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# A Study of Special School Teachers and Inclusive School Teachers toward Mainstreaming Of Students with Visual Impairment

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## Abstract

*This study investigates the attitudes and practices of special school teachers (SSTs) and inclusive school teachers (ISTs) towards the mainstreaming of students with visual impairment (VI). Mainstreaming, or inclusive education, aims to integrate students with disabilities into general education settings with appropriate support. This research explores the perspectives of both SSTs and ISTs regarding the benefits, challenges, and essential support systems required for successful mainstreaming of students with VI. Data was collected through surveys and interviews with teachers from both special and inclusive schools. The findings reveal significant differences in confidence levels, knowledge of assistive technologies, and perceptions of required support between the two groups. The study concludes with recommendations for improved teacher training, resource allocation, and collaborative strategies to enhance the mainstreaming experience for students with VI.*

**Keywords;** Visual Impairment, Mainstreaming, Inclusive Education, Special School Teachers, Inclusive School Teachers, Attitudes, Practices, Assistive Technology, Collaboration.

## INTRODUCTION

The global movement towards inclusive education recognizes the right of all children, regardless of their abilities, to learn together in mainstream school environments. Mainstreaming students with visual impairment (VI) presents unique opportunities and challenges. Integrating these students into general education classrooms fosters social inclusion, promotes cognitive development, and prepares them for successful participation in society. However, successful mainstreaming hinges on the attitudes, skills, and access to resources of the teachers responsible for their education.

This study focuses on exploring the perceptions and practices of two key groups of educators involved in the mainstreaming process: special school teachers (SSTs) and inclusive school teachers (ISTs). SSTs possess specialized knowledge and experience in educating students with VI within segregated settings. ISTs, on the other hand, are responsible for educating a diverse range of students within general education classrooms, often with limited specific training on VI. Examining the perspectives of both groups is crucial for identifying effective strategies to bridge the gap and ensure successful mainstreaming for students with VI.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The mainstreaming of students with visual impairment (VI) in Gujarat has been widely studied, focusing on the attitudes of teachers, challenges in implementation, use of assistive technology, teacher collaboration, and government support. Several research studies conducted in Gujarat highlight both the progress and the barriers to inclusive education for visually impaired students.

1. Patel (2017) conducted a survey-based study on the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education for students with VI. The study used a questionnaire to collect data from inclusive school teachers (ISTs) and special school teachers (SSTs). The findings revealed that while ISTs supported the idea of mainstreaming, they felt unprepared due to a lack of proper training in handling visually impaired students. On the other hand, SSTs believed that special schools provide better individual attention to students with VI and were hesitant about full inclusion.
2. Mehta & Desai (2018) explored the challenges in implementing inclusive education for visually impaired students in Gujarat. This case study utilized interviews and classroom observations in mainstream schools. The research highlighted major obstacles such as the lack of assistive technology, insufficient teacher training, and poor resource allocation. Many ISTs expressed difficulties in modifying lesson plans and providing appropriate support to students with VI due to these limitations.
3. Sharma (2019) conducted an experimental study to evaluate the impact of assistive technology in teaching visually impaired students. Using a pre-test and post-test model, the study examined the effectiveness of tools such as screen readers, Braille notetakers, and audio-based learning methods. The results showed that teachers who received training in assistive technology were more effective in improving the learning outcomes of students with VI compared to those who did not receive such training. This study emphasized the need for continuous professional development programs to enhance the competency of ISTs.
4. Joshi (2020) carried out a mixed-method study investigating the perceptions of SSTs and ISTs toward mainstreaming. Using surveys and focus group discussions, the research found that collaborative training between SSTs and ISTs was essential for improving the inclusive education system. The study suggested that ISTs should be given more exposure to specialized instructional strategies, and SSTs should be involved in guiding inclusive education efforts in mainstream schools.
5. Trivedi (2021) conducted a policy analysis on the role of government support in inclusive education for visually impaired students. The study used document reviews and teacher interviews to assess the effectiveness of existing policies. The findings revealed gaps in policy implementation, lack of

financial support, and inadequate infrastructure in mainstream schools. Teachers reported that the government must increase funding, provide better learning materials, and conduct specialized training programs to improve the quality of inclusive education in Gujarat.

