

**THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN
GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS OF NEW DELHI**

A project report submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of
Arts in Disability Studies and Action



**BY
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M2021DSA002**

**Under the guidance of
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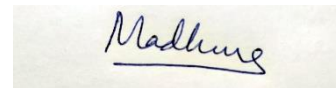
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Declaration

I, Anugya Srivastava, hereby declare that this dissertation entitled “The Role of Teachers in Inclusive Education in Government Schools of New Delhi” is the outcome of my own study undertaken under the guidance of Dr. Madhura Nagchoudhuri, Assistant Professor, Centre for Disability Studies and Action, School of Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. It has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or certificate of this or any other university. I have duly acknowledged all the sources used by me in the preparation of this dissertation.

Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “The Role of Teachers in Inclusive Education in Government Schools of New Delhi” is the record of the original work done by Anugya Srivastava under my guidance. The results of the research presented in this dissertation have not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or certificate of this or any other university.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in blue ink. The signature appears to be 'Madhura' written in a cursive style.

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Abstract

The Right to Education Act in 2009 and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act replacing the “Persons with Disabilities Act 1995” in 2016, have increasingly emphasized the need to make education in India more inclusive, with accommodating children with disabilities being just a small but prominent part of inclusive education. Further changes were brought on with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown in 2020, resulting in school-going children attending school online from their homes. Further modifications were made with the advent of the National Education Policy in the same year. In this context, the current study focused on understanding inclusion in school education, the facilities available to teachers for teaching children with disabilities in the Government schools of New Delhi and the impact of COVID-19 on the teachers teaching children with disabilities. Data was collected online through questionnaires using convenience sampling from a total of 74 school teachers at primary, secondary and higher secondary levels. The findings show that among the Government school teachers, 49 respondents (66%) are aware of the existing policies related to Inclusive Education. Facilities, including devices, infrastructure and support, are available to teachers for facilitating children with disabilities’ education, but there is still room for improvement. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 14 respondents have stated that they were unable to reach out to children with disabilities due to lack of internet connectivity/laptops/smartphones (4 respondents i.e. 5%), financial issues (2 respondents i.e. 3%), or parents’ inability to facilitate their child’s education (3 respondents i.e. 4%).

Chapter 1

Introduction

“Inclusive, good-quality education is a foundation for dynamic and equitable societies.”

Desmond Tutu

Education in India is a Fundamental Right as per Article 21 of the Constitution of India, which the passing of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act in 2009 has further strengthened. The Act states that “Every child of the age of six to fourteen years, including a child referred to in clause (d)¹ or clause (e)² of section 2 shall have the right to free and compulsory education in a neighbourhood school till the completion of his or her elementary education.”

Although inclusive education is gaining momentum in India, disability issues have been recognised in the country’s mid-term development plans, gradually bringing in policy changes in critical matters like education, employment and integration for all impairment groups (UNICEF, 2003, as cited by Lamichhane in 2015). India’s ratification of the United Nations Convention on Rights for Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2007 showed its commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

The Scheme of Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) was launched in 2009 to encourage children with disabilities to pursue four years of secondary education in an inclusive environment after completing eight years of compulsory elementary education (Ministry of Education, 2016). The impact of this scheme is dismal, despite 100% assistance provided by the Central Government. Proposals submitted to the Government are vague and show little understanding towards the requirements of children with disabilities, and appear to be more NGO-driven, thus hampering the implementation of the scheme across the Indian states.

¹ “child belonging to disadvantaged group” means “[a child with disability or] a child belonging to the Scheduled Caste, the Scheduled Tribe, the socially and educationally backward class or such other group having disadvantage owing to social, cultural, economical, geographical, linguistic, gender or such other factor, as may be specified by the appropriate Government, by notification;”

² “child belonging to weaker section” means “a child belonging to such parent or guardian whose annual income is lower than the minimum limit specified by the appropriate Government, by notification;”

On September 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Disability is mentioned in multiple parts of the SDGs, specifically in education-related ones, out of which Goal 4.5 states, “By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of Education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.”

The Delhi Government’s Education Department released a handbook on “Barrier Free Access to School” in 2017, consisting of all the instructions related to infrastructure, wheelchairs, signs, site planning, etc. These guidelines have been made keeping in mind the safety of everyone, ensuring total accessibility of new buildings from the planning stage and retrofitting of old ones, compliance of internal and external elements of infrastructure with universal design principles and above all, the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities (Govt. NCT of Delhi, 2017).

In the same year, they released notifications that mapped out the responsibilities of special educators, the steps that Government schools should take in sensitisation and awareness of persons with disabilities, implementations of interventions and maintenance of certificates and learning materials in detail.

The Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan scheme was launched in 2018 was launched to cover all children with disabilities (CWDs) from classes I to XII, with the objective of “screening children with disabilities at the school level and assessment of their educational needs, providing aids and appliances, making accessible classrooms, laboratories, libraries, play/recreational area and toilets in schools, supply appropriate teaching-learning materials, medical facilities, vocational training support, guidance and counselling services and therapeutic services to children with disabilities as per their requirement in convergence with line departments, sensitisation of school teachers to teach and involve children with disabilities in the general classroom, capacity-building programs for special educators, and so on” (6, N/A).

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the Government of India’s Ministry of Education launched the National Education Policy (hereafter referred to as NEP), which has a separate chapter on inclusive education, both primary and secondary level. In May 2021, they released a guideline on electronic content for children with disabilities, which extensively laid down instructions for making educational content for PwDs and their schemes.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have been instrumental in shaping the landscape of inclusive education in India over the years. They provided services to persons with disabilities that the government could not offer earlier. Most of the schools that the NGOs run are under the administration of the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (Furuta, Thamburaj, 2014).

Comprehensive policies and guidelines are in place for providing inclusive education to CWDs. However, the extent of outreach of these schemes and whether the facilities benefitted the educators of CWDs has yet to be documented.

Rationale

To ensure that children with disabilities are not behind the non-disabled students and keep Sustainable Development Goal 4 (quality education) in mind, the Government established many policies and schemes at the Central, State and Union level (Delhi in this study). The Right to Free and Compulsive Education Act 2009 provides accessible and compulsive education to a child with a disability without prejudice. One of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan's goals was cognisant of the RTE Act: to provide universal access. The National Education Policy 2020 talks extensively about inclusive education and the role of special educators, keeping the Rights to Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 in mind.

Under Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (that replaced Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan), the Government NCT of Delhi has prepared a framework that has issued guidelines for implementing barrier-free education for Children with Disabilities (CwDs). They have also provided instructions for setting up resource centres for these children. Against the backdrop of Government policies, it is felt necessary to analyse the status of their implementation, the facilities available to teachers for teaching students with disabilities in the Government schools of New Delhi and the impact of COVID-19 on the teachers teaching children with disabilities.

The research questions were as follows:

Research Questions

- 1) How much awareness is there among the teachers of children with disabilities on the Government of Delhi policy guidelines?
- 2) What support has been given to teachers teaching children with disabilities in Delhi's government schools?

3) How has COVID-19 impacted the teaching of children with disabilities in Government schools in Delhi?

The objectives that the researcher sought to study are as follows:

Objectives

- 1) To assess the awareness about policy guidelines of the Government of Delhi by the teachers of children with disabilities (CWDs) in government schools.
- 2) To examine support available to teachers for teaching children with disabilities in school.
- 3) To examine the impact of COVID-19 on teaching children with disabilities in Government schools of Delhi.

Field Of Study

The researcher decided to conduct this study in Delhi for many reasons. First is that Delhi is the capital of India. The second reason is that the Delhi Government has taken several measures towards inclusive education in its schools. According to the 2019 State of the Education Report on Children with Disabilities (which used Census 2011 as their source), the total population of children with disabilities in the NCT of Delhi is 52,330, with 21,365 being girls and 30,965 being boys. Regarding children with disabilities attending Delhi's educational institutions, 58.1% have attended them, out of which 59.1% are girls and 57.4% are boys. In comparison, 32.2% have never attended educational institutions, out of which 31.6% are girls while 32.6% are boys.

