

A Systematic Review on Assessment Practices in Inclusive Schools in India: Barriers and Opportunities

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Abstract


Assessments are integral to the educational process, fostering student development and expediting the teaching-learning continuum. They not only guide teachers in shaping students' learning trajectories but also aid in the selection of Teaching-Learning Materials (TLM), procedural decisions, diagnosing children's needs, and overall administrative system enhancement. Inclusive education relies heavily on assessment techniques as vital tools providing valuable insights into students' progress and learning requirements. This information enables teachers to ensure proper educational placements and make informed decisions. This paper employs a systematic literature review method (SLR) using PRISMA techniques to explore tools and techniques in inclusive schools, along with barriers and opportunities in implementing assessment practices. The findings underscore the availability of diverse assessment tools in schools, yet reveal a deficiency in teachers' training on proper implementation. General educators, compared to special educators, exhibit lower levels of training, skills, and updates. The implementation of various assessment techniques positively impacts students by providing appropriate facilities and services. The study recommends the necessity for additional teacher training programs and updates to the curriculum.

Keywords: Inclusive education, Barriers, Opportunities, Assessment practices

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Introduction

In the phenomenal world, God is the supreme. He created the world beautifully and mysteriously and filled with all sorts of creatures, each with its own unique culture and taste; he created the plants, sky, human beings and various species full of beauty and uniqueness. So the whole world is like a beautiful, inclusive place full of diversity. There are people of all colours, shapes, sizes, and abilities. All individuals come from different cultures, languages and belief systems. Still, despite these differences, we all live in an inclusive world where we all deserve to be treated with respect, dignity, and equality. That is why UN Agenda 2030 for SDG has given importance to making a better society by making global citizenship and practising inclusiveness in every sphere of society.

Inclusion is a generic term that aims to eliminate exclusionary practices from society by changing individuals' attitudes, value systems, and belief systems. So, in translating the objectives into action, Inclusive education will play a catalytic role. Generally, Inclusive education is an umbrella term and an updated version of the teaching method with learning difficulties and all normal children in the same classroom with the same school or campus (Sharma et al., 2021). Angelides et al. (2006) define Inclusive education as a practice of increasing learners' participation and acceptance of the differences in the school as a whole. They also highlighted that inclusive education is all about all students having the right to attend school in the neighborhood. This suggests that this approach does not just apply to enrolling students with disabilities and special needs in regular classrooms. However, it is equally concerned with the circumstances allowing all children to receive an adequate education. Thus, adopting inclusive education practices entails modifying the curriculum in schools to take into account each student's individuality and thereby enhancing their presence, access, participation, and achievement in learning society (Booth, 2006). So, we need proper identification and assessment to properly place special education children in the inclusive setup. It has been said that without proper assessment and identification, there will be no special or inclusive education. Hence, inclusive or special education begins with assessments and ends with assessments without proper assessments.

It is challenging on the part of professionals or teachers to identify children with special needs and provide unique opportunities and services. In order to make Inclusion a reality, assessment procedures must be creative in order to encourage the participation of all students. However, in the case of India, most of the instructor training programs do not have a set up on capacity assessment techniques, a more significant proportion of the schools in India are not sufficiently planned, teachers are also not capable, and they did not get any bolster benefits from their classrooms. As per the survey results, most special needs students need inclusive education. (Sharma et al., 2021) also investigated that regular assessment and improper assessment are very few in India. The selection of assessment tools and techniques is essential for inclusive school teachers because assessments play a vital role in inclusive education. For this purpose, if a child is misdiagnosed due to the wrong use of assessment tools, the right services will not be provided to the child, which will again increase the rate of disability. So, the present study focuses on and explores the different tools and techniques adopted in inclusive schools and the barriers to inclusive assessment practices in Indian schools.



Research Questions

1. What tools and techniques are used in inclusive education to assess and identify the special educational needs of students?
2. What does the teacher face the problems in the implementation of tools and techniques for identifying the special education needs of students?
3. What problems does the teacher face in evaluating and assessing the performance of learners.?
4. What benefits and opportunities are available after implementing the assessment tools and techniques in inclusive schools?

