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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EXPLORING THE LIVES OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN AIZAWL EAST BLOCK: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract

The goal of inclusive education is to provide equal learning opportunities for all students, including those with special needs. This study examines the, opportunities, challenges, and support systems for Children with Special Needs (CWSN) in schools across Aizawl East Block, Mizoram. Drawing from a comprehensive literature review of global, national and local studies, the research identifies key objectives: assessing the challenges, pinpointing opportunities, evaluating resources, and proposing solutions. The study employs a quantitative approach with purposive sampling of schools and uses a closed-ended questionnaire for data collection, analysed via SPSS. Findings highlight systemic challenges such as teacher resistance and insufficient training, resource gaps including a lack of special educators and assistive technology, and infrastructure inadequacies. This study aims to bridge the gap between policy and practice in inclusive education in Aizawl East block. By examining the complexities of inclusive education, this research contributes to the ongoing dialogue on how to create truly inclusive educational environments that support the diverse needs of all learners.

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Introduction: -

Before delving into the various components of the research, it is necessary to have a thorough understanding of the topic. Shrivastava (2024) described inclusive education as a way of teaching in which all students, regardless of disability, learning difficulties or other special educational needs, are treated equally in the classroom setting. This approach values diversity and strives to remove barriers to learning and participation for all pupils. According to David Mitchell (2015), inclusive education is a comprehensive notion that involves more than just placing children with special needs in regular courses. It encompasses vision, curriculum, evaluation, teaching, acceptance, access, support, resources, and leadership, with the objective of reforming schools to accommodate all children, not just those with disabilities.

According to Kumar (2017), inclusive education is a process that requires the active participation of all stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, families, and students. He underlines that inclusive education is about creating inclusive cultures, beliefs, policies, and practices, and it can only be successful if there is a collaborative commitment and cooperation to meet the diverse needs of every child in the classroom. Haug (n.d.) also

characterized inclusive education as creating an atmosphere for social life and learning, rather than just placement, and focusing on aiding all students, particularly those at risk of marginalization.

According to the definitions given above, inclusive education is a dynamic and all-encompassing approach that goes beyond simply placing students with different needs in regular classrooms. At its core, it is about establishing fair, encouraging, and cooperative learning environments where all students—regardless of their background, learning difficulties, or disabilities—are respected and valued. In order to promote a sense of belonging and meet the needs of all students, this approach requires the removal of barriers to learning and participation, the development of inclusive cultures, policies, and practices, and the active participation of all stakeholders, including educators, families, and policymakers. Ultimately, inclusive education reflects the broader objectives of equity and social justice in education by transforming schools into communities that celebrate diversity, foster academic and social growth for all, and persistently strive to prevent marginalization. It is not just about access.

Definitions Of Inclusive Education.

Inclusive Education refers to an educational approach that ensures all students—regardless of ability, background, disability, or special educational needs—learn together in the same schools and classrooms. It emphasizes equal access to high-quality education by removing barriers and providing appropriate accommodations to meet diverse learning needs.

1. According to Oxford Review (2025) and Ram et al. (2023), inclusive education promotes equal learning opportunities by integrating all children, including those with impairments and from marginalized groups, into mainstream classrooms, thereby enhancing access and participation.
2. The Alliance for Inclusive Education (2019) highlights that inclusive education involves disabled and non-disabled students learning alongside each other in traditional educational settings such as schools, colleges, and universities.
3. As noted by UNICEF (2017), an inclusive educational system ensures that all pupils have access not only to appropriate instruction and curriculum but also to accessible school infrastructure and resources, supporting full participation regardless of individual needs.

Looking into the above stated definitions, it can be seen that inclusive education is a complete method that ensures that all students, regardless of ability, background, or handicap, learn together in mainstream educational settings. It prioritizes equal access to quality education by removing barriers, establishing appropriate adjustments, and encouraging participation from historically underrepresented groups, such as individuals with disabilities and minority language speakers. The notion has expanded beyond just giving access, emphasizing on student involvement, progress, and the change of educational environments to foster diversity, equity, and full inclusion for every learner in the school community.

