Assessing Teachers' Attitudes towards

Inclusive Education within an Urban School District

in Ireland

Ciara Mahony

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Higher Diploma in Psychology at Dublin Business School, School of Arts, Dublin.

Supervisor: Dr. Pauline Hyland

Programme Leader: Dr. Pauline Hyland

March 2016

Department of Psychology

Dublin Business School

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my thesis supervisor Dr. Pauline Hyland for her patience, guidance, support and kind words of encouragement throughout this process.

I would like to express my gratitude to those who participated in this study by taking the time out to complete questionnaires. Without their invaluable input this research would not have been possible.

Finally, to my family and friends, a very special thanks for your unending support and encouragement over the past two years.

Abstract

The role of teachers in establishing inclusive learning environments is critical. It is generally accepted that inclusive practice relies on teacher knowledge, skills, understanding, and attitudes. This study aimed to assess teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education and establish the constraints and barriers faced by teachers in creating inclusive learning environments. It also assessed the effect of inclusion on teachers' perceived self-efficacy. Two schools from an urban district in Ireland were used for data collection. The instruments used were self-reported questionnaires and the participants consisted of mainstream, learning support and resource teachers in the participating schools. Pre service training and professional development was a significant factor in ensuring positive teacher attitudes. Other challenges reported by teachers were class size, behaviour and severity of need. The results indicated that experience with special educational needs resulted in higher perceived self-efficacy.

1. Introduction

1.1. Inclusion of Students with Special Needs in Ireland

Over the past two decades, the provision of education for children with special educational needs (SEN) has been a contentious issue within Irish education (National Council for Special Education [NCSE], 2009). During the first half of the twentieth century there was little or no progress in the development of education for people with general learning disabilities. Throughout the mid-nineteen-fifties a number of voluntary organisations and religious orders took the initiative to establish schools for students with such disabilities (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, [NCCA], 1999). These schools were officially recognised as special national schools by the Department of Education and Skills. Since the 1990s there have been major developments with regard to special education. Due to the dissatisfaction among parents regarding the segregation of children with special educational needs, the Special Education Review Committee (SERC) made a number of recommendations (NCSE, 2010). These recommendations led to the inclusion of children with special educational needs within the mainstream classroom. It was suggested that SEN children integrate in the mainstream school setting where appropriate and experience as little segregation as possible. Today there is a strong emphasis on creating inclusive learning environments within the mainstream classroom that can cater for pupil diversity (Griffin & Shevlin, 2011).

The main aim of the inclusion of children with special needs within the mainstream classroom is equality of access to education and opportunities. The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004 provides a legislative framework for inclusive education. It offers the following definition of special education needs:

"a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning

disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition" (NCSE, 2014, p.10).

The fundamental principle of Inclusive Education is that all children should have the opportunity to learn together (NCSE, 2015). The EPSEN Act 2004 (p.7) states that "A child with special educational needs shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs unless to do so would not be in the best interests of the child". The act specifies two exceptions to this; firstly, unless it is not in the best interests of the child and secondly, if it interferes with the education of the other children in the class. Therefore, much responsibility lies with the Board of Management, Principals and teachers in order to ensure adequate provision for children with special educational needs within the mainstream school.

1.2. Profile of a Teacher Today

The role of teachers in inclusive education diverges from its traditional role. Mainstream teachers must be sensitive to the variety of modern classrooms and must be able to adjust their teaching strategies in accordance with the diversity of learning styles within the classroom (Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2013). Teachers have to adapt or modify the content of their lessons and their teaching methods as well as make adjustments to classroom management in order to support students with disabilities and learning difficulties. Teachers face increased pressure as their roles diversify. The Department of Education and Skills' current policy is to ensure maximum possible inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools (Department of Education and Skills [DES], 2010). Many teachers working in inclusive schools lack training in special education. Research studies indicate that while teachers are in favour of an inclusive teaching environment, they lack confidence relating to instruction, use of resources and classroom management (Florian, Young, & Rouse, 2010). While inclusive education has altered the role of the teacher, the experience of the students is

also affected. In a study carried out by Idol (2006) across 8 American schools, the majority of educators reported that other children in the class remained unaffected by inclusive education practices. Some schools noted that the inclusive strategies were benefiting other children in the class who were experiencing school failure.

1.3. Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusion

Research has shown that teachers' attitudes are vital for successful inclusive education (Sharma, Forlin & Loreman, 2008). Forlin (2001) acknowledges that teachers find the implementation of inclusive education challenging. According to Ryan (2009) the nature and type of special educational need has a profound effect on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Centre and Ward's 1987 study (as cited in Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000) indicated that teachers were only positive about integrating students whose special educational need would not require extra instructional skills on the part of the teacher. Cassady (2011) focused specifically on teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with Autism and Emotional Behavioural Disorder (EBD). The findings of this study suggest that the characteristics specific to the two disabilities affect teachers' attitudes. Teachers were more accepting of having a child with Autism in their class rather than a child with Emotional Behavioural Disorder. Thus the presence of particular characteristics influences teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. These results are similar to results of other studies that highlight a lack of understanding of the disorders and in turn a lack of confidence in teaching children with specific special educational needs (Lindsay, Proulx, Thomson & Scott, 2013).

A positive teacher attitude toward inclusion may be the key to the success of including students with special needs (Cochran, 1998). The attitudes of these teachers play an important role in the success of school inclusion and therefore, the factors which influence these attitudes in a positive manor need to be examined. A study carried out in America examined the factors that influence the attitudes of mainstream classroom teachers in relation

to inclusive education. The results highlighted a strong correlation between professional development and teachers' attitudes (Walker, 2012). According to Daane, Beirne-Smith, and Latham (2000), teachers perceive themselves as unprepared for inclusive education because they lack appropriate training in this area. Inadequate training relating to inclusive education is associated with lowered teacher confidence (Whitworth, 1991). Increased training in special educational needs and inclusive teaching was associated with more positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities, while lack of training was associated with negative attitudes (Van Reusen, Shoho, & Barker, 2000). A report prepared for the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) in 2009 found that inadequate training and in-service were among the most common constraints to inclusive education in Ireland (NCSE, 2009). Furthermore, many Principals expressed fear of inclusion, in particular if the special educational need was one which they had not previously experienced. Pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and those with ADHD and autistic spectrum disorders were noted as a particular challenge in the majority of interviews. The study concluded that teacher perceptions and teacher experiences are crucial to developing inclusive learning environments. This current research will examine the attitudes of mainstream teachers towards inclusive education in Ireland, as well as the factors affecting their attitudes.

1.4. Experience

Some studies have indicated that teachers who have been implementing inclusive practices, and who have active experience of inclusion within a mainstream school, possess more positive attitudes (Avraimids et al. 2000; LeRoy & Simpson 1996). While, in contrast, other studies argue that while teachers gain experience, their attitude towards inclusive practice becomes more negative. In one particular study, Leyser, Kapperman and Kelle (1994) concluded that teachers with 14 years or less experience held more positive attitudes towards integration than those with more than 14 years teaching experience. However, they

also indicated that those with experience of disabled persons had significantly more positive attitudes towards inclusive education than those with no experience. This study will assess the effect that experience has on attitudes towards inclusive practice.

