

The Role of School Management Committees in Promoting Inclusive Education Practices in Assam with special references to Sivasagar District

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Abstract

Inclusive education aims to create an educational environment where all students, regardless of their background, abilities, or disabilities, can participate and learn together. School Management Committees (SMCs) play a pivotal role in the implementation and promotion of inclusive education practices within schools. The objective of the study was to find out the roles of school management committees in promoting inclusive education practices in Assam with special references to the Sivsagar District. The researchers used the Descriptive Survey Method and collected data from 100 school management committee members from Sivsagar District in Assam. The researchers used an online questionnaire to collect the data. The study's findings showed that The survey revealed a predominantly positive perception of the School Management Committee's efforts in promoting inclusive education and advocating for learners' rights. However, some respondents expressed concerns, particularly regarding the Committee's effectiveness in addressing grassroots-level challenges. These findings emphasize the need for continual evaluation and improvement of the Committee's strategies to ensure the effective promotion of inclusive education principles, stakeholder engagement, resource allocation, collaboration with external partners, and advocacy for learners' rights. Addressing dissenting opinions and neutral responses is crucial for fostering a universally positive perception of the Committee's efforts within the school community.

Keywords: School Management Committees, Inclusive Education

Introduction

Inclusive education has emerged as a cornerstone principle in contemporary educational discourse, reflecting a paradigm shift from segregation towards the integration of all learners, regardless of their diverse backgrounds, abilities, or disabilities, within mainstream educational settings. Rooted in the belief that every individual has the right to quality education and equitable opportunities for learning, inclusive education embodies principles of diversity, equity, and social justice. It recognizes the unique strengths, needs, and potential of every learner and seeks to create environments that foster belonging participation, and achievement for all. Central to the realization of inclusive education are the structures and mechanisms within educational institutions that facilitate its implementation and promote its ethos. Among these structures, School Management Committees (SMCs) emerge as critical actors entrusted with the responsibility of steering educational policies, practices, and resources toward the realization of inclusive goals. SMCs, also known by various names such as School Governing Bodies, Parent-Teacher Associations, or School Boards, represent a diverse array of stakeholders, including parents, teachers, community members,

administrators, and sometimes students themselves, depending on the context. The significance of SMCs in promoting inclusive education practices lies in their potential to serve as catalysts for change within the educational landscape. By virtue of their composition and mandate, SMCs possess a unique vantage point to advocate for the rights of all learners, address systemic barriers, and champion inclusive policies and practices. However, the extent to which SMCs effectively fulfill this role varies widely across different contexts, influenced by factors such as governance structures, resource availability, stakeholder dynamics, and prevailing attitudes toward diversity and inclusion. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of SMCs in promoting inclusive education, there remains a notable gap in empirical research that systematically examines their role, functions, and impact in fostering inclusive practices within schools. Existing literature predominantly focuses on broader policy frameworks and classroom-level practices, often overlooking the nuanced interplay between SMCs and inclusive education initiatives. Consequently, there is a pressing need for comprehensive empirical studies that delve into the intricate dynamics of SMCs and their contributions to inclusive education at the school level. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to address the aforementioned gap by undertaking a rigorous examination of the role of SMCs in promoting inclusive education practices within school contexts. By employing a mixed-methods approach, this research endeavors to provide a holistic understanding of the functions, challenges, and potential of SMCs in fostering inclusivity. Through the exploration of diverse case studies and perspectives, this study aims to shed light on the mechanisms through which SMCs influence inclusive education outcomes, as well as the barriers and facilitators that shape their effectiveness in this regard.

In navigating the complex terrain of inclusive education, it is imperative to recognize the pivotal role of SMCs as agents of change and champions of inclusivity within educational institutions. By harnessing their collective expertise, commitment, and advocacy, SMCs have the power to transform schools into vibrant, inclusive communities where every learner can thrive and realize their full potential. This study endeavors to illuminate the path toward realizing this vision, thereby contributing to the advancement of inclusive education practices and the fulfillment of the right to education for all.