Significance of Inclusive Education.

1. **Promotes student's readiness:** According to Shrivastava (2024) The significance of inclusive education is found in the way it readies students for the intricacies of a multicultural society, giving them important perspectives and abilities that help create a more welcoming community.
2. **Promotes equality and non-discrimination:** Portobello Institute (n.d.) stated that Inclusive education guarantees that all students, regardless of ability or background, have equal access to a quality education. This strategy helps down barriers and prejudices, establishing a fairer society and encouraging students take a step towards the elimination of discrimination.
3. **Enhances Learning for Everyone:** Inclusive education enriches and engages the learning environment by including a variety of teaching methods and practices. This benefits every student by exposing them to different perspectives and learning styles, which improves overall knowledge and academic achievements. 21K School (2025).
4. **Promotes social cohesion and mutual respect:** Inclusive classrooms teach students to empathize with, accept, and value their peers' various abilities and backgrounds. These social skills, including as collaboration and respect for diversity, are essential in today's interconnected society (Dutt & Singh, 2021).
5. **Empowers students with additional educational needs:** Students with special needs or impairments are encouraged to learn alongside their peers, fostering a sense of belonging and self-esteem. This empowerment lowers marginalization and helps these students develop confidence and resilience. Portobello Institute, n.d.; 21K School, 2025.

6. **Prepares students for a diverse society:** Inclusive education prepares children to thrive in various surroundings and handle social complexity in the real world by representing societal diversity in the classroom (Portobello Institute, n.d.; 21K School, 2025).
7. **Improves emotional well-being and self-esteem:** According to research, inclusive classroom settings improve kids' emotional well-being, self-esteem, and confidence. Students feel respected and appreciated, which promotes mental health and lessens feelings of loneliness. (21 K School, 2025)
8. **Encourages empathy and respect:** Close engagement with different classmates helps kids develop empathy, compassion, and emotional intelligence, all of which are necessary for good interpersonal relationships (21K School, 2025).
9. **Promotes academic excellence and collaboration:** Inclusive education cultivates a culture of respect and collaboration, which promotes academic performance and prepares students for lifetime learning and growth (Dutt & Singh, 2021).

Significance of the Study: -

Education is a universal right of every citizen; Article 21 of the Indian constitution mandates the State to provide free and compulsory education to all children aged 6 to 14 years as a fundamental right. As a result, every citizen, regardless of status or ability, must have the right to an education. According to UNICEF (2025) All students should attend the same schools and be in the same classrooms as part of inclusive education. It entails genuine educational possibilities for historically marginalized groups, including minority language speakers and children with disabilities. So, it is vital to conduct research on inclusive education in more to make education more inclusive and reachable for all students, especially for CWSN's. This study on inclusive education in Aizawl East Block, focusing on Children with Special Needs (CWSN), is vital because it highlights the current status and challenges and opportunities faced by these children in accessing quality education. By examining local conditions, the research identifies barriers such as lack of resources, inadequate teacher training, and social attitudes that affect inclusion. The findings will help educators, policymakers, and communities develop targeted strategies to improve support and create a more inclusive learning environment. Ultimately, this study aims to promote equal educational opportunities for CWSN in Aizawl East Block, contributing to their overall development and social inclusion.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the challenges faced by Children with Special Needs in schools of Aizawl East Block.
2. To identify the resources and support system which are available for Children with Special Needs in schools of Aizawl East Block.
3. To suggest solution for challenges encountered by Children with Special Needs in schools of Aizawl East Block.

