



Quality of education & support services for children with special needs in non-governmental schools of Alipurduar District: A case study

Liza Das¹, Dr. Amal Kumar Sarkar²

¹ North Bengal University, West Bengal, India

² Associate Professor, Department of Education, University B.T & Evening College, West Bengal, India

Abstract

This paper analyses the quality of education and supportive services available to the children with special needs in non-government schools in Alipurduar district, West Bengal. This study discusses educational quality, environment, number of trained teachers, teaching-learning materials availability, assistive facilities and support services which provided to children with special need. It also focuses on the problem faced by schools and teachers in implementing inclusive education. The study emphasizes the importance of inclusive schools with a supportive educational environment for social, educational and emotional development of children with disabilities. The findings may be helpful to find out the existing gap and suggested measures for improving the quality of education and support services in non-governmental schools.

Keywords: Inclusive education, infrastructural conditions, challenges, children with special need

Introduction

Education is a fundamental human rights which means social justice, dignity, equality, and overall development of a child including the children with needs. 'Children with special needs (CWSN)'s term refers to those who have physical, developmental, intellectual, sensory, learning or multiple disabilities that require additional support in education. According to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016, disabilities should not become a barrier to accessing quality of education. Instead, every school should ensure that all children can receive equal facilities to learn and participate and to achieve their highest potential. To ensure a quality of education for children with special needs is not by just providing school enrollment, it also includes accessible infrastructure, creating an inclusive learning environment, assistive devices, trained teachers, educational planning for individuals and mostly collaboration among teachers, parents and specialists.

In recent years, the inclusive education has achieve considerable importance through national and international initiatives that advocate equal educational opportunities for all learners. However, the quality of educational provisions and support services often varies, particularly in non-governmental schools where the availability of specialized resources, resource rooms, therapeutic services, and trained professionals may differ significantly. Although various national policies and legislations have enacted in India regarding inclusive education to ensure that children with special needs are educated alongside their peers in regular schools, there are significant disparities in various private or government schools regarding access to state facilities and implementation. To understand these variations, is essential for identifying existing strengths and challenges in inclusive practices.

Against this context, the present study, "Quality of Education and Support Services for Children with Special Needs in Non-Governmental Schools of Alipurduar District: A Case Study," aims to examine the quality of educational

provisions and support services available for children with disabilities. The study aims to identify existing practices, challenges, and areas requiring improvement, thereby contributing to the development of more effective and inclusive educational environments for all learners.

Definition: According to the Rehabilitation Council of India(RCI), 'Special children'- officially termed Children with special needs or exceptional child are "those who deviate significantly from the normal or average child in physical, intellectual, emotional, or social characteristics to the extent that they require specialized instructional methods, modified school curricula, or supportive physical accommodations to develop to their maximum capacity". And Inclusive education means - "Inclusive education is a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range."
— UNESCO (Guidelines for Inclusion).

General description of the study area:

Alipurduar is the easternmost district of West Bengal, India, Situated in the Western Dooars natural region, in the foothills of the Bengal Himalayas. It comprises two municipalities and six CD blocks. The area is predominantly rural, with over 80%of the population belonging to Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes.

The total number of Government school in this district is 1624, Where The number of primary schools are 1326. There are only 2 government sponsored special schools. Most other schools provide Inclusive education under the Samagra Siksha/CWSN programmed by enrolling children with special needs and offer them necessary support and services.

