



Status Of Implementation Of Inclusive Education At Secondary Schools In West Bengal

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Abstract

Inclusive education is a strategy to universalize education which aims to integrate all children, regardless of background or disabilities, into regular school systems. This study examines the implementation of inclusive education in secondary schools of West Bengal, focusing on the facilities provided, challenges faced, and teachers' perceptions of classroom management and school administration. A qualitative research method was used and data were collected from 170 secondary school teachers and 18 school heads through questionnaires, checklists, and semi-structured interviews. The analysis, conducted through percentage and qualitative methods, revealed a significant lack of essential facilities such as resource rooms, accessible toilets, and transport for disabled children, and inclusive materials. Additionally, 82.35% of teachers reported difficulties in managing inclusive classrooms, regarding classroom size (70%), insufficient class time (66.47%), and inadequate training (60.59%) as major issues. Despite these challenges, most teachers felt supported by their school administrations in implementing inclusive education. Key challenges identified included poor infrastructure, classroom sizes, guardian's unwillingness to admit their disabled or mentally challenged students in general schools, difficulties in reaching disabled students, students' reading and writing difficulties, lack of trained teachers, and increased teacher workload.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Policy, Special Education, Teacher Perception, Challenges, Implementation.

Introduction:

Inclusive education is one of the emerging issues in the Indian educational system. Over the past few years, it has created a significant impact on the education system. Many initiatives have been undertaken worldwide and in India to promote inclusive education. It is now universally accepted that every child has the right to education. We must create an educational environment where every child feels welcome and can learn effectively and efficiently. Inclusive education means providing education to all kinds of students, including disabled children, in general schools and common classrooms. It focuses on developing schools so that every child can learn joyfully without difficulty and participate in all school programs and activities. The main feature of inclusive education is the development of an education system that meets the educational needs of all children.

Every child has unique characteristics and different educational needs, requiring various types of help and support. Creating separate schools for each type of child is both difficult and psychologically inappropriate. Therefore, we must create a school environment where the educational needs of every child are fulfilled. We need to provide education inclusively, ensuring that every child enjoys their education.

An important factor in implementing inclusive education is the skills and positive attitudes of teachers and administrators. They should recognize that children with disabilities and special needs are part of their responsibility. They need to create such a school environment where all children feel welcome and embrace diversity in schools and classrooms. A policy of inclusion must be implemented in all schools and throughout the education system. The participation of all children must be ensured in all aspects of their lives, both inside and outside of school. As stated in the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005, "A policy of inclusion needs to be implemented in all schools and throughout our education system. The participation of all children needs to be ensured in all spheres of their life in and outside the school. Schools need to become centres that prepare children for life and ensure that all children, especially the differently abled children, children from marginalised sections, and children in difficult circumstances get the maximum benefit of this critical area of education" (NCF, 2005, p. 85).

Inclusive education does not simply mean placing all the children in regular classrooms. Classroom teaching is central to inclusive practice, and its success depends on how well inclusive practices are implemented. This largely relies on teachers' beliefs and knowledge about teaching different kinds of students. Effective inclusive practice occurs when teachers believe that teaching every child is their responsibility. As Singh (2009) states, "Inclusive schooling is not a process of making different kids fit into exclusionary schools, within the framework of schools as they exist today. It is imperative that teachers accept, recognize, and celebrate diverse learners in the classroom; they must promote equity by accepting differences" (p. 15).

Rationale of the study:

Over the past few decades, India has prioritized education, with the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) initiating several projects to achieve education for all. Since independence, the Government of India has created numerous policies and programs related to inclusive education, such as the IEDC (1974), RCI Act (1992), PWD Act (1995), SSA (2000-01), NCF (2005), RTE Act (2009), and Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs (2014). Quality education is a very much concern today and inclusion is considered an indicator of quality education. It is crucial to analyse the local situation to understand how the education system works in schools. Simply allowing all kinds of children in regular classrooms will not ensure the successful implementation of inclusive education. Implementing inclusive education is a challenging task, and those responsible for it may face many barriers and challenges. Identifying these challenges is essential for successful implementation. This study aims to explore how the concept of inclusive education has been implemented in schools and to identify the challenges faced by implementers during this process.

