

From Policy to Practice: An Assessment of Educational Provisions for Special Needs Children in Assam

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the various government initiatives and policies implemented for the education of Children With Special Needs (CWSN) in Assam, India. The study employs a descriptive survey method utilizing both primary and secondary data sources to analyze the effectiveness of educational provisions and support services. Through an examination of central and state government schemes, including the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, District Primary Education Programme, and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, this research evaluates the current scenario of special education in Assam. The findings reveal that while significant legislative and programmatic efforts have been made, challenges persist in terms of qualified professionals, curriculum flexibility, and societal attitudes. The paper concludes with recommendations for strengthening the inclusive education framework and improving service delivery for children with special needs.

KEYWORDS: Children With Special Needs, Inclusive Education, Government Policies, Assam, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Disability Education

INTRODUCTION

Education is about supporting children to develop in all aspects of their lives—spiritual, moral, cognitive, emotional, imaginative, aesthetic, social, and physical (UNESCO, 1994). Children with special needs are children first and have much in common with other children of the same age. There are many aspects to a child's development that make up the whole child, including personality, the ability to communicate (verbal and non-verbal), resilience and strength, the ability to appreciate and enjoy life, and the desire to learn (Ainscow, 2005). A child is active by nature, and access to education is recognized as a universal right (United Nations, 1989).

Throughout the world, children who have disabilities and many others who face difficulties in living have traditionally been marginalized within or excluded from schools (Pijl et al., 1997). There are children with special needs who require the assistance of special educators in order to benefit from education. According to the World Health Organization (2011), children with special needs are at significant risk for limited participation in school. Many children with special needs often live outside of mainstream society in residential institutions or at home with limited interaction with the broader community (Mittler, 2000).

Discrimination and negative attitudes towards children with special needs continue to permeate many regions, which in part can be traced to historical perspectives where individuals were valued according to their productivity and contributions to the advancement of society (Barton, 1998). These attitudes impede progress towards inclusive education. The language widely used to describe children with special needs serves to perpetuate negative stereotypes and prevent full inclusion (Corbett, 1996). Professionals as well as the wider society commonly use derogatory terms when referring to children with special needs, while the belief that these "defects" must be corrected prevails in many regions. The implementation of inclusive education is hampered by persisting negativity towards children with special needs among professionals in the education system (Singal, 2006).

In the Indian context, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) uses the term "Children With Special Needs" (CWSN) for children with disabilities, and it ensures that every child with special needs, irrespective of the kind,

category, and degree of disability, is provided meaningful and quality education (Government of India, 2007). However, the unavailability of sufficient qualified professionals for the evaluation of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in Assam has badly affected the enumeration of PWDs in the region. Furthermore, the non-flexible curriculum and evaluation methods are also found to challenge the system. Universities may be used in designing curricula which may help in changing the attitudes of people towards PWDs (Jangira, 2002).

The involvement of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) will certainly be very instrumental in such situations. Therefore, the establishment of inclusive schools should be essential both by government and non-government institutions. Different organizations also need to have processes in place which can be created through living and experience education to first get trained and then work with the child (Sharma et al., 2008). Over the years, various national level programmes, such as the District Primary Education Programme (1990) and the SSA have shaped the developments in schools. The SSA is India's current flagship elementary education programme. SSA categorically brings the concerns of children with disabilities—or those termed "Children With Special Needs"—under the framework of "Inclusive Education" and argues for the adoption of a "Zero Rejection Policy" so that no child is left out of the education system (Government of India, 2007).

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptualizing Children with Special Needs

The concept of children with special needs has evolved significantly over the past few decades. Historically, disability was viewed through a medical model that focused on individual deficits and limitations (Oliver, 1990). However, contemporary understanding has shifted towards a social model that recognizes disability as a product of environmental barriers and societal attitudes rather than solely an individual impairment (Barnes, 1991). This paradigm shift has profound implications for educational policy and practice.

According to Florian (2008), inclusive education is not merely about placing children with disabilities in regular classrooms but about transforming educational environments to accommodate all learners. The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) marked a significant milestone in promoting inclusive education globally, affirming that regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes and achieving education for all.

2.2 Global Perspectives on Inclusive Education

Internationally, the movement towards inclusive education has gained momentum since the 1990s. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) established education as a fundamental right and called upon states to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels. Pijl et al. (1997) examined inclusive education across eight countries and found that successful implementation required changes in school culture, teaching practices, and support systems.

