

Status And Perception Of Elementary School Teachers In Relation To Inclusive Education: A Study In Barpeta District Of Assam

¹*Kalita Anamika

Abstract:

The Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE), 2009 mandates free and compulsory elementary education to all children including the Children with Special Needs (CWSN) (samgra.education.gov.in). As such now the all elementary schools welcome these children in the regular schools in a common classroom through inclusive education. In this regard an important element of inclusive education involves ensuring that all teachers are prepared to teach the CWSN effectively. Inclusion cannot be realized unless teachers are empowered with proper knowledge, skill, training, values and necessary attitudes to guide the CWSN to succeed. This paper intends to explore the perspective of elementary school teachers towards Children with Special Needs. 180 elementary school teachers were taken as sample and collected data using semi structured questionnaire. It was found that 61% teachers are not trained to teach CWSN and most of the teachers face academic and non academic challenges in dealing with them.

Keywords: CWSN, Teacher, Inclusive, Education, Elementary.

INTRODUCTION

INCLUSION IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION:

An individual is born in the world to live the life. It is the education which helps the individual to lead a worth full life in this world with the training of various experiences of life so as to draw out the best in him. Education helps the individual to acquire knowledge, experiences and to develop skills, habits, attitude with the help of which the individual can realize his/her "self". The aim of education is to develop the "whole" of the children. The agencies of imparting education specially the formal one like school can realize this objective only when, they hold two ingredients- "relationship with students" and the belief that "every child has strength". With this view each school should welcome all the students. No development can be considered complete unless it is inclusive (Mahanta, Borah, Adhikari, 2017. P. 13-14). We know that no two individual are alike in respect to their physical, mental, emotional, social, intellectual and in other aspects. Human variation and differences are natural. These variations reflect in the schools. If the school can impart education to all the children with their variation, the education of all children will improve.

Inclusion in the context of education means the quality education which can meet the educational needs of all children in the classroom. Inclusion in education refers to the placement and education of children with special needs in regular classroom with the children of the same age who do not have such kind of needs. Inclusion rejects the use of special school or class room to separate students with several variations from the students without the same. Inclusion in education is restructuring school as the common place for all children where they can learn together without any discrimination. It secures opportunities for the students with disabilities to spend time and learn alongside their non-disabled peers in a general education classroom. Thus inclusive practice is about all children experiencing quality education with the peers. Societal requirements and human right perspective necessitate equal treatment of each and every child with dignity and respect. (Mahanta, Borah, Adhikari, 2017. P. 15-16). "School should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions" (Article 3, UNESCO 1994). The ultimate goal for inclusion in education is to create a unified school system that may serve all students together (Lipsky and Gartner 1998). Inclusion is indeed an educational approach and philosophy that provides all students with collective membership and greater opportunity for academic and social achievement. Inclusion in education is thus an approach towards equality for students with special needs. Inclusion in education can be defined as educational arrangement in which teachers have the instructional and other support to foster the participation of all learners in the society valuing relationship with peers and adults (Crawford and Porter 2004).

MAIN FEATURES OF INCLUSION IN EDUCATION:

The features about inclusion or inclusion in education are-

- ❖ Inclusion in education is an approach towards bringing all children together in a common educational community.
- ❖ Inclusion in education is an effort to ensure that all students gain access to knowledge, skills and information needed for their all round development.

¹*Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Anundoram Barooah Academy Degree College, Pathsala, Barpeta , Assam PIN: 781325, Email:anamikakalita180@gmail.com
DOI: 10.53555/V24I1/400180

- ❖ Inclusion in education leads to a sense of belongingness of the students within the classroom community.
- ❖ It mainly involves increasing participation for all, be it children or adult in the teaching learning situation.
- ❖ Inclusion in education is a means or way of realizing the goal of equality of educational opportunities.
- ❖ Inclusion in education is about addressing differences, sharing the ideas and crossing boundaries in the context of education.
- ❖ The idea of inclusion in education is a revolutionary contrast to exclusion, discrimination and limitations to access education on the ground of solve disabilities or disadvantages.
- ❖ Inclusion in education emphasizes on the existing variation amongst individual without creating division amongst group of people in the educational community.
- ❖ Inclusion in education aims at bringing social reform to acknowledge the right of children to quality education.
- ❖ Inclusion in education in a holistic approach rejecting the concept of special classroom in special schools. Rather it emphasizes integration between the children with diverse needs and the children without.
- ❖ Inclusion in education is the philosophy that provides collective membership to the students in the educational society.