Objectives of the study:

1. To identify educational facilities and opportunities given to children with special needs.
2. To find out teachers' perception about implementation of inclusive education.
3. To identify different challenges of implementing inclusive education.

Research questions:

1. What are the facilities and opportunities given to children with special needs?
2. What kind of perception among secondary school teachers have while implementing inclusive education with respect to classroom management?
3. What kind of perception about school administration among secondary school teachers have while implementing inclusive education?
4. What are the challenges faced by schools in the implementation of inclusive education in respect of admission and teaching?

Limitations of the study:

The present study has some limitations in order to conduct this study. These are-

1. The study was limited to only three districts of West Bengal i.e. Hooghly, Burdwan & Murshidabad.
2. The study was limited to the selected Government and Government Sponsored Secondary schools under WBBSE of urban and rural areas.
3. The study was conducted only on 18 Heads of the institution and 170 School Teachers of selected sample schools.
4. In the present study, the convenient sampling method was used due to time and availability of respondents.

Method used:

For the present study 'Descriptive Survey method' having qualitative approach was employed by the investigator.

Sample:

Out of existing districts in West Bengal three districts i.e. Hooghly, Burdwan & Murshidabad were chosen randomly for the study. In the following Table 1 objective wise sample size is given.

Table-1: Selected Sample

Sl.no	Objective	Sample	Sample size
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1.	To identify educational facilities and opportunities given to children with special needs.	School Headmaster/Mistress	18
2	To find out teachers' perception about implementation of inclusive education	School teachers	170
3	To identify different challenges of implementing inclusive education	School Headmaster/Mistress	18

Tools and techniques used for data collection:

1. A checklist to checking facilities & opportunities for the children with special needs developed by the researcher.
2. A questionnaire on 'Teachers' perception about implementation of Inclusive Education' was developed by the researcher himself. Content validity of tool was determined by the three subject experts. It consists of a series of close ended questions of 7 statements with two responses i.e. 'Yes' & 'No'. There are 4 items related to classroom management and 3 items related to school administration.
3. Semi- Structured interviews with the Head of the institutions were undertaken person-to-person on two issues associated challenges faced while implementing inclusive education. These are–
 - i) Challenges faced in respect of admission.
 - ii) Challenges faced in respect of teaching.

Result and Discussion:

Research Question 1: What are the facilities and opportunities given to children with special needs?

The present researcher list down different facilities and opportunities required after review of different literature which are given bellow with short description of each facilities and opportunities.

i. Resource Room: Resource room is special room for teaching-learning of children with special needs. The room equipped with suitable furniture, teaching aids and equipment.

ii. Inclusive materials: Inclusive materials refers special equipment & teaching materials for the children with special needs to meet their specific requirements. Such as- Wheel chair, Braille books, Talking books, Large printed materials, Hearing aids, Magnifying glasses etc.

iii. Counsellor: Counsellor is a person who trained to give guidance and counselling on personal or psychological problems.

iv. Special teacher: Special teacher is a teacher who has training, knowledge, experience, and skills about how to handle and provide education to the children with special needs.

v. Extra-time in examination: According to Govt. rules disabled children should provide extra-time in the examination.

vi. Writer: Those students have problem with own hand writing, they needs to provide writer.

vii. Remedial teaching: Remedial teaching is a one kind of extra academic support for those students whose academic performance is poor. In remedial teaching Teachers make an effort to improve student learning strength and remove students' weakness.

viii. Special training programme: Special training programme refers special Skill development and vocational education (like- dance, singing, drawing etc.) for the children with special needs as per their special ability.

ix. Vehicle facility: Physical disabled children faced very much difficulty to reach the school alone. Vehicle facility refers any kind of transport facility to reach the school for the disabled students.

x. Playground: Playground is a place where all the students plays in the school.

xi. Ramp: Ramp is a sloping surface joining two different levels, as at the entrance or between floors of a building.

xii. Accessible toilets: Accessible toilet is a specially designed toilet to accommodate people with disabilities.