In developed countries, the emphasis has shifted from integration to inclusion. While integration assumed that children with special needs should adapt to existing school structures, inclusion demands that schools transform to accommodate diverse learners (Ainscow, 1999). Booth and Ainscow (2002) developed the Index for Inclusion as a practical tool for schools to examine and improve their inclusive practices.

2.3 Indian Context and Policy Framework

India has made significant strides in addressing the educational needs of children with disabilities. The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, was a landmark legislation that mandated the government to ensure that every child with a disability has access to free education in an appropriate environment (Government of India, 1995). This act recognized seven categories of disabilities and stipulated various provisions for their education and rehabilitation.

Singal (2006) examined inclusive education in India and highlighted the tension between policy rhetoric and

implementation realities. Despite progressive legislation, the educational experiences of children with disabilities varied significantly across states and contexts. The author emphasized the need for capacity building among teachers and systemic changes in school structures.

The National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (2006) further reinforced the commitment to inclusive education and recognized the importance of assistive technologies, accessible infrastructure, and trained personnel (Government of India, 2006). The policy acknowledged the role of civil society organizations in supplementing government efforts.

2.4 The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Inclusive Education

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, launched in 2000-01, represents India's most comprehensive effort to achieve universalization of elementary education. The programme explicitly includes children with special needs within its purview and adopts a zero rejection policy (Government of India, 2007). According to Sharma et al. (2008), SSA has significantly increased enrollment rates of children with disabilities in regular schools, though concerns remain about the quality of education and adequacy of support services.

The programme provides for various interventions including identification and assessment of children with special needs, provision of assistive devices, training of teachers in inclusive education, and establishment of resource support at block and district levels (Rao, 2008). However, the implementation of these provisions varies considerably across states.

2.5 Challenges in Implementation

Despite progressive policies, several challenges persist in the implementation of inclusive education in India. Jangira (2002) identified key barriers including inadequate training of teachers, lack of appropriate teaching-learning materials, inaccessible school infrastructure, and negative societal attitudes. The author argued for a systemic approach to addressing these challenges.

Mukhopadhyay (2006) highlighted the need for curriculum adaptation and flexible evaluation methods for children with special needs. The rigid structure of mainstream education often fails to accommodate diverse learning needs, leading to poor educational outcomes for children with disabilities.

The role of NGOs has been recognized as crucial in bridging the gap between policy and practice. Sharma and Deppeler (2005) emphasized the importance of partnerships between government and civil society organizations in expanding educational opportunities for children with special needs.

2.6 Studies Specific to Assam and the Northeast Region

Research on inclusive education in Assam and the northeastern region remains limited. However, some studies have highlighted specific challenges and opportunities in this context. Borah (2013) examined the status of inclusive education in Assam and found that while enrollment of children with special needs had increased, retention and achievement rates remained low.

Das (2015) investigated the role of special schools in Assam and highlighted the need for better coordination between government departments and NGOs. The study found that many special schools lacked adequate infrastructure and trained personnel.

The challenging geographical terrain of the region, with many remote and inaccessible areas, poses additional difficulties in delivering educational services to children with special needs (Sharma, 2014). The linguistic and cultural diversity of the region also necessitates context-specific approaches to inclusive education.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the literature review and the objectives of this study, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What are the major government initiatives and policies implemented for the education of Children with Special Needs in Assam?
2. How effective are the current educational provisions and support services in addressing the needs of children with special needs in Assam?
3. What is the current status of special schools and inclusive education programs in Assam?
4. What challenges exist in the implementation of government policies for children with special needs in Assam?
5. What recommendations can be made to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for children with special needs in Assam?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To review the initiatives provided by central and state governments towards education for Children with Special Needs with reference to Assam.
2. To examine the role of various government departments and agencies in implementing educational programs for children with special needs.
3. To assess the current scenario of special schools in Assam.
4. To identify gaps and challenges in the implementation of inclusive education policies in Assam.
5. To suggest measures for improving educational opportunities for children with special needs in the state.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive survey method to fulfil the research objectives. The research utilizes both primary and secondary data sources to provide a comprehensive analysis of government initiatives for children with special needs in Assam.

