Challenges of Special Education Teachers in Applying Differentiated Instruction for Children with Specific Learning Disabilities in Inclusive Setup

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Abstract

Inclusive education aims to provide equitable access and meaningful involvement of learners with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), and differentiated instruction (DI) is an essential pedagogical strategy in order to cater to the needs of various learners. This paper explores the situation, practice, and problems of Special Education Teachers (TGTs) in providing differentiated instruction to the learners with SLD in the inclusive government schools in Delhi. Quantitative data were collected with the help of the mixed-method research design as a structured questionnaire should be given to special education teachers, and qualitative data were obtained using semi-structured interviews to examine their professional experiences and instructional practices. The results indicate that as much as the concept of differentiated instruction is universally recognized as a fundamental component of inclusive education, the application of differentiated instruction is limited by systemic, instructional, as well as socio-cultural obstacles. Some of the systemic constraints are overcrowded classes, lack of teaching-learning materials and inadequate policy and institutional support. Professional training is a problem of pedagogical issues because it is not an efficient way to develop and apply the Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and the problem of developing curriculum and assessment practice. The second hindrance of effective inclusion and instructional adaptation is socio-cultural barriers such as parental denial, the stigma of learning disabilities, lack of peer acceptance, and school environments marked by examination-focused orientation. The research states that differentiated instruction is essential to facilitating equitable learning through allowing students with SLD to be active participants in the educational processes as opposed to receiving accommodations. The results highlight professional development as a specific and focused activity, institutional reinforcement, and joint work of educators, parents, and policymakers. This study fills the gap between the policy of inclusion education and its practice in classrooms providing context-specific empirical evidence of inclusive schools in Delhi and providing practical suggestions on how to enhance inclusive instructional practices in resource-restricted learning environments.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is now a prominent source of educational changes in India especially since the enactment of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 that acknowledged Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) as a group of students that must be given particular consideration (Government of India, 2016). The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 also highlights equitable and inclusive education with references to diverse strategies (differentiated instruction and Individualized Education Plans) required to address a variety of learning needs among children with disabilities (Ministry of Education, 2020). In this context, the Government of NCT Delhi, via its Directorate of Education (DoE) and the Inclusion Education Branch (IEB) has placed inclusive practices within government schools as a priority.

The task of special education teachers is to facilitate the applications of inclusive education through designing and implementing instruction strategies that are unique to students with SLD. Adjusting the content, process, and assessment to the needs of learners has been identified as a successful practice in heterogeneous classrooms (Tomlinson, 2014). On the same note, IEPs present goal sets that are designed to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of students in a structured and individualized manner (Smith et al., 2020). Nonetheless, because of systemic barriers encountered by implementing the strategies, including overcrowded classrooms, lack of resources, and institutional support (Sharma and Das, 2019; Subramanian, 2021).

Besides systemic limitations, there are also pedagogical issues that make the work of special education teachers even more complex. Teachers note that they are not well trained in differentiated instruction, do not have access to assessment data, and have problems adapting curriculum material to children with SLD (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011; Sharma, 2018). Besides, socio-cultural factors, including stigma, low levels of parental cooperation, and peer rejection, still affect the quality of inclusive practices in Indian schools (Mukhopadhyay and Mani, 2002; Singal, 2019). Under these conditions, it becomes important to explore the experiences of special education teachers working in the governmental schools in Delhi. Although policies offer a robust inclusion framework, policies rely on teacher readiness, institutional investment, and multiagency partnership with general educators. Through the analysis of these issues, this paper aims to offer evidence-based suggestions on how to enhance teacher capacity and facilitate effective involvement of children with SLD in integrated classrooms within the DoE.

Differentiated instruction (DI) is an inclusive education philosophy based on the philosophy of inclusive pedagogy that has been popularly known in special education as a responsive teaching methodology. Its background is based on the idea that students do not have the same readiness levels, learning styles, pace, and interests, and, as such, teaching should be differentiated, not standardized (Tomlinson, 2014). The essence of differentiated instruction is flexibility in curriculum delivery, multiple forms of engagement, different assessments, and accommodations or modifications aimed at minimizing the barriers to learning. Such differentiated instruction is beneficial in the case of Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), i.e., dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia. It allows teachers to use multisensory instruction, scaffolding activities, assistive technologies and alternative assessments to provide children with SLD meaningful access to the curriculum. In addition to academic assistance, differentiated instruction promotes increased engagement, confidence in the learner, decreased classroom exclusion, and increased peer acceptance. Through the matching of teaching choices according to the individual profiles of the students, differentiated instruction not only tackles the challenges faced by the students in their academic life; but also ensures their inclusion and holistic involvement and growth in general classrooms.

