

Parents' attitudes to inclusion of their children with special needs

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This study investigated the attitudes of 354 Australian parents who have a child with a disability and who attends a state school in Queensland. The types of disability of the children were broadly in accordance with accepted prevalence figures, except for a greater number reported as having autistic spectrum disorder and fewer students with a learning difficulty/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The children were in a range of classes, from special schools to schools where there was in-class help from a special teacher or teacher aide. Many of the parents favoured inclusion, some would if additional resources were provided, and a small group of parents favoured special placement. There were a limited number of negative attitudes to inclusion reported by the parents, and though some parents thought that some need existed for in-service education about inclusion, this was not a widespread view.

Introduction

The term 'inclusive education' is nowadays broadly conceptualised to include students from different backgrounds and with languages other than English, as well as students with disabilities (Ashman, 2002). However, for the purposes of this study, 'the term inclusion is defined as partial or full inclusion in regular classrooms, with the level of inclusion being dependent upon the severity and number of disabilities and the level of additional support available for that student' (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994, cited in McNally, Cole & Waugh, 2001, p. 258).

A successful system of inclusion requires that the community believe in the competence of the education system to meet the needs of all students. Parents especially have to have confidence in the capacity of the schools to understand and effectively educate their children with special needs. Given the current policies of inclusive education, children with special needs are increasingly being educated with their non-disabled peers in the regular classroom. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes of parents of students with disabilities, with regard to the inclusion of their children within the regular education system.

The research literature indicates that there is a wide range of opinion amongst parents related to the placement of children in educational settings. Some parents prefer and advocate for inclusive placement, while others favour separate placement (Grove & Fisher, 1999). As the trend towards inclusion grows, one of the chief concerns of parents is the protection of support services for their child. Daniel and King (1997) found that parents were more concerned about the degree to which their child's individual education plan (IEP) actually addressed the needs of their child when the child was being educated in an inclusive setting, as opposed to a segregated setting. It may be difficult for parents to find schools with personnel who are sufficiently knowledgeable about inclusive educational goals in order to provide appropriate services to their child (Grove & Fisher, 1999).

Grove and Fisher (1999) also found that the parents in their study viewed staff as lacking in knowledge about their child, and they found it difficult to access teachers or other staff willing both to provide them with information and receive information from them. Even when such a person is available, conflict can arise from divergent perspectives about the child's needs (Lake & Billingsley, 2000).

A recent Australian study by Gilmore, Campbell and Cuskelly (2003) examined the attitudes of experienced teachers and the community to the inclusion of students with Down syndrome in regular classroom settings. They found that parents recognised the educational, social and emotional benefits of inclusive education for both students with disabilities and their non-disabled classmates. Despite these findings, the authors stated that the majority of parents felt that the needs of students with disabilities could be better met in special education classes. The authors found that those in the community who supported inclusive practices had fewer negative stereotypes about Down syndrome.

Palmer, Borthwick-Duffy, Widaman and Best (1998) found that parents of children with severe disabilities, who met the following criteria, had positive attitudes towards inclusion. First, the parents saw socialisation as an important educational goal. Second, their child had relatively higher cognitive skills, had fewer behavioural problems and had fewer characteristics requiring special

education. Finally, their child had had more time in regular classrooms. Using data from the Palmer et al. (1998) study, Palmer, Fuller, Arora and Nelson (2001) analysed the comments of 140 parents of students with severe disabilities who were in special education settings to identify the reasons for their support of, or resistance to, inclusive education. Positive affirmations about inclusive practices provided by about half of the parents revealed that they believed their children would enhance their achievement and develop improved functional skills due to higher expectations and additional stimulation in regular classrooms.

The parents who held negative attitudes towards inclusive practices reported that the severity of the child's disability meant that the regular classroom was not an option for their child. The parents believed that regular education classes were not accommodating enough for their child and that the teachers could be overburdened when students with disabilities were in their classes. These parents were concerned with matters of class size, teaching conditions, and the demands of teaching to a diverse range of students.

Parents also indicated that their anti-inclusion stance was due to the fact that regular classrooms focused on the academic curriculum, rather than on basic living or functional skills. It was the latter that they wanted for their children. In general many of the parents opposed to inclusion were also concerned about aspects of inclusive programming such as not receiving special attention, or fearing that their child would be mistreated, harmed or ridiculed in the regular classroom.

