

Exploring the Challenges of Special Needs Students at Secondary School of Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify common challenges faced by students with special needs in Bangladesh's mainstream secondary schools. Data was collected from 30 students with special needs, 30 general students, 30 mainstream teachers, 30 parents, and 12 school administrators using FGD and interviews. The study reveals that inclusive education is acceptable and seen as a means to reduce social discrimination. However, there are unsettling findings regarding the provision of quality education and physical facilities for inclusive classrooms. Despite a lack of physical facilities, schools accept a variety of students, but teachers are not always prepared to support students with special needs. Despite initiatives to train teachers, there is a lack of trained teachers in schools to care for special needs students. The findings are expected to influence policies and policymakers to ensure quality education and physical facilities in mainstream classrooms, reducing the challenges faced by special needs students.

Keywords: Conceptualization, Inclusive education, Social discrimination, Physical facilities Quality education, Accessibility, Secondary education, Special Need students

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive classrooms aim to include special needs students in regular classroom settings, ensuring they are not isolated from their typically developing peers and that they are not receiving any disadvantages as a result (Wilson, 2020). According to Ministry of Education (MoE, 2004) Bangladesh's educational system has undergone significant transformations. All modifications were implemented in an effort to improve the educational scenario in Bangladesh. Simultaneously, the government has undertaken a number of policy reform initiatives to enhance secondary education quality (Ahsan & Burnip, 2007). Inclusive Education (IE) is one of those initiatives that have been viewed as an educational reform that seeks to reduce the barriers for welcoming all children, regardless of their diversity and backgrounds, into regular education (Mayor, 1994). Within Bangladesh's educational system, the idea of teaching special needs students in regular classrooms is a relatively new one (Ahmmed et al., 2012). The 2010 Education Policy acknowledged inclusive education as a viable strategy for ensuring education for all students and emphasized the significance of safeguarding the education rights of special needs students (Kene et al., 2021). Additionally, Bangladesh's constitution ensures that special needs students have the same access to facilities, respect, and basic human rights as other students as well as social equality. The study sought to identify the factors that are seen to be obstacles to providing secondary school special needs students with a quality education in a mainstream classroom. Four participants suggested inclusive education could eliminate social inequality among different social classes, despite the majority claiming inclusive education refers to education. (Khan, 2011). The inclusion of special needs students in regular classrooms is neither an Australian nor a recent development. The right of special needs students to receive an education in regular classrooms has been

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confirmed by international accords, and Australian law supports that decision (Forlin & Chris, 2016). The subject teacher may occasionally forbid anything. Even they had a lot of trouble hiring a writer for their written test (Mallick& Begum, 2023). Austrian educators' perspectives on including students with disabilities were favorable (Nishioet al., 2020). Three to five special needs students are enrolled in regular classes, with a secondary special education teacher hired full-time (Gebhardt et al., 2015). Parents whose children attend inclusive classes are generally more accepting of all students, but parents whose children attend mainstream classes are more critical of all students (Paseka & Schwab, 2020). The maximum of parents, particularly of special needs students believed that IE had a negative impact on their children; and were unable to catch up with their "normal" peers, making them even more susceptible to various forms of abuse, such as being bullied, teased, or neglected (Magumise & Sefotho, 2018). Teachers believed regular education classrooms were ineffective for serving children with impairments due to lack of displays, accessible technology, and amenities(Alshehri, 2017).

Special needs students face difficulties due to inadequate accessibility tools like braille books and hearing aids. High-quality education and student ownership are crucial, and teachers use multimedia sparingly and occasionally substitute it for teaching aids (Mallick& Begum, 2023). A study focuses on instructional techniques for boosting student enrollment in inclusive classrooms in Bangladeshi schools. It examines teachers' perceptions of special education settings and the Ordinary Education Initiative, which is headed by special educators. The study highlights the importance of effective strategies for inclusive classrooms. To find an answer to this question, the authors have reviewed the available literature on secondary education for special needs students in Bangladesh.

Research questions of the study

The main objective of the study was to identify the common challenges faced by special needs students at mainstream secondary school of Bangladesh. For fulfilling the main purpose, it was tried to find out other sub-division of this challenge and gathered information about:

- 1. How do secondary school stakeholders conceptualize inclusive education?
- 2. What are the common challenges faced by special needs students at mainstream secondary school in Bangladesh?