Table 2: Facilities and opportunities for children with special needs

SL. No.	Facility/Opportunity	Total No. of School	Availability in school	Non-availability in school
1	Resource Room	18	-	18
2	Inclusive materials	18	1	17
3	Counsellor	18	1	17
4	Special teacher	18	-	18
5	Extra-time in examination	18	18	-
6	Writer	18	18	-
7	Remedial teaching	18	18	-
8	Special training programme	18	-	18

9	Vehicle facility	18	-	18
10	Playground	18	13	5
11	Ramp	18	12	6
12	Accessible toilet	18	-	18

Interpretation:

Table 2 presents the availability of facilities and opportunities for children with special needs across the sample of eighteen schools. It reveals that:

- Every school offers extra time in examinations, access to writers, and remedial teaching for children with special needs.
- Twelve schools have ramps and thirteen have playground facilities.
- In contrast, no school provides a resource room, special teacher, special training programs, vehicle facilities, or maintains accessible toilets for these children.
- Only one school offers inclusive materials and counselling services.

The data indicates significant gaps in the facilities and opportunities available to children with special needs in the surveyed schools. While all schools have made some provisions such as extra time in exams, writers, and remedial teaching, essential facilities like resource rooms, special teachers, special training programs, vehicle facilities, and accessible toilets are entirely absent.

Research Question 2: What kind of perception among secondary school teachers have while implementing inclusive education with respect to classroom management?

Table 3: Teachers' Perception about classroom management

Item No	Statement	Total no. of responses	No of responses		% of responses	
			Yes	No	Yes	No
1	It is very difficult to manage inclusive classroom where different types of children are included.	170	140	30	82.35	17.65
2	School classrooms are so crowded that it is very difficult to give attention to all kind of children.	170	119	51	70	30

3	Time allotted for each class is not enough to handle all types of children in the classroom.	170	113	57	66.47	33.53
4	I am not technically trained to handle different types of children in the classroom.	170	103	67	60.59	39.41

Interpretation:

Table 3 illustrates the perceptions of secondary school teachers regarding classroom management while implementing inclusive education. Key observations include:

- A significant majority (82.35%) of teachers find it very difficult to manage classrooms that include different types of children. This suggests that the presence of diverse learners poses a substantial challenge for most of the teachers.
- 70% of teachers feel that their classrooms are too crowded, making it difficult to give adequate attention to all children. This indicates that large class sizes are a major barrier to effective inclusive education.
- 66.47% of teachers believe that the time allotted for each class is not enough to handle the diversity of students. This implies that current scheduling does not provide adequate time for teachers to address the varied needs of all students within a single class period.
- 60.59% of teachers feel they are not technically trained to handle different types of children in the classroom (The term technically trained means that knowledge about how to handle and teach different types of children i.e. normal children, disabled children, mentally challenged students etc. in a common classroom). This highlights a critical need for professional development and training programs that equip teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary for managing inclusive classrooms effectively.

The above data indicates that teachers face significant challenges in managing inclusive classrooms, primarily due to the difficulty of addressing diverse needs, overcrowded classrooms, insufficient class time, and a lack of technical training. These factors create barrier for the successful implementation of inclusive education.

Research question 3: What kind of perception about school administration among secondary school teachers have while implementing inclusive education?

Table 4: Teachers' perception about school administration

Item No	Statement	Total no. of responses	No of responses		% of responses	
			Yes	No	Yes	No

1	School administration is very much willing to implement inclusive education in schools.	170	146	24	85.88	14.12
2	School administration provides sufficient support for inclusive environment.	170	130	40	76.47	23.53
3	School administration inspires teachers to attend in Seminar, Workshop and Training programme relating to inclusive education.	170	136	34	80	20

Interpretation:

Table 4 provides insights into secondary school teachers' perceptions of school administration concerning the implementation of inclusive education. Observation of the Table 4 shows that-

- A majority of teachers (85.88%) believe that their school administration is very willing to implement inclusive education. This suggests strong administrative support for inclusive practices.
- 76.47% of teachers feel that their school administration provides sufficient support for creating an inclusive environment. This indicates that most teachers perceive their administration as actively facilitating inclusive education.
- 80% of teachers acknowledge that their school administration inspires them to attend seminars, workshops, and training programs related to inclusive education. This reflects a positive administrative attitude towards continuous professional development in inclusive education.

