Research Paper

"A study on the status of Inclusive Education in the Elementary (Upper Primary) Schools of Sipajhar Educational Block of Darrang District of Assam".

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Abstract
Developing sustainable and effective inclusion in schools is a challenging task that requires vision, commitment, constant reflection and perseverance. Inclusive education is recognized as an integral part of general education. Educating mainstream school teachers about inclusive education, changing curriculum, educating and informing parents, and developing positive attitudes about disability are keys to successful inclusive education. Opening the general education system for children with disabilities is not an easy task. It is very important to emphasize the role of parents. In the present study, with respect to the identification of the present status of inclusive education in the upper primary schools of Sipajhar Educational Block of Darrang District. It is revealed that 36.4% of the girl students and 36.4% of the boy students are found to be having low vision. In total 36.4% of the students are found to be with low vision disability. Only one boy out of 22 sampled students i.e. 4.5% of the students is found to be with hearing disability (deaf and dumb). 18% of the girl students and 18% of the boys' student are found to be having speech disability. In total 18% of the students are found to be with speech disability. 9% of the girl students and say 18% of the boys' student are found to be mentally retarded. In total 13.6% of the students are found to be mentally retarded. 9% of the girl students and about 18% of the boys' student are found to be with loco motor disability. In total 13.6% of the students are found to be loco motor disabled. Only one girl i.e. 4.5% of the students is found to be having learning disability. Only one girl out of 22 sampled students i.e. 4.5% of the students is found to be having cerebral palsy disability. Only one boy out of 22 sampled students i.e. 4.5% of the students is found to be with multiple disabilities. Adjustment capacity of the special children a normal classroom revealed that students have adjusted themselves in the schools and they said that attention is paid by teachers to each and every child in class. 68% of the students enjoy attending classes. Majority of the students enjoy looking at the Black Board: doing class work: home work but they do not enjoy writing notes. All the students enjoy Teachers teaching: hearing teachers voice in class; opined that teachers are caring. 70% of the students enjoy communicating with classmates. 19% of the students like writing: 38% likes speaking: and 43% likes listening. There is a variation in number of students liking different type of subjects. 91% of the students do not enjoy doing class work, home work and writing examinations.
Key Words: Inclusive Education, Elementary (Upper primary) students.

I. Introduction

Inclusive Education (IE) is defined as a process of addressing the different requirements of all learners by reducing walls to, and within the literacy terrain. It means attending the age applicable class of the child's original academy, with collectively customized support (UNICEF 2007). Inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners. Jometin World Conference (1990) in Thailand, highlights the pretensions for 'Education for All' were set and it was placarded that every person (child, youth and grown-up) shall be suitable to profit from educational openings which would meet their introductory literacy requirements. After independence inclusive education is written into India's constitution as a fundamental right for all citizens. There are various means like Special School, Integrated Education, Inclusive education, The Rehabilitation Council of India Act 1990, People with Disabilities Act 1995 etc. through which

inclusive education is under progress. The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 emphasizes that, "Education is the single greatest tool for achieving social justice and equality" which has implications for development of an inclusive community and society at large. In order for policy to translate to practice, educational barriers, facilities and services for Children with Special Needs (CwSN) must be addressed. An inclusive school and the process of inclusive schooling is the ultimate goal of integration and mainstreaming. Once inclusive schooling is achieved integration and mainstreaming will no longer be anyone left out to be integrated or mainstreamed into regular educational setting. Inclusive education is a vital for making education for all children with special needs. The meaning of inclusive education is that the school should improve in all dimensions to address the educational needs of all children irrespective of sex, caste, religion, disability etc. For successful inclusion, the following parameters are to be taken care of:

1) Readiness of the general education system to accept responsibility for education of children with special needs.
2) Encouragement provided by the community for including children with special needs in general schools.
3) Readiness of parents of children with special needs to admit the children in general schools.
4) Basic knowledge of general classroom teachers about the education of children with special needs.
5) Admission of all types of Disabled children in general school irrespective of the extent of disability.
6) Enrollment rate of children with special needs at least on par with that of non- Disabled children..
7) Retention of children with special needs in schools.
8) Ability of general classroom teachers to modify teaching-learning strategies to teach children with special needs.
9) Availability of support from peer-group to children with special needs and vice-versa in teaching-learning processes.
10) Provision of support materials such as aids, appliances and books.
11) Comparable achievement of children with special needs in curricular, plus curricular and co-curricular activities as per with their capabilities.
12) Availability of specialist teacher support, if possible, to the regular classroom teachers.