Statement of the problem

Bangladesh education system aims to improve standards for all students, but challenges arise in secondary schools for special needs students. These students face limited access, poorly trained teachers, and limited facilities. This research aims to study the problems faced by special needs students in Bangladeshi secondary schools, aiming to develop solutions to close disparities and ensure proper education for all learners. These students are generally marginalized in that they have to cope with restricted access to the educational systems, teachers who have received little training, and limited educational facilities. Also, one of the key areas that deserved little attention goes to the multifaceted needs and concerns of special needs students within the frameworks of the contemporary educational system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As stated in (Khan's, 2011) research, the maximum participants defined inclusive education as education that is accessible to all individuals. However, four participants viewed it as a means to address social inequalities among different socioeconomic classes. The integration of impaired students into mainstream classrooms is not a fresh or exclusive phenomenon in Australia. International accords have affirmed the entitlement of special needs students to receive education in ordinary classrooms, and Australian law upholds this determination (Forlin& Chris, 2016). The 2021 Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on

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School Students with Handicap (NCCD) indicated that 21.8% of Australian students possess a disability that impacts their educational progress.

The subject teacher may occasionally forbid anything! Even they had a lot of trouble hiring a writer for their written test (Biplob, 2023). Austrian educators' perspectives on including students with disabilities were favorable (Nishio et al., 2002). Three to five students with special education (SEN) are enrolled in regular classes, with a secondary special education teacher hired full-time (Gebhardt et al., 2015). Parents whose children attend inclusive classes are generally more accepting of all students, but parents whose children attend mainstream classes are more critical of all students (Paseka & Schwab, 2020). The majority of parents, particularly of special need students, believed that IE had a negative impact on their children; and were unable to catch up with their "normal" peers, making them even more susceptible to various forms of abuse, such as being bullied, teased, or neglected (Magumise & Sefotho, 2018). Teachers believed regular education classrooms were ineffective for serving children with impairments due to lack of displays, accessible technology, and amenities (Alshehri, 2016). SN students face difficulties due to inadequate accessibility tools like Braille books and hearing aids. High-quality education and student ownership are crucial, and teachers use multimedia sparingly and occasionally substitute it for teaching aids (Biplob, 2023).

The social model of disabilities defines environmental challenges as those that affect the mobility of students with physical disabilities and are a result of built environments and natural surroundings, as per (Rieser, 2002).

According to (MohdZuki, 2016), it highlighted the challenges faced by teachers in Malaysian schools in inclusive education programs, particularly for special needs students. These include behavioral and learning issues, classroom management, and inadequate support. To address these issues, teachers focus on skill development through professional training, positive attitudes towards autistic students, and appropriate classroom environments. Future research and professional development are needed to improve inclusive education programs.

According to (Shaddock, et al., 2007), it focuses on teaching students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. It emphasizes preparedness, resourcefulness, and class atmosphere, assessing needs, differentiation, environment classification, and social support. It advocates for whole school support, integration, and continuous professional learning.

(Maria, 2013) found that just 26.3% of teachers correctly define the notion of inclusion in education, showing adverse clarity in their understanding. The obstacles of inclusiveness persist despite efforts to collaborate with school counselors and implement personalized strategies. These challenges mostly stem from inadequate preparation, the perpetuation of stereotypical notions, and prejudiced attitudes towards special needs students. Thus, the study implies that experience and knowledge, extensive connections with communities, and application of the inclusive education approach in practice are crucial for genuine inclusive education.

This study focuses on instructional techniques for boosting student enrollment in inclusive classrooms in Bangladeshi schools. It examines teachers' of special education environments and the Ordinary Education Initiation, which is headed by special educators. Based on the work, one must acknowledge the relevance of efficient approaches to the substrate population. To answer these questions the authors offered a systematic review that would be more accurate and also overview the existing literature on secondary education of students specially education for special needs students in Bangladesh.

METHODOLOGY

This study follows mixed method research. The participants in this research are selected from secondary

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schools in Bangladesh. School stakeholders, special needs students, and parents are selected as samples for this study. As data collection instruments, both the FGD and interview schedule are utilized. The interview schedule is used by the researcher to gather information from the participants contain ten questions regarding how stakeholders conceptualize inclusive education and the challenges faces by special needs students in mainstream classrooms. The FGD and interviews took (30–35) and (35–40) minutes per session. The focus group discussions and interviews are semi-structured. Face-to-face interviews are conducted with school administrators and focus group discussions are conducted with mainstream teachers, General students, special needs students and parents.