Thus, inclusion in education is an approach towards quality education with collective membership to the students in educational society (Mahanta, Borah, Adhikari, 2017. P. 17-18).

INCLUSION IN EDUCATION FOR THE CHILDREN WITH DIVERSE NEEDS- IT'S RATIONALE

Education is the fundamental right of every individual guaranteed by the law. Every child has the right to access to the educational opportunity to meet this goal of educational opportunity with equity. This approach focuses on ensuring all children's need is met in a classroom. Inclusion in education is an approach which covers up another group which forms a very important part of equity issue with special reference to education. The group consists of the children with diverse/special needs. Before discussing inclusion of this group of children in education we should have a clear concept of such children and their special needs to identify such children in the "inclusive context" (Mahanta, Borah, Adhikari, 2017. P. 54-55).

WHO ARE THE CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (CWSN)?

We know that the world is full of diversities and individual differences. Most of the children possess average ability, capacity and potentiality with regard to their growth and development in one or the other dimensions of the personality. Individual differences are natural, no two children are identical, but many of the children deviate too much from the expected range of the normal or average possession of the one or the other traits of their personality so much that their needs becomes special care, attention; and measures for the adequate adjustment. These groups of children are termed as "exceptional children or children with special need". The children with special or diverse needs are found to suffer from extremes or excesses. The term exceptional in fact means "rare or unusual". These children have noticeable above average or below average traits and characteristics that makes them fundamentally different from the general or average population of children. These children begin to demonstrate signs of their exceptionality from their very birth or during their developmental stages. It is important to note here that these exceptional children can be categorized into two categories- (a) Fortunate like gifted, creative, talented, who possess capacities and potentialities in abundance in one or the other field of life and the (b) Unfortunates, they are called disabled. They are found to suffer a lot from one or the other deficits, deficiencies and inadequacies with regard to their potentialities, growth and development. Therefore, these children are termed as exceptionally superior or inferior, capable or incapable in one or the other aspect of personality development. The needs of such children are very special as they deviate significantly from other average children of their age and grade. Crow and Crow defined "Exceptional" as applied to a trait or to a person possessing the trait up to the extent of deviation from normal possession of the traits is so great that because of it the individual warrants or receives special attention from his fellows and his behavior responses and activities are there by affected. Again Telford and Sawrey [1977] defined exceptional children as "those children who deviate from the normal in physical, mental, emotional or social characteristics to such a degree that they require special social and educational services develop their maximum capacity" (Mahanta, Borah, Adhikari, 2017. P.56).

Exceptional children represents a quite diversified group of positive, negative and multiple exceptionalities to a multiple number of aspects or dimensions of the growth and development of one's personality on the basis of following aspects-

- **Physical track:** some children exhibit an abundant capacity with regard to the physical growth with sound health, sizable height, and weight, strong sensory and motor capacities. On the Negative side some children exhibit serious defects, deficiencies and other sensory motor deficiencies.
- **Mental track:** some exceptional children may demonstrate intellectual superiority and creative functioning on the other hand some exceptional children show marked deficit in their intellectual functioning.
- **Social track:**, some exceptional children may demonstrate high above average ability and capacity for social interaction, social adjustment, social cohesiveness and leadership. On the other hand, some exceptional children are found to be socially deviant and troublesome in maintaining social company and social harmony.
- **Emotional track:** some exceptional children demonstrate a high degree of emotional intelligence and emotional maturity. On the other hand, some exceptional children suffer from serious emotional disturbances.

- There are some exceptional children who demonstrate a mixture of the multiple characteristics in exceptionality in the various traits of personality (Mahanta, Borah, Adhikari, 2017. P.56).