Review of Related Literature/Studies on Barriers to Assessments Practices

Due to the development of research, various new theories, principles, and techniques are emerging daily, leading to the development of society as a whole. With the development of society, various traditional blind belief systems, values, and old theories have been changed. Due to the evolution of various concepts, special education terms changed to inclusive education, which opened a common platform for all children. Besides that, various tools, techniques, methods of teaching, and various aspects of education are also changing. So, in the present study, we will explore the assessment techniques and tools available for assessing and identifying special needs students and find out the problems and benefits after implementing the tools and techniques. Various researchers conducted some studies on the assessment practices of inclusive schools. Adzanku et al. (2022) studied assessment practices among inclusive school teachers. The findings revealed that most teachers need more knowledge and should have used appropriate assessment techniques to assess children with special needs. It was found that the curriculum available for teachers during pre-service and in-service training programs for identifying and assessing disabled students was not enough and appropriate (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019; Pit-ten Cate et al., 2018). The study revealed that teachers who take part in more in-service training have favourable views toward students with disabilities and inclusive education. Therefore, teachers must participate in professional development activities such as conferences, in-service training, seminars, lectures, and presentations, mentorship programs and supervision, peer assessment, involvement in educational projects, and self-evaluation.

Dhala et al. (2021) studies found that the need for more trained teachers and the wrong attitude of teachers in India is a severe challenge for the proper implementation of inclusive assessment techniques in India. As a result, 94% of students need more proper facilities and education. Another researcher, Gutuza et al. (2015), found that in an inclusive education environment, there is a lack of cooperation and collaboration between the special educator and regular classroom teacher, which affects the assessment process and fails to implement the assessment practices effectively and to follow the grading system.

Pillai and Devamanokari (2023) conducted a study on Academic assessment by general educators in inclusive schools on special needs. The study's findings revealed that general education teachers faced problems in assessing written tests and oral exams for children with special needs in the inclusive setup, and there needs to be more holistic assessments.



Review of Related Studies on Opportunities on Benefits of Assessment Practices

Assessment plays a significant role in the students' learning; it is essential not only for record purposes but also to decide learners on advancements and provide appropriate services to special needs students. Several researchers conducted studies on opportunities and benefits of assessment practices in inclusive classrooms; Gunter et al. (2000) conducted an FGD with a group of 10 teachers in Upper Saddle River School on assessing special students' needs and found that self-assessment and peer assessment can be fun and morale busting in the inclusive classroom. It also creates independent thinking and builds self-confidence among special needs students. Adewuni and Mncube (2020) conducted a study on assessment strategies for the Inclusion of learners with special education needs. The findings revealed that most teachers adopt CCE and mediate by offering various instructions like scaffolding and differentiated instructions.

Wilson (1996) found that after using innovative assessment practices like videotapes, manual projects and assignments, the performance of special needs students has comparatively increased. Some researchers like Darling-Hammond (2013) also found that performance-based assessment is beneficial for identifying and assessing special needs students where children construct their own response; instead of selecting or identifying the correct response, teachers can observe students' performance on tasks reflecting real world or authentic requirements.

Most of the B. Ed. Teachers also said the activity-centered method is the best way to assess children with special needs. So, the above review of related literature concludes that assessment provides information about learners and appropriate facilities and services to both the teacher and learners. Various research has been conducted on the attitude of teachers towards assessment practices, implementation problems and barriers to assessment practices. However, the present study explores the different tools and techniques adopted in inclusive schools and the barriers to inclusive schools.

Purposes & Importance

The major purpose of the study is to explore what are the assessment tools and techniques adopted by the teacher in the inclusive education setup and what are the problems and opportunities available. Due to the recommendation of the Salamanca Committee (1994), various countries followed inclusive education practices for providing a new learning platform to disadvantaged group people (Forlin, 2006). Besides that, there are lots of theories, principles, tools, techniques, and methods developed in the field of inclusive education, which is giving new shape to the entire education system. This study can help administrators, teachers, curriculum planners and policymakers to better understand the problems, challenges, and opportunities in the implementation of assessment practices.

This study will also benefit the special educator, medical practitioner and policymakers to provide better assessment practices and launch various innovative tools and techniques. It will help the policymakers to allocate resources and adopt new policies, programs, etc.



Assessment Practices Inclusive Education in India

Generally, assessment is a dynamic term that aims not only to provide information towards the next step of learning, but it can also use selection, administration, monitoring standards, diagnosing and decision-making processes. While we talk about assessment in inclusive education, a lot of questions come to our mind. Like,

- Why will disability students be assessed?
- Who uses the assessment information?
- Who carries out the assessment, and who else is involved?
- What domain of learning will be assessed?
- How are pupils assessed?
- Against what are the assessment results compared?