5.1 Data Sources

Primary Data: Primary data was collected directly from key government offices and institutions in Assam, including:

- Social Welfare Department, Assam
- Guwahati Medical College & Hospital (Composite Regional Centre)
- Mahendra Mohan Choudhury Hospital (Regional Rehabilitation Centre)
- State Child Protection Society, Beltola, Guwahati

Secondary Data: Secondary data was obtained from various sources including:

- PhD theses and dissertations
- Peer-reviewed journals and academic publications
- Government reports and policy documents
- Books from Krishna Kanta Handique State Open University Library and Gauhati University Library

5.2 Data Collection Methods

Interviews were conducted with concerned authorities of special schools and government officials from various departments including the Social Welfare Department, Composite Regional Centre (CRC), Regional Rehabilitation Centre (RRC), and State Child Protection Society. Structured interview schedules were used to gather information about the roles and initiatives of these organizations.

5.3 Data Analysis

The data obtained from various respondents was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Statistical data regarding enrollment, fund allocation, and beneficiary numbers were compiled and presented in tabular form. Qualitative data from interviews and document analysis were subjected to content analysis to identify key themes and patterns.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN INDIA

The central and state governments in India have implemented various schemes and programs to address the educational needs of children with special needs. These initiatives represent a progressive evolution of policy and practice in special education.

6.1 District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)

The District Primary Education Programme was launched in 1994 by the Government of India for the development of elementary education. The programme included the Integrated Education for Disabled (IED) component as an integral part. At present, IED under DPEP is operational in 242 districts across 18 states. In these states, approximately 6.2 lakh children with special needs have been enrolled in regular schools with adequate support services (Government of India, 2001). The success of DPEP in increasing enrollment rates provided the foundation for scaling up inclusive education efforts through subsequent programs.

6.2 Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights & Full Participation) Act, 1995

The Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995, represents the most landmark legislation in the history of special education in India. This Act recognizes seven categories of disabilities: blindness, low vision, leprosy-cured, hearing impairment, locomotor disability, mental retardation, and mental illness. The Act mandates the government to ensure that every child with a disability has access to free education in an appropriate environment until the age of 18 years (Government of India, 1995). Key provisions include:

1. 3% reservation in government educational institutions
2. Non-discrimination in educational settings
3. Provision of accessible infrastructure
4. Removal of architectural barriers in schools

The Act also stipulates the establishment of special schools in every district and the training of teachers for special education (Rao, 2008).

6.3 National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation, and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999

The National Trust Act, passed in 1999 by the Parliament of India, is a major landmark in the history of integrated education in India. This Act specifically addresses the needs of persons with autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation, and multiple disabilities—categories that were not adequately covered under the PWD Act of 1995 (Government of India, 1999). The Act provides for:

1. Legal guardianship for persons with these disabilities
2. Creation of an enabling environment for independent living
3. Support to registered organizations providing services
4. Schemes for care-giving and rehabilitation

The National Trust has implemented several schemes including the Aspiration scheme for early intervention, the Disha scheme for day care, and the Vikaas scheme for vocational training (National Trust, 2020).

6.4 Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has been operational since 2000-01 in partnership with state governments to achieve the goal of universalization of elementary education. The programme adopts a zero rejection policy and uses an approach of converging various existing schemes and programmes for children with special needs (Government of India, 2007). Key features of SSA for children with special needs include:

Zero Rejection Policy:

SSA ensures that every child with special needs, irrespective of the kind, category, and degree of disability, is provided meaningful and quality education. The programme has adopted a multi-option model which includes enrollment in regular schools, Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE) centers, and home-based education for children with severe disabilities.

Free and Compulsory Education:

Keeping conformity with the Right to Education, SSA provides free and compulsory education to all children, including those with special needs. Educational materials, assistive devices, and other support services are provided at no cost to the child.

Teacher-Student Ratio (1:8):

SSA maintains a favorable teacher-student ratio for educating children with special needs. One teacher is appointed for every eight students with special needs, ensuring individualized attention and support.

Appointment of Itinerant Teachers:

To increase the efficiency of the programme and ensure regular monitoring, SSA appoints itinerant teachers who travel from place to place to provide specialized support to children in different schools (SSA Mission, 2018).

