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# Struggling for inclusive education in Japan and Finland: Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education

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**Abstract**

The aim of this study was to analyse and compare teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in two culturally different countries: Finland and Japan. A sample of 362 Finnish and 1518 Japanese teachers participated in this survey. The teachers' attitudes varied and were rather critical. The Finnish teachers were more worried about teachers' efficacy when implementing inclusion, particularly when teaching students with intellectual disabilities or emotional and behavioural problems. The Japanese teachers had a more positive view on the benefits of inclusion for disabled or non-disabled students. Because Finnish schools emphasize the effectiveness of special education, the Finnish teachers in this study were more critical than the Japanese teachers of the idea that the efficacy discourse justifies the need for inclusive education. The findings support the idea that, to improve the universal understanding of inclusive education, more research should be done to analyse how inclusive education developments are realized in different cultural and historical contexts.

Key words: inclusive education, efficacy, teachers' attitudes, self-efficacy

## Introduction

Although inclusive education (IE) is a globally recognized goal for education (UNESCO, 1994), the implementation of an IE agenda has not proceeded as expected. There is still resistance to inclusive practice in schools throughout the world. Many reasons have been given for the slower than expected progress in IE. For example, difficulties in defining IE have led to excessive heterogeneity in related research. It is also a fact that IE has complex local meanings, which are created through historical, cultural, political, and economic forces (Artiles, Harris-Murri, & Rostenberg, 2006; Dyson, 1999). Kozleski and Waitoller (2010) emphasized that we need to understand the development of IE in specific national contexts and how this relates to larger historical forces and cultural assumptions. It is therefore important to recognize, for example, how these cultural historical forces relate to teachers' attitudes toward inclusion. As an example, Engelbrecht, Savolainen, Nel, & Malinen (2013) showed how teachers' attitudes toward IE in Finland and South Africa are mediated by each country's historical commitment to IE and how education has responded to diversity in the past. Thus, the way a universal idea is enacted in practice locally varies, and to understand these realities, more comparative research is needed to inform decision-making on IE (Kozleski, Artiles, Fletcher, & Engelbrecht, 2007). The objective of this paper was to contribute to this research by analysing, among the first researchers to do so, the similarities and differences in teachers' attitudes toward inclusion in Japan and Finland, two countries which make an interesting pair for comparison because they have both several similarities and differences in their education system and culture. For example, both countries have a nine-year comprehensive education producing internationally high achievement rates and are culturally relatively homogenous. On the other hand, while Japanese education system is very meritocratic and competitive with long schooling hours in large classrooms, Finland is known for its social cohesion and trust in schools, which have relatively small class-sizes and high local autonomy (see Yada, Tolvanen, & Savolainen 2018).

## *Background to Inclusive Education*

Within educational research inclusion has multiple meanings, which range from the mere placement of students with disabilities in general education classrooms to the transformation of the entire educational system. According to Dyson (1999), it is important to distinguish between the justification and implementation discourses on inclusion. The justification discourse offers reasons for an inclusive education (IE) system whereas the implementation discourse concentrates on the way IE is carried out. The justification discourse takes two forms: the rights and ethics discourse and the efficacy discourse.

The rights and ethics discourse concentrates on inequalities, particularly for students with disabilities. It states that the existence of a dual educational system prevents systemic changes that could make education responsive to an increasingly

diverse society. Endorsers of this discourse conclude that decisions about special education placement are inevitably linked to questions of rights and ethics because the consequences of such decisions have a bearing on a person's status as marginalized and hence shape his or her access to educational opportunities (Artiles et al., 2006). Alternatively, the efficacy discourse justifies the need for IE. It critiques segregated models on the grounds of special education's failure to promote student learning and argues that IE has benefits for all (i.e., nondisabled and disabled) students. According to Artiles et al. (2006), the differentiation of inclusion discourses is artificial. A common theme across these discourses is the underlying assumption that inclusion serves social justice goals.

### ***Teachers' Role in Inclusive Education***

Teachers play a crucial role in the practical implementation of IE (Ainscow, 2007). Although the majority of teachers are positive regarding the ideological principles of IE, many hesitate and are concerned about implementing inclusion in practice (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; de Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011; Moberg & Savolainen, 2003).

Forlin, Keen, and Barrett (2008) pointed out that teachers' anxiety over their competency is twofold: first, teachers doubt the adequacy of their pre-service training, and second, teachers believe that their ability to teach is compromised by having to focus on students with additional needs at the expense of others in the class. In their review of the literature, de Boer et al. (2011) stated that the majority of teachers are undecided or negative in their beliefs about IE and do not rate themselves as very knowledgeable about educating pupils with special needs. Teachers do not feel competent and confident in teaching pupils with various types of special needs (de Boer et al., 2011).