Differentiated instruction (DI) is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of inclusive pedagogy, particularly in contexts where classrooms are highly diverse in terms of learners' abilities, learning styles, and backgrounds. According to Tomlinson (2014), DI is not a set of fixed strategies but rather a philosophy

of teaching that emphasizes flexibility in content, process, product, and learning environment. Its background lies in the principle that learners differ in readiness levels, pace, and interests, and therefore teaching must be adapted rather than standardized. The core characteristics of DI include curriculum flexibility, varied modes of engagement, multiple assessment strategies, and the use of accommodations or modifications to minimize barriers to learning.

Different instruction is especially important to children with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) because it offers organized but flexible avenues to learning. SLD- including dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia- is an invisible disability, with the learners generally having an average or even higher level of intelligence, but experience continued difficulties in reading, writing or mathematics. Failure to overcome these challenges can result in poor academic achievement, diminished self-esteem and marginalization in the classroom unless action is taken to correct it via specialized support. Differentiation strategies enable educators to utilize multisensory teaching, scaffolding activities, assistive technology, and other types of assessment in order to make the curriculum meaningfully accessible to learners with SLD. Outside academics, DI also fosters involvement, increases the confidence of learners, and lessens stigma, as well as promotes increased peer acceptance- therein supporting both cognitive and socio-emotional needs of children with SLD.

In the government schools in Delhi, they are institutionalized by the Inclusive Education Branch (IEB) of the Directorate of Education (DoE). The IEB provides policy guidelines, capacity-building, and monitoring systems that are cantered on development of Individualized Education Plan (IEPs) and the implementation of various differentiated instructional programs to children with disabilities including SLD. However, these frameworks are hard to interpret into realities of the classroom. The overcrowded classes, the absence of assistive machines and teaching-learning facilities and non-support of the policies are some of the systemic barriers that special education teachers have to face. Their pedagogical issue is also connected to the insufficiency of DI training, the lack of helpful tools to modify the curriculum, the secondary requirement to compose and put IEPs into practice.

In such a situation, the special education teacher in a mixed classroom becomes even more important and multidimensional. They are supposed to guide general educators, mediate in policy and practice, and ensure that IEPs represent needs of the children with SLD. The fact that DI has been successfully implemented by such teachers is not merely a pedagogical choice but rather a necessity to comply with the mandate of inclusive education as it can be seen in both the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 and the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020. DI provides a solution to this constitutional issue as it brings diversity in teaching, making classes inclusive, more accessible, and participatory.

This paper therefore evaluates the difficulty experienced by the special education teachers in the Delhi government schools in implementing DI and IEPs to children with SLD. It aims to generate evidence-based knowledge of systemic, pedagogical and socio-cultural barriers through studying their lived experience, the advantages and prospects of DI in developing inclusive education practices.

Research Objectives

1. To study systemic challenges in integrating differentiated instruction for children with Specific Learning Disabilities.

2. To explore pedagogical difficulties experienced by special education teachers while applying differentiated methods.

3. To examine the cultural & social factors affecting the practice of the differentiated instruction in inclusive classrooms.

