

Exploring the Readiness of Implementing Inclusive Education for the Secondary School Students with Special Needs at Developing Country

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Abstract

The authors' objective in this study is to assess the preparedness of secondary schools in the southern part of a developing country in implementing inclusive education for learners with disabilities. The study utilized the qualitative research method, which was narrative research design used in interviewing mainstream teachers, school administrators, SNS and parents and FGD and observation checklists were utilized to collect data. The study showed a neutral attitude toward the idea of inclusive education among the teachers, as some teachers had positive attitudes and saw the benefits of the programme, while some stated the following difficulties: They often do not have enough resources; they do not have proper training. Likewise, parents' perceptions can also be categorized as having a positive view about the involvement of SNS in mainstream education and the other fold views negatively regarding the consequences. However, the researchers observed critical gaps in implementation of the inclusive education policy such as student-teacher ratio, insufficient resources and inadequate teaching aids to cater for the special needs students, and the teachers' absence of professional development in teaching special needs students. However, the study highlights the need for the implementation of the policy on inclusion and avails suggestions to enhance learners' preparedness and promote equal chances for success in education for all students.

Keywords: Present status, Readiness, Inclusive education, Physical facilities, Quality education, Teachers training, Secondary education, SNS (special need students)

DOI: 10.7176/JEP/15-11-05

Publication date: October 30th 2024

1. Introduction

The idea of inclusive education advocates for all students, including those with special needs, to have equal access to education. To fully integrate children with a range of abilities into all areas of education that other children may access and enjoy is to practice inclusion. It entails actual modifications and adaptations made by traditional educational institutions and classes to satisfy the needs of every child (Loreman.T, 2002). Many students with impairments are thought to be able to attend school more easily through inclusive education. This implies that a greater number of special need students than previously will be studied in ordinary classrooms (Mukhopadhyay. S, 2009). A student in an inclusive classroom usually just needs to show that he or she is not losing out by being included in the class, even if they aren't necessarily making any significant progress (Wilson, 2020). Teachers, administrators, and parents must invest time, effort, and dedication in implementing inclusive classroom practices, embracing student diversity, and acquiring knowledge through professional development activities (Kumar & Behera, 2012). With the backing of the administration, parents, and the chance to acquire new skills through training, teachers are able to rise to the occasion and take on the responsibility (Saloviita, 2019). Promoting inclusive practices and raising the academic performance of students require an understanding of the connection between instructors' preparedness and success in executing inclusive education programs (Demichenko et al., 2021). Teachers' readiness and skill are essential to ensuring inclusive education is implemented successfully (Dioso et al., 2022).

2. Statement of the problem

Developing nations frequently have several obstacles in their efforts to provide all students, particularly those with special needs, with high-quality education. A number of elements, including adaptable curricula, teaching techniques, accessible materials, the availability of support services, and assessment protocols, are necessary for inclusion to be successful in secondary school mainstream classes. But some of the main obstacles to adopting inclusive education include a lack of infrastructure, a lack of finances, and poor teacher preparation. The goal of the study was to evaluate how prepared emerging nations were to meet these obstacles and offer inclusive

education to all children of secondary schools at southern area of developing country.

3. Research Purpose and Question

This study aims to explore the school readiness for implementing Inclusive Education (IE) for Students with Special Needs (SNS) at secondary school of southern area in developing country. As the case of practice, it was studied on southern area Schools for collecting data regarding readiness, practice and challenges of implementing IE for SNS.

- To what extent the schools are ready for implementing inclusive education for students with special needs?
- What is teachers' attitude towards inclusion of SNS in the mainstream classroom of secondary school?
- What challenges teachers face regarding inclusion of SNS in the mainstream classroom?

4. Literature Review

Integral education means the education of a child with cognizance of individual differences that focus on equal education rights of every child. This concept has now spread all over the world premised on the facet of education as a basic human right. In most developing countries, there are different contingencies that hinder the implementation of inclusive education especially for learners with special needs. Teachers' preparedness to foster effective teaching and learning for children in developing countries therefore depends on the following factors; Policy Environment and Reforms and Facilities and Services including infrastructural policies and facilities, and social policies and perceptions. (Ainscow et al., 2006) stated that Thus, the latter has resulted in the signing of various international treaties and national policies by the governments of developing countries to enhance the access of children to education. For example, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and rehabilitation cum education rights gives importance for education integration. Nevertheless, the implementation of these policies as actualized strategies of effective action tends to be restricted because of inadequate resources coupled with the absence of political commitment. Teachers' willingness is important concerning the integrated pedagogy of inclusion. Meta-analysis studies reveal that many teachers in the developing countries do not possess adequate preparation and tools that facilitate the implementation of adequate instruction for learners with disabilities (Chhabra et al., 2010). Another factor indicating that teachers require support is that professional development for teachers must be a continuous lifelong process for implementing and enhancing the professional knowledge on inclusion (Florian, 2008). In the case of developing nations, particular challenges emerge relative to ready infrastructures, or more simply, accessible classrooms and readings. (Miles & Singal, 2010) revealed that schools often lack requirements features for implementing the inclusive policies including ramps, teaching aids, and facility for accessible toilets. This infrastructural weakness acts as a major impairment to the achievement of inclusive education.