O'Rourke (2015) suggested that there could be three reasons for the current status quo and provided reasons to explain why these challenges appear to have remained steadfastly: (1) Regular classroom teachers do not want to include students with disabilities in their classrooms due to the challenges presented by this undertaking; (2) Regular classroom teachers would feel more prepared to address the needs of students with disabilities in their classrooms if some of the challenges were sufficiently addressed; (3) If the same challenges continue to occur, IE possibly needs new directions.

Teachers' attitudes toward IE differ according to the type of disability of pupils. Pupils with emotional and behavioural disorders (EBD) and intellectual disabilities are seen as causing significantly more concern to teachers than pupils with other types of disabilities. Specifically, teachers have shown the greatest willingness for the inclusion of pupils with physical disabilities, specific learning difficulties, or sensory impairments (Moberg & Savolainen, 2003).

Besides the types of disabilities, teachers' attitudes also seem to be related to other variables, such as experience with IE. Teachers with experience in IE hold more positive attitudes than those with less experience (Kalyva, Gojkovic, & Tsakiris, 2007). Quality of experience is important; teachers who have had successful experiences have more positive attitudes toward

inclusion than those with no experience or unsuccessful experiences (Moberg & Savolainen, 2003). However, teachers' beliefs and attitudes play a significant part in the success of inclusive education and practice (Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2011).

Furthermore, attitudes towards IE have been shown to be a multidimensional concept. It is possible, for example, to differentiate between sentiments, general attitudes and concerns on IE (Savolainen, Engelbrecht, Nel, & Malinen, 2012) or separate attitude dimensions like social justice, meeting special needs of pupils with severe disabilities, teachers' competence and quality education for non-disabled students (Moberg & Savolainen, 2003).

More recently, there has been growing interest in studying this pragmatic side of teaching in an inclusive education by measuring teachers' feelings of self-efficacy in implementing IE. There is evidence to support the idea that self-efficacy beliefs are indeed connected to attitudes toward IE (Savolainen et al., 2012). The more teachers believe they are able to implement inclusive practices, the more positive their attitudes toward inclusion are.

### ***Inclusive Education Context in Finland and Japan***

We will first provide a short description of the historical background and current status of IE in both countries.

*Toward inclusive education in Finland.* The development of IE in Finland has its background in the comprehensive school reform of the 1970s. The goal of this reform was to reduce inequalities in education with regard to social class, regions, and gender (Kivirauma, Klemelä, & Rinne, 2006). Thus, this reform is similar to the justification discourse of IE, with the idea of full participation and equal recognition of all people reflecting the Nordic welfare state ideology. The comprehensive school project was very successful, at least in terms of academic excellence criteria; however, despite its broadly inclusive roots, the success of the reform and smooth functioning of schools have at least partially been created by an ever-increasing and now very extensive special education system (Savolainen, 2009). In contrast with its broader objectives, special education has had strong roots in a traditional deficit approach to diverse educational needs and a clear emphasis on what is defined as the implementation discourse.

Part-time special education responds quickly to learning problems without waiting for diagnoses and thus labeling students as "special" or "different". There is also some evidence that part-time special education may have played an important role in the Finnish success in PISA studies concerning reading performance (Moberg & Savolainen, 2008).

Nevertheless, while part-time special education has continuously grown (22.7 % of all students 2014), so has also the traditional type of special education, which involves an official statement. At the same time, the number of special schools has decreased during the last two decades from 362 to 75 (Official Statistics of Finland 2017). The number of students with official statement reached the maximum of more than 8% of students in 2010 (Official Statistics of Finland, 2016).

It could be argued that the first special education strategy (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2007) and related changes in education law (Finnish Basic Education Act, 2010), which changed the system of special education in Finland, were made

partially as a reaction to the continuous rise of special education figures and as a response to the pressure of the universal goal of IE. These changes have meant a shift in official rhetoric from an implementation discourse to a stronger emphasis on a justification discourse. Nevertheless, the reform changed special education into a de facto three-tiered response to intervention strategy. The three tiers of support in the current system are universal, intensified, and special education support. There is a possibility that with this new conception of support the thinking in schools will change toward a more inclusive direction. So far the number of students identified as having SEN have fallen (Official Statistics of Finland, 2016) for the first time since the comprehensive school reform 45 years ago.

