



Analysis of Government Policy in Improving the Effectiveness of Inclusive Education in Public Schools

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the effectiveness of government policies aimed at improving inclusive education in public schools, focusing on the barriers and challenges that impede successful implementation. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study combines quantitative data from surveys of educators and administrators with qualitative insights from interviews and focus group discussions with stakeholders. The findings reveal significant gaps in teacher training, insufficient funding, and inadequate resource allocation, particularly in rural and low-income areas, all of which hinder the successful inclusion of students with disabilities. Additionally, societal attitudes and stigma surrounding disabilities continue to pose challenges to inclusivity. The research highlights the importance of community and parental involvement, emphasizing that active engagement can foster a more supportive and accepting educational environment. Furthermore, it underscores the necessity for a culture of continuous improvement through regular assessment and feedback mechanisms. Based on these findings, the study offers actionable recommendations for policymakers and educators to enhance the effectiveness of inclusive education practices, ensuring that all students, regardless of their abilities, receive equitable access to quality education. Ultimately, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on inclusive education, providing valuable insights for future policy development and implementation strategies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is a critical component of modern educational systems, aiming to provide equal learning opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities and special needs (Haug, 2017). In recent years, governments around the world have recognized the importance of inclusive education, leading to the development and implementation of various policies designed to support students with diverse learning needs. These policies reflect a commitment to the principles of equality, non-discrimination, and the right to education for every child, regardless of their physical, intellectual, or emotional challenges (Waddington & Toepke, 2014).

Despite these efforts, the reality of inclusive education in many public schools remains far from ideal (Slee, 2011). Numerous challenges hinder the effective implementation of inclusive

education policies, including limited resources, insufficient teacher training, and a lack of awareness and support from the broader school community. In many cases, students with special needs continue to face significant barriers to accessing quality education, leading to disparities in educational outcomes and social integration (Harry & Klingner, 2014). This situation highlights the need for a comprehensive evaluation of current policies and practices to identify areas for improvement and ensure that the goals of inclusive education are fully realized (Donohue & Bornman, 2014).

Recent studies, such as the work by Sharma et al. (2020), emphasize the importance of teacher training in inclusive education. Their research highlights that well-trained teachers are more equipped to handle diverse classrooms, ensuring that students with special needs receive the support they require. Effective government policies have been found to invest in continuous professional development programs for educators, providing them with the skills and knowledge to adapt their teaching methods (Elmore, 2002). However, a gap identified in this area is the lack of consistent, long-term training programs across different regions, leading to disparities in the quality of education provided to students with disabilities.

Another key area of focus has been the role of government funding and resource allocation. According to a study by Nelson and Banks (2021), the availability of adequate resources is crucial for implementing inclusive education policies effectively. Their research found that countries with robust funding mechanisms tend to have more successful inclusive education systems, as they can afford to invest in necessary infrastructure, assistive technologies, and smaller class sizes (Grönlund et al., 2010). Despite this, the study also noted a persistent issue of unequal distribution of funds, where rural or less affluent areas often receive less support, leading to inconsistencies in policy implementation (Wilson et al., 2009). This indicates a need for more equitable funding models that ensure all students, regardless of their geographical location, have access to quality inclusive education.

The involvement of parents and communities has also been a significant theme in recent studies. Research by Martlew and Hodkinson (2019) suggests that when inclusive education policies actively involve parents and community members, the outcomes for students with disabilities improve. Their study found that community engagement fosters a more inclusive culture, reduces stigma, and provides additional support for students outside of the classroom (O'Leary et al., 2020). However, there is still a gap in understanding the best practices for engaging different community groups, especially in multicultural or socio-economically diverse settings, which remains an area for further research.

Despite these advances, several gaps in recent research have been identified (Erkes-Medrano et al., 2015). First, there is a lack of comprehensive, cross-cultural studies that examine how inclusive education policies are adapted and implemented in different socio-economic and cultural contexts. While much of the existing literature has focused on developed countries, there is limited research on how these policies work in developing nations where resources and infrastructure might be more constrained (Straub, 2008). This creates a gap in understanding the challenges and successes of inclusive education in varying contexts, which is crucial for global policy development.

Another gap lies in the evaluation of the long-term impacts of inclusive education policies (Miles & Singal, 2010). While short-term assessments of policy effectiveness are common, there is a lack of longitudinal studies that track the educational, social, and economic outcomes of students with disabilities over time. According to a review by Wong et al. (2022), understanding these long-term impacts is essential for refining policies and ensuring that they contribute to the sustained success and well-being of students with special needs throughout their educational journey and into adulthood.