Methodology: -

This study uses a descriptive survey, which is a cross-sectional design approach, to collect and analyse data, resulting in a numerical representation of the phenomenon under inquiry. The population of this study includes Secondary schools in Aizawl East Block, both private and public. Purposive sampling was utilized to choose schools that had admitted Children with Special Needs (CWSNs), allowing for a more concentrated investigation of the specific context and experiences associated with CWSNs. The researcher constructed a closed-ended questionnaire that collected precise, organized data that aligned with the research aims. The questionnaire was pilot tested for clarity and reliability. The information collected was analysed using SPSS and statistical methods to detect patterns and trends relevant to the research goals. The study follows to ethical standards by maintaining respondents' confidentiality and anonymity, obtaining informed consent in advance of data collection, and addressing data in accordance with ethical guidelines for human subject's research.

Results: -

Objective 1: -To identify the challenges faced by Children with Special Needs in schools of Aizawl East Block.

Sr. no	ITEMS	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total
1	I encounter resistance from other staff regarding the inclusion of children with special needs in regular classroom.	2(3%)	11(16%)	20(30%)	17(25%)	17(25%)	67(100%)
2	Sometimes it is difficult to balance the	5(7%)	25(37%)	26(39%)	10(15%)	1(1%)	67(100%)

	needs of children with special needs and those of another student in my classroom.						
3	There is a lack of awareness about the importance of inclusive education among the wider school community.	5(7%)	28(42%)	20(30%)	11(16%)	3(4%)	67(100%)
4	There is a lack of awareness or understanding about the special needs among the general student population	8(12%)	26(39%)	9(13%)	23(34%)	1(1%)	67(100%)
5	I feel supported by school leadership in implementing inclusive practices.	24(36%)	29(43%)	9(13%)	3(4%)	2(3%)	67(100%)
6	The teacher received sufficient training on how to handle behavioral challenges posed by CWSN.	6(9%)	31(46%)	18(27%)	12(18%)	0(0%)	67(100%)

The item “I encounter resistance from other staff regarding the inclusion of children with special needs in regular classrooms” reveals a mixed response. While 38% of respondents disagree with this statement, indicating they do not face resistance, 29% agree and 3% strongly agree, suggesting that a notable portion of teachers do experience resistance from colleagues.

The statement “Sometimes it is difficult to balance the needs of children with special needs and those of other students in my classroom” shows that 44% of respondents agree, highlighting that many educators find it challenging to address the diverse needs within their classrooms. Conversely, 16% disagree, indicating some teachers do not perceive this as a significant issue.

Regarding the item “There is a lack of awareness about the importance of inclusive education among the wider school community,” 30% of respondents remain neutral, reflecting uncertainty or ambivalence. However, 49% agree, pointing to a perceived deficiency in community awareness, while 20% disagree, suggesting some believe awareness is adequate.

The statement “There is a lack of awareness or understanding about special needs among the general student population” indicates concern, with 51% of respondents agreeing that students generally lack sufficient understanding. Meanwhile, 35% disagree, implying that some educators perceive better awareness among students.

The item “I feel supported by school leadership in implementing inclusive practices” reflects strong positive sentiment, with 79% of respondents agreeing that leadership support is present. Only a small minority, 7%, disagree, underscoring the important role of leadership in fostering inclusive education.

The item “The teacher received sufficient training on how to handle behavioural challenges posed by children with special needs” reveals a divided perspective. While 55% of respondents agree that training is sufficient, 18% disagree, and 27% remain neutral. This suggests that although many teachers feel adequately prepared, there remains a significant need for enhanced training opportunities.

Objective 2: - To identify the resources and support system which are available for Children with Special Needs in secondary schools of Aizawl East Block.