There are nine districts in Delhi: North, North East, East, South East, South, South West, West, North West and Central. According to Census 2011, the Union Territory's total population is 11,034,555, with the female population being 5,152,438 and that of males being 5,882,117. The schools in Delhi are categorised on the basis of management: Government-run schools (local body, privately aided and privately unaided). At the pre-primary and primary levels, providing education falls under the responsibility of three local bodies: Delhi Cantonment Board, Municipal Corporation (MCD) and New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC).

Figure 1. District Map of Delhi



There are eight schools under Delhi Cantonment Board's administration. These schools are located in South West district of Delhi. Under Municipal Corporation, there are 1819 schools located in twelve zones of Delhi. And under NDMC, there are 57 schools.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Inclusive Education

The focus of inclusive education is on the participation of children. Most importantly, those who are the most vulnerable, i.e., those who have not been included or are at risk of being excluded from the education system. The focus of inclusive education has been disability in education that includes strategies and approaches or setups which are specific for teaching children with disabilities. However, since the setting up of a framework through the “Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education” (Kamenopoulou, 2018, p.1; cited from [UNESCO, 1994]) for the inclusion of children with disabilities the regular schools, many countries across the globe have adopted and accepted the fact that children with disabilities also have the right to education like other children in the mainstream education (Kamenopoulou, 2018).

The Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, are aimed to ‘leaving no one behind’ and also support the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the agenda for global development. Disability is considered and referred to in the SDGs, specifically pertaining to the goals concerning education, growth and employment, removal of inequality, accessibility to human settlements, as well as collection and monitoring of data. This is clearly bringing into focus the present plight and also promises to bring disability into focus of the international development agenda. A number of assertions that emphasize the rights of persons with disabilities in those agendas that focus on development were also made in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, UNCRPD (United Nations, 2006, as cited by Kamenopoulou in 2018).

The UNCRPD is one of the most important human rights conventions adapted by the United Nations and the first one that specifically focuses on persons with disabilities. This Convention summarizes (Kamenopoulou, 2018), the rights aspect and also acknowledges the dignity, and values people with disabilities and the need to increase their visibility in the society. The development aspect is meant for human rights as a set of plans designed to include persons with disabilities in the policies meant for development. While what will be the impact of the SDGs on the lives of people with disabilities only time will tell, the landscape of disability is fast changing, resulting in not only new opportunities but also challenges.

Inclusive Education in India

A study conducted in Hyderabad and Sangareddy revealed the professionals' readiness to support children with disabilities' education and welfare needs of their families and an awareness of current national legislation to achieve this objective (Rose, Narayan, Matam, Reddy Sambram, 2021). "There is a disparity between professional support services available to families and children, with those living in Sangareddy experiencing greater difficulty accessing appropriate support than their counterparts in Hyderabad. The lack of opportunities for training and professional development is seen as a significant obstacle to the progress of inclusive education as required by national legislation in both locations" (Rose, Narayan, Matam, Reddy Sambram, 2021, p.1).

Another study conducted in Haryana's six primary schools found that although the teachers were willing to engage with disability issues, their thinking was dominated by their deterministic and deficit views on disability. The teachers struggled with the classroom practices regarding diverse learner needs, due to which exclusionary practices increased more for children with disabilities. Lastly, the teachers were adamant to take responsibility for children with disabilities' learning due to major concerns over their preparedness and lack of adequate support structures (Johansson, Singal, Samson, 2021).

A Tamil Nadu study that explored the role of NGOs in inclusive education found that accountability and transparency surrounding the activities of NGOs, like hiring teachers, has been a matter of concern (as cited by Furuta and Thamburaj, 2014). However, they can provide flexible support to students with disabilities and their caregivers since government officers are often slow to act on issues because they work under the bureaucratic system. Although 70% of disabled people live in rural areas, support remains concentrated in metropolitan cities. (Furuta, Thamburaj, 2014)

Covid-19 And Inclusive Education

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when education was being conducted online, three categories of problems emerged regarding children with disabilities: participation in online classes of disabled students, development/decrease of competencies of students with a disability due to online education, and inclusive education of students with a disability after the pandemic ends. The researcher found that although there is an increased awareness of the meaning and value of the cooperation of teachers and parents of children with disabilities, coming back to school

after the pandemic ends will bring new problems for children with disabilities like discipline, repeating the curriculum that was taught remotely and increase of social issues like communicating with peers and teachers. Remotely, children with disabilities had low IT competencies due to improper infrastructure and the socio-economic conditions of the family being poor (Chrzanowska, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has hugely affected the schooling experiences of children with disabilities, but there were variations in terms of disability when it intersects with race, class, linguistic status, and gender. Online learning and other pandemic-related changes to schools amplified inequalities in children's educational experiences and in families' ability to effectively advocate for their children in school (Fish, Rangel, De Arcos & Friend, 2022).

There has been significant learning loss in students with disabilities during COVID-19 when performing a task, interacting and participating in events, contributing to their growth and meaning-making of their experiences (Gaurav, 2021). Getting accustomed to routines, like getting used to the schools and day-care centres' closure, social distancing and/or confinement to home, proved to be a struggle for children with physical and developmental disabilities. Additionally, there was a lack of assistive technology and educational assistance for children, which impacted the development of children with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), Autism Spectrum Disorder, Down Syndrome, and the like (Patel, 2020).

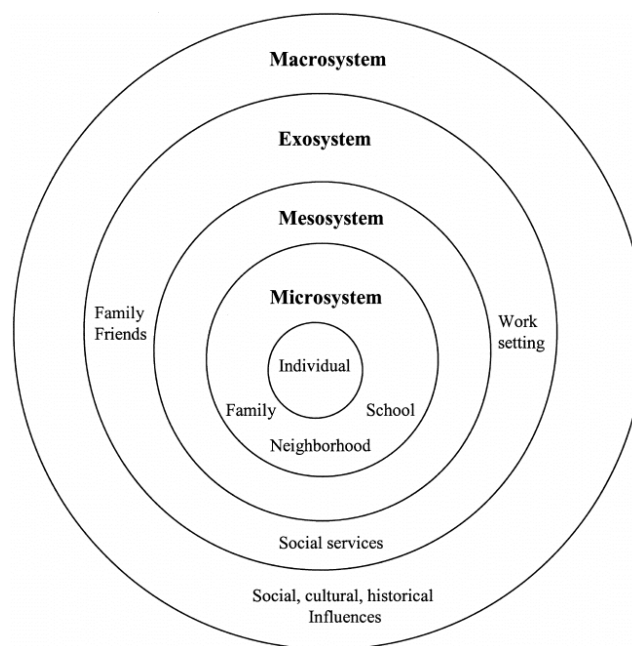
Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

Ecological Systems Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory is focused on people interacting in real time and space with the systems, or to put it simply, how children are enmeshed with the social systems and how it affects them concerning their social environments. It consists of four parts:

Figure 2. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory



- Microsystem is the immediate environment inhabited by the child and their closest communities, like home, school, and peer group (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the context of this study, New Delhi's government schools are the most crucial component in the life of a child with disability since its where their learning and social life start to expand, and teachers play an essential role in the inclusion of children with disabilities, in terms of accommodating their learning needs depending on the type of disability. The family also wants to ensure their child is not facing any problems due to their disability.
- Mesosystem is where a child has connections with other children's families, peer groups, and the community (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Here, children with disabilities' school life

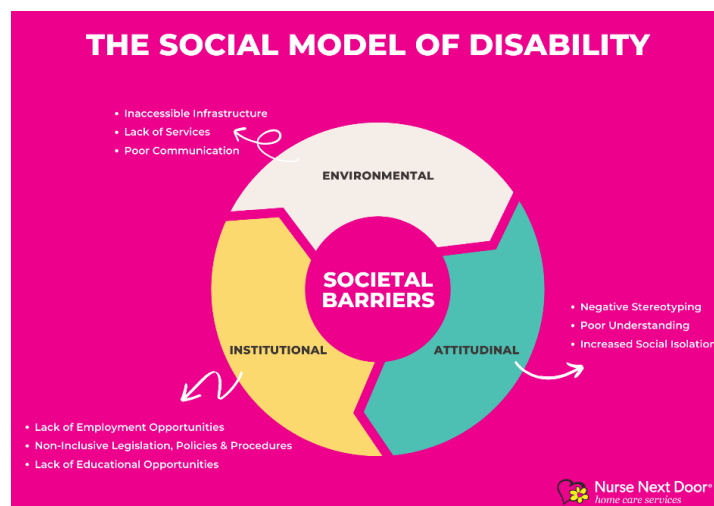
have a lot to do with how the peer groups, parents of the child's peers, and teachers perceive and recognise the needs of the children.

