

**Equity in Access and Participation in Senior Secondary
Education: An Analysis of Select Indicators in Sikkim**

A Thesis Submitted

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Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

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Declaration

The study "**Equity in Access and Participation in Senior Secondary Education: An Analysis of Select Indicators in Sikkim**" is a presentation of my original work. Whatever the contributions of the others are involved, I have tried to acknowledge them and every effort has been made to indicate it through the citations.

The work was done under the guidance of **Dr. Yodida Bhutia** (Head, Department of Education, Sikkim University) and under the joint supervisor **Dr. Subhash Misra**, Assistant Professor BBAU, Lucknow at Department of Education, Sikkim University.



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All the assistance and help received during the course of investigation has been duly acknowledged by him.

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*‘मूकं करोति वाचालं पंगुं लंघयते गिरिम् ।
यत्कृपा तमहं वन्दे परमानन्दमाधवम् ॥*

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CHAPTER – 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The historical development of India can be seen through the three distinct phases and are ancient India, medieval India and modern India. The development of education in India can be traced back to the ancient Vedic civilization where the education was based on the idea of inherited merit. “The concept of ‘inherited merit’ relates access to higher education to the circumstances of birth (being born to prosperous parents), and access to higher education becomes the preserve of favoured social groups’ (Varghese, Sabharwal, & Malish, 2016)”. The idea of inherited merit in education acted as a barrier for education for the different ethnic communities in ancient India as the education became a privilege for a selected few upper caste. The medieval India also had the same structure of education system when the education was the preserve of the few elite communities. However, in the modern India, there has been a paradigm shift in the Indian education. The idea of ensuring equitable opportunity for educational access and universal inclusion has been the focal issue. Our country being poised with astonishing demographic structure has still witnessed a positive growth in the literacy rate thereby leading to the educational transformation. This proves to the fact that education is one of the basic necessities for the social and economic development of a country. It is a recognized fact that the education helps to gain the knowledge, it also helps in economic development of a country. “Education is the most important factor influencing job entry and salaries of those recruited. In other words, education plays an important role in promoting growth in national income and

an equally important role in the sharing (distribution) of the national income through employment and earnings. When educational opportunities and attainment are unequally distributed, they become important source of inequalities, and it requires corrective public policies” (Varghese, Sabharwal, & Malish, 2016).

Despite the educational development in the country, it is also a fact that various forms of inequities in education are still evident in society. India is a home to the astonishing demography, with a huge diversity in terms of our ethnicity, socio-economic status, language and geographical background. It is also a recognized fact that still a large number of students in our country are the first generation learners who have their own expectation. As the large number of population still resides in the rural areas or poor urban area, the low socio-economic factor has the cause of inequity. Similarly the patriarchal society has projected difficulty for the girl child thereby leading to inequity in access and in order to remove inequity of them, various policies have made special programmes and incentives to cover the gender gap. The gap in ethnicity hasn't completely failed in the modern India too. These issues on equity are the matter of concern which calls for in depth and exhaustive study.

1.2 SECONDARY AND SENIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION IN INDIA

The school educational structure of India comprises of 5+3+2+2 pattern wherein first 5 years comprises of primary education, next three years comprises the elementary level, followed by two years of secondary education and the next two years comprises of the senior secondary level of education. However, the new National Policy on Education 2020 (Government of India, 2020) envisages that the existing 10+2 structure in education will be modified with a new pedagogical and curricular structuring of 5+3+3+4 covering ages 3-18. The new pedagogical structure as per the

policy document comprises of 4 stages namely foundational curricular structure, preparatory structure, middle structure and secondary structure. The foundational curricular structure (5 years) comprising first three years of anganwadi /pre-school/ Balvatika and next two years for classes 1 and 2. The preparatory structure comprises of 3 years from classes 3 to 5, similarly the middle structure comprises of 3 years from class 6-8 and the secondary stage comprises of 4 years from class 9 to 12 (Government of India, 2020). According to the new educational policy, the existing structure of senior secondary education has been now considered a null and void. Further the 'children in the age group of 3-6 years were considered in pre-primary and primary education in the earlier structure of education are now not covered under the formal education as the first year of formal schooling of the learners will now start after they attain 6 years of age' (Government of India, 2020).

The senior secondary education which has now been amalgamated under the secondary education plays a prominent place in the Indian education as it is a gateway to professional life. This stage leads to the specialization in the subject that can be pursued at the later stage in the college and the university level. The senior secondary education is also a gateway to the professional education wherein the learners can chose the professional and specialized courses that interest them. The senior secondary education can also be said as the midway between secondary and higher education. This stage is crucial with regard to education as it is the stage where pure and applied subjects are focused rather than the core subjects and the core curriculum. It is the transitional stage between basic education and the further higher education thus this stage can is also marked with the diversion of school curriculum.

The curriculum of the new education can be seen in two phases for secondary education. Now the structure secondary education comprises two phases i.e (phase one for classes 9 and 10 and phase two for the existing classes 11 and 12) according to the new educational policy the curriculum in the secondary stage will ‘comprise of four years of multi-disciplinary study, building on the subject oriented pedagogical and curricular style of the middle stage, but with a greater depth, greater critical thinking, greater attention to life aspiration, and greater flexibility and student choice of subjects’ (Government of India, 2020).

The significance of completing the senior secondary education has a greater prominence in the present context as it is the senior secondary education that determines the career of the students. The current structure of India’s school education is structured in 10+2 design, comprising of the 10 years of secondary level schooling and two years of senior secondary schooling, wherein the student is allowed to choose their streams and subjects only after the secondary schooling. It clearly symbolizes the importance of the senior secondary education in India. After world war II UNESCO was committed to building mass and then fundamental education. Later, in one of the most erudite and conceptually sound attempts to foster access, it advanced the notion of lifelong education as a “master concept” or educational reform (Boshier, 2006). This notion of the UNESCO can be said as the basic benchmark of the idea of fostering equity in access in education.

The access to education in India was initially based on the idea of inherited merit. ‘The concept of inherited merit relates access to education to the circumstances of birth’ (being born to prosperous parents) (Varghese, Sabharwal, & Malish, 2018). It is thus an undeniable fact that the access to education in the early Indian context just

rested on the principle of the selective inclusion, thereby creating a vast gap among the elite and the economically weaker sections of the society in the context of access to education. The studies have also revealed that the access policy in higher education is rested in three principles- inherited merit, equality of rights and equality of opportunity Clancy and Goastellec in (Varghese, Sabharwal, & Malish, 2018). These three basic principles of ensuring access in education created a huge disparity in the society thereby creating the double deprivation to the marginalized sections of the society. The inequity in access in higher education can be linked with the inequity in the secondary and senior secondary education as the inequity in the preceding levels have a direct influence over the succeeding levels in educational setting. The secondary and senior secondary education is no different in terms of the principles as stated above as the inequalities in the higher education is evident as a result of the existing inequities in the lower levels of education. The history of Indian education reflects that the inequity with regard to access in early education has been rested on various personal and social factors as- gender, socio economic class, ethnicity, religion, region, caste which has created the hindrance in the harmonious development of the society.

1.3 CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS (WITH REGARD TO EQUITY IN ACCESS)

The constitution is considered as a basic legal document of a country. Indian Constitution being the largest document has a special provision with regard to equity in access in education.

- **Article 15**

Article 15 of our constitution prohibits the discrimination by the state on account of the race, religion, sex and place of birth. This article thereby protects the rights for the girls and other minority groups for the access to the basic public priorities. Clause 3 and 4 of the article 15 gives the message loud and clear about the prohibition of discrimination against women and the socially and economically backward or the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes. The clause 3 and 4 reads “Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children’ ‘ Nothing in article or in clause 2 of article 29 (No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the state or receiving aid out of the state funds on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them) shall prevent the state from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes (Government of India, 2021).”

- **Article 16**

Article 16 mentioned the equality of opportunity in terms of public employment. Being incorporated in the fundamental right, this article also provides an important impetus for the women and the minorities as the article strictly prohibits the discrimination based on gender, place of birth, religion and ethnicity in terms of the public employment in any office. Thus the constitution of India provides an elusive and exhaustive arrangement of providing equity in access in education and equality of opportunity in education and employment opportunities.

- **Article 29**

The educational rights of the marginalized communities or the minorities can also be seen vide- Article 29, clause one and two that highlights “ (1)Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same. (2) No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them” (Government of India, 2021).

This article also provides a message loud and clear that our fundamental right safeguards the right of admission for equitable access in education for the religious, cultural or linguistic minorities of our country. In a country with huge demography and diverse culture like India, safeguarding the educational aspiration of the girls or women is also an important concern. India being the largest democracy provides an equitable framework for the girls with regard to the educational access.

- **Article 30**

The another distinct feature of the constitution of India in ensuring the Equity in education is by providing certain educational rights for the minorities in India, clause 1 of article 30 of our constitution provides a special arrangement for the minorities based on religion or language to establish the educational institution of their choice. The clause 2 of the article also states that ‘The state shall not, in granting an aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language’

(Government of India, 2021). Article 30 thus provides an equitable opportunity to the minorities in terms of the access in education in India.

- **Article 45**

Incorporated in the Directive Principles of the state policy, Article 45 of our constitution states –‘The State shall endeavor to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years’ (Government of India, 2021). Article 45 of our constitution being incorporated in the Directive Principles of the State Policy (DPSP) was a non-justiciable right, however it can be said that the basic premise idea of equity in educational access was enshrined through this article. This article has now been replaced by the Right to Education act 2002. Right to education being considered as a fundamental right (amended under 86 amendment, Act 2002). According to this article, the Indian constitution directs the state to provide the free and compulsory education to all children of the age 6-14 years of age in such a manner as the state may, by law determine. The right to education act has been incorporated under the fundamental rights under the Indian constitution which talks of Universal access to education by providing an arrangement to provide free and compulsory education among the children aged 6-14 and this is the basic pillar of ensuring equity in access in Education.

1.4 POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

In the Indian context, the development of the secondary education post-Independence can be traced back to 1952-1953. The first commission after Independence which laid

emphasis on the secondary and senior secondary education is the Secondary Education Commission, popularly known as the Mudaliar commission (1952-53).

1.4.1 Mudaliar commission

The Government of India constituted the commission under the chairmanship of Dr. A. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar to examine the status of the secondary education and the needs and challenges faced by the schools in the country. The Mudaliar commission states -

‘We have to bear in mind the principle already noted that Secondary education is complete unit by itself and not merely a preparatory stage; that at the end of this period, the student should be in a position, if he wishes, to enter on the responsibilities of life and take up some useful vocation. The age at which the child is to begin his Secondary education and the age up to which it should be continued is, therefore, a matter of considerable importance. It is now generally recognised that the period of Secondary education covers the age group of about 11 to 17 years. Properly planned education, covering about 7 years, should enable the school to give a thorough training in the courses of study taken up by the student and also help him to attain a reasonable degree of maturity in knowledge, understanding and judgment which would stand him in good stead in later life’ (Ministry of Education, 1965).

The commission provided a comprehensive recommendation about the structure of secondary and senior secondary education, technical education, scholarship for the students, examination pattern, administration, three language formula, comprehensive curriculum, methods of teaching, guidance and counseling, financial issues and structures and the inspection of the schools. In terms of the organizational structure,

the committee recommended school education in three stages as – Junior basic stage, middle basic stage and higher secondary stage. The commission also recommended special home science subjects for girls in the co-education schools however with no distinction of education for the girls and the boys. The commission recommended a diversified curriculum in the high school or higher secondary stages with some core subjects made common for all. This diversified curriculum was provided for the interest of the students. The recommendations of the commission reads –

“1. Under the new organisational structure, education should commence after four or five years' period of primary or Junior Basic education and should include (a) the Middle or Senior Basic or Junior Secondary stage of three years, and (b) the Higher Secondary stage of four years.

2. During the transitional stage, the existing High schools and the Higher Secondary schools should function on the lines laid down.

3. The present Intermediate stage should be replaced by the Higher Secondary stage which should be of four years' duration, one year of the present Intermediate being included in it.

4. As a consequence of the preceding recommendations the first degree course in the University should be of three years' duration.

5. For those who pass out of the High school there should be provision for a pre University course of one year, during which period the scheme of studies should be planned with due regard to the needs of the degree or the professional course to be taken by the students and special emphasis should be placed on the quickening of

intellectual interests, training in method of study at college and the study of English so long as it continues to be the medium of instruction at the University.

6. Admission to professional colleges should be open to those who have completed the Higher Secondary course, or have taken the one year's pre-University course' (Ministry of Education, 1965).

Thus secondary education commission can be said as the first education commission in India which paved a way to cater the learner's interest area in the curriculum structure.

1.4.2 Committee on Rural Education (1957)

The focus on rural educational can be seen through the recommendations made by the Committee on rural education (1957), the committee was constituted under the chairmanship of Shri B. Mukherjee. The committee recommended that -

'The Post-Basic Schools should form a part of higher education above the Senior Basic Schools...The education given in the Higher Secondary and the Post-Basic Schools located in rural areas should give to young men and women the necessary academic attainment, a proper knowledge of the language, humanities and general science as will give them a progressive outlook and an awakening mind, a good acquaintance with rural conditions and understanding of rural problems so that they can see the opportunity for service to the rural people which is created by the Community Development Programme and have understanding of the process of democratic planning and development of the country that we have undertaken' (Aggarwal, 2010).

The committee further recommended on providing agricultural education as the knowledge of agricultural education was a felt need in the rural society.

1.4.3 The National Education Committee on Women's Education

The National Education Committee on Women's Education (1957-59) can be seen as a first committee on education post-independence which has been constituted to understand the nature of education exclusively for girls at different stages of schooling. The committee also highlighted some key areas for girl education at the rural level.

This committee provided a special recommendation to address the concern of women education in the country and emphasized that girls education should be prioritized. The committee further recommended 'opening more of the co-education schools at the middle secondary education and opening more of the separate schools for the girls at the secondary level' (Ministry of Education, 1959)'. The committee also recommended free education for girls up to the middle stage and also highlighted on providing the adequate and subsidized transporting facilities for the girls to ensure their access to the middle school.

1.4.4 Education Commission (1964-66)

The comprehensive structure of education and the educational re-construction is evident in the Education Commission (1964-66), the commission which is popularly known as the Kothari commission. This education commission was appointed by government of India in 1964 under the chairmanship of Prof. D.S Kothari who was then the chairman of University Grants Commission (UGC). It was the Kothari commission which recommended a new structure in school education by doing away

with the existing structure. Point 2.14 (volume 1) of this voluminous document clearly defines the new prescribed structure of school education. The policy recommends

‘- a pre-school stage of one to three years; - a primary stage of seven or eight years divided into two sub-stages-a lower primary stage of four or five years and a higher primary stage of three years - a lower secondary or high school stage of three or two years in general education or of one to three years in vocational education; - a higher secondary stage of two years of general education or one to three years of vocational education; - a higher education stage having a course of three years or more for the first degree, followed by courses of varying durations for the second or research degrees’ (Kothari, 1970).

The Kothari commission (in Chapter VI, Volume -1, and Page 181-239) also focusses elaborately on the idea of equalization of educational opportunities for the school education through the various aspects –‘tuition fees and other private costs, scholarships, education for the handicapped children, regional imbalances in education, education of girls and education of scheduled tribes’ (Ministry of Education, 1966).

1.4.5 The National Committee on 10+2+3 Educational Structure (1973)

The National Committee on 10+2+3 Educational Structure (1973) highlighted the practical approach of the curriculum to be implemented for the uniform 10+2+3 educational structure for schools in India. The committee recommended the following curriculum to be included in the new classes IX and X (Aggarwal, 2010)-

- i. Teaching of Language(s)
- ii. Modern Mathematics

- iii. Sciences
- iv. Social Sciences
- v. Moral Education
- vi. Physical Education
- vii. Craft or Trades

The commission further recommended introduction of the latest curriculum and incorporation of the academic and vocational stream in the senior secondary level.

1.4.6 The Committee on the Status of Women (1971-74)

The committee on the status of women (1971-74) constituted under the chairmanship of Dr. Phulrenu Guha can be said that it is the second committee in the history of Indian education system that focus exclusively on the comprehensive examination and recommendation for the status women Education in India. The committee recommended a common general course of education in the secondary education for both boys and girls. The committee also recommended the ‘freedom choice of vocational and technical education among the girls and as per their own conveniences’ (Department of Education and Social Welfare, 1974). This committee for the first time recommended free education for the girls up to the secondary level. The committee also recommended the introduction of more vocational areas of education for the girls which can create ample job opportunities for the girls.

1.4.7 The National Policy on Education (1986)

The National Policy on Education (1986) put forward the issues of educational equity, reorganization of education at different stages and management of education as the guiding forces for their recommendations. The focus of the National Policy on

Education was to provide a universal access to education ‘of comparable quality’ (Aggarwal, 2010) to all the students up to a certain stage of schooling. The commission also envisaged a common educational structure. The commission also recommended the curriculum and educational programmes strictly as per the idea of secularism as ushered by the constitution of India. The policy emphasized the ‘removal of disparities and to equalize opportunities by attending the specific needs of those who have been denied equality so far’ (Department of Education, 1998). The emphasis was also made for the education of the women and the education of the Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes.

1.4.8 National Education Policy 2020

Nearly after three decades (28 years), a comprehensive educational policy was framed in India. The National Education Policy 2020 can be said as a comprehensive policy that focusses on all the stages and levels of education. The press release of the Ministry of Education highlights 34 key areas out of which some of the key areas with regard to secondary and senior secondary education have been highlighted below:

‘ Ensuring Universal Access at All Levels of schooling from pre-primary school to Grade 12, New Curricular and Pedagogical Structure (5+3+3+4); No hard separations between arts and sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams Emphasis on promoting multilingualism and Indian languages; The medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language. Equitable and inclusive education - Special emphasis given on Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs); A separate Gender Inclusion fund and

Special Education Zones for disadvantaged regions and groups; Increasing GER in higher education to 50%' (Ministry of Education, 2020).

The new education policy has led much emphasis on the issues of equity, access and universal inclusion in the school education. The policy clearly highlights that 'Education is the single greatest tool for achieving social justice and equality. Inclusive and equitable education - while indeed an essential goal in its own right - is also critical to achieving an inclusive and equitable society in which every citizen has the opportunity to dream, thrive, and contribute to the nation' (Government of India, 2020). Thus this policy ensures that no child is left behind and deprived of basic schooling on the basis of their religion, race, sex, and place of birth or their economic background.

1.5 INTERNATIONAL POLICY ON EQUITY, ACCESS AND QUALITY IN EDUCATION

Equity, access and quality in education are the catchphrases that have been evolving in the educational policy documents not just in India, however, these phrases are of the global concern. Various international organizations have been vocal about the issues of equity, access and quality in education. Global Education First Initiative, a five year initiative launched by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon prioritizes to expand and improve access and quality education.

'The Global Education First Initiative focuses on three priorities: First, putting every child in school. The global community pledged to achieve universal primary education by 2015...Second, improving the quality of learning. Access to education is critical. But it is not enough. Millions of children go through school and come out

without basic literacy and numeracy...Third, fostering global citizenship. Education is much more than an entry to the job market. It has the power to shape a sustainable future and better world' (UNINDIA, 2021).

The Global Education First Initiative has listed the above priority areas for the education however it has also been focusing on social cohesion and environmental care.

The study commissioned by the Education International (EI) Research Institute University of Exeter which had carried out the case studies Canada, New Zealand, Ireland, England, Poland and Zambia have focused on elusive equities issues. The Union's policy statement reveals that-

'Five unions had no specific equity policy formulated. The majority of unions had wide ranging policies that included broad principles of equity, and some (such as UK and Australia) had more detailed policy statements that focused on specific areas for teachers and children' (Wood, Levinson, Postlethwaite, & Black, 2011).

According to the report, Statement on Equity as highlighted by the Australian Education Union, states that Australian Education Union (AEU) supports public schooling. The public schools are open to all the students and their special needs are always taken care of. Regardless of the ethnicity, sexual preferences, social status, economic status and other aspects, the specific needs of all the students are catered by the schools. The report also mentions that – AEU supports curriculum, pedagogical and educational practices that lead to greater access and equity for all students (Wood, Levinson, Postlethwaite, & Black, 2011).

The Sustainable Development Goals also known as ‘Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ is a resolution under the United Nations Resolution under the section A/RES/70/1 of 25 September 2015 (Knowledge Hub, 2021). This resolution highlights some important areas with regard to the important areas of education like – quality education, gender equality, and reducing inequalities. The agendas state –

‘Realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the Goals and targets. The achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities. Women and girls must enjoy equal access to quality education, economic resources and political participation as well as equal opportunities with men and boys for employment, leadership and decision making at all levels. We will work for a significant increase in investments to close the gender gap and strengthen support for institutions in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women at the global, regional and national levels. All forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls will be eliminated, including through the engagement of men and boys. The systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the Agenda is crucial’ (United Nations, 2021).

The sustainable development goal thus emphasizes the empowerment of women through the creation of the opportunities for them. The agenda further states –

‘We commit to providing inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels – early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary, technical and vocational training. All people, irrespective of sex, age, race or ethnicity, and persons with disabilities,

migrants, indigenous peoples, children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations, should have access to lifelong learning opportunities that help them to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society'(United Nations, 2021).

The agendas of the United Nations on 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' thus shows the commitment of ensuring inclusive, equitable and quality education at all levels.

1.6 VISIONS AND OBJECTIVES OF RASHTRIYA MADHYAMIK SIKSHA ABHIYAN

Rashtriya Madhyamik Siksha Abhiyan (RMSA) is a flagship programme on secondary education in India launched by the Ministry of Human Resource Development Department, Government of India in the year 2009. The main aim of the RMSA is to ensure access to secondary education and ensure the quality education. 'It is envisaged to achieve an enrolment rate of 75% from 52.26% in 2005-06 at secondary stage of implementation of the scheme by providing a secondary school within a reasonable distance of any habitation' (Department of School Education & Literacy, MHRD, 2021). Some other objectives laid down by the RMSA are – 'improving quality of education imparted at secondary level through making all secondary schools conform to prescribed norms, removing gender, socio-economic and disability barriers, providing universal access to secondary level education by 2017, i.e., by the end of 12th Five Year Plan and achieving universal retention by 2020' (Department of School Education & Literacy, MHRD, 2021). The policy has also highlighted some special strategies to ensure that the planned objectives are met with respect to the school education. For ensuring the access and participation in the

school education, special strategies were highlighted which includes- improving the resources and the infrastructure inside the class, ensuring extra support for girls and other marginalized sections of the society, additional classrooms, facilities for library, computers and laboratories, adequate toilet and water facilities. Among the strategies laid down by RMSA for quality education, the following have considered more important –

‘School Grant, (b) Minor Repair, (c) Teachers training, (d) Salary of teaching & non-teaching staff in new and existing schools, (e) Setting up of EduSat in Schools, (f) Excursion trip for students, (g) Study tour outside the State, (h) Performing arts, (i) Maths laboratory kit, (j) Book Fair, (k) Science fair, (k) Language and Digital Communication Laboratory, (l) Orientation Programmes for head teachers and Educational Planners, (m) Sports material for schools, (n) Self defence training for students especially girls, (o) Special teaching for weaker students, and (p) Guidance and counselling. The interventions for addressing equity included: (a) Activity for Maa-Beti Mela, (b) Transport facilities for girls, (c) SC/ST Oriented activities (Shiksha Mahasabha, traditional game meet, traditional art/craft/ dance competition, (d) Interaction with stakeholders and chain agents in SC/ST/Minority/Tea-Tribe dominated areas, and (e) Retention derive for tea-tribes and minority girls' student’ (Department of School Education & Literacy, MHRD, 2021).

The policies and the implementation of RMSA have created a profound impact on the universalization of the secondary education in our country. It is an undeniable fact that RMSA is a comprehensive policy document that focuses on quality, equity and access in education with regard to the secondary education in the country.

1.7 SAMAGRAH SIKSHA ABHIYAN

Samagrah Siksha Abhiyan, an integrated scheme for school education has been implemented as a centrally sponsored scheme under the Ministry of Human Resource Department (MHRD). The basic idea regarding the implementation of the Scheme was to attain a convergence between the two schemes launched by MHRD as two separate schemes – Sarva Siksha Abhiyan and Rashtriya Madhyamik Siksha Abhiyan before the implementation of the of the Samagrah Siksha Abhiyan. As stated in its draft document under chapter 1 and section 1.2.4,

‘The Major objectives of the Scheme are provision of quality education and enhancing learning outcomes of the students; Bridging Social and Gender Gaps in the School Education; Ensuring equity and inclusion at all levels of School Education: Ensuring minimum standards in schooling provisions; Promoting Vocationalisation of education ; Support states in implementation of Right of children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE)Act, 2009;and Strengthening and up-gradation of State Councils of Education Research and Training...’ (Department of School Education, MHRD).

The basic premise of the policy document rests in the principle of ensuring access to all levels of schooling for the children of age 4-18 years. The draft of the policy document chapter 2 focuses on School access, infrastructure, development and retention. The chapter highlights some important issues- universalizing and expanding quality school education, ensuring equity in access to the schools for all the marginalized and deprived sections of the society, ensuring the availability of adequate infrastructural facilities in the school, focus on achieving 100 per cent retention from pre-school to the senior secondary school and school area mapping.

The scheme has focused on all the levels of schooling and has suggested specific commitments at all levels of schooling. In terms of secondary and senior secondary education, the draft of the policy document in chapter 2, under section 2.5.1 specifically highlights that ‘The scheme is committed to provide universal access to quality education at the secondary and senior secondary stage’ (Department of School Education, MHRD). Apart from the commitment of universal access to education, the scheme also envisages to strengthen the existing schools with emphasis on the increase of additional sections in the school. The scheme also provides various arrangements on opening up of the new Schools with the provision of additional rooms with adequate infrastructures. The section 2.5.8 of the scheme clearly mentions that ‘The scheme would also support strengthening of existing secondary and senior secondary schools’ (Department of School Education, MHRD). Further emphasis on gap assessment exercise with the help of the UDISE data and school mapping exercises.

1.8 PROGRESS OF SECONDARY AND SENIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION IN INDIA

There has been remarkable progress in senior and senior secondary education in India post-independence. Educational data reveals that the enrolment rates in the schools have made a remarkable change in the past few years. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India data reveals that the total enrolment of students in the high/senior secondary schools during 1950 -1951 was 15 lakhs in the country out of which 13 lakhs comprised of the boys enrolment and the two lakh comprised of the girls. The figure saw a whooping change in the next decade itself where in 1960-1961 saw the increase of enrolment of students to a total of 34

lakhs where 27 lakhs enrolment comprised of boys and seven lakh comprised of girls in the country at the high and the senior secondary level. There has been a paradigm shift in the enrolment in the students in all the different levels of schooling. The following table shows the enrolment in Secondary school from 2010 to 2016.

Table 1

Enrolment in Secondary Schools (since 2010 till 2016)

Year	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Total	31852309	34052581	34640103	37296683	38301599	39145052
Enrolment						

Source: Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development & DISE, NUEPA (School Education since 2012-13)

The above data reveals that the enrolment in the secondary schools in India has shown a remarkable change for the past six years. The total enrolment in the secondary schools in the year 2010-11 was 31852309, the data shows an increase of enrolment to 34052581 in the year 2011-12, further increase to 34640103 in the year 2012-13, in the year 2013-14 the total enrolment in the secondary school was 37296683, the enrolment further rose to 38301599 in the year 2014-15 and per the last data on enrolment in secondary level the enrolment was 39145052 an all-time high in the year 2015-16.