Different countries have different purposes towards assessment practices. Some countries may have aimed to apply the information to compare pupils' achievement and monitor overall educational standards. All countries have more specific assessment procedures for individual pupils to identify the exact nature of special needs and inform the teaching and learning. Assessment is primarily used to enhance learning for all students, especially those with various learning requirements. Teachers are aware that every student is unique. They have advantages and particular requirements that can affect learning. Various assessment methods will be employed to keep students informed throughout the teaching-learning cycle for designing the personalised learning plans for students' programs, tracking students' progress, making changes to the curriculum and assessing students' progress in light of program objectives and student achievements, besides the major purpose of assessment discussed in the following points.

1. Assessments helps to identify the special need students.
2. Assessment to inform teaching and learning.
3. Assessment helps to measure and compare student's achievement.
4. To monitor overall educational standards.

Assessment is primarily used to enhance learning for all students, especially those with various learning requirements. Teachers know that every student is unique and has advantages and particular requirements that can affect learning. Various assessment methods will be employed to keep students informed throughout the teaching-learning cycle for designing the personalised learning plans for student's programs, tracking students' progress, making changes to the curriculum and assessing students' progress in light of program objectives and student achievements.

Types of Assessment Procedure used in Inclusive schools in India

1. Performance Based Assessment
2. Ecological Assessment

3. Rating scale and checklist
4. Portfolio assessment
5. Teacher-made assessment.
6. Observation

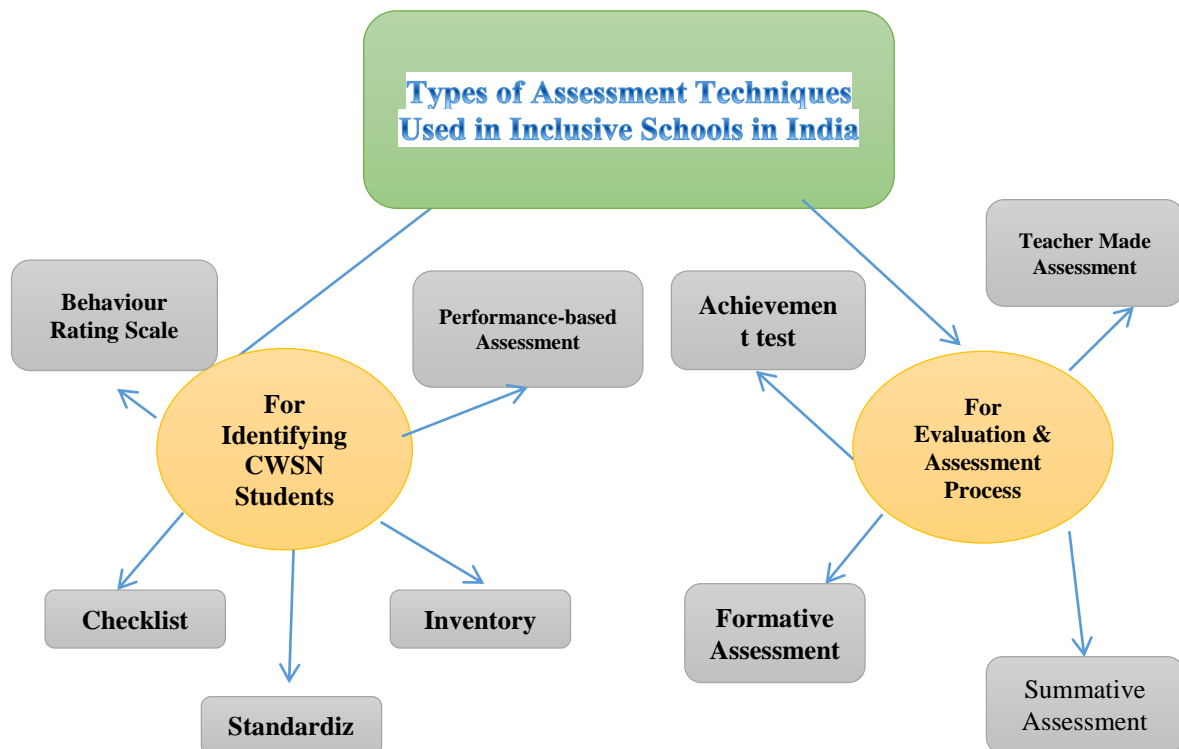


Figure 1. Types of Assessment Techniques Used in Inclusive Schools

Method

Design of the Study

In this study, to find out the results of the previous research question, the researcher employed the systematic literature review method (SLR) (Mohamed Shaffril et al., 2021) by following the PRISMA technique, which includes three essential stages search, eligibility, data collection and extraction (Moher et al., 2015). The researcher has gone through some systematic stages to conduct this study, like in the first stage, research questions raised by the researcher. In the second phase, the researcher collected the relevant articles that have been published and are significant for the current topic. After this, exclusion and inclusion norms were applied to downloaded papers for selection according to the needs of the research questions. In the next stage, the result is extracted from selected papers by going through it thoroughly. In the last stage, the extracted results have been synthesized meaningfully regarding the need for research questions. The following steps comprehensively define the strategy of the present paper.