A country's culture with regard to disability and inclusion influences readiness for implementing inclusive education. Some of the problems, which are faced when implementing the integration of students with special needs into mainstream education, include; Many developing countries still have negative perception and stigmatization of disability (Stubbs, 2008). Awareness creation and alteration of people's perceptions is therefore a major goal in advocating for inclusion.

Some developing countries are coming up with ways and measures of supporting the education of children with disabilities but several barriers exist. For instance, in Bangladesh there have been strides made to fulfill the agenda of inclusive education but these have been hindered by; Untrained teachers and Limited resources (Ahmad et.al 2012). Likewise, in Kenya, despite policy changes, the general functioning of policies on inclusive education is hindered due to lack of funding as well as lack of adequate and appropriate teachers' training (Kiarie, 2014).

This paper focuses on the fact that the readiness of the developing countries to implement the ideas of inclusive education for secondary school students who have some special needs is heterogeneous. In my opinion, this fighting requires practice, starting from the policy level, in teacher training, infrastructural conditions, and social perceptions. Some of these barriers have been met partially though they are still a major thorn in ensuring all the students receive a good education regardless of their disability status.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Method

A narrative research design was adopted for this qualitative research method. This study was used to investigate in-depth activities, processes, events, or individuals using various data collection techniques, with participants chosen from Southern area of developing country. Mainstream School teachers, SN students along with their parents and school administrators were selected as samples for this study. As data collection instruments, FGD, interview schedule and an Observation checklist had been used. Three FGD had been used to conduct interviews with the Parents along with students. And Interview (One-on-One) schedule had been used for mainstream teachers contain ten questions regarding about their attitude toward Inclusive education and Readiness for welcoming students with special needs at southern area schools of developing country. The FGD and interviews had taken (20–35) and (35–40) minutes per session. Observation checklist had been used to observe SNS and the infrastructural facilities of the classroom

5.2 Sampling procedure of the study

The study areas were purposively chosen from the schools which were located at the southern area of developing country like Bangladesh. The population of the study included the Secondary schools that had admitted special need students, mainstream teachers, and Parents of SNS.

5.3 Sample size

Having quantified this, while the literature is not clearly prescriptive in its recommendations on the number of individuals that should be part of any given study, some literature recommends that you may need as few as 10 to 50 Participants for any study depending on the study being conducted (Creswell, 2012). For this study five teachers, fourteen parents of special needs students along with them, four school administrators were expected to gather information. The total sample size was 23.

5.4 Data collection instruments and analysis techniques

Interview Schedule entails finding out what one or more participants think about a subject. The interview schedule had been employed for school teachers and administrators to understand attitude towards Inclusive education, how they ensure quality education for inclusive classroom, how Schools were included their students with SN and how they prepared for welcoming SN students. Through observation, it had been seen how the inclusive classroom was, how the facilities of the school were, how the use of material for SNS was, how the preparation for inclusive education was and how school was ready for implementing inclusive education for students with special needs. In this study with the consent of parents, FGD had been conducted in the presence of SN students. The collected data was analysed thematically. During the data analysis process, no new themes were considered; instead, the themes we were chosen inductively.

6. Ethical consideration

Therefore, in this research ethical issue like informed consent, intrusiveness, secrecy, and anonymity was taken into consideration. This enabled the consideration of the research location's condition and participants' welfare. Participants kept on being informed of their participation and the outcome of the study was made sure that the participants' identities would not be disclosed.

7. Result and Discussion

The results of qualitative findings revealed that there were some barriers to offer the inclusive education for SN students in the southern area of Bangladesh. The findings of this study were discussed in the discussion chapter. The results had been presented to five sections with a different theme as follows:

7.1 Present status of inclusive education

The UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) led the global movement known as Education for All (EFA), which aimed to address the learning requirements of all children, youth, and adults by the year 2015. The government of Bangladesh also accepted EFA. As a means of achieving the goals of Education for All (EFA), the government also focused to develop IE. Therefore, Government took different initiatives in the past few years that had the potential to advance IE (Malak et al., 2014). The findings from the recently-published (Report on National Survey on Persons with Disabilities (NSPD) 2021, December 2022) revealed that more than half of student with disabilities in Bangladesh were not enrolled in formal education. It also showed that only 35%students with special needs were enrolled in secondary education (UNICEF Bangladesh). According to (National Education Policy, 2010), it was expected to ensure the participation of all

students in general education curriculum to provide supports, resources and to deal with students' needs. These students may include children with disabilities, students from diverse ethnic backgrounds, girls, and students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds (Azam, 2015). In accordance with the (Development and Climate Change, 2010), Bangladesh made inclusion a reform agenda item in its educational system. As a result, laws promoting inclusive education had been passed that allow special need students to attend regular schools.