Children with Special Needs are unique individuals. Their uniqueness may be noticed in one or more of the following dimensions: Vision, hearing, movement, communication, perceptual, motor, social, emotional intelligence and adaptive behaviour. These children were previously regarded as children with diverse abilities. Mainly there are 10 types of disability or special need. Each of these disabilities is discussed further.

1) Visually Impaired
The visually impaired children are those who have problems with vision. Depending upon the degree of loss they may be total blind or partially blind
Blind and partially sighted children attending mainstream schools are often given educational materials in a format they cannot read rather than large print, audiotape or Braille.

2) Hearing Impaired
The hearing handicapped children are those children who have a damaged hearing mechanism and face difficulty in speech and language development. The degree of hearing loss is less in some children while it is more in severe. A hearing aid will be enabling them to hear well. The deaf are those who cannot hear even if spoken to very loudly.

3) Speech Impaired
Speech impaired refers to minor or major speech and language problems. There are children with mild language and speech disorders in our classroom and they often go unnoticed. While speaking and writing they tend to omit, distort, add or substitute words. phrases, letters of the alphabet etc. They stammer and are quite or have long gaps in speaking full sentences. Their problems should be correlated before they start school. The major types of speech disorders are:

4) Mentally Retarded Children
The phrase 'Mentally retarded" is used for all those children who are unable to work in the school, society and the house. General characteristics of mentally retarded children as include   very low I.Q., absolutely no creative ability and are feeble minded.

5) Autism Spectrum Disorder
A development disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

6) Physically Handicapped

A physical disability is a limitation on a person, physical functioning, mobility, dexterity or stamina. Individuals with physical disabilities often experience stigma concerning their physical competence and bodily appearance. Some children are physically handicapped from birth, others develop infirmities after accidents.

7) Cerebral Palsy (CP)

Cerebral palsy is a group of permanent, non-progressive movement disorders that cause physical disability, mainly in the areas of body movement. CP a static encephalopathy is the name for a collection of movement disorders caused by brain damage that occurs before, during or shortly after birth.

8) Multiple Disabilities

Multiple disabilities refer to more than one disability in the child. A child may be blind and deaf, blind and orthopedically handicapped, deaf and orthopedically handicapped and so on. Depending on the definition a serve intellectual disability may be included in the term "multiple disabilities.

9) Learning Disability

These children are not mentally retarded, nor do they have visual or hearing problems. But they have problems in spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, listening and comprehension.

There are some long held beliefs that in inclusive education setting children with special needs will disrupt classes and impair the learning of other children in a class, teachers will be unable to cope with the extra work expected of them, and children with special needs will ultimately receive an inferior education and possibly come through the process with damaged self-esteem. But, in reality benefits of inclusion would seem to far outweigh any disadvantages. Social acceptance of children with special needs is enhanced by the frequent small group work, nature of their instruction in inclusive classroom. Friendship more commonly develop between children with special needs and those without disabilities in inclusive setting. Research has found that children in inclusive setting have more durable network of friends than children in segregated setting.

II. Review of Related Literature

Zelina (2020) conducted a qualitative phenomenological study in Slovakia used sample consisted of n-218 female teachers with a minimum of 20% of disadvantaged students in their classroom. The main findings show that the teachers opinions and attitudes towards inclusive education are positive and they appreciate their cooperation with specialists in schools.

Mukhopadhyay and Mani (1999) in their work titled "Education of Children with Special Needs put out a country report for India by focusing on planning. This study highlighted the various aspects of education of children with disabilities. Fernandez, Koenig. Mani, and Tensi, (1999) conducted study about inclusive education in India and made several recommendations to help achieve effective inclusive education.

Palliwal (2000) in a paper titled "Integrated Education for the Disabled under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan" stressed that the commitment of the Government of India to Universalisation of Elementary Education cannot be fully achieved without taking care of special educational needs of the physically and mentally challenged children.

Madan, Ankur and Sharma, Neerja (2013) studied the paper "Inclusive education for children with disabilities: preparing schools to meet the challenge" in India. In this paper provides guidelines in a generalized mode that schools can follow to initiate such programmes.

Saikia (2016) in her study an attempt has been made to find out the attitude of parents towards Children with Special Needs in Kamrup District, Assam, India. The study used descriptive survey as a research design to explain the problems related to the existing in the study area, Kamrup District Assam, India.

III. Objectives of study

To identify the present status of inclusive education in Sipajhar Educational Block of Darrang District.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The present study was based on descriptive survey method.