- Exosystem is the environment outside the child's immediate environment that may or may not have anything to do with children, but it indirectly impacts their development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the context of this study, it is the teachers of New Delhi's government schools, NGOs and the school system, including the decisions taken by the Delhi Government regarding children with disabilities.
- Macrosystem is the largest system of the theory that consists of the most distant collective of individuals, beliefs and values that influence children significantly (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the study's context, it is the historical and mythological perceptions of disability that continue to influence Indian people in the 21st century, which is someone to be sympathised with or to whom you have done a favour (*ehsaan kiya/nibhaya*). The discourses on disability rights and the evolving understanding of disability in Global North and Global South countries also play a part in the macrosystem.

Social Model of Disability

The term "Social Model of Disability" was coined by Mike Oliver in 1983 when the intersections of disability and society were starting to be considered in light of the Disability Rights Movement that was taking place and as a response to the medical model of disability. This model states that one's impairment or condition is not the reason they are disabled, but it is due to the barriers that exist in a society that prevents the person with disability from accessing and navigating the services (Oliver, 1983).

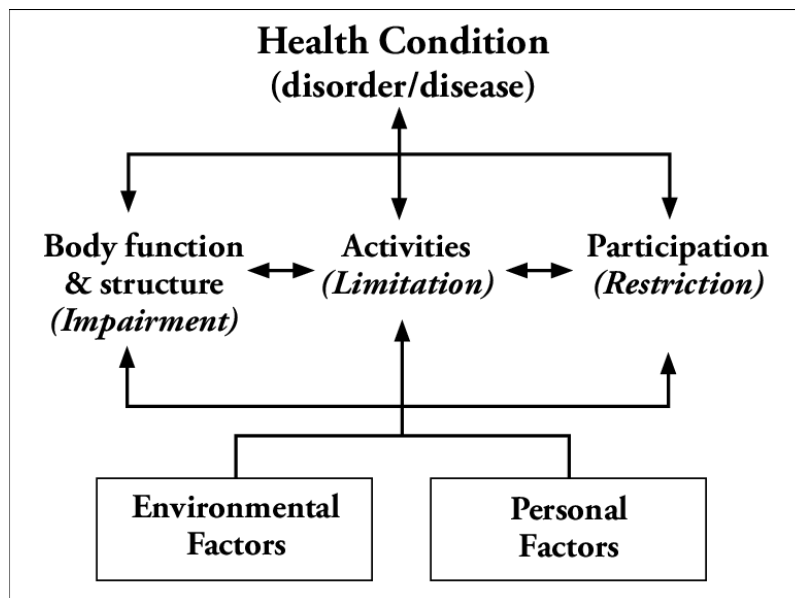
Figure 3. Social Model of Disability



In this study's context, if a child with disability has dropped out of school during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not because of their unwillingness to attend school online; it is either due to their parents' financial issues, lack of internet connection, computers or smartphones, or that their parents are unable to facilitate their child's education. At the school level, there is the issue of the availability of disability-friendly infrastructure and facilities, which affects the learning of children with disabilities.

ICF Model

Figure 4. ICF Model



ICF model is a biopsychosocial framework developed by the “World Health Organisation (WHO)” as an update to the first edition of the “International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH)” that came out in 1980. This framework, called the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICFDH) or ICIDH-2, gives standard language to describing disability and functioning and a basis to define the measurement of health and disability. This model states that disability is not just a consequence of a health condition but also due to the person's environment and available services. Disability, here, is defined as an umbrella term for limiting a person's activity and restricting participation.

Applying this model to the research, children with disabilities (depending on the type of disability) have one or more parts of their body structure affected, due to which they cannot do the usual physical activities (sports, for example) or see a board while copying what the teacher has written, which a non-disabled child can do. So, the teachers and the school system will be wondering, “What assistance does the child need so that they can show a similar level of

performance just like other children?” which is where facilities like resource centres, scribes, learning software, colour-coded keyboard and infrastructural changes like ramps, stair lifts, disability-friendly washrooms with adequate space and the seat of an appropriate height come in the picture.

Chapter 4

Methodology

Research Design

The quantitative research design adopted was descriptive to understand the teachers' role in inclusive education at Delhi's government schools.

Sampling

Convenience sampling was used in this research, where teachers from government schools in Delhi were contacted since the study was conceptualised during the COVID pandemic; it was not clear if it would be possible to reach out to teachers in person based on which the sampling and methodology were arrived at. The researcher's family members and relatives had contacts with Government school teachers, some of whom are neighbours of the researcher. The questionnaire was circulated on WhatsApp to those teachers who chose to participate in this study. The criteria that the researcher used in selecting the participants were a. Age. b. Qualification. and c. Teaching Experience.

Data Collection

A questionnaire was circulated to the Government school teachers of South West district online. The division of questions that were asked to the teachers was based on the objectives of the research.

The questionnaire, made on Google Forms, consisted of 26 questions, out of which 17 were close-ended, and the remaining nine were open-ended. The tool was pilot tested with five government school teachers who teach students from classes 1 to 12. On the questionnaire itself, consent was asked at the beginning of the tool in the form of the question, "Do you want to participate in this research?" After following up with them for feedback, changes were made to the questionnaire, which was then circulated to other teachers on WhatsApp. Data were collected from 74 school teachers teaching in Government schools of Delhi (New Delhi Municipal Council [NDMC] and Municipal Corporation of Delhi [MCD] schools), located in South West district.

Data Analysis Plan

The collected data were entered into Microsoft Excel. In the same application, different spreadsheets were made to make graphical representations of the identified variables after cleaning the data. It was found through coding that the 16 variables identified were of nominal level, and questions concerning the teachers' demography i.e., age, gender, and classes they teach, were of ratio and nominal, respectively.

Ethical Concerns

Informed consent was addressed by talking to the teachers on the phone about the research that is being undertaken by the researcher. The researcher sent them the Google Form link to the questionnaire after the teachers granted permission to send it on WhatsApp. Confidentiality of the respondents' data was maintained, and only those teachers who volunteered to participate in the study were considered for the data collection and analysis. In case they chose not to fill out the questionnaire, that was respected by the researcher.

Chapter 5

Findings

Data were collected from a total of 74 teachers using an online questionnaire. These teachers teach in Government schools of Delhi (New Delhi Municipal Council [NDMC] and Municipal Corporation of Delhi [MCD] schools), located in South West district.

Demographic Profile

Out of the 74 respondents, a majority of teachers amounting to 78%, were female (58 teachers), while 22% of them were male (16). The maximum number of respondents out of 74 teachers were from the age band of 24-61, with a maximum age of 61 and a minimum of 24 years of age. The mean age was 42.22, while the median was 43.00. The range was 37 from 24 to 61. The standard deviation was 9.396, while the variance was 88.299.

Educational Qualifications & Teaching Experience

Out of the 74 respondents, 46 (62%) of them pursued B.Ed., while 18 respondents (24%) pursued other courses which were not related to education, and five respondents (7%) pursued B.A. and M.Ed.

As far as overall teaching experience is concerned, the maximum is 37 years, and the minimum is 1 year, with the mean number of experiences being 20.2 and modal years of experience being 23. The maximum number of years of experience at their current schools is 23 years, with the minimum being five months, with modal years of experience at the current school being one, and the mean number of experiences being 6.67.