*Toward inclusive education in Japan.* Through 1970's and 80's, special education had been provided only at either special schools or special classes in regular schools for pupils with severe or moderate disabilities. This meant that only 1% of all pupils were receiving special education. Most pupils with difficulties, for example, pupils with mild disabilities like dyslexia or poor academic achievement, had been in regular classes without any specific support (Muta, 2002).

On the other hand, the Japanese school system has had a relatively serious problem of non-attendance at school. This has raised the question of whether support would also be needed for students with LD or those with behavioural problems (MEXT, 2003a; Inoue & Kuboshima, 2008; Ichikawa, 2014). After a lobbying campaign initiated by the parents of children with LD (Geshi, 2002), the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) of Japan initiated the Project for the Promotion of the Special Needs Education System in 2003 (MEXT, 2003b).

As a result, the education law was partially amended in 2007, and special education was transformed into special needs education (SNE). In accordance with the new law, SNE is now provided not only in special schools and special classes, but also in regular classes. (MEXT, 2007.) Pupils with mild disabilities, like specific learning disabilities, ADHD, or high-functioning ASD, are eligible for SNE. Every school is encouraged to establish a support system for the pupils with special needs in regular classes.

In the most recent development, the MEXT of Japan declared in 2012 that SNE would be promoted as IE, thus providing support in regular classes, resource rooms, and special classes, as well as special schools (MEXT, 2012). These developments are reflected in the statistics, which have shown a rapid increase in the numbers of students served special support since 2000. The biggest increase has been in special classes, but support in resource rooms has also more than tripled since 2000 (MEXT, 2015).

### ***Research Questions***

The purpose of this study was to assess teachers' attitudes regarding inclusive education in Japan and Finland. The goal was to answer the following research questions:

1. What differences exist between Finnish and Japanese teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education?

2. How are Finnish and Japanese teachers' experiences of inclusive education related to their attitudes toward inclusive education?

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

The target population in Finland was teachers in Finnish basic schools (grades 1–9). Multi-stage stratified random sampling was used. Ten percent of basic schools from all six Finnish regional districts were selected randomly for the study. Webropol<sup>1</sup> questionnaires were sent via email to 265 schools September 2012. One third (86) of those schools participated in this study. Of the 1444 teachers within these schools, a total of 362 responded to the survey. This number represents a response rate of 25%. The participants consisted of elementary school teachers ( $n=199$ , 55 %), junior high school teachers ( $n=127$ , 35 %), and special school teachers ( $n=36$ , 10 %).

The target population in Japan was teachers in Japanese elementary schools and junior high schools (grades 1–9). The most questionnaires (93 %) were collected at teachers' professional development seminars on special needs education held from July 2013 to January 2014 in eight prefectures, including Tokyo being a response rate of 63 % of participants at seminars. A small portion of questionnaires (7 %) was collected from three separate schools with a response rate of 53 % of teachers of those schools. In total, 1518 teachers responded to the questionnaires representing an overall response rate of 62%, with some missing data in individual items. They consisted of elementary school teachers ( $n=882$ , 58 %), junior high school teachers ( $n=411$ , 27 %), and special school teachers ( $n=225$ , 15 %).

### ***Data Collection Method***

The teachers' attitudes toward IE were measured with a scale designed by Moberg (1997) and used by Moberg and Savolainen (2003). The scale consists of 19 statements on a six-point Likert scale. The statements represent the major features of the debate over inclusion. The scale consists of both negatively (nine items) and positively (10 items) phrased items. The order of the items is randomly determined. Each item is scored from 1 to 6, with the highest score indicating the most positive attitude toward IE. The reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the scale was .85 (Finnish sample) and .75 (Japanese sample). Principal axis factor analyses with varimax rotations of the 19 items of the attitude scale were performed separately with the Finnish and Japanese data (Table 1) to estimate whether the attitudes are multi-dimensional and subscales should be formed. Both analyses extracted a four-factor solution, which explained 50% (Finnish data) and 47% (Japanese data) of the total variance. Three out of the four factors were essentially the same in both countries (factors I, II, and IV). These common factors were named: I) general attitude toward IE, II) appropriateness for children with severe disabilities, and IV) avoiding labeling. In the Finnish sample, factor V (teachers' efficacy) was extracted while in the Japanese sample it was possible to find factor III (appropriateness for



non-SEN children). Two items (2 and 13) were excluded from the final subscales (Table 2) because of their low communalities ( $< .15$ ). As the primary goal of this study was not to test the similarity of factor structures across countries and the exploratory factor analyses pointed towards some dissimilarity in the attitude structures between the countries, Confirmatory Factor Analysis was not employed. Thus, average sum-scores of the original items having high loadings for specific dimension were used as indicators of attitude dimensions. We opted not to use factor scores because we wanted to be able to interpret the level of responses of the teachers against the original scale varying between 1 to 6. (Table 2). By doing this we were able to provide rough estimates whether the overall attitudes and attitudes in the similar sub-scales were towards the positive or negative end of the scale or, rather, neutral. The reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of two Japanese sub-scales with only two items (IV and V) was low.

