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The Role of the Saksham Tripura Project in Advancing Inclusive Education: A Present-Day Analysis

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Abstract

This research focuses on a comparative study of the *Saksham Tripura Project* and its significant impact on the field of Inclusive Education, specifically examined across gender, type of disability, and geographical location.

The research work entitled Inclusive Education at Tripura Present Day Scenario with the help of Saksham Tripura Project. This study is presented in a concise and logical manner on the basis of information collected during the study. This study will give some insights about the Present day Scenario of Saksham Tripura Project.

Prior to the implementation of the project, children with special needs (CwSNs) in Tripura faced numerous challenges, including limited access to inclusive educational settings, inadequate support systems, and a lack of awareness among stakeholders. The study finds that the implementation of the Saksham project adopted a development-oriented approach, which effectively addressed these issues.

Post-implementation assessment indicates a marked improvement in the educational readiness and participation of CwSNs. The STP helped create a more inclusive and supportive environment tailored to the diverse needs of these children, enabling them to develop skills and confidence according to their individual abilities. This research highlights the project's role as a model for future interventions aimed at strengthening inclusive education across different dimensions.

Keywords: Inclusive Education (IE) Saksham Tripura Project (STP), Children with Special Needs (CwSNs)

Introduction
Inclusive education refers to a system that welcomes all children into a shared learning environment. According to UNICEF, inclusive education entails children learning together in the same classrooms, in the same schools, with equitable opportunities for meaningful learning. This includes groups traditionally excluded from mainstream education.

The National Curriculum Framework (2023) highlights that inclusive education accommodates children with diverse needs-whether differently-abled, gifted, street-connected, working children, or children from remote and nomadic communities. Inclusive education is thus a dynamic process that addresses all dimensions of child development: emotional, intellectual, creative, physical, and social.

Benefits of Inclusive Education
- Enables differently-abled children to learn alongside their peers, reducing stigma and promoting equality.
- Fosters appreciation of diversity within schools and communities, encouraging acceptance and belonging.
- Engages parents in their child's educational development and school activities, strengthening school–community collaboration.

Saksham Tripura Project
The Saksham Tripura Project-a comprehensive initiative for the development of Children with Special Needs (CWSN)-was launched on 21 July 2021 by the Department of School Education, Tripura. The project aims to enhance the quality and accessibility of education for CWSN. ICFAI University Tripura serves as the lead partner institution.

In its first year, the project deployed
- 70 Special Educators (SEs) across 100 schools
- 4 Mentors
- 1 Project Coordinator

Objectives of the Project
- Promote inclusive practices in mainstream schools.
- Build the capacity of educators and administrators.
- Strengthen community engagement and awareness.

Roles and Responsibilities of Special Educators
- Work with dropout students and facilitate re-enrolment.
- Provide individualized and group support through resource rooms.
- Conduct awareness programmes for stakeholders.
- Integrate performing arts in learning.
- Implement the ADIP Scheme (Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids/Appliances).
- Establish support systems for effective inclusive education.

Literature Review
The global movement towards inclusive education has been shaped by several international and national milestones:
1. **Inclusive Education in India (2007):** Highlights the need to educate children with disabilities alongside their peers within the same institutions.
2. **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006):** Ensures the full and equal enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities.
3. **The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994):** A landmark declaration promoting policy reforms for inclusive education globally.
4. **Saksham Tripura Initiative (Tripura Tribune, 2021) [8]:** Launched to ensure holistic development of CWSN in Tripura, with ICFAI University as a key partner.
5. **AICTE Saksham Scholarship Scheme (2018–19):** Financial support for differently-abled students in technical education.
6. **Government of India, Project Saksham (2017):** A technology-driven project strengthening IT systems for GST implementation (distinct from Saksham Tripura).
7. **Role of Teacher Educators in Inclusive Education (IJSRD, 2020):** Underlines the importance of teacher preparation in fostering inclusive classrooms.

Materils and Methods
Objectives of the Study
- To examine the impact of the Saksham Tripura Project on inclusive education, with a focus on special educators.
- To analyse the project's effectiveness in enhancing readiness and participation among CWSN.

Research Design
- **Method:** Survey-based
- **Tool:** Rating scale comprising 30 items

Sample
- **Population:** 100 Special Educators under the Saksham Tripura Project
- **ICFAI University Tripura:** 70 Special Educators deployed
- **Respondents:** 30 Special Educators under ICFAI University Tripura

Inclusion Criteria: B.Ed. (Special Education) qualified teachers willing to participate.

Exclusion Criteria: General and undergraduate teachers.