Review of Literature

An extensive body of literature supports the relevance of differentiated instruction (DI) and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) to further inclusive education, especially among students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD). International studies show that DI enhances student engagement and performance by means of personalized content, process and assessment (see, e.g., Tomlinson, 2014; Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). Mixed-method research is particularly common in empirical studies: e.g. Scruggs and Mastropieri (2017) combined classroom observations and teacher interviews to evaluate co-teaching and DI, finding that, among students with SLD, peer acceptance and performance improved. Sharma (2018), too, has provided part of the survey instrumentation to the special educators to demonstrate what has been omitted in the preparation to the inclusive pedagogy, and Subramanian (2021) has provided the policy analyses and the qualitative case studies to demonstrate what has been omitted in the resources allocation. Mukhopadhyay and Mani (2002) and Singal (2019) conducted interviews, focus groups, and school-based research in India to report the systematic issues of stigma, overcrowded classroom, and parental disengagement, which hamper implementation of policy. The positive effects of inclusive practices are systematically summarized in a significant volume of quantitative studies that use structured questionnaires to prove their point (Sharma and Das, 2019), and, therefore, the authors clarify that the resources provided, training of the teaching staff, and institutional support can be listed among the most influential factors to predict effective inclusion practices. Despite these informative insights, however, there remain some gaps. This curent study will help bridge the gap between the policy intent and classroom practice by connecting systemic, pedagogical, and socio-cultural factors with evidence-based suggestions on how teachers can be trained, what resources to be provided, and how they can collaboratively practice.

Significance of the Study

This paper is important because it helps to reinforce the ideas of inclusive education practices in inclusive schools of Delhi by looking at how differentiated instruction (DI) is used to support students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD). Although policy frameworks are focused on inclusion, there is still a disconnect between theory and practice in the classroom. This study fills that gap by producing field-based evidence by describing the influence systemic constraints, pedagogical limitations, and socio-cultural barriers have on the implementation of DI in practice in real schools. The results can be utilized on different levels: to the policy makers, the study findings may be an empirical source of information that will aid in determining how to distribute resource, train teachers and implement the policies of inclusive education in the inclusive schools, which will facilitate the delivery of the content, process and assessment in a way that will meet the needs of the learners with SLD, to the teachers themselves, the results of the study can tell them about practice and the challenges faced in the process of delivering the content, process and assessment in such a way that will meet the needs of the students with SLD. Along with practice, the study contributes to the academic debate with context-specific knowledge in Delhi, thereby broadening the diversity of knowledge on DI in low-resource, high-classroom settings. Finally, it is also relevant in the sense that it will be used to help offer evidence-based solutions and sustainability-related solutions that would assist in enhancing positive engagement and improving student performance with SLD.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study applied the mixed methods research design in order to capture the breadth and depth of the challenges associated with the applications of differentiated instruction among students with SLD in Delhi government schools. The quantitative data collection was carried out through the group of 50 special education teachers (TGTs) by means of a structured questionnaire, which covered the systemic, pedagogical, and socio-cultural dimensions of the DI practice. In order to understand this better, qualitative data were gathered with 15 teachers through purposive-cum-convenience sampling and semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the experiences, adaptations, and perceptions of the teachers towards DI. In order to identify the patterns and trends of the quantitative data, data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages and mean scores) in order to identify the recurring themes in the data, and to make sure that the themes were identified according to the objectives of the research, the qualitative responses were analysed with the help of the thematic analysis. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings has made it possible to obtain the macro-level perspective of common challenges and the micro-level perspective of individual teacher experience. They were very ethical and informed consent, voluntary participation and secrecy were followed. The methodological rigor of the synthesis of the systematized survey data collection with the detailed narrative made it possible to unite the analysis of the different directions of differentiated instruction in the practice supporting the validity and application of the research results.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

An analysis of the answers provided by 50 special education teachers showed a tendency of systematic issues that have a powerful influence on the use of differentiation instruction (DI) in general classrooms:

Objective 1: To study systemic challenges in integrating differentiated instruction for children with Specific Learning Disabilities.

Table 1: Report by Systemic Challenges Special Education Teachers (N = 50).

Systemic Challenge	Teachers Reporting (n)	Percentage (%)	Rank Order
Overcrowded classrooms	39	78%	1
Weak policy-level support	36	72%	2
Lack of TLMs and assistive aids	34	68%	3
Poor physical infrastructure	33	66%	4
Heavy teacher workload	25	50%	5

The responses of 50 special education teachers revealed a pattern of systemic challenges that strongly affect the implementation of differentiated instruction (DI) in inclusive classrooms:

Overcrowded Classrooms (78%, n=39):

The main challenge turned out to be that of overcrowding. Teachers said that it is almost impossible to use small-group teaching, peer-assisted learning, and tiered-tasks, all of which are central to DI, because of large student-teacher ratios. In a classroom with over 40-50 students, this makes giving a student with SLD a special scaffold or support in instructional rate impractical. Teachers described overcrowding as not

only a way of reducing the time spent interacting with specific students but also minimizing the chances of detecting and addressing learning gaps as soon as possible.