Classes Taught

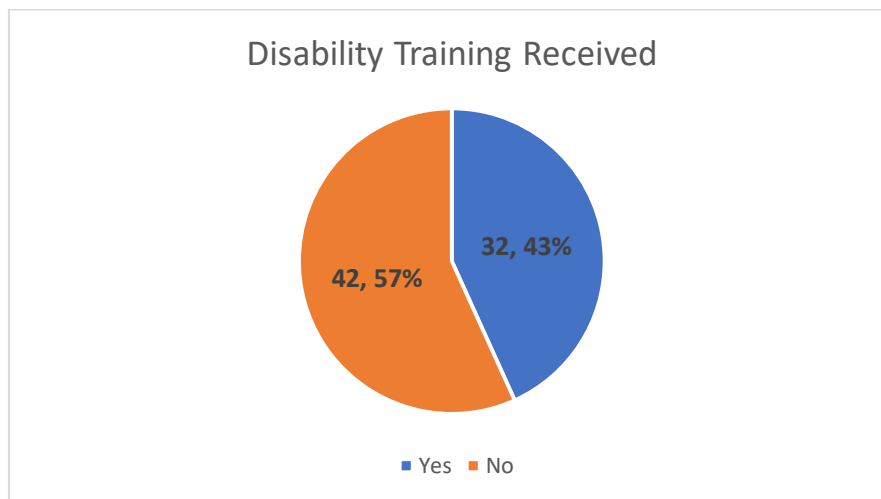
Table 1.1 Grade/Classes Taught By The Teachers

Grade/Classes Taught By The Teachers	Frequency	Percentage
Primary (Class 1-5)	19	26%
Upper Primary (Class 6-8)	11	15%
Secondary (Class 9-10)	26	35%
Senior Secondary (Class 11-12)	18	24%
Total	74	100%

The above table 1.1 shows that out of the 74 respondents, 26 respondents (35%) teach students in Secondary grade (classes 9 to 10), 19 respondents (26%) teach Primary grade (classes 1 to 5), 18 respondents (24%) teach Senior Secondary grade (classes 11 to 12) students and 11 respondents (15%) teach Upper Primary grade (classes 6 to 8).

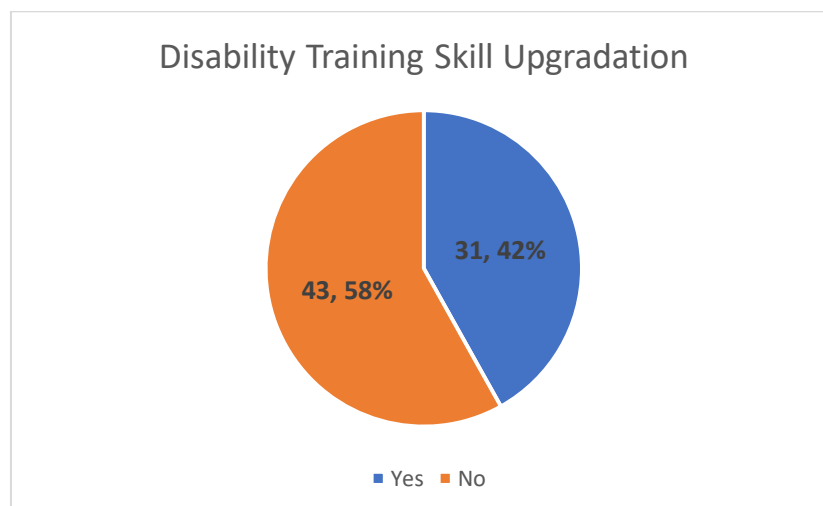
Inclusive Education

Graph 1.1 Disability Training Received During Studies



Of the 74 respondents who filled out the questionnaire, 42 respondents (57%) stated that they did not receive disability training during their studies, while 32 respondents (43%) did receive disability training.

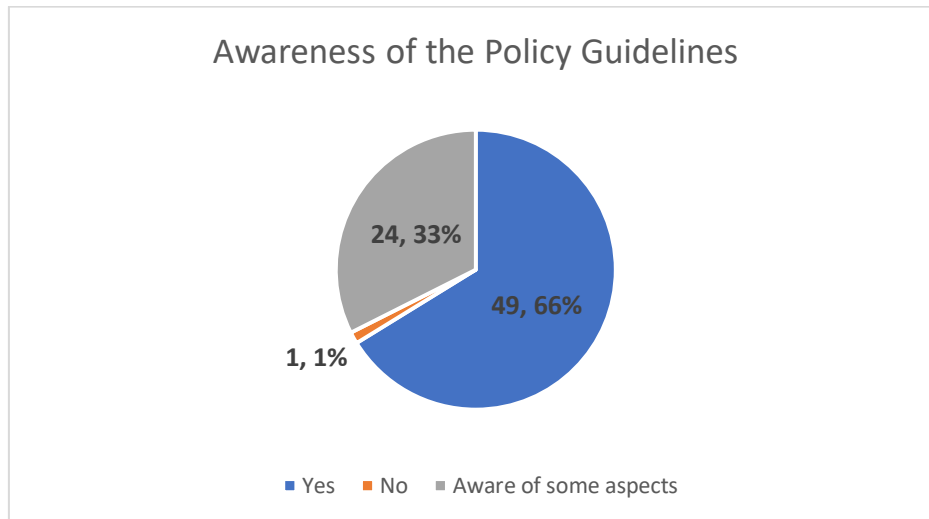
Graph 1.2 Disability Training Received as a Skill Upgradation



Whether New Delhi's government school teachers received disability training as a skill upgradation after they started teaching came out via this question: Have you received additional training in teaching students with disabilities after you became a teacher? Of the 74 respondents,

43 respondents (58%) stated that they hadn't received disability training as a skill upgradation, while 31 respondents (42%) have received additional training in teaching students with disabilities.

Graph 1.3 Awareness of the Policy Guidelines



The respondents were asked about whether they are aware of the guidelines set up by the Right to Education Act 2009, Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 and CBSE Handbook of Inclusive Education 2021 on inclusive education. It was found that 49 respondents (66%) stated that they are aware of the policy guidelines on inclusive education and disability, while 24 respondents (33%) stated that they are aware of certain aspects of the guidelines.

Table 1.2 Types of Facilities Available for Teaching Children with Disabilities (in Yes and No form)

Types of Facilities Available For Teaching Children With Disabilities	Frequency		Percentage	
	YES	NO	YES	NO
Specialised learning materials	43	31	58%	42%
Learning software	20	54	27%	73%
Colour coded keyboard	17	57	23%	77%
Resource centres	36	38	49%	51%

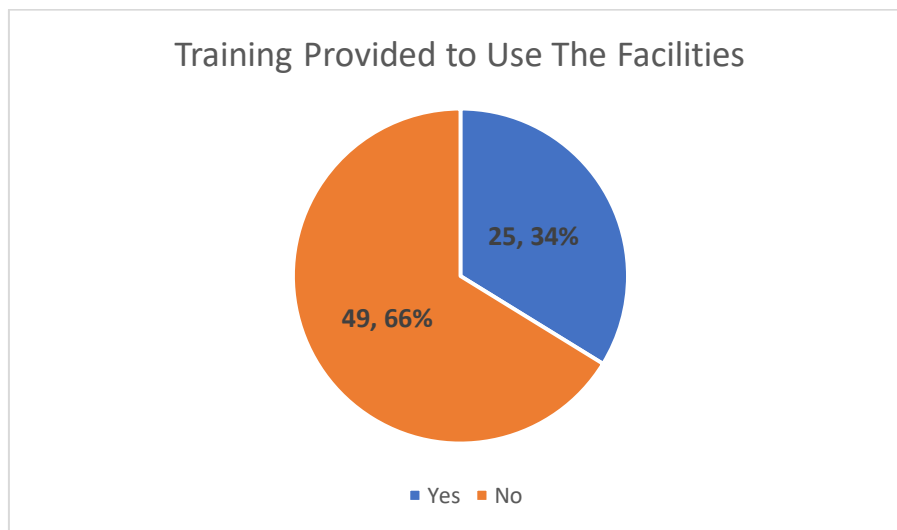
All of the above	14	60	19%	81%
None of the above	27	47	36%	64%
Total Responses	74		100%	

When asked about the facilities available in their school for teaching children with disability, respondents indicated that the facilities available included access to specialised learning materials, access to resource centres and facilities including colour coded keyboards and learning software. The above table 1.2 shows the nature of facilities available in schools for accommodating children with disabilities.

