

Understanding the Attitudes of School Teachers Towards Inclusive Education at the Local Context of Nepal

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Abstract

Teachers' positive attitudes are widely acknowledged as necessary for successful policy making and implementation of inclusive education. This study aims to assess general education teachers' attitude towards inclusion of children with special needs education into regular education classrooms. It seeks to replicate previous findings regarding the effects of gender, age group, educational qualification, years of teaching, teaching levels and the class size in relation to inclusive education in the local context of Nepal. Following descriptive survey design, ninety-five general education teachers from Kirtipur Municipality, Nepal responded. For this study all schools located in that municipality were selected. The "Scale of Teachers' Attitude Toward Inclusive Classroom (STATIC)" created by Cochran (1999) in Missouri, United States was adapted into Nepali language and used as a data collection tool that has four themes in a 5-point Likert-type scale. The midpoint or point 'three' of the replies was regarded as neutral, while less than that was labeled negative and more than that was considered a positive attitude. The major findings of the study indicate that the overall attitudes of the teacher participants are positive toward inclusive education, however it seems only at a minimal level or slightly positive. There was no significant difference in overall attitudes by teachers' gender, age group, educational qualification, teaching levels, teaching experience and students class size. The study concludes that more effort is required to enhance the teachers' understanding of inclusive education by various means including in-service training, seminars and exposure as well as promoting a collaborative culture. The internal consistency among items was indicated acceptable level and inter-themes correlation were positive.

Keywords: general education teachers, inclusive education, special needs education, teachers attitude,

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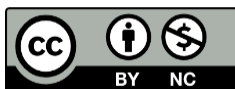
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Introduction

Inclusive education has become a global developmental agenda, thus increasing attention across the countries. Inclusive education is generally understood to mean the inclusion of all students, regardless of their individual differences of race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation, language, or socioeconomic status (Polat, 2011). It gives the formal classroom learning opportunities not only to those children with disabilities, but provides school environment that can be considered as a rich in terms of foundation for language development, socialization and interactions with a feeling like a valued and respected member of society with dignity.

In the Nepalese context, since the first adoption of National Education System Plan in 1971, along with incorporation of policy and provision of Special Education for students with disability, there has been intense debate about how to best educate learners with special educational needs and disabilities (Aryal, 2014). In the historical and contemporary context, national and global paradigms of special education and inclusive education have been developed, disseminated, and discussed at length over the years. However inclusive vision, directions and specifically the practice of disability inclusive education still differs significantly from the reality of Special Education provision. Until and unless the reality faced by practitioners and parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities is acknowledged, educational practice remains ineffective for learners with disability.

On the same way, the effect of disability on a child's education is poorly understood and so frequently, academic progress for such students is slow. Due to such misunderstanding, awareness raising among teachers and developing infrastructure to accommodate students in school remain critical. Being a traditional country with diverse religion and multi-ethnicity, inclusion has only been perceived as facilitating disability and addressing people from low socio-economic groups. This provides enough benefit of doubt that teachers, being the vital part in delivery of inclusive education, lack proper understanding, positive attitudes and progressive behavior. These things are required to uplift and contribute to the development of inclusive education in mainstream schools. Therefore, as teachers are the key persons or motivators for delivering knowledge and skills to the students, they are also key in realizing the goals of inclusive education.

If teachers do not have proper knowledge, understanding and attitudes regarding the importance, process or techniques of inclusion in school and classroom teaching, the goal of inclusive education is hard to achieve. In Nepal, inclusive Education Policy for Children with Disabilities 2073 and later its main essence and provisions are incorporated in the national education policy 2076 dismissing the policy of 2073 (Department of Education, 2017; Government of Nepal, 2019). It indicates that inclusive education policy and other provisions have ensured and promoted the rights of education for all students with special needs.

Theoretical Construct and Empirical Evidence

Attitude is defined as a mindset or a mental condition of readiness to do something. It is an active condition of mind or neural state which is organized through experience and knowledge that influences individual responses to an object or related situation (Allport, 1935). It is a settled way of thinking or feeling about an object, which may have influence on the individual's behaviors. It is also known as our evaluation process whereby we evaluate other people, things or situations. Attitudes are positive or negative, favorable or unfavorable; they are formed from three key components, affective, behavioral and cognitive.