(Table 1 about here)

The teachers' personal readiness for inclusion was measured by asking the question: "Are you ready to accept different pupils with special education needs into your group without conditions?" Two questions concerned the quantity and quality of the participants' experiences of IE: "Do you have experience about IE?" (not at all/some/much/very much) and "If you have experiences about IE, how did you see IE in general?" (unsuccessful/successful). The Finnish data of experience is from an earlier parallel study ( $n=501$ , Moberg & Savolainen, 2003) because it was missing in this study. Two statements relating to two discourses of justification on IE, namely rights and ethics, and efficacy were added to the questionnaire: "Teaching all pupils together means primarily seeking social justice" and "Teaching all pupils together means primarily seeking effective education".

## Results

### *Comparison of the Finnish and Japanese Teachers' Attitudes*

The level of teachers' attitudes toward IE varied considerably in the two countries in question and was in general rather critical, often negative. The Finnish teachers were more critical than their Japanese colleagues (means 52.50 and 57.74, difference: Cohen's  $d=.54$ ,  $p<.001$ ). At sub-scale level there were many differences between the Finnish and the Japanese teachers (Table 2).

(Table 2 about here)

The Japanese teachers saw more often than the Finnish teachers that negative labeling of pupils with disabilities is not avoided in IE (means 2.91 and 3.70, Cohen's  $d=.92$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The Finnish teachers were much more worried than their

Japanese peers about teachers' efficacy in implementing IE (means 2.70 and 3.66, Cohen's  $d=1.10$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The biggest difference between the countries concerned the sub-scale "appropriateness for non-SEN children." The Finnish teachers believed more often than the Japanese teachers that physical inclusion will have a negative effect on the quality of teaching of non-disabled children (means 2.95 and 4.28, Cohen's  $d=1.35$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The teachers' attitudes are presented on the item level in Table 3.

(Table 3 about here)

There was a clear difference between the Japanese and Finnish teachers' personal readiness to accept different pupils with special needs into their own groups (Fig 1).

(Fig 1 about here)

In general, the Finnish teachers were more ready to accept pupils with special needs into their groups; however, with regard to pupils with emotional and behavioral problems and pupils with intellectual disabilities, the Japanese teachers were more prepared for physical integration. The Finnish teachers considered these pupils the most challenging while the Japanese teachers accepted them more often than pupils with physical disabilities, or hearing or visual impairment.

The teachers' opinions regarding the two justification discourses on IE were also compared. These opinions were different in Japan and Finland (Table 4). The Finnish teachers frequently saw IE as seeking social justice (rights and ethics discourse) rather than as seeking effective education (efficacy discourse) (difference of means=.84,  $t=7.9$ ,  $p<.001$ ); however, in both countries most of the teachers did not agree with either of the justifications. The Japanese teachers did not see clear differences between these two alternative justifications. The correlation between the options in the Japanese data was clear ( $r=.64$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The Finnish teachers differentiated the concept ( $r=.10$ ,  $p=ns$ ).

(Table 4 about here)

### ***Impact of Experience on Attitudes toward Inclusive Education***

Experience of IE in itself did not explain the teachers' attitudes toward inclusion; however, quality of experience had a clear effect on attitudes. The teachers with successful experiences in IE had more positive attitudes than those who had had unsuccessful experiences (Fig. 2). This positive effect of successful experience was found in both countries. The Finnish data in Fig. 2 are from an earlier study (Moberg & Savolainen, 2003).

(Fig. 2 about here)

## **Discussion**

The aim of this study was to explore and analyze the possible similarities and differences in attitudes regarding IE between Finnish and Japanese teachers. This study supported previous findings showing that inclusion is a multidimensional

concept that, on a practical level, is highly context-dependent. The structure of the attitudes toward IE was almost the same in both countries; three of the four attitude factors were essentially similar. In the case of the Finnish data, the factor of the importance of teachers' efficacy was extracted whereas the factor of appropriateness for non-SEN children was extracted only in the Japanese data. The overall attitudes toward IE varied greatly in both countries and were on average rather critical. The Finnish teachers were a little more critical than their Japanese colleagues.