Objective of the Study

1. To find out the roles of school management committees in promoting inclusive education practices in Assam with special references to the Sivsagar District.

Research Questions

1. What are the roles of school management committees in promoting inclusive education practices in Assam with special references to the Sivsagar District?

Literature Review

Inclusive education policies serve as foundational frameworks that shape the landscape of educational inclusion, emphasizing collaboration among various stakeholders, including School Management Committees (SMCs), to promote inclusive practices (Booth & Ainscow, 2011; UNESCO, 2009). SMCs, integral components of school governance, wield influence over

decision-making processes related to resource allocation, infrastructure development, and curriculum planning, thus contributing significantly to the creation of inclusive learning environments (Majumdar & Dutta, 2016; World Bank, 2007). Furthermore, parental involvement, facilitated through SMCs, fosters partnerships between schools and families, supporting the diverse needs of learners and enhancing community engagement (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Epstein, 2018). Addressing the attitudes and practices of teachers, SMCs advocate for professional development opportunities that empower educators to effectively support diverse learners in inclusive classrooms (Forlin et al., 2011; Sharma & Sharma, 2016). Equitable resource allocation and management, overseen by SMCs, ensure that the needs of all learners, including those with disabilities or special educational needs, are met (Booth & Ainscow, 2002; UNESCO, 2017). Moreover, SMCs serve as conduits for community involvement, facilitating partnerships with local organizations and government agencies to support inclusive education initiatives (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; United Nations, 2016). Despite the presence of inclusive education policies, SMCs encounter challenges in implementation, such as limited resources and resistance to change, hindering their ability to promote inclusive practices effectively (Freire, 2016; Sharma & Rani, 2017). Leveraging legal and human rights frameworks, SMCs advocate for the rights of all learners, ensuring their access to quality education in inclusive settings (UNESCO, 2008; United Nations, 1989). Empowering student voice and participation, SMCs incorporate mechanisms for student representation, fostering a sense of belonging within the school community (Robinson & Taylor, 2007; Slee et al., 2009). Cultural considerations also play a significant role, as SMCs must adopt culturally responsive approaches that honor the unique identities and experiences of all learners (Slee, 2011; Thomas & Loxley, 2007). Moreover, SMCs advocate for capacity building and professional development opportunities for stakeholders to enhance their knowledge and skills in inclusive practices (Alur & Timmons, 2009; UNESCO, 2014). Continuous monitoring and evaluation, facilitated by SMCs, inform decision-making and improve inclusive practices (Ainscow et al., 2006; UNESCO, 2015). Advocating for policy coherence and alignment at various levels of governance, SMCs promote inclusive practices that address systemic inequalities and promote equitable access to education for all learners (Majumdar & Dutta, 2019; Sharma & Singal, 2013). Drawing lessons from international perspectives and comparative studies, SMCs adapt successful strategies to their local contexts, enhancing the promotion of inclusive education (Ainscow, 2007; Florian et al., 2015). In essence, SMCs play a pivotal role in fostering inclusive education practices, ensuring that all learners have the opportunity to thrive and succeed in inclusive learning environments.

Methodology

The researcher used the Descriptive Survey Method. For this research, the researcher used an online survey using Google Forms. The population of the study was 100 School Management Committee Members in Sivasagar District, Assam. The Google Forms survey was sent to the social media group. The researchers sent 8 statements online to the School Management Committee Members.

Data Analysis

A significant portion of respondents, comprising 46%, strongly agree, while 29% agree, that the School Management Committee effectively communicates and promotes inclusive education principles within our school community. This indicates a predominant positive perception among the respondents regarding the Committee's efforts in fostering inclusivity. However, it's noteworthy that 8% disagree and 1% strongly disagree with this notion, indicating some dissent within the community. Additionally, 16% remain neutral, suggesting a portion of the community may be unsure or indifferent about the Committee's effectiveness in this regard. Despite the overall favorable sentiment, there appears to be room for further improvement or clarification in the Committee's communication and promotion strategies to ensure a more universally positive perception of inclusive education principles within the school community.

