

## Pre-service Educators' Attitude towards Inclusive Education: A Case Study

J. D. Adams<sup>1</sup> and M. S. Mabusela<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education,  
University of Zululand, South Africa*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies, University of Zululand,  
Private Bag x1001, Kwa-dlangezwa 3886, South Africa  
E-mail: msmabusel@pan.zulu.ac.z*

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**ABSTRACT** The present research study reports on the attitude of pre-service teachers towards inclusive education and the extent to which specific factors may influence their attitudes towards inclusion. The following theoretical hypotheses were tested: (1) Pre-service students' attitudes towards inclusive education are neither positive nor negative. (2) The following variables do not have an influence on pre-service student attitude towards inclusive education: age, gender year level and phase. A purposive sample of eighty-eight students responded to a five-point Likert scale questionnaire on attitudes towards inclusive education. Data was analysed quantitatively. The results informed that pre-service students display negative attitude towards inclusive education. The research also revealed that variables such as gender, age, year level and phase registered for, have an influence on the educators' attitude towards inclusive education. Implications of the findings are discussed and recommendations are made to assist lecturers to understand how to manage attitudes towards inclusion and identify variables that might influence it negatively.

### INTRODUCTION

Prior to 1994, the South African Education Department was split into more than ten racially divided education departments and learners with special needs were programmed according to these racial divisions. Not all education departments managed to provide for these learners' special needs, particularly the disadvantaged communities - the majority of whom were Blacks. The disparity in the education led to the marginalization of learners with special needs from the educational system. The South African education system has gone through the process of metamorphosis since the birth of democracy in 1994. Among the noticeable changes was a move towards an inclusive education.

"Inclusion is a worldwide movement and has a global agenda" (Pijl et al. 1997). Sakiz and Woods (2014) stated that inclusive education aims to combat exclusionary practices in schools and transform them into institutions which naturally possess mechanisms to meet a wide range of individual needs. However, Göransson and Nilholm (2014) posited that inclusion is not only about physical placement but regard it as an idea about what school system, schools and classrooms should accomplish and as such, an

expression of an educational philosophy. Florian (2014) explored that the origins of inclusive education are rooted in special education research that questioned the efficacy of separate education classes in the 1960s. It received its first major impetus in 1994 at Salamanca, Spain, at the World Conference on Special Education Needs. In this conference 92 governments and 25 international organizations made a declaration that they will take upon themselves to make inclusive education a reality and not a dream and thus, the Salamanca Statement. South Africa was among the countries that made the commitment (Du Toit 1996).

In recent years, the concept of inclusion has been increasingly understood more broadly as an educational reform that welcomes and supports diversity among all learners (Sakiz and Woods 2014).

The following documents have a direct bearing to the development of the inclusive system in South Africa. These documents are:

- ♦ The South African Schools Act (1995)
- ♦ White Paper on Education and Training in South Africa (1995)
- ♦ White Paper on an International Disability Strategy (1997)
- ♦ The National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and

The National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) (1997)

- Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: building an inclusive education and training system (2001).

The South African Schools Act (1995) abolished compulsory exclusion (Department of Education 1995a). Section 5 (1) of the act states that: "A public school must admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way." In other words parents have the right to place their children in schools of their choice without restrictions of learning barriers, distance, location, and race among other reasons. The White Paper on Education and Training in South Africa (1995) introduced key initiatives to respond to diverse learner's needs (Department of Education 1995b). Some initiatives focused on how the saga of teaching and learning should be approached in a manner that accommodates all learning styles and diverse learner's expectations. This approach was known as the Outcomes Based Education (OBE). The White Paper or an International Disability Strategy (1997) on other hand, highlighted strategies for access to curriculum for learners with impairments, thus, hammering on the fact that the community should be accommodative to the diverse needs of everybody (Department of Education 1997a).

The National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and The National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) (1997) conducted a research which culminated to the identification of different barriers to learning in the South African context (Department of Education 1997b). The report also resulted to the understanding of concepts such as "special needs". Most of the recommendations of the (NCSNET) and the (NCESS) report were used to formulate the Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: building an inclusive education and training system (2001) policy. In this document a framework for establishing inclusive education in South Africa is stipulated. As evidence, the document clearly spelt out how the system should transform itself to accommodate the full range of learning needs and to establish a humane and caring society (Department of Education 2001).