Lastly, there is a need for more research on the integration of inclusive education with other social policies, such as health care and employment services (Ferguson, 2008). Inclusive education does not exist in isolation, and recent studies, such as that by Loreman (2021), suggest that coordinated efforts across sectors can lead to better outcomes for students with disabilities. However, research on how to effectively implement such intersectoral collaboration remains limited, representing a critical area for future investigation.

In the context of government policy, inclusive education is supported by a range of legislative frameworks, regulations, and programs that aim to create a supportive and accessible learning environment for all students (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002). These policies often include provisions for specialized teacher training, infrastructure modifications, and the development of inclusive curricula. However, the effectiveness of these measures varies widely, depending on factors such as funding, administrative support, and the level of collaboration between schools, families, and communities. As such, it is essential to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of existing policies to understand how they can be improved to better serve students with special needs.

The importance of this research lies in its potential to inform policymakers, educators, and stakeholders about the current state of inclusive education in public schools (Ainscow et al., 2000). By examining the effectiveness of government policies and their implementation, this study aims to shed light on the challenges and successes of inclusive education initiatives. Furthermore, it seeks to provide recommendations for enhancing policy frameworks and practices, ensuring that all students have access to quality education that meets their individual needs. Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader goal of building an inclusive society where every child can thrive and reach their full potential (Roffey, 2013).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The methodology for this research on the "Analysis of Government Policy in Improving the Effectiveness of Inclusive Education in Public Schools" will involve a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of how government policies are being implemented and their effectiveness in promoting inclusive education (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020).

The study will be structured around a case study design, focusing on a selection of public schools where government inclusive education policies are actively in place. This design will enable an in-depth exploration of the real-world application of these policies, identifying both successes and challenges (Steiner & Posch, 2006). The research will also involve a comparative analysis across different regions or school settings (urban vs. rural) to examine variations in policy implementation and outcomes.

Surveys will be administered to a wide range of stakeholders, including school administrators, teachers, and parents of students with special needs (Tucker & Schwartz, 2013). The surveys will collect data on perceptions of policy effectiveness, the availability of resources, and the extent of support provided to students. Questions will be designed to assess various aspects of policy implementation, such as teacher training, infrastructure, and the use of assistive technologies.

Data on enrollment rates, academic performance, and attendance of students with disabilities will be gathered from official government education databases (Mizunoya et al., 2018). This will help quantify the impact of inclusive education policies and provide insights into trends over time.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with key stakeholders, including policymakers, school principals, special education coordinators, and representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in inclusive education (Mwangi, 2013). These interviews will help to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and barriers to policy implementation, as well as the strategies that have been successful.

Focus group discussions will be organized with teachers and parents to explore their experiences and perceptions of inclusive education (Forlin & Chambers, 2011). These discussions will help to uncover the nuanced issues that may not be apparent through quantitative data alone, such as cultural attitudes towards disability and specific local challenges.

Relevant policy documents, government reports, and strategic plans will be analyzed to understand the legislative and regulatory framework guiding inclusive education (Lindsay, 2003). This will also involve reviewing policy guidelines to assess their comprehensiveness and alignment with international standards for inclusive education.

The study will use a purposive sampling method to select schools and participants (Rai & Thapa, 2015). Schools will be chosen based on factors such as their geographical location (to ensure representation from both urban and rural areas), the presence of inclusive education programs, and

the diversity of their student population. For interviews and focus groups, participants will be selected to include a variety of perspectives, ensuring that insights from different levels of the education system (policy, administration, and classroom) are represented.

Statistical analysis will be conducted on the survey data using software tools such as SPSS or R (Larson-Hall, 2015). Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize the responses, while inferential statistics (such as regression analysis) may be employed to identify patterns and relationships between different variables, such as the level of funding and the effectiveness of policy implementation.

The analysis of official data on student performance will involve trend analysis to determine any improvements or declines in educational outcomes for students with disabilities since the introduction of specific policies (Hanushek & Raymond, 2005).

Thematic analysis will be employed to analyze the qualitative data from interviews, focus groups, and document reviews (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). This method will involve coding the data to identify common themes and patterns that emerge from the experiences and perceptions of stakeholders. Themes might include the adequacy of resources, effectiveness of training programs, and challenges in policy enforcement.