Notwithstanding, at a sub-scale level there were interesting differences and similarities between the two countries. With regard to the teachers' general attitudes toward IE, which was perhaps the factor best reflecting their overall acceptance of the philosophy of inclusion, there was no difference between the Finnish and Japanese teachers, and the mean score remained slightly on the negative side of the theoretical distribution of the six-point scale. Nonetheless, in all the remaining more-specific factors, there were clear differences between the teachers from the two countries. The Japanese teachers were more worried than their Finnish peers about whether children with special needs would be negatively labeled in an inclusive classroom and less worried about teachers' efficacy in implementing IE. The biggest difference by effect size between the two countries was reflected in the question of how appropriate IE is for non-SEN children. The Japanese teachers did not doubt the quality of IE for non-disabled children whereas the Finnish teachers were clearly much more worried about it.

The difference between the teachers' regarding the efficacy of IE in the two countries was also seen in the teachers' attitudes towards the two justification discourses (efficacy vs. social justice) on IE. The Japanese teachers did not see any difference between these two justifications but placed more emphasis on its efficacy than their Finnish colleagues. The Finnish teachers on the other hand saw social justice as being more important than efficacy when justifying IE.

Finally, there were also clear differences in how the teachers in the two countries felt about including students with specific different disabilities. Overall, the Finnish teachers were more ready to unconditionally accept students with specific disabilities in their classrooms than the Japanese teachers, and the biggest differences in their favor were in accepting students with specific learning disabilities, visual and hearing impairments, and physical disabilities in their classrooms. The Japanese teachers however were more willing to unconditionally accept students with behavioral problems and intellectual disabilities in their classrooms than the Finnish teachers.

These differences and similarities between the teachers' attitudes in the two countries can perhaps best be understood by considering their unique cultural contexts and histories of IE. In both countries, IE as a universal principle seems to be accepted with similar caution. This reflects the fact that both countries have committed to universal agreements, and IE is a de facto goal in both countries; however, many differences in practice are observable. For example, the higher acceptance of children with behavioral problems in mainstream classrooms in Japan probably reflects the fact that traditionally there have not been many special classes for these children in Japan, whereas the tradition in Finland has until very recently emphasized special class education placement, especially for children with severe behavioural problems. On the other hand, in Japan there have been more special classes available for children with visual or hearing impairments and physical disabilities, and this is reflected in

the teachers' lower willingness to accept these children in mainstream classes. In contrast, children with visual impairments and physical disabilities in particular have been among those groups of children for whom the first integration efforts in Finland have been built systematically over quite some time, for example, by the provision of outreach support to local schools from government special schools.

On a more general level, the idea of integration and, more recently, IE and teacher training of special education teachers at university level have deeper roots in Finland than in Japan. In Finland, discussions about integration and later, inclusion (rights and ethics) and high standards (efficacy) started in the 1970s and continue to this day (Moberg & Savolainen, 2015).

Discussions on social justice in relation to IE have not been common among either teachers or educational policymakers in Japan and the idea of social justice in IE may not be clear to Japanese teachers and may also not be differentiated from the idea of efficacy in IE. The MEXT of Japan has explained that the key aspects of IE are to prepare the appropriate learning opportunities for children with disabilities and to support them in learning with their peers in regular classes as much as possible (MEXT, 2012).

The correlation between experiences of IE and teachers' attitudes are documented in many earlier studies. An important finding of this study is that experience itself did not explain more positive attitudes, but the effect of experience depended on the quality of the experience; the teachers with successful experiences held more positive attitudes than the teachers with unsuccessful experiences. The teachers with unsuccessful experiences had even more negative attitudes than the teachers with no experience at all.

### ***Limitations***

This study had some obvious limitations. First, the data were collected using a questionnaire that had been translated from Finnish via English to Japanese. Notwithstanding careful translation, it is possible that some items and concepts in the Japanese version did not capture the original meaning of the Finnish version. Second, it is also possible that some terms used in the study, even if correctly translated, may be understood differently as a result of the cultural historical background in the two countries. However, the main aim of this study was to compare these understandings by comparing the attitudes and thus increase our understanding of these cultural historical differences with regard to understanding disability and IE in the two countries. The third limitation concerns the sampling methods, which were different in Finland and Japan. Both may also have been selective. Although the samples represented large areas of the countries (in Finland the whole country) and included all the most relevant teacher groups in both countries, the findings cannot be generalized to the overall situation in the two countries, and the results must be interpreted with caution.