OBJECTIVES

The study intends to study-

- Challenges faced by the teacher in teaching CWSN.
- Status of training of the teachers to teach CWSN.
- Perception of teachers towards inclusive education.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to the following aspects

- Confined to only Barpeta district of Assam.
- Teachers who teach from class I to V, were taken as sample.

METHODOLOGY

Study area: The study was conducted in Barpeta district of Assam, India.

Sample: 180 primary school teachers were selected as sample from three educational blocks.

Tool used: Semi structured questionnaire was used to collect data.

Data: Both primary and secondary data were collected for the study.

Data Analysis: Simple percentage and graphical analysis were used as statistical tool of data analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Challenges faced by the teachers in teaching CWSN

Here the research question “What kind of challenges faced by the teachers in teaching CWSN” is discussed on the basis of the responses given by the teachers to the related question of the inclusive education questionnaire for teachers. The challenges faced by the teachers were categorized on the basis of the views of the teachers. Response given by the teachers were analyzed and same has been tabulated as follows-

Table No. 1: Challenges faced by the teacher in teaching CWSN.

Respondent	Sample	Academic	Non academic	Both
Assistant Teacher	180	47	41	92
		26.11%	22.77%	51.11%

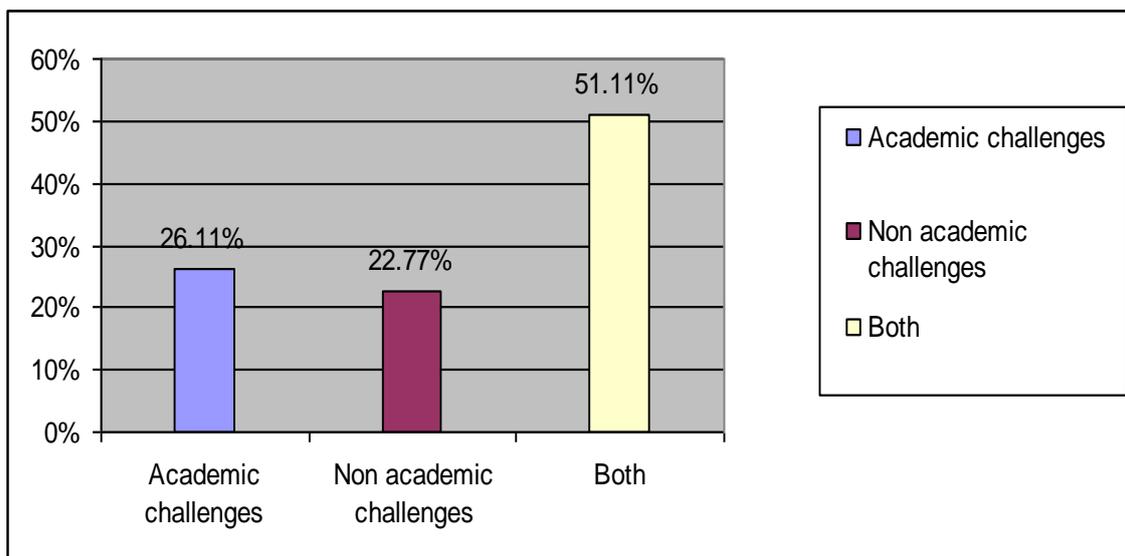


Figure No- 1: Shows the challenges faced by the teachers in teaching CWSN.

Interpretation: The table No. 1 reveals that 26.11% teachers face academic challenges, 22.77% Face Non-academic challenges and 51.11% teachers face both kinds of challenges in teaching CWSN.

Status of training of the teachers to teach CWSN.

Answer to the research question “what is the status of training of the teachers to teach CWSN?”

Teachers were asked to respond to the related question of the inclusive education questionnaire for teachers. Responses were analyzed and categorized as follows.

Table No. 2: Status of training of the teachers to teach CWSN.