The data on the senior secondary level show the same pattern in school education which is reflected in the table below:

Table 2

Enrolment in Senior Secondary Schools (2010 till 2016)

Year	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Total	19468950	21007565	19923782	22314314	23501798	24735397
Enrolment						

Source: Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development & DISE, NUEPA (School Education since 2012-13)

The above data reveals that the enrolment in the senior secondary schools in India has shown a remarkable change for the past six years. The total enrolment in the secondary schools in the year 2010-11 was 19468950, the data shows an increase of enrolment to 21007565 in the year 2011-12, the data reveals that there was a slight decrease in the enrolment in the year 2012-2013 wherein the total enrolment in all the schools was 19923782, in the year 2013-14 the total enrolment in the secondary school was 22314314, the enrolment further rose to 23501798 in the year 2014-15 and per the last data on enrolment in secondary level the enrolment was 24735397 an all-time high in the year 2015-16.

Education in India has witnessed many policy reforms since independence. The National Policies on education came into existence in the year 1968, 1986 (Plan of Action 1992) and the New Educational Policy 2020. These policy perspectives have highlighted major reforms in the educational structure in the senior as well as the secondary level schools. It is well evident that there has been a remarkable change in the senior secondary and secondary education since the independence in the country.

1.9 OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL EDUCATION IN SIKKIM

Nestled in the north eastern India, Sikkim is a beautiful and the 22nd state of Indian union. The state of Sikkim became democratic state in 1975. “Sikkim was under the dynastic rule for a long time. The Namgyal dynasty ruled Sikkim from the year AD 1642 to 1973. In 1890, Sikkim became a British protectorate and was gradually granted more sovereignty over the next three decades. In 1947, when India became independent, a similar democratic aspiration in Sikkim had found its echo when Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru favoured monarchy to continue with protectorate status with Government of India...On May 16, 1975, Sikkim became the 22nd State of Indian Union with the notification declaring all the Sikkim Subjects registered in Sikkim Subjects Regulation Register as Indian citizens” (Drall, 2013). With a mere 6 lakh population, there are three major ethnic communities inhabiting in Sikkim – The Nepalese, Bhutias and the Lepchas. The census of India 2011, revealed that the density of Sikkim is 86 per square Kilometer. ‘Its population of Scheduled caste (Kami, Damai, Lohar, Sarki and Majhi) is 27,165 and Scheduled Tribe (Lepcha and Bhutia including Chmubipa, Dophthapa, Dukpa, Kagatey, Sherpa, Tibetan, Tromopa and Yolmo) Population is 1,11,405...The Population of Sikkim is of multi-ethnic and can be broadly classified into Tribal and Non-Tribal groups. Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis are the main inhabitants of the State. The people from plain mostly involved in Trade and Services represents a marginal group’ (Gurung, 2020).

1.9.1 Demographic Indicators of North East- India

The demographic indicators north eastern states of India are as under:

Table 3

Demographic Indicators of North East- India

Sl. No	State	Population	Increase	Area/KM ²	Density	Sex- ratio
1	Tripura	3,673,917	14.84 %	10,486	350	960
2	Meghalaya	2,966,889	27.95 %	22,429	132	989
3	Manipur	2,855,794	24.50 %	22,327	128	985
4	Nagaland	1,978,502	-0.58 %	16,579	119	931
5	Arunachal Pradesh	1,383,727	26.03 %	83,743	17	938
6	Mizoram	1,097,206	23.48 %	21,081	52	976
7	Sikkim	610,577	12.89 %	7,096	86	890

Source: <https://www.census2011.co.in>

The above table reveals that population of Sikkim is lowest i.e. 610577 as compared to other six North Eastern states. Sikkim has third highest density among the North-East states as the state has lowest area i.e 7096 sq kms.

1.9.2 Literacy rate among North Eastern states of India

The literacy rate among the North Eastern states of India are as follows:

Table 4

The Literacy Rate among the North Eastern States of India

Sl. No	State	Literacy Rate
1	Tripura	74.04
2	Meghalaya	74.43
3	Manipur	76.94
4	Nagaland	79.55
5	Arunachal Pradesh	65.38
6	Mizoram	91.33
7	Sikkim	81.42

Source: <https://www.census2011.co.in>

The above table reveals the literacy rate among the North Eastern states of India. The literacy rate of Sikkim is 81.42 which is second highest in North East after Mizoram which is 91.33.

1.9.3 Gender wise literacy rate of Sikkim

The literacy rate of the state also shows a good figure on the available data. The data on the literacy rate is as shown below:

Table 5

Gender wise Literacy Rate of Sikkim

Category	Literacy Rate
Male	87.3
Female	76.4
Overall	82.2

Source: <https://www.census2011.co.in>

The above table highlights the literacy rate of Sikkim. As per the census data of 2011, The male literacy rate in Sikkim is 87.3 percent, female literacy rate is 76.4 percent and the overall literacy rate is 82.2 percent. The difference between male and female literacy is 10.9 which shows more number of male in Sikkim as compared to female.

1.9.4 Number of Schools in Sikkim

Sikkim also has an adequate number of the schools in respect of the total population of Sikkim. The data on the number of the schools in Sikkim is as under:

Table 6

Number of Schools in Sikkim (2016-2017)

Schools	Primary with Upper Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary	Upper Primary with Secondary & Higher Secondary	Primary with Upper Primary	Upper Primary with Secondary	Total
Total schools	80	7	138	5	230
Schools in Rural Areas	65	7	125	4	201
Schools in Urban Areas	15	0	13	1	29

Source: <http://udise.in>

The above table highlights the school by the organization. There are total 80 primary with upper primary, secondary and higher secondary schools, 7 upper primary with secondary and higher secondary schools, 138 primary with upper primary schools and 5 upper primary with secondary schools in Sikkim. With regard to the school in rural areas, there are total 65 primary with upper primary, secondary and higher secondary schools, 7 upper primary with secondary and higher secondary schools, 125 primary

with upper primary schools and 4 upper primary with secondary schools in Sikkim. However, with regard to the schools in urban areas, there are total 15 primary with upper primary, secondary and higher secondary schools, no primary with secondary and higher secondary schools, 13 primary with upper primary schools and 1 upper primary with secondary schools in Sikkim. The total numbers of schools in rural areas are more as compared to schools in urban areas.

1.9.5 Availability of Teachers (2016-2017)

The availability of the teachers in the school is also a pre requisite for ensuring better access to educational facilities for the learners. The data on availability of the teachers in the schools of Sikkim is as under:

Table 7

Availability of Teachers (2016-2017)

Schools	Primary with Upper Primary, secondary and Higher Secondary	Upper Primary with Secondary & Higher Secondary	Primary with Upper Primary	Upper Primary with Secondary	Total
Total Teachers	3364	92	2901	52	6409
Teachers in Rural Areas	2561	92	2554	42	5249
Teachers in Urban Areas	803	0	347	10	1160

Source: <http://udise.in>

The above table highlights the availability of school teachers in Sikkim. There are total 6409 teachers in Sikkim. In totality there are 3364 teachers in primary with upper primary, secondary and higher secondary schools, 92 teachers in upper primary with secondary and higher secondary schools, 2901 teachers in primary with upper primary schools and 52 teachers in upper primary with secondary schools in Sikkim. With regard to the teachers in urban areas, there are 2561 teachers in primary with upper primary, secondary and higher secondary schools, 92 teachers in primary with secondary and higher secondary schools, 2554 teachers in primary with upper primary schools and 42 teachers in upper primary with secondary schools in Sikkim. With regard to the teachers in the urban areas, there are 803 teachers in primary with upper primary, secondary and higher secondary schools, no teachers in primary with secondary and higher secondary schools, 347 teachers in primary with upper primary schools and 10 teachers in upper primary with secondary schools in Sikkim.

1.9.6 Enrolment by social category in the Senior Secondary Level

Understanding the enrolment pattern and trend in education is important to understand the level of equity in access among the minorities and the marginalized learners of the state. The data on the enrolment of the students on the basis of their caste is as under:

Table 8

Enrolment by social category in the Senior Secondary Level (2016-2017)

Sl. No.	Caste	Total Enrolment in Percentage
1	Scheduled Tribe	36.91
2	Scheduled Caste	5.23
3	Other Backward Class	40.94
4	Muslims	1.08
5	Others	15.84

Source: <http://udise.in>

The above table shows the enrolment by caste in the senior secondary level in the year 2016-2017. The table highlights, that the total enrolment of scheduled tribe students is 36.91 percent, the total enrolment of scheduled caste students is 5.23 percent, the total enrolment of other backward class students is 40.94 percent. The total enrolment of other Muslim students is 1.08 percent and the total enrolment of others students is 15.84 percent.

1.9.7 Enrolment of Girls of Different Social Category at the Senior Secondary Level

Understanding the enrolment of girls by social category is important to understand the level of equity in access in gender perspective among the minorities and the marginalized learners of the state.

Table 9

Enrolment of Girls of Different Social Category at the Senior Secondary Level (2016-2017)

Sl. No.	Caste	Girls Enrolment in Percentage
1	Scheduled Tribe	58.03
2	Scheduled Caste	52.44
3	Other Backward Class	54.08
4	Muslims	44.51

Source: <http://udise.in>

The above table shows the percentage girls enrolment among the different social categories. The scheduled tribe girls student's enrolment was 58.03 percent, scheduled caste girls student's enrolment was 52.44, other backward girls student's enrolment was 54.08 and the Muslim student's enrolment was 44.51. This indicates

the girls enrolment and ST, SC and OBC are higher than 50 percent so more girls are accessing the senior secondary schools.

1.9.8 Enrolment as per Stream & Gender at the Higher Secondary Level

The following table shows the enrolment of students in Sikkim on the basis of their streams and grade.

Table 10

Enrolment by Stream & Gender at the Higher Secondary Level (2016-2017)

Stream	Class XI	
	Boys	Girls
Arts	848	1249
Science	381	546
Commerce	284	320
Vocational	160	153
Others	11	9

Source: <http://udise.in>

The above table reveals the enrolment of students in class XI in the year 2016-2017. The table highlights that in there are 848 boys and 1249 girls in class XI in arts stream. There are 381 boys and 546 girls in class XI in the science stream. There are 284 boys and 320 girls in class XI in the commerce stream. There are 160 boys and 153 girls in class XI in the vocational stream. There are 11 boys and 9 girls in class XI I in other streams. In all the streams in class XI, the enrolment of girls are higher as compared to boys.

1.9.9 Pupil Teacher Ratio at Different Levels

The Pupil teacher ratio is also an important factor for analyzing the equity in access at the school. It shows how the teachers are able to cater the needs of the learners in education. The following table shows the pupil teacher ratio at different level among the different level and the types of the schools.

Table 11

Pupil Teacher Ratio at Different Levels (2016-2017)

	Primary with Upper Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary	Upper Primary with Secondary & Higher Secondary	Primary with Upper Primary	Upper Primary with Secondary	Total
Pupil Teacher Ratio	9	11	4	8	6

Source: <http://udise.in>

The above table highlights the pupil teacher ratio at different levels of schools in Sikkim. In primary with upper primary, secondary and higher secondary level there is one teacher for nine students similarly in upper primary with secondary and higher secondary level there is one teacher for 11 students, in primary with upper primary level there is one teacher for four students and in upper primary with secondary there is one teacher for eight students. The average pupil teacher ratio in Sikkim is six.

1.9.10 Female teachers in the school

The availability of female teachers is also important to ensure the equitable access in education for the girls. The girls feel more comfortable to share their problems with the female teachers and more female teacher brings more equitable opportunities for the learners in the schools. The following table highlights the availability of female teacher in the schools of Sikkim.

Table 12

Percentage of Female Teachers per School at Different Levels (2016-2017)

	Primary with Upper Primary Secondary and Higher Secondary	Upper Primary with Secondary & Higher Secondary	Primary with Upper Primary	Upper Primary with Secondary
Average				
Number of Teachers	55.86	20.65	52.15	40.38

Source: <http://udise.in>

The above table highlights the percentage of female teachers per school at different levels. The percentage of female teachers is 55.86 in primary with upper primary, secondary and higher secondary schools, 20.65 in upper primary with secondary and higher secondary schools, 52.15 in primary with upper primary schools and 40.38 upper primary with secondary schools in Sikkim. The data shows that there are more female teachers especially at the primary with upper primary and higher secondary

level, primary with upper primary and the overall presence of female teachers in the school is higher.

1.9.11 Student Classroom ratio at Different Levels

It is important to understand the student classroom ratio at the different levels as the student classroom ratio also reveals the status of equity in the classrooms. The table below shows the student classroom ratio at different levels in Sikkim.

Table 13

Student Classroom ratio at Different Levels (2016-2017)

	Primary with Upper Primary Secondary and Higher Secondary	Upper Primary with Secondary & Higher Secondary	Primary with Upper Primary	Upper Primary with Secondary
Student Classroom Ratio	34	21	29	32

Source: <http://udise.in>

The above table highlights the student classroom ratio at different levels. The student classroom ratio is 34 in primary with upper primary, secondary and higher secondary schools, 21 in upper primary with secondary and higher secondary schools, 29 in primary with upper primary schools and 32 upper primary with secondary schools in Sikkim.

1.9.12 Average Numbers of teachers per school at different Levels

Understanding the availability of teachers in School is also important from the point of view that the more number of teachers the better for the learners. The following table highlights the average number of teachers per school at different levels of schools in Sikkim.

Table 14

Average Numbers of teachers per school at different Levels (2016-2017)

	Primary with Upper Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary	Upper Primary with Secondary & Higher Secondary	Primary with Upper Primary	Upper Primary with Secondary
Average Number of Teachers	42	13	21	10

Source: <http://udise.in>

The above table highlights the average numbers of teachers per school at different levels. The average number of teachers is 42 in primary with upper primary, secondary and higher secondary schools, 13 in upper primary with secondary and higher secondary schools, 21 in primary with upper primary schools and 10 upper primary with secondary schools in Sikkim. This indicates that there are adequate teachers in the schools in Sikkim.

1.10 UNDERSTANDING EQUITY IN EDUCATION

The ideas of equity in education have been defined differently by educationists and researchers throughout their studies and researches. 'The terms equity and equality have been used synonymously as a catch phrase in conversations as well as in ordinary business. Both these terms may seem identical in their appearance however these two terms have different meanings. The access to education can be seen as a first step in equitable provision' (Wood, Levinson, Postlethwaite, & Black, 2011). The access is the main parameter that ensures equity in education. (O.E.C.D, 2007) defines equity as the broad area that emphasizes both equity in opportunities and equity in educational outcome. This reflects the fact that equity does not rest just in the premises of the educational opportunities but also the educational outcomes. These educational outcomes further reflect the educational choices, educational aspirations and the educational conundrums. (Patton, Shahjahan, & Osei-Kofi, 2010) explained the two terms clearly stating as equality refers to equal distribution of goods whereas equity refers to the strategies that lead to equal access and removal of known barriers for groups traditionally disadvantages in existing social processes and systems. Broadening the equity in access and participation in education are common parlances existing in the educational setups in the current scenario. It is an undeniable fact that access to education is seen as an important framework in equitable system. Ensuring the non-discriminatory system and making education accessible to all, particularly involving the marginalized sections of the society in participations in the curricular, co-curricular as well as extra-curricular activities in all the levels of institution as well as outside the institutions have become necessary to ensure their inclusion. (Willie, 1987) suggests, equity is a method or technique of distributing limited resources, opportunities, and services among many individuals in a way that is

fair. As such, equity is a property of groups, organizations, associations, and institutions. Characteristics of individuals and of groups can easily be joined to the benefit of both. (Barth, 2006) clarifies the equality and equity as - 'Equality in education is achieved when students are all treated same and have access to similar resources. Equity is achieved when all the students receive the resources they need so they graduate prepared for the success after their high school'. Equality guarantees individual the access to the similar resources as other individuals however equity guarantees the resources to the different individuals as per their own needs and requirements. However various educationists argue that the access in education is not a sole factor for determining equity. (Astin, 1990) in the study 'Educational Assessment and Educational Equity', argues with the analysis of three decades data from national samples, that the educational equity cannot be solely defined with regard to the access concept. The study observes that majority of the policymakers believe that educational equity will be attained when overall enrolments in post-secondary education reach proportionate or near-proportionate representation for ethnic minorities, poor students, and other underrepresented groups. The study stresses on the fact that until and unless the suitable opportunities are being provided to the learners the concept of equity will remain vague. (World Bank, 2006) report on equity and development have elaborated the different forms of inequalities that influence the equality of opportunity among the individuals. The report emphasized that inequalities in different dimensions can interact with, and reinforces, one another over time. It was believed that the inequalities in the health, education, income, agency and power can directly influence the equality of opportunity of an individual. The report states that the better facilities in health, education, income, agency and power lead towards more equitable opportunity of the individuals. The report

highlights different dimensions of the health facilities that needs to be taken care of for ensuring the equality of opportunities. These aspects include infant mortality rate, stunting, access to immunization, High-impact health services, disability. The report also highlighted the fact that measuring inequality in education is not easy. The report stressed that though the census and survey data in most countries can generally yield statistics but such information does not capture well the quality of education and how that might vary across individuals. The report also stressed that it is not easy to compare years of schooling across countries, because those years might mean something quite different from country to country.

1.11 PRINCIPLES OF EQUITY

Education is a fundamental need for every child. All the students need and deserve the opportunity to shape their career in the best environment. With the advancement of the technology driven education, it has now become a great challenge for the different stakeholders to provide a suitable learning environment to all the learners. The suitable learning environment with equitable access to education has become the need at the Global level. UNESCO has highlighted five principles to guide measurement of equity in Learning in education as ‘Meritocracy, Minimum Standards, Impartiality, Equality of Condition, Redistribution’(Cameron, Daga , & Outhred, 2021). The idea of meritocracy believes in the opportunities provided on the basis of the merit for the students. The merit here denotes the academic performance of the students and not the traditional idea of inherited merit. The Minimum standard denotes certain criteria that define basic measure of equity. Minimum standards have certain criteria as whether the child has been enrolled in the school, the retention level, the literacy level etc. these criteria has been referred as the minimum standard. The Idea of impartiality

highlights the differences in educational access and outcomes with respect to gender, locale, ethnicity, economic background of the learners. In order to achieve the educational equity, these differences have to be reduced. The principle also believes as these impartiality goals are the benchmarks of ensuring minimum standards. The equality of condition is also an important principle in ensuring equity in education. UNESCO further highlights ‘quality of condition approach looks at the distribution of the variable across children, regardless of their circumstances. For example, we can look at the number of years of education and chart a curve, starting with those who have the least education and ending with those who have the most. The flatter the line, the greater the equality of condition. Such measures require only one variable and provide equity indicators that are comparable over time and between countries’ (Cameron, Daga , & Outhred, 2021). The principle of redistribution states that unequal distribution of the inputs is necessary to ensure and compensate the existing inequality. The unequal distribution inputs lead to differential treatment of the stakeholders in education.

(Maiztegui-Oñate & Santibanez-Gruber, 2008) on the other hand have highlighted three principles of equity,: a) horizontal equity: equality of treatment for those who start from the same point; b) vertical equity: the series of compensatory measures directed toward minority groups or toward groups at risk of disadvantage (such as, for example, women, ethnic minorities or the less affluent social classes); c) equal education opportunity: the series of initiatives designed to ensure that everyone has the same opportunities for success, starting from different conditions and resources.

1.12 UNDERSTANDING ACCESS IN EDUCATION

The access to education has been the focal area of all the educational policy documents in this 21 century in India. Access in its simple term can be defined as - opportunity to approach or enter a place. However, in educational parlance, the access can be defined as the ability of all the people to have opportunity in educational structure. There are different forms of barriers to the access in education which can range from the social class, gender, ethnicity background or physical and mental disabilities and the geographical terrain as well. (Govinda & Bandyopadhyay, 2008) in their study 'Access to Elementary Education in India' observed that the gender disparity is one of the most complex factor affecting the goal of the Universal Elementary Education there by creating a serious concern of access in elementary school education. The study highlights that Gender discrimination invariably combines with socio-economic disadvantage to limit access to school. The Socially disadvantaged groups of our society also continue to lag behind in terms of educational progress, and a level of poverty worsens the case for these socially disadvantaged groups. Their study reveals the fact that though there has been a significant improvement of the infrastructural facilities particularly through the sarva siksha abhiyan programme. The study revealed that we still need the improvement of governance mechanisms and the promotion of active involvement of the community to improve access further. The study also revealed in their researchers that a large number of children enrolled in schools are first generation learners whose parents are illiterate, and many live below poverty lines. This as a matter of fact can be one of the worst case scenarios for our educational structure as these learners require the additional support. It was observed that the retention of the children also becomes necessary so as to ensure their progresses however the schools do very little to meet

these special needs of the learners. The study also revealed the different categories of the excluded children from the school set up. Some of these excluded learners are the working children and some are the learners with different educational needs. The study further states that though these needs are looked upon by the NGOs as well as the governments by prioritising these needs yet these areas still need an improvement. Another category of children and children who face multiple disadvantages based on poverty, economic deprivation, caste and gender-based discrimination and living in extremely difficult circumstances that are often excluded from schooling are working children. A large number of NGOs and civil society coalitions have been involved in issues of child labour and yet the problem remains intractable. The study also highlighted the fact that not much empirical work can be found to understand the nature and extent of the exclusion of the learners from schooling. (Zaidi, 2013) in the study 'Access to Secondary Education in North-Eastern States' highlighted that the facilities related to the provision of secondary education are not satisfactory in most of the north-eastern states. The study further highlighted that the over-all the position of access to secondary education is not very good in the north-eastern region, even-though the number of secondary schools per lakh population in this region is slightly higher than the national average. The study revealed that it is because of the geographical factor that influences access to schools in the north-east India. Because of hilly terrain in most of the states and scattered habitations and low density of population, access is a big issue in the north-eastern states. The study also revealed that the Schools in north-east India are generally ill-equipped as majority of the schools do not have even basic facilities available on the school premise. The north-eastern states lack properly oriented and trained educational functionaries in planning and management of the educational

programmes. This study thus reflects, the problems that the north eastern states of India do face with regard to the access to education.

(Little, 2010) in the study *Access to Elementary Education in India: Politics, Policies and Progress* have revealed that there has been progress in increasing access to elementary education in India since independence but with a very slow but steady rate. This study in fact can be related to the higher secondary education as the primary and elementary education can be considered as the bedrock for the senior secondary education. The study revealed that though the literacy rate has shown a considerable progress since the independence, however the literacy rate is still very low as compared to the world standards. The study further highlighted the importance of the equity in access so as to remove the disparities that is bound to exist between those who have the access to and who do not have access to education. Access to education and achievement in education are different. The study also forecasted that inequalities between those who have access and those who have no access will remain, and inequalities in educational achievement are likely to be enhanced. As a result, Inequalities in elementary education will gradually move up the system to join the glaring inequalities between those who currently do and do not have access to secondary and higher education thereby creating a significant influence in the educational setting. The study also mentions that the achievement of education for all at the elementary level and the reduction of inequalities in access to secondary and higher education will require considerable political will at all levels of the Indian polity.

(Lewin, 2007) in the study *Improving Access, Equity and Transitions in Education: Creating a Research Agenda* highlighted that improved access to education, broadly

defined is central to progress towards Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals. The study further stated that it is also essential for development more generalised terms. The rights to education, and their realisation through meaningful participation, are fundamental to any recent conception of development. This rights to education and the meaningful participation of the learners in the educational setting is only possible by realizing and providing the opportunities of access for the learners. The study highlighted further that the knowledge and skill that educational participation can and should confer on the next generation will contribute to poverty alleviation albeit that this alone will be a necessary but insufficient condition for progress. This further highlights the importance of access in education. The study presented the realities basic realities of the inclusion, access and participations of the learners in poor countries which leaves the questions to ponder upon development of new ways of thinking about access, an invitation to develop insightful and significant studies and reviews of the many different dimensions that will shape improved access, and an opportunity to develop and locate the discussions around improved access at many different levels: household, community, school, national, and international. Improved access requires action at all these levels and across the levels where these interact. This study signifies the importance of access as Access to basic education lies at the heart of development. Lack of education is both a part of the definition of poverty and a means for its diminution. Sustained and meaningful access to education is critical to long term improvements in productivity, the reduction of intergenerational cycles of poverty, demographic transition, preventive health care, the empowerment of women, and reductions in inequality.

(Juneja, 2010) in the study Access to What? Access, Diversity and Participation in India's schools have also highlighted the importance of access in education. While the

diversity of supply has made some form of schooling available for most children, this paper points out that it has also fostered inequalities in the quality of access. These inequalities in terms of access are as a result of the facilities in different schools. These facilities in different schools are unequal in terms of infrastructure, resources and outcomes. The study also highlights about the retention in the schools and states that, the quality of schooling available contributes to who continues in school, who leaves, who learns, who is silently excluded and who is able to transit to the next stage. This reflects that the access and retention is dependent to the infrastructural and other forms of facilities available on the schools viz. quality, physical facilities, community participation, allocation of funds, etc. Such factors within schools also place some children at risk of low achievement and dropout thereby reducing the rate of retention. The study also points out that if the elementary education system continues to create parallel schools for the poor and disadvantaged, and if all schools are not improved in terms of their quality and transitions to secondary, universal elementary education will continue to be difficult to achieve. This literally means that the access to education and the participation in education will not reach to the desired level and will degrade if the conditions and the facilities of the schools are not improved at the desired level.

(Alhassan & Mensah, 2010) in the study ‘Teachers and Access to Schooling in Ghana’ revealed out how teachers’ actions, behaviour and conduct interact to influence patterns of access to education. The study highlighted that positive relationship of the teachers with pupils shape motivations to learn and willingness to attend regularly. The study revealed that the motivations of the teachers play the crucial role for the access and the retention of the learners. The study also revealed as how the rewards and punishments are managed in schools also affects access and

participation of the learners and that the teachers' classroom interactions with pupils' have a range of impacts on exclusion or retention after initial access. Teacher absenteeism, lateness and use of corporal punishment and violence against pupils have all contributed to the incidence of dropout in basic schools. The study found that the other factors that contribute to dropout and low retention rate which include misuse of instructional hours, inadequate teaching and poor pedagogy. The teachers' lack of strategies for identifying the signs of dropping out of school and teaching of heterogeneous age groups as if they were homogeneous have all contributed to making the classroom unpleasant and not interesting for most children to continue to want to remain in school. The causes of the low retention rate and low access rates as per the findings of their study are the Paucity of record keeping, poor head teacher supervision of teacher attendance and output of work have all contributed to exacerbate school management problems which in turn make the system ineffective. It was also found that the Teacher attendance records, records of administration of corporal punishment, school log book, and pupils' registers are all poorly and inappropriately kept. The study suggested that the teachers need to be held accountable for their actions, they need to show that they are worthy of the salaries and status that their position affords. They must act as examples of good behaviour for children and families to encourage hard work, regular punctual attendance and excellence in education. (Hills & Chalaux, 2011) have highlighted though the Indian education system is experiencing the rapid growth in every spheres ranging from the reduced gender disparities, lifting enrolment and moving closer to the goal of universal enrolment at the elementary level however they believe that there are certain areas holding back the progress. The low student attendance and a high dropout rate has been the matter of concern for the Indian Education system. Their study also

reveals that enrolment rates at secondary and tertiary levels compare poorly internationally. It has also been observed that large disparities in enrolment across states persist and some official minority groups continue to be disadvantaged. The Right to Education Act, complemented by other initiatives to encourage attendance, should provide a renewed impetus to raising enrolments. However, introducing other targeted programmes, including those designed to improve the health of children, may also be needed. The study provides a backdrop of the problem of access to education among the marginalized and minorities in Indian state. They have also suggested that since the government has already implemented reforms that require private schools to allocate one quarter of places to government-funded students. Ideally, these places should be allocated to the most economically disadvantaged students. To help improve access to higher education government loan guarantees should be provided for eligible students to alleviate credit constraints.