### ***Implications and future direction***

Many previous studies have shown that teachers' attitudes toward IE are a significant factor in implementing it. This study showed that many teachers in Finland and Japan hold critical beliefs and attitudes toward IE. It also showed that successful experiences can play an important role in making teachers' attitudes more positive. One implication is that, if we want to develop teachers' attitudes and efficacy in IE, we should provide them with more opportunities to be involved in such activities. Nonetheless, clear and straightforward exposure to inclusive classrooms does not automatically produce positive mastery experiences, particularly if the situation is too demanding and there is no additional support or further training available to the teachers. One should also avoid experiences of easy success when trying to improve teachers' attitudes and efficacy beliefs (Malinen et al., 2013). Previous studies have suggested that if people experience easy success, they only come to expect quick results and soon become discouraged when they encounter difficulties. Resilient self-efficacy can be achieved only through experiencing and overcoming obstacles through perseverant effort (Bandura, 2012).

Another major implication of this study was that teachers should be provided with positive experiences in IE early, during their initial teacher education. More specifically, since the knowledge and skills needed for effective inclusion require many different skill sets, more emphasis should be placed on the idea of collaboration in teaching and the planning of teaching in pre- and in-service teacher education. The practical implication is that teacher candidates currently enrolled in separate programs, for example, elementary classroom teachers, subject teachers, and special education teachers, should have more common core content on inclusive pedagogy as well as opportunities to experiment with IE together with their peers from other programs during their initial teacher education. Teachers who struggle to implement successful IE often acknowledge the importance of collaboration in developing schools that are better equipped to respond to student diversity.

A clear future direction is a call to researchers to carry out more in-depth analyses on what role does the cultural historical background of school systems and teacher education play in the teacher attitude formation and their feelings of efficacy toward inclusive practices. This study suggests for example that having a history of special arrangements for a specific group of children with disabilities seems to be related to lower acceptance of that specific group in mainstream education. Another future direction is to collect qualitative and longitudinal data on the development of teachers' self-efficacy and attitudes toward inclusion (Savolainen et al., 2012). Longitudinal data would make it possible to test the causality of the relation between self-efficacy and attitudes. Furthermore, the impact of existing contextual factors could be estimated more reliably when prediction is based on prior knowledge of the context and on possible changes in the context observed in the follow-up.

## **Conclusions**

While strong national policy support and universal declarations are very important in making IE possible, our school systems do not become inclusive before the key players, namely teachers, have acquired the needed positive attitudes as well as

the necessary skills and beliefs in their abilities to implement IE successfully. This is to say successful inclusion requires strong simultaneous top-down (e.g., policy) and bottom-up (e.g., teacher efficacy and teacher education) support; either one on its own is not enough.

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**Table 1** Factor analysis (principal axis factoring, varimax rotation) of the attitudes towards inclusive education. Factor structure of Finnish (n = 362) and Japanese (n = 1366) data, the loadings related to the sub-scales bolded

Item	Japan				Finland			
	Factor				Factor			
	I	II	III	IV	I	II	IV	V
5	<b>.70</b>	.06	.05	.11	<b>.71</b>	.25	.16	.13
4	<b>.62</b>	.04	.23	.05	<b>.68</b>	.01	.20	.05
17	<b>.55</b>	.13	.03	.14	<b>.57</b>	.16	.20	.29
1	<b>.51</b>	.11	.17	.06	<b>.48</b>	.11	.14	.28
6	<b>.49</b>	.04	.00	.06	<b>.51</b>	.04	.33	.19
15	<b>.45</b>	.07	.21	.03	<b>.32</b>	.40	.00	.29
14	.47	.03	.10	<b>.23</b>	.45	.05	<b>.62</b>	.04
11	<b>.40</b>	.02	.41	.06	<b>.68</b>	.20	.15	.19
10	.32	.03	.26	.14	.34	.18	.14	<b>.61</b>
19	.14	<b>.68</b>	.18	.03	.06	<b>.79</b>	.02	.01
18	.11	<b>.49</b>	.37	.01	.26	<b>.63</b>	.21	.25
12	.03	<b>.50</b>	.10	.07	.10	<b>.71</b>	.00	.04
7	.15	<b>.40</b>	.39	.01	.12	<b>.54</b>	.19	.17
8	.11	.07	<b>.59</b>	.12	.40	.29	.25	.06
16	.04	.20	<b>.51</b>	.05	.46	.43	.04	.11
9	.03	.13	.38	.06	.08	.20	.06	<b>.79</b>
2	.14	.19	.23	.19	.20	.18	.59	.27
3	.09	.05	.17	<b>.58</b>	.08	.08	<b>.77</b>	.07

Note. Number of item refers to the Table 3.