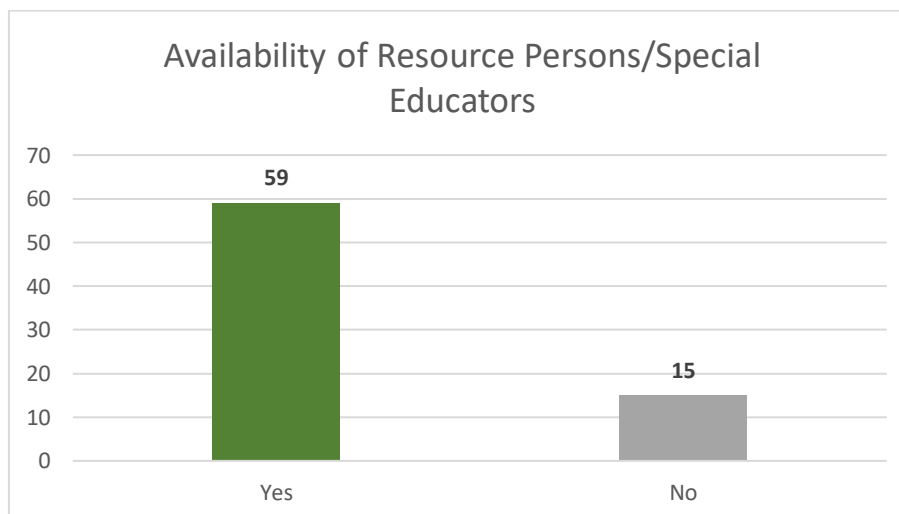
Table 1.3 Infrastructure and Support Available for Children with Disabilities

Infrastructure and Support Available for Children with Disabilities	Frequency	Percentage
Ramps and disabled-friendly toilet	3	4%
Counselling	1	2%
Wheelchair	2	3%
Resources Room	1	2%
Resource therapy centre	1	1%
Scribe facilities	1	1%
Signage facilities for children with disabilities	1	1%
Drinking water facility and ramp	1	1%
Basic infrastructure	2	3%
Aids and appliances	1	1%
No facilities apart from what was mentioned in Table 1.2	58	81%
Total	74	100%

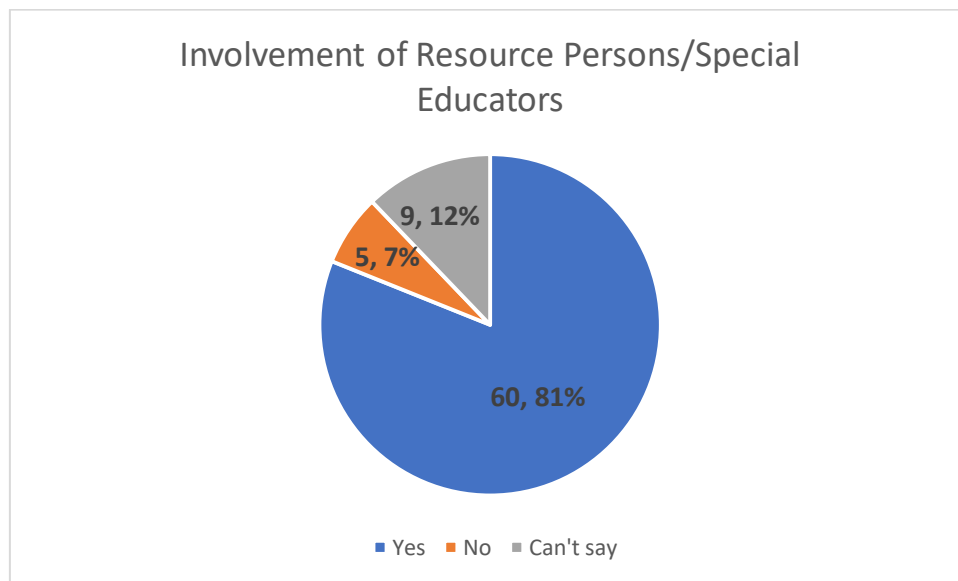
Whether the infrastructure and other support are available for children with disabilities apart from specialised learning materials, colour-coded keyboards, resource centres and learning software in government schools of New Delhi is evident in Table 1.3.

Graph 1.4 Training Provided to Use The Facilities

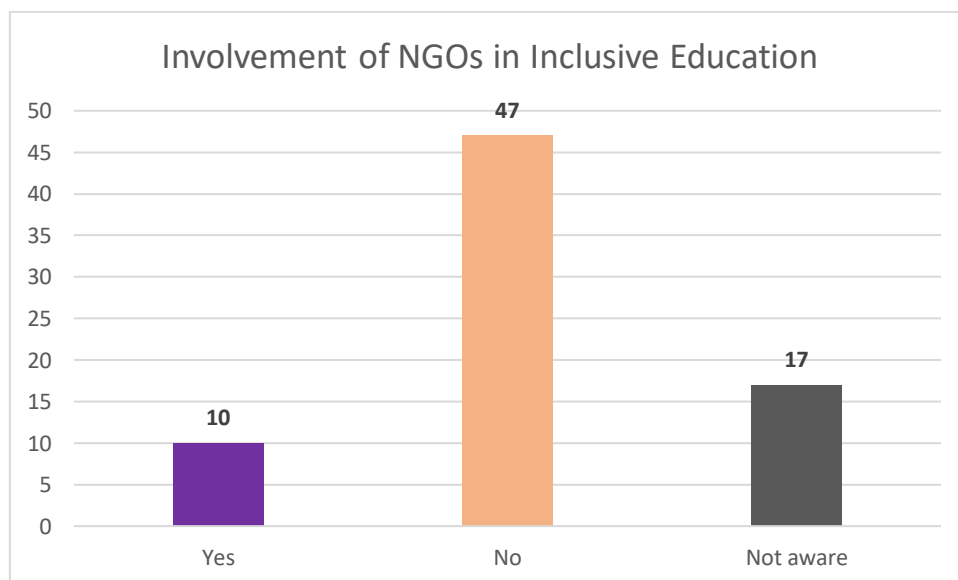
Regarding the two questions on the facilities provided to children with disabilities in government schools of New Delhi, it was found that 25 respondents (34%) have received training on using these facilities compared to 49 respondents (66%) who did not.

Chart 1.1 Availability of Resource Persons/Special Educators

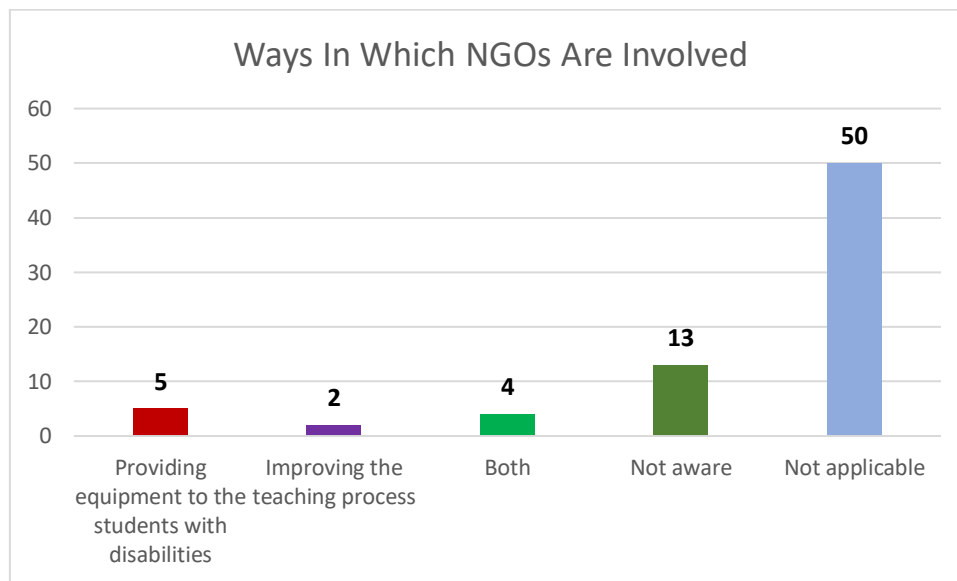
Out of the 74 respondents, 59 respondents (80%) have stated that Resource Persons/Special Educators are available in the government schools of New Delhi, while 15 respondents (20%) have stated that Resource Persons/Special Educators are not available.