Inclusion advocates that the learner should be accepted "just as he or she is" (Du Toit 2002). Inclusive education shifts focus from the learn-

er to the educator. It demanded that educators adjust themselves to suit the needs of the learners not vice versa as it used to happen in the past. "This implies that educators need to refine their knowledge and skills and, where necessary develop new ones" (Landsberg et al. 2005: 18). This also means that all stakeholders in school settings need to reshape their beliefs and attitudes.

Direct involvement with educators through part-time lectures has revealed that inclusive education has been received with misgivings by some of them. Landsberg et al. (2005) stated that inclusion has raised "temperatures" among educators. Many educators express the fear that they do not know how to teach learners with disabilities. This fear is manifested in a form of a certain attitude, either positive or negative (The National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Commission in Education Support Services (NCESS) (Department of Education 1997b : 29). Studies on the attitude of educators towards inclusive education have been conducted locally (Bothma et al. 2000; Davies and Green 1998; Mashiya 2003), and internationally (Carr 1997; Mushoriwa 2000; Sadek and Sade 2000; Luseno 2001). A number of studies (Hoover 1984; Daane et al. 2000; Mushoriwa 2000; Avramidis et al. 2000; Bothma et al. 2000; Luseno 2001; Mashiya 2003) indicated that the educator's attitude towards inclusive education is negative. Davies and Green (1998), on the other hand, found that a number of South African educators were positively disposed towards inclusive education. Studies (Marshall et al. 2002; Campbell et al. 2003; Lambe and Bones 2007) involving pre-service educators revealed that they have a positive attitude towards inclusion.

Many variables influence an individual's attitude towards an object. These might be, experience, training, exposure, age, gender, grade level. To evidentially support, studies (Mushoriwa 2001; Avramidis and Norwich 2002; Mashiya 2003) have revealed that males and females differ significantly in their attitudes towards inclusive education. Davies and Green (1998) investigated that the lack of experience with exceptional children affects the teacher's attitude. The lack of experience results into a negative attitude, while experience leads to a positive attitude (Hoover 1984; Hutchinson and Hemingway 1984; Minke et al. 1996). Giangreco et al.

(1998), on the other hand, discovered that general familiarity with disability is more likely to promote positive attitudes. Davies and Green (1998) found that the nature of disability has an influence on the educator's attitude. Mashiya (2003) has, in addition, revealed that class-size and qualification have an influence on the educator's attitude towards inclusive education.

The studies on the educator's attitudes towards inclusive education shed light about their encounter with learners who have diverse needs. These studies also explained sources and factors that caused an attitude (positive or negative) towards inclusive education. Attitudes of all stakeholders in the teaching-learning situation are very crucial; hence they need to be explored. "Negative attitudes can be corrosive to efforts to implement inclusive education as well as counterproductive, as they spread in a contagious manner among the rest of the school community" (Landsberg et al. 2005). The results also suggested that teacher's attitudes might be influenced by a number of factors.

One important fact to note is that pre-service educators' beliefs and attitudes are crucial in ensuring the success of inclusion; hence, there are needs to examine them before the students complete their training.

### **Motivation**

The education faculty at the Case University has a teacher education program which runs for four years. During the third and fourth year students are exposed to the practical aspect of their training. Students during this time are exposed to students with diverse needs. On their return students share their experiences about teaching practice. Some students report of a rewarding and fulfilling period during their teaching practice period, while others report difficulties and frustrations. Most of them often reported that they had difficulties handling learners. They label learners as slow-learners, as disruptive, unresponsive, and inattentive, among others. Negative comments from some students seem to suggest that learners with different learning needs are a challenge not only to in-service educators but also to pre-service educators. The students are future drivers of inclusive education so their attitudes need to be put on the track during the training years, so that they can add value to the changing education system.