1.5. Professional Development

Research also highlights the importance of professional development in the establishment of teachers' positive attitudes (Avramidis &Norwich, 2002). Teachers reported resisting inclusion due to the challenges they face when attempting to implement inclusive practice in the classroom (Shevlin, Winter & Flynn, 2013). These challenges correlate with teachers' lack of confidence, skills and availability of resources, teachers' inadequate professional development and the ability to deal with a variety of disabilities and special educational needs (Avissar, 2007). A crucial element in the development of successful inclusion in mainstream schools is training and support for teachers (Florian, Young & Rouse, 2012). School and environmental factors that have been linked to teachers' attitudes towards inclusion include the availability of resources (materials, ICT, etc.), regular in-service opportunities and classroom support in terms of learning support teachers, SNAs and resource hours for children with SEN (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Having the right attitude alone is insufficient; teachers need professional development and support in order to implement successful inclusive education within the mainstream classroom (NCSE, 2009).

1.6. Self-efficacy

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) define teacher self-efficacy as 'individual teachers' beliefs in their own abilities to plan, organize, and carry out activities required to attain given educational goals' (p.612). Self-efficacy is grounded in the theoretical framework of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997). Bandura identified self-efficacy as a key mechanism that influences human behaviour. 'People's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated

levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives' (p.71). Hoy (2000) defines teacher self-efficacy as 'teachers' confidence in their ability to promote their students' learning'. Teachers with high efficacy beliefs are thought to work harder, be more involved in informal learning activities, and to be more persistent and less stressed (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1997) found that teachers with a high sense of efficacy exhibit greater levels of planning and organising, maintain confidence and motivation and are more able to cope with stressors and negative feelings. According to Sharma et al, (2012), self-efficacy is a factor that is found to significantly influence teaching practices of teachers in inclusive classrooms. It is generally assumed that a teacher's behaviour in class is likely to be influenced by their perceived sense of efficacy (Palmer, 2006). Teachers' self-efficacy is of major importance for the success of inclusive practice within mainstream classrooms. Teachers with a greater sense of self-efficacy are typically more willing to try out new methods to meet the needs of their students and also to persevere with a student who has challenging learning problems (Emmer & Hickman, 1991). Teacher efficacy beliefs about their ability to educate students with learning difficulties in inclusive classrooms are related to teachers' attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities (Bender, Vail, & Scott, 1995; Wood, 2007). Both of these studies concluded that teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy have more positive attitudes towards inclusive education. Hoy (2000) suggested that one of the most important factors that influence a teacher's self-efficacy is experience during teaching practice and teacher induction.

1.7. Successful Inclusive Practice

The success of inclusion does not solely depend on teachers' attitudes: a number of other factors play a significant role. Firstly, it depends greatly upon the strategies which teachers adopt to ensure that all pupils participate and engage fully, at an individual level, in learning (Department of Education and Skills [DES], 2010). All students should be provided

with a curriculum which is relevant to their needs. This requires planning and differentiating work to suit the individual needs of children with SEN. Inclusion recognises the right of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, to be taught alongside their peers, while acknowledging their common and differing needs (Tilstone, Florian & Rose, 1998). Planning for successful inclusion involves acquiring the necessary information about SEN children within the class, differentiating and structuring lessons to suit the individual needs of the children and working collaboratively alongside resource teachers and SNAs. Without necessary training or previous experience, a teacher may perceive this extra work as challenging or daunting. A study carried out by Cipkin and Rizza (2000) investigated if teachers had a negative attitude toward inclusion. This was done by asking if a teacher would accept an inclusion job if offered one. The majority of the teachers (55%) indicated that they would not accept an inclusion job if offered one and those that agreed held a degree in special education. This study emphasises the positive effect of training teachers to adopt strategies necessary for inclusive education.

1.8. The Aim of this Study

The purpose of this study is to further research into the area of teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, specifically focusing on the impact training and experience has on attitudes. While there has been much research carried out on inclusive education in other countries, there is significantly less research carried out in Ireland. This study will also look at the relationship between inclusive education and teachers' self-efficacy. Through the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data from a convenient sample of primary school teachers, this study will attempt to identify if there is a relationship between number of years taught, experiences with special educational needs, training and attitudes towards inclusive education. Finally, through open ended survey questions, the study will examine the factors

that affect teachers' attitude towards inclusive education and the supports and resources that teachers deem beneficial to successful inclusive practice.

1.9. Hypotheses

This study hypothesised the following:

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant positive correlation between special educational needs training and attitude towards Inclusive Teaching.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant relationship between personal and professional experience with special educational needs and attitude towards Inclusive Teaching.

Hypothesis 3: There will be a difference in attitude towards teaching children with a learning difficulty and a behavioural problem.

Hypothesis 4: There will be a significant relationship between perceived self-efficacy and attitude towards Inclusive Education.

Research Questions:

1. Do teachers feel that they have the necessary training to implement successful inclusive education?

2. What factors influence teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education?

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

This study utilised a convenience sample of seventy four primary school teachers based in urban school districts in Dublin. Two schools were involved in the study; both schools are co-educational senior national schools. The schools vary in terms of socio-economic status and the respondents varied in terms of age, teaching experience and gender. 74 surveys were distributed by the researcher across the schools, of which 67 were returned. All participants received a cover letter outlining the aims of the study and a statement of confidentiality. The survey then consisted of a demographics section, the two standardised questionnaires and open ended questions for qualitative analysis. Participants were informed that by sending back the completed survey they were consenting to participate in the study. The response rate for this study was 90.5%, of which 71 % were female and 28% were male (figure 3).

2.2. Research Design

A descriptive research design was used to investigate teachers' attitude towards inclusive education and the factors that influence their attitudes. Data was gathered at one point in time using a single group design. In order to gather data for quantitative analysis, a combination of demographics and three reliable standardised surveys were used. The first survey, an adaptation of a survey used by Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden (2000) based on the Opinions to Mainstreaming Scale (Antonak & Larrivee, 1995), assessed teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education and identified barriers to inclusion within mainstream education. This was combined with The Emotional Reaction Scale which consisted of bipolar adjectives assessing teachers' reactions to teaching children with SEN. In the final section of the survey, The Teacher Self Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, (2001) was used. This assesses teachers' sense of self-efficacy in their work environment (Hoy, 2000). In addition to these

two questionnaires, the survey contained a demographics section which consisted of questions relating to age, gender, experience, training and class size. Qualitative data was gathered using open ended questions which encouraged participants to elaborate on their answers.

Using the results from the quantitative data, quantitative analyses were conducted. Teachers' attitude was the dependent variable for the purpose of this study. ANOVAS were preformed to analyse the relationship between the independent variables; gender, age, education level, number of years taught, experience and training. Open ended questions completed in the final section of the survey provided information on the factors that most affect teachers' attitudes and the benefit of professional development and training in the areas of special education and inclusive teaching. Thematic analysis was used to code qualitative data. Themes and sub themes were identified and explored.

2.3. Materials

This study utilised an anonymous, self-administered survey consisting of standardised scales and self-generated questionnaires. Part A of the study gathered demographic information; gender, age, education level, number of years taught, number of children the teacher is currently teaching, class level the teacher is currently teaching, experience and training in special education. The surveys used in this study were chosen based on the three component model of attitudes. According to Rosenberg & Hovland (1960) as cited in Avramidis et al, (2000), attitude is a combination of 3 distinguishable reactions to an object. The 3 reactions are affective, conative and cognitive. Affective refers to the emotional reaction one has towards an object. Conative refers to the way one behaves when exposed to the object and cognitive refers to one's thoughts and beliefs about the object. Part B, The Emotional Reaction Scale (Affective component) assessed teachers' emotional reaction

towards hypothetical situations regarding inclusive education. Part C, Teacher Opinions, Intentions and Current Practice (Cognitive and conative components) consisted of a 26 item survey assessing teachers' opinions, their intentions or current practice. Part D of the survey assessed teachers' self-efficacy using the TSES (Teachers' Self Efficacy Scale) questionnaire. The final section of the survey consisted of 7 open ended questions assessing the factors that influence teachers' attitudes towards inclusion.