6.5 Right to Education Act, 2009

After a continual demand for making education a fundamental right from all corners, the government enacted the 86th Amendment of the Constitution of India in 2002. The 86th Amendment introduced Article 21A, making the right to education of children from 6 to 14 years of age a fundamental right. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, operationalized this constitutional provision. Significantly, the Act explicitly includes children with special needs within its ambit (Government of India, 2009). Key provisions include:

1. Free and compulsory education for all children aged 6-14 years
2. 25% reservation for children from disadvantaged groups
3. Non-discrimination and non-detention policies
4. Provision of barrier-free access in schools
5. Training of teachers in inclusive education

6.6 Samagra Shiksha

Launched in 2018-19, Samagra Shiksha is an integrated scheme for school education covering children with special needs from classes 1 to 12 under the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development. The scheme subsumes the erstwhile SSA, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), and Teacher Education (TE) schemes (Government of India, 2018). Key features related to children with special needs include:

1. Enhanced financial support for assistive devices and equipment
2. Provision of home-based education for children with severe disabilities
3. Stipend for girls with special needs
4. Identification and assessment camps
5. Resource support at block and cluster levels

SCENARIO OF SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN ASSAM

A special school is a school catering to students who have special educational needs due to severe learning difficulties, physical disabilities, or behavioral problems. Special schools are specifically designed, staffed, and resourced to provide appropriate special education for children with special needs. These schools provide special equipment and additional training to children with special needs and focus on developing independent

living skills and social skills.

According to data from the Social Welfare Department (2019-2020), there are 4 government special schools under the Social Welfare Department, Assam, and 27 private schools run by NGOs. The enrollment of students in special schools stands at 1,69,293 students (Social Welfare Department, 2020). These special schools provide facilities to those children who cannot be given education in normal schools due to the severity of their disabilities.

The special schools in Assam offer various services including:

1. Individualized educational programs
2. Therapeutic interventions
3. Vocational training
4. Parent counseling and training
5. Provision of assistive devices
6. Mobility training for visually impaired students

However, challenges remain in terms of infrastructure, trained personnel, and quality of education. Many special schools lack modern equipment and follow outdated curricula that do not adequately prepare students for integration into mainstream society (Borah, 2013).

INITIATIVES TOWARDS CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN ASSAM

8.1 The Role of Social Welfare Department, Assam

The Social Welfare Department of Assam plays a crucial role in implementing various schemes and programs for children with special needs. Some of the key educational provisions include:

Educational Support:

1. Free education to children aged 6-18 years in special schools and inclusive schools
2. Free books and educational materials
3. Guidelines regarding written examinations
4. Curriculum adapted for visually impaired students
5. Braille textbooks for students with visual impairments

Scholarship Programs:

1. Monthly scholarship of Rs. 200/- for students in special schools (Rs. 2,400/- yearly)
2. Monthly scholarship of Rs. 3,000/- for students in technical and medical education (Rs. 36,000/- yearly)
3. Vocational training institutions receive financial aid from the government

Disability Camps and Services:

1. Special disability camps organized across the state
2. Aid and appliances distribution camps in association with Assam State Legal Services Authority
3. District-wise camps organized with ALIMCO (Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India)
4. Aid and appliances worth Rs. 10.5 crore distributed in 2017-18

Other Provisions:

1. Health grant of Rs. 5,000/- for persons with disabilities
2. 100% concession in state buses for persons with disabilities
3. Two seats reserved for persons with disabilities in government vessels under Inland Water Transport Department
4. 3% reservation in government posts (notified in 1996)
5. State Coordination Committee and State Executive Committee formed under the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995

The Office of the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, Assam, in association with the Directorate of Social Welfare, organizes "World Disability Day" on 3rd December annually at Government B.D.S. Deaf and Dumb School, Kahilipara, Guwahati. Activities such as drawing competition, musical chair, music competition, run for the blind, and other events are conducted to celebrate the abilities of children with special needs.

In March 2017, a joint programme under the Social Welfare Department and Ali Yavar Jung National Institute for Speech and Hearing Disabilities, Mumbai, was organized in collaboration with Shishu Sarothi, an NGO. This National Workshop on "Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in North-East Region" saw participation from West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar, and North Eastern states.

8.2 Regional Rehabilitation Centre (RRC), Mahendra Mohan Choudhury Hospital

The Regional Rehabilitation Centre (RRC) was established under the National Programme for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disability (NPRPD), a central government scheme. The centre is staffed with 3 doctors, 1 nodal officer, 4 consultants, 2 special educators, 1 orthopedic engineer, 1 audiologist, and 1 technician. Key services provided include:

1. Issuance of disability certificates to persons with disabilities
2. Training programs for children with special needs
3. Supply of wheelchairs, hearing aids, and other medical equipment to children with special needs from below poverty line families
4. Mobility training for visually impaired children
5. Color conception training
6. Early intervention programs

The centre celebrates World Disability Day on 3rd December annually by organizing summer camps, drawing competitions, parent counseling sessions, and vocational training activities.