Sr.no	ITEMS	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total
1	My school has a clear policy promoting inclusive education for children with special needs	22(33%)	34(51%)	9(13%)	2(3%)	0(0%)	67(100%)
2	The current curriculum is adaptable to meet the needs of children with special needs	11(16%)	24(36%)	26(39%)	6(9%)	0(0%)	67(100%)
3	There are enough special educational professionals (e.g., resource teachers, counsellor) in my school to support children with special needs.	12(18%)	34(51%)	10(15%)	11(16%)	0(0%)	67(100%)

4	The school infrastructure is accessible for children with special needs	11(16%)	18(27%)	27(40%)	10(15%)	1(1%)	67(100%)
5	There is access to technology and assistive devices that can help support learning for children with special needs	6(9%)	28(42%)	16(24%)	15(22%)	2(3%)	67(100%)
6	There should be a clear policy in your school to promote inclusive education for children with special needs	16(25%)	40(60%)	10(15%)	1(1%)	0(0%)	67(100%)
7	The teacher receives enough time to plan and prepare inclusive lessons that cater to children with special needs	8(12%)	36(54%)	20(30%)	2(3%)	1(1%)	67(100%)

The item “My school has a clear policy promoting inclusive education for children with special needs” reveals strong consensus among respondents. A combined 84% either strongly agree (33%) or agree (51%) with this statement, indicating that most schools have established clear policies to support inclusive education. Only a small minority (3%) disagree, suggesting widespread institutional commitment.

The statement “The current curriculum is adaptable to meet the needs of children with special needs” shows more varied responses. While 52% of respondents agree (16% strongly agree, 36% agree) that the curriculum is adaptable, a significant 39% remain neutral, and 9% disagree. This suggests some uncertainty or inconsistency regarding how well the curriculum accommodates diverse learning needs.

Regarding the item “There are enough special educational professionals (e.g., resource teachers, counsellors) in my school to support children with special needs,” 69% of respondents agree (18% strongly agree, 51% agree), indicating that many schools have adequate specialized staff. However, 16% disagree, highlighting that some schools may face shortages of these critical support personnel.

The statement “The school infrastructure is accessible for children with special needs” reflects mixed perceptions. Only 43% of respondents agree (16% strongly agree, 27% agree), while 40% remain neutral and 16% disagree. This indicates that many educators perceive accessibility as an area needing improvement.

Regarding “There is access to technology and assistive devices that can help support learning for children with special needs,” 51% of respondents agree (9% strongly agree, 42% agree), but 25% disagree or strongly disagree, and 24% are neutral. This suggests uneven availability of technological resources across schools.

The item “There should be a clear policy in your school to promote inclusive education for children with special needs” shows overwhelming support, with 85% of respondents agreeing (25% strongly agree, 60% agree) and only 1% disagreeing. This underscores the perceived importance of formal policies in promoting inclusion.

The statement “The teacher receives enough time to plan and prepare inclusive lessons that cater to children with special needs” reveals that 66% of respondents agree (12% strongly agree, 54% agree), while 30% remain neutral. This suggests that although most teachers feel supported in lesson preparation, a notable proportion may still face challenges related to time constraints.

Discussion of Findings: -

One of the biggest obstacles to including children with special needs in mainstream classes is staff resistance. Just 19% of employees are in favor of inclusiveness, whereas 50% are against it. Schools should address this by offering professional development and training to provide teachers the skills they need. Professionals in both general and special education can develop confidence and teamwork via collaborative planning. Support from the leadership is essential, and tools like instructional aids and adaptable technology can allay worries. Peer mentoring initiatives, which match recalcitrant employees with experienced teachers, can also be successful. Employees can voice issues and work together to develop solutions when there are open lines of communication. Implementing inclusion policies gradually can assist employees in adjusting without feeling overburdened. Schools can lessen disagreement and create a more positive environment by sharing success stories and fostering a supportive culture.

Additionally, 44% of educators agree or strongly agree that it can be difficult to balance the demands of kids with special needs with those of other students in a classroom. Teachers can address this by using tailored instruction to meet the needs of students with diverse learning styles and skill levels. Students can work at their own pace with

progressive assignments, and individualized attention is made possible by flexible grouping. Teachers can further adapt their instruction to successfully address a range of requirements by making use of resources and support personnel, as well as by conducting regular assessments and feedback sessions.

A significant number of instructors (49% strongly agree or agree) acknowledge that the general student body lacks understanding or awareness of special needs. Schools can address this by putting in place awareness programs that teach kids about the various kinds of special needs while encouraging compassion and understanding. Peer mentoring and inclusive activities can also promote relationships and friendships amongst kids with and without special needs.