Review of literature

- G.Das (2020) ^[7], conducted a study on ‘Challenges of using ICT for Inclusive education in North-East India’, which showed that this area has faced various challenges for providing teaching through ICT such as lack of technology, lack of knowledge and skills among teachers, internet access etc. to the mass community. It showed that North-east is a hilly and tribal community area which is also isolated from the mainland of India so, economically lower people are live, and they have not personal computer at their home and not expert in English and there are multilingual students in the classrooms.
- M Islam and P Chowdhary (2024), in their study ‘Values of secondary school teachers on West Bengal regarding Inclusive education’ try to find out significance difference between secondary school teachers’ values for inclusive education based on gender, habitat, teaching experience, types of board, nature of school(gov or non-gov.), specially trained or non-trained teachers. This study concludes that teachers with diploma/course/done any paper on inclusive education have significantly higher values compared to normal teachers. Others quality does not affect the values of Inclusive education.
- M K and B.G. Sankar (2017) conducted research on ‘The challenges and opportunities to implement Inclusive education in West Bengal’ Which show the internal and external barriers to implementation of inclusive education properly. Those are curriculum, non-trained teachers, language and communication, socio-economic factors, funding, implementation of policies.
- R Nath and K.K Rajak (2025), their study ‘Accessibility and readiness of government schools of West Bengal for the children with special needs: An Explorative study’ have highlighted that although inclusive education is strongly supported by national and international policies, its implementation remains inadequate due to poor infrastructure, limited assistive technology, insufficient trained teachers, and inadequate institutional support. Research has mainly focused on teacher attitudes and policy issues, while comparatively little attention has been given to assessing the actual accessibility and readiness of government schools for Children with Special Needs (CWSN).

Objectives of the study

1. To observe the practical implementation of inclusive education.
2. To find out the infrastructural conditions for specially challenged children at primary level.
3. To find out the methods of teaching and teaching learning materials for specially Challenged students.
4. To find out the extent of facilities available for children with special needs in alipurduar town.

Delimitations of the study

Considering the constraints of time, resources and the researcher’s capacity, the present study has been limited to the following aspects:

1. The study has restricted non-government schools only.
2. The study has delimited only Alipurduar district of west Bengal.

Methodology

To conduct the study, primary & secondary data are used. To collect primary data the researchers directly visited the different schools of Alipurduar district and observed its infrastructure, methods of teaching, environment, teacher-student relationship etc. and collected various information about the school through questioning the school’s principle, student and assistant teachers. All the questions there were open-ended. Secondary data are collected through various journals, books and articles. After data collection the researcher analyzed those data by qualitative content analysis method. In addition, the findings have been presented using graphical representation.

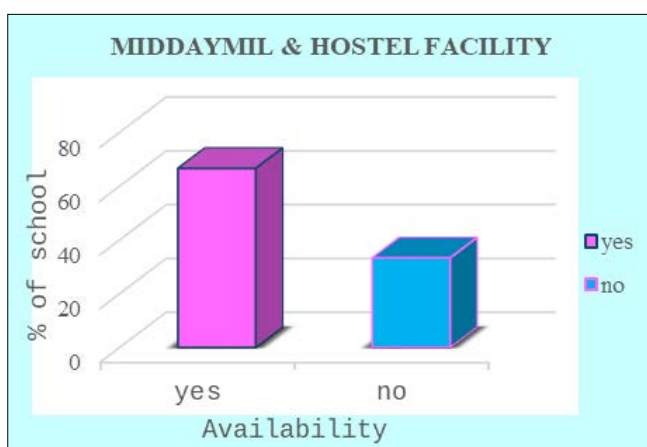
Analysis of the data

Through statistical analysis and pilot study of the sample the following factors we found:

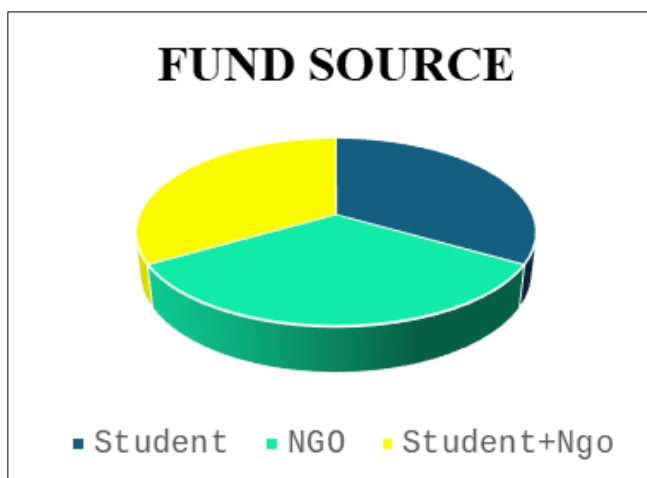
1. **Types of students:** Children with special needs include children who require additional support due to physical, sensory, intellectual, developmental, emotional or learning difficulties. The students at respondent schools included those with hearing impairment, locomotor, minor intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, specific learning disabilities etc.
2. **Co-curriculum activities:** In primary and secondary classes, there are opportunities for co-curriculum activities such as drawing, dancing, recitation, color matching activity in stitching board, yoga and making small items along with students. In everyday class routine special time is allotted for these activities. However, prevocational and vocational students are given special encouragement and training in co-curriculum activities so that they can do something on their own and become self-reliant. These include candle making, sewing, doll making etc.
3. **Opportunities for other exams outside of the class exam:** General students and those with minor disabilities participate in class exams, scholarship exams and various talent search exams. However, students with special needs do not participate in such exams, but rather they participate in various handicraft fair and exhibitions like Dooars mela, Raas mela and other handicraft fairs with their handmade items.
4. **Teaching method:** Teaching through sign language, leap read and TLM. TLM consists of flash card, story card, color card, English vowel and consonant, various vehicles, animals, flowers and fruits, hobbies of various organs, differences between wild & domestics animals through picture.
5. **Method of diagnosis of TLM:** A child with special is assessed for at least one week, then goals are set and what needs to be taught is decided. A short-term process is followed by which lasts for only a month for students with minor problems and a long-term process is followed by those which have severe problems which last for at least three months. Then, according to the level graph it is decided how and what will be taught,

and how the subjects will be taught. Before giving any lesson of the children with special need counselling is provided based on an understanding of their psychology.

6. **Sanitation & Drinking water:** Every school has separate and proper toilets for girls and boys, safe drinking water facilities, ramps and safe movement facilities.
7. **Midday mill & Hostel:** From the survey it can be said that 33% schools have Midday Mil facilities free of cost. Deaf special vocational training school provides this. But other 66.64% of schools do not provide this. Similarly, Deaf special school provides hostel facilities for their students. There are separate rooms for boys and girls. Every room consists of 12-15 beds. But other schools in this district don't have this. All the students in those schools are day scholars.



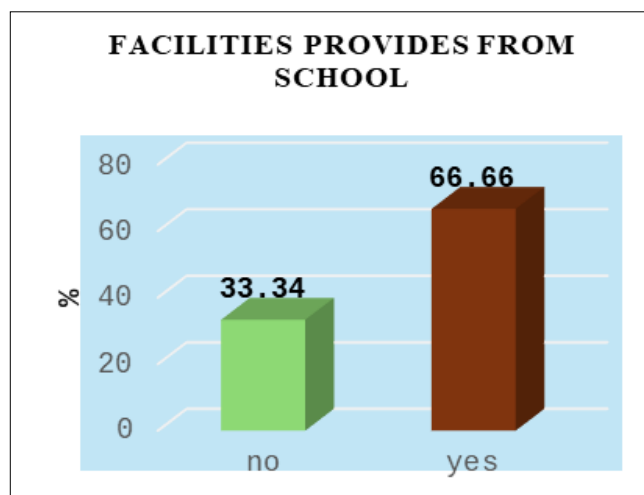
8. **Government aid and scholarships:** Every school did not get same scholarship. Some schools get pre-matric and post-matric scholarships from government. All special students receive a monthly stipend of 1000 rupees from the government under the 'Manabik' scholarship. Also, special need children who get 40% marks in secondary and higher secondary get 10000/- annually under Niramoy scholarship.