The reality is that the schools in South Africa are already inclusive to a lesser or greater extent and student educators do participate in the teaching and learning process during teaching practice, but very few studies (Ivey and Reinke 2002; Marshal et al. 2002; Campbell et al. 2003; Lambe and Bones 2007) have attempted to evaluate their attitudes towards inclusive education. Most studies (Avramidis et al. 2000; Sadek and Sadek 2001; Mashiya 2003) conducted on inclusive education focus on in-service educators only, because there is a dearth of up-to-date information and research that considers pre-service teachers attitudes towards inclusive education in most South African Universities, the researchers, thus, decided to close the gap by undertaking an investigation on this aspect. The present research is a case study. The idea behind using the case study is to find out as much as possible about the pre-service students' attitude towards inclusive education.

### **Problem Statement**

An educator's attitude is vital in fostering a favourable learning atmosphere. With the ushering of inclusive education in 1994 educators see themselves being subjected in working conditions which do not only require that they master the art of teaching normal learners but also learners who deviate from the normal and all those with barriers that affect learning. This new responsibility from in service educators has resulted in negative attitudes towards inclusive education (Hoover 1984; Daane et al. 2000; Mushoriwa 2000; Avramidis et al. 2000; Bothma et al. 2000; Luseno 2001; Mashiya 2003). The findings of the research, including negative comments from some students seem to suggest that inclusion is a challenge not only to in-service educators but also to pre-service educators.

In addition, the researchers' experience as lecturers and informal observations of teaching practicum informed that, student educators adopt attitudes of in-service educators, they are exposed to during the period of practicum; this might be the case with the attitude towards inclusive education. This scenario is detrimental to espousing the goal of inclusion, yet there is paucity of literature which has documented information about the attitude of pre-service educators towards inclusive education. The researchers would like to establish the participants'

reception of inclusive education. More specifically, the study attempted to answer the following questions:

- (1) What is the nature of the pre-service educators' attitude towards inclusive education?
- (2) To what extent do the following variables influence the pre-service educators' on attitude; age, gender, year level and phase?

The following hypotheses were tested.

- (1) Pre-service students' attitudes towards inclusive education is neither positive nor negative
- (2) The following variables do not have an influence on pre-service students' attitude towards inclusive education: age, gender year level and phase.

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks**

To have a better understanding of the attitude of pre-service teachers towards inclusion, the researchers opted to locate it within theories of attitude formation. Several theories underpin attitude formation. These, for example include the learning theory, the cognitive consistency theory, and the cognitive dissonance theory. Taylor et al. (2000) investigated that attitudes are learned by association, reinforcement and imitation. Evidentially, students can display a positive or a negative attitude by association if teachers express positive or negative feelings towards beneficiaries of inclusion in their presence. Alternatively, students can learn attitudes by imitating the behaviour of teachers in the schools in which they would be doing their teaching practice. This case would be usually because the teachers in the practicing sites, would be viewed by students as their mentors. In addition, if teachers show approval of the attitude students' display towards inclusion, the behaviour of the pre-service educators will be reinforced. From the point of view of cognitive consistency proponents, people always strive for coherence and meaning in their cognitions. This is done to maintain consistency among their attitudes and among the affective, cognitive, and behavioural components of a particular attitude (Taylor et al. 2000). These authors (Taylor et al. 2000), maintain that if students' cognitions are already consistent and they are faced with new cognition that might produce inconsistency,

they strive to minimize that inconsistency. The cognitive dissonance theory also deals with inconsistencies but the focus is on people's attitudes and their behaviour. The assumption behind the cognitive approach is that dissonance results when some behaviour we engage in is inconsistent with our attitudes (Taylor et al. 2000). This is the inconsistency that causes discomfort. In the case of students, some might want to adopt a positive attitude towards inclusion but might experience discomfort when they have to engage in behaviour, which is contrary to their attitudes.

The all aforementioned theories are relevant to the present research that seeks to study attitudes of pre-service students towards inclusive education as it provides a framework of how attitudes are formed.

Further, there is a relationship between a theoretical framework and conceptual framework. This relationship becomes explicit when Ruane (2005) alludes to the fact that theoretical framework is theory on which the study is based, while conceptual frame work is operanalisation of the theory. The study, therefore, centers on the following concepts: attitude, inclusive education and pre-service educator.