Hence, attitude can be studied in relation to different themes like the advantages and disadvantages, professional issues, psychological issues and logistical concerns regarding inclusive education. Inclusive education is an effective approach but it has many challenges for implementation. These include the possibility that students with special needs are ignored or upset by classmates or teachers who may not be ready or trained; every classroom may not be equipped with basic requirements. (Mastro, Pieri, & Scruggs, 2004). Inclusion depends upon various factors like the range of students, peer attitudes, administrative support, collaboration, training, inclusive curriculum (Aryal, 2013). Professional issues include the need to increase interest among teachers and educational leaders towards students with different needs and their inclusion. It includes working capacity, along with the teachers' qualification, ongoing professional development, experience etc. It is related to a deep mastery of challenging content, ability to solve complex problems, critical thinking, effective communication, collaboration skills and self-direction skills toward professional practice. (Kedzior, & Fifield, 2004).

In a similar vein, philosophical issues of inclusive education are related to belief, ideas and a view that all children can learn and reach their full potential given opportunity, appropriate resources and effective teaching. Participation of students with exceptional needs in inclusive settings is based on the philosophy of equality, participation, sharing and respecting the individual (Vasianovych, & Budnyk, 2019). In addition, logistical concerns relate to the provision of proper infrastructure and facilities across the whole school, easy physical access, well equipped classrooms and specialist learnings support teachers (Yadav et al., 2015).

The attitude and understanding of teachers towards inclusive education affects its successful implementation because teachers are considered to be one of the most important actors for the effective delivery of instructional content to all students, with or without disability. A number of previous research papers show that teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disability vary greatly. For instance, some teachers are willing to include children with disability within the general classroom when adequate support is directly available to them, while other teachers believe that the inclusion of children with disability may be unfavorable to the education of the rest of the class (Grieve, 2009). Others feel that children and young people with disability would be better provided for within special schools, where it is supposed that they receive a higher quality and level of support than that provided within mainstream schools. The affective component of

attitude relates to a person's feelings or emotions towards a person or object. On the other hand, the behavioral component of attitude influences how we act or behave. In addition, the cognitive component of attitude relates to a person's belief and knowledge about an issue. Attitudes are a complex combination of personality, beliefs, values, behaviors, and motivations. Research has also suggested that teachers' capacity to be inclusive might be influenced by a number of other factors including the nature and the severity of the disability. (Al-Zyoudi, 2004).

Teachers play a remarkable role in implementing inclusive education. It does not matter how well resources, policy and educational infrastructure might be in place, the classroom teacher must adopt appropriate and meaningful inclusive instructional strategies (Bhatnagar, & Das, 2014). General classroom teachers have a significant role in creating an inclusive classroom environment as they assume responsibility for teaching and creating opportunity for all students to access learning (Jordan, & Stanovich, 2004). In fact, the teacher's attitude to teaching and learning plays the most significant role in the success of all children, including those with special or different needs.

Salem (2013) has stated that a positive attitude toward students with disability is one of the requirements for successful inclusion, while the teacher is the most influential factor. He also highlights that a positive trend towards inclusive behaviour in the wider society will be essential if we are to achieve fully inclusive education. Recently, Ghimire (2020) also carried out a study among general education teachers in Sunsari district of Nepal. The study also revealed that teachers hold slightly positive attitudes towards those who study with disabilities and their inclusion in the classroom. The researchers also reported strong correlational indices among the major themes as used in this study, such as advantages and disadvantages, professional issues, philosophical issues and logistic concerns of inclusive education. Ghanizadeh, Bahredar and Moeini (2006) argue that increasing knowledge among teachers about the inclusion of students with disabilities and ways to address their learning needs would be a means of minimizing negative attitudes.

Aryal (2013) conducted a study of teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education in Nepal among 160 in-service teachers, including 96 general education teachers and 64 special education teachers from 12 public and 16 private schools. The study found that both general and special teachers have positive attitudes regarding inclusion for students with disabilities. More specifically, the study investigated and revealed the significant influence of factors including teachers' type, age, gender, educational level and previous contact with students with disability. However, this willingness appears to vary according to the type and severity of disability.