1.13 NEED OF THE STUDY

The significance of secondary and senior secondary education can be understood with the fact that the demand of higher education in the country is ever increasing. Secondary and senior secondary education plays an important role in the educational structure of our country as it is the stage that opens up two distinct dichotomies of courses for the learners ie. higher education and the vocational education. The curriculum of primary education and the elementary education are the basic curriculum or the core curriculum in nature and are only the preparatory structure for the learners. It is only on the stage of secondary and senior secondary education a clear bifurcation of the above mentioned dichotomies is clearly visible. The secondary

and senior secondary education thus opens the opportunities for the learners to pursue the subjects and areas that interest them.

Understanding the issues of equity in access and participation in senior secondary education becomes an important aspect for understanding the significance of the education and the education policy of a country. The recent education policy programmes have emphasized highly on ensuring equity in access and participation in the secondary education. Equalizing opportunities for the secondary and senior secondary education has become significant in our country. The educational researches conducted in our country reveal that inequities in equalization of opportunities with regard to education are still visible. India being a geographically diverse, economically diverse and culturally diverse country has array challenges with regard to establishing equitable framework in the education. Sikkim a beautiful state located in the north-eastern part of the country has its own diversities and challenges. Understanding the issue of equity in access and participation in education in Sikkim is important as some of the students in Sikkim still are the first generation learners and have their own issues and problems. The society of Sikkim is patriarchal in nature and there are gender inequities still existing in the society. Majority of the population of Sikkim still belong to the rural background and also face inequities in access to various facilities. The state is located in a hilly terrain and also faces the disadvantage of unavailability of the technologies. The study therefore is significant in exploring various dimensions of equities and inequities in educational opportunities in the state.

Understanding the equity and inequity in access and participation in the secondary and senior secondary education is also important from the point of view that it also

helps us to understand the retention rates. Such study also helps us to explore on the dimension of the dropouts and the possible causes of dropouts and wastage if any.

1.14 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study on Equity in access and participation in senior secondary schools was made using the mixed method design. The study explored the equity in access based on the broad indicators i.e. gender, locale and ethnicity. The participation of students were investigated in order to study the equity in access through the lens of gender, locale and ethnicity. The quantitative and qualitative strand of the study simultaneously assisted the data to be augmented and understand equity in access with clarity.

1.15 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS USED

Equity:- in the present study, equity is defined as a fair, just and uniform opportunity given to students regardless of the gender, locale and ethnicity.

Access:- in the present study, access indicates the ability to accomplish physical presence at senior secondary level of education

Participation:- in the present study, participation is defined as engagement in the curricular and co-curricular activities among the senior secondary students, which can be at institutional level and outside the institutional level.

Senior Secondary Education- in this present study, senior secondary education corresponds to class XI and XII.

The Select Indicators: in this present research has been classified under the following heads:

- i. Broad Select Indicators : The broad select indicators to study the equity in access and participation in senior secondary education are identified under four categories:
 - a) Gender
 - b) Locale
 - c) Ethnicity
- ii. Select indicators for ensuring equity in access:
 - a) Admission
 - b) Incentives
 - c) Infrastructural facilities
 - d) Socio Economic Status
- iii. Select indicators for ensuring Participation
 - a. At institutional levels:
 - i. Curricular activities.
 - ii. Co- curricular activities

1.16 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How is the status of equity in access at the senior secondary schools of Sikkim?
2. How is the status of participation to ensure equity in access at senior secondary level in Sikkim?
3. What is the implementation mechanism for equity in access at the senior secondary education level in Sikkim?
4. How are the policy perspectives ensuring equity in access at the senior secondary level in Sikkim?

1.17 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To explore the status of equity in access at senior secondary schools of Sikkim.
2. To find the status of participation to achieve equity in access in the senior secondary schools of Sikkim.
3. To understand the implementation mechanism for equity in access at the senior secondary education level in Sikkim.
4. To analyse the policy perspectives ensuring equity in access at the senior secondary level in Sikkim.

1.18 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study is delimited to Government Senior Secondary Schools of Sikkim.

1.19 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of the study are that there were less recent statistical official records on enrolment, number of schools or students in the schools of Sikkim. The study relied on old secondary data for the background. In the quantitative strand of the study all the senior secondary schools couldn't be covered, so study relied on data from 20 senior secondary schools.

CHAPTER - 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Review of related literature is an important part in the research. It provides a historical background and direction to the research. Reviews also provides the insights of the on the problem to be studied on the basis of previously conducted research. It is the collection of the academic writing on any given subject. According to (Creswell, 2017) ‘Review of related literature is a summary of journal articles, books and other documents’. There are various processes involved in conducting a review of related literature. All these processes need to be followed systematically for conducting a proper review. (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009) argue that the review of related literature involves the systematic identification, location and analysis of documents containing information related to the research problem.

The review of related literature has been presented thematically wherein ‘the researcher identifies a theme and briefly cites literature to document the theme’ (Creswell, 2017). The thematic review was selected by the researcher rather than study-by-study review. The research being a mixed methodological design requires major ideas or results from studies rather than in-depth studies of researches. Only few researches have been conducted in India on the research problem, the researcher felt that generalizing the problem on the basis of those few researches may not be appropriate. The researcher located major ideas thematically and organized the reviews for the proposed study. The following themes were classified –

- a. Gender equity in education
- b. Equity in education based on ethnicity, marginalization and socio- economic status
- c. Access to education based on gender
- d. Access to education based on locale
- e. Access to education based on ethnicity
- f. Access to education based on socio-economic status

2.2 Gender Equity in Education

The existence of gender inequity in education can be understood by the fact that girls often face double deprivation in educational equity. Girls in excluded groups suffer not only as members of the group but also as Girls (Lewis & Lockheed, 2007). These educational disparities among the girls lead to educational inequities among the girls.

(Klein, et al., 1994) in the study titled ‘Continuing the Journey toward Gender Equity’ found that educational attainment for the post-secondary education in the united states have increased substantially, However educational inequity with regard to gender still exists in the educational setting. In terms of the educational workforce, 72 percent of the elementary and secondary school teachers are women, the study however also reveals that males have been in charge of this predominantly female teaching force in most of the cases. The gender difference with regard to salary in education is also evident in this study. The study further reflects that the gender inequity also exists in curriculum areas and much of the schools in United States are based on gender stereotypical expectations of roles of women in the society. This gender- stereotypical expectations are also evident in most of the developing economies. The study further highlights that there has not been done much to decrease this gap of gender inequity.

The study suggests that a proper training and proper policy formulation to address the issue of increased vulnerability of girls needs to be prioritized.

(Global Campaign for Education, 2005) In the study titled 'Ensuring a fair chance for girls' revealed that Girls face many barriers for access to education an education, In the developing economies, the economic benefits or the returns play a crucial role. The society perceives that returns from boys' education is higher compared to the girls education which of acts as a barrier to education for the girls. The study also stresses on the fact that though the causes and consequences of gender inequity varies according to the different countries however it is a common set of constraint in all the developing economies. The study highlights some important factors that act as barriers for girls' education. These factors range from Cultural and social beliefs, attitudes, and practices, Parents' preferences over children, early marriage, expensive schools, house hold chores, failing to provide basic facilities in the schools like such as toilets and running water, and the failure of the schools to motivate and encourage girls.

(Unterhalter, Challender, & Rajagopalan, 2005) in the study titled 'Measuring gender equality in education' have stressed that the two parameters 'Gender parity' and the 'gender gap' does not always measure gender equality. Further the study suggests that these two parameters fail to acknowledge content in terms of gender inequity. The study also highlights that the Educational Development Index also does not represent gender inequity in Education. The study suggests that measuring inequity is not just about measuring these aspects however it is more than that. Measuring gender equity in education should also take into account cross-sectoral aspects of gender equality

which can be linked to various social factors in relation to health, wealth, and decision making.

(Bandyopadhyay & Subrahmanian, 2008) conducted a study on title ‘Gender Equity in Education: A Review of Trends and Factors’. The study revealed that Gender inequality is still prevalent in educational setting in India. Along with the gender inequality there are other factors that are interlinked and closely associated with each other social inequality in the form of caste, ethnicity, religion, girls from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Muslim minorities which constitute a maximum percentage of dropouts. The study also reflects that there is a huge inter-state variations in gender parity index. The study also stresses that more needs to be done in terms of ensuring gender equality in education.

(UNESCO , 2009) in the report titled ‘Promoting gender equality in education’ have highlighted that there exist a huge gender inequity in education, the report also highlights that the gender parity in the school is also not achieved. The report highlights that only 59 of 176 countries of the world have gender parity in education. When we reflect in the percentage count, it is just 33% of the total countries having gender parity in education. In terms of the Asia and the Pacific, the report reveals that only 27 countries out of 40 countries have achieved gender parity in primary education. The data for secondary education is more concerning as 30 countries out of 43 countries have not achieved gender parity. The data further reveals that children who are out of school are mostly girls, out of 72 million out-of-school children in the world, 55% are girls according to the study.

(Lynch & Feeley, 2009) in the report titled “Gender and Education (and Employment): Gendered imperatives and their implications for women and men-

lessons from research for policy makers” have studied gender equality through the perspective of European Union. The study reveals that gender education in European Union has a vast and varied conceptual framework. The study further reveals that there is very low rate of participation of girls in subjects like mathematics, science and technology as compared to boys. There are subjects with gender stereotypical and occupational choices which as a result create gender disparities among the learners in Education. The gender disparity is also evident in the work field according to the study wherein the male dominance over the higher paying posts is evident.

(SADEV, 2010) in their report titled ‘Gender equality in and through education’ have conducted a study in the seven countries viz. Bolivia, Kosovo, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Cambodia. On the basis of studies conducted in the seven countries, the study highlighted four important factors responsible for gender inequality in education. These four factors include Low enrolment; Low retention rate; widening gender gap at higher education levels; Low achievement in school. The study also revealed that majority of the respondents of the study believed that girls’ access to and retention at the school level lead to the reduction of the gender inequity in the society. The study also revealed there is a huge dropout rate among the girls in these countries.

(Sahin, 2014) in the study titled ‘Gender Equity in Education’, have explained gender equity in education as equal opportunities for male and female in terms of economic, social, cultural, and political developments. The study reveals that despite all the efforts in development of education, gender inequity in education still exists. The patriarchal nature of families inherited through the ages also has led to gender inequity in education. The study further reveals that according to the 2012-2013

National Education Statistics of Turkey, there are 29169 primary schools in Turkey where the enrolment of 5593910 students out of which 28,62,730 are boys and 27,31,180 are girls enrolled in the school. This gap of more than 1 lakh itself is evident of existing gender inequity in schools.

(Østby, Urdal, & Rudolfson, 2016) in the study titled ‘What Is Driving Gender Equality in Secondary Education? Evidence from 57 Developing Countries, 1970–2010’ have found that gender inequity is evident in most of the countries of the world. The study focused more on understanding gender inequity in secondary education particularly in developing economies of the world. The study reveals that though the free education has been provided in majority of the developing countries with regard to secondary education, however, there still exists gender inequity in educational settings in those developing countries. The study tried to understand the issue of gender inequity in education based on the two factors namely ‘state capacity’ or ‘state willingness’. The study found that the state willingness is the major cause of the inequities in education. In the developing countries where there is less ethnically fractionalized demography, the inequities are higher and vice versa.

(Banham, Ahern, & Mundy, 2016) in policy brief titled ‘Advancing Gender Equality in Education Across GPE Countries’ have revealed that gender disparities are widely prevalent in the secondary schooling and is evident as social, economic and health related barriers. These allied factors acts as hindrance for the learners, particularly for the girl child for retention in the classrooms. The study also reveals a comparative progress made by different countries in bridging the gap of gender disparity between 2002 and 2014, however there is a huge variance of gender disparities among the

countries. It thus is self-evident of the fact that there exists a huge gender disparity in education.

2.2.1. Summary of reviews on Gender Equity

The researches conducted with regard to the theme of gender equity highlights that the double deprivations for girls still exist in the society. Girls belonging to the marginalized section of the society, minorities and Social- economic disadvantaged groups have a high risk of getting dropout from the schools and face this double deprivation. The researches also suggest that that gender stereotypical expectations still exists in the society. The cultural factors, economic factors, social beliefs and perceptions, attitudes of parents, parent's preference of the boy child, early marriage, house hold activities, inadequate infrastructural facilities and the fees of the schools also act as the barrier for a girl child for equitable access in education. The researches also revealed that only the gender gaps and gender parity index are not a proper parameter for measuring equity in access and participation. The studies reveal that the basic idea of equity in access can be understood through how the schools cater the needs of the learners in the real sense. The studies also mention that with regard to academics, the participation of girls is low in the mathematics, science and technology as the researchers have found that there are subjects with occupational choices that creates inequity among the students. The studies have also revealed that there are factors responsible for the gender inequity in education and are 'Low enrolment; Low retention rate; widening gender gap at higher education levels; Low achievement in school' (SADEV, 2010). The researches also reveal that the 'patriarchal nature of families' (Sahin, 2014) also leads to the gender inequity in the society. The gender inequalities in schools have also been mentioned by the researches with regard to the

teachers as the studies have highlighted that the percentage of female teachers are higher in the elementary and the secondary level however there are male heads or in charges of the school predominantly for this female teachers. ‘Silent exclusion’ (Hossain & Benjamin, 2010), is also visible in the schools as the students belonging to the weaker sections are silently exclude themselves in the participation in the schools.

2.3 Equity in Education based on Ethnicity, Marginalization and Socio-Economic Status

Lewin suggests, ‘Access to basic education lies at the heart of development. Lack of education is both a part of the definition of poverty and a means for its diminution. Sustained and meaningful access to education is critical to long term improvements in productivity, the reduction of inter-generational cycles of poverty, demographic transition, preventive health care, the empowerment of women, and reductions in inequality (Lewin, 2007)’. The access to education is important to ensure equity in education.

(Aggarwal, 2007) conducted a study on Access and retention under (DPEP) and suggested that there was a consistent enrolment and retention including that of girls, SC and ST children and a steady progress towards achievement of DPEP goals in 42 districts covered under DPEP-I. The study further suggested that various innovative and cost-effective strategies will have to be discover to reach the unreached in isolated and smaller habitation, habitation which has a large concentration of ST children and areas having large concentration of working and desirable children. The traditional strategy to provide found school everywhere may not be a cost-effective way of in providing access in certain areas. And in that contest itself, they are lesson to be learnt from the DPEP models to provide access to children who had so far

remained outside the reach of educational system. Much more focus for the formal school should be on resources. Utilization, increase the internal efficiency an optimal level and also raise the quality of instruction so that the overall goals of DPEP can be realized. The participation retention of girls has been significant in DPEP districts and also reduce in qualities in occurs and retention between boys and girls.

(Sedwal & Kamat, 2008) conducted a study on Education and Social Equity With a Special Focus on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Elementary Education and found that the country has witnessed a remarkable growth in literacy and the enrolment rate. Despite this significant increase in literacy and enrolment rates, the Caste and Scheduled Tribe populations however, still face inequalities in educational capabilities. The study also highlights the context of 'double deprivation' for the girls belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes with regard to their education. The girl child belonging from a poor and scheduled caste family has relatively low chances of access to the school, retention and higher chance of getting drop out. The study further highlights the unmatched aspect of the demand and supply dynamics in the educational setting for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribes. The demand for the of quality schooling has been ever increasing among the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe families however the supply of quality education has not been matched to this demand-supply dynamics as the quality of education has been declined in the government schools. Further, the low income Scheduled caste family cannot send their children to the affluent private schools which in turn creates additional disadvantage for the learners. The study also points out that gender inequity is still persistent within the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities and the drop-out rates being higher among these groups.

(Hossain & Benjamin, 2010) in their study titled Poverty, Equity and Access to Education in Bangladesh have highlighted an important concept of ‘silent exclusion’ and the causes of the silent exclusion among the children of Bangladesh. ‘Silent exclusion’ happens to be poverty related exclusion. The students from low economic background have low access to education thereby leading to increase the inequities with regard to access to education. The study highlights that the students from low income families are ‘less likely to go to school’, and have a higher risk of getting drop out from the school. Even if there is retention among these learners, they are silently excluded in the school. The study also suggests the existence of a strong correlation among the lack of school equipment, and lack of access to education. Though the Government of Bangladesh provides free textbooks to the learners in the School however the poverty stricken family’s inability to afford basic school equipment increases the gap of inequities in access to education in Bangladesh. The study also highlights other causes that are related to the silent exclusion among the students with low economic background and are such as poor health, or the effects of the prevalence of private tuition.

(OECD, 2018) in the document ‘Equity in Education-Breaking down barriers to social mobility’ in its chapter ‘Are disadvantaged students affected by the socio-economic profile of their school?’ examines the disparities of educational attainment and educational achievement of the economically disadvantaged students. The document also highlights the idea of double disadvantage or the double deprivation in education. The disadvantaged students attending disadvantaged schools are bound to face hardships in their educational attainment and the educational achievement. The study reveals that across OECD countries 48% of disadvantaged students attend disadvantaged schools.

(Kadel, 2013) conducted a study on the title Exclusion of Minority Mother Tongues from the Classroom Context (in Nepal) and found that children from the linguistic minorities feel discriminated in the schools from the first day of schooling. The study revealed that the home language plays a crucial role for the students in the schools and the exclusion of their home language in the schools creates a hindrance for the learners. The study also revealed that there is no proper mechanism for bridging the gap of the new language and the language used in the home. It was also revealed that these learners also face disadvantage in education as the learners face difficulties in understanding the instructions of the teachers in the school. The study also revealed that the well-educated and rich families from the linguistic minorities groups send their students to the private schools, this has led to the inferiority complex among the other students studying in the government schools. The study revealed that though the classroom aspires to be multi-lingual, however the classrooms are not multilingual in the real sense.

(Osler & Hill, 1999) in their study title 'Exclusion from School and Racial Equality: an examination of government proposals in the light of recent research evidence' have highlighted that if the schools seek the supports from the local bodies and the agencies then the rate of exclusion can be reduced in education. The study highlights that the African-Caribbean pupils have been excluded in education and to ensure the inclusion of these learners. The study also reveals that the coloured approach is evident in the schools and it suggests to remove the coloured approach to reduce the problem of exclusion in education. The policy suggests to move from the model of 'race equality' to a model responding to current existing inequalities.

(Osler, Watling, & Busher, 2001) in the report ‘Reasons for Exclusion from School’ found that the low turnout of ethnic minority students in the schools can be linked to the issues of racism which is still prevalent in the system. The policy also highlighted the need of ensuring a proper policy framework for addressing the issue of the exclusion from the schools. The report also suggested on ensuring adequate number of the ethnic minority staffs in the schools to build a cordial relationship with the parents of these students. The policy also the school to encourage the staffs to establish the positive relationship with the ethnic minority students.

(Raabe, 2019) in the study ‘Social Exclusion and School Achievement: Children of Immigrants and Children of Natives in Three European Countries’ found the difference in academic achievement of the children of the immigrant communities and the other students. The children of the migrant communities and immigrant communities have relatively lower academic achievement in comparison to their peers. The research also stresses on conducting more researches on understanding the actual mechanism behind the social exclusion.

2.3.1 Summary of reviews on equity in education based on ethnicity, marginalization and socio- economic status

The reviews on the theme of equity in education based on ethnicity, marginalization and socio- economic status highlights that there is consistent enrolment and retention of girls in the schools. The scheduled caste and scheduled tribe populations also have access to schools and the retention in the schools and shows improvement in the figures. The researches under this subtheme also talks about the ‘double deprivation’ faced by the girls from the marginalized and the minorities with regard to the education. The research highlights that a girl belonging to the economically weaker

section of the society, marginalized section of the society or the minority group has higher chance of facing inequitable access to education than a girl belonging to the other sections of the society. It has also been found that the demand of quality education and equitable access to education has been in a huge demand by the economically weaker section of the society, marginalized section of the society or the minority group however the supply side dynamics of this demands have not been achieved to the fullest. Researches have also found that the students from the minorities and marginalized sections of the society are less likely to go to school and if they go to the school, the 'Silent exclusion' (Hossain & Benjamin, 2010), is also visible in the schools as the students belonging to the weaker sections are silently exclude themselves in the participation in the schools. They are unable to show their presence in the academic and co-curricular activities.

2.4 Access to education based on Gender

(Motala, et al., 2007) conducted a review on, 'Educational Access in South Africa: Country Research Summary'. The paper examined the pattern of access to education in South Africa by drawing on the then recent fieldwork and research that was undertaken by the Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE). The study found out that the access to basic education was extensive, few number of children didn't enrol in schools, daily attendance was seen to be higher, repetition was low and declining and the dropout was rare. Over-agedness was seen as a problem throughout the system, especially in higher grades. The study found that gender parity had been achieved and it appeared to be maintained in terms of enrolment and attendance, but more boys would repeat and few number of girls excel academically. It was also found that transport and uniforms

were still a huge burden for poorer households. The access to meaningful education was a dream for vast majority of learners in South Africa. The limitation to school choice was also the school language and teaching which forced some learners to travel long distances to other schools. It was also found that the parents voices weren't sufficiently heard. The research also found that very little actual teaching and learning took place, lessons started late, most of the time was only used for maintaining order, and teacher was active and students acted as passive members. A numeracy test was conducted to about 1000 Grade 5 and Grade 7 learners. The findings of that test done were stiff. The performance were below the expected levels, the over-age and under-age learners were worse off in terms of their performance. It was also found that corporal punishments existed in schools. Also with reference to Community survey of 2007 indicated that there were about 386,000 children who were out of school. The findings revealed that unlike any other developing countries, South Africa had more girls in school and gender parity was attained.

(Levtov, 2013) conducted a study titled, 'Promoting Gender Equity through Schools: Three Papers on Schooling, Gender Attitudes, and Interventions to promote Gender Equity in Egypt and India'. The study conducted presents data from two countries, Egypt and India. The investigator referred to data from the Adolescence and Social Change in Egypt survey (ASCE) for examining the connection that lies between school staffs' gender attitudes, school climate, and structural characteristics, for instance, the type of school and proportion of female teachers, and the outcome: student attitudes about gender. The investigator also referred to the data from the Gender Equality Movement in Schools (GEMS) Survey in Mumbai, India. The investigator also focused on interviews of teachers in Mumbai. The study found that all the sets of variables of interest, for instance, school structure, school climate, and

staff attitudes are associated with student attitude about gender in Egyptian middle-schools. It was also found that there was important difference between boys and girls in their support for gender equity. The findings suggested that the attitude of girls is more sensitive to the measured school characteristics, as compared to boys. The investigator's analysis revealed that schools' matter in shaping children's idea about gender. It was also analysed that in terms of violence or support that the students experience, both boys and girls have different experiences in schools and mostly the school characteristics or features affect boys and girls, and men and women. The finding also was that, the perceptions of teachers towards students' lives are shaped by both poverty and gender inequality. The study also found out that interventions like GEMS can have a positive impact for promotion of gender equitable attitudes. It was also suggested that its effectiveness also depends on factors such as school environment, personal histories of the participants, and the policies and institutional realities that shape children's and teachers' lives

(Kumari, 2014) conducted a study on 'Social Inclusion in Indian Higher Education: Equity in Access'. The paper's major focus were on the policies that existed in higher education, its structure and changes those policies had went through. The paper aimed to reform certain policies in order to make higher education in India more socially inclusive in a wholesome and innovative ways by focusing right from start of the college till graduation. The paper also catered to the best international practices by looking at what degree those practices could be adopted by Indian Higher education. The paper by ultimately understanding the crucial need to create inclusion, tried to give a clear thoughtful views to all who were concerned with education and discrimination. The study stated inclusion as an important step is multidimensional in itself, and creating it in Indian Higher education proves to be a complex process, it

would require careful planning and policy framework in order to make it accessible for all. The study revealed that the very crucial step would be to make dramatic changes at primary and secondary levels and also focus should be on allocation of educational budget to higher education in order to make significant changes. The study also stated that learning from international practices and also implementing them in Higher education in India could change the scenario and contribute to the focus of 12th Five Year plan of Inclusive growth.

(Kaur, 2015) conducted a study titled, 'A Study of Gender Disparity in School Education in India with Special Reference to Punjab'. The data for the study were mostly collected by referring to various government reports, pertaining to different years from 1951 to 2015. The study revealed that in Punjab, literacy has improved during the last decade, 76.7% of the total population were literate in 2011 as compared to 69.7% in 2001. As per the 2011 census, the literacy rate in urban areas was 83.7% against 72.45% in rural areas. The rural and urban gap in literacy rate as per 2001 census was 14.38% which came down to 11.25% in 2011 census. In Punjab, the male literacy (81.50%) rate is lower than the national male literacy rate (82.14%) by 0.64 % whereas female literacy rate is higher (71.3%) than the national female literacy rate (65.46%) by 5.84 percent. In Punjab, percentage of girls' enrolment to total enrolment is highest at primary stage (47.54%) followed by upper primary stage (44.67%) whereas it is 44.16% at secondary stage in 2012. In India, particularly from 2013-2014, at primary, upper primary, secondary and senior secondary levels, 93, 95, 90 and 89 girls are enrolled per hundred boys enrolled. The number of girls per 100 boys enrolled at different levels of schools is on rise over the years. During the academic year 2012-2013, Punjab had witnessed a transition rate from primary to upper primary stage as 97.46 (97.72 for boys and 97.46 for girls). The rate of

transition is higher for boys, than girls indicating that the girl's dropout rate is higher than their counterparts. The data also revealed that the dropout rate is increasing as we move from one stage of schooling to next higher stage of schooling. The enrolment ratios at secondary and senior secondary levels are lower than the enrolment ratio at primary and upper primary level in India. It was also found that one-fifth of the dropouts are at the primary stage in case of girls. By also taking primary and the middle stages together (elementary), it can be noted that about two-fifths of the girl's dropout at this stage. In India, the total estimated number of children in the age group of 6-13 years is 20.41 crores, out of which, an estimated 60.64 lacs (2.97 percent) are out of school. Also, with the religion wise disaggregation, it revealed that out of total estimated Muslim children in the country, 4.43 percent are out of school. An estimated 4.20 percent ST children are out of school followed by SC (3.24 percent), OBC (3.07 percent).

(Osagie & Alutu, 2016) conducted a study titled, 'Factors Affecting Gender Equity in the Choice of Science and Technology Careers among Secondary School Students in Edo State, Nigeria'. This study was a case study survey and was carried out at the University of Benin Demonstration Secondary School in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The total sample from whom data was collected was 150 students of average age 15 years in their penultimate year. The study was in order to examine the choice of science and technology careers among senior secondary school students. The study found that as a result of stereotypes, discouragement, economics, self-doubt and wrong perception of what math and science are all about, there is a very low percentage of female students who wish to pursue science and technology related careers and mentioned reasons acted as barriers to female candidates having lesser focus on science and technology careers. As the study suggested that awareness is

must for all including parents, teachers and everyone who can play a role in helping girls' identify work and educational choice process in regards to science and technology careers.

(Selvan, 2017) conducted a study titled, 'Problems of Rural Girl Students in Higher Educational Institution' the study conducted was able to highlight some important factors that were responsible for creating problem among girl child in rural area. They were the difficulty that was presented in front of girls in pursuing higher education because of unplanned family, much importance is not given to girls students in terms of higher education, the parents feel that the girl child won't support economically in future, parents of the girls feel that they are meant to do house chores, no matter if they go for higher education or not. It was also observed that usually the parents fix their daughters marriage in between of their educational process. It was seen that a lot of parents do not have proper awareness about the importance of higher education, and also because of being in remote areas the facilities of transport hinders, usually.