There are many common sense definitions of attitude, some of which define attitude in a negative way. Evidentially, some of us heard people saying: "You have an attitude", when you display a behaviour they do not agree with or a behavior that offends them. Their definition is subjective and confined to a negative view of things that happen to them yet the way we react to people can be favorable or unfavorable. Taylor et al. (2000) explored that, an attitude is an enduring response disposition with an affective, behavioral component, and cognitive component. They opine that an affective component consists of the entire person's emotions and affection toward the object, especially the positive and negative evaluation, while the behavioral component consists of how the person tends to act towards the object, yet the cognitive component deals with the way a person thinks. This definition is in line with what the researcher seeks to know about the attitude object (learners with barriers). In the present study, attitude refers to the manner in which a student-teacher will behave, feel and think whether positively or negatively, favorably or unfavorably towards learners with diverse learning needs in

a school setting due to past and present environmental factors. Lastly, for the purposes of this paper the term attitude refers to a state of readiness to accept or reject inclusion when exposed to learners with barriers in any setting, specifically the school setting.

In fact, many definitions of inclusive education have evolved throughout the world. It ranges from a learning environment that promotes the full personal, academic and professional development of all learners irrespective of race, class, gender, disability, religion, culture, sexual preference, learning styles and language ((NCS-NET/NCESS 1997). In the Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: building an inclusive education and training system (2001) policy inclusion centers around: acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support; accepting and respecting that all learners are different in some way and have different needs which are equally valued and an ordinary part of our human experience; enabling structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners; acknowledging and respecting differences in learners whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, and disability or HIV status; changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies, curricula and the environment to meet the needs of all learners; empowering learners by developing their individual strengths and enabling them to participate critically in the process of learning and; acknowledging that learning also occurs in the home and community, and within formal and informal modes and structures. The focus of this policy is broad and inclusive in approach, because it does not only focus on inclusion of learners but also on changing attitudes and behaviour to meet the needs of the learners.

The concept inclusive education in the present research paper connotes to an educational approach that exposes pre-service students to all learners regardless of their (the learners') physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions, without prejudicing them (the learners).

The term pre – service educator in this study refers to students in training who are in the third and fourth year level of study and have enrolled either in the foundation, intermediate or senior phase. The terms pre-service teacher and teacher-trainee will be used synonymously with the term pre-service educator.

## METHODOLOGY

The present study falls into the category of the non-experimental research design of a descriptive type. Descriptive research reports things the way they are and does not manipulate the independent variable (Ary et al. 1996). The use of this design enabled the researchers to describe the nature and the extent of pre-service educators' attitude towards the phenomena under study. A number of researchers (Hoover 1984; Davies and Green 1998; Bothma et al. 2001; Marshall et al. 2002; Mashiya 2003) have used this design in the studies of attitude towards inclusive education. Purposive sampling was considered to be a viable option for the present study. This technique involves collective data from information-rich participants about the phenomena under investigation. Very few investigations (Bothma et al. 2000; Mashiya 2003) have used this sampling technique in studies of inclusive education. The researchers identified eighty- eight students (third and fourth years) from the case university as information-rich sources who could provide insight about how they felt towards inclusive education as they had already visited schools to gain the practical experience of teaching. Permission to conduct research was sought from the respondents and the purpose of the research was explained to them, including the use of the research findings. Efforts were made to inform respondents in a manner that would encourage choice of involvement. Respondents were then requested to sign consent forms, in which they indicated whether or not they intended to participate in the study. Following the literature review, it was decided after considering various measuring techniques to use a five-point Likert scale questionnaire for the purpose of collecting data. The researcher used the questionnaire that was adapted from Mashiya (2003), because it was relevant for the study. The open-ended section of the questionnaire was excluded as it was not relevant for the present study. The questionnaire was considered valid and reliable as it was already subjected to internal consistency method of item analysis. The tool was piloted to twenty five students in the Faculty of Education. This was done to identify minor misunderstandings and to make adjustments where applicable. The pilot group's data was not included in the final study. This instrument had 38 items and three factors

