

A Preliminary Study of General Education Teachers' Attitude Toward the Inclusive Education in Elementary Schools

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1. Introduction

One of the current trends in education policies around the world is the promotion of inclusive education. In 1994, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) held the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Spain and issued the famous Salamanca Statement. It made a statement based on the concept of inclusive education: (1) Every child has a basic right to education. (2) Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs. (3) Education services should consider these diverse characteristics and needs. (4) Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools. (5) Regular schools with an inclusive ethos are the most effective way to combat discriminatory attitudes, create welcoming and inclusive communities and achieve education for all. (Lu, 2016)

The conference also stated: "Governments of all countries should adopt the principle of inclusive education in terms of educational methods and strategies. Unless there are special reasons, otherwise all students should be allowed to study in regular schools" in order to safeguard the educational rights of persons with disabilities. Inclusive education has become the goal of all countries.

Since the promulgation and implementation of Public Law 94-142 in the United States, the number of students with disabilities placed in general classes has increased year by year. According to the latest statistics from the Ministry of Education of our country in 2023, there were a total of 51620 students with disabilities in elementary schools in the 2022 academic year, and 50927 students of them studied in regular schools, only 693 students were placed in special schools, and the former was as high as 46525 were placed in general classes. It accounted for more than 90% of the total number of students with disabilities in elementary schools. It is obvious that inclusive education has become the mainstream of special education placement, which is in line with the development trend of international special education.

Table 1. An overview of the number of students with disabilities placed in elementary schools in my country in the 2022 academic year

county	class	special education school	general school		subtotal
			special education class	special education class	
New Taipei City		0	726	7953	8679
Taipei City		84	526	4737	5347
Taoyuan City		0	532	4537	5069
Taichung City		96	535	5217	5848
Taichung City		89	321	2567	2977
Taichung City		95	461	5686	6242
Yilan County		0	89	747	836
Hsinchu County		54	107	1478	1639
Miaoli County		0	106	1252	1358
Changhua County		84	216	2183	2483
Nantou County		28	70	1006	1104
Yunlin County		37	115	1531	1683
Chiayi County		0	54	993	1047
Pingtung County		25	161	2222	2408
Taitung County		16	51	546	613
Hualien County		22	63	700	785
Penghu County		0	19	190	209
Keelung City		13	70	766	849
Hsinchu City		0	112	1364	1476
Chiayi City		50	63	673	786
Kinmen County		0	5	155	160
Lienchiang County		0	0	22	22
total		693	4402	46525	51620
			50927		

(Unit: person)

Source: https://www.set.edu.tw/Stastic_Spc/sta2/doc/stuSPC_sch_edulev/stuSPC_sch_edulev_20230320.asp?act1=%E8%BC%B8%E5%87%BAXLhttps://www.set.edu.tw/Stastic_Spc/sta2/doc/stuA_city_All_cls_B/stuA_city_All_cls_B_20230320.pdf (date of tabulation: 2023.08.03)

Inclusive education has become a mainstream trend and popularized in Taiwan. The role of general education teachers who are on the front line of the inclusive education is becoming more and more important. The general education teachers' attitude toward the inclusive education will have a great impact on the implementation of inclusive education. It is related to whether students with disabilities can become real beneficiaries in inclusive education.

2. The Meaning of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is based on the advocacy of social justice, human rights and equality for persons with disabilities, and attaches great importance to the right of persons with disabilities to participate in learning activities in general education. The concept of inclusive education originates from the emphasis on multiple social values. It advocates that all students should learn together in the same environment regardless of differences in intelligence, family socioeconomic status, and cultural background. From the perspective of school education, its significance is give all students the same educational opportunities in the school environment, so that students with disabilities can be prepared to enter the community in the future (Zheng, 1999). Inclusion refers to the education method that directly places students with disabilities in general classes, combining special education and general education, emphasizing that every student should be placed in mainstream education, and that relevant services or support systems must be provided according to their special needs, so that all students can benefit, and integration is the most fair and ethical way of education, so individuals should accept various educational arrangements with dignity, and integrate fairly into the mainstream of general education (Wu, 1998). Praisner (2003) advocated inclusive education, placing students with disabilities in ordinary classes, in addition to improving the service quality of their education, and at the same time promoting all students to obtain high-quality education. Mittler (2000) believes that inclusion is a process of treating everyone as a whole, allowing all children to study, work, and rest together, and to promote the identification of all students, and to cherish the "community" and community belonging together. Therefore, inclusion what education emphasizes is that although each individual is different, they all stand on an equal footing. Stainback (1996) pointed out that " inclusive education " is a kind of learning environment that provides a learning environment in neighboring schools for all students, so that they can effectively receive equal educational opportunities and receive support services in general classes, regardless of the type of disability of the students. Inclusive education provides each student with a complete educational experience within the formal education system that meets his or her abilities and needs, and allows each student to receive the support and assistance they need. The Ministry of Education of my country (2021) also pointed out: "Inclusive education is an education type based on the concept of equal educational opportunities and resource sharing, and places students with special needs in general classes... so that special education and general education are integrated into one, to achieve the educational ideal of "teaching without discrimination" and "special but not isolated".