(Hussain, 2018) conducted a study titled, 'RTE Act: A Means for Equity in Education'. The study was focused on explaining how RTE Act can be said as a means for equity in education. The study was taken up by looking at the gender based disparities that sustained as one of the bitter truth of our society even after six decades of independence. The study presented the data on enrolment of girls in schools. The study stated the guarantees by the Constitution of India on 'justice, social economic and political' and 'liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship' to the entire citizens of the country. It stated about the exclusion of discrimination at any grounds. The study also presented excerpts from sections of the constitution which talks about equality in whole. It stated the disparities that women population still have

to go through in terms of equitable educational opportunities. It was also suggested that for a basic development to take place, promotion of gender equity and fairness act as a force to achieve equity in all spheres especially in education. It also stated UNESCO 's advocacy, 'Once girls are able to get enrolled in school, they are rather more likely than boys to continue their education with more success'.

(Singh & Rabindranath, 2020) conducted a study titled, 'Gender Divide in Education in India: A Critical Study Based on Functionalist Theory of Education'. The main purpose for conducting the study were to analyse the gender divide in education and the importance of educating girls through the functionalist theory of education and to formulate framework on how girl's education can lead to development of society. The data for the study were collected from secondary sources such as articles, research papers, journals, the internet, etc. The findings of the study were on the importance of educating girls in the context of Durkheim's Functionalist Theory of Education, which explained that education distributes the common values of society from one generation to the next generation. It fosters responsibilities among the members of society to work for the interest of society. Also providing better education to girls will enable them to be skilled and knowledgeable to understand the challenges in life and deal with them. As can be rightly agreed, the findings suggest that in the 21st Century world, both men and women have equal rights as to whatever they want to achieve. It puts forward the idea of providing equal access to everything, irrespective of gender. The study also found out that there is a lack of understanding of the value of educating girls, and especially in remote and socio-economically backward communities. The study also recognized the importance of proposing certain framework for the development of society by creating awareness on importance of girl's education. The study realized the importance of including parents, teachers,

leaders of the community and also the general public in making aware of the importance of girl education.

2.4.1 Summary of reviews on access to education based on Gender

The reviews on the theme of access to education based on gender highlighted that the weaker section the girls are more sincere and sensitive towards the participation in the school activities as compared to the boys. It is quite evident from the studies that the girls still face inequities in education as compared to the boys. There are various factors leading to these disparities among the girls with regard to the education. Studies have revealed that the attitude of girls towards the academic activities are also positive as compared to the boys and once enrolled they are likely to continue education more as compared to boys (Hussain, 2018) however the social perceptions create hindrance for the girls with regard to their education. Lack of awareness on the value of education of girls, particularly among the economically weaker section of the society is visible and to create better opportunities of access in education, the awareness among the parents for the education of the girls needs to be emphasised as the parents often fix the marriages of the girls in between their educational process. The researches also reveal that due to the wrong perception and lack of proper counseling about the subject matter, percentage of the girls pursuing science and mathematics as a subject is relatively lower. The studies also reveal that the girls need counseling on higher education for the better and equitable access to education. The studies further reveal that the teachers should emphasis on the identification of educational choice of girls to help them for equity and inclusion in education. Researches also suggest that more funds should be allocated for the primary, elementary and secondary level to ensure gender equity in the schools. It was also

revealed in the researches that ‘one-fifth of the dropouts are at the primary stage in case of girls (Kaur 2015)’.

2.5 Access to education based on Locale

(Pour, 2008) conducted a study titled, ‘A Critical Study of the Availability, Accessibility and Utilization of Educational Technology Facilities for the Post-Graduate Students in Indian and Iranian Universities’. In the study, a ‘normative survey method’ was used. A total of 200 postgraduate students, 100 each from Iran (Ferdowsi University) and India (University of Mysore) constituted the sample for the study. The findings of the study revealed that India is much ahead than Iran in terms of status of development of educational technology for higher learning and especially with the presence of dedicated organisations for e.g. Indira Gandhi National Open Universities (IGNOU) and other 13 State Open Universities, which utilizes the potential of educational technology for delivery of multiple courses in higher education through distance mode, also the University Grants Commission (UGC). It was found that technology developments that are used for higher learning is very limited in Iran. There is only one Open University namely, ‘Azad’ and one Distance University ‘Payam Noor’, which uses only a little technology for course delivery. The study also found that all the selected departments of the Ferdowsi University in Mashhad in Iran had at-least more than half of the required educational technology materials. In India, only two departments of the University of Mysore, Mysore namely Computer and Management were equipped with half of the required educational technology materials. It was revealed that most of the departments of University of Mysore did not have even a minimum required material of educational technology. With the study, the percentage of students who had an access to materials

of educational technology ranged from 30 to 48 in case of the departments in Ferdowsi University (Iran) and from 08 to 37 in case of the University of Mysore (India). About 60% of the postgraduate students in both the universities had either 'good' or 'excellent' educational technology skills. The skills range from 18.0 to 24.7 in Iran, among the postgraduate students' educational technology and from 16.1 to 26.3 in India. The study showed that the percentage of students utilizing various educational technology materials ranged from 34 to 54 in the case of the departments in Ferdowsi University (Iran) and from 05 to 50 in case of University of Mysore. An observation was also made that half of the students of University of Mysore weren't at all making use of any educational technology materials. The study found that there is a low positive relationship, in case of Iran and a negligible relationship in case of India, between the postgraduate student's attitude towards use of educational technology and the extent of utilization of educational technology. And also, in case of both Ferdowsi University in Iran and University of Mysore in India, there exists a negligible relationship between the postgraduate students' extent of utilization of educational technology facilities and academic performance of Postgraduate students.

(Tejaswani & Sridevi, 2012) conducted a study titled, 'Primary Education in India: A Case Study of Government-Run Primary Schools in Rudraram'. For the study, the Mandal Parishad Primary School and Zilla Parishad Primary School in Rudraram, Patancheru Mandal in Andhra Pradesh was considered. The study dealt with various factors that influenced the performance of students in Zilla and Mandal Parishad Primary Schools. The study was aimed to help the students of State government run schools in Rudraram to be on par with students of schools which followed Central Government syllabus or International syllabus. In the present study, feedbacks from students, teachers and parents were taken into account. The study found that it is

because of low economic background, illiteracy of the parents, and the fee structure of English medium schools that they can't bear with, the parents send their children to Zilla and Mandal Parishad Primary Schools. Also, it was seen that most villages had no access to schools and the teacher-student ratio was disproportionate, although many schools had been constructed by the government. It was also found that inspite of the completion of primary schooling, the students were mostly illiterate due to the quality of education, which wasn't suitable. It was found that there was also issues of lack of proper infrastructure in primary schools and the difficulty which came up with procuring funds from the Government or private organizations for providing basic amenities. The study also revealed that in the Mandal Parishad Primary School, the students were not able to utilize the washrooms, and students were forced to attend nature's calls outdoors. With the study, it was observed that some extensive modifications needed to be brought in the Government orders with regards to primary level education in rural areas.

(Visalatchi, 2015) conducted a study titled, 'Information Access and Use Pattern of Faculty and Research Scholars of Education in the Universities of Tamil Nadu'. The study was conducted for the faculty members and research scholars of the department of Education in 15 Universities in Tamil Nadu. In the present study, survey method was used for collection of data. The study was able to find out that to some extent only, the users depend on libraries and Google appeared to be the most commonly used search engine among users to retrieve required information. It was also found that in terms of access and ICT skills and library use behaviour, gender and designation as variables have no effect. It was also found that the library facilities are used only to some extent by the educational researchers among the universities surveyed. With the study conducted, and after the findings were drawn out, it was

suggested that some measures need to be taken in order to achieve effective and efficient use of modern equipment and resources present online, by the research scholars and the faculty members of all the fifteen universities.

(Frost, 2013) conducted a study titled, ‘Improving Education Quality, Equity and Access: A Report on Findings from the Young Lives School Survey (Round 1) in Ethiopia’. The study revealed that out that especially with regards to children starting late and dropping out, access to education remained a significant problem, girls in the Young Lives sites started school earlier than boys and they were less likely to be over-age for their grade, also, less likely to dropout, but nonetheless they didn’t have higher achievement scores. It was also reported that better paid teachers were more likely to promote child-centred teaching methods and the classes having better-qualified teachers spent less time off-task. The study stated that majority of schools had already developed a school-improvement plan and also drawn a budget for the same, fewer than half had reported of having enough funds to put their plan into action. The study revealed that absenteeism from school among boys was due to several work responsibilities and in case of girls, it was due to having younger siblings at home.

(Parveen & Awan, 2019) in the study ‘Equitable Higher Education: Students’ Perspective on Access to Resources, Participation, and Educational Outcomes have found that there are equity issues in higher education in Pakistan. The study analyzed students’ equity in terms of access, participation and outcomes at higher education. The study reveals that 25 percent of the students faced inequitable access to resources in Pakistan. The study also revealed that the teaching learning environment was not found suitable and was one of the weak links in ensuring equitable provisions in

higher education. The study highlighted a major difference in equity in education with regard to the locale. It was found that that the urban schools students were better off against the rural school students. The study also suggests that students with lower mother education faced more inequities. The study recommended that there is a need that higher education may be developed such that the unprivileged groups are catered.

(Lee, 2002) in the study 'Equity and Access to Education: Themes, Tensions, and Policies' found that there is an inter-linkage among different forms of inequities. The study revealed that the regional equity is inseparable from gender and income equity. The study also highlighted about the double deprivation among the girls in education as poor rural girls are most dis-advantaged in access to education. The study revealed that there is a huge gap between urban and rural students in terms of access, literacy, enrolment and retention in the schools. The study also reveals that the gap is more with regard to the female. The study found that the urban- rural gap in terms of access, literacy, enrollment and retention in the developing countries. The urban rural gap wide as 45.9 times in Pakistan and 15.6 times in Nepal.

2.5.1 Summary of reviews on Access to education based on Locale

The reviews on the theme of access to education based on locale highlights that the students from the remote locations face various problems with regard to access in education. It was found through the studies that the students of remote villages do not have access to education. Due to the low income, illiteracy and ignorance among the parents of economically weaker sections of the society it becomes difficult for the parents to give quality education to their children (Tejaswani and Sridevi, 2012). The studies have also revealed that the students of the villages do not have equity in access to schools, the teacher student ratio is disproportionate in the government schools in

villages. The schools located in villages have problem in the procurement of the adequate funds and have a huge problem in the basic infrastructural facilities thereby reducing the facilities of access among the students.

2.6 Access to education based on Ethnicity

(Bhat) conducted a study titled, 'Access to Education for Gujjars and Bakarwals of Kashmir: A Case Study of District Kupwara'. The sample of the study was gathered from Gujjar and Bakarwal students, teachers and all those 396 schools including 14 mobile schools. The objectives of the study were to, survey the total number of schools in District Kupwara and the enrolment of Gujjars and Bakarwal students in these schools, survey the number of mobile schools and their enrolment in District Kupwara, examine the access to education for Gujjars and Bakarwal children in terms of distance of schools and infrastructure facilities in these schools in District Kupwara, explore the quantity, quality (number and qualification) and experience of teachers working in these schools, study the parental education and occupation of enrolled Gujjar and Bakarwal students in Districts Kupwara, and to study the educational achievement of Gujjar and Bakarwal students in District Kupwara. The findings of the study were that more than 40% Gujjar and Bakarwal population of the district was below the age of 15 years, only 60.65% children of the Gujjar and Bakarwal community were enrolled in different schools in District Kupwara. It was found that the schools being run on mobile names were found non-migratory and there was a lack of infrastructure of every type in existing schools, and maximum teachers were found to be under-qualified and having lesser experiences. Most of the students of Gujjar and Bakarwal population were first generation learners (FGLs). And it was also observed that most of the Gujjar and Bakarwal children were living a

poor life and was observed that the academic achievement of Gujjar and Bakarwal students were very low.

(Babu, 2013) conducted a study titled, 'An Inquiry into The Ethnic Diversity and Educational Attainment Among the Scheduled Tribes of Kerala'. The sample of the study were 1300 tribal pupils, 200 teachers, 130 tribal parents, 30 social workers and 30 educational experts. The scheduled tribe pupils and teachers from Wayanad District of Kerala were used in the study. The objectives of the study were to, study the educational status among scheduled tribes of Wayanad District, identify the ethnic factors leading to the educational backwardness of tribal pupils, explore existing facilities for educational development among scheduled tribes of Wayanad District, explore the facilities available for job attainment of scheduled tribes, study the job attainment among tribals of Wayanad District, and suggest a comprehensive paradigm for educational development of Scheduled Tribes. In the study it was found that the illiteracy rate among parents of Scheduled Tribe pupils is very high, and poor socio-economic conditions of the parents were the reason for such educational backwardness. The study environment at home was not conducive for tribal students, there were irregular attendance among the pupils because of household duties and engagement in other traditional chores and because of scattered habitations, long distance to reach to school, etc. It was also seen that the tribal householders were not that much supportive of education of the children and rather believed that involvement in family occupation at home would help in economy generation. It was also found that the reason of dropouts was lack of interest among children, socio-economic, cultural and psychological factors. The many reason for the irregularities and backwardness were unavailability of electricity at home, lack of enough learning facilities at home, hostel facilities, lack of parental guidance, lack of awareness about

the importance of education, poor exposure to mass media, difficulty due to school language, lack of awareness about the reservation of posts for tribals in government departments, parents are not members of PTA in school. In the study it was also found that there is nobody at home to help the tribal students, they are also not getting adequate help from teachers, the curriculum was not relevant to the tribal students and their life needs, rituals and ceremonies also affect their studies, parents also have little interest in schools' affairs and so on. The result of the study found out that the ethnic factors act as a major constraint in the education of tribal pupils of Wayanad District and diversity exists among the scheduled tribes of Wayanad district with regard to education and attainment of job.

2.6.1 Summary of the reviews on Access to education based on Ethnicity

Reviews on access to education based on ethnicity highlights that the students among Gujjar and Bakarwal population were first generation learners and have very low academic achievement. The researchers also reveal that the schools face huge problems in managing the migratory learners. The studies also revealed that most of the parents of the scheduled tribe students are illiterates and the tribal population have a high illiteracy rates and are economically disadvantaged due to which their children's access to education is very low. The home environment also played a crucial role for the low turnout and irregular attendance as a result led to the low academic achievement of the tribal students. The studies also revealed that there are dropouts from these category of learners and was due to the lack of interest among children, socio-economic, cultural and psychological factors, unavailability of electricity at home, lack of enough learning facilities at home, hostel facilities, lack of parental guidance, lack of awareness about the importance of education, poor

exposure to mass media, difficulty due to school language, lack of awareness about the reservation of posts for tribals in government departments (Babu, 2013)'.

2.7 Access to education based on Socio-Economic Status

(Rideout & Katz, 2016) conducted a study on title, 'Opportunity for All? Technology and Learning in Lower-Income Families'. The report presented the results of the first nationally-representative survey of lower-income parents on the issues of digital connectivity. The survey included 1,191 parents with school aged children (ages 6 to 13). The study was focused on detailing the increase of certain dependency on internet and other devices for the works that children in school have to do by focusing on the access and affordability of low income families. The study found out that most low and moderate-income families had internet connectivity but many were under-connected, with mobile-only access and incompatible connectivity, the families runned by Hispanic immigrants were the ones less connected than other low-and moderate-income families. It was found that it was inaffordability that some families didn't have computers or internet access. The study also revealed that the parents felt largely positive about the internet but there were also many families who had concerns relating to children's exposure to inappropriate content online and with the overuse. The study found that children and parents learn about technology together in a frequent manner, especially in low income families and where parents had less education. It was also found that low and moderate income parents use internet and its services for a variety of purposes including looking for information, staying in touch with family and friends, get news, etc. but the mobile-only families were less likely to do certain online activities including online shopping, bill payment, applying for jobs or services online, etc. The finding was also revealed that children belonging to low

and moderate income families used internet and computer for various educational activities, but those not having access at home were less likely to go online to pursue their interests.

(Caturianas, Užpelkienė, & Migliarini, 2017) conducted a study titled, 'The Role of Education for Social Inequality in Modern Societies (With a Special Perspective on EU Member States)'. The study aimed to provide a brief summary on the various areas of life that are influenced by education and other relevant determinants at both individual and societal level. The study had a special focus on equity and inclusion. It also identified the key determinants of educational inequalities and stressed their impact on EU member states. The report and its findings revealed that parental background was the key determining factor of inequalities that existed in the area of education. Others included low socio-economic status, income and education of parents which were the crucial factors that were responsible for decreasing children's access to quality education. The evidence also projected that children belonging to disadvantaged socio-economic background often have to face psychological issues related to level of support from the family, self-esteem and values attached to education, which in later years would contribute to inequalities in education. It was also reported that immigrant status contributed to such inequity. When it comes to disabilities and inequalities in education, there exists a positive trend in most EU countries, which already has a larger number of students studying in an inclusive setting. The report also stated that the boys, especially belonging to low socio-economic background are at greater risk of early school leaving in Europe. The observation was also made in terms of reading and mathematics performance, where boys demonstrated better achievements in mathematics and girls outperformed boys in reading. The report also stated that poorly educated Europeans are almost three

times more likely to be at risk of poverty or social exclusion than those with tertiary education.

(Gobena, 2018) conducted a study titled, 'Family Socio-Economic Status Effect on Students' Academic Achievement at College of Education and Behavioural Sciences, Haramaya University, Eastern Ethiopia'. In the study, descriptive survey research design was used. The sample for the study was from four departments from which 172 undergraduate regular first and second year students were taken out of 248. Out of 172, 85 were female and 87 were male. The findings of the study were that there were sex disparities among the respondents in the area of study. It was found that the majority of respondents' fathers had completed primary schooling, and in terms of respondents' mothers, they were fewer in number, who had completed primary schooling. It was found that the male students were higher achievers as compared to the female students. It was found that there was a weak positive relationship between both boys and girls, and family level of education. There was a weak positive relationship between Family Total Income per Month (FTIPM) and student academic achievement measured by CGPA. It was found that families who were educated were able to better encourage them with suitable counseling and guidance, whereas families who were non-educated weren't able to contribute to their academic achievement. The finding was also that the non-educated families contributed 40.96% to students' achievement and 59.04% were unexplained variables that had contributed to students' academic achievement. The result also revealed that the respondents' sex, families and parents who help their pupils do their school academic tasks contributed 34.81% to students' academic achievement whereas 65.19% were some unexplained variables that contributed to students' academic achievement.

(Salmi & Bassett, 2014) in the study titled ‘The equity imperative in tertiary education: Promoting fairness and efficiency’ have highlighted that democratic societies ensure the equality of opportunities among its citizens and the societies that do not provide equality of opportunity to its citizens are not a democratic societies. The study also suggests that the most importance instrument to ensure equity and better access to facilities to the disadvantaged students is a financial aid. The study emphasizes that the financial aids with proper policy framework should be ensured to increase the inclusion in the education. The study also highlights that the financial burden can be reduced among the disadvantaged students by waiving off the tuition fees, and by providing more grants and the student loans.

(Lee, 2002) in the study titled ‘Equity and Access to Education: Themes, Tensions, and Policies’ highlighted that the socio-cultural and socio-economic perceptions also leads to the inequity in education. The study found that most of the minorities are disadvantaged in-terms of access to education and retention in education. The study also revealed that as the access to higher education is concerned, the access to ethnic minorities decreases with the increase in the classes. The study also highlighted that there exists subtle tensions between the minority groups in the society which leads to the problem of the minorities.

2.7.1 Summary of reviews on access to education based on socio-economic status.

The reviews on access to education based on socio-economic status highlights that the students from the moderate income families have access to the internet facilities for the resources available online but overuse the internet facilities whereas the students from economically weaker sections feel deprived of the basic internet facilities and face inequities in access to the online resources. The studies also revealed that the

immigrant status of the students also faced inequities in access to education. it was also revealed in the studies that the students from the economically weaker sections of the society are also risk of leaving the school early due to the low income of the parents as compared to the moderate income families. The studies however also revealed that there was a weak positive relationship between Family Total Income per Month (FTIPM) and student academic achievement measured by CGPA (Gobena, 2018).

2.8 Research gap

The research study conducted on gender equity by (Klein, et al., 1994) (Global Campaign for Education, 2005) (Bandyopadhyay & Subrahmanian, 2008) found that gender inequity exists and it is linked to various social factors such as health, wealth and decision-making. (UNESCO , 2009) emphasized that the existence of gender inequity in education world over especially at secondary education. (Lynch & Feeley, 2009) found that gender stereotyped subjects have created gender disparities. Dropout among girls are higher as compared to boys (UNESCO , 2009) (SADEV, 2010). The causes of gender inequity are dropouts (SADEV, 2010), social inequity (Bandyopadhyay & Subrahmanian, 2008), patriarchal nature of families (Sahin, 2014) fractionalized society with ethnicity (Østby, Urdal, & Rudolfson, 2016) and further economic and health barriers for girl students (Banham, Ahern, & Mundy, 2016). The inequity in education based on ethnicity, marginalization and socio-economic status have shown numerous factors which on the way to the achievement of equity in education. Despite the increase in literacy and enrolment rate among overall students, the girls, SC, ST students from low income families have low chance of access to the school. The double deprivation (Sedwal & Kamat, 2008) occurs if a student is SC or

ST from low income family and additionally if they belong to female gender, the inequity gets deepened leading to dropout from the school system. Low socio economic status leads to low access to education which is termed as silent exclusion (Hossain & Benjamin, 2010). One of the reason for inequity among ethnicity, marginalized group is poverty (Hossain & Benjamin, 2010) (Sedwal & Kamat, 2008) (OECD, 2018). The study conducted by (Motala and Dieltiens, 2010) showed that various mechanism were in place to increase educational access in South Africa. In contrast, access to education based on gender is not encouraged at Punjab, India Kaur (2015). Lack of understanding of value of educating girls is the major obstacle against access in education based on gender Singh (2020). Access to education ased on locale highlighted that low income, illiteracy and ignorance of value of education from rural areas (Tejaswani and Sridevi, 2012)

The research gap found in the study was that equity in access based on gender were seen only from the part of enrolment. The researcher felt the need to explore the rationale for inequity in access. The researcher reviewed the equity in access based on ethnicity and marginalisation which is also based on the law of socio-economic status and ignorance of value of education among the parents. The research gap found that there are negligible studies on equity in access for divyang and CWSN children, therefore the research gap is the need of the study on equity in access for divyang children and CWSN. Another research gap identified is the participation of the students ensuring equity in access at senior secondary level. The researcher found that the implementation mechanism of equity in access and analyse the policy of education and centrally sponsored scheme to ensure equity in access. Therefore, the investigator decided to study the status of equity in access, participation, implementation

mechanism to ensure equity in access among the senior secondary education level in Sikkim.

CHAPTER - 3

RESEARCH METHOD AND PROCEDURE

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapter III deals with Research method and Procedure in detail. It is important to explain research methodology before detailing the research methodology used and procedure followed in the research.

Research methodology is an umbrella term for the procedure and the techniques the researcher uses to conduct a scientific enquiry that starts from identification of a problem, the process of data collection, analysis of the study and the reporting of the study.

“Research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. It may be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically. In it we study the various steps that are generally adopted by a researcher in studying his research problem along with the logic behind them. It is necessary for the researcher to know not only the research methods/ techniques but also the methodology. Researchers also need to understand the assumptions underlying various techniques and they need to know the criteria by which they can decide that certain techniques and procedures will be applicable to certain problems and others will not. All this means that it is necessary for the researcher to design his methodology for his problem as the same may differ from problem to problem. The scope of research methodology is wider than that of research methods. Thus, when we talk of research methodology we not only talk of the research methods but also consider the logic

behind the methods we use in the context of our research study and explain why we are using a particular method or technique and why we are not using others so that research results are capable of being evaluated either by the researcher himself or by others” (Kothari, 2004). The research methodology is thus a broad analysis of how a researcher designs his overall framework of his research.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

‘Research design are the specific procedures involved in the research process: data collection, data analysis and report writing’ (Creswell 2015).

Research design is needed to provide the direction to the study. Research design creates a path for the research process. Creswell has further stated the importance of research design as - “Research designs are the plans and the procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to the detailed methods of data collection and analysis. This plan involves several decisions and they need not be taken in the order in which they make sense...the overall decision involves which the design should be used to study a topic. Informing this decision should be a world view assumptions the researcher brings to the study, the procedures of enquiry (called strategies) and specific methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation. The selection of a research design is also based on the nature of the research problem or the issue being addressed, the researcher’s personal experience and the audience for the study’ (Creswell 2009).

3.1.1 Research method

The present study used the convergent parallel design mixed method design. As Creswell highlights ‘The purpose of a convergent (or parallel or concurrent) mixed

method design is to simultaneously collect both quantitative and qualitative data, merge the data, and use the results to understand a research problem. A basic rationale for this design is that one data collection form supplies strength to offset the weakness of the other form, and that a more complete understanding of a research problem collecting both the quantitative and qualitative data’(Creswell, 2015). ‘The objective of this design is to study the research problem in its entirety and dimension. The quantitative approach is used to measure the properties and objective aspects of the problem. The qualitative approach is used to understand and describe the subjective aspects. It is known as convergence because each design approach is used to study different aspects of the problem. The quantitative approach measures the objective aspects of the problem and the qualitative phase enters the subjective aspects of the problem or the experiences of the participants. Convergence occurs because it is the researcher who integrates quantitative and qualitative data to explain the problem studied’ (Ponce & Maldonado, 2015). The convergent parallel design can be understood with the help of the figure below:

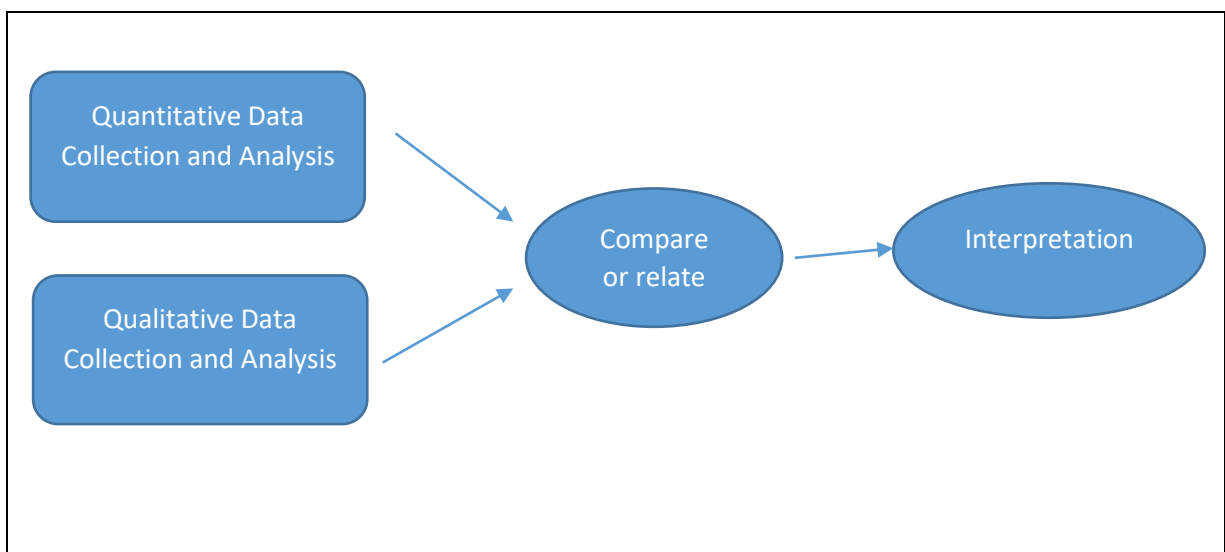


Figure 1 Convergent parallel design

3.1.2 Justification for the use of convergent parallel design mixed method

The researcher used the convergent parallel mixed method design for the study as the study used both qualitative and quantitative data. The convergent parallel form of design is ‘the strength of this design is that it combines the advantage of each form of data; that is quantitative data provides for generalizability, whereas qualitative data offers information about the context or setting. This design enables a researcher to gather information that uses the best features of both quantitative and qualitative data collection. One difficulty with this design is how to merge two forms of data, and, when this is done to determine how to access results that diverge’ (Creswell, 2015).