It is clear that the key to the success of inclusive education lies in the hands of the educators, in their attitudes and willingness to accommodate students with disabilities. It is, therefore important to examine educator's attitudes towards inclusion. Research evidence shows that regular teachers are the key service providers in teaching students with special needs in the inclusive classroom and

their attitude towards inclusion is a key factor in its success or failure (Ainscow, 2006; 2007). As teachers play vital role in delivering inclusive education, their importance can be examined with reference to the Positioning Theory (Harre, & Van Langenhoven, 1999). Positioning theory sometimes can be referred as a metaphorical term “Positioning” which helps to analyze interpersonal encounters from a discursive viewpoint (Hollway, 1984). This conceptual framework allows researchers to assess and understand the evolving social interactions by how people position themselves and others within a contextual environment.

This framework is useful in the assessment of general education and special education teachers’ attitudes and concerns to acquire a better understanding and interpret their role in a range of classroom settings (Aryal, 2013). More specifically, it will focus on three aspects: how the policy affects general and special education teachers in relation to inclusive practices, how both types of teachers position and adapt themselves according to the changes in inclusive policies to meet the demand and how they position students within special education services.

Many scholars believe that teachers’ attitudes depend heavily on environmental factors where they work. Ajzen (2001) argues that attitudes are formed and changed as the product of self and social interaction within environment. A part from environmental and social atmosphere, studies suggest that a teacher’s attitude could be influenced by various factors such as age, gender, teachers’ qualification, years in teaching, teaching level, training and previous experience with special need students. In addition, scholars also consider that the aspect of inclusion may be significantly affected by the students’ variable themselves and by peer supports, administrative supports and collaboration, and inclusive curriculum (Aryal, 2013).

Considering the above-mentioned evidence and concepts, this study was carried out to assess teachers’ knowledge, attitudes and belief toward inclusion in the schools located in Kirtipur Municipality, Kathmandu, Nepal. It reflects on the core areas of advantage and disadvantage of inclusive education, professional issues, philosophical issues and logistical concerns. Thus, the specific objectives of this study were to: (i) assess the attitudes of general teachers toward inclusive education regarding children with special educational needs, (ii) explore the attitudes of teachers by gender, age group, teaching experience, teacher educational qualification, teaching levels and student class size in relation to inclusive education, and (iii) present the recommendations in order to improve the teachers’ attitudes and promote professional development for the teachers and educational leaders regarding the possibilities of inclusive education based on findings of this study.

Methods and Materials

Research Design

In this study, a descriptive survey research design was used. It is a procedure in quantitative research in which the researcher administers a survey to a sample or to

the entire population of people, to describe the present level of attitudes, opinions, behaviors or characteristics of the population (Creswell, 2008). In this procedure, researchers collect quantitative data using questionnaires and analyze data in order to describe trends about responses to questions. Quantitative data was collected and presented in a descriptive pattern assessing teachers' attitudes regarding inclusive education.

Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure

This study assessed general school teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in the reference of children with special needs. Thus, the population of this study was teachers who have been teaching in mainstream schools, also called general school. The sample of the study was therefore general education school teachers of Kirtipur Municipality, Kathmandu, Nepal. According to information available in Kirtipur Municipality Office, there are 12 government schools which comprise ten secondary (from grade 1 through 10 or 12) and two basic level schools (from grade 1 up to 8). This study included teachers from both basic and secondary schools. Census method was followed in order to select respondents (teachers). Thus, all the teachers of twelve schools were the respondents of this study.

Altogether, 95 teachers responded in this study and their response rate was 66 percent. Demographic information of the respondents was as 49 (52%) male and 46 (48%) female teachers. Accordingly, teacher respondents based on their age group was 6 (6.3%) of 20-30-years, 26 (27.4%) of 31-40-years, 33 (34.7%) of 41-50 and 30 (31.6%) of 56 years and above). Similarly, among them, 55 (61.1%) teach basic level and 37 (38.9%) secondary level. Almost all the teacher respondents who participated in this study 88 (93%) had six-years or more teaching experience and only seven (7%) had less than five-years. Regarding educational qualification of the teachers, having master's degree was highest in frequency which was forty-seven (49.5%) where one (1.1%) teacher had doctoral degree, thirty-one (32.6%) teachers had bachelor's degree and sixteen (16.8%) teachers had less than bachelor's degree respectively. Likewise, teachers' experience based on teaching students with SNE students in their class were 55 (54%) while forty-four (46%) were teaching general and students with SNE.