Weak policy level support (72% n=36):

Although the RPwD Act (2016) and NEP (2020) focus on practices concerning inclusiveness, teachers reported that institutional and administrative support is still low. DI practices are not closely monitored, there is a lack of follow up by school authorities, and there is a lack of guidance on how DI is to translate to classroom practice. This leaves the implementation entirely at the discretion of the teachers and, in most cases, is based on individual initiative, not systematic support.

Lack of Teaching-Learning Materials (TLMs) and Assistive Aids (68%, n=34):

The lack of ICT resources, audio materials, tactile kits, and multisensory tools was identified by a significant number of teachers as being a serious limitation to differentiated teaching. Students with SLD who require concrete, visual or auditory reinforcements have no choice but to accept traditional lecture-based learning. This lack of TLMs undermines the flexibility of DI and promotes the one-size-fits-all model of teaching that is particularly disadvantageous to SLD students.

Poor Infrastructure (66%, n=33):

Teachers also found lack of proper resource rooms, they have only corners in the multipurpose area, poor composition in classrooms, and non-availability of learning areas to be other infrastructural constraints. DI is characterized by learning activities which require a space, a flexible seating plan and small group interaction. It was observed that the infrastructure existing in majority of government schools was rigid and hence, impeded collaborative and student-cantered practices.

Heavy teacher workload (50%, n=25):

Government school teachers have more than enough responsibilities that go way past being a teacher. Besides classroom training, they are occupied with various non-teaching tasks, including BLO election duty, census reports, identity card preparation and various government meetings. They also have the role of overseeing midday meals, administering uniforms and scholarships, board examination duties and responding to regular circulars. Moreover, they have to compose reports and submit data frequently on official portals. This constant engagement in administration and clerical work gives them very little time to do productive teaching. Consequently, this discourages a lot of honest and devout educators because they would like to concentrate on the learning of the students yet they must spend their energies on avoidable non-teaching duties.

Objective 2: To explore pedagogical difficulties experienced by special education teachers while applying differentiated methods.

Thematic Coding & Frequency Distribution (n = 15 teachers)

Theme	Subtheme	No. of Teachers (n)	Percentage (%)	Example Codes (from interviews)
Instructional Workload	Time-intensive planning, multiple worksheets, resource creation	12	80%	"Takes double effort to design two levels of activities" / "DI planning beyond school hours"
Professional Preparation	Limited training, lack of multisensory pedagogy exposure	11	73%	"We know DI in theory, but not how to apply" / "Workshops are general, not SLD-specific"
Curriculum Rigidity	NCERT syllabus pressure, lack of flexible content	10	66%	"Chapters must be finished on time" / "Textbooks not adaptable"
Classroom Management	Grouping issues, varying pace, maintaining engagement	9	60%	"Fast learners lose interest" / "Weak students feel left out"
Assessment Misalignment	Standard exams vs. DI progress, lack of adapted tools	8	53%	"Exam papers don't reflect progress" / "Oral responses not accepted"
External Support Gap	At home, parents are not supporting and reinforcing, stigma in community.	7	46%	"Parents expect miracles" /"Home practice missing"

Instructional Workload (80%, n=12)

Most of the teachers indicated that differentiation instruction (DI) adds a lot of time to preparing. The development of tiered worksheets, the use of aids (tactile and visual) or the development of visual aids, in addition to regular school schedules, required extra hours to create the aids. Educators complained that the amount of time they had was further shortened by administrative and exam related assignments. This means that DI cannot be practical unless the workload is reduced or supported by planning, even to motivated teachers.

Professional Preparation (73%, n=11)

One of the identified critical issues was the unspecialized training of DI with respect to SLD. Teachers knew about the DI concepts but not many of them were trained in practice on using multisensory techniques, scaffolding, and ICT-based support. DOE workshops were typically generic, policy based and

had little classroom demonstrations. Such a gap exposes that knowledge is not easily transferred to practice in the absence of skill-based professional development.