Results
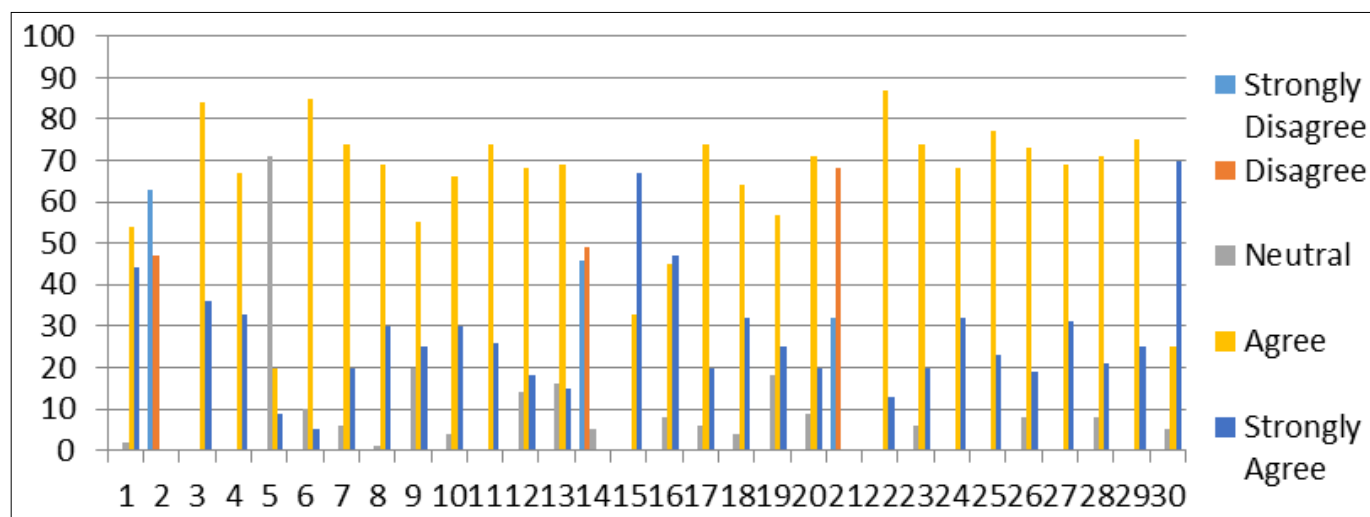
Fig 1: Findings from the survey indicate a generally positive perception of inclusive education among special educators.

Selected highlights include
- **Educational preparedness:** 98% agreed/strongly agreed that their background prepared them to teach CWSN.
- **Segregation vs inclusion:** 100% disagreed/strongly disagreed that CWSN should only be placed in special classes.
- **Collaboration:** 84% strongly agreed they provide suggestions to regular teachers about CWSN.
- **Curriculum adaptation:** 100% agreed/strongly agreed they adapt curriculum for CWSN.
- **Resource constraints:** 95% reported inadequacies in teaching-learning materials.
- **Capacity building:** 94% agreed/strongly agreed they require additional training outside their specialization.
- **Assistive technology:** 94% reported training CWSN to

use assistive technology.
- **Social participation:** 95% strongly agreed/agreed that CWSN should participate in school events.

Overall, the responses suggest strong endorsement of inclusive practices, though resource availability and training gaps remain critical challenges.

Discussion

Education is a fundamental right, particularly for children with special needs. The principle of *"Education for All"* has gained momentum in India, with inclusive education seeking to dismantle discriminatory barriers and ensure equitable access.

The Saksham Tripura Project demonstrates significant progress in this direction through
- Deployment of trained special educators.
- Emphasis on collaboration between regular and special educators.
- Curriculum adaptation and the promotion of assistive technology.
- Parental and community engagement.

However, challenges persist, including limited resources, training needs beyond specialization areas, stigma, and attitudinal barriers among some stakeholders.

Challenges Encountered
- Attitudinal resistance among some educators.
- Limited awareness of the project.
- Prevailing stigma and lack of sensitivity.
- Difficulty in obtaining responses for surveys.
- Barriers in interpreting questionnaires.

Conclusion

The Saksham Tripura Project has emerged as a transformative initiative in advancing inclusive education in Tripura. Through specialized educator deployment, individualized education planning, infrastructure support, and awareness campaigns, the project has successfully aligned itself with the goals of *NEP 2020* and *Samagra Shiksha*.

Nonetheless, sustained efforts in evaluation, capacity-building, and community participation are crucial for ensuring long-term success and scalability.

Recommendations
- Strengthen continuous professional development for special educators.
- Increase community and parental involvement through workshops and awareness drives.
- Enhance coordination across departments for better implementation.
- Expand the reach of the project to more schools across Tripura.
- Conduct regular training for general educators to foster collaborative teaching practices.
- Promote use of assistive technologies and inclusive teaching-learning materials.

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