The researcher first collected quantitative data from the principals of schools and conducted interviews with the principal of the schools and the teachers and the focus group discussion with the students. The researcher spent much time in the field interviewing the principals, teachers and conducting focus group discussion. The data was brought up analysed separately. The researcher compared the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data and finally interpreted the data, and the researcher triangulated the data collected.

3.1.3 Population and the Sample

Population can be defined as a group of individuals with similar characteristics of the sample. ‘A population refers to any collection of specified group of human beings or of non-human entities such as objects, educational institutions, time units, geographical areas drawn by individuals’ (Koul, 2009). ‘A population is the set of all elements. It is the large group to which a researcher wants to generalise his or her sample results’ (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

The population for the study is 87 principals of senior secondary schools of Sikkim. Out of 87 senior secondary schools, 72 senior secondary schools are located in rural areas and 15 schools are located in urban areas. The population of teachers for the study is 4456, out of which 3653 teachers are from rural schools and 803 teachers are from urban schools. The population of the students is 7100.

The table below reflects the distribution of the population in senior secondary schools of Sikkim.

Table 15

Distribution of the population in Senior Secondary Schools in Sikkim (2017)

	Schools	Teachers	Students
Rural Areas	72	3653	-
Urban Areas	15	803	-
Total	87	4456	7100

Source: <http://udise.in>

3.1.4 Sample

‘The representative proportion of the population is called a sample. To obtain a representative sample, the researcher selects each unit in a specified way under controlled conditions’ (Koul, 2009). ‘A sample is a set of elements taken from a larger population according to certain rules’ (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

3.1.5 Sample for the quantitative study

The sample for the quantitative study includes 20 principals of senior secondary schools of Sikkim.

For the quantitative data collection, the total number of schools was identified by the researcher and the stratified random sampling was used by the researcher. The basis for stratification was districts and then distribution of the schools on the basis of locale to ensure maximum representation of the schools from all the districts and areas of Sikkim. The data was collected from 20 principals of selected 20 senior secondary schools. The sampling technique used for the data collection is stratified random sampling. 'In stratified sampling, researchers divide (stratify) the population on some specific characteristic (e.g., gender) and then, using simple random sampling, sample from each subgroup (stratum) of the population (e.g., females and males). This guarantees that sample will include specific characteristics that the researcher wants included in the sample' (Creswell, 2015). From the four districts of Sikkim, schools were selected using simple random technique. The sampling structure for the quantitative study is shown as follows:

Table 16

Sampling Structure for Quantitative study

Sl. No	Districts	Number of Schools		Total Schools
		Urban	Rural	
1	East	3	3	6
2	North	1	2	3
3	South	2	4	6
4	West	1	4	5
Total	-	7	13	20

For the quantitative data collection, six schools were taken from east Sikkim out of which three schools were from the rural areas and three schools from the urban areas. Further, the data was collected from three schools in North Sikkim out of which one school belonged to the urban area and two schools belonged to the rural area. Similarly, in the south Sikkim, the data was collected from six senior secondary schools out of which two schools belonged to rural area and four schools belonged to urban area. Further in west Sikkim, the data was collected from five schools out of which one school belonged to urban area and four schools belonged to rural areas. The variation in selecting sample in each district is due to the population distribution, classification of urban and rural areas. Particularly for the north Sikkim, only three senior secondary schools were available so all the three school were taken as a sample for the study.

3.1.6 Sample for the qualitative study

The sample for the qualitative study includes 20 principals of senior secondary schools, 30 school teachers and 30 students of senior secondary schools of Sikkim.

The following is the distribution of the sample for the collection of the qualitative data for the interview is as under-

Table 17

Distribution of the sample for qualitative data collection (2017)

Sl. No	District	Number of Principals	Number of School teachers	Students
1	East	6	7	12
2	North	3	7	6
3	South	6	7	6
4	West	5	9	6

The above table reflects the distribution of sample for the qualitative data collection. A total of 20 principal of senior secondary schools, 30 teachers of senior secondary schools and 30 students of the senior secondary school were taken as the sample of the study. The sampling technique used for the collection of the qualitative data was purposive sampling technique. 'Purposive sampling has a long developmental history and there are as many views that it is simple and straightforward as there are about its complexity. The reason for purposive sampling is the better matching of the sample to the aims and objectives of the research, thus improving the rigour of the study and trustworthiness of the data and results' (Campbell, et al., 2020).

Six principals from east Sikkim, three principals from north Sikkim, six principals from south Sikkim and five principals from west Sikkim (all belonging to senior secondary schools) were interviewed for the data collection. Similarly, seven school teachers from the three districts- east, north and south and nine teachers from west district were interviewed for the study. The semi structured interview was conducted to the principal and teachers for finding the anomaly in the quantitative data.

For the focus group discussion, 12 students were taken from east district, six students from the north district, six students from the east district and six students from the west district.

3.1.7 Tools for data collection for Quantitative strand of the study

The researcher prepared a questionnaire for the quantitative data collection, 'A questionnaire is a self- report data collection instrument that each research participants fills out as part of a research study. Questionnaire can be used to collect quantitative, qualitative and mixed data. The content and organisation of a

questionnaire will correspond to the researcher's research objectives' (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The prepared questionnaire was distributed to the various departments of Sikkim University and the expert opinion was sought from the experts. The questionnaire was corrected as per the opinion of the experts and content validity of the questionnaire was established through the expert opinion.

The researcher used the questionnaire as a tool for the collection of the quantitative data as the data collection through the questionnaire as it is an economical method and puts less pressure on the respondents. The respondents may take their own suitable time and answer the questions. The questionnaire designed for collecting the quantitative data had a broad dimension and any other form of data collection would not have been convenient.

3.1.8 Tools for data collection for Quantitative strand of the study

The researcher used semi-structured interviews with the 20 principals and 30 teachers of senior secondary schools. The rationale behind using the semi-structured interview was that the semi structure interviews are convenient as compared to structured and unstructured interviews. The semi structured interview is pre-planned interview where the researcher asks only a few pre-planned and pre-determined questions to the interviewee, provides a basic framework of what is required by the research question and also expands the horizon of the questions. The responses made by the respondents can also be cross examined by the following question which further helps in the analysing and interpreting the results.

Similarly, the researcher collected the data through semi structured interview through focus group discussion with 30 students studying in senior secondary level. As per the

standard format of the focus group discussion, where six to eight participants are preferred (Creswell, 2015), the researcher conducted two focus group discussion with the students in east district and one focus group discussion in each of the other districts. The focus group discussion was preferred over the one to one interview with the students as the time to collect the data was limited and focus group could yield the data from the students better than the other methods of data collection. The researcher preferred the focus group discussion over the other methods of data collection as the students usually feel hesitant to provide the information when asked questions to the single participant. The time to collect the information was also limited. (Creswell, 2015) suggests ‘focus groups are advantageous when the interaction among the interviewees will likely yield the best information and when the interviewees are similar and cooperative with each other. They are also useful when the time to collect information is limited and individuals are hesitant to provide information (some individuals may be reluctant to provide information in any type of interview)’.

3.2 PILOT STUDY

The researcher conducted pilot study to check the applicability, objectivity and validity of the questionnaire to the five principals. The questionnaire was distributed to five principals and enquired about the content validity in detail. 80 percent principal reported that the questionnaire had questions which matches with the theme of the tool. The pilot study is done to pre-test the questions in order to ensure its applicability and the objectivity. In the pilot study, it was found that five items required reframing, few of the words were general, which needed to be made specific and the language used were re-checked. The researcher also conducted pilot study with the six teachers for the interview schedule. The teachers were asked to identify

the ambiguity of items and difficult questions. Based on their suggestions, the corrections were made as required. After correcting the items of the questionnaire, it is ensured that the questionnaire and interview schedule is appropriate and could collect the data as stated in the objectives of the research.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

The collection of the data is the most important aspect of the research. 'Collecting data means identifying and selecting individuals for a study, obtaining their permission to study them, and gathering information by asking people questions or observing their behaviours'(Creswell, 2015). It is only after the collection of the data, the data are analysed and the findings of the research is arrived.

3.3.1 Planning for data collection

The planning for data collection is important in a research. The researcher first focused on the identification of the unit of analysis for the data collection, followed by the specifying the population and the sample for the study. For the quantitative data collection the researcher constructed a tool to be administered to the principals of the senior secondary schools of Sikkim. For the construction of the tool, various policy programme and the schemes of the education department, government of India was studied by the researcher. The researcher prepared the tool and was taken to the experts to check the content validity of the tool.

For the qualitative data collection, the researcher also identified the unit of data collection and the technique of data collection. The semi-structured interview schedule was prepared for the interviews with the principals and the teachers. The

researcher also fixed the time and venue of data collection and the data collection was conducted on the convenience of the principal and teachers.

For the focus group discussion, the researcher first identified the units of data collection, the researcher prepared semi-structured questions and consulted the principals of the school for deciding the time and venue. After deciding the time and venue, the researcher met the students, discussed about the focus group discussions- its procedure and the technique and conducted the discussion.

3.3.2 Permission for the data collection

An application for issuing permission for the data collection was submitted to the head of the department, Department of Education, Sikkim University. After receiving the permission letter from the head of the department, the researcher further applied for the permission of data collection from the Education department, Government of Sikkim under each district. A counter signature was also procured from the Additional Director level in each district. The permission letter with the counter signature was handed over to the Principals of different schools for the data collection.

3.3.3 Ethical consideration of the qualitative research

Before conducting the interviews with the principals and the teachers, the researcher assured the confidentiality of the data to the principal, teachers and the students. The researcher mentioned that the data will be used purely for the academic purpose. The researcher also prepared an informed consent form for the teachers, principal and the students. The researcher received the signature in the informed consent forms. The researcher ensured the voluntary participation of all the candidates and informed the

objectives of the study. The researcher also made aware to the participants that they can leave the interview at any point of time if they feel uncomfortable.

3.3.4 Procedure of data collection

The researcher prepared the informed consent form and made and gave to the principal and teachers. They signed voluntarily. For the interviews with teachers a vacant room was selected, two chairs and a table was managed and made the teacher to sit facing the interviewer. A permission for recording the interview was asked to the teachers and the researcher conducted the interview.

For the focus group discussion, purposive sampling was used by the researcher to select the schools for focus group discussion. United States Agency for International Development have suggested the following steps in conducting focus group discussion – selection of the team, selecting the participants, deciding on time and location, prepare the discussion guide, conduct the interview, record the discussion and analyze the results (USAID, 2011). The researcher followed the steps suggested for the focus group discussion. A small team of two individuals including the researcher was prepared by the researcher. The researcher acted as a moderator and the other member helped with the audio recording of the interview. The researcher selected six participants through the purposive sampling technique, after the selection of the participants, the venue and time for each focus group discussion was selected on the convenience of the respondents, the discussion guide consisting of the semi structured questions was prepared by the researcher. The focus group was then conducted as per the scheduled time and venue with the standard format of six participants seated in a round pattern facing the moderator. The discussion was then recorded in the audio form which was transcribed and analyzed at the later stage.

The researcher also experienced some major difficulties during the data collection, the senior secondary schools were located at distant locations and the researcher had to travel a lot for the data collection, after visiting the schools it was often found that the Principal was on leave and the in-charge of the school hesitated for the interview and the researcher had to plan again for the data collection. Some of the schools were also having the sports and the cultural activities, the researcher could not collect the data and had to re-plan for the data collection. During the data collection also, most of the students were shy and did not speak up. The researcher also had to speak in native language to make the students feel comfortable for answering the questions. The researcher also faced problems during the interviews as the few of the teachers and the principals were not cooperative and had to wait for long hours to conduct the interviews.

3.3.5 Data Analysis

In the analysis of the data, first the quantitative data was collected. After the collection of the quantitative data, the organisation of the data was done by the researcher in excel format. The organisation of the data was based on the different indicators of the study. After the data was organised, the researcher used the scoring of the data. The researcher used the percentage wise scoring of the data and the data was finally analyzed according to the indicators of the study.

For the analysis of the qualitative data, the data collected through the interviews was organised in proper sequence as the extensive data were of large files. The interviewed data was then transcribed sequentially in a single spaced transcription word by word manually. The transcribed data was then reduced to the categories than simple coding was done. The data was coded and the coded data was arranged

thematically. The layering of the themes was also done by the subsuming the minor themes into the major themes. The researcher finally reported the findings in the form of narrative discussion.

The researcher analysed the qualitative and the quantitative data, and categorised it into themes. The data with the similar themes were taken and verified and analysed by the researcher.

For the policy documents, the researcher followed content analysis of the policy documents where the researcher evaluated the policy perspectives related to the education. For the policy analysis, the researcher conducted a study of the policy documents extensively followed by categorising the policy perspectives thematically. The policies were then analysed thematically and the findings were presented.

3.3.5.1 Triangulation of Method

‘The term Triangulation refers to the practice of using multiple sources of data or multiple approaches to analysing data to enhance the credibility of a research study. Originating in navigational and surveying contexts, triangulation aligns multiple perspectives and leads to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Salkind, 2010)’.

‘Triangulation is a process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research. The inquirer examines each information source and finds evidence to support a theme. This ensures that the study will be accurate because the information draws on multiple sources of information, individuals or processes. In this way, it

encourages the researcher to develop a report that is both accurate and credible' (Creswell 2015).

3.3.5.2 Triangulation of the data

The researcher collected the qualitative and the quantitative data for the study. The Quantitative data and the qualitative data are triangulated by integrating the qualitative information, observation and dialogues with the quantitative data.

CHAPTER - 4

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

Equity in access and participation in education has been in the focal list of all the policy documents in the past few decades. Senior secondary education being one of the important areas of education, exploring the frontiers of equity in access in the senior secondary level becomes important. This chapter has delve in depth in the area of understanding equity issues in education in the context of Sikkim state.

The researcher explored the issues of equity in education through the select indicators under the three major dimensions: broad select indicators, select indicators for ensuring equity in access, select indicators for ensuring equity in participation. The quantitative data was collected through the self-constructed questionnaire administered to 20 school heads of Sikkim which was followed by qualitative data collection in the form of semi- structured interview with the principals of senior secondary school of Sikkim and the focus group discussion with the students of senior secondary level. Since the study focused on both the qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, the study took embedded mixed method design in- order to study the objectives to the study.

Research questions of the study are as follows:

- How is the status of equity in access at the senior secondary schools of Sikkim?

- How is the status of participation to ensure equity in access at senior secondary level in Sikkim?
- What is the implementation mechanism for equity in access at the senior secondary education level in Sikkim?
- How are the policy perspectives ensuring equity in access at the senior secondary level in Sikkim?

The following were the objectives of the study:

- To explore the status of equity in access at senior secondary school of Sikkim.
- To find the status of participation to achieve equity in access in senior secondary education in Sikkim.
- To understand the implementation mechanism for equity in access at senior secondary level in Sikkim.
- To analyse the policy perspectives ensuring equity in access at the senior secondary level in Sikkim.

4.1 TO EXPLORE THE STATUS OF EQUITY IN ACCESS AT THE SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

Access to education is a pre-requisite for ensuring equity in education. Access and enrolment are co-related. The growth of education is directly related to the rate of enrolment. ‘This growth in general education is mainly supply driven as the students fill up the seats in the educational institutions’ (Bordoloi, 2012). The enrolment of students is thus an important aspect of ensuring the access and equity in education. The structural and functional arrangements in education lead to the inequities in education. In order to understand the existing inequities in access and participation in

education, the fundamental question is that whether the students from different socio-economic background, different genders, different ethnicity and the children with special needs are able to access the basic facilities in the school. The answer to the question lies in understanding the basic premise for understanding equity in access and participation education. The other variables that go on hand in hand are the implementation mechanism for ensuring equity in education and the policy perspectives ensuring equity in education.

4.1.1 Equity in admission from gender perspective

Understanding equity in admission through gender perspective is important to understand the equity in access to education.

4.1.1.1 Equity in admission

All the principals of 20 school mentioned that the school provide equal admission opportunity to girls and boys students. The interview reflected that there is no inequity in admission of girls and boys students.

A principal said *“we provide admission on the basis of first come and first serve thus there is no point of inequity in admission, having said that there is no inequity in enrolment of girls and boys students”*

This indicate that all the senior secondary schools of Sikkim provide equity in access to all the gender students. There is no inequity based on admission. There is no restrictions during the admission to secondary or senior secondary schools based on gender.

4.1.1.2 Girls enrolment higher

The study found out that in 20 schools, the enrolment of girls are higher.

Table 18

Enrolment of students in schools (2016-17)

	Primary with upper primary and secondary and higher secondary	Upper Primary with secondary and higher secondary	Primary with upper primary and secondary	Upper Primary with secondary	All Schools
Boys	13657	480	5043	148	19310
Girls	15814	556	5333	265	21968
Total	29471	1036	10376	413	41296

Source: udise.in

The above table revealed the enrolment of students in schools in the year 2016-2017. The enrolment of boys in primary with upper primary and secondary and higher secondary school was 13,657 and the girls enrolment was 15,814. The enrolment of boys in upper primary with secondary and higher secondary schools was recorded 480 and the girls enrolment was recorded 556. The enrolment of boys in primary with upper primary and secondary school was 5043 and the girls enrolment was 5333, similarly the boys enrolment in upper primary with secondary school was 148 and the girls enrolment was 265. The data indicates that the enrolment of girls is higher in schools.

A principal said “*speaking about the gender equality or enrolment, the enrolment of girls are a bit higher the boys*”.

A teacher said “... *yes, yes the enrolment of girls are higher in the senior secondary level in our school.*”

Higher enrolment of girls in senior secondary schools of Sikkim indicate that girls are getting chance to come to school and they are being benefitted from the opportunity of free and compulsory education. The girl students are showing interest towards education and enrolling themselves in schools.

4.1.1.3 Requirement of Guidance for boys and girls

Guidance is important for the students as it shapes their personal development. It also helps the learners in the decision making for their carrier and life.

Table 19

Requirement for Guidance for boys and girls

Yes	No
15(75%)	5(25)

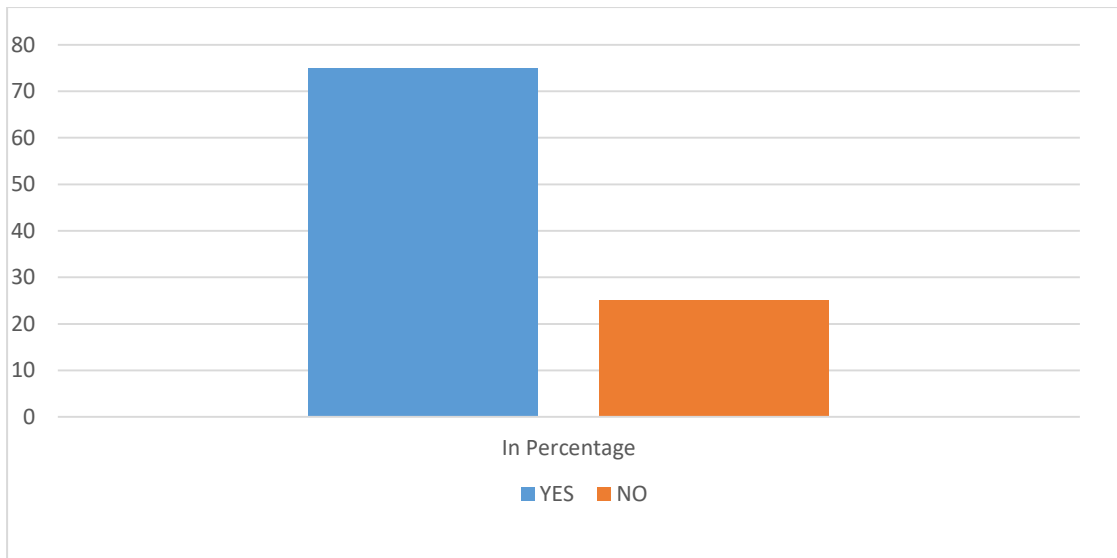


Figure 2 Requirement for guidance

The above table and the figure revealed that 75 percent school principals mentioned that the both the boys and girls need guidance for higher education.

The interviews with the teachers revealed that 20 teachers among 30 teachers mentioned that both the boys and girls students need counseling however it was mentioned that the girls are more serious about the counseling whereas, 10 teachers mentioned that the students do not need any specialized counseling. The focus group discussion revealed that 100 percent girls mentioned that they require educational and personal guidance and only 50 percent of the boys mentioned that they require guidance.

A principal stated “... they (girls) have (ummm) more expectation, some have really high expectations from the school, they require and aspire guidance from the school”

This indicates that the girls look upon the teachers not just for the educational guidance but also for the personal guidance as well.

A Teacher stated *“Girls are relatively more serious in their studies and want to have a successful career in life, they often come to us to discuss about the subjects however the boys are overconfident and feel they do not require guidance... the boys are more casual in their studies”*

A girl stated *“... yes we require guidance, guidance for higher education, guidance for career and guidance for good life”*

This indicate that majority of girls have expressed the need of guidance related to education, and other related matters. The students have expressed for guidance as it appears that they receive less educational guidance from home and other agencies. It could be that majority of students are first generation learners and they do not receive appropriate guidance at home so most of them have experienced the need for guidance. Guidance is important to improve student’s behavior and help them to achieve their goals.

4.1.2 Equity in infrastructure facilities

The infrastructural facilities play important role in ensuring the equity in access to the schools. proper buildings, proper classrooms, proper sanitation facilities, proper hygiene, proper laboratories, computer facilities etc. all these facilities are important to ensure that the school caters all the needs of the learners inside as well as outside the classroom. The samagrah siksha abhiyan in chapter 2 highlights- ‘Access to school will not be confined to mere availability of school but it will contain all the provisions that are required to attract and retain children in school till their completion of education. Provisions such as proper classrooms, adequate & functional toilets, Drinking water facility, ramps etc. are necessary part of any school building and need

to be provided mandatorily. All school buildings that will be constructed under the Scheme will have provision of rain water harvesting system and solar panel in the building plan itself and the school buildings will be designed so as to make them disabled friendly’ (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018). National education policy 2020 also highlights ‘A good education institution is one in which every student feels welcomed and cared for, where a safe and stimulating learning environment exists, where a wide range of learning experiences are offered, and where good physical infrastructure and appropriate resources conducive to learning are available to all students. Attaining these qualities must be the goal of every educational institution’ (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020).

The infrastructural facilities are thus the important aspect of ensuring equity in access to education.

4.1.2.1 Availability of adequate furniture

The availability of adequate furniture in the classroom is important for the smooth functioning of the teaching and learning process. Congested seating space hinders in the learning process among the students.

Table 20

Availability of adequate Furniture in the Classroom

Yes	No
17(85%)	3(15%)

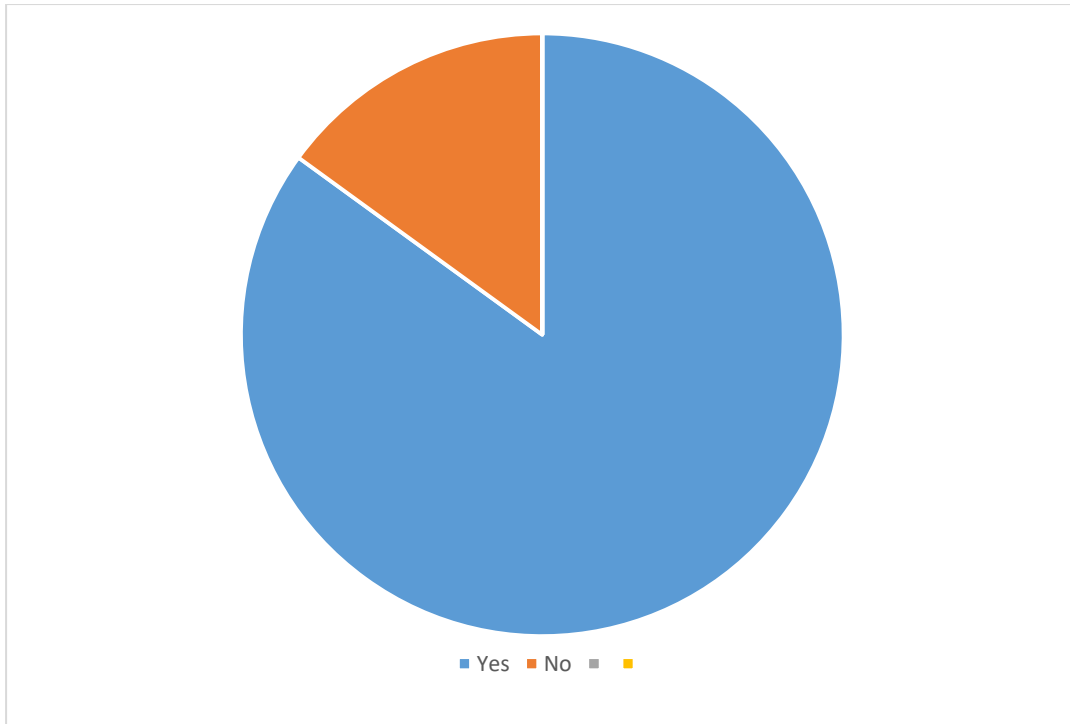


Figure 3 Availability of adequate furniture

The above table and figure revealed that 85 percent schools a have adequate furniture available in the schools and 15 percent schools do not have adequate furniture available in the school. The quantitative data and qualitative data corroborated and proved that 85 percent schools have adequate furniture whereas 15 percent schools do not have adequate furniture in the school.

It was observed by the researcher that the principals of rural schools mentioned that they do not have adequate furniture available in the school.

A principal of a school which did not have adequate furniture stated *“our school has been upgraded recently and we are facing some shortage of furniture...however, we have already sent the requisition to the government and hopefully the adequate furniture will be available soon”*.

A student stated “...yes we have adequate furniture inside the classroom”

This indicate that 85 percent school students have equity in infrastructure. It is a matter of concern that 15 percent school do not provide equity in access of furniture due to inadequate availability of the furniture. The students of those 15 percent schools do not have equity in access of furniture which may lead to discomfort while sitting in the class and hamper the learning of the students.

4.1.2.2 Common room for boys and girls

The common room is important for the students in the school as the students can use the room for recreational purposes. The common room can be used for socialization and is helpful for removing monotony among the students.