The first instrument used in this study consisted of a semantic differential scale measuring teachers' emotional reactions to dealing with a new student with Special Educational Needs (SEN). The seven items consisted of bipolar adjectives such as 'anxious-relaxed', 'uncomfortable-comfortable' and 'pessimistic-optimistic'. This scale measured emotional reactions on three broad categories; Moderate Learning Difficulties, behavioural problems and SNA support. The respondent was asked to circle the number closest to the adjective that best described their feelings on a scale from 1 to 7. An overall total was computed. If a participant scored highly on this scale they were regarded as having a positive attitude towards inclusion. The lowest possible score was 21 and the highest was 147.

The Teachers' Opinions questionnaire has previously been used to identify teachers' attitudes and has shown to provide reliable scores (Avramidis et al, 2000). The survey consisted of a Likert scale measuring teachers' beliefs relative to inclusion. This 26 item scale was taken from the Opinions Relative to Mainstreaming scale (Larrivee & Cook, 1979). It has been identified as having acceptable psychometric properties (Antonak and Livneh, 1995). It was adapted for this current study to assess teachers' attitudes towards Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) rather than Mild General Learning Difficulties (MGLD). Five of the twelve items require reverse coding. The scale consisted of statements such as:

> ➢ *The needs of students with MLD are best served through separate classes in resource.*

> ➢ *Participating in an ordinary classroom will promote academic growth of the child with MLD.*

> ➢ *The contact mainstream students have with children with MGLD, may be harmful.*

This questionnaire also consisted of a separate Likert Scale assessing teachers' intentions and current practice. This scale included items such as:

> ➢ *I would be supportive towards the idea of including children with MLD in my classroom.*

> ➢ *I would engage in developing the appropriate skills to teach children with MLD in their classroom.*

> ➢ *I am engaging in developing the appropriate skills to teach children with MLD in their classroom*

For each of the three Likert scales the participant was required to indicate the extent of their agreement by selecting either Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Undecided (3), Agree (4) and Strongly Agree (5). A composite score was calculated for each section. Section B and Section C were merged and these scores were then combined to form an overall total. A high score signified a positive attitude.

Teachers' Self Efficacy Scale (TSES) is considered a reasonably valid and reliable questionnaire used to determine the self-efficacy of teachers (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). The questionnaire consists of either 12 or 24 items capturing a wide range of teacher

tasks. According to Tschanned et al, (2001, p.801), efficacy in instructional strategies, student engagement and classroom management are required for effective teaching. Using factor analysis, the authors consistently found a correlation between these three factors. These three dimensions form the basis of the TSES. The questionnaire administered for this study was the 12 item questionnaire; reliability for this scale is .90. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each item using the following 9 point continuum; 1(Nothing), 3(Very little), 5(Some Influence), 7(Quite A Bit) and 9(A Great Deal). Each of the three subsets, instructional strategies, student engagement and classroom management contained 4 items. The mean score for each of the subsets was computed. The results indicate a teacher's level of efficacy with higher scores indicating a more positive efficacy level. Examples of items included in this scale are:

> *How much can you do to control disruptive behaviour in the classroom?*

> *How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?*

> *How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?*

2.4. Procedure

Following ethical approval of the research proposal, a letter was sent to each school Principal, requesting permission to carry out the study in their school. Once permission was granted, self-administered surveys were handed out to classroom teachers, learning support teachers and resource teachers. Instructions and guidelines for completing the questionnaire were explained to one teacher in each strand and this information was relayed to the rest of the teaching staff. Each principal was asked to answer questions on enrolment numbers, number of children with IEPs and staff distribution in each school. The surveys were contained in an envelope to ensure anonymity. The cover letter of each survey stated the purpose of the study and included a statement of confidentiality and anonymity. The teachers

were informed that by sending back a completed survey, they were consenting to take part in the study. Participants were provided with an email address for the researcher and supervisor should they have concerns or questions. They were given one week in which to complete the survey. Completed surveys were gathered from the office of each school and compiled confidentially.

3. Results

The purpose of this study was to assess primary school teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with special educational needs within the mainstream class. The primary interest was to identify the factors that affect teachers' attitudes. The factor analysis and reliability analysis were the first tests to be completed in order to determine whether the results from the current research study were similar to the results from previous research studies. Descriptive statistics provided a demographical breakdown of the participants. Inferential statistics compared relationships between the variables and analysed the strength of any significant correlations.

3.1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistical analyses were carried out to determine the frequencies and percentage breakdown of survey responses. Results show that of the 67 respondents (N=67), 58 taught in an inclusive classroom and 9 did not. Of the 58 respondents that taught in an inclusive classroom, 48 had full time SNA support on a daily basis. Table 1 and 2 provide a summary of descriptive statistics. Table 1 displays the average number of years taught and the average number of years' experience teaching children with special educational needs. The mean number of years teaching was 13.15, with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 36. The average number of years teaching children with special educational needs was 9.58, with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 33. The level of teaching and years' experience were well distributed among the participants. The most common age bracket was between 26 and 35 (see figure 1). Figure 2, below displays the gender breakdown of the participants.

Table 1*: Descriptive Statistics of Teaching Experience*

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Teaching experience (years)	13.15	10.28
Experience teaching Sp. Ed	9.58	7.95
No. of children with SEN	3.26	3.34

Table 2 provides details of the enrolment numbers in each school and the number of children who have been assessed as having special educational needs. School A student enrolment included 446 students of which 11.1% have Individual Education Plans. Student to teacher ratio was 20:1. The school employed 35 teachers, of which 29 were mainstream class teachers. The rest comprised of learning support teachers, resource teachers, language support teachers, an art therapy teacher and a home school liaison. School B enrolled 387 students and 5.4% of those students had IEPs. The school employed 19 mainstream class teachers and 4 learning support teachers. Student teacher ratio was 26:1.

Table 2: *Enrolment Details of School A and School B*

School	Enrolment	Special needs children
School A	446	49
School B	387	21

Resource allocation in the Republic of Ireland is based on assessment according to special education needs and disability (National Council for Special Education, 2014). According to the principal of each school, the special educational needs of children within the schools include Autism, Emotional Behavioural Disorder, Attention Deficit Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Dyslexia, Mutism and Dyspraxia. Table 3 displays the descriptive statistics of teachers' attitudes towards inclusive teaching within a mainstream classroom.

Table 3: *Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Attitudes*

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Teachers' opinion total	78.7	6.53
Emotional reaction total	103.31	16.4
Total self-efficacy	20.97	2.62

3.2. Inferential Statistics

Prior to inferential statistical analyses the data was tested for abnormality. In order to test this, histograms were analysed for skewness, and kurtosis. Observation of these indices showed that the data was normally distributed and that the statistical tests could be employed. The results will be discussed in relation to each hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant difference between training and attitude.

Of the 67 respondents, 27 reported that they had received training in special educational needs, while 38 reported that they had not. 57% of the respondents who received training reported that it was part of their initial teacher training course and 43% reported that the training they received was not part of their initial teacher training. An independent t-test showed no significant difference between training and teacher opinions. A separate independent t test found a significant difference between the emotional reaction to inclusive teaching of those who received training (mean= 112, SD =16.01) and those who had not received training (mean=97.46, SD=14.21) (t (64) = 3.88, p< .01, CI (95%) 7.05-22.02). These results, displayed in Table 4, below, provide support for the hypothesis that attitudes of teachers who have received training differ from those who have not.