7.2 Teachers Attitude towards Inclusive education

There had been a positive change in teacher to accept inclusive education in secondary schools in Bangladesh. This study was also found that, secondary school teachers have mostly positive attitudes towards inclusive education. Three out of Five teachers (T-1, T-3, and T-4) appreciated the inclusive education as a good initiative and they believed that readiness for welcoming SN student at mainstream schools is more important. (Rahaman & Sutherland, 2022) also found that the majority of the teachers supported Inclusive education. Teachers are aiming to remove barriers for SN students and improve accessibility in the learning environment, promoting a nondiscriminatory, equal learning environment for all members of the society. Some teachers motivated the inclusive education and expressed that "IE helps to eradicate the stigma associated with disabilities among people. The SN students got to play and learn with general students, also IE assists in developing the skills of the students with disabilities. The very similar result revealed by some of the studies (Boyle, et al., 2020). Some of the teachers suggested that the Government can make them a part of mainstream schools by establishing special units in each school or can increase the number of special schools. They also believed that only trained teachers can teach them. Austrian educators' perspectives on including students with disabilities were also favorable, while the teachers stated that co-teaching with friendly and courteous school climate were the two most crucial elements affecting inclusion success (Singh, 2020). One of the teachers explained that many SN students got themselves nervous to communicate with others. Therefore, Teachers made them involved in different activities of class work. It was quite beneficial to SN students which was gradually developed them. However, there were some different views among teachers. One teacher (T-5) disagreed with the previous statement and exclaimed that through this IE (Inclusive education), General students from the class had been disturbed through SN students. Similarly, Some teachers in Pakistan had a negative attitude towards Inclusive education (IE), they believed that implementation of inclusive education is unfeasible due to its Eurocentric approach and societal challenges, and also made it an intimidating task that requires careful consideration of pros and cons (Rahaman & Sutherland, 2022). Previous study investigated the similar views of teachers on inclusive education in relation to special needs in 112 ordinary schools in Cambodia. They proved that teachers had very unfavorable opinions on inclusion. According to their findings, 86.83% of the teachers had extremely unfavorable opinions regarding SN students. It was mentioned by a few teachers that these students ought to be sent to special schools (Kuroda et al., 2017). It was also discovered that some teachers perceive inclusive education as a burden, focusing on emotional and behavioral issues of students with special needs, which disrupts the educational process (Galaterou & Antoniou, 2017). There was a mixed reaction from teachers regarding the adequacy of teachers' skills and attitude to support the implementation of inclusive education. This result of the study is similar to the study conducted by (Rahman & Sutherland, 2022).

According to the previous study it was exclaimed that Parents whose children attend inclusive classes are generally more accepting of all students, but parents whose children attend at mainstream classes are more critical for accepting Special need students (Paseka & Schwab, 2020). The present study stated that there was a mixed reaction from parents regarding attitude towards inclusive education. (P-3, P-5 and P-6) claimed that inclusive education is the great opportunity for special need students to expose their intelligence. P-1 and P-8 also agreed with the statement and added that inclusive education is a boon of the society. Similarly, the previous study exclaimed that it is not only a concept; it can have benefits ranging from in the family to the entire nation (Paseka & Schwab, 2020).

On the other side, the majority of parents, particularly of children with disabilities, believed that IE had a negative impact on their children and they also added that SN students were unable to cope up with their general peers and it is making them even more susceptible to various forms of abuse, such as being bullied, teased, or neglected (Magumise & Sefotho, 2018).

7.3 Ensuring Quality Education for inclusive classroom

The present study explored that Inclusive education in Bangladesh required teachers training and preparation, infrastructural development, accessible resources, inclusive teaching strategies, and fostering cooperation among government, schools, and communities which were ensuring quality education. In previous study, it was found that fundamental principles aimed to ensure high-quality educational provision and encouraged inclusive education through increasing participation, education and training, organizational culture, supportive structures, flexible resourcing systems, policies, and legislation (Reddy, 2016). According to SDG 4.2, inclusive education allowed students with disabilities to participate equally and effectively with students without disabilities.

