

Inclusive Practices of Students with Special Needs at Medinipur and Kolkata in West Bengal

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Abstract: *Inclusive education is about ensuring the best education, both socially and academically, for all children including those with disabilities. Equality of educational opportunity includes provision of education for all, irrespective of religion, caste, creed, sex and location, Government of India has taken many initiatives to achieve inclusive education, but in reality most of the children with disabilities were not getting proper education in the society. The current study aims to examine the current practices followed for inclusive education at inclusive schools, 30 students with special needs were selected for the study through purposive sampling method from 10 schools. A researcher made questionnaire was used to collect data under four areas, such as inclusion in the teaching learning process, inclusion in the examination, inclusion in the school environment and inclusion in games and sports. The responses of the sample were then analyzed and the study results reflect the need to improve practices that are followed in the schools for better inclusion of students with disabilities.*

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Students with Special Needs, Government Initiative, Disability Act, Elementary Education

1. Introduction

Inclusion is an approach to include students with special needs to get equal opportunities in all aspects. In an ideal system of inclusive education, the general education itself should make the education of disabled children as its integral part. Inclusive education means that all students attend and get education in regular school to learn, contribute and participate in all activities. Equality of educational opportunity includes provision of education for all, irrespective of religion, caste, creed, sex and location. According to census of India 2011, 1.4 million children of primary school age did not go to school in India, with 18 percent girls out of school and 14 percent boys. The report said that while India has made significant improvement in primary education enrolment, the figures for children with disabilities are staggering. Out of 2.9 million children with disabilities in India, 990,000 children aged 6 to 14 years (34 percent) are out of school. The percentages are even higher among children with intellectual disabilities (48 percent), speech impairments (36 percent) and multiple disabilities (59 percent).

Government Initiatives

United Nation Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) emphasized the civil, cultural, political, social and economic rights of persons with disabilities. One of the major principles of the UNCRPD is equality of opportunity for persons with disabilities. The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 emphasized that equalization of educational opportunity. Educational facilities should be expanded and attempts should be made to develop integrated programmes enabling the children with disabilities to study in regular schools. Persons with Disability Act (1995) make it mandatory to provide free education to children with disabilities. Articles of the Indian Constitution (Articles 26, 21(A), 46) also stress the equality

of education. In recent years, major initiatives taken by the government for achieving the goals of universalization of elementary education through the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in 1994 and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2002.

2. Review of Literature

Singal (2005) stated that inclusive education is largely adopted from the international discourse and has not been engaged within the Indian context. Internationally defined inclusive education relates to the education of students with a range of diversities, not just disabilities, included and supported in mainstream schools.

Sanjeev & Kumar (2007) mentioned that inclusive education is not only the alternative measures for children with special needs (CWSN), but it is a scientific well thought strategy for their overall development. They also stated that various initiatives for teaching of CWSN along with normal children in main stream schools popularly known as inclusive education are being taken at different levels but still 95 percent of CWSN are out of mainstream schools. The reasons for poor quality of training for inclusive education were poor infrastructural facilities, teacher's capability to deal children with disability along with non-disabled children.

Anusha (2012) said that the awareness on inclusive education in schools throughout the country is still at an infancy stage, educational institutions are somewhat skeptical about having both normal and special children studying in the same classroom. The author also mentioned that the child not getting a fair inclusive education because of lack of flexibility in curriculum, not getting adequate attention from the teachers. As a result, the number of

children with special needs receiving higher education is on the decline.

Sharma & Das (2015) quoted that the best approaches to providing inclusive education opportunities to such a vast number of children, who are spread across the country, may differ from one state to another or from one region to another. The fundamental shift that needs to occur at the highest level is for the provision of inclusive education to children with disability to be seen not as a charitable issue but as a systemic issue. It needs to be seen as a way to provide high-quality education to all, not just to children with a disability.

Need of the Study

Inclusive education stands for improvement of schools in all dimensions to address the educational needs of all children. It is a developmental approach to address the educational needs of all children including children with disabilities. Now days, many educationalists and non government organizations were supported for inclusion, but the real situations were mentioned in the publications that the ordinary classroom cannot provide quality education for children with disabilities. Hence a need was felt to study the current practices followed in inclusive schools for better inclusion.

Aim of the study

The aim of the study is to explore the current practices followed in inclusive schools for better inclusion.

3. Methodology

A. Research Design

The Survey method under descriptive research design was adopted for this present study.

B. Sample

Totally 30 students (15 students with visual impairment, 15 students with hearing impairment) with special needs from ten inclusive schools were selected from Paschim Medinipur, Purba Medinipur and Kolkata District purposive sampling technique under non-probability method was used for this present study.