From 1995 to 1998, Inclusion International focused on "Education for All" and "Inclusive Education", calling on governments to protect children's education rights and ensure that all children are educated in the general education system (Wu, 1998). The Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (NCERI) in the United States defines inclusive education as the provision of services for all students with disabilities, enabling them to attend general classes of appropriate age in schools near their residences, and providing the support system that facilitates academic, behavioral, and social adjustments that prepares them to be full and contributing members of society (Lipsky & Gartner, 1996).

3. Research on Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is a mainstream trend in the world, and the penetration rate in elementary schools in Taiwan is as high as 90%. After more and more students with disabilities enter general classes, it also brings new challenges to general education teachers. Although most general education teachers agree with the inclusive education model of placing students with disabilities in general classes, the proportion of teachers who do not fully agree is not low. Therefore, the implementation of inclusive education still has a long way to go (Chiu, 2001). There are many factors that affect teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. This paper summarized several studies related to teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, which are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. The results of domestic research on attitudes toward inclusive education

author (date)	research topics	research object	research object
Chuang, Hsiu-Chi (2021)	General Education Teachers' Attitude Toward Inclusive Education in Junior High Schools	general teachers in junior high school	<p>1.The general teachers' attitudes with different background toward inclusive education in the learning performance of students with special needs, and the behavioral problems of students with special needs differences had significant difference. Especially in gender, age, seniority, and special education background.</p> <p>2.The teacher training system and teacher empowerment study had a great impact on the attitude of inclusive education.</p> <p>3.The improvement of the special</p>

			education support system in the school environment could increase the attitudes of teacher in junior high schools.
Wu, Pei-Chi (2019)	A Study on the Attitude of Inclusive Education of Elementary School Teachers in Pingtung County	elementary school teachers	The inclusive education knowledge and skills and the role perception on inclusive education of regular elementary school teachers are significantly predictable in terms of the attitude on inclusive education.
Hung, Yu-Ting (2019)	The Study of the Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education at Universities and Colleges in Taichung City	university and college teachers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.University and college teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education were positive. 2.University and college teachers from different age, seniority, the background of special education have significant differences in their attitudes towards inclusive education. 3.University and college teachers from different gender, job grade, teaching subjects, type of school do not have significant differences in their attitudes towards inclusive education.
Chen, Yi-Fang (2018)	A Study on the Effect of Regular Teacher's Inclusive Education Attitudes on Classroom Climate in Elementary Schools	the elementary school regular teacher	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Regular teachers' inclusive education attitudes in the elementary schools were positive. 2.The service duration and professional trainings on special education of the elementary school regular teacher could cause significant difference on inclusive education attitudes.
Chen, Hsi-Hui (2016)	A Study of the Relationships among Professional Competence for Special Education, Attitudes Toward the	general class teachers in senior high schools and vocational high schools	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.The overall teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of inclusive education were good. 2.Department of special education or have completed high school special education process post of regular class

	Implementation of Inclusive Education and Instructional Problems of General Class in Senior High Schools		teacher special education professional knowledge and ability is better, better teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of inclusive education. 3.The correlation among teachers' professional competence for special education and teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of inclusive education were significant and positive.
Gu, Chia-Ying (2012)	Attitudes of Kindergarten Teachers toward Inclusive Education An Example of Hualien-Taitung Area	the kindergarten teachers	1.The kindergarten teachers with special education background revealed more positive attitudes towards inclusive education than those who did not have.
Peng, Hsin-Yu (2015)	The Study of the Attitude of Elementary School Regular Classroom Teachers toward Inclusive Education Practice: Take the Hsin Chu City for Example	elementary school regular classroom teachers	The teachers who are under 30 years old, with less than five years teaching experience, who graduated from the department of special education and who have related experience in inclusive education have more positive attitude than other teachers.
He, Yi-lin (2013)	To explore pre-school teachers' needs and attitudes toward inclusive education in Nantou County.	pre-school teachers	1.The majority of the participants had very positive attitudes toward inclusive education. 2.Different educational backgrounds, teacher certificates, professional training and teaching experiences made a significant difference in their attitudes.
Wang, Guang-Jr (2011)	A Study of the Integrated Education Attitudes and Teaching Support Needs of the	teachers in aboriginal elementary school in Kaohsiung	1.Integration education attitude is no significant differences with the teachers' different background factors including gender, aboriginal status or not, teacher job, years of service and