Data Collection Tool

In this study, data collection tool was adapted as it was previously developed and used Scale of Teachers' Attitude Toward Inclusive Classroom (STATIC) Scale by Cochran (1999) in Missouri, United State. Originally, the questionnaire includes of two sections such as (i) demographic section that contains twelve questions that have been slightly modified, since the context of these two countries may differ culturally. On the other hand, next section of the questionnaire was (ii) attitude questionnaire that consists of twenty questions related to attitude. It used the 5 point Likert's scale designated as 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=Neutral, 4= agree, and 5 =strongly agree where positive statement get points S. D=1, D=2, N=3, A=4, S. A=5 while negative statements were reversely coded or scored as S. A

=1, A=2, N=3, D=4, S. D=5. Originally, the attitude questionnaire is divided into four major themes such as i) advantage and disadvantage of inclusive education ii) professional issue iii) philosophical issues, and iv) logistical concern arguing that it covers the dimensions of inclusion education for children with special needs and their inclusion in education including. The adapted tool was translated from English to Nepali language by following two folded methods of translation namely (i) word for word translation and (ii) free translation.

Data Collection Procedures

Pretest. Pretest of the questionnaire was carried out in a Secondary School. For this purpose, the researcher conveniently selected this school and five teachers participated in this pretest phase. They were briefly explained the purpose and their role in filling the questionnaire, providing accurate data as per their previous knowledge and experience regarding students with special needs and their inclusion in general schools. The teachers were asked to return the questionnaire within seven days. Minor changes were made on the adapted data collection tool after the pretest

Data Collection. Schools were visited and met the principals in order to obtain permission to carry out the study. Following that, researchers met the teachers and explained about the purposes and rationale of study. It highlighted the importance of their participation in the study and their role. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the instruction from the principals, teachers were working alternate weeks. The questionnaire was distributed to the teachers accordingly. Data collection took place from mid-2022 to December. Approximately, 180 questionnaires were distributed, however only 95 teachers responded the questionnaire.

Analysis of Data

Demographic data were analyzed in frequency and percentage while descriptive statistics were used to represent teachers' attitudes. A descriptive statistics method was used to analyze the quantitative data and obtain the mean and standard deviation (SD) for each theme. Consequently, overall attitude was estimated by averaging the means of the four themes as consisted in the attitude questionnaire where above 3 on Likert Scale was considered as positive attitude. The demographic effect on overall attitudes as well as themes was tested using Chi-square and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Results

Overall Results: Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education

Overall teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education were estimated based on the mean average of four major themes such as advantages and disadvantages of inclusive education, professional issues, philosophical issues and logistical concern. As presented in table 1, the overall attitude of the teacher respondents was demonstrated to be positive toward inclusive education; the mean score was estimated to be 3.5 and SD as 0.3. On comparing the four themes of teachers'

attitudes, results were more positive on philosophical concern, where the mean was 4.5 and S.D 0.4. However, teachers showed neutral attitudes on the theme of professional issues where the mean score was 3.0 and SD 0.5. There was a similar result for advantage and disadvantage of inclusive education and logistical concern; both showed only slightly positive attitudes.

Overall attitude toward inclusive education was tested using chi-square, to determine whether there was difference or not in attitude by gender, teaching grade and teaching experience in the four themes. Chi-square test showed that there were no significant differences between male and female teachers' attitude toward inclusive education ($X^2=11.399$, $df=13$, $p>0.05$), no difference by grade ($X^2=9.558$, $df=13$, $p>0.05$) and no difference by teaching experience ($X^2=6.280$, $df=13$, $p>0.05$). Similarly, ANOVA test was performed in order to find out if there were significant differences in attitude by teachers age group (4 groups of teachers by their age), students class size and education qualification of teachers, in the four themes. ANOVA test showed that there were no significant differences in overall attitude by the age of teachers ($F=1.188$, $n=95$, $p>0.05$), students class size was categorized into four group from students less than ten to students more than thirty-one similarly, there was no difference by student class size ($F=1.346$, $n=95$, $p>0.05$), and teachers education qualification was categorized from less than bachelors to M.Phil./PhD into four groups there was also no difference by teachers' education qualification ($F=0.388$, $n=95$, $p>0.05$), where all teachers showed a slightly positive attitude.