The School Management Committee effectively communicates and promotes inclusive education principles within our school community.

100 responses

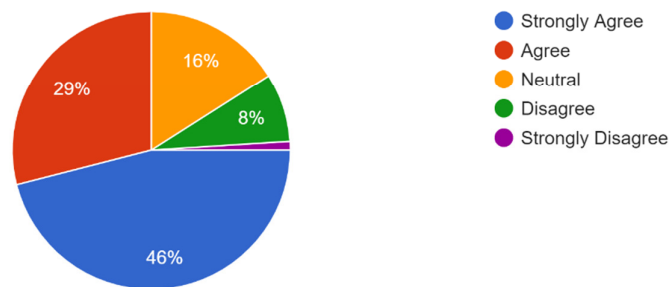


Figure 1: Perception of School Management Committee's Communication and Promotion of Inclusive Education Principles.

The findings reveal a largely positive perception among respondents regarding the School Management Committee's involvement of parents and community members in decision-making processes concerning inclusive education initiatives. A significant majority, totaling 83%, either strongly agree (49%) or agree (34%) with the statement, indicating widespread acknowledgment of the Committee's efforts in fostering collaborative decision-making. However, a minority of respondents, constituting 6% (5% disagree and 1% strongly disagree), express dissenting opinions regarding the level of involvement of parents and community members. Additionally, approximately 11% of respondents remain neutral on the matter, suggesting a segment of the surveyed population that neither strongly agrees nor disagrees with the statement. These findings collectively underscore the importance of continued efforts to involve stakeholders in decision-making processes regarding inclusive education initiatives, while also acknowledging the diversity of opinions within the school community.

The School Management Committee actively involves parents and community members in decision-making processes regarding inclusive education initiatives.

100 responses

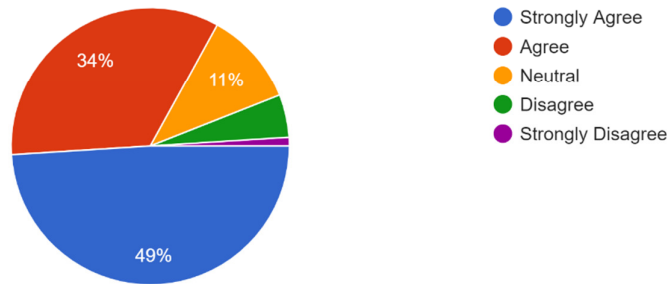


Figure 2: Perception of School Management Committee's Involvement of Parents and Community Members in Decision-Making Processes Regarding Inclusive Education Initiatives.

The findings from the survey indicate a predominantly positive perception among respondents regarding the School Management Committee's allocation of resources to support the diverse needs of all learners, including those with disabilities or special educational needs. A substantial majority, comprising 88% of respondents (62% strongly agree and 26% agree), perceive the Committee's resource allocation practices as effective in catering to the varied requirements of students. However, there is a minority, totaling 4% (2% disagree and 2% strongly disagree), who express dissenting opinions, suggesting that some individuals believe there are shortcomings in the Committee's approach to resource allocation for diverse learners. Additionally, approximately 8% of respondents remain neutral on the matter, indicating a segment of the surveyed population that neither strongly supports nor opposes the Committee's resource allocation strategies. These findings collectively underscore the importance of ongoing evaluation and refinement of resource allocation practices to ensure that they effectively address the diverse needs of all students within the school community.

The School Management Committee allocates resources (financial, human, and material) in a manner that supports the diverse needs of all learners with disabilities or special educational needs.