C. Research Tool

A questionnaire was prepared by the researcher based on the various aspects of inclusion such as

- Inclusion in the teaching learning process
- Inclusion in the examination
- Inclusion in the school environment and
- Inclusion in games and sports

D. Data Collection Procedure

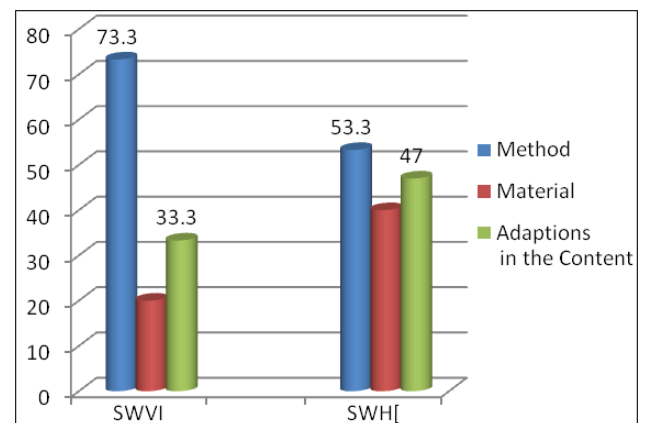
The questionnaire was distributed among the selected sample. Instructions were given to the sample to read all the questions carefully and to give their response in the respective columns. The collected data was then analyzed for further interpretation.

E. Results and Discussions

Results were made based on the areas of inclusion.

F. Inclusion in the Teaching Learning Process

All students with special needs are unique. Each child needs different instructional strategies and methods to understand the concept. Teaching learning process Includes instructional method used, material used and making adaptation in the content.



The result showed only 73.3% of students with visual impairment (SWVI) and 53.3% students with hearing impairment (SWHI) were satisfied with methods used for teaching learning process. In terms of material used in the inclusive school, 20% of SWVI and 40% of SWHI gave positive answers. 33.3% of SWVI and 47% SWHI reported that they could get adapted content while teaching learning process. The remaining percentage of samples reported that they did not get the appropriate methods, materials and adaptations in the content in teaching learning process.

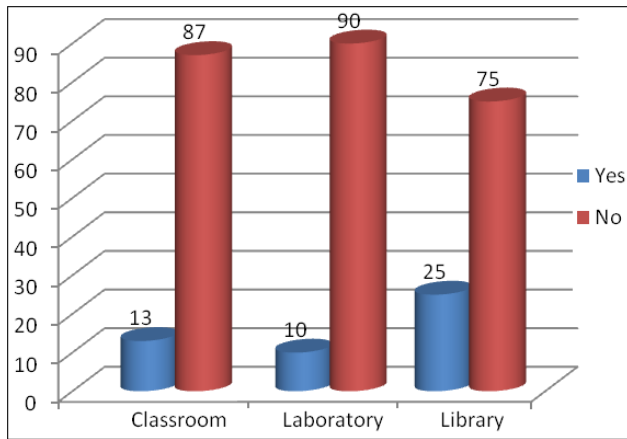
Method of teaching, teaching learning material and making adaptations in the content are the core of inclusion. These are very important aspects to get equal educational opportunities. If these are not provided to the students with special needs then the concept of inclusion becomes meaningless.

G. Inclusion in the Examination

Most of the schools follow scribe system for students with visual impairment and general examination pattern for students with hearing impairment. It was found that in many schools students with visual impairment were not encouraged to write examination in Braille, due to inadequacy of trained teachers. In fact, results found that students with visual impairment themselves were not efficient in reading or writing Braille.

H. Inclusion in the school Environment

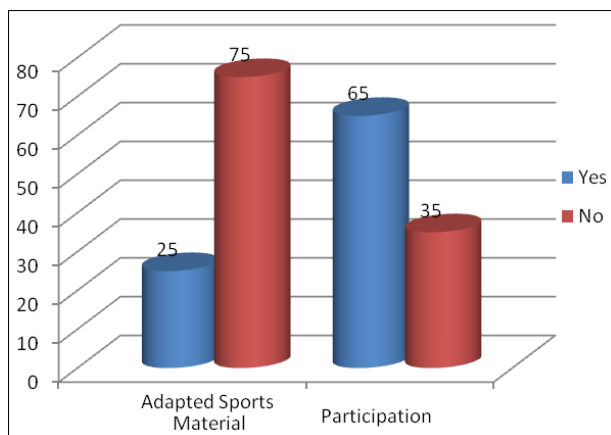
Barrier free environments are an important factor for successful social inclusion. Physical barriers are structural obstacles in natural or manmade environments that prevent or block mobility or access. This study includes the physical infrastructure such as accessible classroom, laboratory and library.



The result revealed that most of the schools do not have basic infrastructural facilities. 87% of the students stated that the classroom was not accessible and 90% of the students mentioned that the materials and equipments which were present in the laboratory did not have Braille labels/large print. In case of library 75% of the students with visual impairment reported that they could not find Braille books in their library.

I. Inclusion in Games and Sports

Low self-esteem and a lack of confidence can plague children with disabilities. Allowing them to have equal access to sports and games enhances their gross motor skills, social and communicating abilities, as well as improve their overall health and well-being.



Results showed that 75% of students mentioned that the adapted sports materials were not present in their schools and also they informed that they were not including in the games which required adaptations in the sports materials such as cricket, volley ball, foot ball. 65% of the students with special needs mentioned that they were included in the games activities like exercises.

4. Conclusion

This is the era of inclusion. Inclusive education provides equal educational opportunities to all children irrespective of abilities and disabilities. It is important to include students with disabilities in all aspects of school activities. It consist of having a balanced curriculum, proper method of teaching, suitable adapted materials for all categories of children, teachers with the ability to handle the individuals

based on their unique needs as well as barrier free environment. These aspects of inclusive education help students with special needs to progress and gain confidence for better independent living.

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