	Aboriginal Elementary School Teachers	county and Pingtung county	<p>educational background.</p> <p>2.Only the aboriginal status factor significantly differs in integrating educational philosophy items.</p> <p>3.Teachers of different job factors, including whether to attend special education programs, there were obstacles types students placed in class or not, there were obstacles levels students placed in class or not, think the obstacles types students has suitable for placed in class or not, think the obstacles types students has suitable for placed in class or not, all factors are no significant differences with the integrated education approach.</p>
Liu, Fu-Rong (2011)	A Study on Taitung Teachers' Attitude toward The Aboriginal Disabled Students in Inclusion Education	junior high school and elementary school teachers	<p>1.There were significant differences between the knowledge of special education and the attitude toward the inclusion education.</p> <p>2.There was no significant difference between the personal background and the attitude toward the inclusion education. The personal background includes different genders, ages, educational backgrounds, teaching years, positions, teaching and learning stages, teaching areas, and teacher races.</p> <p>3.The three variables: school administration support, parents' participation in class activities, and the perception and opinion of tribal groups did influence the teachers' attitude toward the aboriginal disabled students' in inclusion education.</p>
Cheng,	The study about the	the normal	1.The normal class teachers in

<p>Chin-Hung (2010)</p>	<p>normal class teachers' attitudes to inclusive education on disabilities students at elementary school—an example of Pingtung County.</p>	<p>class teachers in elementary school</p>	<p>elementary school toward disabilities students' integrated education were significantly positively. 2.Elementary school teachers in different gender and special education background, have significant differences in teachers' attitudes to inclusive education on disabilities students. 3.Regarding to the impact factors, school administration support, special education professional knowledge, the involvement of parents have significant differences in teachers' attitudes to inclusive education. 4.Elementary school teachers in whether the special education class in the township didn't have significant differences in teachers' attitudes to inclusive education.</p>
<p>Lin, Ying-Chao (2009)</p>	<p>A Survey Study of Regular Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education in Senior High Schools and Vocational High Schools in Taipei</p>	<p>regular teachers in senior high schools and vocational high schools</p>	<p>1.Regular teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in the senior high schools and vocational high schools were positive. 2.Regular teachers from different ages and special education expertise have significant differences in their attitudes towards inclusive education. 3.Regular teachers from different type of school, the schools with classes for students with disabilities or not, teaching subjects, gender do not have significant differences in their attitudes towards inclusive education.</p>
<p>Hsu, Ching-Chi (2008)</p>	<p>A Study about the teachers of regular classroom for the attitude of the</p>	<p>regular class teachers in elementary schools</p>	<p>1.Elementary school teachers adopt a positive and positive attitude towards inclusive education. 2.Elementary school teachers from</p>

	inclusive education at Elementary Schools in Yunlin County .		genders, positions, special education backgrounds, and experience in teaching students with disabilities do not have significant differences in their attitudes towards inclusive education. 3.Elementary school teachers from years of service, whether the school has set up special education classes do not have significant differences in their attitudes towards inclusive education.
Chen, Chia-sui (2008)	Attitudes and Needs of Pre-School Teachers toward Inclusion for Exceptional Children in Kaohsiung County	pre-school teachers	1.The pre-school teachers had very positive attitudes toward inclusion for exceptional children. 2.Different educational training backgrounds, professional skills, and special education experiences made a significant difference in the pre-school teachers' attitudes toward inclusion for exceptional children.

Source: Compiled by the author

Summarizing the above research results, teachers at all stages of education have positive attitudes towards inclusive education. There are many factors that affect teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, gender factors are the factors that would affect teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in 3 research results, but gender has no effect on attitude towards inclusive education in other 4 research results. Age factors are the factors that would affect teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in 3 research results, but age has no effect on attitude towards inclusive education in 1 research results. Educational background factors are the factors that would affect teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in 2 research results, but educational background has no effect on attitude towards inclusive education in other 2 research results. Teaching seniority factors are the factors that would affect teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in 6 research results, but teaching seniority has no effect on attitude towards inclusive education in other 3 research results. The professional training of special education or professional ability to teach students with disabilities factors are the factors that would affect teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in 13 research results, but the professional training of special education or teaching disabled students' professional ability have no effect on attitude towards inclusive education in only 1 research result. Based on the aforementioned research, factors such

as gender, age, education background, teaching seniority, professional training of special education, and professional ability to teach students with disabilities may affect teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education.