Table 1 Overall Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education

S. N	Theme	Mean	S. D
1	Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusive education	3.1	0.5
2	Professional Issues	3.0	0.5
3	Philosophical Issues	4.5	0.4
4	Logistical Concern	3.3	0.4
	Overall Attitude	3.5	0.3

Teachers Attitudes by Major Theme. Attitude may differ according to different factors and/or it may have different levels depending on different themes or issues. This study has attempted to assess the level of teachers' attitudes on different themes. In order to measure teachers' attitudes, four themes related to inclusive education were utilized for the analysis which is presented below.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusive Education. As presented in Table 2, attitude score of the participating teachers on the theme of advantages and disadvantages of inclusive education indicated that they expressed positive attitude where the mean score was estimated to be 3.1 and S.D. as 0.5. This showed that teachers had just a satisfactory and/or positive attitude on this theme. The results appeared to be positive in general, however it is considered as a minimal level of positive attitude.

Teachers' attitude toward inclusive education on the theme of advantage and disadvantage of inclusive education was examined if there was difference by

gender, teaching level and teaching experience. Chi-square test showed that there was no difference between male and female teachers' attitude ($X^2=21.643$, $df=19$, $p>0.05$), no difference by grade ($X^2=26.961$, $df=19$, $p>0.05$) and no difference by teaching experience ($X^2=10.350$, $df=19$, $p>0.05$). Similarly, ANOVA test was done in order to assess any significant differences on attitude by teachers' age, students' class size and teachers' education qualification in this factor. It indicated that there was no difference in attitude by teachers age ($F=1.465$, $n=95$, $p>0.05$), no significant differences by students' class size ($F=1.343$, $n=95$, $p>0.05$) and no differences in attitude by teachers' education qualification ($F=2.560$, $n=95$, $p>0.05$). Hence, Teachers' attitude was slightly positive on advantage and disadvantage of inclusive education.

Table 2 *Advantages and Disadvantage of Inclusive Education*

Q. N	Statements	Mean	S. D
1	I believe that children with special needs should be placed in special education classes.	1.8	1.1
2	I am comfortable teaching a child that is moderately physically disabled.	4.0	0.7
3	Students with special needs having higher achievement when included in the regular education classrooms.	3.1	1.1
4	It is difficult for children with special needs to make strides in academic achievements in the regular education classrooms.	2.5	1.1
5	Self-esteem of children with special needs is increased when included in the regular education classroom	3.9	0.9
6	Students with special needs in the regular education classroom hinder the academic progress of the regular education students	3.1	1.1
7	Students with special needs should be included in regular education classrooms	3.5	1.1
Average score		3.1	0.5

Professional Issue. As presented in table number 3 average attitude score of the participating teachers on the theme of professional issues of inclusive education indicated that they expressed neutral attitude where the mean score was estimated to be 3.0 and S.D. as 0.5. This showed that teachers had neither positive nor negative attitude on this theme.

Teachers' attitude toward inclusive education on factor Professional Issues of inclusive education was examined for there was difference or not in attitude by gender, teaching grade and teaching experience. Chi-Square test showed that there was no difference between male and female teachers' attitude ($X^2=11.365$, $df=10$, $p>0.05$), no difference by teaching levels ($X^2=4.636$, $df=10$, $p>0.05$) and no difference by teaching experience ($X^2=3.478$, $df=10$, $p>0.05$). Since Teachers attitude was positive on professional issues of inclusive education. Similarly, ANOVA test was done in order to find out any significant differences or not in attitude by teachers age, students class size and teachers education qualification in this factor. ANOVA test showed that there was no difference in attitude by teachers age ($F=0.646$, $n=95$, $p>0.05$), no significant differences by students' class size ($F=2.500$, $n=95$, $p>0.05$)

and no differences in attitude by teachers' education qualification ($F=0.634$, $n=95$, $p>0.05$). Since Teachers attitude was just positive on professional issues of inclusive education.