Respondent	Sample	Trained		Untrained
		Regularly trained	Not regularly trained	
Assistant Teachers	180	32	38	110
		17.77%	21.11%	61.11%

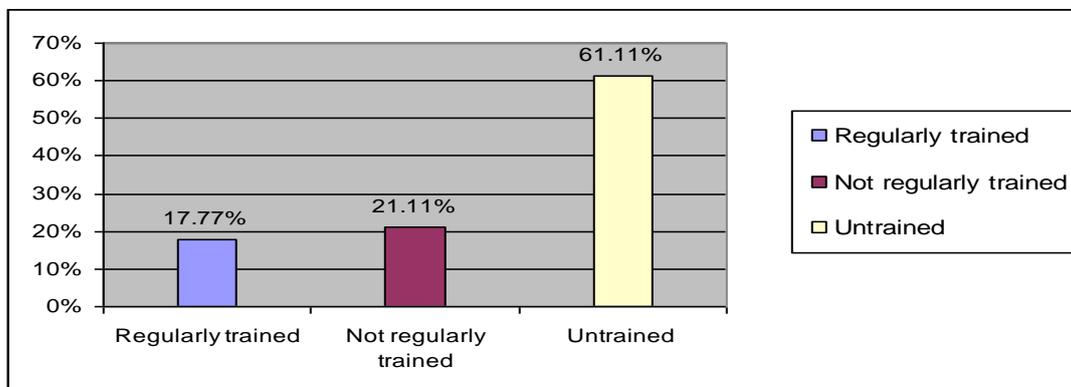


Figure No. 2 shows the status of training of the teachers to teach CWSN.

Interpretation:

Table No. 2 shows that only 17.77% teachers are getting regular training to teach CWSN, 21.11% teachers are getting training but not on the regular basis whereas 61.11% teachers are not getting any kind of training to teach CWSN.

Overall perception of teachers towards inclusive education

Table No. 3: Overall perception of teachers towards inclusive education.

Sl. No.	Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	Like to teach the CWSN	140 77.77%	20 11.11%	20 11.11%
2	Feel comfortable to teach CWSN	96 53.33%	41 22.78%	43 23.88%
3	Support the idea of Inclusive education	97 53.88%	39 21.66%	44 24.44%
4	Get necessary support from the parents of CWSN	107 59.44%	33 18.33%	40 22.22%
5	Getting special training to deal with severe disabilities	40 22%	0 0	140 78%
6	Inclusion won't work at any schools that have too many learners	85 47.22%	42 23.33%	53 29.44%
7	CWSN can learn together with normal children	63 35%	51 28.33%	66 36.66%
8	Face difficulties in teaching CWSN	96 53.33%	40 22.23%	44 24.44%
9	CWSN distracts other students in the class	0 0	0 0	180 100%
10	Face problem in maintaining discipline when CWSN are in the class	63 35%	16 8.89%	101 56.11%
11	Face problem while applying new method	150 83.33%	0 0	30 16.66%
12	Difficult to meet the needs of CWSN in regular classroom	163 96.56%	0 0	17 9.44%
13	Face negative behaviors from CWSN	6 3.33%	0 0	174 96.67%
14	CWSN pay attention properly in the class	67 37.22%	30 16.66%	83 46.11%
15	Possible to involve CWSN in the all classroom activities	20 11.11%	3 1.67%	157 87.22%
16	Inclusion can work at all schools	20 11.11%	70 38.88%	90 50%
17	Crisis of necessary teaching learning materials to teach CWSN	180 100%	0 0	0 0
18	It is pleasurable to teach CWSN	130 72.22%	30 16.66%	20 11.11%

Interpretation:

- The table No 3: reveals that 77.77% teachers like to teach CWSN, 11.11% are Neutral and other 11.11% don't agree that they like to teach CWSN.
- 53.33% teachers feel comfortable to teach CWSN, 22.78% have neutral feeling but 23.88% teachers do not feel comfortable to teach CWSN.
- 53.88% teachers support the idea of inclusive education whereas 21.66% have neutral viewpoint and 24.44% teachers do not support the idea of IE.
- 59.44% teachers revealed that they get necessary support from the parents of CWSN, 18.33% have neutral response but 22.22% teachers responded that they do not get support from parents of CWSN.
- 22% teachers are getting special training to deal with severe disabilities but 77% teachers said that they do not get special training to deal with severe disabilities.
- 44.22% teachers think that inclusion won't work at any schools that have too many learners. 23.33% have neutral view whereas 29.44% teachers do to agree with it.
- 35% teachers agreed that CWSN can learn together with normal children, 28.33% teacher have neutral view but 36.66% teacher are not agree that CWSN can learn with normal children.
- 53.33% teacher agree that they face difficulties in teaching CWSN, 22.23% have neutral views whereas 24.44% teachers viewed that they don't face difficulties in teaching CWSN.
- 35% teachers face problem in maintaining discipline in the class when there have CWSN, 8.89% have neutral view and 56.11% teachers response that they don't face problem in maintaining discipline in the classroom when there are CWSN.
- 83.33% teachers face problem while applying a new method in the class and 16.66% viewed that they don't face problem.
- 90.56% teachers agree that it is difficult to meet the needs of CWSN in regular education classroom, 9.44% are not agreeing with it.
- 3.33% teachers were agreeing that they face negative behavior from the CWSN but 96.67% teachers were not agreeing with it.
- 37.22% teachers were agree that CWSN pay attention properly in the class, 16.66% have neutral view and 46.11% teachers were not agree with it.
- 11.11% teachers viewed positively that it is possible to involve CWSN in all classroom activities, 1.67% teachers have neutral views but 87.22% teachers have negative viewpoint about it.
- 11.11% teachers were agreeing with that inclusion can work at all schools, 38.88% have neutral views whereas 50% teachers were not agree with it.
- 100% teachers were agreeing that they face crisis of necessary teaching learning materials to teach CWSN.
- 72.22% teachers feel pleasure to teach CWSN, 16.66% have neutral views whereas 11.11% were not agreeing with it.

The significance of the present study lies in terms of the Universal progress and development of inclusive education. Inclusive education is not only a system of education but a movement, movement from segregation to inclusion, movement to equality, to social justice and for securing the basic human rights of the CWSN who are still being in the race of getting equality in education. Therefore, every member of the society is responsible to support, help and contribute in this movement for its success and development. Inclusion is about changing the traditional concept of integrated system. It is about bringing revolutionary changes in the process of education. But it is not an overnight job. Successful implementation of inclusion is not possible without bringing change in the traditional believes and values. Inclusive education is a most welcoming approach but is not free from obstacles, problems and barriers. To make inclusion a reality, we must strive to overcome these barriers of inclusion. Priority should be given to the Pre-service and In-service teacher education and training. Special teachers should be appointed in the schools to teach CWSN effectively as per their nature. Curriculum is another area that needs reformation.. There is no specific curriculum structure for CWSN to help them remain in the main stream education. Therefore, curriculum should be designed suitably for the CWSN. Essential support services like-special education teachers, experts, resource room facilities, aids and equipments should be provided to the schools. School environment should be modified for the teachers and students. An inclusive environment should try to be developed in the school. Collaboration should be obtained from state, family, teachers, administrators and community members. Teachers should develop interpersonal skills and collaborative practice.

Acknowledgement: I express my sincere gratitude to the people who co operated and gave support during the entire study specifically in the time of data collection. My gratitude also goes for my husband who helped me very much with great sincerity.

Conflict of interest: None.

References

- [1].Das, P. (2014). *Special Education*. Guwahati: Surya Prakas.
- [2].Deka, B. Nath, K. & Hussain, R. (2014). *Special Education*. Guwahati: Ashok Book Stall.
- [3].Hazarika, B. & Kalita, L. (2016). *Inclusive Education*. Guwahati-1: Ashok Book Stall.
- [4].Mahanta, N. N. Borah, H. N. & Adhikari, A. (2017). *Inclusion in Education*. Guwahati: Mani Manik Prakash.
- [5].Ministry of Education Government of India. (August 17, 2020). *Samagra Siksha*.
<https://www.samagra.education.gov.in>