6. Vyas (2022) focused on collaboration between SSTs and ISTs for effective mainstreaming of students with VI. Using qualitative in-depth interviews, the study concluded that joint lesson planning, co-teaching models, and knowledge-sharing sessions significantly improved the learning experience of visually impaired students. The research recommended structured collaboration programs where SSTs and ISTs could exchange teaching strategies and receive joint training on inclusive methodologies.

This study builds upon this existing body of research by specifically examining the attitudes and practices of both SSTs and ISTs, providing a comparative analysis of their perspectives on the mainstreaming of students with VI.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To understand the opinions of special school teachers (SSTs) and inclusive school teachers (ISTs) about including students with visual impairment (VI) in regular schools.
2. To find out the benefits and challenges of mainstreaming students with VI, as seen by SSTs and ISTs.
3. To check how much knowledge and confidence SSTs and ISTs have in using assistive technology and special teaching methods for students with VI.
4. To identify the types of support that SSTs and ISTs think are needed to successfully include students with VI in regular schools.
5. To study how SSTs and ISTs currently work together in teaching students with VI and find ways to improve their teamwork.

## METHODOLOGY

- **Participants:** The participants in this study included a sample of SSTs working in special schools for the visually impaired and ISTs working in mainstream schools that have integrated students with VI.

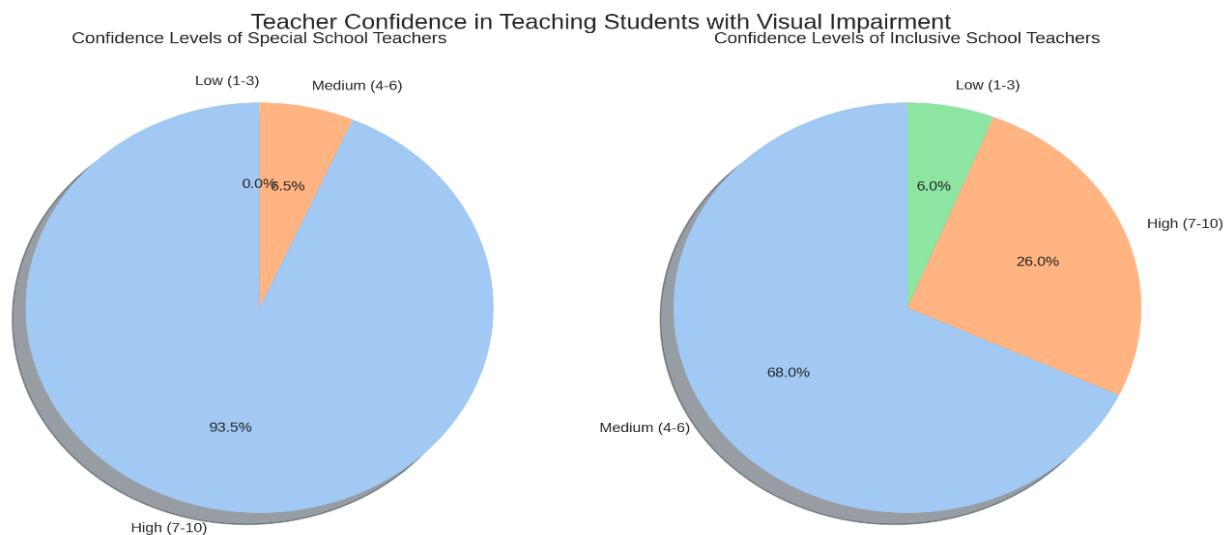
- The sample was selected from AHMEDABAD ANDHSHALALA, BLIND PEOPLE ASSOCIATION AHMEDABAD URBAN.
- Sample was assured to make of education background and diversity of experience teachers and blind students.
- **DATA Collection:** Data was collected through a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data
- **Surveys:** A structured survey questionnaire was administered to both SSTs and ISTs.
- **TOOLS:** The survey included Likert-scale items measuring attitudes towards mainstreaming, knowledge of assistive technologies, perceived challenges, and preferred support systems.
- **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of participants from each group. The interviews explored participants' experiences with mainstreaming, their perspectives on effective strategies, and their suggestions for improving the process.