Table 4: An Independent Sample T-test Table Displaying the Differences in Attitudes of those who Received Training and those who did not

Variable	Groups	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Teacher opinion	Training	80.26	6.48	1.68	63	.98
	No training	77.53	6.47			
Emotional reaction	Training	112	16.01	3.88	64	<.01
	No training	97.46	14.22			
Self-efficacy	Training	21.86	2.79	2.2	64	.03
	No training	20.44	2.44			

Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant difference between training and self-efficacy.

An independent t-test found that there was a statistically significant difference between training and self-efficacy. These results indicated a difference between those who received training (m = 7.5, SD = .98) and those who did not receive training (m = 6.9, SD = .93) with regard to classroom management t (64) = 2.53, p = .01, CI (95%) = .128-1.08). Therefore the null can be rejected.

Hypothesis 3: There will be a difference in attitude towards teaching children with a learning difficulty and a behavioural problem.

A paired sample t-test was carried out in order to investigate the difference between the mean scores of the participants on the Emotional Reaction Scale. As previously mentioned, the ER Scale consists of three sections. Section 1 and 2 are significant to this analysis. Section 1 was designed to measure teachers' emotional reactions to teaching a child with a severe learning difficulty (MLD) in a mainstream classroom, and section 2 measured teachers' emotional reactions to teaching a child with emotional *and* behavioural difficulties in the mainstream classroom. The analysis revealed a significant difference between the mean

scores in section 1 (mean = 33.42, SD = 7.12) and section 2 (mean = 26.24, SD = 8.04). (t (66) = 11.41, p = <.01, CI (95%) 5.92-8.43). These results indicate that teachers' attitude towards teaching children with behavioural problems is significantly more negative than their attitude towards teaching children with learning difficulties.

Hypothesis 4: There will be a significant positive relationship between experience with special educational needs and perceived self-efficacy.

A Pearson correlation coefficient found that there was a significant negative relationship between experience with special education (m=9.58, SD = 7.95) and self-efficacy regarding classroom management (m = 7.13, SD = .99) and student engagement (m=6.77, SD = 1.06). r (62) = -.25, p =.05, r(62) = -.3, p = .02. These results indicate that an increase in teachers' experience will reduce teachers' perceived self-efficacy. However, Pearson's Correlation found a significant positive relationship between student engagement and classroom management, indicating that a rise in efficacy towards student engagement would result in a rise in efficacy towards classroom management. These results do not support the original hypothesis; therefore the null can be accepted. A correlation was used to discover if there was a relationship between years taught and perceived self-efficacy. A multiple regression was then carried out to determine the effect that teaching experience (m = 13.15, SD = 10.28) has on perceived self-efficacy with regard to student engagement (m = 6.77, SD = 1.01) and instructional strategies (m = 7.07, SD = .87). f (2,64) = 46.34, p <.001. These results indicate that years teaching significantly predicted perceived self-efficacy. Student engagement and instructional strategies explained 58% of the variance. Therefore while the results show that experience in inclusive education does not increase self-efficacy, they show that years' teaching does.

Table 5: *Correlation Table Displaying the Correlation between Years' Experience with SEN and Self-efficacy*

Variable	Years' experience	Classroom management	Student engagement
Years' experience			
Classroom management	-.247		
Student engagement	-.303	.774	

3.3. Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data obtained from the open ended questions was coded. Thematic analysis of this data highlighted the major factors that affect and influence teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. Information regarding supports and resources that teachers consider beneficial for successful inclusive education was also identified. 78% of participants stated that they did not feel confident planning lessons for and teaching a child with special educational needs. 90.5% felt that they did not have the necessary training to teach children with special educational needs. Perceived constraints on inclusive practice included class size, resources, time, and inadequacies in training.

Class Size

Class size was the most universally cited constraint to creating a successful inclusive classroom environment. Many teachers found this to be one of the biggest challenges they face regarding inclusive education. "If the class is large and there are a lot of children who require extra attention, it is difficult to cater for all abilities". A sub theme that emerged relating to class size was meeting the needs of all children within the class and challenging all children. "Keeping brighter children challenged while catering to all".

Severity of Need

Teachers often feel that they are ill prepared to meet the needs of students with significant disabilities and report that the severity of the disabling condition presented to them determines their attitudes towards integration (Avramidis et al, 2000). The type and severity of special educational need was identified in this study as a major challenge faced by teachers with regard to inclusive education. Moderate general learning disability, significantly challenging behaviour and severe autistic spectrum disorders were reported as major concerns. "It depends on the child's needs. If it is MLD I have never experienced this before and it would cause me to be less confident". Within this theme, a sub theme of behavioural problems emerged. Teachers regarded behavioural problems encountered by children with special educational needs as a barrier to successful inclusive education.

Time

Time constraints were cited by participants as a barrier to successful inclusive practice. This included time to develop individualised lesson plans, find appropriate resources and liaise with parents, learning support and resource teachers in order to meet the specific needs of the child, while meeting the demands of the primary school curriculum. Many teachers reported that they would benefit from time dedicated specifically to planning for successful inclusive practice. "Planning mornings or Croke Park hours dedicated to planning for children with SEN".

Training

97% of participants reported that they would benefit from additional training on planning and teaching in an inclusive classroom. Inadequate training emerged as a recurring theme when asked what were the biggest challenges faced by teachers in an inclusive

classroom. It also occurred when asked what supports the participants would like to see in place in order to improve inclusive education. Although many teacher education courses in Ireland now offer modules on special educational needs (National Council of Special Education [NCSE], 2009), this is a recent innovation and teachers who qualified before the addition of such courses have had little professional development in teaching students with special educational needs. Many teachers maintained that professional development or in-service training on inclusive practice would be beneficial. Teachers with and without training in Special Education had similar requests regarding professional development. Requests for professional development and training focused on developing IEPs, knowledge of specific disabilities, teaching and assessment methodologies.

Resources and Support

The two major supports that teachers reported as important for the improvement of inclusive education were SNA support and courses/professional development. Many teachers felt that they would benefit from support on planning differentiated lessons to suit the individual needs of the child. Other participants suggested regular support throughout the school year from agencies such as the National Educational Psychology Service. With regard to resources, a common sub theme among participants was age appropriate resources. "Children with SEN often get embarrassed if they are working from a book for a much younger class. I would like to see resources that are appropriate for both age and educational need".

4. Discussion

"Education is vital for all children including those with special educational needs, if they are to become significant participants in society" (Griffin & Shevlin, 2011, p.267). The primary aim of this study was to assess teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in

Ireland. It also sought to investigate the factors that affected teachers' attitudes. Positive perceptions of inclusion create the foundation for inclusive practice but having the right attitude alone is insufficient (Shevlin et al. 2009). This study identified and analysed other factors that affected respondents' perceptions of inclusive education.

Teachers have a very important role to play in creating inclusive learning environments. Positive school ethos and positive attitudes among staff are factors that have contributed significantly to the success of inclusion (Skidmore, 2004). The concept of inclusive education is a relatively new phenomenon within the Irish education system (MacGiolla Phádraig, 2007). According to The Growing Up in Ireland Study (Williams, et al 2011), the prevalence of students with special educational needs in Ireland is approximately 25%. As a result of the increasing need for SEN provision in mainstream schools, Irish primary schools have undergone considerable change in recent years, in terms of the policy and practices required for the inclusion of children with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. All mainstream primary schools are required to be inclusive in their policies and practices (EPSEN, 2004).