Graph 2.1 Involvement of Resource Persons/Special Educators

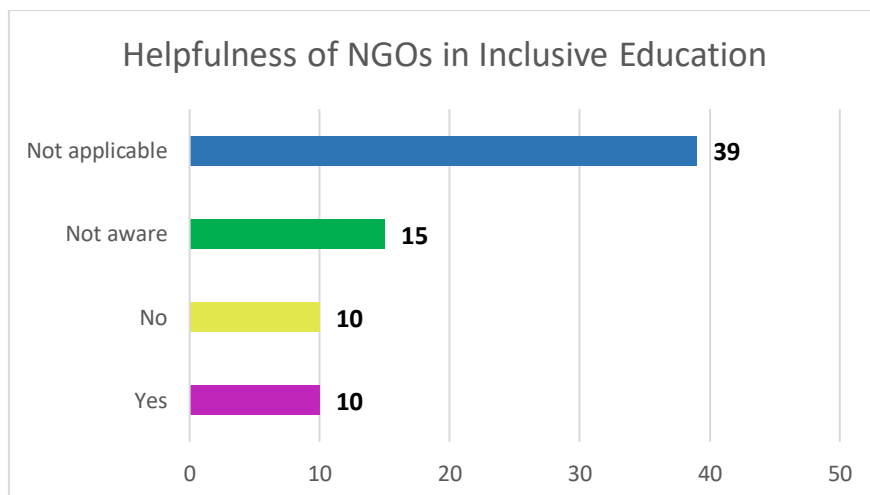
Of the 74 respondents who filled out the questionnaire, 60 respondents (81%) feel that the involvement of Resource Persons/Special Educators has helped in children with disabilities' education in government schools of New Delhi. In comparison, nine respondents (12%) were unsure of their contribution to the “education of children with disabilities”.

Chart 1.2 Involvement of NGOs in Inclusive Education

Out of 74 respondents, 64%, i.e., 47 respondents, have stated that New Delhi's government schools don't have a tie-up with NGOs who provide support in the education of children with disabilities, while 23%, comprising 17 respondents, are unaware of NGOs' involvement in their schools' inclusive education.

Chart 1.3 Ways In Which NGOs Are Involved

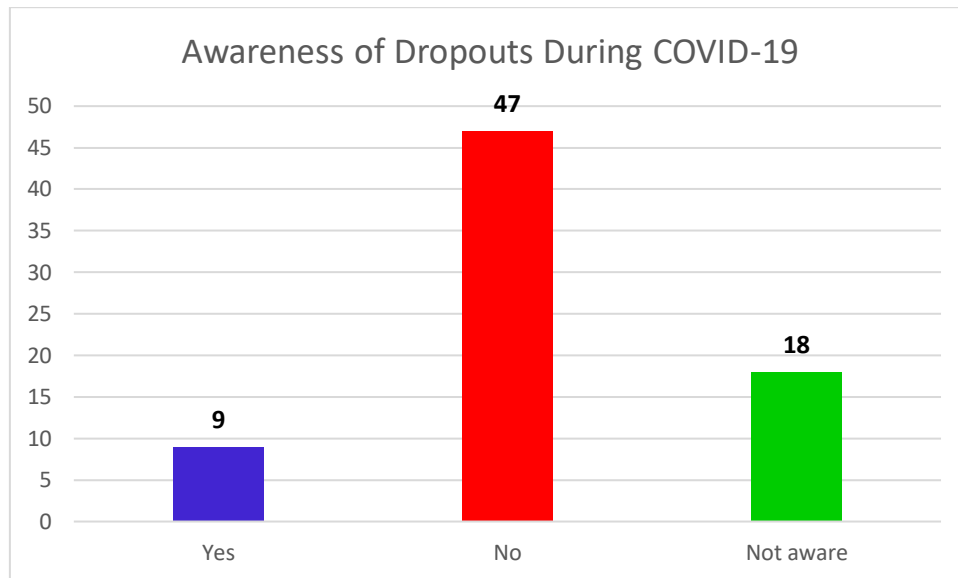
Of the 74 respondents who filled out the questionnaire, five teachers (7%) stated that the NGO(s) provide equipment to students with disabilities. In comparison, four teachers (5%) have said that NGO(s) provide equipment to students with disabilities while also improving the teaching process, and two teachers (3%) feel that the NGOs are involved in improving the teaching process.

Chart 1.4 Helpfulness of NGOs in Inclusive Education

Ten respondents (14%) feel that the NGOs' involvement in inclusive education is not helpful, while the other ten respondents 13% feel the opposite. Thirty-nine respondents (53%) chose "Not applicable", which indicates that the NGOs are not involved in their schools but are working elsewhere on the issue of inclusive education.

Inclusive Education During COVID-19

Chart 2.1 Awareness of Dropouts During COVID-19



Among the 74 respondents, 47 respondents (64%) stated that they did not know how many children with disabilities dropped out of school during the COVID-19 pandemic, while 9 respondents (12%) indicated that they were aware about children with disabilities who dropped out of school during the pandemic. Those respondents who were aware of children with disabilities dropping out also shared the type of disability they have, which is given in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4 Type of Disability of Students Who Dropped Out of Government Schools

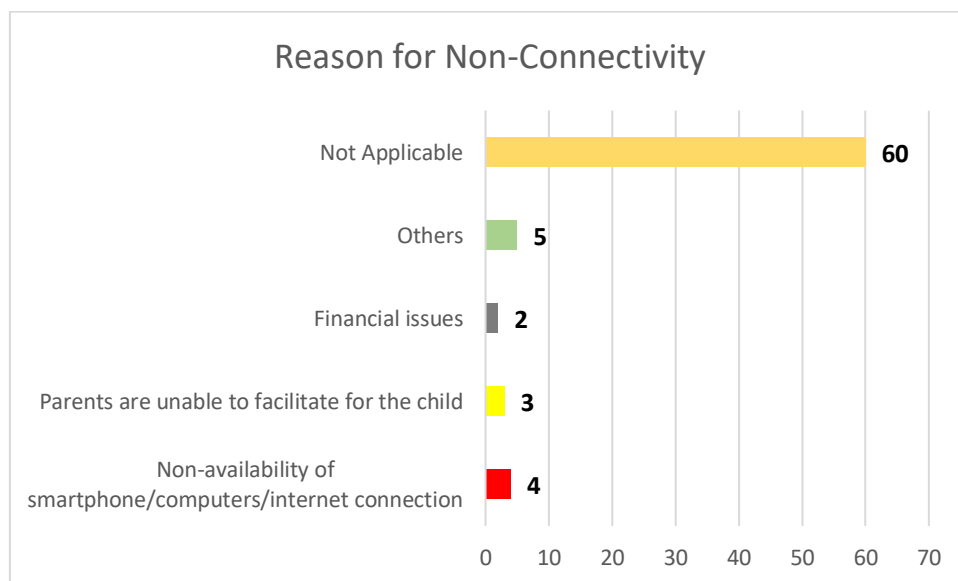
Type of Disability of Students Who Dropped Out	Frequency	Percentage
Dyslexia	1	1%
Locomotor disability	1	1%
Intellectual disability	4	5%
Hearing impaired	3	4%
Mental illness	2	3%
Autism	1	1%
Neurological problem	1	1%
Not aware of how many children with disabilities dropped out	62	83%
Total	74	100%

Out of the 74 teachers, 35 of them (47%) were in touch with students with disabilities, while 27 of them (37%) were not in contact with students with disabilities.