Sampling procedure

The research locations were purposefully selected from three Government secondary schools located in three divisions of Bangladesh. The population of the study included the Secondary schools that had admitted special need students, general students, mainstream teachers, Parents, and School administrators.

Sample size

The highly targeted 30 mainstream teachers, 30 special needs students, 30 general students, 30 parents and 12 school administrators were expected to capture a cross section of opinion. The total sample size was 132.

Data collection instrument and analysis technique

The study involved twelve focus group discussions with mainstream teachers, general students, special needs students and parents to understand secondary schools' aiding of special needs students and inclusion. A checklist was developed to understand these efforts. Interview schedules were used for data collection. Thematic analysis was performed on collected data, using an inductive approach, without considering new ideas. The study aimed to understand the ways secondary schools are addressing special needs and their inclusion.

Ethical consideration

In this research, ethical concerns such as informed consent, intrusiveness, secrecy, and anonymity were considered. The research location's condition and the welfare of participants were considered. Participants were informed of their involvement and their confidentiality and anonymity were confirmed during the study.

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The research showed that special needs students encountered various challenges. The findings and results of the study are given below:

For the remaining 10% of teachers, inclusive education means integrating students who are socially and physically challenged into the mainstream classroom. The remaining teachers responded that while they had heard of inclusive education, they were unaware of its specifics. A quarter of the participants stated that there is no unique assessment system for students with special needs, and thirty percent of the participants claimed there is a lack of supplies.

Additionally, 15% of respondents said that there are no shadow teachers. Just 10% of teachers said they created lesson plans to run their classes. 20% of the participants said they were unaware of the specific teaching strategies used in inclusive education. We can see from the diagram that each of these is a significant obstacle to ensuring high-quality education. In addition, parents of special education students

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reported that their students lived a normal life and that they were happy with their mainstream education.

Nonetheless, parents of general students believed that special needs students should attend separate schools since they were better equipped with resources and had teachers who were more aware of their requirements. Additionally, the survey discovered that although 43% of students said that having a special child in the classroom hampered general instruction, 57% of general students thought that special children and general students had become friendlier. While 7% of special needs kids said that some of their peers did not want to interact with them, 93% of special needs students thought that they had forged pleasant relationships with other students. The current study's analysis also revealed a predetermined amount of resources designated for ordinary schools and insufficient resources for pupils with special needs. According to the current assessment, there aren't enough restrooms for boys and girls, and not all of the school's buildings have ramps. Students with special needs also complained about inadequate amenities both inside and outside the classroom, including the lack of a designated seating area. The majority of the buildings lacked lift systems and ramps. Students were required to provide their own transportation to school. The school does not have a dedicated transit system for students with special needs or a specific directional sign for them.

DISCUSSION

In the chapter of the discussion, findings are presented topically in five sections:

Conceptualization of inclusive education

The results of this study demonstrated that participants' conceptualizations of inclusive education werevaried. According to (Khan, 2011) Most people thought inclusive education meant education for everyone, but four thought it meant eliminating social class inequality.

Inclusive education is an educational system that includes all children, including those special needs student's, social disadvantaged or intellectual disabilities. It aims to provide educational opportunities for all types of children, including those with special needs and street children. Some administrators view inclusion as integrating special needs students into the general education classroom, while others acknowledge the need for more knowledge about inclusive education.

According to (Mallick & Begum, 2023) visually impaired student (S-11) expressed concerns about recording classroom lectures, using Braille frames, and hiring writers for written tests. Despite challenges, most students actively support them in extracurricular activities. The present research showed that general students are unaware of inclusive education, while the majority agrees. However, some special needs students have the opportunity to study together in the same class environment.

According to (Maria, 2013) itwas emphasized the value of an inclusive perspective for all pupils. They also added that any kind of other challenges that the students or the families might bring with them, are vital. P5 concurred with P4 when they emphasized the significance of all students while talking about inclusive education. In the present study, it was found that 6 out of 12 school administrators were aware of inclusive education but they have not enough knowledge about it. They also believed that only physically impaired children who have mild disorder enroll in mainstream classes, while two discussed including students with special needs in general classes. Most parents were unaware of inclusive education.