**Table 2** Teachers' attitudes towards IE in Japan and Finland by the sub-scales according to factor analysis. Reliabilities (alpha), means (M) and sizes of differences (Cohen's d). The scale 1-6, higher scores mean more positive attitudes, the neutral midpoint of the scale is 3.5. The numbers of the scales (I – V) refer to the Table 1

Scale	Japan		Finland		Cohen's d
	alpha	M	alpha	M	
I General attitude towards IE (items 1,4,5,6,11,15,17)	.73	2.55	.80	2.64	.11
II Appropriateness for children with severe disabilities (7,12,18,19)	.66	2.75	.75	2.00	.84***
IV Avoiding labelling in IE (3,14)	.33	2.91	.74	3.70	.92***
V Teachers' efficacy in IE (9,10)	.19	3.66	.65	2.70	1.10***
III Appropriateness for non-SEN-children (8,16)	.55	4.28	.60	2.95	1.35***
Total scale (19 items)	.75	57.74	.85	52.50	.54***

Note: Cohen's d: .20 - .49 = small, .50 – .79 = medium, .79 < = large; \*\*\*: t-test, significance of the difference, p<.001

**Table 3** Teachers' attitudes towards IE in Japan (n = 1482) and Finland (n = 362), means, significance of difference (t-test) and sizes of differences (Cohen's d) and. The scale 1 – 6, higher scores mean more positive attitude, the neutral midpoint of the scale is 3.5.

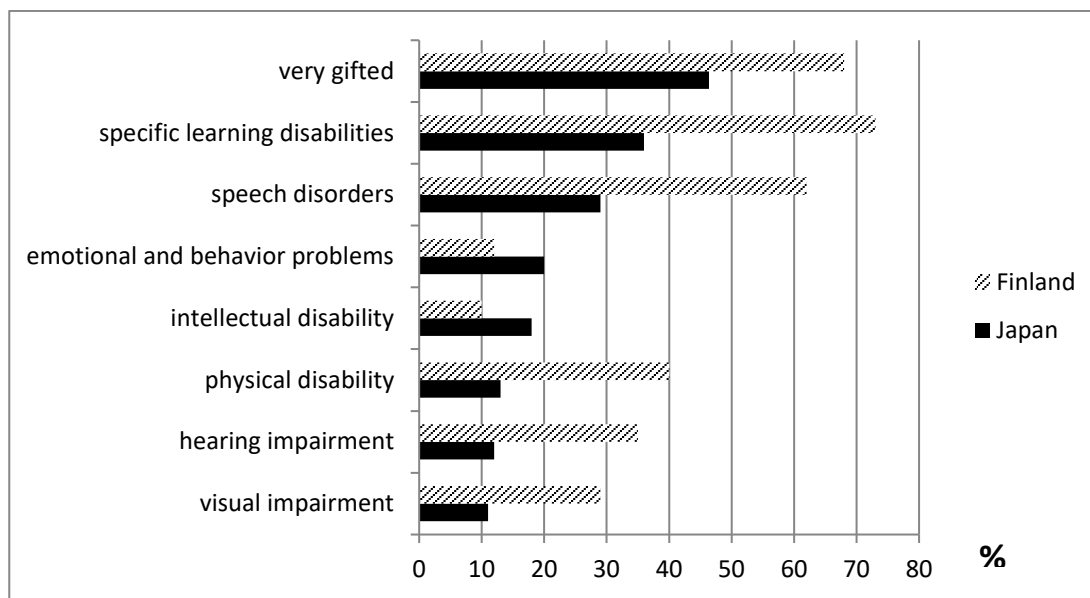
Item	JPN	FIN	t-test	Cohen's d
1. All pupils will receive appropriate educational programs and related services in ordinary education.	2.8	2.5	***	0.26
2. Pupils with mild disabilities would experience more academic failure if they were placed full time in the ordinary classroom.	3.4	3.6		0.03
3. Pupils with disabilities are sometimes rejected, ridiculed, and/or teased by other pupils in the regular classroom.	3.7	3.9		0.10
4. The self-esteem of pupils with disabilities would improve if placed full time in the ordinary classroom.	2.4	3.5	***	1.37
5. Full time integration for pupils with disabilities in ordinary classes means equity for all.	2.2	3.0	***	0.63
6. Ordinary education has the resources and personnel to address the individual educational needs of all children	2.1	1.5	***	0.52
7. Non-disabled children and children with severe disabilities should be taught in separate classrooms.	2.7	2.2	***	0.43
8. Having pupils with disabilities in ordinary classes will interfere with the quality of education offered to pupils considered as non-disabled.	4.9	3.5	***	1.31
9. Only teachers with special educational training are able to teach effectively pupils with severe disabilities.	4.1	2.6	***	1.18
10. Ordinary class teachers can meet the academic needs of pupils with disabilities currently in their classrooms.	3.1	2.8	***	0.36
11. Placing pupils with disabilities full time in regular classes means quality education for all.	3.3	2.7	***	0.48
12. Special classes are needed for pupils who display severe forms of severe behavior problem.	2.7	1.7	***	0.73