Table 21

Availability of Common Room

Yes	No
1(5%)	19(95%)

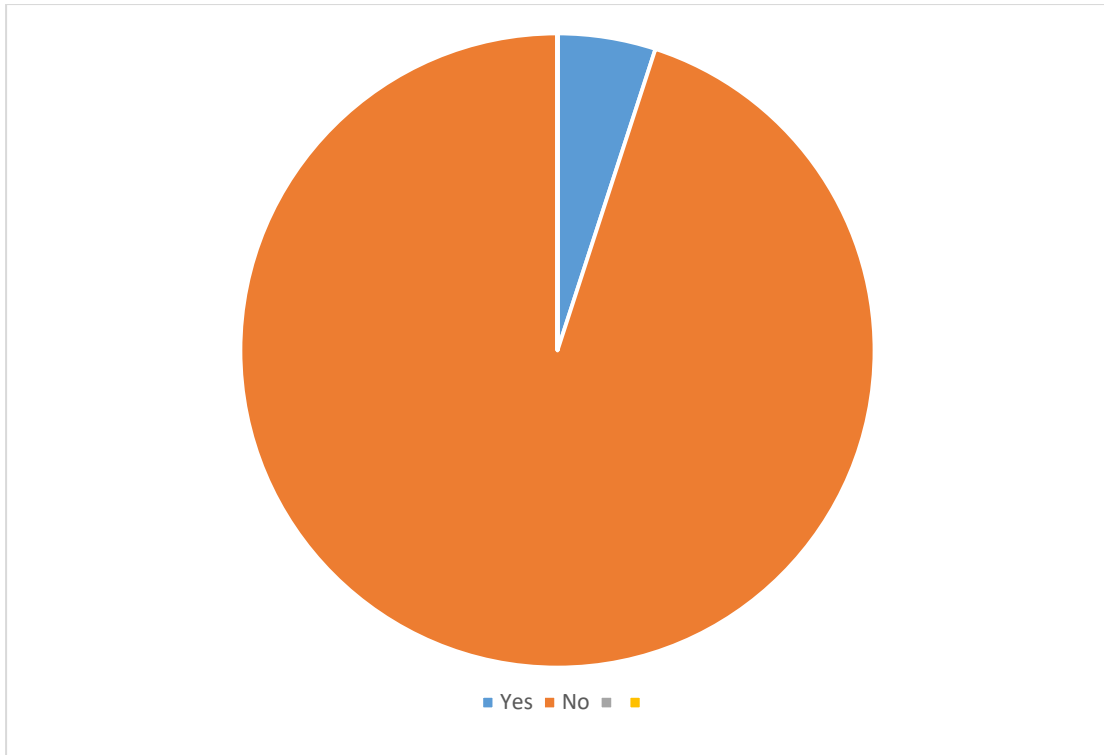


Figure 4 Availability of common room

The above table and the figure revealed that 95 percent schools do not have common rooms for boys and girls in the school, five percent school have the common rooms for boys and girls. The qualitative data also revealed that 19 schools do not have a separate common room for boys and girls. The reason provided is that common rooms are not required to be kept separately in schools so these rooms are used for other purposes.

A Principal explained *“we made a separate common room for boys and girls but the turnout in the common room was very low, since our school has a playground nearby and have sufficient space inside each classroom, there is no need of common room as such”*

This indicate that principals of senior secondary school have not seen the uses of common room so these rooms are not made available in schools. It is observed that

majority of the government schools in Sikkim have enough space around the school campus and have the facility of playground. There are no boundaries around the school and the students can easily socialize with the peers so it is felt that the students do not need a separate common room for socialization, however in the school located in the most urban areas, with limited space around the campus, the common room is needed for the student for socialization.

4.1.2.3 Availability of sanitary machine

Sanitary pad vending machine is very important in schools as it promotes menstrual hygiene of adolescent girl students. It also promotes menstrual health among the girl students as they can use the sanitary pads easily over the conventional methods during the menstrual cycle. It gives them confidence to girls to attend school even during the menstruation time. National policy on education 2020 highlights “The fund will be available to States to implement priorities determined by the Central government critical for assisting female and transgender children in gaining access to education (such as the provisions of sanitation and toilets, bicycles, conditional cash transfers” (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020). The sanitary facilities will be more emphasized in the schools with regard to the national policy on education.

All the principals of 20 senior secondary schools mentioned that these schools have the sanitary pad dispensing machines installed for the sanitary purpose. The qualitative data collected through focus group also revealed that the sanitary vending machine has been installed in all the 20 schools. This indicate that the schools are sensitive to the needs of girl students. Such facility encourages girl students to access the school and have equity in access of facilities.

4.1.2.4 Working status of sanitary machine

Working condition of the sanitary machine is important to ensure proper hygiene during the menstrual cycle of girls.

Table 22

Working Status of Sanitary Machine

Yes	No
12 (40%)	18(60%)

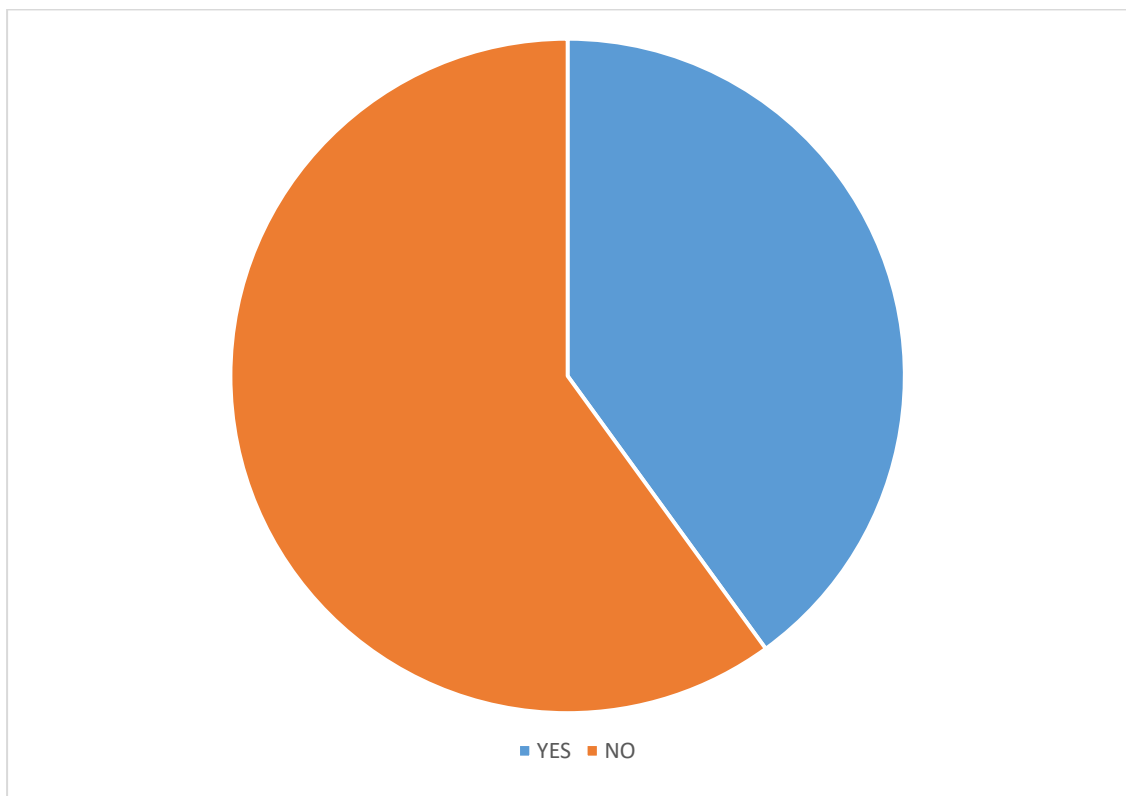


Figure 5 Working status of sanitary machine

The above table and figure revealed that 40 percent schools have sanitary machine under working condition and 60 percent of the do not have sanitary machine under

working condition. The focus group discussion with the students revealed that the sanitary machine is not working in their schools.

A student stated “... *yes we have the machine in our school but it is not working*”.

The study showed that the need for maintaining machine should be regularly maintained then only the objective of installing the machine may be fulfilled. The head of the school may seek suggestions from the members of the school managing committee to keep the machine in working condition.

Regarding the fee for using the sanitary pads, the qualitative study revealed that the girls students shared that they pay a nominal charge of five (05) rupees each time they use the sanitary pad from the installed vending machine.

A student stated “*we have to pay 5 rupees for using the sanitary machine installed in the toilet*”.

This indicate that school charge nominal fee, may be materials are brought by the school so as to raise the fund, the nominal charges are made. This also reflects the Health policy of the Government where natural phenomena concerning female are not free, so the schools cannot make it free.

4.1.2.5 Availability of changing rooms

The changing room provide an environment for girls student to feel comfortable during the time of menstruation. The facility of changing room and the vending machine will encourage girls students to attend and access the school even during the menstruation as they will be aware of support system in the school.

Table 23

Availability of Separate Changing Room

Yes	No
3 (15%)	17(85%)

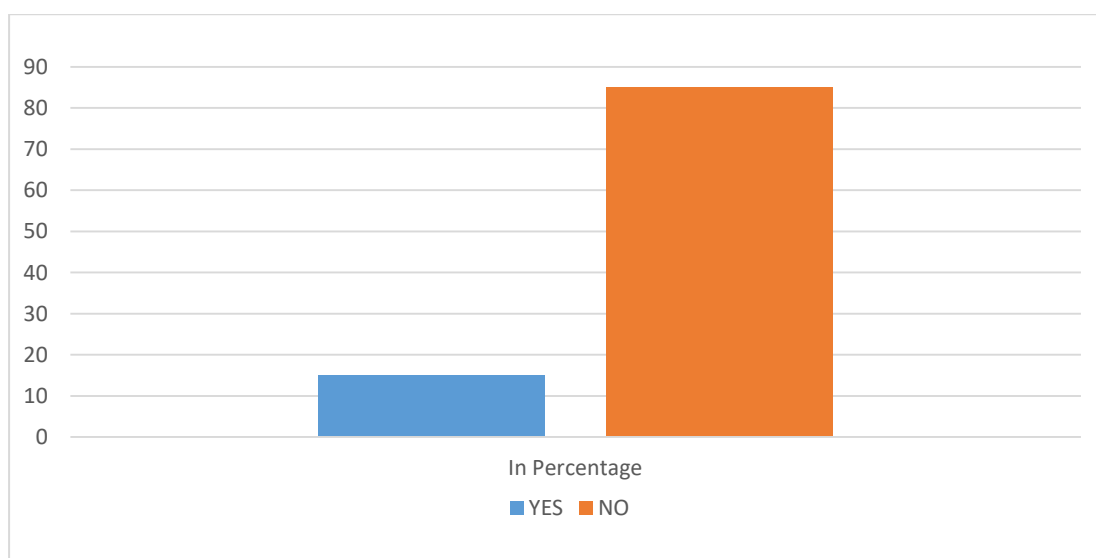


Figure 6 Availability of separate changing room

The above table and the figure revealed that 15 percent of the school have separate changing room for the girls for sanitary purpose and 85 percent of the schools do not have separate changing room for the girls.

A Principal stated “*we don’t have a separate changing room, the sanitary pad vending machine is installed in the girl’s toilet and they use it whenever they need*”.

This indicate that the authorities of the schools have to be highly concerned about the girl child and their needs so that equity in access of schools is established. The girl students will be able to access the schools in all school days and attend the school

with confidence as they will be aware of facilities provided to girls even during the menstruation.

4.1.2.6 Availability of library with adequate books

Library is an important component of infrastructure in a school. Library is created not just for the school books but provides students opportunity for creative thinking. Samagrah siksha abhiyan in chapter 5 highlights 'Library is an essential component of the school, providing not only resource for learning, but also for strengthening the idea of reading for pleasure, recreation and further deepening of knowledge and imagination. Accordingly, it will have books, pictorials, newspapers, journals, magazines, reference books, biographies, autobiographies, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, audiovisual material, etc. as well as access to information technology and digital resources. Training of teachers in library management and its usage will be integrated within the teacher training programmes. Efforts will be made for involving SMC and community for enriching the libraries. The library resources are also to be utilised for facilitating reading as the process of reading with comprehension in the light of Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat (PBBB)'(Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018). The library is thus an important component of infrastructural facility in the school for ensuring equity in access in education.

Table 24

Availability of the Library

Yes	No
20 (100%)	Nil

The above table revealed that 100 percent schools have a library room, however the qualitative study revealed that though there are library room in all the schools but the rooms are very small and not with adequate books.

A principal stated “... *yes we have a small library... not in an organized way... we have a small room and have two cupboards for library books*”.

A teacher stated “*we have a room for library but do not have adequate number of books required by the students*”.

A student stated “*Yes... we have a library but we have less number of books in the library and the room is also quite small for us*”

This indicates that the library is established in all the senior secondary schools however, no adequate books are available. Adequate books, reading materials and adequate space are important so that all the students can access the library. Inequity in access of the library exists as adequate books are not available. Additionally, the library has small room. The small library room with less books will not fulfill the objectives of establishing the library such as providing reading materials to students, encourage literacy appreciation and reading habits.

4.1.2.7 Availability of separate toilet for boys and girls but the issue of cleanliness is there.

Toilet facility is also an important component of the infrastructural facility in the school. Lack of access to toilet in the school hinders the hygiene and proper sanitation. The Samagrah siksha abhiyan under the swachh vidyalaya initiative highlights “The provision of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in school secures

a healthy school environment. Girls are particularly vulnerable to dropping out of school, partly because many are reluctant to continue their education when toilets and washing facilities are private, not safe or simply not available/ functional. The Government of India, therefore, launched the Swachh Vidyalaya Initiative in collaboration with State/UT governments, public sector undertakings and private corporate for provision of separate toilets for girls and boys in all government schools” (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018). In the co-educational institutes, separate toilets are required for boys and girls so that they can have access to the toilet facilities.

Table 25

Availability of Separate Toilet for Boys and Girls

Yes	No
20 (100%)	Nil

The above table revealed that 100 percent of the school have separate Toilet for boys and girls in the school. The interviews with 30 teachers revealed that all the 30 teachers mentioned that they have separate toilets for boys and girls in the school. All the 30 students in focus group discussion have also mentioned that they have separate toilets in the school. The quantitative data and qualitative data corroborated and proved that 100 percent schools have separate toilet for boys and girls in the school.

A student stated ‘...yes we have separate toilet for boys and girls, we have three units of toilet each for boys and girls’.

A teacher stated “ *yes.. yes we have separate washroom for boys and girls in the school*”.

This indicate that the senior secondary schools have equity in access to one of the major infrastructure of the schools which is a separate toilet.

Clean toilets in the school are important to promote cleanliness amongst the students. The clean toilet is a sign of good hygiene. Clean toilets in the schools also help to stop the spread of diseases. The interviews with the principals and teachers revealed that all the 20 principals and 30 teachers mentioned that have clean toilets in the school. However, the focus group discussion revealed that 12 students mentioned that they don't have clean toilet in the school.

A student stated “ *... yes we have separate toilets for boys and girls but our toilets are not clean enough*”.

This is a matter of concern that 12 students mentioned that they do not have access to clean toilets in their school.

4.1.2.8 Availability of separate laboratory for science subjects

The laboratory is an important component of the infrastructural facility in the school. The laboratory allows the students to perform experiments and acquire first hand data related to their study. The laboratory also provides an opportunity for the learners through learning by doing. The samagrah siksha abhiyan also recognizes the importance of laboratory facilities in the schools for the senior secondary level and envisages to provide the facilities. The scheme in chapter 2 highlights “The Scheme also provides for, 4 class rooms for 2 section school / 2 class rooms for 1 section

school for Secondary level & 4 class rooms for 02 section school/ 2 class rooms for 01 section school for Senior Secondary level for each stream i.e. Science, Arts and Commerce. The scheme also provides 1 integrated Science Laboratory for Secondary School and 4 laboratories for Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Mathematics for Senior Secondary Schools having science streams” (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018).

Table 26

Type of Laboratory Facility Available

Integrated	Separate
5 (25%)	15 (75%)

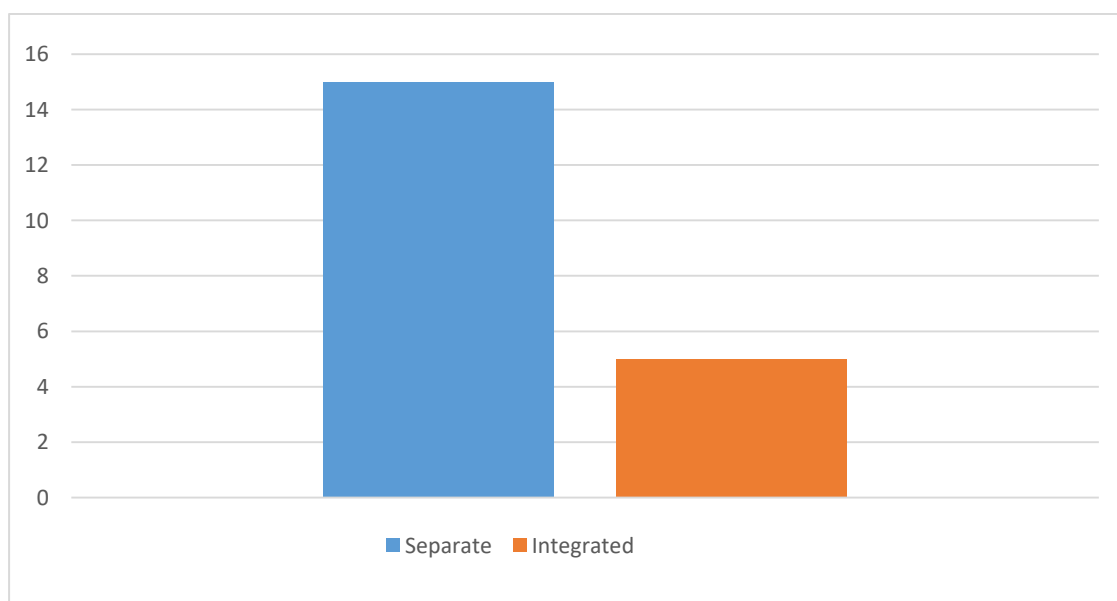


Figure 7 Type of laboratory facility available

The above table and figure highlighted that qualitative data revealed that 25 percent of the school have integrated laboratories for science subjects and 75 percent of the schools have separate laboratory for the science subject in the school.

A principal stated “ *our school has recently been upgraded from secondary school to senior secondary school hence we do not have science stream in the senior secondary level, however we have integrated laboratory for science subject till the tenth (10th) standard*”.

A teacher stated “*yes we have separate library for science subjects...the government provides all the equipment we require for practical works*”

This indicate that still five schools requires to have a separate rooms for different science subjects. These schools do not provide equity in access of facilities of laboratories in science to all the students. Additionally students face inequity as compared to the students from the schools that have laboratories for all the science subjects.

4.1.2.9 Fees for using the equipment in the laboratory

Since the year 2004, education in Sikkim has been made free and inclusive for the Sikkimese students up to the college level, as per the educational policy in Sikkim, no fees are to be paid by the Sikkimese students till they complete their graduation.

Table 27

Fees for Using the Equipment in the Laboratory

Yes	No
Nil	20 (100%)

The above table revealed that 100 percent of the school do not charge any fees from the students for using the equipment in the laboratory.

A principal stated “...*The government provides all the required equipment in the laboratory so the students are not required to pay any fees*”.

The Students in one of the Focus Group Discussion stated “*No we are not required to pay any fees for using the laboratory and library*”. The study indicate that the equity in access exist in all the schools for all the students studying the science subject.

4.1.2.10 Sitting space in the laboratory

The availability of adequate sitting space in the laboratory is important. It is through the laboratory that the learners can have hands on experience with the experiments they conduct. Adequate sitting space is a pre-requisite for the learners to enhance their learning outcome.

Table 28

Availability of Adequate Sitting Space in the Laboratory

Yes	No
20 (67%)	10 (33%)

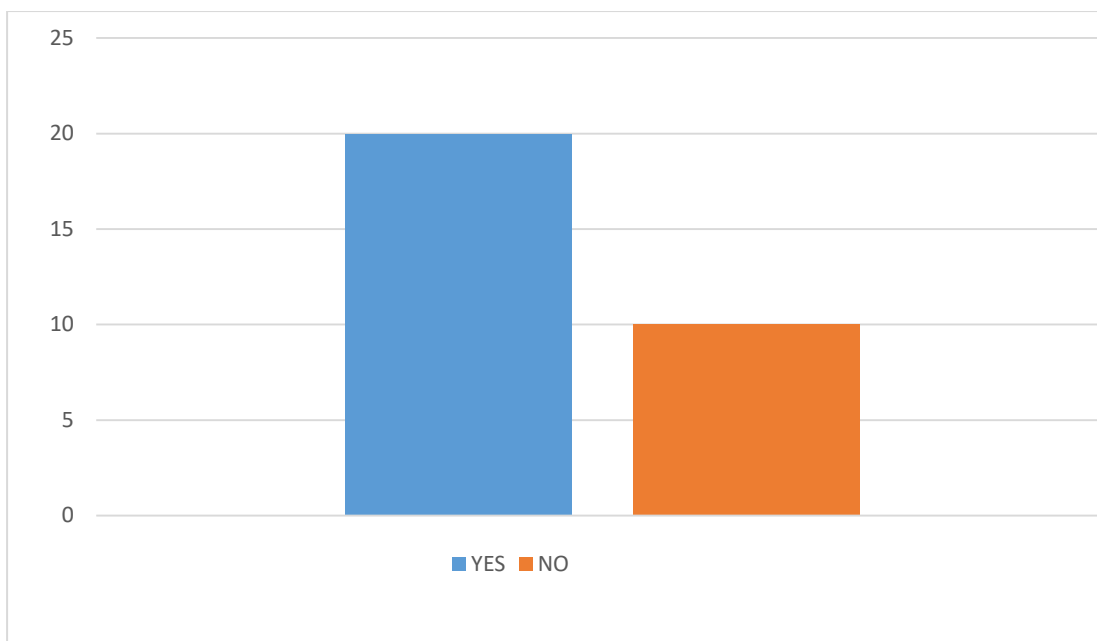


Figure 8 Availability of adequate sitting space in the laboratory

The above table and figure revealed that 67 percent of the students mentioned that there is adequate sitting space in the laboratory in their school and 33 percent students mentioned that there is no adequate sitting space in the laboratory.

A student stated “No we don’t have adequate sitting space in the laboratory, we have to wait for our turn to conduct an experiment in the Laboratory”

The findings of the study indicate that inequities while conducting experiments of science subjects exists as the sitting space are inadequate. The space in the laboratories should be improved so that all the students can study and conduct experiments in laboratory and do not face inequity during the science experiments.

4.1.2.11 Availability of Playground

Playground is also an important component of the infrastructural facility in the school, it is the place where the maximum socialization among the students takes place. It is also a place of recreation for the students. The samagrah siksha abhiyan highlights “The Scheme will be governed and regulated by the provision of the RTE Act, 2009 for elementary schools. The Schedule to RTE Act lays down the norms and standards for a school and provides that a school with an all-weather building should consist of ...Playground” (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018).

Table 29

Availability of playground

Yes	No
20 (100%)	Nil

The above table revealed that 100 percent of the school have playground for the learners. The interviews with the teachers and the focus group discussion with the students have revealed that all the 30 teachers and 30 students mentioned that they have playground in the school. The quantitative data and qualitative data corroborated and proved that 100 percent schools have playground for the learners. The findings of the study indicate that equity in access of playground exist for all the students of senior secondary schools.

4.1.2.12 Inadequate Sports Materials

Games and sports are important recreational activities for the students. It not only supports recreation but also helps to maintain physical and mental health. There are number of sports materials like football, volleyball, basketball, cricket kits, table-tennis boards and gears like gloves, helmet, shoes, suits etc.

Table 30

Availability of sports materials

Yes	No
6 (30%)	14 (70%)

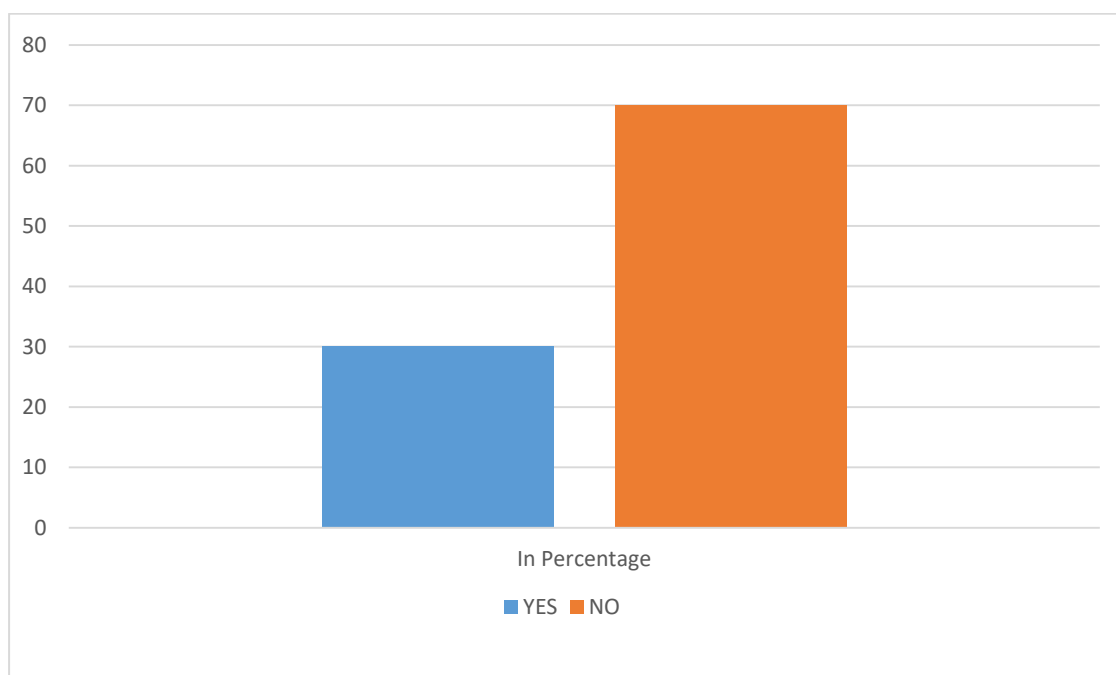


Figure 9 Availability of sports materials

The above table and the figure revealed that 30 percent of the school have adequate sports materials for the students and 70 percent of the schools do not have adequate

sports materials in the schools. The focus group discussion also revealed that 6 students have mentioned that the school does not have adequate sports materials.

A principal stated *“yes we have sports materials in the school but we don’t have adequate gears”*.

A student stated *“Yes... we have sports materials like football, badminton and volleyball in the school but we don’t have table tennis board, cricket bat etc.”*

The quantitative data and qualitative data corroborated and proved that 40 percent schools do not have sports equipment for the learners. Availability of the sports material encourage equity in access to sports which develops confidence, skills like leadership, patience and team efforts.

4.1.2.13 Availability of Indoor Game Facilities

There are number of indoor games like table tennis, badminton, chess, carom, ping-pong etc. Indoor games also provide the recreational opportunities for the students, the students for recreational purposes.

Table 31

Availability of Indoor Games Facilities

Yes	No
6 (30%)	14(70%)

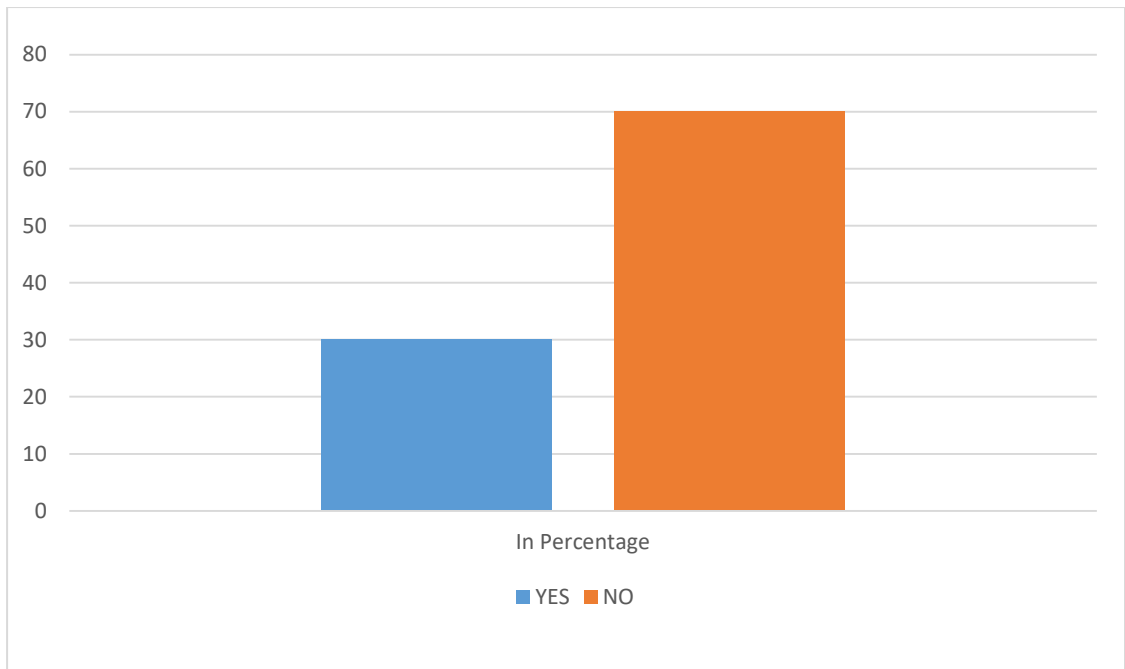


Figure 10 Availability of indoor game facilities

The above table and the figure revealed that 30 percent of the school have facilities for the indoor games and 70 percent schools do not have indoor game facilities.