According to (Bahdanovich & Erina, 2022) All children's equal access to inclusive education has been eagerly anticipated and welcomed. On the other hand, some parents expressed skepticism regarding inclusive education by defending various forms of segregation.



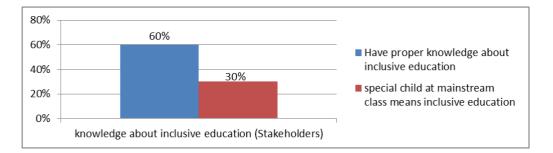


Figure 01: In the remaining 10%, some teachers think that adding physically impaired and socially deprived children to the mainstream is inclusive education. And the rest of the teachers said they had heard the name of inclusive education but did not know the details.

According to (Paseka & Schwab, 2020) It is more than just an idea; the family and the country as a whole can benefit from it.

Ensuring Quality Education for inclusive classroom

According to (Gebhardt et al., 2015) Three to five special needs students are enrolled in regular classes, with a secondary special education teacher hired full-time. An hourly shadow teacher is hired for those with fewer than three students. The shadow teacher spends four hours per week with each student, with six hours for physical, eight for sensory, and ten for cognitive impairments. In the present study it was found that educational system aims to accommodate some special needs students in each school through team teaching, with result it showed that disability type and teacher exposure impact inclusiveness attitudes.

Austrian educators' perspectives on including special needs students were favorable (Nishio et al., 2020). In the present study it was discovered that Bangladesh lacks a shadow teacher management system and follows a team teaching method in inclusive classrooms, unlike the methods mentioned by (Nishio et al., 2020). Insufficient teaching materials and lack of knowledge about strategies are major barriers to inclusion in inclusive education. 94% of the participants believed that these materials are insufficient, and they need different strategies for special children with vision impairments. They also have lacking of appropriate resources and specialized skills to help include these students. Two participants (T-2, T-4) expressed interest in creating their own materials and stated that it is not impossible for teachers to create them. School administrators reported that there is no shadow teacher for special needs students, but subject-based teachers provided assistance. There was no special scholarship system for special needs students, but they were given priority in government-provided stipends. Special needs students were evaluated similarly to general students, with no separate time allotted during examinations.

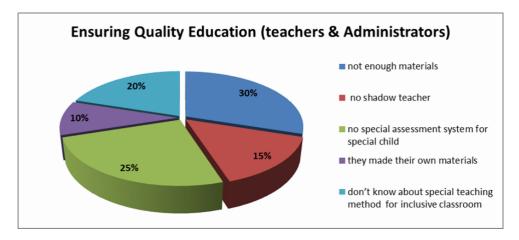


Figure 02: 30% participants said that there is a lack of materials and 25% of the participants said that there



is no special assessment system for special need students. Also 15% participants exclaimed that there is no shadow teacher. Only 10% teachers expressed that they made learning materials for conducting their class. 20% of the participants claimed that they don't know about special teaching method for inclusive education. From the diagram, we found that these all are major barriers to ensure quality education.

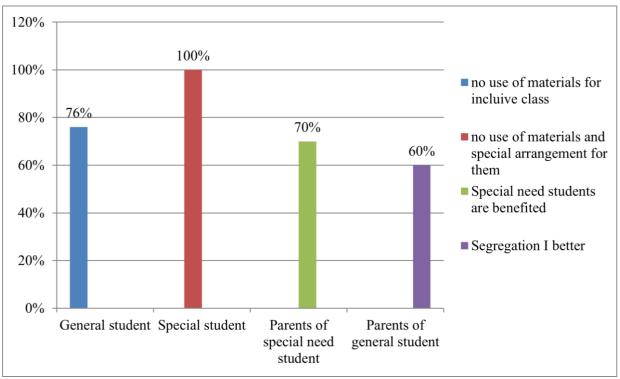


Figure 03: Parents of special students expressed satisfaction with their children's mainstream school experience, stating they had a normal life. However, general students' parents felt separate schools for special need students were better, as they had more resources and teachers paid more attention to their needs.

Utilizing inclusive education as a strategy to mitigate social prejudice

This is essential to promoting diversity, educational, and social inclusion (Molina Roldán et al., 2021). In order to completely attain respect for diversity, understanding its potential, and promoting educational and social inclusion, it is imperative to ensure that special needs students are given equal access to these learning opportunities.