However, from the present study it was discovered that Bangladesh had a few specific discussions about shadow teachers for SN students. Similarly, it also revealed by the administrators (A-1, A-4, A-5) that there was a lack of shadow teacher management system and Bangladesh followed a team-teaching method at inclusive classrooms. Other School administrators also reported the same things. They exclaimed that there were no shadow teachers for children with special needs, but subject-based teachers provided assistance. In the previous study it was found that educational system aims to accommodate SN students in each class through team teaching and it also depended on disability types (Nishio et al., 2020). Accordance with the previous study the results showed that shadow teachers applied minor adjustments and strategies that made SN students succeed in mainstream classrooms (NG, 2015). In the present study, some teachers (T-3, T-5,) exposed about the barriers of implementing inclusive education. Insufficient teaching materials and lack of knowledge about strategies are major barriers to inclusion at inclusive education. Three of the teachers (T-1, T-2, and T-3) thought that materials are insufficient, and they need different strategies for special need students. They also lack appropriate resources and specialized skills to help special need students. According to Ferdous et al. (2024), they discovered that special education students in mainstream schools are devoid of several essential teaching aids, and that this deficiency hinders the process of providing inclusive education. Two teachers expressed interest in creating their own materials and also stated that it was not impossible for teachers to create materials for inclusive classroom. There was no special scholarship system for special needs students, but they were given priority in government-provided stipends. Special students were evaluated similarly to general students, with no separate time allotted during examinations.

7.4 Lack of Teachers' training

The result of the study revealed that most of the school teachers have got training on their teaching subject under Continuous Professional Development, but they do not have training for inclusive education. Similarly, in previous study some participants expressed that they did not get any training on inclusive education alongside they faced problem because of insufficient teacher training resources and highlight the importance of professional learning, practice and engagement, and also specific training content (Siddik & Kawai, 2020). In the present study, two of the participants (T-2, T-5) explained that only four of the one and a half hour seminars that they attended dealt with inclusive education. That was insufficient preparation for understanding a novel topic or idea. They also required specialized instruction in inclusive education. According to the previous study, it was found that 45% of regular education teachers thought that they lacked the necessary training to effectively work with special education children (Alshehri, 2016). On the other hand, some of the participants (A-2, A-3) did not even think that teachers need training on inclusive education. However, they thought that only segregation school teachers need this training. According to previous study (Azam, 2015) it was found that administrators' negative attitudes towards school support may stem from their concern about the inability to provide adequate support to teachers for inclusion of SN students into inclusive classrooms. But this finding is totally different from present study. However, the present study explore that administrators have positive attitude towards inclusive education. But the teachers' readiness of Implementing Inclusive Education for the secondary level Students with Special Needs are not as suitable as schools need

7.5 Accessibility and Physical facilities for students with special needs

Every participant (A-1, A-2, A-3, A-4) of the present study expressed that there is a separate quota for SN students and they get admission to the Govt. mainstream school through this quota and also there was no discussion about special education teacher. But the previous study revealed that Three to five students with SN student can enroll in regular classes and a secondary special education teacher are hired for full-time (Gebhardt et al., 2015). In the present study two Administrators (A-1, A-2) exclaimed that there is considerable deficiency in their movement and overall management. They also added that there is no provision of ramps in the stairs, no provision of separate seating in the washroom and class rooms. School Building classrooms did not have a code or sign system. Also, there are no special facilities for students with special needs in their school. Moreover, the previous study also found the similar result. Therefore, the teachers believe that traditional education classrooms may not effectively assist students with disabilities due to lack of accessible technology, displays, elevators, and restroom facilities (Alshehri, 2016).

8. Conclusion

The state of preparedness for the provision of inclusive education for the secondary special need's students in the perceived developing world setting can therefore be seen as complex. This study highlighted several critical areas requiring attention: of teachers, construction and enhancement of structures, and the availability of low-cost teaching aids (Ahsan & Sharma, 2018). There was appreciation of the gains made through inclusive education while other teachers were concerned with issues relating to resource mobilization, and teachers' self-

efficacy (Rahman & Sutherland, 2022). Regarding the last hypothesis, both primary and secondary care givers revealed parental attitudes comprising of positive support as well as anxieties (Magumise & Sefotho, 2018). Thus, to support the inclusive education success it is needed to solve the mentioned barriers and provide the opportunities for the teacher professional development and to create the right school climate. It is hoped that by adopting the strategies highlighted in this study, the developing nations will be in a position to effectively narrow down the education gap hence promoting fair treatment and equitable education for every child who ought to be given a chance to attain his/her full potential in life.

9. Acknowledgement

Finally, we would like to express the gratitude to all the people who have been of great support throughout this research. There is need to thank our supervisor Dr. Biplob Mallick for the unbiased criticisms and views he offered. We would also like to thank those teachers, school administrators, students and parents who consented for me to interview them and those who participated in the focus group discussions so that we could get their feedbacks and perceptions. To the friendly respondents in this research who contribute their consent wish this research could not have been accomplished. Additionally, the appreciation would go to the team members for availing and providing all the supports needs for this study. Finally, all the credit of encouragement and patience goes to our family and friends.

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