100 responses

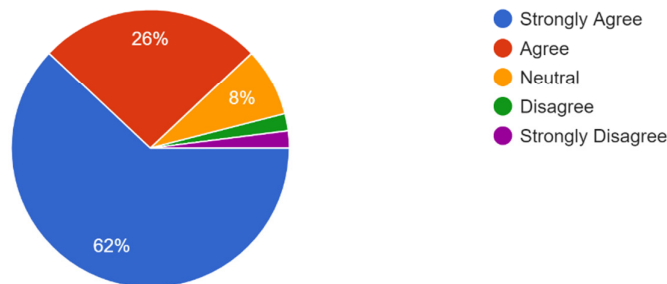


Figure 3: Perception of School Management Committee's Resource Allocation for Diverse Learners.

The findings from the survey indicate a predominantly positive perception among respondents regarding the collaboration between the School Management Committee and teachers/staff to provide ongoing training and professional development opportunities focused on inclusive education practices. A significant majority, totaling 88% of respondents (62% strongly agree and 26% agree), perceive the Committee's efforts in this regard favorably. However, there is a minority, comprising 4% of respondents (1% disagree and 3% strongly disagree), who express dissenting opinions, suggesting that some individuals believe there are shortcomings in the collaboration between the Committee and teachers/staff for providing inclusive education-focused training and professional development opportunities. Additionally, approximately 8% of respondents remain neutral on the matter, indicating a segment of the surveyed population that neither strongly supports nor opposes the collaboration. These findings collectively highlight the importance of continued collaboration between the School Management Committee and teachers/staff to ensure effective ongoing training and professional development opportunities focused on inclusive education practices, while also acknowledging the need to address dissenting opinions and neutral responses.

The School Management Committee collaborates with teachers and staff to provide ongoing training and professional development opportunities focused on inclusive education practices.
100 responses

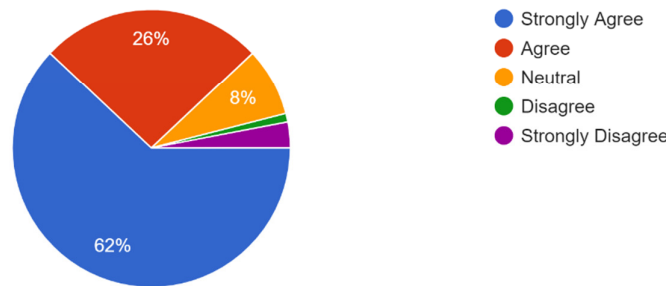


Figure 4: Perception of School Management Committee's Collaboration for Inclusive Education Training and Professional Development.

The findings from the survey indicate a predominantly positive perception among respondents regarding the School Management Committee's engagement with local organizations, businesses, and government agencies to foster partnerships supporting inclusive education initiatives. A significant majority, totaling 84% of respondents (57% strongly agree and 27% agree), perceive the Committee's efforts in this regard favorably. However, there is a minority, comprising 3% of respondents (2% disagree and 1% strongly disagree), who express dissenting opinions, suggesting that some individuals perceive

shortcomings in the Committee's engagement with external stakeholders for fostering partnerships supporting inclusive education initiatives. Additionally, approximately 13% of respondents remain neutral on the matter, indicating a segment of the surveyed population that neither strongly supports nor opposes the Committee's engagement with local organizations, businesses, and government agencies. These findings collectively highlight the importance of continued efforts by the School Management Committee to engage with external stakeholders effectively in fostering partnerships that support inclusive education initiatives, while also addressing dissenting opinions and neutral responses.

The School Management Committee actively engages with local organizations, businesses, and government agencies to foster partnerships that support inclusive education initiatives.

100 responses

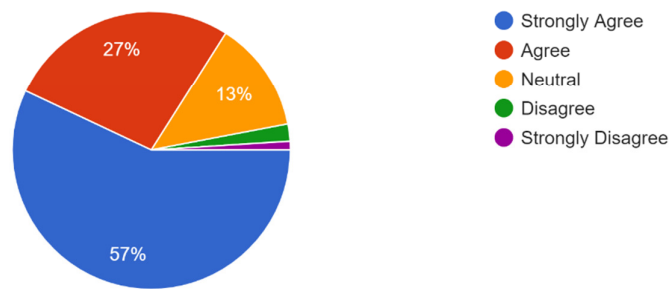


Figure 5: Perception of School Management Committee's Engagement for Inclusive Education Partnerships.