Concerns about socialisation were also expressed by parents in a study conducted by Freeman and Alkin (2000), who investigated parents' attitudes to socialisation and inclusion. Parents who participated in that study believed that students with severe disabilities who were included in regular classroom settings would be rejected socially. Even when parents believed inclusion to have beneficial social implications, they still maintained that those with severe disabilities would be rejected.

An analysis of research involving parents' attitudes towards inclusion of students with special needs has revealed few recent Australian studies. Although the education system of Australia parallels those of the UK and the USA in the move towards inclusive education, the outcome of studies conducted with parents in these countries cannot be directly applied to Australian parents. Hence the need for further investigation of parents' attitudes in Australia.

This study aims to investigate the attitudes of Australian parents who have a child with a disability and who attends a school within the Queensland state education system. Evidence of parents' attitudes, concerns and opinions related to supporting students with special needs in the regular classroom was sought. The findings may be useful in enhancing the practices of supporting children with special needs and identifying the wishes of parents for their children with special needs.

Method

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Queensland's Social and Behavioural Sciences Ethical Review Committee, and permission was obtained from Education Queensland to approach their schools.

Participants

One hundred preschools, 150 primary schools and 150 secondary schools were randomly selected from the lists of preschools, primary schools and secondary schools from the database of Education Queensland schools. A letter was written to the principal of each school requesting that two parents of students in the school who had a child with a disability (e.g., intellectual, physical, visual, hearing, autism, emotional, multiple and speech-language) complete the Parent Survey and, once completed, it be returned to the researchers in a stamped addressed envelope. In addition a number of parent organisations were contacted to seek their cooperation in distributing the Parent Survey to their members. These organisations included Queensland Parents for Persons with a Disability, Down Syndrome Association Queensland and Spina Bifida Association. In addition we tried to obtain equal numbers of parents with students in each disability category. As the data came in we noted that there were fewer parents of children with hearing and vision impairments and attempted to solicit further parents of children in these groups. An Information Letter and a Consent Form were provided to each parent. The Information Letter outlined the project and provided information about completing the Parent Survey. The signed Consent Form was to be returned with the Parent Survey.

Instrument

A questionnaire entitled *Survey of Parents' Attitudes and Opinions About their Children with Special Needs and their Support* was adapted by the researchers from the *Survey of Teacher Attitudes and Opinions about Students with Special Needs and the Types of Support for Integration/Inclusion* used in the collaborative project with the Korea Institute for Special Education (KISE).

The Parent Survey had a number of sections, including: personal information (e.g., gender, age, age of child, occupation, and child's disability); school details (e.g., geographical location, enrolment); information about the child's school (e.g., nature of support including teaching, curricula, and materials/resources); parent attitudes (e.g., feelings about and interactions with their child with special needs); views about aspects of school organisation that facilitate inclusion; and opinions on a variety of statements about the education of their child in a regular classroom. The items parallel those found in the subsections: Attitudes (ATTIT), Organisation (ORG) and Opinions (OPIN) of the Teacher Survey used in the study reported by van Kraayenoord, Jobling and Elkins (under review). Given the factor structure reported in van Kraayenoord, Jobling and Elkins, all the items in the Parent Survey were used in the analyses. (The Parent Survey can be obtained from the authors.)

Procedure

Coding schemes were devised to record the responses for some items in the Parent Survey. (The coding schemes can be obtained from the authors.) The data were analysed to generate the frequencies, means and standard deviations. Responses to the open-ended questions on the Parent Survey were transcribed. These were then read and re-read and themes were developed to reflect the nature of the responses.

Results

The parent respondents numbered 354, most being female ($N = 332$). The age groups represented were typical of the parents of school-aged children (Table 1), with very few younger than 26 years and few over 50 years. Younger parents tended to have preschool children and the older parents to have secondary school children. As the children could have been in preschool (25.4%), primary school (typically students aged 6 to 12 years) (44.6%) or high school (29.9%), the reported age range of all students was from 1 to 19 years. There was some overlap of ages at the boundary between preschool and primary, and between primary and secondary school, suggesting that some students were placed in lower grades than would be typical for their age.