A student stated “... we have table tennis board and a badminton court in our auditorium and we play sometimes”.

Another student stated “I like to play table tennis but no we don’t have indoor game facilities in our school”.

A teacher stated “Yes we have badminton court in the auditorium and the students often play during the free time, however it is not enough for the students”.

The study indicates that there exist inequities with regard to the availability of indoor game facilities as only 30 percent schools have indoor game facilities available for the students. The indoor game facilities develop collaboration skills and team work and certain cognitive skills with games like chess and carom boards. The school need

indoor game facilities as it is not possible to access outdoor games especially in rainy seasons. The availability of indoor game encourage participation for all sections of the students. They come in close contact and learn cooperation and respect for each other.

4.1.2.14 Availability of computer room with functional computers

In this era of science and technology, computer has become integral part of our lives. Even in the educational context the use of computers are profound. Through the means of computers and internet facilities, the students can access the information they require, they can also complete the assignments and projects and attend online classes.

Table 32

Availability of Computer Room with functional Computers

Yes	No
20 (100%)	Nil

The above table revealed that 100 percent of the schools have computer room with the functional computers for the learners. The interviews with the principals and teachers also revealed that there are computer rooms with functional computers in the school. The focus group discussion also revealed that all the students mentioned that they have access to the computer classes. The quantitative data and qualitative data corroborated and proved that 100 percent schools have computer room with functional computers for the learners. This indicates that equity in access to the computer facilities exists in all the senior secondary schools.

4.1.2.15 Availability of Electricity connection in the school

Electricity plays very important role in the education, a school with well-connected electricity facilitates better learning. The electrified schools have better access to the digital education, they have better lighting facilities and have access to electric fans.

Table 33

Availability of electricity connection in the school

Yes	No
20 (100%)	Nil

The above table revealed that 100 percent of the school have access to electricity supply. The interviews with the principal, teachers and focus group discussion with the students also revealed that all the principals and teachers and all the 30 students mentioned that they have availability of electricity connection in the schools. The quantitative data and qualitative data corroborated and proved that 100 percent schools have electricity connection.

4.1.2.16 Availability of solar panel, generator or inverter facility in the school

The generator provides un-interrupted power supply when the power supply is temporary cut down so that no normal functioning of the schools gets un-interrupted. The generator facility is also important for the using the computer till the power supply is restored. The samagrah siksha abhiyan in chapter 7 highlights “Wherever the power supply is unreliable it is suggested to procure solar power panels and wherever they are not feasible a generator may be used on a temporary basis. In such

cases where the school and TEI is using a generator facility; a recurring cost subject to a maximum of Rs.3000 per month will be applicable. For reliable power supply, it is advised to take into consideration the guidelines of Ministry of Power & Ministry of Renewable Energy, Government of India for convergence of plans and services (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018)’’.

Table 34

Availability of Solar Power Panel, Generator or Inverter in the school

Yes	No
6 (30%)	14 (70%)

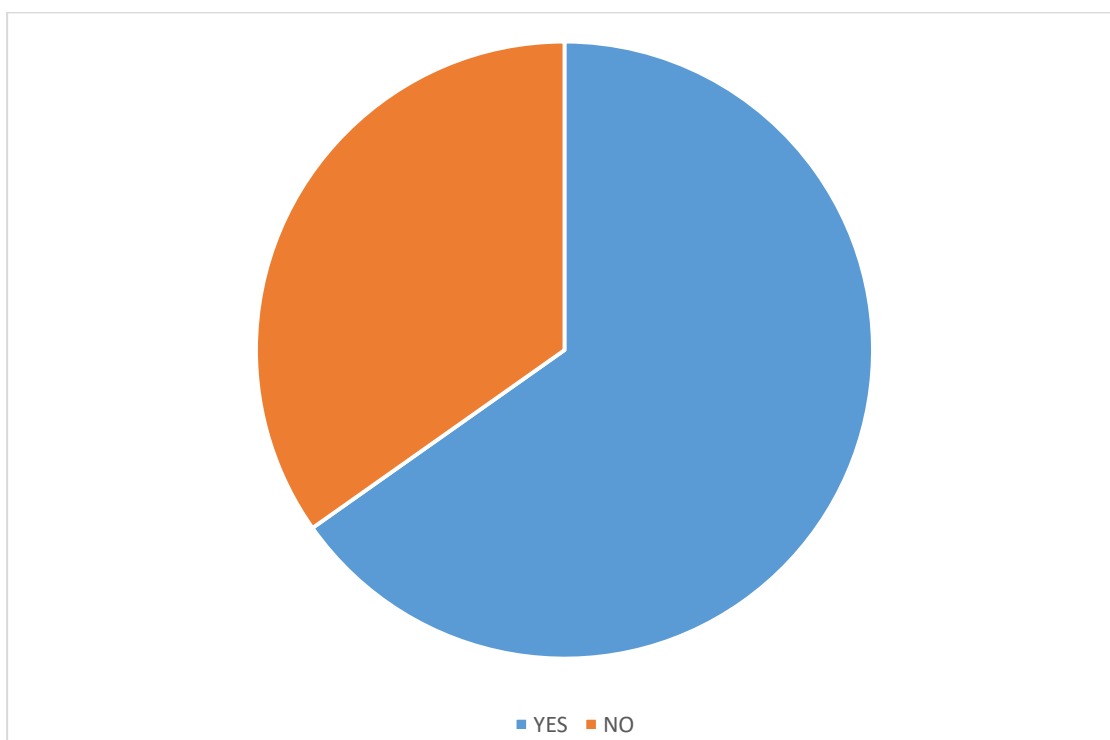


Figure 11 Availability of solar panel, generator or inverter facility in the school

The above table and the figure revealed that 30 percent of the school (urban schools) have access to generator and inverter facilities whereas 70 percent schools do not

have access to generator facilities. The study indicates that though all the schools have access to proper electricity and computer facilities, however in case of power-cuts, the students of 70 percent schools cannot have access to computer facilities. Sikkim has heavy rainfall and during the rainy season, it is observed that electricity supply gets cut off frequently. In addition if the inverter or generators are not available, then the inequity as compared to those school having all these facilities.

4.1.2.17 Availability of auditorium hall

The auditorium hall is also known as a multipurpose hall it is a place where the various functions of the schools are conducted. It can be used for assembly hall, indoor games, recreational purposes and various other activities.

Table 35

Availability of Auditorium Hall

Yes	No
14 (70%)	6 (30%)

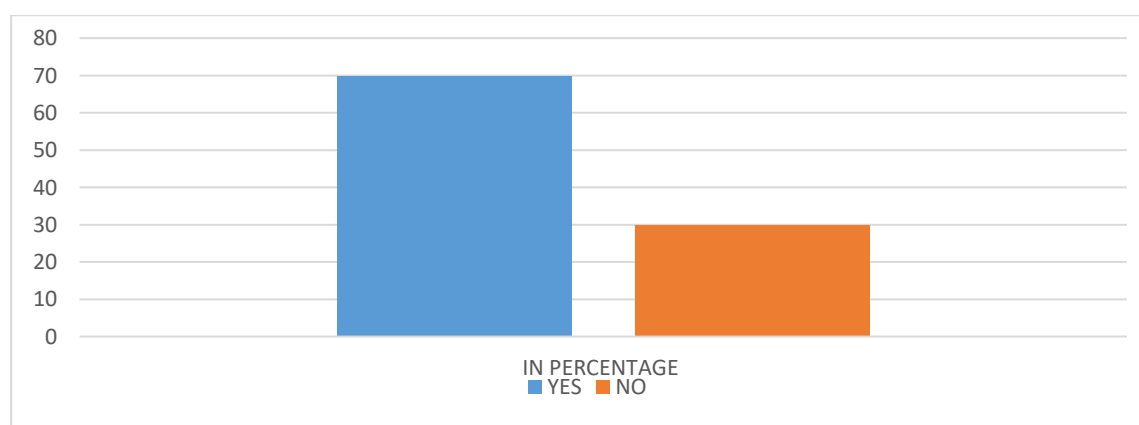


Figure 12 Availability of auditorium

The above table and the figure revealed that 70 percent of the school have auditorium hall in the schools and 30 percent of the school do not have auditorium hall. Further the qualitative data revealed that the schools without auditorium are recently upgraded to senior secondary school they use a room in the school for functions as the auditorium hall.

4.1.2.18 Additional rooms under construction

Samagrah siksha abhiyan states “Opening of new Senior Secondary and Secondary sections/ schools, or up gradation of upper primary schools to secondary /Senior Secondary level would include provision of additional class rooms with furniture, library, laboratories, vocational lab, computer room, Head Master room, Art and Craft room, drinking water facility, separate toilets with water facility for boys, girls and CWSN” (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018). The additional classrooms are therefore required for the new upgraded schools.

Table 36

Additional Rooms Under Construction

Yes	No
6 (30%)	14(70%)

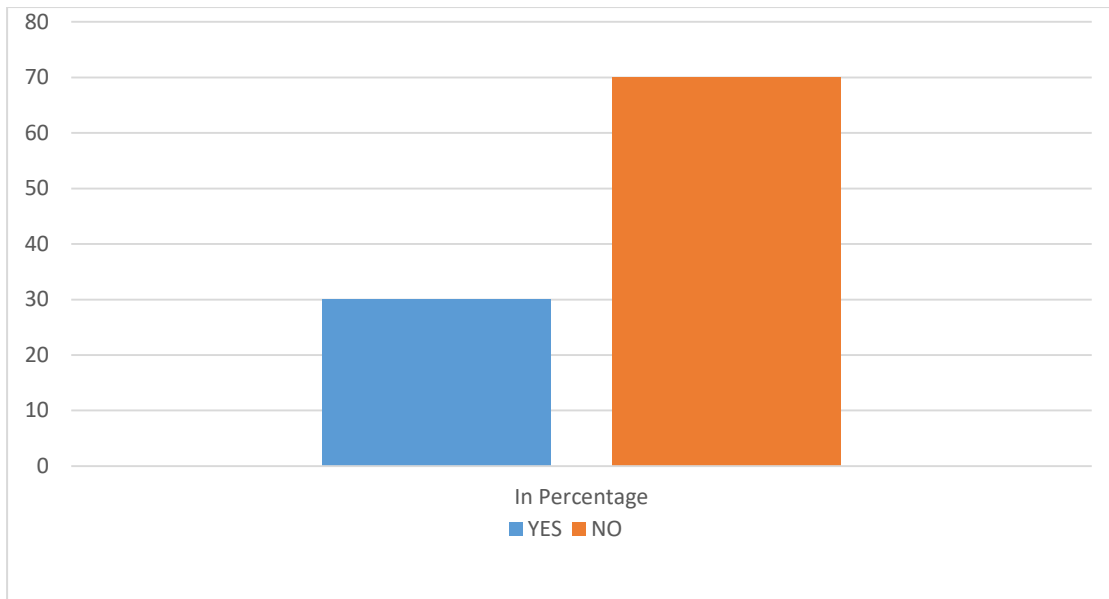


Figure 13 Additional rooms under construction

The above table and the figure revealed that 30 percent of the school have additional rooms under construction.

A principal stated *“we have additional rooms under construction, these rooms will be used for different purposes like library, laboratory and staff rooms etc.”*

A teacher stated *“yes... as you can see, our school is under renovation and we have additional rooms under construction as well.”*

These additional rooms will increase the equity in access of infrastructural facility to all the students accessing senior secondary education.

4.1.2.19 Availability of Art ,Craft and Culture rooms

The art craft and culture room play very important role in the development of the aesthetic aspects of the children. The art, craft and culture room provide the opportunity for the learners to unleash their expression through the coordination with their friends.

The national education policy 2020 has stated the importance of art education as – ‘Art-integration is a cross-curricular pedagogical approach that utilizes various aspects and forms of art and culture as the basis for learning of concepts across subjects. As a part of the thrust on experiential learning, art-integrated education will be embedded in classroom transactions not only for creating joyful classrooms, but also for imbibing the Indian ethos through integration of Indian art and culture in the teaching and learning process at every level. This art-integrated approach will strengthen the linkages between education and culture (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020)’. However the provision of the art and craft room can be seen in Samagrah siksha abhiyan as it highlights- ‘Opening of new Senior Secondary and Secondary sections/ schools, or up gradation of upper primary schools to secondary /Senior Secondary level would include provision of additional class rooms with furniture, library, laboratories, vocational lab, computer room, Head Master room, Art and Craft room, drinking water facility, separate toilets with water facility for boys, girls and CWSN’ (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018).

Table 37

Availability of Art, Craft and Culture Rooms

Yes	No
3 (15%)	17 (85%)

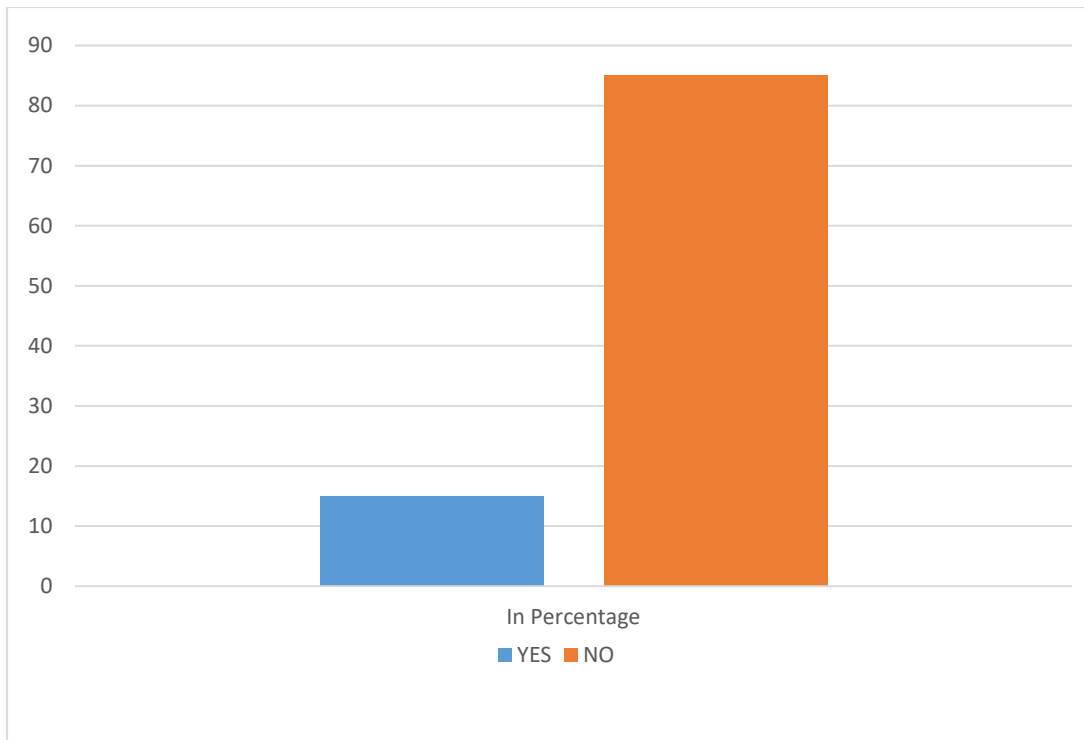


Figure 14 Availability of art, craft and culture rooms

The above table and figure revealed that 15 percent of the senior secondary schools have art, craft and culture room in the school and 85 percent schools do not have art, craft and culture rooms in the school. The study found that the students do not have equity in access to Art, Craft and Culture rooms. It is important of some such rooms as students learn values and appreciate artifacts and images across cultures and times. The students also learn to think creatively.

4.1.2.20 Availability of Drinking water facilities

Water is the most important resource for a school. Adequate drinking water is required for maintaining proper hygiene and sanitation for the students. Providing access to drinking water facilities for the learners help them to remain hydrated and maintain proper hygiene.

Table38

Availability of Drinking Water Facilities

Yes	No
20(100%)	Nil

The above table revealed that 100 percent of the school have drinking water facilities. The focus group discussion and the interview with the principals also revealed that 100 percent schools have drinking water facilities. The quantitative data and qualitative data corroborated and proved that 100 percent schools have adequate drinking water facilities. This study indicates that the students have access to drinking water facilities in all the senior secondary school.

Samagrah siksha abhiyan states- “Access to school will not be confined to mere availability of school but it will contain all the provisions that are required to attract and retain children in school till their completion of education. Provisions such as proper classrooms, adequate & functional toilets, Drinking water facility, ramps etc.” (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018).

4.1.3 Availability of Teaching Learning Materials (TLM) inside the class room.

The teaching and learning materials play important role in the teaching and learning process. The students can understand and comprehend the subject better through the 3D models, charts, diagrams, figures and through the others means of ICT.

20 Principals of senior secondary school mentioned that the subject specific teacher prepare the teaching and learning materials with charts, paper and pen and also with the materials which are indigenously available.

A principal stated *“yes we have teaching learning materials to be used inside the classroom. We have charts, globe, geometry materials etc.”*

A student stated *“we have some teaching learning materials but they are not used frequently”*.

4.1.3.1 Teaching Learning Materials (TLM) prepared through indigenous resources

Teaching learning materials are important as the use of teaching learning material in teaching is directly related to the achievement of the students. The students are able to understand the subject matter better with the help of the teaching learning materials

Table 39

Teaching Learning Materials (TLM) prepared through indigenous resources

Yes	No
12 (60%)	8 (40%)

The above table revealed that 60 percent of the school have availability of the teaching learning and 40 percent schools do not have the teaching learning materials prepared through indigenous resources for the teaching learning process to be conducted inside the classroom. The interviews with the teachers have also revealed that nine teachers mentioned that they do not have time to prepare teaching learning

materials prepared through indigenous material. It was also observed that the teachers from urban schools mentioned that they have no time to prepare the teaching learning materials prepared through indigenous material.

The focus group discussion also revealed that 12 students mentioned that the schools. It was also observed that the teachers from urban schools mentioned that the schools do not have teaching learning materials prepared through indigenous resources.

A teacher stated *“No... we don't have time to prepare the teaching learning materials as we need to complete syllabus on time as well”*.

The locally produced materials are indigenous material and it has multiple advantages. The teaching learning materials made from materials that are naturally and locally available are more applicable while teaching, it will be cheap and save money. It will be environment friendly. Teachers have to be creative to use indigenously made teaching learning materials.

4.1.3.2 Availability of the audio- visual aids

Audio visual aids are very important in the teaching and learning as they enhance the learning outcome of the students. The use of the audio visual aids in the classroom makes it easier for the students to grasp the content matter. Audio-visual aids are the best form of teaching aids for the dissemination of knowledge. The components of the audio- visual aids are Computers, Projectors laptops etc.

Table 40

Availability of the Audio- Visual Aids

Yes	No
5(20%)	15(75%)

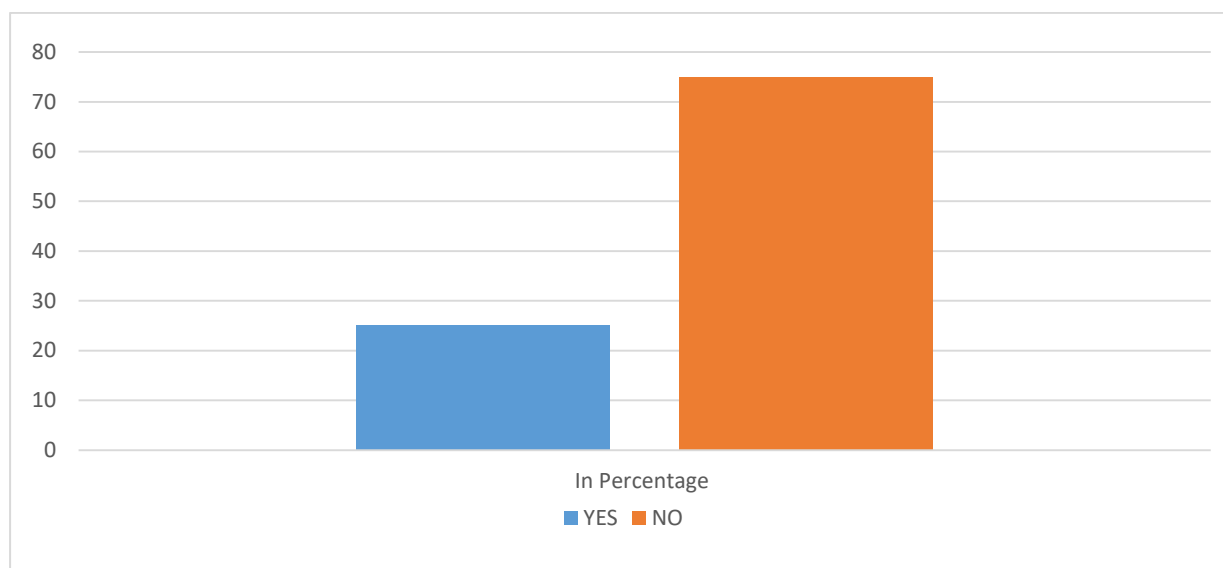


Figure 15 Availability of the audio visual aids

The above table and the figure revealed that 25 percent of the school have availability of the audio-visual aids inside the classrooms and 75 percent of the school do not have audio-visual aids in the schools. The focus group discussion with the 30 students also revealed that all the 30 students mentioned that they don't have access to audio visual aids in the classroom. It was observed that the higher percentage of the rural schools do not have audio-visual aids in the classroom.

A Student stated *“there is a single room for smart class and it is under construction and we do not have audio visual aids in the classroom”*

A principal stated *“...no we don't have audio visual aids in the classrooms”*.

The audio-visual aids are necessary, it helps the teacher to teach well and effectively. It also helps the learner to grasp the knowledge well. The equity in access with regard to audio- visual aids do not exist.

4.1.4 Lack of art ,craft resource teachers

The art and craft resource teachers are the teachers who have specialization in the various form of arts and crafts and are able to cater the needs of the students.

Table 41

Lack of Art, Craft Resource Teacher

Yes	No
1(5%)	(95%)



Figure 16 Lack of art, craft resource teacher

The above table and figure revealed that 95% of the senior secondary schools do not have art and craft resource teacher in the school and 5% of the schools have art, and craft resource teacher in the school.

A Principal explained “*we have art and craft room in the school but we do not have a resource teacher.*”

The study found that the students do not have equity in access to art and craft resource teacher in the school. The lack of resource teacher defeats the objectives of having arts and craft room in the school. These teachers have expertise to teach fine motor skills, encourage creativity and share emotions. Lack of such teachers has inequity in access to art and craft teachers.

4.1.5 Emotional problem among female students may effect equity

The quantitative study and the focus group discussion (FGD) with the students revealed different dimensions on the emotional problem among female students. The study highlighted that the girls are experiencing inferiority complex and feeling disadvantaged.

4.1.5.1 Inferiority complex among girl students

Inferiority complex is a psychological state of mind wherein one feels inadequate, it is a personal feeling that someone is at better off position than me.

Table 42

Inferiority Complex among Girl Students

Yes	No
12 (60%)	8 (40%)

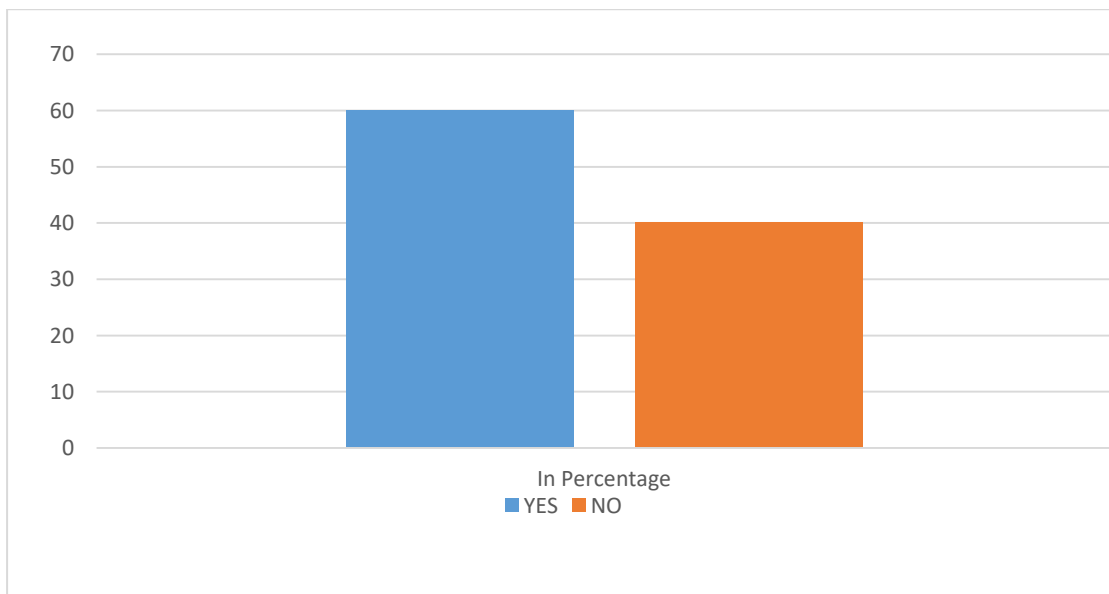


Figure 17 Inferiority complex among girl students

The above table and figure revealed that 60 percent of the principals of the school mentioned that the girls have inferiority complex and 40 percent of the heads of the school heads mentioned that the girls do not have inferiority complex over the boys. The focus group discussion revealed that 25 girl students mentioned that they feel inadequate and believe that they are deficient in every aspect as compared to boys.

A girl student stated “... yes I do feel inferior as compared to boys, boys are stronger than us. Even the society consider that boys are stronger”

This indicate that they are reflecting inferiority complex, they feel small and less as compared to their friends who are male genders. Such individual with poor self-image can't fulfill the objectives of education. The female students who feel inadequate may not take the advantage of facilities of education leading to inequity.

4.1.5.2 Feeling of dis-advantaged being a girl child

The focus group discussion also revealed that the reason for feeling inferior is that society expects all the household chores from the girls, they feel they cannot express freely as well as do not feel freedom of choice in personal matter, their movement and dresses.

A girl student stated “...we have to do all the household works, we are not allowed to roam freely, we are not allowed to wear the dress of our choice. The society always judge us in everything we do”.

These social obligations in the society and in the family make them feel inadequate as they compare themselves with the boys as comparatively they have higher degree of freedom in every aspects of life. They become dependent on others and will not be able to take any decisions later in life also. If the girl students feel disadvantaged because of gender, they may not take the use of resources of education and participate equally with the male students. This may lead to inequity in school and society.