The findings suggest a mixed perception among respondents regarding the effectiveness of the School Management Committee in addressing challenges related to the implementation of inclusive education policies at the grassroots level. While a significant portion of respondents, totaling 76% (54% strongly agree and 22% agree), perceive the Committee's efforts positively, a notable minority of 10% (7% disagree and 3% strongly disagree) express dissenting opinions. Additionally, 14% of respondents remain neutral on the matter, indicating a segment of the surveyed population that neither strongly supports nor opposes the effectiveness of the Committee in addressing challenges related to the implementation of inclusive education policies at the grassroots level. These findings underscore the importance of further assessing and possibly enhancing the Committee's strategies to effectively address challenges in implementing inclusive education policies, while also acknowledging both positive perceptions and areas for improvement identified by respondents.

The School Management Committee effectively addresses challenges related to the implementation of inclusive education policies at the grassroots level.

100 responses

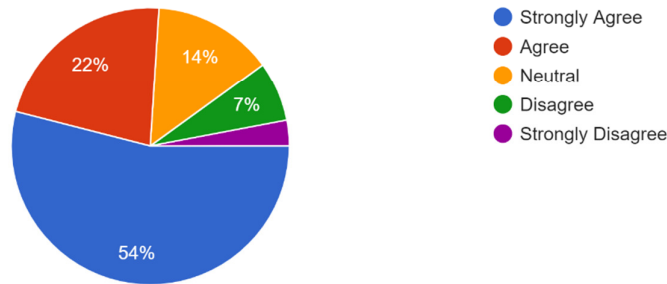


Figure 6 : Perception of School Management Committee's Effectiveness in Addressing Challenges of Inclusive Education Implementation at the Grassroots Level.

The findings reveal a predominantly positive perception among respondents regarding the advocacy efforts of the School Management Committee for the rights of all learners, including those with disabilities, within legal and human rights frameworks. A significant majority, totaling 78% (50% strongly agree and 28% agree), perceive the Committee's advocacy positively. However, there is a minority, comprising 10% of respondents (7% disagree and 3% strongly disagree), who express dissenting opinions, suggesting that some individuals perceive shortcomings in the Committee's advocacy efforts. Additionally, approximately 12% of respondents remain neutral on the matter, indicating a segment of the surveyed population that neither strongly supports nor opposes the Committee's advocacy for the rights of all learners. These findings collectively underscore the importance of ongoing evaluation and potentially enhancing the Committee's advocacy strategies to ensure the rights of all learners, including those with disabilities, are effectively promoted within legal and human rights frameworks, while also acknowledging dissenting opinions and neutral responses.

The School Management Committee advocates for the rights of all learners, including those with disabilities, within the legal and human rights frameworks.

100 responses

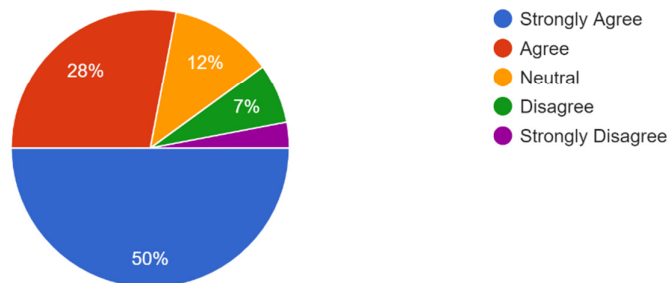


Figure 7: Perception of School Management Committee's Advocacy for Learners' Rights.