- **Data Analysis:** Quantitative data from the surveys was analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistical tests (e.g., t-tests, to compare the responses of SSTs and ISTs. Qualitative data from the interviews was analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes related to the attitudes, experiences, and recommendations of participants.

#### ANLYSIED DATA IN GRAPH FORM

1. **Pie Charts: Teacher Confidence Levels** These pie charts compare confidence levels between Special School Teachers (SSTs) and Inclusive School Teachers (ISTs) when teaching students with visual impairment:
  - **Attitudes toward Mainstreaming:** SSTs generally expressed more cautious and nuanced views towards mainstreaming, emphasizing the importance of careful planning and individualized support. ISTs, while generally supportive of inclusion, expressed concerns about their own preparedness and the availability of resources.

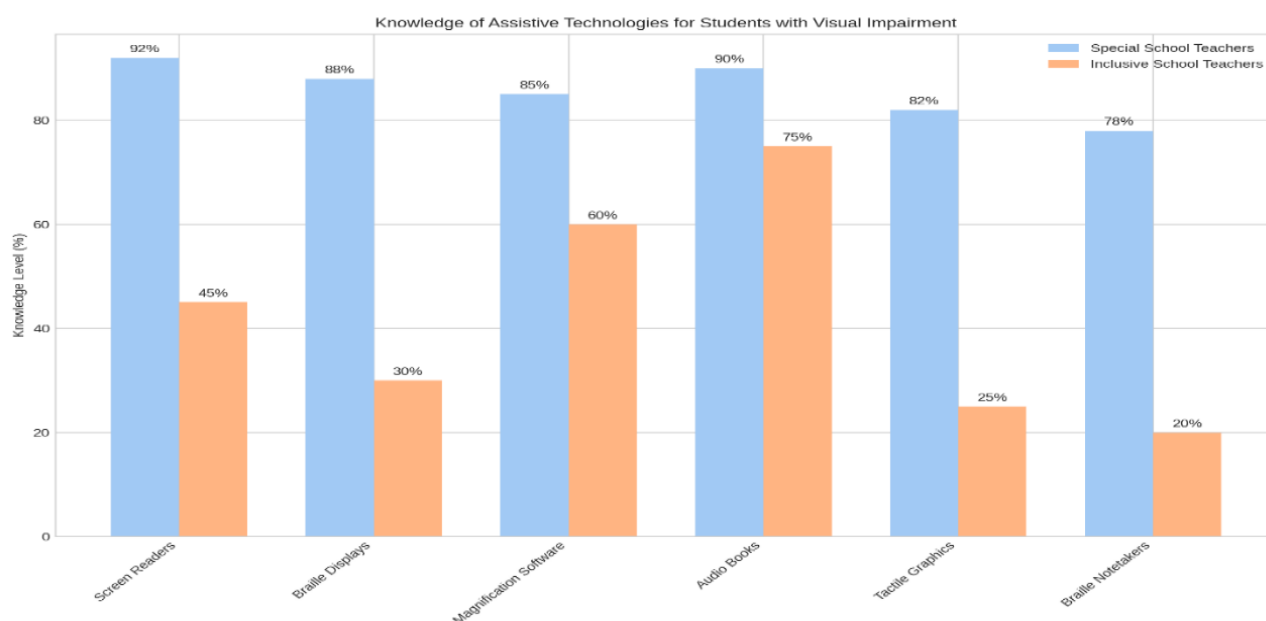
**Figure 1**



#### 2. **Bar Graph:** Knowledge of Assistive Technologies

- This graph shows the difference in knowledge of various assistive technologies between SSTs and ISTs: Knowledge of Assistive Technologies: SSTs demonstrated significantly higher levels of knowledge and comfort regarding assistive