8.3 Composite Regional Centre (CRC), Guwahati Medical College

The Composite Regional Centre (CRC) for persons with disabilities is a central government scheme established in 2000, primarily aimed at improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities. The centre provides support for children with special needs through hospitalization, surgery, and rehabilitation services. Services include:

1. Consultation and expert services for various disabilities
2. Training in social, vocational, and communication skills for parents and children
3. Internship programs for students of Guwahati Medical College and Hospital
4. Training programs for physiotherapists and speech therapists
5. Research activities in the field of disability
6. Distribution of assistive devices for community participation
7. Helpline numbers for persons with disabilities under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan)
8. Medical facilities at subsidized rates

8.4 State Child Protection Society, Beltola, Guwahati

The State Child Protection Society (SCPS) Assam is a registered society under the Department of Social Welfare, Government of Assam, established on 12th July, 2010. The primary responsibility of SCPS is to implement the National Flagship programme of the Government of India, namely the Integrated Child Protection Scheme, in the state. The society aims at providing a holistic child protection mechanism covering both preventive and rehabilitative aspects for children with special needs.

Disability Certificate:

The PWD Act 1995 provides certain benefits to persons with disabilities who have not less than 40% of any

disability as certified by a medical authority. The society facilitates the issuance of these certificates.

District Disability Rehabilitation Centre:

To facilitate infrastructure and capacity building at the district level, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, with active support of the state government, is providing comprehensive services to children with special needs through District Disability Rehabilitation Centres in all unserved districts.

8.5 Schemes for Children with Special Needs under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Mission has announced different plans of action for fulfilling the objectives of an inclusive education system. Major policies adopted include:

Zero Rejection Policy:

Ensures that no child with special needs is deprived of the right to education. The multi-option model includes enrollment in regular schools, Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS)/Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE), and home-based education.

Facilities According to Different Needs:

The major thrust is on inclusion or mainstreaming children with special needs into the fabric of formal elementary schooling. Children with severe and profound disabilities are provided home-based education with intensive specialized support.

Mid-Day Meal for Growth Enrollments:

To ensure the enrollment of special children, the mission provides Mid-Day Meal at schools.

Awareness Programs: SSA carries out awareness programs among family members and community members to address attitudinal barriers. Various modes like Maa-Beti Mela, Bal Sammelan, print and electronic media, and success stories are used. Training of community leaders is an essential component. Mother Teacher Association/Parent Teacher Association (MTA/PTA) meetings are used as powerful mediums to inform parents about the care, needs, and management of children with special needs.

FUNDING POLICY BY GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

The Social Welfare Department provides funds and scholarships to disabled students in special schools. In 2019-2020, according to the Social Welfare Department, Assam, all 27 districts were allocated special funds for children with special needs.

Table 1: Fund Allocated by Social Welfare Department for the Session 2019-2020 - Number of Physically Disabled Candidates Across Assam (District-Wise)

Sl. No.	District	No. of Candidates
1	Baksa	3,963
2	Barpeta	7,158
3	Bongaigaon	2,940
4	Cachar	8,661
5	Chirang	1,788
6	Darrang	7,560
7	Dhemaji	4,044
8	Dhubri & South Salmara	9,736
9	Dibrugarh	4,884
10	Dima Hasao	839
11	Goalpara	8,679
12	Golaghat	4,727

13	Hailakandi	7,126
14	Jorhat & Majuli	7,650
15	Kamrup	5,059
16	Kamrup (Metro)	3,757
17	Karbi Anglong & West Karbi Anglong	6,335
18	Karimganj	7,384
19	Kokrajhar	5,091
20	Lakhimpur	6,030
21	Morigaon	5,246
22	Nagaon & Hojai	16,924
23	Nalbari	6,973
24	Sivasagar & Charaideo	6,937
25	Sonitpur & Biswanath	9,111
26	Tinsukia	6,632
27	Udalguri	4,059
Total		1,69,293

Source: Social Welfare Department, Assam (2019-2020)

The data reveals significant variations in the number of identified children with special needs across districts. Nagaon & Hojai district has the highest number (16,924), while Dima Hasao has the lowest (839). These variations may be attributed to differences in population size, awareness levels, and identification mechanisms across districts.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of government initiatives for children with special needs in Assam reveals a comprehensive policy framework at both central and state levels. The evolution from the District Primary Education Programme to Samagra Shiksha demonstrates a progressive approach to inclusive education. The legislative support through the PWD Act 1995, National Trust Act 1999, and RTE Act 2009 provides a strong foundation for educational rights of children with special needs.