Table 3 *Professional Issues*

Q. N	Statements	Mean	S. D
1	I am comfortable in my ability to teach children with special needs.	3.4	1.1
2	I have adequately trained to meet the needs of children with disability.	2.0	0.8
3	I become easily frustrated when teaching students with special needs.	3.8	0.9
4	I become serious when I learn that a student with special needs will be in my classroom.	2.2	1.0
5	I can adequately handle students with mild to moderate behavioral problems.	3.8	0.9
Average score		3.0	0.5

Philosophical issues. As presented in table 4, attitudes scores expressed by the participant teachers seems highly positive attitudes on the theme philosophical Issues of inclusive education where mean score was estimated to be 4.5 and S.D 0.4.

Teachers' attitude toward inclusive education on the theme of philosophical Issues of inclusive education was examined for there was difference or not in attitude by gender, teaching grade and teaching experience. Chi-Square test showed that there was significant difference between male and female teachers' attitude on professional issues ($X^2=17.261$, $df=7$, $p<0.05$) but however there was no difference by teaching level ($X^2=13.668$, $df=7$, $p>0.05$) and no difference by teaching experience ($X^2=5.358$, $df=7$, $p>0.05$). Since Teachers attitude was positive on philosophical issues of inclusive education.

Similarly, ANOVA test was done in order to find out any significant differences or not in attitude by teachers age, students class size and teachers education qualification in this factor. ANOVA test showed that there was significant difference in attitude by teachers age ($F=2.809$, $n=95$, $p<0.05$), but no significant differences in attitude by students' class size ($F=2.253$, $n=95$, $p>0.05$) and no differences in attitude by teachers' education qualification ($F=0.098$, $n=95$, $p>0.05$). Hence, Teachers' attitude was highly positive on philosophical issues of inclusive education.

Table 4 *Philosophical Issues*

S. N	Component	Mean	S. D
1	Although children differ intellectually, physically, and psychologically, I believe that all children can learn if appropriate environment is provided.	4.6	0.5
2	I believe that academic progress is possible in children with special needs	4.5	0.6
3	Student with special needs can learn social skills that are modeled by regular education students.	4.2	0.7
4	Special in-service training in teaching special needs student should be required for all regular education teachers.	4.6	0.7
Average score		4.5	0.4

Logistical Concern. To investigate teachers' attitudes regarding the logistical concerns around inclusive education, four questions were asked on this. Component Table 5 presents teachers' attitude score on the theme of logistical concern; they expressed positive attitudes, where the mean score was estimated to be 3.3 and S.D as 0.4. This showed that teachers had just a satisfactory positive attitude on this theme where the average score was obtained to be below than 4.0. This result seems to be positive in general, however it is considered at minimal level among the participating teachers.

Teachers' attitudes regarding Logistical Concerns were examined for discrepancy by gender, teaching levels and teaching experience. Chi-Square test showed that there was no difference between male and female teachers' attitude ($X^2=5.403$, $df=7$, $p>0.05$), no difference by teaching levels ($X^2=2.219$, $df=7$, $p>0.05$) but there was significant difference by teaching experience ($X^2=18.937$, $df=7$, $p<0.05$). Overall, teachers' attitudes were positive on Logistical concern of inclusive education. Similarly, ANOVA test was done in order to find out any significant differences or not in attitude by teachers age, students class size and teachers education qualification in this factor. ANOVA test showed that there was no difference in attitude by teachers age ($F=0.405$, $n=95$, $p>0.05$), no significant differences by class size ($F=1.447$, $n=95$, $p>0.05$) and no differences in attitude relating to teachers' educational qualification ($F=0.590$, $n=95$, $p>0.05$). Again, overall, teachers' attitudes were positive regarding logistical concerns around inclusive education.

Table 5 *Logistical Concern*

S. N	Component	Mean	S. D
1	I have problems teaching a student with cognitive deficits.	2.8	1.0
2	I do not mind making physical arrangements in my room to meet the needs of students with special needs.	3.5	1.0
3	Adaptive materials and equipment are easily acquired for meeting the needs of students with special needs	3.2	1.1
4	My principal is supportive in making needed accommodations for teaching children with special needs.	3.5	1.1
Average score		3.3	0.4

Reliability and Validity of the Study

As we used an adapted STATIC first time in Nepali for relevant data collection, overall internal consistency of the items was examined. Thus, overall internal consistency from a pool of 20 items originally included in the STATIC revealed acceptable level of consistency. Furthermore, item-wise consistency among these 20 items were approximately similar estimates. Similarly, a comparison of inter-themes correlation was obtained that indicated a positive correlation among them as presented Table 6. Regarding validity of the tool used in this study, this tool was developed in United States which originally confirms content validity. The present study, doubt can be raised about the validity of the adapted STATIC as it can be inflicted by the influence of translation into Nepali language. The findings from this study are consistent in patterns and comparable with international studies and provide reasonable level of validity. Thus, the outcomes of this study can be considered as a valid one that can be generalized to a population and homogeneity teachers.