Triangulation will be used to cross-verify the findings from different data sources, ensuring the validity and reliability of the results (Shen et al., 2020). For example, insights from interviews can be compared with survey responses and policy documents to identify any discrepancies or confirmations. Ethical approval will be sought from the relevant research ethics committees. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study. Participants will be assured that their responses will be anonymized, and data will be stored securely to protect their privacy. Special care will be taken when engaging with students with disabilities, ensuring that their participation is voluntary and that their views are respected and accurately represented.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Result

The results of this research provide a comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of government policies in promoting inclusive education within public schools. Data collected from surveys, interviews, focus groups, and document analysis reveal a multifaceted picture of how these policies are being implemented, highlighting successes, challenges, and areas for improvement.

The findings indicate that awareness of inclusive education policies among school administrators and educators is generally high. Most respondents were knowledgeable about the key elements of the policies, including the goals of providing equal access to education for all students, regardless of their abilities. However, the level of awareness varied significantly between urban and rural schools, with urban areas showing higher levels of policy knowledge. This suggests that more efforts are needed to disseminate information and training about inclusive education in rural settings.

A critical aspect of successful inclusive education is the preparation of teachers to handle diverse classrooms. The research found that government policies have led to the introduction of various training programs aimed at equipping teachers with the skills necessary to support students with special needs. While many teachers reported participating in these programs, the data revealed gaps in the training's depth and consistency. In particular, teachers in rural schools often expressed concerns about the lack of specialized training, highlighting the need for more comprehensive and ongoing professional development opportunities. Additionally, qualitative data from interviews suggest that while initial training is provided, there is a lack of continuous support and refresher courses, which are essential for maintaining the quality of inclusive education practices.

The availability of adequate resources emerged as a significant determinant of the success of inclusive education policies. The study found that schools with better funding were more capable of implementing inclusive practices effectively. These schools could invest in assistive technologies, classroom adaptations, and additional support staff, which significantly improved the learning environment for students with disabilities. However, there were notable disparities in funding, with schools in more affluent areas receiving more resources than those in lower-income or rural regions. This uneven distribution of funds poses a challenge to achieving true inclusivity across the education

system. The findings suggest a need for policy adjustments to ensure more equitable allocation of resources, allowing all schools to provide quality education for students with special needs.

The study highlights the importance of community and parental engagement in the success of inclusive education. Schools that actively involved parents and community organizations in their programs reported better outcomes for students with special needs. These schools were able to create a supportive network that extended beyond the classroom, helping to reduce stigma and build a culture of inclusivity. Focus group discussions revealed that parents valued opportunities to participate in school activities and decision-making processes, as this allowed them to better understand and support their children's education. However, challenges remain in areas where cultural attitudes towards disability are less accepting, suggesting that more community outreach and awareness-raising initiatives are necessary.

Quantitative data analysis showed improvements in the academic performance, social integration, and attendance of students with special needs in schools that effectively implemented inclusive education policies. These schools were able to create a more supportive and accommodating environment that helped students engage more fully in the learning process. However, the results also identified areas where students continued to face barriers, such as limited access to personalized learning materials and insufficient support in the classroom. This suggests that while inclusive education policies have had a positive impact, more work is needed to address specific gaps in service provision.

3.2 Contributions to Policy Improvements and Recommendations for Implementing Inclusive Education

One of the primary contributions of this research is the provision of evidence-based insights that can inform policymakers. The data collected highlights specific areas where current policies may be falling short, particularly in terms of resource allocation, teacher training, and community engagement. By presenting these findings, the research enables policymakers to make informed decisions that are grounded in empirical evidence rather than assumptions or anecdotal reports. This data-driven approach can lead to more effective policy formulation that directly addresses the identified gaps, ensuring that inclusive education is not merely a theoretical concept but a practical reality in every school.

The research underscores the importance of equitable resource distribution as a critical factor for the successful implementation of inclusive education policies. To address this issue, it is recommended that policymakers develop funding models that prioritize schools in underserved and rural areas, ensuring they receive adequate resources to support students with special needs. This could involve increasing the budget allocated to special education services or creating targeted grants that specifically address the needs of low-income schools. Furthermore, ongoing monitoring and evaluation of resource allocation can help ensure that funds are used effectively and reach the intended beneficiaries.

Another key area identified for improvement is teacher training. The research indicates that while some training programs exist, they are often insufficient and lack continuity. It is recommended that governments implement comprehensive, ongoing professional development programs that not only focus on initial training but also provide continuous support and mentorship for teachers working in inclusive classrooms. This could involve partnerships with universities and educational organizations to create specialized certification programs in inclusive education. Additionally, incorporating practical experiences, such as classroom observations and peer mentoring, can help build teachers' confidence and competence in effectively supporting students with diverse needs.

