
	Female	32	2.63	0.709	
Social growth	Male	18	2.87	0.701	0.0452
	Female	32	2.88	0.777	
Teachers ability	Male	18	2.17	0.667	0.9780
	Female	32	2.37	0.708	

Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of special educational needs children according to gender in the mainstream classroom at three schools in Bangkok, Thailand.

Table 4 shows that there is no significant difference on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of special educational needs children according to nationality in the mainstream classroom at three schools in Bangkok.

**Table 4: The Results of The Dependent Samples T-Test on Teachers' Attitudes Towards Inclusion According to Nationality**

Variables	Nationality	n	M	S.D.	t
Philosophy	Asian	24	2.85	0.439	3.220
	Non-Asian	26	2.49	0.347	
Classroom Behaviour	Asian	24	2.28	0.350	4.080
	Non-Asian	26	2.66	0.308	
Classroom management	Asian	24	2.51	0.280	1.703
	Non-Asian	26	2.71	0.508	
Social Growth	Asian	24	2.66	0.352	1.211
	Non-Asian	26	2.77	0.289	
Teachers ability	Asian	24	2.43	0.364	1.300
	Non-Asian	26	2.28	0.444	

Table 5 shows that there is no significant difference on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of special educational needs children according to teaching experience in the mainstream classroom at three schools in Bangkok.

**Table 5: The Results from The Dependent Samples T-Test That Compares the Significant Difference of Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusion of Children with Special Educational Needs According to Teaching Experience at Three Schools in Bangkok, Thailand**

Variables	Years of Experience	n	M	S.D.	t
Philosophy	0-10	33	3.15	0.881	1.605
	11-40	17	2.76	0.658	
Classroom Behaviour	0-10	33	2.62	0.763	0.978
	11-40	17	2.41	0.622	
Classroom management	0-10	33	2.76	0.648	1.323
	11-40	17	2.5	0.678	
Social growth	0-10	33	2.90	0.773	0.879
	11-40	17	2.71	0.613	
Teachers ability	0-10	33	2.25	0.708	0.721
	11-40	17	2.39	0.514	

## Discussion

The survey questions were designed to get the teachers' attitudes with regards to the beliefs and knowledge they had towards the topic and if demographic and years of experience had an effect on the attitudes. For this research to study teachers' attitude towards the inclusion of students with Special Educational needs in the mainstream classroom, the tripartite or the three components model was used. This model classifies attitude into three components (Panjawani, 2012), affectively based component, behavioural based component and cognitive based component. In this study the teachers' attitude is based off the cognitive component where a persons' attitude is based on the knowledge and believes that the person has towards an attitude object. The researcher surveyed teachers' attitudes towards the topic at hand under

five subscales, teachers' understanding of general philosophy of IE; classroom behaviour of students with disabilities; classroom management; impact of inclusion on academic and social growth of students with disabilities; and teachers' perceived ability to teach students with disabilities.

From the findings stated above, the teachers have good knowledge of IE and have experienced it before, teachers had mostly good attitude towards inclusion with some moderates and very few low attitudes. The results also showed that there was no significant difference in the teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of children with SEN according to gender and teaching experience but there was significance difference according to nationality for the subscales understanding of general philosophy of IE and classroom behaviour of students with disabilities. The results showed that respondents of Asian descent showed a more favourable attitude towards understanding of understanding of general philosophy of IE while respondents of non-Asian descent showed a more positive attitude towards classroom behaviour of students with disabilities. Previous research done in China in rural areas of the mainland shows that some attitudes based on cultural and traditional values and the attitudes of teachers are very important for the success of the inclusion program. (Chhabra, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010). Teacher attitude also differ according to the types of disabilities of students (Glaubman & Lifshitz, 2001). From the survey conducted the results from of the dependent samples t-test of the mean and standard deviation of the teachers' attitude towards IE according to nationalities, Asian and non-Asian showed that out of the five subscales, the results of the teachers' attitude towards classroom management, impact on social and academic growth and teachers' perceived ability to teach children with disabilities, the p value of was more than 0.05. This means that there is no significant difference in the teachers' attitude towards inclusion of children with special educational needs according to nationality i.e. Asian and non-Asian, under the above mentioned three subscales. The p value results for the understanding of the philosophy of IE and classroom behaviour were less than 0.05 therefore it shows that there is a significant difference in teachers' attitude towards the two above mentioned subscales, with respondents of Asian background showed a more positive attitude towards understanding of the IE philosophy while non-Asians had a more positive attitude towards classroom behaviour of students with special educational needs.

From the survey conducted the results from the of the dependent samples t- test of the means and standard deviation of the attitude according to teaching experience, the p values derived were more than 0.05, which means that the hypothesis is rejected and the null hypothesis of there is no significant difference in teachers' attitude towards inclusion of children with special educational needs according to teaching experience at three schools in Bangkok, Thailand.

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