namely, severe disabilities (25 items), behavioral disorders (6 items), and minor disorders (6 items). The subjects were assured that all information would be confidential and that they would remain anonymous. The questionnaire was administered to 88 Bachelor of Education students. Data was analyzed quantitatively with the use of SPSS program. Frequencies were used to analyse biographical data and a chi-square one sample and two sample tests was used to calculate data on observed and expected frequencies. To test the association between the variable of gender, age, year level and phase level the Pearson Chi-square was used. The degrees of freedom that complied with all the tests that were used are one, two and six. The alpha level of 0.05 was chosen for all the data analysed.

## RESULTS

The gender distribution, 58 female and 30 males is given in Table 1. The age distribution of the group given in Table 1 (distribution of participants according to biographical attributes) shows that 3 students were below 20 years of age, while the ages of 69 students were between 21 and 30 and 17 students were between ages 31 and 40. Table 1 also shows that 46 year level three students and 42 year level four students participated in the study. Of the students who participated, 14 were registered in the foundation and intermediate phase and 74 were registered for the senior phase.

**Table 1: Distribution of subjects according to biographic attributes**

Criteria	Levels	
Gender	Females	58
	Males	30
Age in Years	Below 20	3
	21 – 30	68
	31 – 40	17
Study Year Level	Level 3	46
	Level 4	42
Phase Registered	Foundation and Intermediate	14
	Senior Phase	74

The attitude of pre-service educators towards inclusive education was investigated from the aims stated and hypotheses were formulated.

## Hypothesis Number One

Hypothesis number one stipulated:

“Pre-service students’ attitudes towards inclusive education are neither positive nor negative”.

However, before testing hypothesis number one, a general mean of the scores was calculated by adding the total scores of respondents and dividing them by the sum number of items and the general mean score was 1.61 and the standard deviation was .765. Hypothesis one was tested by using a chi-square one sample test and the results appear in Table 2.

**Table 2: Attitude towards inclusion**

Attitude	Negative	69
	Neutral	04
	Positive	15
Total	88	

$\chi^2 = 82.7$  at  $df = 1$   $p < 0.05$

The researcher obtained  $\chi^2 = 82.7$  of which exceeds the tabled value at 0.05 level of significance, namely 0.05.  $df = 1$  is significant. We uphold  $H_1$  and reject  $H_0$ . The hypothesis that pre-service teachers hold a negative attitude has been accepted. The findings reveal that the majority (78%) of students have a negative attitude, while a few (17%) hold a positive attitude. Four pre-service teachers (5%) were neutral. This analysis shows that students hold negative attitude towards inclusive education.

## Hypothesis Number Two

Hypothesis number two stipulated that there is no relationship between the following variables and attitude: gender, age, study level and the phase the student has registered for. Table 3 shows the results. A chi-square was used to test the hypothesis. This test was used for all the variables stated in hypothesis. Findings in relation to whether gender, age, year level and the

**Table 3: Attitude and gender**

Attitude	Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
Positive	12	03	15
Neutral	02	02	04
Negative	44	25	69
Total	58	30	88

$\chi^2 = 1.917$  at  $df = 2$   $p < 0.05$

phase the student has registered to teach has an influence on pre-service educators' attitude are given on Tables 3, 4, 5 and 6 respectively.

The obtained= 1.917 exceeds the tabled value (.383) at 0.05 level of significance at df 2. This means we reject  $H_0$  and uphold  $H_1$ . This means that the results are significant. According to this analysis males and females students differ in the attitude they display towards inclusion. Males (83%) seem to hold a more negative attitude towards inclusive education than females (76%).

Table 4 shows that a chi-square value of 4.936 at df6 was obtained in the analysis of the variable of attitude and age. The obtained score is significant at the chosen level of significance, which is 0.05 (.552). This means that we reject  $H_0$  and uphold  $H_1$ . These results indicate that age factor does have an influence on the attitude towards inclusion. Ninety-five percent (31-40 years) display a negative attitude towards inclusion as compared to other age categories.