Curriculum Rigidity (66%, n=10)

The curriculum as introduced by NCERT was stated by teachers as rigid. They were pressured to work on textbooks and get students ready to take standard exams thus being compelled to conform to uniform teaching practices. Efforts to revise lessons resulted in missing the syllabus thus resulting in tensions with the school authorities. This theme highlights the importance of curricular flexibility as a precondition to DI success, in the absence of which teachers would be unable to completely modify content to meet the needs of SLD learners.

Classroom Management (60%, n=9)

Differentiated grouping was not impossible in DI but hard in practice. The teachers had problems maintaining the tempo of both fast and struggling learners and being disengaged and frustrated. This was compounded by the big classes and the small number of staff to support. Educators indicated that co-teaching models and smaller group size were necessary to make DI possible.

Assessment Misalignment (53%, n=8)

One-half of teachers claimed that DI progress was not reflected in standardized tests. Even the children who excelled in oral, project-based or tactile failed in written exams, which established a discrepancy between learning and assessment. This made teachers not commit to DI wholly since advancement was not appreciated within the system.

External Support Gap (46%, n=7)

Almost half of the instructors pointed to the absence of home reinforcement. The understanding of many parents of SLD learners was that schools should fix poor learning and that they should not practice beyond the classroom. Teachers also identified stigma and denial within families and collaboration with the support was challenging. This demonstrates that school-home partnerships and not classroom strategies determine DI success.

Objective 3: To examine the cultural & social factors affecting the practice of the differentiated instruction in inclusive classrooms.

Thematic Coding & Frequency Distribution (n = 15 teachers)

Theme	Subtheme	No. of Teachers (n)	Percentage (%)	Example Codes (from interviews)
Parental Denial & Limited Cooperation	Lack of awareness, unrealistic expectations, low home support	11	73%	"Parents think the child is just careless" / "Homework not reinforced at home"
Stigma & Community Attitudes	Negative labeling, social exclusion, cultural misconceptions	10	66%	"Other parents complain their children are disturbed" / "Community says child is weak-minded"
Peer Acceptance & Sensitization	Bullying, lack of empathy, teacher-led sensitization efforts	9	60%	"Peers tease them for slow reading" / "After awareness sessions, classmates became more helpful"
Exam-Oriented Mindset	Pressure for marks, neglect of process-based learning	8	53%	"Parents ask only about marks" / "Oral progress not valued unless in exams"
Home–School Communication Gaps	Irregular meetings, lack of follow-up, mistrust	7	46%	"Parents don't attend meetings" / "They expect teachers to do everything"

Detailed Thematic Analysis

1. Parental Denial and Minimal Cooperation (73%, n=11,)

Teachers always noted that a group of parents with SLD rejected or downplayed the problems of their child. Rather than strengthening the need to differentiate strategies at home, parents tended to ignore SLD as being careless, or lazy. Other parents were offering expectations that were impractical and demanding improvements even overnight without the practice. Such ignorance and non-support of the home undermined the classroom endeavours by putting all the burden of intervention on teachers.

2. Stigma & Community Attitudes (66%, n=10)

There was the presence of stigma as a powerful cultural obstacle. Teachers described incidences when children with SLD were considered as dull or mentally weak by the members of the community. The mothers of other children at times opposed the inclusive practice because they felt that their child was being distracted by the existence of SLDs. These communal attitudes discouraged families and learners, and there were cycles of poor self-esteem and withdrawal of active participation.

3. Peer Acceptance/Sensitization (60%, n=9)

The importance of peer interactions was controversial. On the one hand, teasing and bullying reinforced the exclusion (e.g. laughing at slowness in reading or writing). On the other hand, peer support was high when teachers observed that cooperative learning activities and the creation of awareness programs that sensitized classmates led to high levels of peer support. The positive experiences included the ones associated with peers assisting with reading aloud and taking notes, and being involved. This means that peer dynamic is subject to change as a result of proactive teacher sensitization.

4. Exam-Oriented Mindset (53%, n=8)

High emphasis on marks in the system of Indian education was considered one of the cultural challenges. Learning was measured by the school administrators (and sometimes by parents) on the basis of exams. Consequently, oral expression, comprehension or project-based learning strategies that were differentiated were not valued. Teachers also experienced pressure to focus on exam preparation, rather than individualized strategy thereby creating a disharmony between the teaching work and the expectations of the parents.