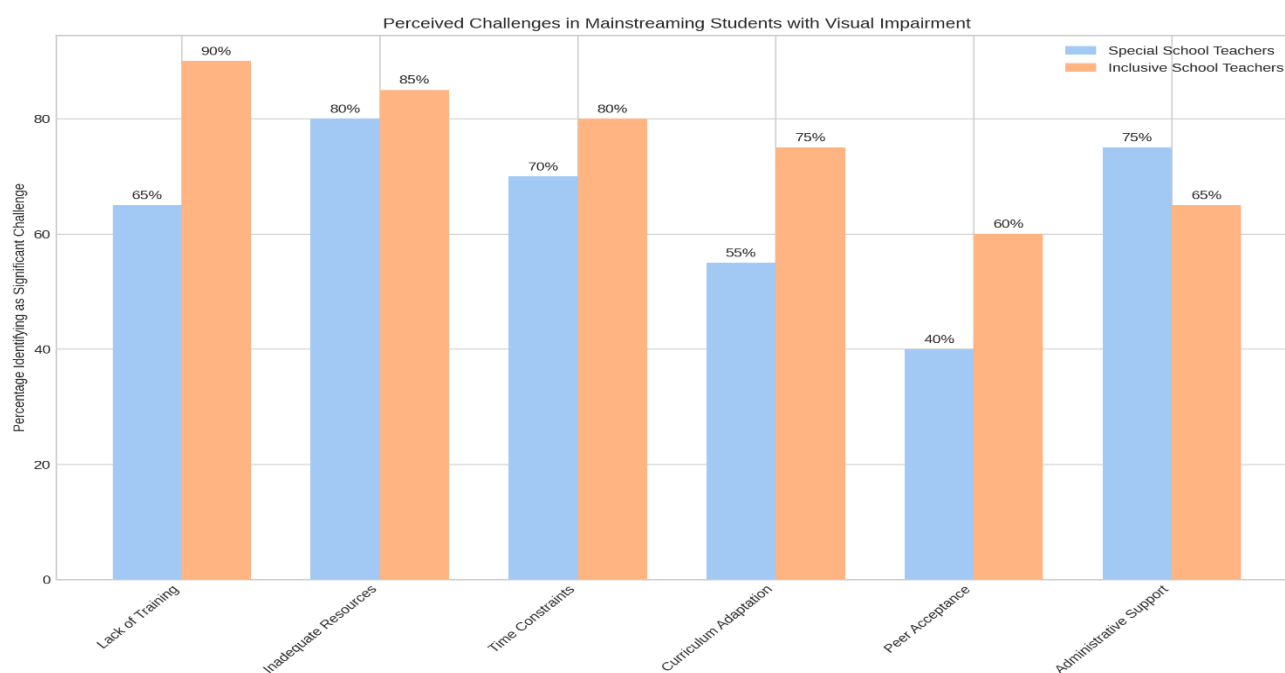
technologies such as screen readers, Braille embossers, and magnification devices. ISTs reported limited training and experience with these technologies, leading to feelings of inadequacy and reliance on outside specialists.

**Figure 2**

### 3. Bar Graph: Perceived Challenges in Mainstreaming

- This visualization compares how SSTs and ISTs perceive various challenges in mainstreaming students with visual impairment: Perceived Benefits and Challenges: Both groups acknowledged the social and emotional benefits of mainstreaming for students with VI. However,

ISTs were more likely to highlight the challenges related to academic instruction, classroom management, and lack of access to adapted materials. SSTs emphasized the potential for students with VI to succeed in mainstream settings but stressed the need for specialized expertise and ongoing support.