The influence of gender, age, and education seems to have both positive and negative aspects in the literature review. A comparison of several research results shows that: women are better at the inclusive education in terms of gender, and young teachers are better at inclusive education in terms of age, and teachers with college or university education are better at inclusive education in terms of education. There are many research results showing the influence of teaching seniority, and junior teachers are better at inclusive education in terms of teaching seniority.

A very high proportion of the papers show that the factor of "the professional training of special education" has an impact on teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. Teachers with higher professional training of special education have better attitudes towards inclusive education. Perhaps this evidence can bring opportunities for inclusive education. The most accessible special education training channel for in-service teachers is special education workshop, but most teachers only participate in the three hours special education workshops stipulated by the special education law every school year. This level of special education professional training is not enough to provide teachers with strong support in the face of inclusive education. The education authorities should take the initiative to understand the learning needs of general education teachers, integrate the opinions of experts and teachers, and conduct highly practical special education workshops. At the same time, the education authorities can increase teachers' motivation to participate in special education professional knowledge training or special education workshops through encouraging or rewarding methods, such as: giving teachers official leave to workshops and providing substitute teachers, record merits and award, adding points for teacher's transfer or promotions, and adding points for school evaluations, etc. In addition, most of the preservice teachers currently take the three credits of special education, which is helpful for the improvement of special education professional knowledge training. However, the three credits of special education are mostly limited to the initial understanding of the concepts of special education and types of disabilities. If the teacher training system can plan more elective course of relevant special education for the preservice teachers, and arrange internship courses to increase their practical experience in inclusive education. Both theory and practice can improve the special education professional knowledge of pre-service teachers. to improve the special education professional knowledge training of preservice teachers. In summary, if the education authorities can improve the special

education professional knowledge of general education teachers through education workshop or advanced training, and provide adequate opportunity of professional training of special education for general education teachers, and even provide the preservice teachers more credits for special education, general education teachers' attitude toward the inclusive education can be effectively improved.

In addition, a very high proportion of the papers show that the factors of " professional ability to teach students with disabilities " has an impact on teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. The teachers with higher professional ability to teach students with disabilities have better attitudes towards inclusive education. The ability includes understanding students' individual characteristics, giving adaptive teaching, using a variety of teaching resources, learning and adaptation counseling, parent-teacher communication, special education professional teamwork, and seeking external resources, etc. Therefore, if the teachers can get higher scores in these aspects, it also means that they can actively assist disabled students to obtain more appropriate education, and their attitude towards inclusive education is better. In addition to the adaptive guidance and assistance of general education teachers for students with disabilities in the class, school administration also plays an important role in the implementation of inclusive education. Schools should actively provide professional manpower, special education consultation or information, special education workshops, assessment tools, assistive devices, related equipment or community resources, etc. If the school can provide administrative support, experience sharing among colleagues, implement supporting measures, etc. to help strengthen teachers' professional ability to teach students with disabilities, it will be conducive to the improvement of inclusive education attitudes. Inclusive education is a team work model, and the school administration must establish a comprehensive network to bring support systems and supporting measures into the classes, so that the general education teachers have sufficient resources to assist students with disabilities. It is difficult and exhausting for general teachers to fight alone in inclusive education. Therefore, through the teamwork model, teaching and administration support each other, and general education and special education cooperate with each other, it can effectively improve teachers' professional ability to teach students with disabilities, thus it can improve teachers' attitude towards inclusive education.

4. Conclusion

With the popularization of inclusive education, the role of general education teachers in inclusive education is becoming more and more important. Therefore, the

general education teachers' attitude toward the inclusive education will be the key to the effectiveness of inclusive education. To sum up, the strengthening of special education professional knowledge will help to improve teachers' attitudes towards the inclusive education. The education authorities and school administration should provide more sufficient resources. The education authority can provide more education workshop or advanced training of special education, and the administrative team in schools can provide support systems and supporting measures. If general teachers can improve their special education professional knowledge in a comprehensive system, teachers in general classes will be able to recognize inclusive education and be able to effectively assist learning and adaptation of students with disabilities. It is also hoped that this can be used to improve the current situation of the implementation of inclusive education in Taiwan, and the research results can be used as suggestions and references for the implementation of inclusive education.

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