5. Home-School Communication Gaps (46%, n=7)

The lack of frequent and positive communication with parents was pointed out by a number of teachers. Meetings were missed, home reinforcement recommendations were overlooked or parents distrusted what teachers could say about SLD. This disjuncture resulted in a break between school interventions and home settings, and this weakened uniformity in learner support. More powerful communications channels were considered to play a crucial role in the maintenance of differentiated practices.

Major Findings

The paper discussed issues concerning the implementation of differentiated instruction (DI) by the special education teachers among children with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) in the Delhi government schools. With the help of a mixed-method approach, the results are synthesized within three wide dimensions; systemic dimension, pedagogical dimension and socio-cultural dimension.

Systemic Challenges

The most important barrier (78%), which restricted the opportunity of small-group instruction and customized scaffolding, was identified as overcrowded classrooms.

There was inadequate policy-level support (72%), weak monitoring, lack of follow-up, and institutional insufficient directives about how to translate DI into classroom practice.

Lack of teaching-learning resources and supporting aids (68%), teachers had to use traditional means of teaching, which weakened multisensory and flexible modes of teaching.

Lack of resource rooms and inflexible classroom designs were considered infrastructural gaps (66%), which limited collaborative and activity-based learning.

The teacher workload (50) was also a limitation to the time needed in differentiated lesson planning.

Pedagogical Challenges

The greatest challenge was instructional workload (80%), and DI needed a lot of planning, several worksheets, and resource preparation outside the school day.

Neo science in professional preparation (73%) indicated that teachers did not receive any practical training in multisensory strategies, scaffolding and support based on ICT.

Teachers were compelled to use uniform teaching strategies through curriculum rigidity (66%) as a result of syllabus pressure and thus it became hard to adapt the curriculum to SLD learners.

The most common challenge (60%) in managing the classroom was balancing between the fast and slow learners in the large classes that caused disengagement.

The lack of assessment misalignment (53%) demonstrated that standardized tests were not indicative of DI progress, which discourages the continued use of standardized tests.

External support gaps (46%) identified that there was infrequent reinforcement of strategies in the home that weakened classroom initiatives.

Socio-Cultural Challenges

A denial of parent and a lack of cooperation (73%) exacerbated DI implementation with most parents attributing the SLD to laziness or unattainable results.

Negative attitudes by the community and stigma (66%) identified children as weak or dull, lowering the confidence of the learners and also lowering the acceptance of the children.

Issues that affected peer acceptance (60%) were bullying and teasing but sensitization programs enhanced cooperation.

Exam-based ideologies (53%) promoted a short-term orientation on marks, at the expense of process-based and differentiated education.

Essentially, a lack of communication between school and home (46%) prevented consistency in the support of learners because the parents tended to skip meetings or distrusted the teachers.

Recommendations

Systemic Reforms

Inclusive classrooms-have smaller classes in which small group and individualized instruction can be implemented.

Improve policy enforcement through the establishment of monitoring, periodic audits and accountability policies of differentiated instruction (DI) practices.

Assistive technology, multisensory kits, audio-visual tools, and the use of tactile materials of learning should be prioritized in resource allocation in order to make DI operative.

Enhance infrastructure by locating well equipped resource rooms, flexible seating plans, and barrier-free classroom set ups.

The administrative support, lessening of non-teaching tasks and teamwork in lesson planning time will enable the teachers to carry out DI effectively.

Pedagogical Enhancements

Ongoing Professional Learning (CPD): Provide practical skills-based training in multisensory learning, scaffolding, ICT integration, and interventions, which are SLD-specific.

Curricular Flexibility: Introduce flexibility throughout the NCERT system by the introduction of activity-based modules, tiered content and alternative learning materials.

Cooperative Teaching Patterns: The cooperative style of teaching and peer tutoring should be encouraged to benefit the needs of various learners in a more effective way.

Reform of the Assessment: Incorporate other assessments (oral response, project work, performance-based assessment) into the assessments to find out the DI outcomes other than the written examination.

Teacher Support Networks: Teachers need to develop communities of learning between teachers to familiarize themselves with strategies, resources, and best practices in DI.

Socio-Cultural Interventions

Parental Awareness Programs: Hold workshops and counseling sessions to lessen the denial, increase acceptance of SLD and provide parents with tools to facilitate DI at home.

Community level Sensitization: Educate the communities to eliminate the stigma and instill the principles of inclusion in the communities.