A large majority of educators (79% strongly agree or agree) believe their school administration is supportive of their efforts to promote inclusive practices. This support is critical for developing an inclusive atmosphere because it gives educators with the resources and confidence they need to modify their teaching approaches. Leadership can increase this support by ensuring ongoing professional development, giving essential resources such as adaptive technologies, and promoting staff collaboration to share best practices. By sustaining and growing this support, schools may continue to develop inclusive classrooms that benefit all kids.

While a large percentage of educators (55% strongly agree or agree) believe they have received adequate training in dealing with behavioural issues presented by students with special needs, there is certainly space for improvement. Nearly half of educators (27% neutral, 18% disagree) believe that more thorough training is required. To address this, schools should provide ongoing professional development focused on behavioural management tactics that are targeted to particular needs. Also, peer mentorship and coaching from experienced instructors can provide helpful knowledge and assistance. Schools can better prepare teachers to tackle behavioural difficulties by providing more training opportunities.

Conclusion: -

Based on the survey data from 67 teachers in the Aizawl East Block, inclusive education faces both support and challenges. Most teachers are female, from urban areas, and come from nuclear families. While a majority feel supported by school leadership and believe their schools have inclusive education policies, difficulties persist. Many teachers struggle to balance the needs of students with and without special needs, and there's a perceived lack of community awareness. Additionally, the curriculum's adaptability and access to technology, assistive devices, and special education professionals are areas needing improvement. Key demographic factors such as a mostly urban, female teaching force and varying levels of educational attainment, also shape perspectives on inclusive practices. The findings aim to raise awareness among stakeholders.

The research findings aim to inform policymakers, administrators, educators, and curriculum designers about the current status, opportunities, and future prospects of inclusive education in Aizawl East Block. By shedding light on critical areas requiring further exploration, the study seeks to prompt targeted improvements. Moreover, the insights gained are expected to deepen understanding of the challenges that have hindered the effective implementation of inclusive education. Ultimately, the findings intend to guide parents and teachers by highlighting the most effective inclusive teaching strategies and emphasizing the vital roles of all stakeholders involved in Mizoram's inclusive education system.

Recommendations: -

1. It is recommended that the State Government should provide more facilities accessible for CWSN in all schools so that no students face problem regarding access to some facilities.
2. Professionals in both general and special education can develop confidence and teamwork via collaborative planning
3. Support from the leadership is essential, and tools like instructional aids and adaptable technology can allay worries.
4. Employees can voice issues and work together to develop solutions when there are open lines of communication. Implementing inclusion policies gradually can assist employees in adjusting without feeling overburdened. Schools can lessen disagreement and create a more positive environment by sharing success stories and fostering a supportive culture.

5. Peer mentoring initiatives, which match recalcitrant employees with experienced teachers, can also be successful. Peer mentoring and inclusive activities can also promote relationships and friendships amongst kids with and without special needs
6. Leadership can increase this support by ensuring ongoing professional development, giving essential resources such as adaptive technologies, and promoting staff collaboration to share best practices
7. Access to technology and assistive devices is another critical factor in supporting children with special needs. The survey reveals mixed views on this issue, with some educators feeling that access is sufficient, while others disagree. Increasing access to technology and assistive devices can significantly enhance learning experiences for children with special needs.
8. Educators generally agree that having a clear policy to promote inclusive education is essential. This reinforces the importance of maintaining and refining existing policies to ensure they remain effective. Communicating these policies clearly to all stakeholders and regularly reviewing them for improvements can help foster a culture of inclusion.
9. Providing educators with sufficient time to plan and prepare inclusive lessons is crucial. While many educators agree they have enough time, a notable portion feel otherwise. Offering educators more time or resources for planning, possibly through collaborative planning sessions or support from special education professionals, can help ensure that lessons are tailored to meet diverse learning needs.

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