The data indicate that secondary school teachers have positive perceptions of their school administration's role in implementing inclusive education. The high percentages across all three items indicate strong administrative support, willingness, and encouragement towards inclusive education initiatives.

Research question 4: What are the challenges faced by schools in the implementation of inclusive education in respect of admission and teaching?

Criteria 1: Challenges Faced Regarding Admission

Based on interviews with the eighteen Head of the Institution, the following challenges emerged in relation to admissions:

a) Poor Infrastructure and Learning Equipment: All the Head of the Institution reported that their schools lack proper infrastructure to provide quality education to children with special needs. While schools allow to admit disabled children, but most are unable to offer the necessary infrastructure and facilities. Additionally, most of the schools lack learning materials for children with special needs.

b) Classroom Size: According to eight Head Masters/Head Mistresses, admitting all students' leads to overcrowded classrooms. This overcrowding makes it difficult for teachers to manage diverse student needs effectively.

c) Guardians' Unwillingness: All Heads of the institutions reported that many guardians are unwilling to admit their mentally challenged or disabled children to general schools. Some guardians prefer to engage their children in small workshops instead.

d) Challenges in Transporting Disabled Students: All Head Masters/Mistresses indicated that guardians, particularly those from financially weaker sections, face difficulties in transporting their disabled children to school. This often results in a lack of interest in enrolling their disabled children in schools.

e) Students' Abilities: Eleven Heads of the institutions, especially those in rural areas, observed that many students admitted to class V lack basic reading and writing skills. Due to the 'no-detention policy', schools cannot refuse admission, leading to significant challenges for these students to cope with their peers and resulting in poorer academic performance.

Criteria 2: Challenges Faced Regarding Teaching

Interviews with the eighteen Heads of the Institutions revealed the following challenges related to teaching:

a) Human Resource: All Heads of the institutions reported a shortage of teachers. The current human resources are insufficient, leading to a high student-teacher ratio.

b) Lack of Trained Teachers: According to all Heads of the institutions, teachers lack proper training to handle diverse types of children. Despite most teachers having B.Ed. training, they lack the skills and knowledge to teach and manage children with special needs.

c) Teacher Workload: All Heads of the institutions noted that teachers face a heavy workload, including numerous administrative tasks, making it difficult for them to focus on teaching.

d) Insufficient Classroom Time: According to seven Heads of the institutions, teachers do not have enough time in the classroom to provide individual attention to students. Managing a classroom with diverse types of children within the given time frame is challenging for teachers.

The implementation of inclusive education faces significant challenges related to both admissions and teaching. Addressing these issues requires improving infrastructure, providing specialized training for teachers, reducing class sizes, and ensuring adequate support for both students and teachers.

Conclusion:

The study revealed the facts relating to inclusive education in selected secondary schools in West Bengal. It was found that while the system of inclusive education is followed at the primary level, it is still an emerging concept in the broader educational framework of the state. To ensure the future development of inclusive education, several important decisions must be made.

Teachers play a central role in implementing inclusive education effectively. Therefore, improving teacher education programs is crucial. It is essential to develop quality training programs that provide teachers with basic knowledge about different types of students, how to handle them, and how to tackle various challenges.

Despite the progress, there are still significant barriers and challenges to the successful implementation of inclusive education. These challenges must be addressed to ensure that all students, regardless of their backgrounds and needs, can benefit from an inclusive educational environment.

Recommendations for Future Development:

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the inclusive education system:

- All schools should establish resource centre equipped with appropriate inclusive materials. Additionally, transportation facilities for disabled children should be arranged.
- Programs should be organized to raise awareness among guardians about the opportunities and future prospects for children with special needs.
- Developing an inclusive culture requires proper training. Teachers in regular schools should receive specialized training to effectively manage and support inclusive classrooms.
- Every school should appoint at least one counsellor or special teacher to provide necessary support and guidance for students with special needs.

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