In a discussion, six participants agreed that inclusive education involves providing equal treatment to both wealthy and poor children, potentially reducing social discrimination (Khan, 2011). A female teacher emphasized the importance of inclusive education from a different perspective, stating that it involves treating both children equally. Seven participants believed that distributing equitable benefits would reduce social inequality. However, special needs students were not given special benefits due to inadequate facilities in inclusive classes. The study found that 57% of general students felt that special children had developed friendly relationships with general students, while 43% of students felt that the presence of a special child in the classroom delayed the general teaching process. 93% of Special needs students felt that they had developed friendly relationships with general students, while 7% of special needs students felt that some classmates did not want to interact with them. According to (Paseka & Schwab, 2020) Parents whose children attend inclusive classes are generally more accepting of all students, but parents whose children attend mainstream classes are more critical of all students. (Magumise & Sefotho, 2018) The majority of parents, particularly of special needs children, believed that IE had a negative impact on their children; and were unable to catch up with their "normal" peers, making them even more susceptible to various forms of

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abuse, such as being bullied, teased, or neglected. The research found that parents of special students view inclusive education as beneficial for society, as it allows their children to cooperate with general students, learn new skills, and develop healthy emotional development. On the other hand, general students appreciate the opportunity for special students to study in mainstream schools and learn new skills, such as politeness and understanding difficulties.

Accessibility for children with special needs at mainstream school

According to (Alshehri, 2016), he found that Teachers believed regular education classrooms were ineffective for serving children with impairments due to lack of displays, accessible technology, and amenities. A significant proportion of school buildings in India are not accessible to students with disabilities, since just 18% of schools under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) program have been made barrier-free. In certain states, such as Jammu and Kashmir and Bihar, the percentage is significantly lower, specifically 2% and 6% respectively. Modifying buildings is expensive because of limited resources in the programs. The analysis of the present study also uncovered inadequate resources for special needs students and a set allocation for regular schools. The implementation of inclusive education is impeded by a scarcity of teaching resources and limited access to necessary aids such as hearing aids or Braille materials. These concerns are revealed through interviews and observations.

The researcher claims that teachers' opinions were influenced by preconceptions, which in turn affected their attitudes toward children with physical disabilities, was substantiated by (Lifshitz & Glaubman, 2002).

Physical facilities for inclusive classroom

According to (Mallick& Begum, 2023) SN students face difficulties due to inadequate accessibility tools like braille books and hearing aids. High-quality education and student ownership are crucial, and teachers use multimedia sparingly and occasionally substitute it for teaching aids. According to (Alam, 2023) the study found that most schools lack ramps, suitable classrooms for disabled children, and terrain that is unsuitable for the physically and visually impaired. These physical environments are inaccessible and unsuitable for many students.

In the present study the research showed that not all buildings in the school have ramps, and there are insufficient washroom facilities for boys and girls. Special needs students also reported insufficient facilities inside and in the classroom, with no separate seating arrangement. Most of the buildings had no ramps and no lift systems. Students had to travel to school using their own transportation. The school lacked a separate directional sign for special children and no separate transport system for commuting.

CONCLUSION

According to gathered information, working one-on-one with special needs students, encouraging active participation and collaboration among all students, and maintaining a consistent classroom structure every day help them succeed academically.

For anyone interested in inclusive education, this study will also be helpful. Numerous studies have shown that government funding can influence teachers' attitudes positively and have an impact on special needs student's achievement.

According to the facts in this study, more support might boost explore the challenges faced by special needs students in favor of inclusive education. Teachers with positive attitudes toward inclusive education are more likely to have received Bangladeshi government training, such as CPD (Teaching Quality Improvement in Teaching, 2012), or to know that the 2010 Educational Policy proposed inclusive education.

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This work may affect educational research in Bangladesh and expand inclusive education understanding in Bangladesh and other developing countries. For the purpose, the following recommendations could be made out for the improvement of the situation of special needs students in secondary schools of Bangladesh. The areas of focus in this regard are as follows: teacher preparation; infrastructure improvement; inclusive policies; resource development; community mobilization; IE programs; parents and guardians involvement; and peer support. These measures seek to give these students a chance to learn in environment free from barriers and where they will be offered all they need to enable them to learn effectively. Thus, if these areas are addressed, Bangladeshi secondary schools will attend to the needs of all students more effectively.

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