Parental occupations reflected the gender distribution of respondents, since home duties was the most common occupation (34.2%), and there was a wide range from unskilled to managers and professionals (Table 2). Parental

Table 1: Age group distribution for parents

Age group	Number	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1. 20–25 years	3	0.8	0.8
2. 26–30 years	24	6.8	7.6
3. 31–35 years	66	18.6	26.3
4. 36–40 years	104	29.4	55.6
5. 41–45 years	91	25.7	81.4
6. 46–50 years	42	11.9	93.2
7. Over 50 years	24	6.8	100
Total	354	100	

Table 2: Parental occupations

Occupation	Number	Percent
1. Managers	20	5.7
2. Professionals	66	18.9
3. Associate professionals	19	5.4
4. Trade persons	5	1.4
5. Advanced clerical	1	0.3
6. Intermediate clerical	16	4.6
7. Intermediate production	3	0.9
8. Elementary clerical	64	18.3
9. Labourers	16	4.6
10. Home duties	121	34.7
11. Pension/other	18	5.2
Total	349	100

occupation did not seem to be related to the age of the students.

The type of disability of the child was broadly in accordance with accepted prevalence figures except that there were 21.5% identified as having autistic spectrum disorder. The 5.6% labelled learning difficulties/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder may be a little low. Overall the sample is representative of disability categories in Australia. While speech/language disorder was more common in the preschool sample, overall most disability categories appeared to be distributed across the types of school attended (see Table 3). Queensland postcodes indicated that the sample was drawn in a fairly representative manner geographically.

The enrolment size of schools was highly variable, with some children attending one-teacher schools and others very large high schools. In general older students were more likely to attend larger schools. Slightly more than half of the students (54.0%) attended a school that had at least one special class, while most schools had some form of support service (90.1%). Special classes were more prevalent in primary and especially secondary schools than in preschools. Placement of students ranged through special school (10.2%), special class (15.0%), part-time resource room (18.6%), to in-class help from a special teacher (21.8%) or a teacher aide (26.0%). Placement of older students in special schools was more likely than for preschool students. According to their parents, no special help was given to 2.5% of all students, while 5.9% received more than one type of support.

Almost all students' programmes (90.7%) were supervised by one designated person. Of parents able to offer an opinion, almost all (80.5%) felt that the principal was supportive of the resource teacher's/special education teacher's role. Most (75.7%) felt that other staff were supportive of the teacher in whose class their child was enrolled. While 76.1% of parents felt that their child's curriculum was appropriate, 21.8% indicated only partial satisfaction, and 2.0% felt that it was inappropriate. Similarly, only 8.2% of parents indicated that their child did not receive any special teaching, while 23.3% noted that this was part time. Most parents (88.3%) noted that modified materials were used to help their child. Almost all parents (93.3%) were given sufficient opportunities to talk about their child's needs to school personnel.

Parents' attitudes

The distribution of responses to the six items dealing with parents' feelings is given in Table 4.

While parents gained much satisfaction when they were successful in helping their child, they were not as frustrated when they were unable to help. This suggests that they recognised that their child was harder to help than other children would be. Most parents were hurt emotionally by their child's limitations, yet they were well aware of these problems and very proud of any accomplishments of their

Table 3: Disability type, school level, number and percentage within type

Disability type	Preschool		Primary		Secondary		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Intellectual disabilities	31	34.4	39	24.7	27	25.5	97	27.4
Physical disabilities	7	7.8	15	9.5	31	29.2	53	15.0
Visual disabilities	0	0.0	1	0.6	2	1.9	3	0.8
Hearing disabilities	12	13.3	14	8.9	7	6.6	33	9.3
Autism (including Asperger's syndrome)	19	21.1	43	27.2	14	13.2	76	21.5
Speech and language disorder	12	13.3	8	5.1	5	4.7	25	7.1
Learning difficulties/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder	0	0.0	14	8.9	6	5.7	20	5.6
Acquired brain injury	0	0.0	2	1.3	3	2.8	5	1.4
Multiple disabilities	7	7.8	22	13.9	10	9.4	39	11.0
Undiagnosed	2	2.2	0	0.0	1	0.9	3	0.8

Table 4: Parents' feelings about their child with a disability: percentages, means and standard deviations

