Over the past two decades, there has been a common and widespread drive by international governments towards inclusion as a model for education. As such, inclusion has now become one of the most critical educational issues internationally. The basic premise underpinning inclusion is that all children regardless of ability or disability have a basic right to be educated alongside their peers in their local school. Inclusion is thus generally defined as “providing effective learning opportunities for all pupils”. Despite of the general consensus to the above definition of inclusion, there are a wide range of differences in the policies and practices of inclusive education in different countries.

A number of studies have identified that in-service teachers’ attitude has a great bearing on whether a teacher will embrace inclusion or reject it. A teacher’s attitude has the power to enhance or seriously harm the life quality of students with disabilities, sometimes for the rest of their lives. Teacher attitude has been found to be critical in the success of managing students with disabilities. Inclusion of students with disabilities within mainstream classroom depends on the teacher more than anyone else. So, among many stakeholders associated with implementation of inclusion, teachers’ perceptions, their teaching practices in classroom and the teacher preparation methods by which they are being trained are most significant and should be studied.

The present study aimed at achieving five major objectives. These are as follows:

- To examine current status of education for students with disabilities in mainstream primary education in Bangladesh and Japan
- To explore teachers’ perceptions toward inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream primary education in Bangladesh and Japan
- To identify teaching strategies that Bangladeshi teachers practice in teaching students with disabilities in mainstream primary classroom
- To investigate the challenges of primary teacher education program in Bangladesh in the context of inclusive education
- To compare the perceived views on inclusion between Bangladeshi teachers to Japanese teachers

This research has been conducted in four phases. These are as follows:

Phase-One: Current Policy and Practice of Inclusion, in this phase the present policies, act, legislations etc. related to education for person with disabilities both in Bangladesh and Japan were reviewed in light of inclusive education. In addition, the current practices of education for students with disabilities in both countries were explored. According to this analysis and review of related literature, the research design and framework of the study has been formulated.

Phase-Two: Teachers’ perceptions toward inclusive education, in this phase the participant teachers are selected from Bangladeshi and Japanese primary schools, from both urban and rural areas. A five-point likert-type scale was administered to examine in-service teachers’ perceptions, views and attitudes. The whole questionnaire, consists of 36 statements, was divided into five categories. Collected data from both countries were statistically analyzed for each aspect. The result shows that, for educational philosophy, confidence in inclusion, belief in experience and improvement implications aspects the mean scores of Bangladeshi teachers are lower than those
of Japanese teachers. It indicates that the attitudes and perceived views of inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream classroom, in terms of educational philosophy, confidence in inclusion, belief in experience and improvement implications, Bangladeshi teachers have more positive attitudes than Japanese teachers. On the other hand, for anxiety of inclusion, organizational support or facilities and classroom environment aspects, the perceived views and attitudes of Japanese teachers are more positive than Bangladeshi teachers. It is important to mention that the differences of perceived views of two groups of teachers found in each of the aspects are statistically significant.

Phase-Three: Teaching Strategies for Inclusion, in this phase the participant teachers were chosen only from Bangladeshi primary schools. Japanese teachers were not taken because they are not practicing inclusion in their schools. A three-point self-rating questionnaire that was constructed according to David Mitchell’s evidence-based inclusive teaching strategies was used to identify the teaching strategies that are evidence-based effective for inclusion used in Bangladeshi primary inclusive classroom. In results, among eighteen statements related to strategies, only four were found to be practiced most often in Bangladeshi classroom, seven were found to be used sometimes and other seven strategies were found to be performed less frequently. The important finding of this phase revealed that the most effective strategies are practiced less frequently in the teaching-learning process for students with disabilities in primary classroom in Bangladesh.

Phase-Four: Teacher Education for Inclusion, in this phase the participant teachers were also selected Bangladeshi schools. In this part the current primary teacher preparation programs were reviewed in light of inclusive education. A semi-structured interview schedule was prepared for investigating the challenges and issues of primary level teacher education system in Bangladesh in terms of inclusive education. General Inductive Thematic Analysis method introduced by David R. Thomas (2003) was employed to identify the challenges and to formulate implication mechanisms of present teacher education program. The interview data were synthesized into six key themes such as lack of contents on special educational needs/ inclusion, insufficient knowledge of the trainer, inadequate resource supports, shortage of the trainers in training institutes, large class size in training hall and limited chance of practicum.