9. **Fund:** After analysis of the data it can be said, 33.33% of schools are runs from NGO's fund. Like Khagenhat pragati welfare Organization provides money for all

purpose. 33% of schools collect funds from students. Teachers' salary to teaching-learning materials all of this depends on students' fees. Other 33% of schools get money from both sources student's fees and NGO's fund. Like CCRC Sikkim (Sikkim gov.), NILD organization provides financial assistance to the PATH inclusive model school affiliated with them. This school also receives government financial assistance under the Deen Dayal Rastriya Scheme (DDRS) from the academic year 2024-2025.

10. **Classrooms:** Every school consists of a limited classroom. Some schools have separate rooms, but the room size is too small. And one school had an arrangement for conducting separate lesson for different classes within a single room, although there were no partitions or walls separating the classes.
11. **Use of ICT:** Every school uses ICT equipment in the classrooms. In terms of teaching Speaker, projector etc. are used by teachers. But there was no permanent setup. Only one projector is available, and teachers carry this with them when they give lessons.



12. **Facilities provided by school:** Special children need special equipment. Many schools help students to get this. From the survey, it can be said that 66.66% of schools provide hearing machines, wheelchairs etc. free of charge they also help to make disability certificates. But other 33.34% of schools did not give this without money. Those schools give special types of shoes for needed students. Although parents must pay for those.

Major challenges found

1. There is very few gov. recognized special schools mainly one or two and the private schools' condition are also same. There is no opportunity for education for children who are visually impaired, have low vision.
2. Students with special needs cannot perform tasks independently, therefore special schools should have a higher ratio of teaching and non-teaching staff compared to regular schools. However, the number of teachers and other staff in these schools is significantly low. Consequently, teaching all the students simultaneously has become a challenge, and in some schools, due to shortage of teacher lessons are conducted via phone call as needed rather than through daily classroom infrastructure.

3. The classrooms are not spacious and are too small. Some schools did not have separate classrooms.
4. There is lack of ICT infrastructure in the field of teaching special need students. Classrooms have not been set up for this. Effective integration of ICT in the teaching learning process is not possible unless teachers receive proper training and develop the necessary technological skills.

Findings

1. Schools set target based on student condition and teach through TLM.
2. All the schools are suffering from different infrastructural conditions like lack of trained teachers, separate rooms, and proper use of ICT tools.
3. All the schools do not have same facilities. Some schools have accommodation, but some call their students for teaching as per class.
4. All the schools have proper toilet and drinking water facilities.

Suggestions

1. Schools should ensure the availability of adequate facilities for children with special needs by establishing proper spacious classrooms by developing barrier free infrastructure that meets their educational and physical requirements thereby promoting inclusive education.
2. More qualified and well-trained teachers should be appointed in every educational institution.
3. The government should ensure adequate ICT infrastructure such as projectors, computers, speaker and reliable internet connections in all the educational institutions.
4. Attitude and behaviors of parents, teachers, policy maker peer group towards children with special needs should become positive and supportive.

Conclusion

The quality of education and support services plays a crucial role in ensuring the holistic development and educational success of children with special needs. Although inclusive education has been widely promoted through national policies and legal frameworks, its effective implementation in non-governmental schools continues to face several challenges. The availability of trained teachers, accessible infrastructure, resource rooms, assistive devices, individualized instructional practices, and collaboration with parents and specialists significantly influences the educational experiences of children with disabilities.

The findings of this case study are expected to provide valuable insights into the current status of educational quality and support services for children with special needs in non-governmental schools of Alipurduar district. Identifying existing strengths and gaps can help school authorities, policymakers, and educational stakeholders develop more effective strategies to improve inclusive practices. Strengthening teacher training, enhancing school infrastructure, ensuring adequate learning resources, and promoting awareness about disability inclusion are essential for creating equitable learning environments.

Ultimately, quality education for children with disabilities is not merely about access to schools but about ensuring meaningful participation, equal learning opportunities, and overall well-being. A collaborative effort involving schools,

families, communities, and government agencies is essential to build an inclusive education system where every child, regardless of ability, can learn, grow, and realize their full potential.

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