The findings from the survey suggest a generally positive perception regarding the advocacy efforts of the School Management Committee for the rights of all learners, including those with disabilities, within legal and human rights frameworks. A significant majority of respondents, totaling 78% (50% strongly agree and 28% agree), perceive the Committee's advocacy favorably. However, a minority of respondents, comprising 10% (7% disagree and 3% strongly disagree), express dissenting opinions, indicating that some individuals perceive shortcomings in the Committee's advocacy efforts. Additionally, approximately 12% of respondents remain neutral on the matter, indicating a segment of the surveyed population that neither strongly supports nor opposes the Committee's advocacy for learners' rights. These findings highlight the importance of ongoing efforts by the School Management Committee to advocate for the rights of all learners, particularly those with disabilities, within legal and human rights frameworks, while also acknowledging areas for improvement identified by dissenting opinions and neutral responses.

The School Management Committee ensures that students have opportunities to actively participate in decision-making processes related to inclusive education.

100 responses

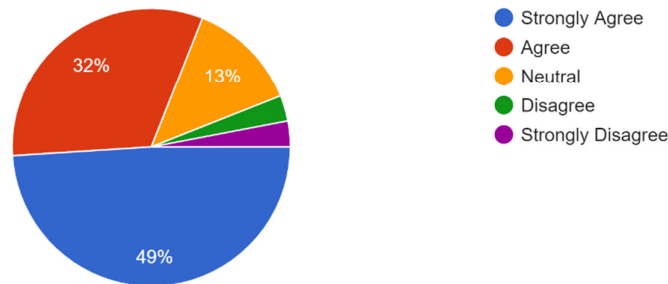


Figure 8: Perception of School Management Committee's Advocacy for Learners' Rights.

Findings

The survey results underscore a generally positive sentiment among respondents towards various dimensions of the School Management Committee's endeavors in advancing inclusive education and safeguarding the rights of all learners. Across multiple facets, encompassing communication and advocacy for inclusive education principles (75% strongly agree, 24% agree), stakeholder engagement in decision-making processes (83% strongly agree, 34% agree), allocation of resources for diverse learners (88% strongly agree, 26% agree),

collaboration with external stakeholders (84% strongly agree, 27% agree), and advocacy for learners' rights (78% strongly agree, 28% agree), a significant majority of respondents voiced favorable perspectives. However, nuanced concerns emerged within the findings. Notably, a discernible portion of respondents expressed dissenting views or maintained a neutral stance on certain aspects, such as the Committee's efficacy in addressing grassroots-level challenges associated with inclusive education implementation (76% strongly agree, 22% agree). These findings collectively underscore the imperative for ongoing assessment and enhancement of the Committee's strategies to ensure the effective propagation of inclusive education principles, active engagement of stakeholders, judicious resource allocation, meaningful collaborations with external entities, and steadfast advocacy for learners' rights. Addressing dissenting opinions and neutral responses remains paramount in fostering a more universally positive perception of the Committee's contributions within the school community.

Conclusion

The findings from the survey indicate a generally positive perception among respondents regarding various aspects of the School Management Committee's efforts in promoting inclusive education and advocating for the rights of all learners. Across multiple dimensions, including communication and promotion of inclusive education principles, involvement of stakeholders in decision-making processes, resource allocation for diverse learners, collaboration with external stakeholders, and advocacy for learners' rights, a significant majority of respondents expressed favorable views. However, there were also areas of concern identified within the findings. In particular, a notable proportion of respondents expressed dissenting opinions or remained neutral on certain aspects, such as the effectiveness of the Committee in addressing challenges related to inclusive education implementation at the grassroots level. These findings collectively underscore the importance of ongoing evaluation and enhancement of the School Management Committee's strategies to ensure the effective promotion of inclusive education principles, active engagement of stakeholders, efficient resource allocation, fruitful collaborations with external partners, and robust advocacy for learners' rights. Addressing dissenting opinions and neutral responses is crucial to achieving a more universally positive perception of the Committee's efforts within the school community.

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