Schools are expected to accommodate all students with and without special educational needs and accordingly, teachers should have the competence to support every student's learning (Florian, 2012). Teacher training for mainstream class teachers rarely prepares teachers for working in diverse classrooms, and in particular does not equip them with the confidence, knowledge and skills to effectively support students with disabilities. Many respondents of this study reported receiving one module on special education in their final year of college and deemed this inadequate and insufficient to prepare them for teaching children with a wide range of learning difficulties and challenging behaviour. A large number of mainstream class teachers were trained in a period when special education modules were not included in their pre-service training. When examining the effect of training on attitude,

the results of this study showed no significant difference between training and teachers opinions (cognitive), it did however show a significant difference between training and emotional reaction (affective) to inclusion. The opinions of teachers who received training and those who had not were similar; however, there was a significant difference in their reactions to hypothetically teaching a child with a learning difficulty. These findings provide further support to the study by LeRoy and Simpson (1996), who also found that teachers who had received training in the area of inclusion had significantly more positive attitudes than teachers who had received no training.

A teacher's ability to implement differentiated instructional strategies may be dependent on confidence in their ability as a teacher (Tomlinson et al, 2003). The results of this current study found a significant difference between training and self-efficacy. Those who reported that they had received training in special needs education scored higher on the perceived self-efficacy scale. These results are consistent with a study carried out by Whitworth (1999) who concluded that inadequate training in inclusive education was related to lower confidence and a negative attitude, whereas a positive attitude and higher confidence levels were associated with sufficient special education training. Qualitative analyses found that the vast majority of respondents felt that they would benefit from professional development or in service training in special education needs. It was suggested by teachers that training in assessment, planning and classroom management would be of great value and would improve inclusive practices in mainstream classrooms. The results of a study by Sharma (2012), aimed at evaluating the effect of completing a course in inclusive education on teachers' beliefs about inclusive education, concluded that participants' confidence level to teach in an inclusive classroom setting increased significantly after completing the course. It can be concluded from these results that training in inclusion is an important factor in the

formation of more positive attitudes towards inclusive practice and higher levels of self-efficacy among teachers.

Scruggs & Mastropieri (1996) conducted a meta-analysis, which examined the attitudes of over 10,500 teachers, and found that two thirds were only prepared to integrate students who did not require significant additional skills or time. Current research suggests that a significant factor influencing teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education is the severity of the need (Ryan, 2009). This study reported similar findings. When examining the difference between respondents' attitude towards teaching a child with a learning difficulty and teaching a child with behavioural problems and a learning difficulty, it was clear from the results that characteristics specific to the need influence teachers' attitudes. Teachers were more accepting of students with learning difficulties compared to those with learning difficulties and behavioural problems. These results are also consistent with Cassady's (2011) findings; teachers were more confident teaching a child with Autism Spectrum Disorders than Emotional Behavioural Disorders. Cassady suggested that this may be due, in part, to teachers' lack of knowledge of learning and behavioural difficulties. When examining the responses from the qualitative questionnaire, a significant number of respondents reported that one of the main challenges faced by them was behavioural problems associated with special educational needs.

Experience is considered to be an important factor in promoting positive attitudes and helping teachers to feel more confident in their teaching. Interestingly, this current study found a significant negative correlation between special needs experience and self-efficacy. The particular instrument used in this study subdivided self-efficacy into three categories; student engagement, classroom management and instructional strategies. The results suggest that as experience with special needs increases, self-efficacy with regard to classroom management and student engagement decreases. These results are contrary to the findings of

LeRoy and Simpson (1996) who suggest that experience with SEN children changes attitudes. This finding has since been supported by Avramidis et al (2000) and Forlin (2001), although, the small sample size used by Avramidis et al (2000), ($N = 81$) limits the generalisation of the results. A significant positive correlation was found between years taught and self-efficacy, suggesting that as teaching experience increases so too does self-efficacy. These results are in contrast to those from Leyser et al (2000) and Gal et al (2010) who reported that teachers with fewer years teaching experience held more positive attitudes towards inclusive education and in turn scored higher on a scale measuring perceived self-efficacy.

Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) carried out research on 28 reports published between 1958 and 1995 in which teachers' attitudes towards inclusion were assessed. They reported that only two thirds of teachers supported the concept of inclusion and of those teachers surveyed one third felt that they had sufficient time, skills, training or resources necessary to successfully implement inclusive practice. Qualitative analyses of this study found that while most respondents were positive about inclusion, they reported concerns regarding successful practice. Similar to Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996), respondents reported dissatisfaction with large class sizes. Other common concerns reported were time, SNA support, and lack of resources. Balancing the development of individualised plans, behavioural management, supervision, and meeting the needs of the whole class caused much concern for teachers. Avramidis et al, (2000) reported time demands of liaising with other staff members, parents and outside agencies as barriers to successful inclusion. Teaching is considered more effective if it is differentiated – that is, if the teacher adapts lessons and activities to suit different students in their class. This may be particularly challenging if faced with time constraints and a lack of resources. Many teachers of children with special educational needs reported that they found it difficult to successfully meet the needs of all children in the class.

4.1. Strengths and Limitations of the Study

This study has identified the challenges that teachers in Ireland face regarding inclusive education. It has added to the overwhelming evidence from various methods of research, reporting that teachers feel they are under prepared for teaching children with special educational needs. Inclusive education relies on knowledge, skills, understanding, resources and positive teacher attitude (Shelvin et al, 2012). The factors that influence teachers' attitude were assessed and analysed and supported previous research on the barriers to successful inclusive education in Ireland. Qualitative analysis of the data provided significant and detailed information on common concerns for teachers. It also offered suggestions regarding appropriate resources and supports that teachers deem beneficial to inclusive practice.

A significant limitation of this study was its small sample size of 67 participants. Due to this the results should be interpreted cautiously by the reader. It is assumed that a larger sample would yield more significant results and enable generalisation of the findings. The majority of the teachers surveyed for this study worked in schools within close proximity of each other, therefore the results are only representative of a small demographic area in Ireland. A larger sample size would reach broader demographics and varied socio economic status. Another limitation is in the materials used for data collection. There is potential validity problems associated with the use of self-report questionnaires. The risk of response bias is one such problem. Participants may present themselves favourably rather than truthfully, therefore limiting the validity of the results.

4.2. Implications for Further Research

While the use of self-reported questionnaires provided adequate information for this small scale study, it is suggested that actual observations be used to assess inclusive practices

within mainstream classrooms. Due to the limitations of the sample size used in this study, further research using participants from a larger sample of schools is recommended. Any significant findings would be more generalisable across the population than the findings from this study. Research into children's attitudes towards and perceptions of inclusive education would offer a more in-depth insight into how best to implement inclusive practice. This study highlighted potential barriers to successful inclusion in Ireland. Further investigation into the challenges and concerns faced by teachers in inclusive classrooms is required. Providing adequate support and resources for teachers would further enable them to respond effectively to the needs of all children within the class. This study highlighted the effect of preservice and in service training on teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy. Continued research into the benefit of professional development and training in the area of inclusion are recommended. As suggested by the respondents in this study, training in the areas of planning, assessment, differentiation and classroom management would be of great benefit. Research into the usefulness and practicality of current SEN courses available to students and teachers is necessary to provide appropriate training in inclusive education. Comparative studies with other countries, comparing self-efficacy, attitudes and teaching methodologies would be very informative.