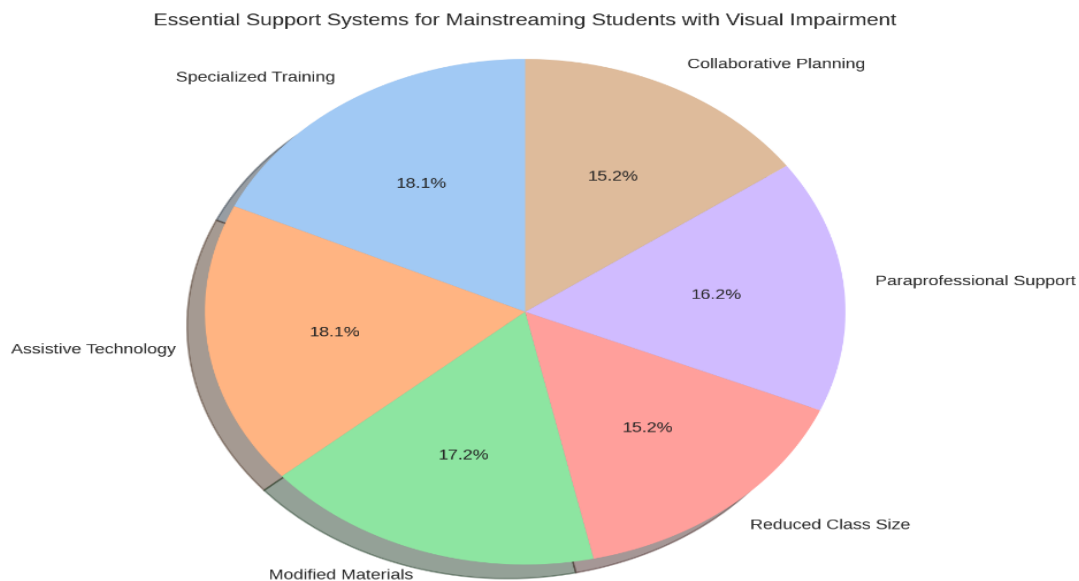
**Figure 3**

#### 4. Pie Chart: Essential Support Systems

- This pie chart shows the relative importance of different support systems needed for successful mainstreaming: Required Support Systems: Both groups identified the need for comprehensive support systems, including: (a) ongoing teacher

training on VI-specific pedagogy and assistive technologies; (b) access to specialized consultants and support staff; (c) availability of adapted materials and resources; (d) collaborative partnerships between SSTs, ISTs, and parents; and (e) accessible physical environments.