Table 2.1 Means of Connectivity for Teaching Students with Disabilities

Means of Connectivity for Teaching Students with Disabilities	Frequency	Percentage
Phone/video call	27	36%
Messaging (SMS, WhatsApp, Telegram, E-mail)	10	14%
Home visit	1	1%
Not applicable	36	49%
Total	74	100%

Of the 74 respondents who filled out the questionnaire, 27 respondents (36%) stated that they connected with students with disabilities through phone or video calls, while 10 respondents (14%) connected with the students through messages in the form of SMS, WhatsApp, Telegram and/or E-mail. One teacher (1%) connected with student(s) with disability by visiting their home.

Chart 2.2 Reasons for Non-Connectivity

As seen in Chart 2.2, four respondents (5%) felt that due to the non-availability of smartphone/computer and/or internet connection, they could not be in contact with students with disabilities during the classes, while three respondents (4%) felt that the parents of the student(s) with disabilities could not facilitate their education, and two respondents (3%) felt that financial issues were the primary reason behind the non-connectivity of teachers and students with disabilities.

Concerns Regarding Inclusive Education

When the respondents were asked about the concerns they have regarding Inclusive Education, the responses to the open-ended question were diverse, which are mentioned below:

“Financial support for them”

“More focus for disabled children in terms of infrastructure needed to be taken care of.”

“More activities should be included in curriculum that will bring special students close to other students of the class. Their syllabus should also be reduced; exams should be separately organised. An empathetic bond between the two is very important in inclusive education.”

“The teacher education curriculum needs to be made more focussed on teaching children with disability.”

“Lack of training among general teachers.”

“Inflexible school curriculum, lack of training and professional development of mainstream teachers.”

“Classmates, too, need to be sensitized in this matter.”

“Special Educators should find the inclination of students towards some special art or activity.”

“Education and awareness of abled students regarding issues the children with disabilities face.”

“All types of children with disabilities should not be put in one section.”

“Lack of understanding of the concept of inclusive education.”

“Mindset and acceptance among administrative staff and other teachers in school.”

“Adequate teaching materials.”

“More materials regarding students with disabilities should be given to school.”

“Peer group tutorial.”

Chapter 6

Discussion

This research aimed to understand teachers' role in inclusive education at New Delhi's Government schools by exploring the level of awareness they have regarding the policy guidelines, whether the support that the teachers are being provided is adequate and how COVID-19 impacted their dynamics with children with disabilities in the classroom. This chapter will further delve into the findings that came out of this quantitative research by connecting it with the literature reviewed, available policies and theoretical framework.

Baker, Wang and Walberg (1994) have stated that schools are being increasingly challenged to provide support to a diversifying student population; whether to provide inclusive education is not the cause of concern, but how to implement inclusive education in ways that ensure the success of schooling for all children, especially those with disabilities feasibly and effectively. Fast-forward to 2023, efforts towards mainstreaming inclusive education have been made in Delhi, which were explored through this study. In a circular dated May 8, 2019, the Directorate of Education, Government of NCT of Delhi, instructed all the Government schools to maintain, provide or repair ramps, signages, railings, modified toilets, tactiles etc., as per the specifications provided in "Handbook of Barrier Free Access to Schools for Children with Disabilities". The current finding of this research shows that this order was followed, as 14 respondents have stated that additional facilities, like ramps and disabled-friendly toilets (three respondents i.e. 4%), wheelchairs (two respondents i.e. 3%) and basic infrastructure (two respondents i.e. 3%), are available for children with disabilities, along with counselling (one respondent i.e. 2%), resource room (one respondent i.e. 2%), scribe facilities, signage facilities for children with disabilities, resource therapy centre and aids and appliances (all 1%, which is one respondent each).

The 2021 document "Guidelines for the Development of e-Content for Children with Disabilities", published "by the Ministry of Education, Government of India", states that one of the reasons for students with disabilities dropping out of school or absenteeism is the lack of accessible material. "Article 40 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016" states that:

- "All contents available in audio, print and electronic media must be in accessible format

- Persons with disabilities must have access to electronic media by providing audio description, sign language interpretation and close captioning;
- Electronic goods and equipment, which are meant for everyday use, are available in universal design.”

The findings of this study show that there is adequate awareness among the Government school teachers of Delhi regarding the existing Act and guidelines, with 49 respondents (66%) stating that they are aware of the policy guidelines on inclusive education and disability, while 24 respondents (33%) stated that they are aware of certain aspects of the guidelines. But just providing accessible materials and assistive devices does not mean the system’s job is over; training is needed for the teachers to help children with disabilities with their studies.

In a survey conducted with 470 regular school teachers in Delhi, India, by Bhatnagar and Das (2014), it was found that while the secondary school teachers did not see an increased workload due to inclusion as a problem, an overwhelming majority of the respondents (95%) stated that they had not received training in inclusive education. The current findings support this, as 42 respondents (57%) stated that they did not receive disability training during their studies, while 32 respondents (43%) received disability training. Even after they became teachers, 43 respondents (58%) stated that they hadn’t received disability training as a skill upgradation, while 31 respondents (42%) have received additional training in teaching students with disabilities.

Ecological system theory states that an individual’s (in this study, a child with disabilities) development is dependent on their social environment, whether it’s the influence of teachers, parents and peers (Bronfenbrenner, 1992) or due to synergies of micro and macro factors like educational services, income level, policies and health (World Bank, 1997, as cited in Mutua, 2001). In the current study, it’s children with disabilities studying in New Delhi’s Government Schools who are at the centre of this framework, and the support they need in their education rests on their parents, teachers, NGOs and Delhi Government. As the findings of this study show, 59 respondents (80%) have stated that Resource Persons or Special Educators are available in the government schools of New Delhi, and 60 respondents (81%) feel that their involvement has helped in the education of children with disabilities. Forty-seven respondents (64%) have stated that the Government schools don’t have a tie-up with the NGOs, but 10 respondents have stated the opposite (in this case, 5 respondents [7%] have stated that the NGOs provide equipment to children with disabilities, while 4 respondents [5%] have stated

that NGOs provide equipment as well as help in improving the teaching process). Whether the NGOs have helped in supporting the education of children with disabilities has mixed responses from the teachers, with 10 respondents (14%) stating that the NGOs have not been helpful, while 10 respondents (13%) feel the opposite, and 15 respondents (20%) have stated that they are unaware of the extent to which NGOs have helped students with disabilities.

The Social Model of Disability states that one's impairment or condition is not the reason they are disabled, but it is due to the barriers that exist in a society that prevents persons with disabilities from accessing and navigating the services (Oliver, 1983). This was starkly clear when the Central Government imposed nationwide lockdown across India during the COVID-19 pandemic. Regarding education, "the Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW)" issued their respective advisories to address the needs of children with disabilities during the pandemic (Krishna, Rajaraman, 2021, p.3). These guidelines were concerned with access to important products, priority treatment, helplines, awareness material's availability in an accessible format, and maintaining ease of access to their caregivers during the pandemic. While these were comprehensive, what was notably absent was the state's accountability for efforts towards CWDs' education during the pandemic. Remarks like "education had largely come to a halt" and "nothing specific was doable in the face of the pandemic" were nonchalant (Krishna, Rajaraman, 2021, p.3).