Feelings	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
It is rewarding when I am able to help my child	82.7	15.3	1.4	0.0	0.6	1.20	0.51
It hurts when my child can't do something	58.3	31.1	6.9	1.7	2.0	1.58	0.85
I feel frustrated when I can't help my child	25.5	27.5	18.4	23.2	5.4	2.56	1.25
I feel uncomfortable if people stare	13.8	26.7	30.7	18.4	10.3	2.85	1.18
I am proud of his/her accomplishments	85.8	13.0	0.6	0.0	0.6	1.16	0.47
I am aware of my child's problems	70.2	27.6	1.4	0.0	0.9	1.34	0.60

Table 5: Parents' attitudes about aspects of school organisation that facilitate inclusion: percentages, means and standard deviations

Aspects of school organisation	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Smaller class sizes	65.7	21.4	10.9	1.1	0.9	1.50	0.80
Principal's positive attitude	87.8	10.8	0.9	0.0	0.6	1.15	0.46
Teachers' positive attitudes to collaboration with specialist support staff	89.8	9.4	0.6	0.3	0.0	1.11	0.36
Time for consultation	77.2	21.4	0.6	0.6	0.3	1.25	0.52
Use of parents/aides to assist children	69.3	26.7	3.1	0.3	0.6	1.36	0.62
In-service training for teachers	78.4	18.2	2.8	0.3	0.3	1.26	0.55
Travel to school with siblings	41.6	22.3	28.4	6.5	1.2	2.03	1.03
Therapy services provided	70.1	20.8	6.3	2.3	0.6	1.42	0.76

child. Responses to the item that explored their feelings of discomfort when people stared at their child were spread across the options, perhaps as a consequence of some children having little distinctive appearance or behaviour.

Organisation

The distribution of responses to the nine items dealing with aspects of school organisation is given in Table 5.

Most parents felt that smaller class sizes, time for consultation, use of teacher aides, specialist advice, in-service training and therapy services were important, but positive attitudes of the principal and teacher, especially

attitudes to collaboration with experts, were the most highly supported conditions for successful inclusion. Parents were generally supportive of their child with a disability travelling to school with siblings. Where this was not supported it was, perhaps, because there were no school-aged siblings in the family.

Parents' opinions

Parents' opinions about aspects of their child's education are displayed in Table 6.

There was moderate support for inclusion in the parent responses, with almost all parents being strongly or

Table 6: Parents' views about aspects of their child's education: percentages, means and standard deviations

Aspects of child's education	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Teachers undertake appropriate actions in classroom	24.9	45.7	17.1	10.9	1.4	2.18	0.98
My child's needs are best served through separate classes	19.4	14.5	16.2	33.9	16.0	3.13	1.38
More patience is required for the classroom behaviour of my child	40.3	28.7	9.4	12.21	9.4	2.22	1.34
Participation in the regular classroom will promote academic growth	34.2	35.3	16.5	8.3	5.7	2.16	1.15
Inclusion offers mixed group interaction which will foster understanding and acceptance of differences	56.7	34.7	4.0	3.2	1.4	1.58	0.83
Regular education teachers have a deal of expertise	8.0	22.2	24.5	30.5	14.8	3.22	1.18
Special class placement would have a negative effect on social and emotional development	31.6	25.6	13.1	18.5	11.1	2.52	1.39
More rapid development of academic skills in special versus regular class	14.3	19.7	24.9	25.1	16.0	3.09	1.29
Inclusion will require significant changes in regular classroom procedures	21.7	28.6	20.9	24.6	4.3	2.61	1.19
Most children with special needs are well behaved	4.9	27.3	38.5	22.7	6.6	2.99	.98
Contact with regular class children may be harmful to my child	4.0	4.9	10.0	36.4	44.7	4.13	1.04
Regular class teachers have sufficient training to teach children with special needs	2.3	11.1	21.4	43.3	21.9	3.72	1.00
Including my child with special needs promotes his/her independence	38.0	48.3	9.7	3.1	0.9	1.8	.80
It is likely my child with special needs will show behaviour problems in the regular class	9.4	21.9	18.5	29.6	20.5	3.30	1.28
Inclusion of children with special needs can be beneficial for regular class children	35.5	50.9	11.1	1.4	1.1	1.82	.77
Children with special needs have to be told exactly what to do and how to do it	27.9	35.9	20.4	11.8	4.0	2.28	1.11
Inclusion is likely to have a negative effect on social/emotional development	3.4	6.0	13.4	42.6	34.6	3.99	1.02
My child with special needs will be socially isolated by other children	6.6	13.4	17.7	39.7	22.6	3.58	1.17
Parents of children with special needs present no greater problem for classroom teachers than other parents	25.1	34.3	19.1	15.1	6.3	2.43	1.20
Inclusion will necessitate extensive teacher retraining	17.9	31.6	23.1	23.9	3.4	2.63	1.13
Children with special needs should be given every opportunity to function in the regular classroom	61.1	34.7	2.3	1.4	0.6	1.46	0.67
Children with special needs are likely to create confusion in the classroom	2.0	12.0	19.1	49.3	17.7	3.69	0.96
Presence of children with special needs will promote acceptance of differences on the part of other students	43.6	43.9	8.3	3.1	1.1	1.74	0.83
My child will make friends with non-disabled children	42.7	40.5	11.4	4.0	1.4	1.81	0.89
My child will imitate normal behaviours in the regular classroom	38.5	42.2	14.1	4.3	0.9	1.87	0.87