13. Ordinary class teachers have the primary responsibility for the education of pupils with disabilities in their classrooms.	3.6	4.1	***	0.36
14. Pupils with disabilities would lose the stigma/label of being 'dumb', 'different', or 'failures' if they were placed full time in the ordinary classroom.	2.0	3.5	***	1.39
15. It is risk to ask ordinary class teachers to accept pupils with severe disabilities in their classes.	2.7	2.6		0.05
16. Time for teaching of non-disabled is taken away when pupils with disabilities are placed in ordinary classrooms.	3.6	2.4	***	0.95
17. Achievement levels of pupils with disabilities would increase if they were placed full time in the ordinary classroom	2.2	2.7	***	0.51
18. Because of their special needs, pupils with severe disabilities are best taught in special classrooms.	3.0	2.2	***	0.73
19. Pupils with severe behavior disorders need special education in special schools.	2.4	1.9	***	0.48
Note: *** = $p < .001$ ; Cohen's d: 20 – 49 = small, 50 – 79 = medium, 79 < = large				

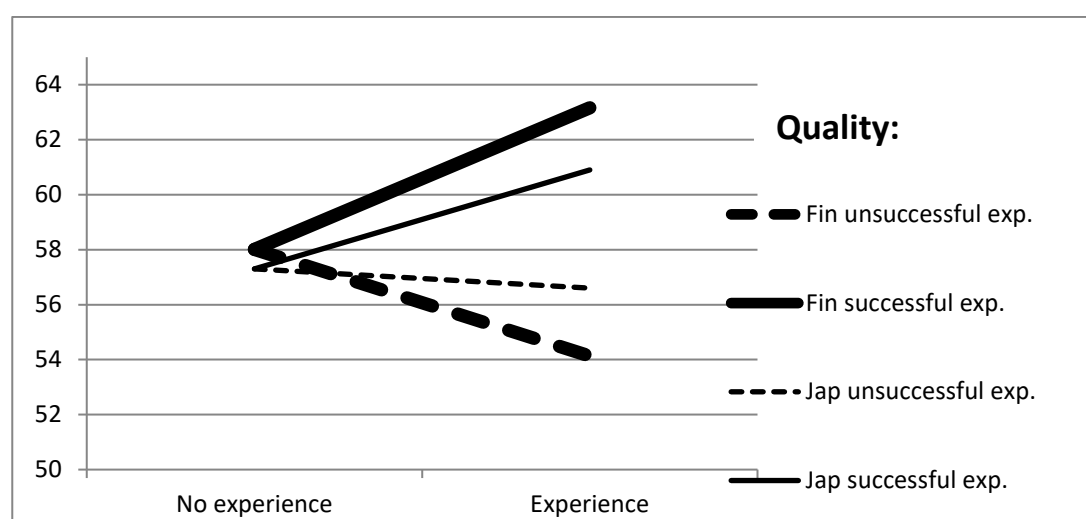
**Table 4** Japanese (n = 1484) and Finnish (n = 362) teachers’ opinions regarding the two justification discourse on IE. Means (M), sizes of differences (Cohen’s d) and significance of difference (t-test). The scale 1 – 6 (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree)

Item (Justification)	Japan			Finland			Cohen’s d
	M	SD	% agree	M	SD	% agree	
A Inclusive education means primarily seeking social justice.	2.99	1.32	34	3.34	1.40	46	.28***
B Inclusive education means primarily seeking efficacy.	3.00	1.30	37	2.50	1.45	21	.40***

Note: Cohen’s d: .20 – .49 = small, .50 – .79 = medium, .79 <= large; \*\*\*: p < .001



**Fig. 1** Teachers' readiness (%) to take different pupils with special needs to their group unconditionally in Finland (N = 362) and Japan (N = 1457)



**Fig. 2** Impact of quantity and quality of experience on attitudes towards IE in Japan and Finland, the Finnish data from Moberg & Savolainen (2003). Effects in the Japanese data: quantity ( $F = 1.14$ , ns), quality ( $F = 26.19$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Effects in the Finnish data: quantity ( $F = 1.81$ , ns), quality ( $F = 12.08$ ,  $p < .001$ )

<sup>i</sup> Webropol is an online tool to create and send electronic questionnaires to collect the data for further analysis.