Peer Sensitization Activities: Include cooperative learning, buddy systems and classroom awareness training to form sympathy and peer tolerance to SLD learners.

Stop Exam-Heavy Learning to Process-Heavy Learning: promote curriculum that recognizes improvement, effort and alternative successes, rather than marks.

Enhance Home-School collaboration: Provide formal contact between parent and school, with frequency review meetings, parent teacher accordance and joint IEP purpose.

Policy-Level Recommendations

Alignment with NEP 2020 and RPwD Act 2016: See to it that policies on inclusive education are not just enacted, but also are being implemented in a clear manner, which is funded and accountable.

Capacity-Building at the DoE Level: Provide supply with special toolkit and curriculum adaptation guides and ongoing mentoring services.

Integrated Teacher Preparation: DI and SLD-specific coursework that is woven into B.Ed. and in-service initiatives of teacher training programs.

Research/Evidence-Based Practices: Advance habitual action research in schools in order to document effective DI practice and duplicate it with other schools.

Implications of the Study

Policy Implications

The results of the current research demonstrate the pressing necessity of reinforcing accountability, monitoring, and implementation frameworks that could help to guarantee that various forms of differentiation instruction (DI) and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are applied in inclusive government schools. The inclusive education, as a requirement of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016) and supported by the National Education Policy (2020), needs specific policy interventions in practice. This is because policymakers should consider specific funding to inclusive infrastructure such as assistive technology, multisensory teaching-learning resources, and well outfitted resource rooms to facilitate meaningful involvement of learners with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD). Moreover, institutionalized parent involvement programs must form part of the inclusive education system since parental involvement directly affects continuity of learning, stigma, and the learning process of learners with SLD.

Implications at school level

Schools should be able to implement structural and pedagogical changes that can facilitate the successful application of differentiated instruction at the institutional level. Class sizes should be rationalized and teacher workload should be optimized so that teachers could offer individualized instructions. The programs of continuous professional development must be reinforced with the emphasis on evidence-based instructional strategies, multisensory teaching method, integration of assistive technologies, and curriculum modification in accordance with the diverse learning requirements. Moreover, peer support systems, cooperative learning models, and sensitization programs should be encouraged in schools to foster inclusive classroom cultures that will promote social acceptance and participation of learners with SLD. It is also necessary to reform assessment practices, although, more importantly, process-oriented, flexible, and inclusive assessment approaches that reflect individual development instead of basing outcome assessment on the results of standardized examinations only. These institutional practices will help in enhancing inclusive practices in classrooms and enhance student learning with SLD.

Conclusion

This paper gives some critical understanding of the systemic, pedagogical and socio-cultural factors that impact the adoption of differentiated instruction with learners with specific learning disabilities in the inclusive state schools in Delhi. Although the legislative and policy frameworks like the RPwD Act (2016) and NEP (2020) are progressive, large-scale barriers against the implementation of the changes are evident at both the institutional and classroom level, including overcrowded classes, insufficient resources access, limited professional readiness, and the lack of institutional support. Another factor limiting effective inclusion is pedagogical challenges, such as the inability to put in use individualized instructional strategies and changes in curriculum and assessment practices. Moreover, socio cultural issues like stigma, parental denial and examination focussed educational practices, still restrict full involvement and acceptance of learners with SLD.

The results emphasize the fact that there remains a long-standing gap between the policy of inclusive education, and its application in school contexts. To fill this gap, there is the necessity of systemic changes that would enhance the capacity of teachers, increase access to resources, increase their

institutional accountability, and promote collaborative working relationships between educators, families and policymakers. The differentiated instruction seems to be one of the core pedagogical strategies that will not only lead to the academic access but also to the active involvement and confidence of the learners with SLD as well as to the equal learning opportunities.

Finally, institutional commitment, professional readiness and integrated stakeholder cooperation are the keys to the successful practice of inclusive education. This study about the use of inclusive schools in Delhi contributes to the further development of the discussion about inclusive pedagogy and provides certain practical recommendations on how to enhance differentiated instructional practices. The successful application of differentiated instruction will play an important role in ensuring that inclusive education is not just a policy requirement but a long-term and productive educational process that makes sure that learners with the Specific Learning Disabilities can reach their full academic and social potential.

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