The findings of this research highlight the positive impact of community and parental involvement on the success of inclusive education initiatives. To leverage this potential, it is recommended that schools actively engage parents and community members in the development and implementation of inclusive education policies. This could be achieved through the establishment of advisory committees that include parents of students with special needs, local organizations, and advocacy groups. Providing workshops and informational sessions can also empower parents with the knowledge and resources they need to support their children effectively. Furthermore, outreach programs aimed at fostering a more inclusive culture within the community can help reduce stigma and encourage acceptance of students with disabilities.

Inclusive education cannot be addressed in isolation; it must be integrated with broader social policies to ensure that all aspects of students' lives are considered. This research recommends that policymakers collaborate across sectors, including health, social services, and employment, to create a holistic support system for students with disabilities. Such collaboration can lead to coordinated services that address not only educational needs but also social and emotional support, helping to create a more inclusive environment for students both in and out of school.

Finally, the research highlights the need for a culture of continuous improvement within educational institutions. Policymakers should establish mechanisms for regular assessment and feedback regarding the effectiveness of inclusive education policies. This could involve the implementation of performance indicators that measure student outcomes, teacher satisfaction, and community involvement. Encouraging schools to engage in self-evaluation processes can help identify areas for growth and allow for the sharing of best practices among institutions. Creating platforms for collaboration and knowledge-sharing among schools can facilitate innovation and ensure that successful strategies are disseminated widely.

3.3 Challenges and Barriers

Despite the progress made in promoting inclusive education policies, numerous challenges and barriers continue to impede their effective implementation in public schools. Understanding these obstacles is crucial for developing strategies to enhance inclusivity and ensure that all students, regardless of their abilities, receive a quality education. This section explores the various challenges identified in this research, including insufficient teacher training, inadequate funding, lack of resources, societal attitudes, and structural barriers within the education system.

One of the most significant barriers to successful inclusive education is the lack of adequate training for teachers. While many educators recognize the importance of inclusivity, a substantial number report feeling ill-equipped to handle the diverse needs of students with disabilities. The research highlights that initial teacher training programs often do not provide sufficient focus on special education strategies, resulting in a workforce that may be hesitant or unsure about how to implement inclusive practices effectively. Additionally, ongoing professional development opportunities are frequently limited, leading to a knowledge gap that hinders teachers from adapting their methods to meet the varying needs of their students.

Funding is another critical challenge that affects the implementation of inclusive education. The research findings reveal that many schools, particularly those in rural or low-income areas, struggle to secure the necessary financial resources to support inclusive practices. Insufficient funding can lead to a lack of essential services, such as special education staff, assistive technologies, and classroom adaptations. Moreover, disparities in resource allocation mean that some schools are unable to provide the level of support required for students with special needs, perpetuating inequalities within the education system. This financial strain often results in teachers being overwhelmed and unable to dedicate the necessary time and attention to their students, ultimately impacting the effectiveness of inclusive education.

Societal attitudes towards disability play a crucial role in shaping the environment for inclusive education. Research indicates that stigma and negative perceptions of individuals with disabilities can significantly hinder their inclusion in mainstream classrooms. Many students with special needs face bullying or exclusion from their peers, which can adversely affect their self-esteem and academic performance. The research emphasizes the need for awareness campaigns and community engagement initiatives to challenge stereotypes and promote understanding of disabilities. By fostering a more inclusive culture at the community level, schools can create a supportive atmosphere that encourages acceptance and collaboration among students of all abilities.

Structural barriers within the education system further complicate the implementation of inclusive education policies. These barriers can include rigid curricula that do not accommodate diverse learning styles, inadequate infrastructure to support students with physical disabilities, and bureaucratic obstacles that slow down the process of implementing necessary changes. For example, schools may lack accessible facilities, such as ramps or specialized classrooms, making it difficult for students with mobility challenges to participate fully in school activities. Additionally, the research highlights that policy frameworks may not be adequately aligned with on-the-ground realities, leading to gaps in implementation and enforcement.

Resistance to change is another significant challenge facing inclusive education efforts. Some educators and administrators may feel overwhelmed by the demands of implementing inclusive practices, particularly if they have not received adequate training or support. Additionally, entrenched beliefs about traditional teaching methods may lead to reluctance in embracing new approaches that prioritize inclusivity. This resistance can create an environment where inclusive education is viewed as an added burden rather than an essential component of quality education for all students. Overcoming this resistance requires strong leadership, ongoing professional development, and a commitment to fostering a positive culture that values diversity.