Research Questions

The study explores the barriers and opportunities of assessment practice in inclusive schools in India. Therefore, to find this, the researcher raised the following questions.

Searching Relevant works

At this stage, the relevant research articles are searched using the research mentioned above questions and making keywords from them. The search also includes keywords related to the research questions' terms. Google Scholar and Scopus were used to search for relevant articles published between 2000 and 2022 using the keywords mentioned above and their variants with Boolean operators like: "Inclusive assessment" or "Assessment practices in inclusive schools" AND "Barriers" or "Problems" AND "Assessment Techniques" or "Identification Methods" "Special schools" or "Inclusive Schools". The total number of articles, around 70 to 80, from the search varied according to the keyword and research questions.

Sorting and selecting the relevant articles

From these 70 to 80 articles based on the above keywords, only 9 articles for the barriers in the implementation of assessment practices and 6 articles for the opportunities and facilities after implementation of assessment techniques in inclusive schools have been selected to find out the solutions of the research questions by following the inclusions and exclusions criteria.

Table 1. For Selection of Articles Based on Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Study Type	Empirical	Not Empirical
Language	English	Not English
Publication Year	2000-2023	Below range
Main Focus	Assessment techniques in Inclusive schools	Inclusive assessment practices
Education Type	Inclusive Education	Other than inclusive education

The above-mentioned inclusion and exclusion parameters have been used to resolve the research questions. The researcher has reviewed each article to determine if it meets the requirements of the research questions.

Interpreting the Result

There are 15 articles on inclusive assessment practices, only nine articles on the barriers to implementing assessment practices, and six articles on the opportunities and facilities after implementing assessment techniques in inclusive schools. The following Table No. 2 reports the review in a comprehensive way about its title, method, and results.

**Reporting the Review**

Table 2. Shows the Related Studies on Assessment Practices in Inclusive Education

	Topic	Author and Year	Findings
1	Inclusive Education In India – Challenge And Opportunities	Christian PM&Asok A(2021)	There are vast numbers of training programs necessary for teachers. Shortage of human and cloth assets, bad attitudes of instructors and networks, non-disabled friends, and their dad and mom hinder inclusive practices.
2	Assessment Practices among Inclusive School Teachers: A Case from Basic Schools in the Volta Region of Ghana.	Adzanku, Jacob & Attia, Isaac & Agbetorwoka, Ambrose (2022)	The findings revealed that most teachers need more knowledge and should have used appropriate assessment techniques in assessing learners with special educational needs in the schools.
3	Assessment for Inclusion: rethinking inclusive assessment in higher education	Niemmenien Ha.(2022)	The result of the study revealed the change in the existing assessment system and the need for proper implementation of policies and programs.
4		Mereuko & Saeed (2022)	The results found that the curriculum available for teachers during pre-service and in-service training programs for identifying and assessing disability students was not enough and appropriated
5	Academic assessment by general educators in inclusive schools on special needs	Pillai AG & Devamanokari K	The findings of the study revealed that general education teachers faced problems in assessing written tests and oral exams for children with special needs in the inclusive setup, and there needs to be more holistic assessments.
6	Assessment of Children with Special Needs: Issues and Challenges	Sultan & Najar (2020)	The result shows that there is a lack of proper training of teachers to teach in inclusive educational settings and a lack of proper exceptional education teacher support in dealing with children with special needs
7	Specific learning disabilities: Issues that remain unanswered	Kohli, A., Sharma, S., & Padhy, S. K	The result shows that most assessment tools used for assessing children with learning disabilities lack well-established norms for all subsets. Also, the available assessment tools have yet to include all the age groups, which makes assessment difficult, especially for higher classes.



Results

The results show the findings of the collected articles regarding barriers to inclusive school assessment practices. Maximum studies highlighted that significant barriers in inclusive school are the teacher and government; if the government regularly conduct training program and various activities for the development of assessment practices and if the teacher adopts various new skills and techniques for better assessment practices, then disabled students will get appropriate services and facilities. This study highlighted that in comparison to normal teachers, special educators are more skilled, updated, and well-trained with various assessment techniques. The study results are discussed in the following based on research questions.