**Table 4: Attitude and age**

		Age			Total
		Below 21	21-30	31-40	
Attitude	Positive	01	13	01	15
	Neutral	00	04	00	04
	Negative	02	51	16	69
Total		03	68	17	88

$\chi^2 = 4.936$  at df 6 p.<0.05

In Table 5 the calculated value ( value 2.505) is greater than the table value at 0.05 (.286) with df of 2. As a result of this finding the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) was upheld. The findings imply that there is evidence to suggest that year level has an influence on attitude. Results indicate that, eighty- one percent of the year level 4 par-

ticipants display adversely negative attitude as compared to other year levels of study.

**Table 5: Attitude and year level**

		Year level		Total
		3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	
Attitude	Positive	10	05	15
	Neutral	01	03	04
	Negative	35	34	69
	Total	46	42	88

$\chi^2 = 2.505$  at df 2 p. <0.05

In compiling Table 6 the objective was to determine whether the variable of phase does influence the pre-service teachers' attitude towards inclusive education. A value of 7.781 at df 6 was obtained. Since the calculated value is more than the table value (.255) therefore we reject the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between attitude and phase and uphold the  $H_1$  that there is a relationship between attitude and phase in which a student is registered. Teacher trainees in the senior phase hold a more negative attitude towards inclusive education compared to other teacher trainees.

**DISCUSSION**

The results manifested that students have a negative attitude towards inclusive education. These findings deviate from those of Marshall et al. (200), Campbell et al. (2003), and Lambe and Bones (2007) who found that pre-service students have a positive attitude toward inclusion. Further, Sakiz and Woods (2014) in their findings argue that positive attitudes and opinions towards help to build a consensus to begin a process of change. There are several possible explanations for this negative attitude from the pre-service teachers of the Faculty of Education in the case understudy. There is no Module

**Table 6: Attitude and phase**

		Phase			Total
		Foundation	Foundation and intermediate	Senior	
Attitude	Positive	02	03	10	15
	Neutral	00	00	04	04
	Negative	02	07	60	69
Total		04	10	74	88

$\chi = 7.781$  at df 6 p. <0.05

that equips them with information on inclusive education; hence they will be negative towards inclusion. Feelings of inadequacy regarding handling these learners might have contributed to this attitude bearing in mind that these student teachers have not had training on how to handle learners with diverse needs. Ivey and Reinke (2002) support this explanation when they explain that much of this negativity results from lack of knowledge. However, Sakiz and Woods (2014) argue that lack of knowledge among both the in-service and pre-service educators with regard to inclusive education may stem to a larger extent from the position of national policies in this area, which have not introduced explicit aims for promoting inclusion in school regulations, or other guidelines for practice in management, teaching and learning. Studies (Thompson 1992) have revealed that actual experience with inclusion can lead to more negative attitudes. Probably the teacher-trainees' negative attitude was also triggered by exposure to the actual situation (teaching practice). These negative attitudes might be attributed to past and present experiences of what they had learnt, including the imbalance and cognitive dissonance that occurs in their minds when they are exposed to inclusive schools. Erkilic and Durak (2012) and Sakiz and Woods (2014) state that inclusive educational principles and practices were often proposed vaguely under the umbrella of, and as integrated into, special education. This has led, not only to a lack of guidance for schools to move towards inclusiveness, but also to the resilience of traditional ways of educating disabled learners within mainstream schools as isolated groups. These different levels exert reciprocal influences on one another.

It is important to note that there were student teachers (4.5%) who were neutral regarding inclusion. It might be that they were placed in schools which were not inclusive. Another explanation might be that these are people who are indecisive by nature or people who wish to avoid socially undesirable responses, and for that matter people who chose it by accident. These findings point not only to an existence of an unfavorable attitude, but also to a need to address this negative attitude. Campbell et al. (2003) considered the value of combining information-based instruction with structured field-work experiences as crucial in changing attitudes towards inclusion.