3.4 Comparison of Research Results with Previous Studies

Previous research consistently identifies insufficient teacher training as a significant barrier to effective inclusive education. For instance, a study by Avramidis and Norwich (2002) emphasized that many teachers felt unprepared to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities due to inadequate training programs. Similarly, the current research echoes this sentiment, revealing that while initial training exists, many teachers still lack confidence and ongoing support to implement inclusive practices effectively. The continuity of these findings underscores the urgent need for comprehensive professional development programs that not only equip teachers with the necessary skills but also provide continuous mentorship and resources.

The issue of inadequate funding and resource allocation has also been a longstanding concern in the literature on inclusive education. A study by UNESCO (2015) reported that disparities in funding often lead to unequal access to educational resources for students with disabilities, particularly in low-income areas. This research corroborates those findings, highlighting that schools in rural or economically disadvantaged regions struggle significantly to secure the resources needed for effective inclusive education. The current study adds depth to this issue by emphasizing the correlation between funding levels and the ability to implement inclusive practices, suggesting that targeted financial policies are essential for fostering equity in education.

Research has consistently shown that societal attitudes towards disability significantly impact the success of inclusive education initiatives. A study by Loreman et al. (2005) noted that negative perceptions of disabilities can lead to stigma and exclusion, ultimately affecting students' educational experiences. The current research reinforces this observation, indicating that stigma remains a barrier to inclusion, particularly in certain communities. However, the present study goes further by recommending proactive community engagement strategies to challenge stereotypes and promote acceptance, suggesting that a shift in community attitudes is crucial for successful inclusive practices.

Structural barriers within the education system have been widely documented in previous research. For instance, a report by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2018) highlighted that rigid curricula and inadequate infrastructure impede the implementation of inclusive education. This research supports those findings, indicating that such barriers continue to hinder the effective inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Moreover, the current study emphasizes the misalignment between policy frameworks and on-the-ground realities, suggesting that a more integrated approach is needed to bridge this gap. This insight contributes to the broader discourse on the importance of aligning policies with actual educational practices to enhance the effectiveness of inclusive education.

Resistance to change has also been documented in prior studies, with educators often hesitant to adopt inclusive practices due to various pressures and a lack of support. A study by Sharma et al. (2012) found that resistance stemmed from fears about workload and insufficient training. The findings of this research resonate with those earlier conclusions, emphasizing that without strong leadership and a culture of support, implementing inclusive practices can be met with reluctance. The current study contributes to the understanding of this issue by highlighting the need for comprehensive leadership strategies that promote inclusivity as a shared responsibility rather than an added burden.

4. CONCLUSION

This research has provided a comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of government policies in improving inclusive education in public schools. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative

methods, the study has identified both the successes and the persistent challenges in implementing inclusive practices. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of a multifaceted approach that addresses the various barriers to inclusivity, highlighting critical areas for policy improvement and practical application. The results demonstrate that while there is a general awareness of inclusive education policies among educators and administrators, significant gaps remain in their effective implementation. Insufficient teacher training emerged as a primary concern, with many educators expressing a lack of confidence in their ability to support students with diverse needs. This indicates a pressing need for comprehensive, ongoing professional development programs that equip teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in inclusive classrooms. Funding disparities and inadequate resource allocation were also identified as significant barriers to effective inclusive education. The research findings reveal that schools in rural and low-income areas often struggle to secure the necessary resources, hindering their ability to provide the required support for students with disabilities. Addressing these disparities through equitable funding models is essential to ensure that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, receive the support they need to succeed. Moreover, the study highlights the critical role of community and parental involvement in fostering a culture of inclusivity within schools. Engaging parents and local organizations can create a supportive network that enhances the educational experience for students with special needs. This community-oriented approach not only helps to combat stigma but also builds a collaborative environment that benefits all students. The research also emphasizes the importance of a culture of continuous improvement within educational institutions. Establishing mechanisms for regular assessment and feedback can facilitate the adaptation of strategies to meet the evolving needs of students. Policymakers and educators must prioritize systematic evaluations of inclusive practices to ensure that they remain effective and relevant. This research contributes valuable insights into the complexities of implementing inclusive education policies in public schools. By identifying the challenges and opportunities within the current framework, it provides a roadmap for policymakers, educators, and communities to enhance the effectiveness of inclusive education initiatives. The recommendations outlined in this study aim to foster an educational environment where all students, regardless of their abilities, can thrive and achieve their full potential. Achieving true inclusivity requires a collaborative effort, ongoing commitment, and a shared vision of equity and access in education for every child.

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