1. What tools and techniques are used in inclusive education to assess and identify the special educational needs of students?
2. What does the teacher face the problems in the implementation of tools and techniques for identifying the special education needs of students?
3. What problems does the teacher face in evaluating and assessing?

Each student has some innate qualities and needs which will help the child create an identity. So, the role of each teacher is to identify and assess the needs of learners effectively. After the revolution in the field of special education, inclusive education term emerged, which aims not only to provide education to all children but also to provide proper services and identify /assess them properly. Now, various countries need to give more emphasis on making an inclusive society by creating various policies and programs and organizing various activities. Besides, various new techniques, tools, and devices are available for assessing and identifying them, but still, students need to get benefits properly. Nowadays, various problems and issues need to be addressed to successful inclusive practices. The following points discussed the barriers and challenges of assessment practices of inclusive schools.

Barriers and Challenges

- ✓ Lack of Proper training and skills
- ✓ Negative attitudes
- ✓ Lack of proper knowledge about assessment techniques.
- ✓ Lack of policy and programs
- ✓ Lack of collaboration and support

**Table 2. Shows the Related Studies Opportunities of Assessment Practices in Inclusive Education**

Si no	Title	Author and Year	Findings
1	Assessment Strategies Adapted for Implementing Inclusion of Learners with Special Education Needs in Selected Primary Schools in the Amathole West District, South	Adewuni MT & Mncube V. (2020)	The findings revealed that most teachers adopt CCE and mediate by offering various instructions like scaffolding and differentiated instruction.
2	Assessment practices among inclusive school teachers. A case study from Basic school in the Volta Region of Gana.	Welson & King (1996)	The study found that after the use of innovative assessment practices like the use of videotapes, manual projects and assignments, the performance of special needs students has comparatively increased
3	Assessment for Inclusion: rethinking contemporary strategies in assessment design	Tai et al. (2023)	The study found that performance-based assessment is very helpful for identifying and assessing special needs students where children construct their responses; instead of selecting or identifying correct responses, teachers can observe students' performance on tasks reflecting real-world or authentic requirements.
4	Inclusion and learning assessment: Policy and practice	Hegarty, Seamus (2020)	The result shows that self-assessment and peer assessment can be fun and morale-busting in the inclusive classroom. It also creates independent thinking and builds self-confidence among special needs students.

Opportunities

- ✓ CCE AND various differentiated instructions play a significant role in the assessment process.
- ✓ With the adoption of various new tools, devices and techniques, students' performance and interest comparatively increased.
- ✓ Performance-based assessment creates a better learning platform where the teacher directly observes the student's behaviour and assesses them appropriately.
- ✓ Peer Assessment and self-assessment also help the children boost their morale and create a fun environment in the inclusive classroom.

Discussion

In the present study, good and practical assessment practices enhance the academic atmosphere of inclusive schools. Due to the innovation of various theories, principles, techniques and tools, the. The breadth of inclusive education is also increasing (Gutuza et al., 2015). Assessment is collecting information about the student's achievement and performance in the class. It is the process that reveals a student's progress, i.e., what the student has understood, knows, and is capable of doing. Assessing children with special needs is challenging, especially for regular classroom teachers. So, inclusive school includes changes in the content and teaching strategies to educate all children under one roof. It also makes teachers adapt various strategies to assess the diverse learners in their classes (Sultan & Najar 2020). It also found that most assessment tools used for assessing children with learning disabilities lack well-established norms for all subsets. Also, the available assessment tools have yet to



include all the age groups, making assessment difficult, especially for higher classes (Ross et al., 2018), supported by (Pillai & Devamanokari, 2023; Sultan & Najar, 2020).

Conclusions

The study “Assessment Practices in Inclusive Schools in India: Barriers and Opportunities” concludes that most studies conducted abroad and in India are less numbers of study was conducted as now inclusive education is a recent program in the Indian context, so there are lots of things that need to be appropriately implemented. Various studies revealed that most regular teachers are less trained and skilled in comparison to special educators; they need to learn how to properly and effectively implement the various new tools and techniques in the field of assessment. Many studies also said that teachers have insufficient knowledge and do not use appropriate assessment techniques in assessing learners with special educational needs in the schools. Some studies also found that the need for more trained teachers and the wrong attitude of teachers in India is a severe challenge for the proper implementation of inclusive assessment techniques in India. As a result, 94% of students need more proper facilities and education. So a huge number of awareness and training programs should be provided to the teachers and also the curriculum should be modified according to the needs and demands of society.

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