However, the implementation of these policies faces several challenges. The unavailability of sufficient qualified professionals for the evaluation of children with special needs in Assam has adversely affected the enumeration and appropriate placement of children. As noted by Jangira (2002), the training of teachers remains inadequate, with many educators ill-equipped to handle diverse learning needs in inclusive classrooms.

The non-flexible curriculum and evaluation methods also pose significant challenges. As Mukhopadhyay (2006) argued, the rigid structure of mainstream education often fails to accommodate diverse learning needs. Universities and educational institutions need to be actively involved in designing curricula that are responsive to the needs of children with special needs while also addressing societal attitudes.

The role of NGOs has been crucial in supplementing government efforts. Organizations like Shishu Sarothi have played important roles in service delivery, advocacy, and awareness generation. The partnership between government and NGOs needs to be strengthened to expand coverage and improve service quality.

The fund allocation data reveals that identification of children with special needs varies considerably across districts. This suggests that some districts may have better identification mechanisms or higher awareness levels. Concerted efforts are needed to ensure that all children with special needs are identified and provided

appropriate educational support.

The various departments—Social Welfare, Health, and Education—need to work in coordination to provide comprehensive services. The establishment of the State Child Protection Society and District Disability Rehabilitation Centres represents positive steps in this direction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Strengthening Teacher Training Programs:** There is an urgent need to enhance pre-service and in-service training programs for teachers in inclusive education. Universities and teacher training institutions should incorporate substantial components on special education in their curricula.
2. **Curriculum Adaptation:** The curriculum at all levels should be made flexible and adaptable to meet the diverse needs of children with special needs. Assessment and evaluation methods should also be modified to accommodate different learning styles and abilities.
3. **Enhanced Professional Support:** The number of special educators, therapists, and other professionals needs to be increased substantially. Recruitment policies should prioritize filling vacancies in special education positions.
4. **Infrastructure Development:** Schools should be made accessible through ramps, accessible toilets, and other necessary modifications. Special schools should be equipped with modern teaching-learning materials and assistive devices.
5. **Strengthening Coordination:** Better coordination between Social Welfare, Education, and Health departments is essential for providing comprehensive services. Regular inter-departmental meetings and joint monitoring mechanisms should be established.
6. **Community Awareness:** Sustained awareness campaigns are needed to change societal attitudes towards children with special needs. Community leaders, parents, and teachers should be engaged in these efforts.
7. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** A robust monitoring system should be established to track the progress of children with special needs in educational programs. Regular evaluations should inform policy adjustments and program improvements.
8. **Research and Documentation:** More research is needed on various aspects of inclusive education in Assam. Universities and research institutions should be encouraged to undertake studies on identification, intervention, and outcomes for children with special needs.

CONCLUSION

The Government of India is striving to improve the education system and make it completely accessible, and the state government of Assam is also providing the right platform in the form of various schemes and scholarships for children with special needs. This paper has reviewed the different central and state government schemes towards education for children with special needs, examining the initiatives of the Social Welfare Department of Assam and the roles of the Regional Rehabilitation Centre, Composite Regional Centre, State Child Protection Society, and schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. The Social Welfare Department of Assam allocates funds to children with special needs across all districts annually. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan plays a major role in educating children with special needs through various plan of actions. The central and state governments provide disability certificates, implement the Person with Disability Act 1995 through various channels, and provide free and compulsory education with facilities according to different needs. However, in addition to the facilities for educating children with special needs in Assam, it is observed that there is a need to provide social security and proper facilities in schools. The unavailability of sufficient qualified professionals for the evaluation of children with special needs in the state has adversely affected the enumeration of disabled children. The majority of employees are not trained to design and implement educational programs, even in regular schools. Universities may be used in designing curricula which may help in changing the attitudes of people towards children with special needs. Government departments

implementing programs for persons with disabilities face limitations in execution under certain conditions. To help maintain quality of education provided for children with special needs, the government should review programs from time to time. It can be concluded that the aim of provisions and initiatives of government is to ensure that children with educational needs achieve a degree of social acceptance and vocational education which meets the needs arising from their disability. In order to achieve the real purpose of education and developmental activities for children with special needs, central and state governments should work together in hand to assess programs, services, and supports.

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