5. Conclusion

An inclusive learning environment refers to a learning environment that caters for all pupils, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, socio economic background or special educational need (Chen, 2015). This study has attempted to assess teacher attitudes towards inclusion and identify the factors that influence these attitudes. Given the limitations in the study sample and the instruments used, some interesting findings are offered and may be used as a basis for further research into inclusion in Irish schools. The general perceptions of inclusion were largely positive; teachers appear to recognise the value and benefits associated with inclusive practice in mainstream classrooms. The study did report significant barriers to successful inclusion; the most common concern being inadequate training in inclusive practice. Overcoming this barrier requires the development of teachers' competences to better meet the needs of students with special educational needs. Thus, appropriate training and professional development are significant to the success of inclusion. Support is also required, on a regular basis to ensure successful inclusive practice within mainstream primary schools. These findings may help to highlight the importance of teacher attitudes and efficacy beliefs to successful inclusion in Ireland.

6. References

Antonak, R. F., & Larrivee, B. (1995). Psychometric Analysis and Revision of the Opinions Relative to Mainstreaming Scale. *Exceptional Children*,*62*(2), 139-49.

Avissar, G. (2007). Teacher education in an inclusive era: ideologies and current policies in the state of Israel. *Responding to Student Diversity: Teacher Education and Classroom Practice*, 107-24

Avramidis, E., & Kalyva, E. (2007). The influence of teaching experience and professional development on Greek teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. *European Journal Of Special Needs Education*, *22*(4), 367-389. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08856250701649989

Avramidis, E., Bayliss, P., & Burden, R. (2000). A Survey into Mainstream Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Inclusion of Children with Special Educational Needs in the Ordinary School in one Local Education Authority. *Educational Psychology*, *20*(2), 191-211. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/713663717

Avramidis, E., & Norwich, B. (2002). Teachers' attitudes towards integration / inclusion: a review of the literature. *European Journal Of Special Needs Education*, *17*(2), 129-147. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08856250210129056

Bandura, A. *Self-efficacy* (p. 71).

Bender, W., Vail, C., & Scott, K. (1995). Teachers Attitudes toward Increased Mainstreaming: Implementing Effective Instruction for Students with Learning Disabilities. *Journal Of Learning Disabilities*, *28*(2), 87-94. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/002221949502800203

Cassady, J. (2011). Teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with autism and emotional behavioral disorder. *Electronic Journal for Inclusive Education*, *2*(7), 19-20.

Chen, L. (2015). Critical components for inclusion of students with moderate intellectual disabilities into general junior high school. *International Journal Of Developmental Disabilities*, 1-9. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/20473869.2015.1108006

Cipkin, G., & Rizza, F. T. (2000). The attitude of teachers on inclusion.

Cochran, H. K. (1998). Differences in Teachers' Attitudes toward Inclusive Education as Measured by the Scale of Teachers' Attitudes toward Inclusive Classrooms (STATIC).

Daane, C. J., Beirne-Smith, M., & Latham, D. (2000). Administrators' and Teachers' Perceptions of the Collaborative Efforts of Inclusion in the Elementary Grades.*Education, 121*(2), 331-338

Department of Education and Skills,. (2010). *Development of a Framework for Action for the Inclusion of Children with Special Needs in Early Childhood Education Settings* (pp. 1-24). Retrieved from https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/EarlyYears/eye_framework_development_special_needs.pdf

Eastern Educational Research Association,. (2010). *Teacher attitudes towards inclusion scale (TATIS)*.

Education.ie,. (2015). *Special Needs Education - Department of Education and Skills*. Retrieved 18 October 2015, from http://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/

Emmer, E., & Hickman, J. (1991). Teacher Efficacy in Classroom Management and Discipline. *Educational And Psychological Measurement*, *51*(3), 755-765. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0013164491513027

Florian, L. (2012). Preparing Teachers to Work in Inclusive Classrooms: Key Lessons for the Professional Development of Teacher Educators from Scotland's Inclusive Practice Project. *Journal Of Teacher Education*, *63*(4), 275-285. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0022487112447112

Florian, L., Young, K., & Rouse, M. (2010). Preparing teachers for inclusive and diverse educational environments: studying curricular reform in an initial teacher education course. *International Journal Of Inclusive Education*, *14*(7), 709-722. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13603111003778536

Forlin, C. (2001). Inclusion: identifying potential stressors for regular class teachers. *Educational Research*, *43*(3), 235-245. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00131880110081017

Gal, E., Schreur, N., & Engel-Yeger, B. (2010). Inclusion of children with disabilities: teachers' attitudes and requirements for environmental accomodations. *International Journal of Special Education*, *25*(2).

Gargiulo, R., & Metcalf, D. (2013). *Teaching in today's inclusive classrooms*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Griffin, S., & Shevlin, M. (2011). *Responding to special education needs*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan.

Hoy, A. W. (2000,). Changes in teacher efficacy during the early years of teaching. In *annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA*

Idol, L. (2006). Toward Inclusion of Special Education Students in General Education: A Program Evaluation of Eight Schools. *Remedial And Special Education*, *27*(2), 77-94. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/07419325060270020601

Larrivee, B., & Cook, L. (1979). Mainstreaming: A study of the variables affecting teacher attitude. *The Journal of Special Education*, *13*(3), 315-324

LeRoy, B., & Simpson, C. (1996). Improving student outcomes through inclusive education. *Support for Learning*, *11*(1), 32-36. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9604.1996.tb00046.x

Leyser, Y, Kapperman, G. & Kelle, R. (1994) Teacher attitudes toward mainstreaming: a crosscultural study in 6 nations. European Journal of Special Needs Education , 9 (1), 1

- 15 .

Lindsay, S., Proulx, M., Thomson, N., & Scott, H. (2013). Educators' Challenges of Including Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Mainstream Classrooms. *International Journal Of Disability, Development And Education*, *60*(4), 347-362. doi:10.1080/1034912x.2013.846470

MacGiolla Phádraig, B. (2007). Towards inclusion: the development of provision for children with special educational needs in Ireland from 1991 to 2004. *Irish Educational Studies*, *26*(3), 289-300. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03323310701491562

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment,. (1999). *Special Educational Needs: Curriculum Issues* (pp. 4-45). Dublin. Retrieved from http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/nccaeng.pdf

National Council of Special Education,. (2009). *Creating inclusive learning environments in Irish schools*.

Ncse.ie,(2015). *Inclusive Education Framework*. Retrieved 18 October 2015, from http://ncse.ie/inclusive-education-framework

Palmer, D. (2006). Sources of Self-efficacy in a Science Methods Course for Primary Teacher Education Students. *Res Sci Educ*, *36*(4), 337-353. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11165-005-9007-0

Ryan, T.(2009). Inclusive attitudes: a pre-service analysis. *Journal Of Research In Special Educational Needs*, *9*(3), 180-187. doi:10.1111/j.1471-3802.2009.01134.x

Scruggs, T., & Mastropieri, M. (1996). Special Education for the Twenty-First Century: Integrating Learning Strategies and Thinking Skills. *Journal Of Learning Disabilities*, *26*(6), 392-398. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/002221949302600604

Sharma, U. (2012). Changing Pre-Service Teachers' Beliefs to Teach in Inclusive Classrooms in Victoria, Australia. *AJTE*, *37*(10). http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2012v37n10.6

Sharma, U., Forlin, C., & Loreman, T. (2008). Impact of training on pre‐service teachers' attitudes and concerns about inclusive education and sentiments about persons with disabilities. *Disability & Society*, *23*(7), 773-785. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09687590802469271

Shulman, L., & Shulman, J. (2004). How and what teachers learn: a shifting perspective. *Journal Of Curriculum Studies*, *36*(2), 257-271. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0022027032000148298

Shevlin, M., Winter, E., & Flynn, P. (2012). Developing inclusive practice: teacher perceptions of opportunities and constraints in the Republic of Ireland. *International Journal Of Inclusive Education*, *17*(10), 1119-1133. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2012.742143

Skaalvik, E., & Skaalvik, S. (2007). Dimensions of teacher self-efficacy and relations with strain factors, perceived collective teacher efficacy, and teacher burnout. *Journal Of Educational Psychology*, *99*(3), 611-625. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.99.3.611

Skidmore, D. (2004). *Inclusion*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

The National Council for Special Education, (2009). *Creating inclusive learning environments in Irish schools:* (pp. 1-8). Retrieved from http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Creating_inclusive_learning_environments.pdf

Tilstone, C., Florian, L., & Rose, R. (1998). *Promoting inclusive practice*. London: Routledge.