moderately supportive of the benefits of inclusion for children with special needs in general. The mutual benefits of social interaction, greater independence, greater understanding and tolerance by their peers, friendship with non-disabled peers and imitating their behaviours were identified as the most salient benefits of inclusion.

Despite the substantial recognition of the benefits of inclusion for students with special needs in general, parents

were more conservative when asked about their own child, with 50% favouring special classes. Part of the reason may be that almost 70% regarded their child as requiring more patient teachers, extensive changes in regular classroom procedures, and substantial additional training for regular teachers than they perceived to be available in regular schools. Nonetheless, parents regarded special class placement as causing worsened or slower social and emotional development for their child with special needs.

There was a split in views about the behaviour of students with special needs in regular classrooms, with equal support for the view that children with special needs were well/poorly behaved. A small minority, less than 10%, felt that peers would be harmed by the presence of a student with special needs in a regular classroom.

Cross-tabulations among variables were examined and are discussed in the next section.

Adolescent students with physical disabilities were much more likely to be included in secondary schools, while students with autistic spectrum disorder and multiple disabilities were over-represented in primary schools but not in preschools or secondary schools. Acquired brain injury, learning difficulties/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and 'undiagnosed' did not occur in the preschool group. While acquired brain injury and learning difficulties are late-appearing categories, it is puzzling why 'undiagnosed' was not present in the preschool group.

The preschool group also had the highest proportion reported not to receive special teaching (11.9%), as compared with the secondary group (only 3.8%). This pattern was also noted for 'modified resources' (preschool 26.8% versus secondary 3.8%). Overall, there were relatively few differences among the three age groups.

Inviting parents to describe their child's placement resulted in 50 comments pertinent to preschool, 76 to primary-aged and 46 to high-school-aged students. Thus about half of the parents contributed information that expanded upon the categorical forced-response items.

One clear reason why parents offered comments was that students often had multiple placements (usually two), or there were additional facts about the child's educational setting that the parents wished to explain. Six comments identified resource needs in one or more of the settings. Some parents expressed concerns about possible funding cuts, delays in approval of special funding, having to pay for support services, and inadequate funding levels.

Positive attitudes were identified as salient characteristics of settings by four parents. Two parents cited reasons why they were unhappy with aspects of inclusion. One school had required the parent to identify a suitable teacher aide, which was a school responsibility, and one mother felt that a previous unsuccessful enrolment in that school of a child with Down syndrome had prejudiced her child's education.

Among parents of primary-aged children, only one commented on training needs; in this case for teacher aides. A lack of resources, especially aide hours, was identified by 11 respondents. Positive comments were made by several parents. Comments included 'a very caring aide', 'a great programme', 'wonderful staff', 'has made great progress' and 'she has made friends!'

For preschool and primary-aged children there was evidence of mixed placement, with many parents describing programmes in two settings, usually the regular class and withdrawal sessions, though a few described mainly special class placement with some limited inclusion.