4.1 Population

In the present study, the teachers who are working in elementary level in ME as well as in Amalgamated School and students studying Upper Primary level in Assamese Medium Government Elementary as well as amalgamated Schools of the Sipajhar Educational Block of Darrang District under different clusters constitutes the population.

4.2 Sample

Out of 12 nos. of Assamese Medium Govt. Schools (MES, MVS, HS) school. For the purpose of the present study investigator, selected total of 22 (11 boys and 11 girls) students as sample.

Table 1
Distribution of samples

Number of Schools	Number of Teachers	Number of Students		
		Boys	Girls	Total
12	15	11	11	22

4.3 Tool

In the present study the Questionnaire for students on inclusive education was used to collect data. The questionnaire for Students consisted of 12 numbers of items. The items are distributed on different dimensions as depicted in table.

Table2
Distribution of items in Questionnaire for Students

Dimension	Item No.	No. of Items
General Information	2, 3, 4, 5,	4
Related to inclusive education	6,7,8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13	8
Total		12

4.4 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The present status of inclusive education is analysed in the form of nature of disability among students and adjustment capacity of the special children in normal classroom.

Table 3
Nature of disability among Students

Type of Disability	No of Students		
	Girls	Boys	Total
Low Vision(LV)	4	4	8
Hearing Impairment(HI)	___	1	1
Speech Impairment(SI)	2	2	4
Orthopedic impairment(OI)	2	1	3
Learning Disability(LD)	1	___	1
Cerebral palsy(CP)	1	___	1
Multiple Disorder(MD)	___	1	1
Mental Retardation(MR)	1	2	3

Source: SSA, Darrang.

Identification of students is done on the basis of different nature of disabilities in the following manner presented in the table.

a) 36.4% of the girl students and 36.4% of the boy students are found to be having low vision. In total 36.4% of the students are found to be with low vision disability.

b) Only one boy out of 22 sampled students i.e. 4.5% of the students is found to be with hearing disability (deaf and dumb).

c) 18% of the girl students and 18% of the boys' student are found to be having speech disability. In total 18% of the students are found to be with speech disability.

d) 9% of the girl students and say 18% of the boys' student are found to be mentally retarded. In total 13.6% of the students are found to be mentally retarded.

e) 9% of the girl students and say 18% of the boys' student are found to be with loco motor disability. In total 13.6% of the students are found to be loco motor disabled.

f) Only one girl out of 22 sampled students i.e. 4.5% of the students is found to be having learning disability.

g) Only one girl out of 22 sampled students i.e. 4.5% of the students is found to be having cerebral palsy disability.

h) Only one boy out of 22 sampled students i.e. 4.5% of the students is found to be with multiple disabilities.

Adjustment capacity of the special children in normal classroom

➢ All the students love to study in the schools.
➢ All the students have adjusted themselves in the schools.
➢ 59% of the students opined that they face difficulties in doing class work.
➢ 82% of the students opined that they face difficulties in doing home work.
➢ All the students opined that they do not face any difficulty in hearing teachers writing notes.
➢ 33% of the students opined that they face difficulties in communicating with classmates
➢ 92% of the students opined that they face difficulties in writing examinations.
➢ All the students opined that they do not face any difficulty in looking at the Black Board.

V.   Findings

a) 36.4% of the students are found to be with low vision disability.

b) 4.5% of the students is found to be with hearing disability (deaf and dumb).

c) 18% of the students are found to be with speech disability.

d) 13.6% of the students are found to be mentally retarded.

e) 13.6% of the students are found to be loco motor disabled.

f) 4.5% of the students is found to be having cerebral palsy disability.

h) 4.5% of the students is found to be with multiple disabilities.

i) All the students love to study and adjusted themselves in the schools.

j) 59% of the students opined that they face difficulties in doing class work while 82% of the students opined that they face difficulties in doing home work.

k) 33% of the students opined that they face difficulties in communicating with classmates

l) 92% of the students opined that they face difficulties in writing examinations.

m) All the students opined that they do not face any difficulty in looking at the Black Board.

VI.   Conclusion

Inclusive education is suitable for all children and it promotes flexibility. The process of developing inclusive schools is complex and multifaceted, requiring time, commitment, constant reflection, and relentless effort. Necessary monitoring and regular assessment by educational leaders, researchers, and other stakeholders is required with relation to students' social relationships in schools with disabled children. To make inclusive education effective for all students, collaborative effort between schools and community is essential. The collaborative partnerships will provide more opportunities for teachers, students, and school communities to become aware of differences and needs in authentic contexts when both parties share their understandings and views.

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