Tomlinson, C., Brighton, C., Hertberg, H., Callahan, C., Moon, T., & Brimijoin, K. et al. (2003). Differentiating Instruction in Response to Student Readiness, Interest, and Learning Profile in Academically Diverse Classrooms: A Review of Literature. *Journal For The Education Of The Gifted*, *27*(2-3), 119-145. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/016235320302700203

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, A. (2001). Teacher efficacy: capturing an elusive construct. *Teaching And Teacher Education*, *17*(7), 783-805. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/s0742-051x (01)00036-1

Van Reusen, A. K., Shoho, A. R., & Barker, K. S. (2000). High school teacher attitudes toward inclusion. *The High School Journal*, *84*(2), 7-20

Walker, T. (2012). *Attitudes and Inclusion: An Examination of Teachers' Attitudes toward Including Students with Disabilities* (Phd). Loyola University Chicago

Whitworth, J. (1999). A model for inclusive teacher preparation. *Electronic Journal for Inclusive Education*, *1*(2).

Williams, J., Greene, S., Doyle, E., Harris, E., Layte, R., McCoy, S. & O'Moore, M. (2011). *Growing up in Ireland national longitudinal study of children. The lives of 9 year olds*. The Stationery Office

Wood, M. J. (2007). *Teacher efficacy, teacher attitudes towards inclusion and teachers' perspectives of training needed for successful inclusion*

Appendices

Appendix 1

Consent from principles

9th Feb. 2016

Dear _____,

I am conducting research with the Department of Psychology in Dublin Business School which aims to explore teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education (teaching children with special needs within a mainstream classroom) and the factors that influence their attitude.

I am seeking permission to carry out a self-administered survey in _____ between March Feb 22nd and Feb 26th 2016. The survey should take no more than ten minutes and I will deliver and collect them personally. Each survey will contain a cover sheet detailing anonymity and confidentiality should the teacher consent to take part in the research. It will also contain instructions for completing each questionnaire.

Your school's participation in this research project will be greatly appreciated. Should you have any questions or concerns you can contact me at 10160560@mydbs.ie, or my supervisor Pauline Hyland at Pauline.Hyland@dbs.ie.

Kind Regards,

_____

Ciara Mahony

Appendix 2

Cover Letter

Assessing Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education within an Urban School District in Ireland

Dear Teacher,

I am conducting research with the Department of Psychology in Dublin Business School which aims to explore teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education (teaching children with special needs within a mainstream classroom) and the factors that influence their attitude.

Attached to this letter are three surveys. It would be greatly appreciated if you could take the time to answer the questions as honestly as you can. Your input is very valuable to the outcome of this study.

This study is being carried out according to the PSI code of ethics. This requires that the researcher protect the anonymity of the participants and safeguard data for the duration of the study. Participation is voluntary and anonymous. All information gathered will be stored securely for one year after submission of this research project. After this time it will be destroyed.

It is important to understand that by completing and returning this survey you are providing your consent to participate in the study. Once questionnaires have been submitted it is not possible to withdraw from the study.

Dissemination and reporting of the findings of this research study will be submitted for examination in March 2016.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the survey please contact me at 10160560@mydbs.ie, or my supervisor Pauline.Hyland@dbs.ie

Thank you in advance for your time and participation.

Kind Regards,

_____

Ciara Mahony

Appendix 3

Permission to use TSES

Anita Woolfolk Hoy, Ph.D.   Professor
Psychological Studies in Education

Dear

You have my permission to use the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale* in your research. A copy the scoring instructions can be found at:

http://u.osu.edu/hoy.17/research/instruments/

Best wishes in your work,

Anita Woolfolk Hoy

Anita Woolfolk Hoy, Ph.D. Professor Emeritus

Appendix 4

Teachers' attitudes towards Inclusive Education

1. **Gender**   (please circle)   Male   Female
2. **Age group**   (please circle)   18-25 25-35 36-45 46-55 55+
3. **Education level** (please tick)   College student (at present)
(*Tick more than once if necessary*)   Bachelor's Degree
                                             Higher Diploma
                                             Masters
                                             Doctorate
4. How many years have you been teaching? _____
5. What classes have you taught? (please tick)

Junior infants	Third class	Learning support
Senior infants	Fourth class	Resource
First class	Fifth class	Language support
Second class	Sixth class	

6. Do you currently have any children with special needs* in your class/group? **Yes / no**
7. If so, how many special needs children are you teaching? _____
8. If your answer to Q6 was yes, do you currently have SNA support? _____
9. How many years' experience do you have of teaching children with special educational needs? _____
10. How many children are you currently teaching? (please circle)

      Support groups/ one to one   < 20   21-25   26-35

11. Have you received any training or taken part in any courses in Special Education? **Yes / no?**
12. If your answer to Q11 was yes, was this course part of your initial teacher training course? **Yes / No**
13. If this course/ training was not part of your initial teacher training course, can you be specific as to the type of training you completed (name of course, level of course)_____
_____

*According to the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004, Special educational needs are defined as: "*a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition.*" (EPSEN ACT 2004)

Appendix 5

Emotional Reaction Scale

Section I presents 3 different situations. Please read each statement carefully. Below each statement is a list of different adjectives (e.g. Negative-Positive). Circle the number (1-7) that represents the strength of your feelings. For example circling 1 on the Negative – positive item would suggest that you feel completely negative about that situation. Circling 7 would suggest that you feel completely positive about the situation. Circling a 4 would suggest that you feel neither positive nor negative about the situation.

(i)   **If a new student who was described as having MLD* was about to join your class tomorrow, how would you feel…..**

I would feel…   (Please circle the number which best describes your feelings)

Uncomfortable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Comfortable
Negative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Positive
Unconfident	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Confident
Pessimistic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Optimistic
Worried	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Self-assured
Disinterested	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Interested
Unhappy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Happy

(ii)   **If a new student, who was described as having MLD and behavioural problems, was about to join your class tomorrow, how would you feel…..**

I would feel….   (Please circle the number which best describes your feelings)

Uncomfortable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Comfortable
Negative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Positive
Unconfident	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Confident
Pessimistic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Optimistic
Worried	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Self-assured
Disinterested	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Interested
Unhappy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Happy

(iii) **How would you feel about having another adult (e.g. Special Needs Assistant) who helps with children with MLD, in your class?**

I would feel… (Please circle the number which best describes your feelings)

Uncomfortable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**Comfortable**
Negative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**Positive**
Unconfident	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**Confident**
Pessimistic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**Optimistic**
Worried	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**Self-assured**
Disinterested	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**Interested**
Unhappy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**Happy**

Moderate general learning disability: "Children with moderate general disabilities have considerable difficulty with basic literacy and numeracy. Their language, communication, personal and social development is affected. Many students with moderate general learning disabilities have great difficulty concentrating on tasks and transferring what they learn from one situation to another. They need simple, direct and clear instruction in order to benefit from the classroom situation. Some children with moderate general learning disabilities can have additional disabilities or conditions, including autistic spectrum disorders, medical conditions, physical and/or sensory disabilities, and emotional/behavioural difficulties". (NCSE)

Appendix 6

Teacher Opinions

Please read each statement carefully. Use the numbers beside each statement to indicate your agreement or disagreement with the statement. Each number denotes a certain response category. For e.g. **1= strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= undecided, 4= Agree, 5 = strongly**. Circle the point on the scale that best represents your opinion.