The results informed that variables such as gender, age, year level and phase registered for have an influence on the educators' attitude towards inclusive education. According to this analysis males (83%) seem to hold a more negative attitude towards inclusive education than females (76%). This finding is in accord with studies (Mushoriwa 2001; Avramidis and Norwich 2002; Mashiyi 2003) who revealed that males and females differ significantly in their attitudes towards inclusive education. The explanation to this negative attitude might be that inclusion involves dealing with barriers to learning and thus involves attributes like caring, sympathy and empathy which is perceived to be female attributes. Failure by lecturers to consider this aspect will aggravate the prevailing negative attitude.

The results (Table 4) showed that the ninety-five percent of the 31-40 year age bracket respondents displayed a negative attitude towards inclusion as compared to other age categories. The age of student teachers has a bearing on students' attitude as shown by the findings. This means that younger pre-service educators will be less uncomfortable with certain categories of challenges while older student educators will be more uneasy with other categories. What can be deduced from this finding is that the older a person the more ingrained is the attitude because of a longer exposure to past factors. Davies and Green (1998) viewed that lack of experience with exceptional children affects the teacher's attitude. It has been found that lack of experience results to a negative attitude, while experience leads to a positive attitude (Hoover 1984; Hutchinson and Hemingway 1984; Minke et al. 1996). Though these findings applied to in-service educators, they seem to hold even for pre-service educators.

Regarding the variable of year level (Table 5), it became evident that, the more senior students are the more negative their attitudes will be towards inclusion. The results of this study also revealed that pre-service educators in the senior phase hold a more negative attitude towards inclusive education as compared to other teacher trainees. This in essence means that the phase level for which a person is registered plays a vital role in determining pre-service educators' attitude. The issue of phase level must not be played down when measuring attitude and programming for inclusion in academic institutions.



The studies of pre-service educators towards inclusive education rarely consider these factors.

### CONCLUSION

These findings have added to the body of knowledge on inclusive education, that attitudes of the students are not favorable towards inclusive education and that variables of gender, age, year level and phase in which one is registered have an influence on the attitude of pre-service educators. The present study has also revealed that a study of attitudes necessitates an understanding of their origin, as this will form a backbone in correcting them (attitudes). The researchers have learnt through this study that when one studies attitude one must "dig deeply" and find other underlying factors which might be the source of the attitude under study. Based on the findings of the present research the following recommendations to address the phenomenon are espoused.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Generally, findings indicate that student teachers who are exposed to structured field experiences are likely to have a negative attitude towards disability and inclusion. The negative attitudes that pre-service educators display are indicators that the issue needs to be given serious attention. This in essence means that it is very crucial that prior to teaching practice, student teachers should be given information-based instruction on inclusion and diversity or must be offered a Module on inclusive education. The gesture will make them to be more positive when dealing with learners with diverse needs.

A positive attitude is one of the ingredients of successful inclusion. Exposure of students to theories of inclusion and to school settings where inclusion is a reality will provide them with an opportunity to evaluate their own attitudes in order to improve. Without an understanding of the importance of attitude in shaping inclusion, inclusive education will be a failure. It is, therefore, recommended that all teacher training institutions are responsibility of exposing students to the principles and policies of inclusion before they do their teaching practicum. As an exit outcome for all final year students it would be advisable to include a portfo-

lio of evidence (as one of the assessment activities) that compels them (pre-service educators) to deal with inclusive classes and individual cases of barriers to learning during their training period. This way, it is hoped pre-service educators will be forced to familiarize themselves with the inclusive policy, inclusive classes and be able to handle individuals with barriers to learning.

Variables gender, age, year level and phase registered for have been found to have an influence on the educators' attitude towards inclusive education. Some lectures are not aware that these factors impact negatively on students' interaction with learners with barriers to learning. It is advisable that all lectures be wary of the influence of these variables, as they can be a barrier to successful implementation of inclusive education. Since, the lecturers are understood to be role models of the students; it is, therefore, recommended that they must monitor their actions and utterances while dealing with the issue of inclusion.

The research is not conclusive; the researchers have managed to expose the tip of the iceberg about what pertains to inclusive education and attitudes at the case university. Future researches on topics such as: attitude of lectures towards inclusion and attitudes of learners towards inclusion is regarded essential. It is hoped that lecturers will give the issue of inclusion and attitude, the attention it deserves.

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