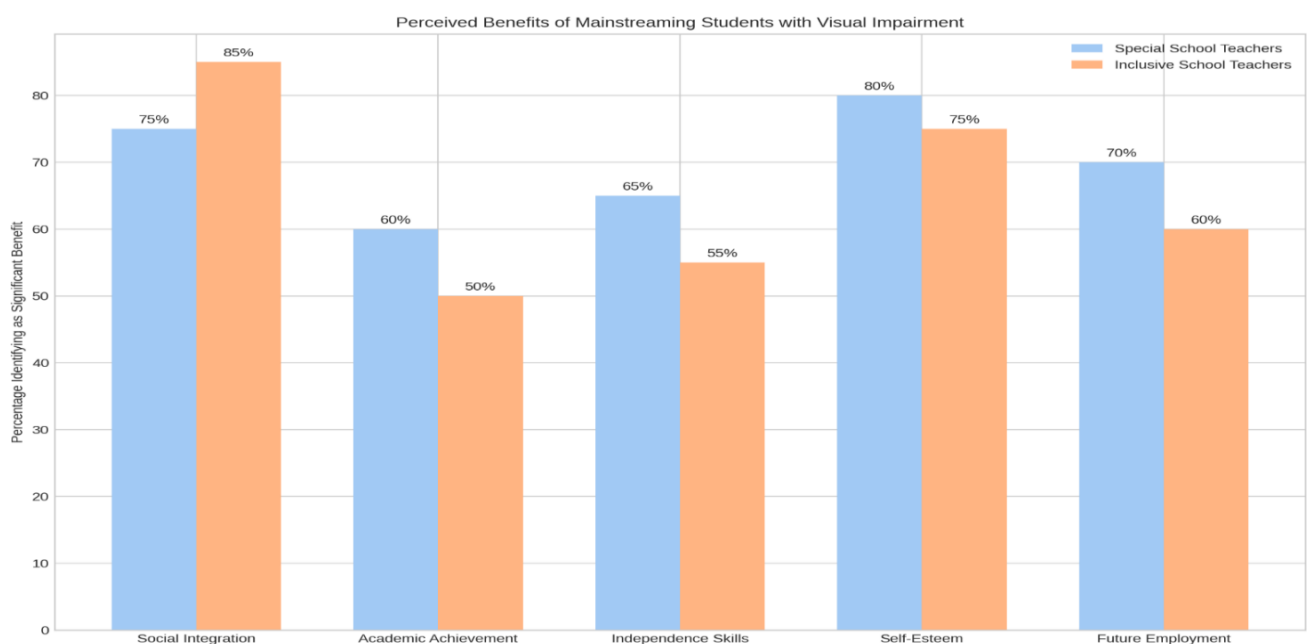
**Figure 4**



#### 5. Bar Graph: Perceived Benefits of Mainstreaming

This graph compares how SSTs and ISTs perceive the benefits of mainstreaming students with visual impairment:

**Figure 5**



The findings revealed several key differences between the perceptions and practices of SSTs and ISTs:

- **Collaborative Practices:** Current collaborative practices were often limited, with infrequent communication and lack of shared planning between SSTs and ISTs. Participants highlighted the need for more structured and formalized collaboration models, such as co-teaching, team meetings, and joint professional development.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study underscore the importance of addressing the specific needs and concerns of both SSTs and ISTs to ensure successful mainstreaming for students with VI. The findings suggest that ISTs require more comprehensive training and support to feel confident and competent in meeting the unique needs of these students. This includes training on assistive technologies, adapted instructional strategies, and managing the classroom environment.

The study also highlights the critical role of SSTs as valuable resources and partners in the mainstreaming process. Their expertise and experience can be leveraged through collaborative models such as co-teaching, consultation, and shared professional development. By fostering stronger partnerships between SSTs and ISTs, schools can create a more supportive and inclusive learning environment for students with VI.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- **Enhanced Teacher Training:** Mandatory and ongoing professional development programs should be implemented to equip both SSTs and ISTs with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively educate students with VI. These programs should focus on:
  - VI-specific pedagogy and instructional strategies
  - Assistive technologies and their applications
  - Classroom management techniques
  - Assessment and evaluation methods
  - Collaboration strategies
- **Resource Allocation and Accessibility:** Schools should allocate sufficient resources to provide students with VI with the necessary adapted materials, assistive technologies, and support services. This includes:

- Funding for Braille textbooks, large-print materials, and digital resources
  - Access to screen readers, Braille embossers, and magnification devices
  - Availability of specialized consultants and support staff (e.g., orientation and mobility specialists, vision therapists)
  - Modifications to the physical environment to ensure accessibility
- **Collaborative Partnerships:** Schools should establish formal collaborative models that foster communication, shared planning, and mutual support between SSTs and ISTs. These models could include:
    - Co-teaching arrangements
    - Regular team meetings for planning and problem-solving
    - Shared professional development opportunities
    - Mentoring programs for ISTs who are new to teaching students with VI
  - **Policy and Advocacy:** Government agencies and educational organizations should advocate for policies and funding that support the mainstreaming of students with VI. This includes:
    - Developing clear guidelines and standards for inclusive education
    - Providing financial incentives for schools to implement inclusive practices
    - Promoting public awareness and positive attitudes towards students with VI

## LIMITATIONS

This study has some limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. The sample size was relatively small, and the participants were drawn from a specific geographic region. Further research is needed with larger and more diverse samples to generalize the findings to other contexts. Additionally, the study relied primarily on self-reported data, which may be subject to bias. Future research could incorporate observational data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of teacher practices.

## CONCLUSION

The mainstreaming of students with VI holds immense potential for fostering their social inclusion, academic achievement, and overall well-being. However, successful implementation requires a concerted effort to address the needs and concerns of both special school teachers and inclusive school teachers. By providing adequate training, resources, and collaborative support systems, schools can create truly inclusive learning environments that empower

students with VI to reach their full potential. This study serves as a valuable contribution to the ongoing dialogue about inclusive education and provides practical recommendations for improving the mainstreaming experience for students with visual impairment.

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