Table 6 *Inter-theme Correlation Indices*

Theme	Pearson Correlation			
	ADIE	PI	Phil	LC
ADIE	1	.188	.040	.321**
PI	.188	1	.137	.226*
Phil	.188	.137	1	.226*
LC	.321**	.226*	.099	1

*ADIE= Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusive Education, PI=Professional Issues, Phil=Philosophical issues, LC=Logistic Concern, * & ** = Significant*

Discussion

The analysis of the results suggested that the overall attitudes of the teachers seem to be positive (i.e., mean score 3.5 and SD as 0.3) but it is just satisfactory since the average mean score above 3-4 is considered only agreeable and minimal level of attitudes towards children with disabilities and their inclusion in general education rather strong level. The findings are comparable with (Salem, 2013; Aryal, 2013; Ghimire, 2020) who reported that general school teachers showed slightly positive attitudes towards children with special needs. The findings clearly indicate that general education teachers are not well-prepared to accept and address diverse learning needs of the students who are in need of special care and education. However, teachers are widely recognized to have a significant role in creating inclusive class and school environments and an executive inclusive plan for education (Jordan, & Stanovich, 2004; Ainscow, 2006). The findings suggested that teachers' attitudes were not affected by the demographic variables examined in this study.

Teachers' attitudes in this study were assessed based on four major themes and found having slightly positive attitudes on Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusive Education, Philosophical Issues, and Logistic Concerns. However,

teachers expressed their neutral attitudes on Professional Issues. This indicates that teachers have a basic awareness about inclusive education, but their professional preparedness needs to be informed by orientation, in-service training, seminars as well as exposure and collaborative culture. This sort of capacity building of the teachers is widely advocated across the research literature (Mag, Sinfield, & Burns, 2017).

It is argued that inclusive education is advantageous for both students with special needs and others Ajzen (2001); inclusion helps both in acceptance and respecting each other as we all have different abilities and unique characters. When teachers have positive attitudes, students with special needs will be benefited in learning and upgrading social skills and foster a welcoming classroom culture, respect and belongingness (Mag, Sinfield, & Burns, 2017). Overall attitudes seen in this study seek more teachers' awareness towards disability and inclusion. The national legal framework and educational policies have been indorsed to combat discriminatory attitudes (Nepal law commission, 2015) which favor the inclusive framework for inclusive education brought by Education For All, by the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). However, the level of teachers' attitudes and awareness is still an issue for inclusive education for children with special needs in Nepal. The present study reveals that the current teachers' status regarding inclusive education should become an urgent need and be considered as a serious issue in educational practice.

Conclusion

Regardless that other limited studies have been carried out to assess teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in the local context of Nepal, this study attempted to cut the edge of such a lack with important findings that help us to further knowledge and challenge the current status of the teachers' awareness. The findings of this study are examined by statistical tests for soundness and accuracy. The instrument we adapted in this study appears to be reliable based on the indices of internal consistency. It can be used for other studies in coming days as it was originally developed ensuring psychometric soundness. The present study examined this adapted tool in the context of Nepal and recommends it for further use in assessing teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. However, the findings of this study suggest that there is still a need to raise awareness about inclusive education among general education teachers as they hold neutral attitudes in professional issues. Teachers are greatly in favor of inclusive education practice for the students with disabilities. Thus, the present study has its implications for teachers, parents, administrators or policy makers and government in the sense that the understanding of educators' attitude is significant for the successful implementation of inclusion.

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Author Contributions

Thapa: Conceptualization, design, interpretation, writing; Aryal: Conceptualization and interpretation; Acharya: Conceptualization and interpretation; Munday: Critical reviewing and editing; Basnet: Conceptualization, design, interpretation, writing

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