Parents of older children also often described a mix of regular class and special class/resource room attendance. Inclusive classes were generally in more applied school subjects, while core subjects such as literacy and numeracy were taught to small groups of students with special needs.

Insufficient support was less frequently mentioned by parents of high school students. Indeed, one parent felt that too much aide support prevented her child from interacting with peers. Though four parents made very positive comments, the overwhelming tenor of comments was 'matter of fact', as if most of the challenges of education for their children had been addressed successfully, if not perfectly.

The next opportunity for comments followed questions about the school's provision of appropriate curricula and support. At the preschool level, 32 parents offered comments. There was a distinct tone of uncertainty about the future education placement for their child. However, several parents expressed a high degree of satisfaction, for example 'the preschool teacher is always willing and keen to discuss any issues that may arise' and 'teacher and aides are willing to ask for help/ideas, and also take on board things we suggest'. In contrast, one parent felt that the special teacher knew little about autism, the disability of her child.

Issues of concern to parents included 'lack of interest by preschool teachers in doing anything different or extra' and 'I fear my son will become lost in the system'. A lack of support was noted by three parents, including one who noted, '[the] family need support too, not just the child'. One parent mentioned the value of a 'communication book' to facilitate information exchange between home and school.

Parents of primary-aged students made 65 comments about curricula and support, with many being positive. Some concerns were expressed over limited resources and insensitive teachers, but the major area of expressed concern was the need for staff training. The parents often found the school staff willing to try to meet the child's needs, but they lacked the understanding or skills required for effective teaching.

Thirty-five parents of older students in secondary schools made comments about curricula and support for their children's schooling, more than half of which were very positive. But some comments indicated support was insufficient. One parent noted, 'at the regular school [her daughter] learned to read ... though she was later assessed as not academically capable.'

The final opportunity for parents to offer comment concerned organisational issues. The 37 parents of

preschoolers who offered their views included several who strongly supported the need for all of the matters canvassed by all nine items on organisation. Positive attitudes of principals and teachers were considered crucial by several parents. Training needs of staff were identified by six parents, and inadequate funding or organisation of services was mentioned by 11 parents. Overall, parents ranged from a majority who were very pleased with the inclusion of their children to a small group who felt that more needed to be done for them to be satisfied with the inclusion of their children.

Parents of primary-aged children ($N = 58$) generally agreed that the organisational features canvassed by the questionnaire were desirable. Some felt generally satisfied but not at all times. Only two commented that training of staff was needed. Some reminded the researchers that simply being parents of a child with disabilities was challenging, and that there were limits to the degree of involvement in the school that parents could maintain. Therapy services were felt to be inadequate by a few parents. Overall, parents agreed that the organisational features were generally necessary, and a small proportion felt that all were available in the child's school. Also, small proportions found one or two of the features to be lacking, yet these were needed to meet their child's characteristics and needs for successful education.

The views of the 33 parents of older students broadly mirrored those already reported. In-service needs of staff were seen as more necessary, and a lack of resources was again a more frequent complaint.

Conclusion

A quick summary of the parent information is that many parents were in favour of inclusion, that some would be if additional resources were provided, and that a small group favoured special placement.

The finding is consistent with the summary provided by Grove and Fisher (1999), indicating a spread of opinion amongst parents related to placement. However, the predominance of the pro-inclusion view in the current study

may reflect the increasing trend towards inclusion in education and society in general, as well as increased acceptance of the Queensland state education system's policy of inclusive education. In addition, this finding is likely to be a reflection of the parents' recognition that there are a number of benefits for their children. Similar views were reported by Gilmore et al. (2003) in their study of the community's views of Down syndrome and inclusion, and by Palmer et al. (2001) in their study of parents of children with more severe disabilities.

Parents in the current study were accepting of inclusion when their children were well supported. This finding mirrors that of other studies (Daniel & King, 1997; Grove & Fisher, 1999). Parents must feel that regular classroom teachers are able to accommodate their children's learning needs (Palmer et al., 2001).

Few examples of negative attitudes to inclusion were cited by parents and, though some parents thought that some need existed for in-service education about inclusion, this was not a widespread view. It seems that care is needed to ensure that resource levels are such that all students with special needs can receive appropriate education within regular classrooms. Additional targeted in-service education programmes are needed for some staff.

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