As the findings show, the online teaching process was solely driven by teachers when it comes to the education of children with disabilities, with 35 respondents (47%) stating that they were in touch with them during the COVID-19 pandemic, while 27 of them (37%) were not in contact with CWDs. Those who were in touch with the CWDs were communicating either through phone or video calls (27 respondents, i.e., 36%), messaging (10 respondents, i.e., 14 %) or visiting their home (one respondent, i.e. 1%). On the other hand, four respondents (5%) felt that due to the non-availability of smartphone/computer and/or internet connection, they could not contact children with disabilities during the classes, while three respondents (4%) felt that the parents of children with disabilities could not facilitate their education, and two respondents (3%) felt that financial issues were the primary reason behind the non-connectivity of teachers and students with disabilities.

Based on the findings that have emerged from this research, a number of recommendations are given below:

Recommendations for Policy

- The findings showed that the respondents' level of awareness regarding the existing guidelines set up by the Right to Education Act 2009, Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 and CBSE Handbook of Inclusive Education 2021 ranges from adequate to only being aware of some aspects. So, to increase awareness about these guidelines among regular Government school teachers, the Delhi Government should incorporate them into disability training.
- Disability training should be provided to the teachers as part of the training curriculum for becoming a teacher and B.Ed. curriculum.

Recommendations for Practice

- As per the guidelines of the Central Government and that of the Delhi Government, all Government schools need to have resource centres and other facilities required for teaching children with disabilities. However, these guidelines do not seem to have been implemented as the findings indicate. Monitoring needs to be spruced up by the concerned agencies.
- Training needs to be mandatorily provided to all teachers to use the facilities.
- NGOs and Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) are an integral part of the education system. Their expertise should be used to effectively implement the inclusive education policy.
- Guidelines for online teaching of children with disabilities should be effectively implemented, and the teachers should be trained in the same.
- Usage of media like TV channels and Radio channels should be explored to overcome the reach to learning for children with disabilities, especially those belonging to low-income groups and Below the Poverty Line (BPL), in order to continue education even in situations like the COVID -19 pandemic.
- As suggested by some of the respondent teachers, more focus is required from all stakeholders to make inclusive education successful.

Recommendations for Further Research

- Further research is required to understand the effectiveness of disability training for Government school teachers.
- Research on the education of children with disabilities before and after the COVID-19 pandemic in New Delhi is required.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The scope of this study is that the effectiveness of disability training for Government school teachers, the implementation of policy guidelines on inclusive education released by the Delhi Government and the ground reality of it, and the education of children with disabilities before and after the COVID-19 pandemic should be further studied.

When the questionnaire was circulated to the teachers online, they responded in affirmative, but as one week passed, no one filled out the questionnaire. So, the researcher had to follow up with them while also stating that they could circulate it to their colleagues further. Also, despite the changes to the online questionnaire as per the feedback received during the pilot study, some respondents did not answer the questions appropriately. So, keeping this in mind, data cleaning and analysis were carefully done.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

The findings indicate that the policy and guidelines for inclusive education made by the Central Government and the Govt of NCT of Delhi are comprehensive. However, their implementation needs effective monitoring. The respondents in the study have stated that they have not received disability training during their studies or as a skill upgradation when being trained as a teacher, compared to those who have received training; not all schools have the facilities laid down in the guidelines for teaching children with disabilities, and the teachers have not received training to use the facilities, so these disparities have to be worked on by the school authorities and the Delhi Government. No participation of NGOs has been indicated for inclusive education in Government schools, but it does not negate the work they are doing on education. During the COVID-19 pandemic, findings state that 35 respondents were able to reach out to children with disabilities, but from the Government side, the approach towards children with disabilities' education was nonchalant.

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Appendix

Google Form Questionnaire

The Role of Teachers in Inclusive Education at Government Schools in New Delhi

I am Anugya Srivastava, currently pursuing my Masters in Social Work, specialising in Disability Studies and Action from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. I'm conducting a study in partial fulfilment of my degree on the role of teachers and the support provided to them by the NGOs to teach students with disabilities at Government schools in New Delhi with the following objectives:

- 1) To assess the awareness about policy guidelines of the Govt of Delhi by the teachers of children with disabilities (CWDs) in government schools.
- 2) To examine support available to teachers for teaching children with disabilities in school.
- 3) To examine the impact of COVID-19 on teaching children with disabilities in Govt. schools of Delhi.

It would be greatly appreciated if you could take the time to answer the questions as honestly as you can. Your input is very valuable to the outcome of this study. This requires the researcher to protect the participants' anonymity and safeguard data. Participation is voluntary and anonymous. It is essential to understand that by completing and returning this consent form, you are providing your consent to participate in the study. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the questionnaire, please contact me at anugyasrivastava24@gmail.com OR Dr. Madhura Nagchoudhari, Faculty of Centre for Disability Studies and Action, School of Social Work, at madhuranag@tiss.edu. Thank you in advance for your time and participation.

Eligibility:

Teachers teaching students with disabilities in Government schools or MCD (Municipal Corporation of Delhi) schools of New Delhi at Primary/Secondary level are needed in this research.

Expectations:

Please read the questions carefully. Most questions are specified with the (*), indicating that it's mandatory to answer them. It will take not more than 5 to 10 minutes to answer the questions.

* Required

1. 1. Do you want to participate in this research? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

Inclusive Education

2. 2. Name

3. 3. Age *

4. 4. Gender *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Female

☐ Male

☐ Others

5. 5. Which classes do you teach? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Primary (Class 1-5)

☐ Upper Primary (Class 6 to 8)

☐ Secondary (Class 9 to 10)

☐ Senior Secondary (Class 11 to 12)

6. 6. Educational Qualification? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ B. A.
☐ B.Ed.
☐ M.Ed.
☐ Other

7. 7. What subjects do you teach? *

8. 8. How many students with disabilities are there in your class? *

9. 9. How many years or months of teaching experience do you have? *

10. 10. How many years have you been teaching at your current school? *

11. 11. Have you received training in teaching students with disabilities during your studies? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

12. 12. Have you received additional training in teaching students with disabilities after you became a teacher? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

13. 13. Are you aware of the guidelines on inclusive education and disability? (Eg. Right to Education 2009 and Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, CBSE Handbook of Inclusive Education 2021) *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Aware of some aspects

14. 14. Please select the facilities for teaching children with disabilities that are available in your school? You may choose more than one, if applicable. *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Specialised learning materials
☐ Learning software
☐ Colour coded keyboard
☐ Resource centres
☐ All of the above
☐ None of the above

15. 15. Mention those facilities that are provided in your school but are not listed in Q. 14? *

16. 16. Have you been provided training to use the facilities mentioned in Q. 14? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

17. 17. Does your school have Resource Person/Special Educators to help in Inclusive Education of students with disabilities? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

18. 18. Are these Resource Persons/Special Educators helpful towards Inclusive Education? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Can't say

19. 19. Is an NGO involved with the school to facilitate inclusive education? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not aware

20. 20. If yes, is/are the NGO(s) involved in helping in the teaching process or providing equipment etc. to the students with disabilities? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Improving the teaching process
☐ Providing equipment to the students with disabilities
☐ Both
☐ Not aware
☐ Not applicable

21. 21. Has the NGO's involvement in your school helped in the teaching of students with disabilities? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Not aware
☐ Not Applicable

COVID-19 and Students with Disabilities in New Delhi's Government Schools

22. 22. Do you know of any child with disabilities dropping out during the COVID-19 pandemic? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Not aware

23. 23. If yes, then what type of disability does the child with disability have? *
-

24. 24. During COVID pandemic, were you able to connect with students with disabilities? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Not aware

25. 25. If yes, how did you continue with your lessons with students with disabilities? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Phone/video call
☐ Messaging (SMS, WhatsApp, Telegram, E-mail)
☐ Home visit
☐ Hard copy of notes sent through Speed Post
☐ Not Applicable

26. 26. If no, what was the reason for not being able to connect? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Non-availability of smartphone/computers/internet connection
☐ Parents are unable to facilitate for the child
☐ Financial issues
☐ Others
☐ Not Applicable

27. 27. Is there any issue or concern you would like to give regarding inclusion in education? *

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Google Forms

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