1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Undecided	4 = Agree	5 = Strongly Agree

		SD	D	U	A	SA
1.	The needs of students with MLD are best served through separate classes in resource.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Participating in an ordinary classroom will promote the academic growth of the child with MLD.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Inclusion offers mixed group interaction which will foster understanding and acceptance of differences.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Separate learning support classes have a negative effect on the social and emotional development of a student whose first language is not English. .	1	2	3	4	5
5.	The child who does not have MLD will probably develop academic skills more rapidly in a separate class than in a regular classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The contact mainstream students have with children with MLD, may be harmful.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Including the child with MLD, in the mainstream classroom will promote his/her social independence.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	The inclusion of children with MLD, in the mainstream classroom can be beneficial for mainstream students.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Inclusion in the mainstream classroom is likely to have a negative effect on the emotional development of the child without MLD.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	The child with MLD will be socially isolated by other students.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Students with MLD should be given every opportunity to participate in the general-classroom setting, where possible.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	The presence of students with MLD will promote acceptance of differences on the part of other students.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix 7

Intentions and current practices

<u>In the following section, please choose either V (i) or V (ii), depending on whether or not you are currently teaching children with MLD.</u>

Please circle the number under the column that best describes your agreement or disagreement with the following statements. There are no correct answers; the best answers are those that honestly reflect your feelings.

SD = Strongly Disagree	D = Disagree	U = Undecided	A = Agree	SA = Strongly Agree

V (i) Please fill out the section below if you currently are <u>not</u> teaching a child with MLD

		SD	D	U	A	SA
1.	I would be supportive towards the idea of including children with MLD in my classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I would not be willing to engage in in-service training on teaching children with MLD.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I would engage in developing the appropriate skills to teach children with MLD in their classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I would accept responsibility for teaching children with MLD if this was my schools policy.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I would not be willing to continuously assess myself to inform my teaching practice.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I would be unable to change my teaching processes to accommodate children with MLD are not English in my classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I would co-operate with the parents of the children with MLD for the benefit of their children.	1	2	3	4	5

V (ii) Please fill out the section below if you <u>are</u> currently teaching a child with MLD

		SD	D	U	A	SA
1.	I am supportive towards the idea of including children with MLD in my classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I am <u>not</u> willing to engage in in-service training on teaching children with MLD.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I am engaging in developing the appropriate skills to teach children with MLD in their classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I accept responsibility for teaching children with MLD if it is my school's policy.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I am not willing to continuously assess myself to inform my teaching practice.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I am unable to change my teaching processes to accommodate children with MLD in my classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I co-operate with the parents of the children with MLD for the benefit of their children.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix 8

Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale[1] (short form)

Teacher Beliefs	Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite A Bit		A Great Deal
Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Your answers are confidential.									
1. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
2. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
3. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
4. How much can you do to help your students value learning?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
5. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
6. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
7. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
8. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
9. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
10. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
11. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
12. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)

Appendix 9

Section 3

Self-Generated Questions- Qualitative Research

(Please explain or give reasons for your answer where possible)

1. Do you feel confident planning lessons for and teaching a child with Special Educational Needs?

    _____

    _____

2. Do you feel that you have the necessary training to teach children with Special Educational Needs?

    _____

    _____

3. What are the biggest challenges you face or have faced regarding Inclusive Education?

    _____

4. What factors do you think impact your attitude towards Inclusive Education? (class size, support, resources, severity/nature of need etc.)

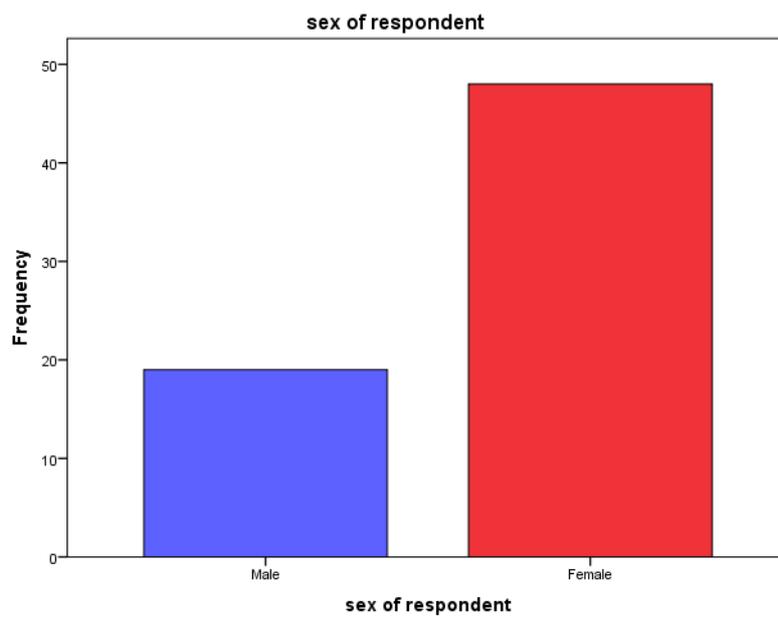   _____

    _____

5. What supports would you like to see in place in order to improve Inclusive Education within the mainstream classroom?

    _____

    _____

6. Are there any resources that you feel would help to implement successful Inclusive Education?

    _____

    _____

7. Do you feel that you would benefit from in service training/courses/professional development in relation to Inclusive Education?

    _____

    _____

Appendix 10

Graphs
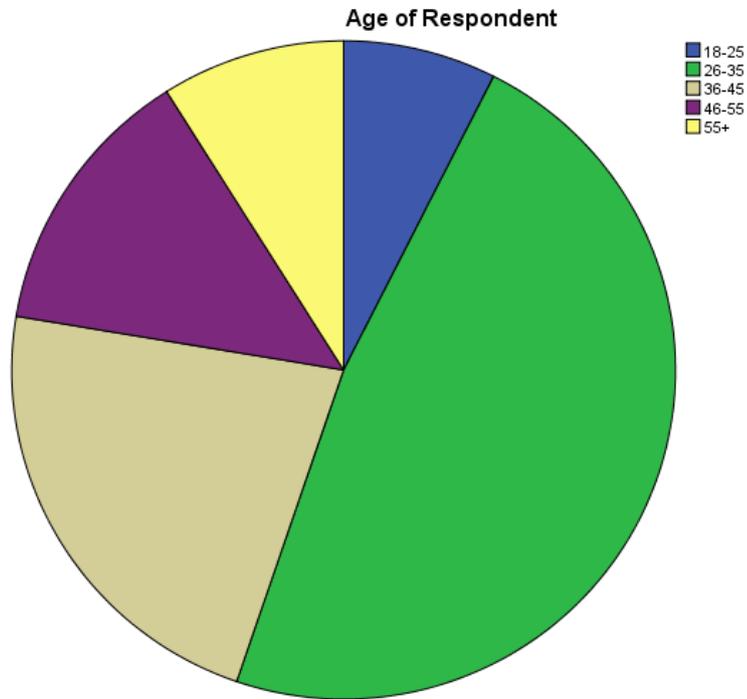
Figure 1 Age of Respondents

Figure 2, Sex of respondents