4.1.6 Equity in access with regard to economically weaker sections of the society

The students from economically sections of our society have their own issues and problems and the education should cater the needs and aspiration of these learners.

Samagrah Siksha Abhiyan states 'Equity would therefore, mean focus on addressing exclusion of girls and children belonging to SCs, STs, Marginalized communities and of the other deprived affected and vulnerable groups who constitute the bulk of excluded children in the country. It will also mean including gender and other equity issues within the quality goal' (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018).

The study found that the school education is free, availability of social welfare groups and there are no separate incentives for the economically weaker section of the society.

4.1.6.1 No Fees required for access to education

The NPE (New Policy on Education) 2020 envisages the waiver of fees for the marginalized students for access to education. It states –

'Within SEDGs, and with respect to all the above policy points, special attention waivers will be given to reduce the disparities in the educational development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. As a part of the efforts to enhance participation in school education, special hostels in dedicated regions, bridge courses, and financial assistance through fee waivers and scholarships will be offered to talented and meritorious students from all SEDGs on a larger scale, especially at the secondary stage of education, to facilitate their entry into higher education' (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020).

Table 43

No fees Required for access to School Education

Yes	No
20 (100%)	Nil

The above table revealed that 100 percent of the school mentioned that no fee is required for access to education. The qualitative data also revealed that all the 30 participants mentioned that they do not require to pay any fees for access to education.

This indicates that free secondary education is provided to all students in all the government schools of Sikkim, which ensure equity in access to the students from economically weaker and marginalized sections of the society. The students accessing government schools do not have to pay fees.

4.1.6.2 Availability of Social welfare group in the school

The social welfare group in schools are constituted to support the students from economically weaker sections of the society. The group comprises of the teachers and students as the members of the group. The social welfare group collects the funds, clothes and distribute it to the students who are in need.

Table 44

Availability of Social Welfare Group in the School

Yes	No
5(25%)	15(75%)

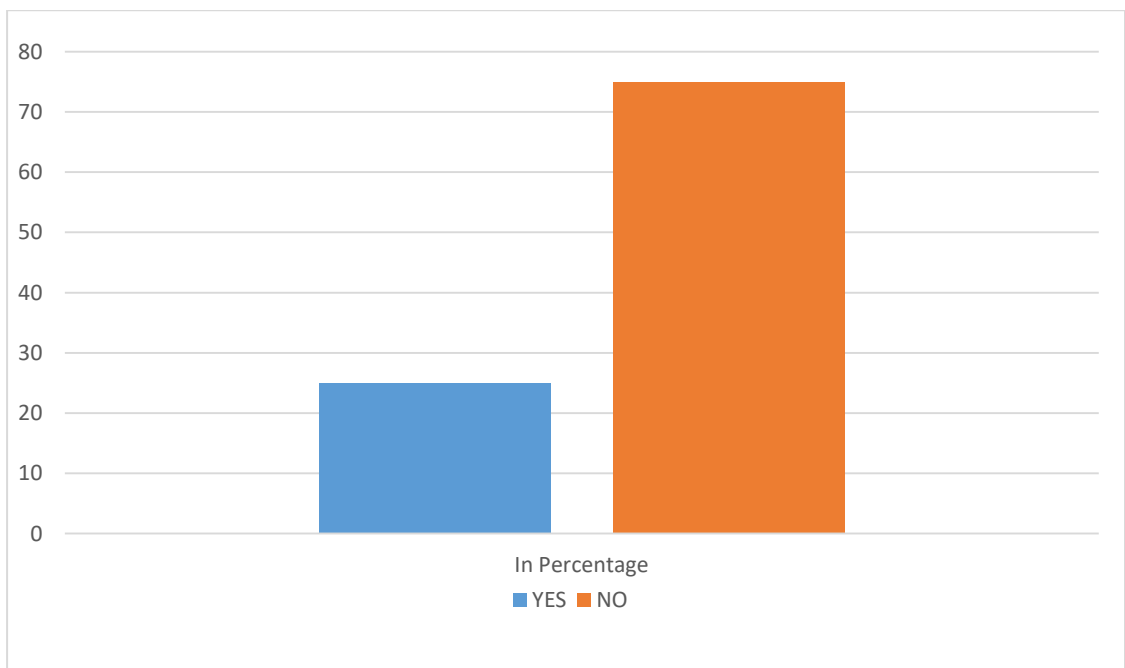


Figure 18 Availability of social welfare group in the school

The above table revealed that 25 percent of the school mentioned that there is a social welfare group (having teachers, and members of the school management committee) in in the group) to cater the needs of the economically weaker sections students.

A principal stated “*there is a social welfare group constituted in the school which has teachers in the group, these teachers help the economically weaker sections students in needs and contribute financial aid for them in need*”.

This indicates that the schools through social welfare group cater the needs of the economically weaker sections students.

4.1.6.3 Economically weaker section students

The economically weaker section is a sub section of the general category of people who have family income of less than rupees 8 lakh a year. The students belonging to this category of family are categorized as economically weaker section students.

Table 45

Percentage of Economically Weaker Section Students

Percentage	10-20	20-30	30-40	40-50	50-60	60 and above
Total	60	40	-	-	-	-

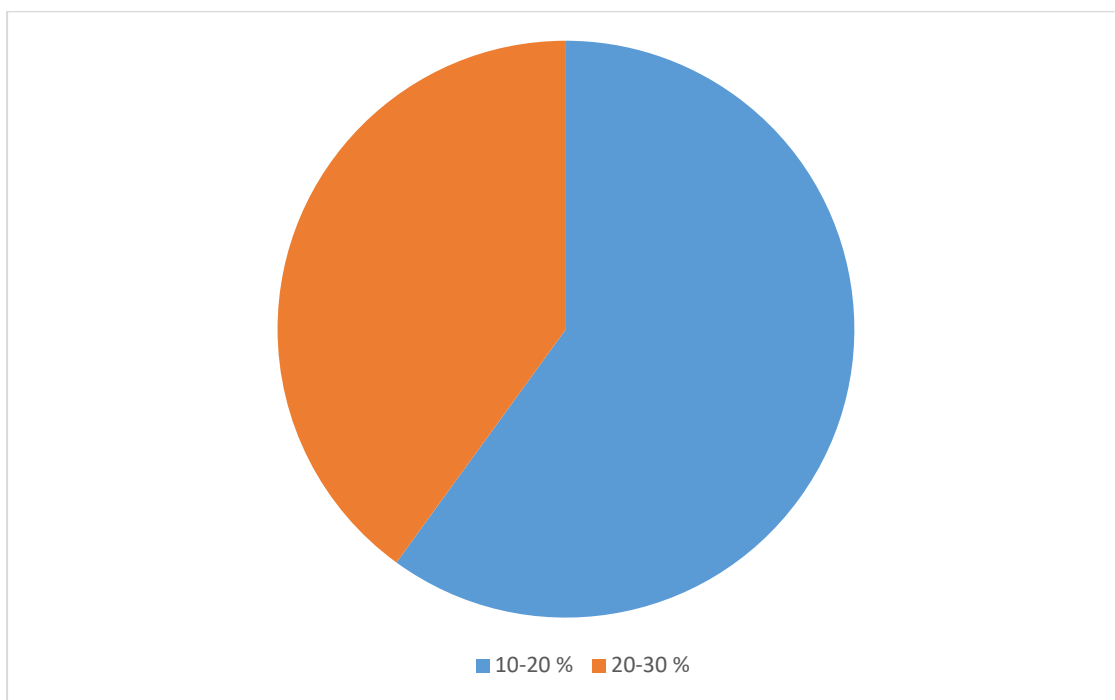


Figure 19 Percentage of economically weaker section students

The above table and the figure revealed that 60 percent of the school mentioned that they have 10-20 percent students from economically weaker section of the society, and 40 percent schools mentioned that they have 20-30 percent students from economically weaker section of the society.

4.1.6.4 Incentives for the economically weaker section of students

The economically weaker section students have their own aspirations and to ensure equitable access in education, the incentives for the economically weaker sections of the society important

Table 46

Incentives for Economically Weaker Section Students

Yes	No
Nil	20(100%)

The above table revealed that all the 100 percent of the principals mentioned that they do not have any specific incentive for the economically weaker section students. The qualitative data revealed that the students from the economically weaker section can avail Chief Minister's scholarship. There is also a cash award for the toppers (local students), Prerna and Merit scholarships for the girls and the post metric scholarships.

4.1.7 Equity in access for the children with special needs

According to the principle of the inclusive education, all the children with special needs have to be brought to the school and the school should cater the needs of the children with special needs. The children with special needs are the special learners

suffering in any of the wide range of disabilities. The different range of disabilities include- visual impairment, speech disabilities, deafness, physical or orthopedic impairments, learning disabilities, emotional disabilities etc.

There is a Scheme of Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage for the divyang learners. The Scheme of Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) is a centrally sponsored programme with the states acting as the nodal agencies for the implementation of the programme. This scheme comes under the department of school education under the education department of the states. This scheme envisages to ensure equitable opportunities for the differently-abled learners the education department under the Indian union provides 100 assistance for the scheme and the state government is required to pay rupees six hundred for the differently abled learner per annum. The scheme also seeks the participation of various non-governmental organizations working on the area of differently abled learners for ensuring equitable access for the differently abled learners.

4.1.7.1 Number of Divyang Learners

‘Divyang’ is a hindi word meaning ‘divine body’ and the word is used for the children with special needs.

Table 47

Number of Divyang Learners

Yes	No
3(15%)	17(85%)

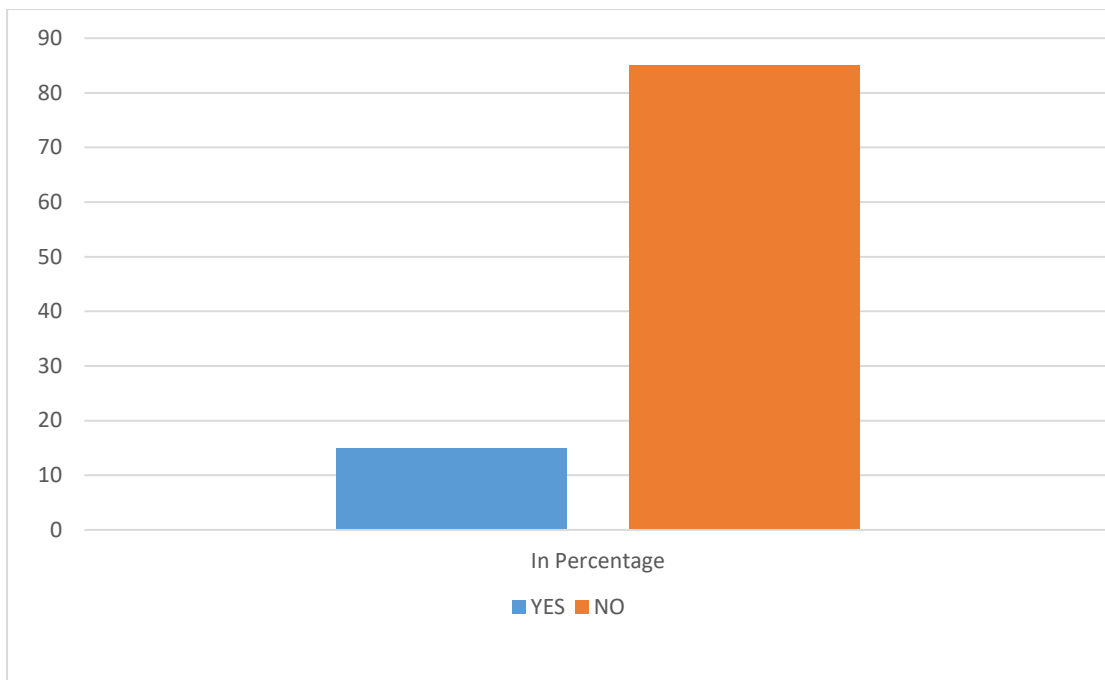


Figure 20 Number of divyang learners

The above table and the figure revealed that 15 percent of the principals of senior secondary school mentioned that there are divyang learners in the school. The qualitative data collected through the interview with twenty 20 school principal also revealed that three principals mentioned that there are three divyang learners of orthopedically handicapped category in the schools.

4.1.7.2 No Proper Mechanism for Identification of Divyang Learners

The study revealed that the principals of 20 schools have mentioned that there is no proper mechanism to identify the differently-abled learners in the school. The data revealed that it is the concerned class teacher, subject teachers and the head of the school who identifies these divyang learners.

A teacher stated “No we do not have the special educator in the school, we identify the children with special needs, suppose if a student is visually impaired or hearing impaired, we make student to sit in the front bench”.

A principal stated “the class teacher or the concerned subject teacher identifies the divyang learners if any...there is a resource person in BAC (Block Administration Centre) and whenever we have a divyang learner in the school, we call her time to time”.

The qualitative data collected through the interview with twenty (20) school heads also revealed that there is no proper mechanism to identify the divyang learners in the school, teachers with their limited knowledge and experience identify divyang learners. They make systematic arrangements of keeping visually or hearing impaired in the front bench. But this cannot be a permanent solution. However, there is a resource person in the Block Administration Centre (BAC) who visits the school sometimes to check the adjustment of divyang learners in the school.

4.1.7.3 Resource Teachers for Divyang Learners

The resource teachers are the special educators who have the essential qualification required for teaching the Divyang learners.

Table 48

Resource Teacher for Divyang Learner in the Senior Secondary Level

Yes	No
3(15%)	17(85%)

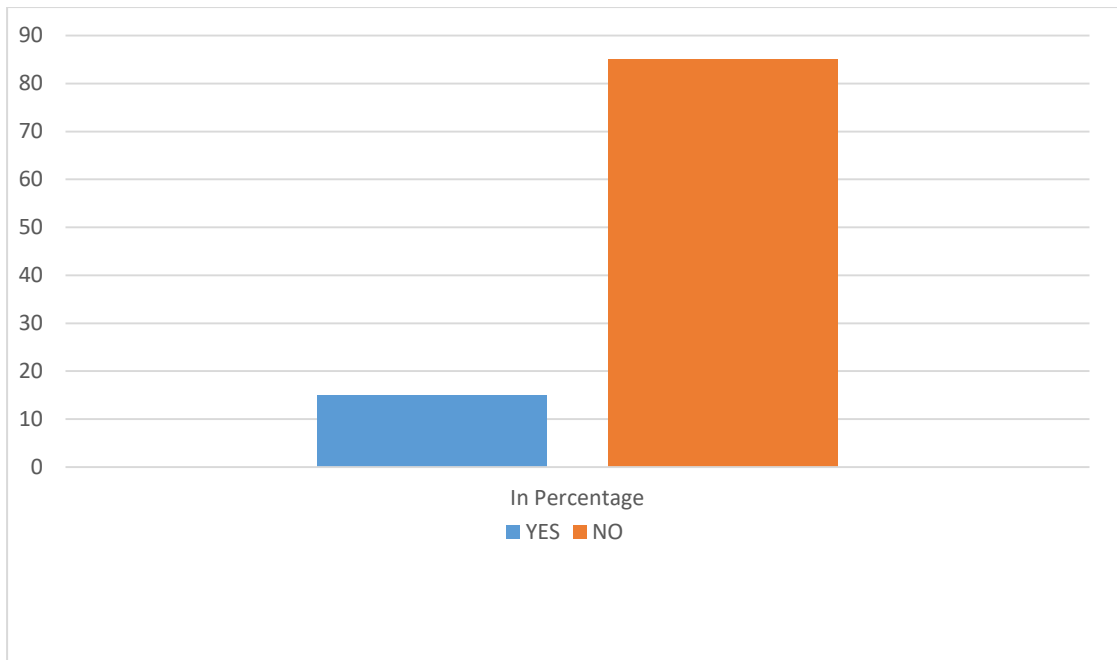


Figure 21 Resource teacher for divyang learner in the senior secondary level

The above table and the figure revealed that 15 percent of the senior secondary school principals mentioned that there are resource teacher for divyang learners in the school and 85 percent of the principals mentioned that there are no resource teachers for the divyang learners in the school.

A student stated *“No we don’t have resource teacher in our school”*.

A teacher stated *“We don’t have a resource teacher appointed specifically to teach divyang learners”*.

The qualitative data collected through the focus group discussion with students and the interview with principals of school also revealed that there are resource teacher for teaching the divyang learners in 15 percent of the schools. The study indicates that there is inequity in education with regard to the children with special needs as they cannot access education as per their special needs.

4.1.7.4 Learners with Learning Disabilities and Emotionally Disturbed Learners.

There are different definitions of learners with disabilities. (Lyon, Fletcher, & Barnes, 2003) highlighted that ‘LDs by definition refer to deficits in one or more of several domains, including reading disabilities, mathematical disabilities, and disabilities of written expression’. (Hammill, Leighr, McNutt, & Larsen, 1987) stated that ‘Learning disabilities is a generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual and presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction’. The students with learning disabilities thus can be broadly categorized under the disabilities like Dyslexia, Dysphasia, Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia, Aphasia and Alexia. Dyslexia – The dyslexia can be referred as reading disability. Dysphasia- Dysphasia is a language disorder wherein a learner is unable to generate speech and comprehension due to brain injury. Dysgraphia – Dysgraphia is also a form of learning disability. The students having dysgraphia can be recognized in terms of their poor spelling and handwriting. Dyscalculia- ‘Developmental dyscalculia is a specific learning disability affecting the acquisition of arithmetic skills in an otherwise-normal child (Shalev & Tsur, 2001). Aphasia – ‘Aphasia is impairment in speech and language following injury to the brain... these aphasia types is distinguished by the pattern of deficits in fluency, comprehension, naming, and repetition (N.F.Dronkers & Baldo, 2010)’. Alexia- Alexia is distinguished by complete or partial inability to read among the learners. The emotionally disturbed learners can be categorized under the following disabilities- Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder, Hyper active and Hypo active, Anxiety Disorder, Shy/Withdrawal tendencies and Depression. Attention deficit hyperactive disorder –As the terminology itself suggests, the learners with Attention

deficit hyperactive disorder lack attention and are restless hyper active. Hyper-active and hypo-active disorder- The hyper active learners are restless and lack attention where hypo active learners are very slow, they also do not exhibit any attention. Anxiety disorder – The anxiety disorder is also an emotional disorder. The children show the intense anxiety or panic worrying about all forms of activities. Shy/Withdrawal tendencies – The learners with shy and withdrawal tendencies exhibit social withdrawal characteristics. These learners are introvert and remain aloof from their friends. Depression – Depression is one of the most visible disorder among the children and is also the chief cause of suicide among the students. Depression can also affect one’s daily life as it is also connected to the mood disorders. The study revealed that all the schools do not have proper mechanism to identify learning disability and emotionally disturbed learners. The identification of these disabilities is important so as the school can cater the differential needs of these learners.

4.1.7.5 Facilities for Divyang learners in the school.

Samagrah siksha abhiyan in chapter 9 point 9.9 states that the children with special needs will be provided with the following facilities in the school-

‘Construction of ramps with rails and stationary bridges - These will facilitate such children approach the indoor and outdoor area and access play equipment. Equipment, play learning material, furniture and other facilities have to be suitable and easily available for children with disabilities, Toilets should have appropriate accessories and adaptations for children with special need’ (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018).

Table 49

Facilities for Divyang Learners in the School

Yes	No
15(75%)	5(25%)

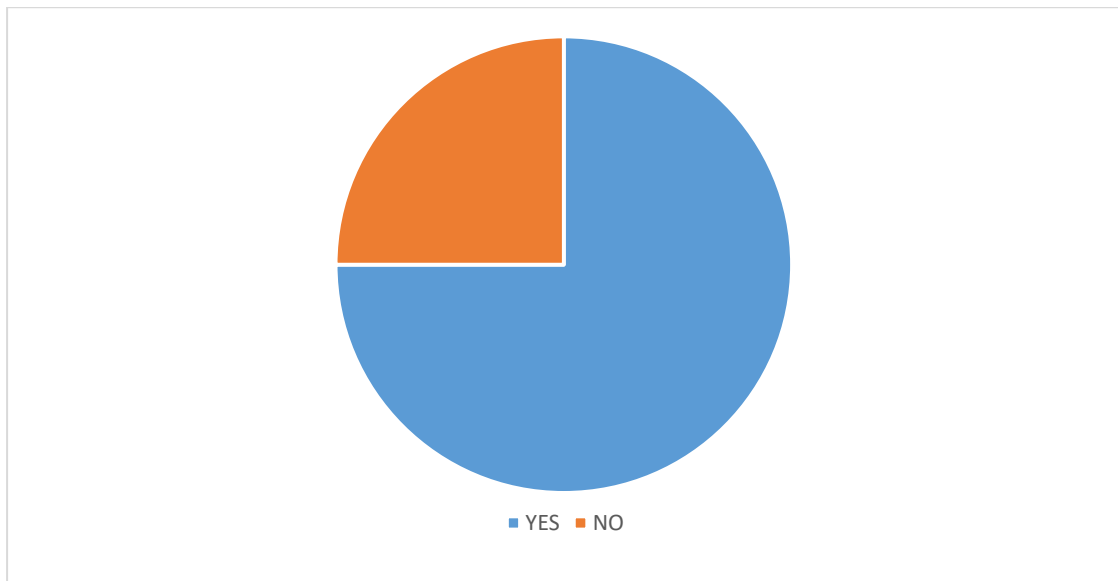


Figure 22 Facilities for divyang learners in the school

The above table and the figure revealed that the principals of 75 percent schools mentioned that they have facilities for catering the needs of the divyang learners in the school and 25 percent principals mentioned that they do not have facilities to cater the needs of divyang learners in the school.

A principal stated *“yes we have facilities like ramps and CWSN friendly toilets in the school”*.

A teacher stated *“No we don’t have any facilities in the school for the children with special needs”*.

However, the interviews with the principals and the focus group discussion with the students also revealed that 15 schools which stated about the facilities for the CWSN (Children with Special Needs) have only ramps and the CWSN (Children with Special Needs) friendly toilets available in the school which does not corroborate with the facilities as stated in samagrah siksha abhiyan.

4.1.8 Equity in access in education with regard to locale

The students from the urban and rural areas have different educational needs and aspirations. It is also an important fact that majority of India's population live in the rural areas and may not have easy access to education. In order to make education inclusive, equitable access to education for the students from different geographical background is important.

4.1.8.1 Enrolment of Students in Schools based on locale

In order to understand the equity in access among the students from the urban and rural areas recognizing the enrolment based on locale is important.

Table 49

Enrolment of Students (2016-2017)

Schools	Primary with Upper Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary	Upper Primary with Secondary & Higher Secondary	Primary with Upper Primary	Upper Primary with Secondary	Total
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Rural	21390	1036	8958	337	31721
Urban	8081	-	1418	76	9575
Total Enrolment	29471	1036	10376	413	41296

Source: <http://udise.in>

The above table highlights the enrolment in schools of Sikkim. There are total 41296 students in Sikkim. In totality there are 29471 students in primary with upper primary, secondary and higher secondary schools, 1036 students in upper primary with secondary and higher secondary schools, 10376 students in primary with upper primary schools and 413 students in upper primary with secondary schools in Sikkim. With regard to the enrolment in rural areas 21390 students in primary with upper primary, secondary and higher secondary schools, 1036 students in primary with secondary and higher secondary schools, 8958 students in primary with upper primary schools and 337 students in upper primary with secondary schools in Sikkim. With regard to the enrolment in urban areas 8081 students in primary with upper primary, secondary and higher secondary schools, no students in primary with secondary and higher secondary schools, 1418 students in primary with upper primary schools and 76 students in upper primary with secondary schools in Sikkim. Difference between the enrolment is 22,146 which shows that the enrolment is higher in rural areas as majority of schools are located in rural areas. This indicates that there is no inequity in access to education based on the locale.

The qualitative data collected among the 20 principal and from the 30 participants of focus group also revealed that students from both the urban and rural areas have access to the school. The study also revealed that the students have access to the nearest senior secondary school from their house.

4.1.8.2 Inferiority complex among students from schools located in rural areas.

The inferiority complex is a feeling of inadequacy. The inferiority complex usually arises as a result of comparison with others.

Table 51

Inferiority Complex among students from schools located in rural areas

Yes	No
20(100%)	Nil

The above table highlights that 100 percent of the principals of senior secondary school mentioned that there is inferiority complex among the rural students.

The qualitative data collected among the 30 participants of the focus group discussion revealed that among the 30 students, 17 students mentioned that they feel inferior when they compared themselves with the students from urban background.

A student stated “*yes we lack a lot of things, we don’t have coaching facilities, we don’t have a good laboratory and library...*”.

The qualitative data also revealed that the feeling of inferiority complex among the students lie in the following areas: better facilities in the school, project and lab based subjects, coaching facilities, disadvantage of geographical background.

The participants of the focus group discussion (rural students) mentioned that they feel inferior studying in the rural school as they perceive that the students studying in the school located urban school have better access to the facilities in the school as they perceive that the urban school has better facilities. The participants also feel inferior as they feel that they get less opportunity for laboratory based subjects. They also mentioned that the students studying in the school located in the urban outskirts have better access to the coaching and tuition facilities which they require out of the school. The rural students also revealed that they feel the disadvantage of being from rural background as they have to travel on foot to the school and get tired after reaching back from the school and it relatively creates impact on their academic achievement.

4.1.9 Equity in access in education with regard to ethnicity

Discrimination based on ethnicity still exists in most of the societies in India. The discrimination based on the ethnicity exists in all forms of social activities. The presence of the caste hierarchy in the society has led to the discrimination with regard to the ethnicity.

The discrimination particularly for the Scheduled caste still exists in soft forms in the schools. The interviews with the teachers and principals revealed that all the 20 principals and 30 teachers mentioned that there is no discrimination based on the ethnicity in the school.

A principal stated *“No there is no discrimination based on ethnicity in the school”*.

A teacher stated *“...the constitution of India provides an arrangement of equality in education... there is no point of the discrimination in the schools”*

However the focus group discussion revealed that two students mentioned that they feel discriminated in the schools not from teachers and principal but among their friends.

A student stated *“the principal, teachers or the staffs do not discriminate us, however we feel discriminated by our friends, some of the do not like to go canteen with us”*.

Another student stated *“I feel discriminated in the school among our friends...I feel more discriminated in the society, I feel un-comfortable to visit our friend’s house”*.

The study revealed that school do not practice discrimination based on community. The principals and teachers follow utmost ethics while dealing with students from different background. The students expressed that teachers maintain just and fair attitude towards the students.

The data from the focus group discussion indicates that the students do not face any discrimination from Principals and teachers but they feel discriminated by their friends in the schools and the society also. The discriminatory behaviors of students reflect the social attitude especially towards the scheduled caste students. The society should make conducive social environment for these learners.

4.2 Equity in participation

Participation denotes engagement in the activities among the senior secondary students. Understanding the equity in participation is very much important to understand whether there is equitable in access in education in the schools or not. Equity in participation connotes engagement in the curricular and co-curricular activities among the senior secondary students.

4.2.1 No Community wise discrimination in participation in curricular and co-curricular activities in the school

‘Article 15 of our Indian Constitution prohibits discrimination by the state against any citizen on grounds 'only' of caste, religion, sex, race, and place of birth. Fundamental rights are provided to every citizen of the country without any discrimination’ (Government of India, 2021). The school should an arrangement to provide no discrimination among the students.

Table 52

No Community Wise Discrimination in participation

Yes	No
Nil	20 (100%)

The above table revealed that 100 percent of the schools do not discriminate between students from different communities. Focus group discussion (FGDs) revealed that students from different community do not face discrimination in schools and they equally participate in all the activities.

A student stated *“No we do not face any kind of discrimination in the school while participating in curricular and co-curricular activities”*.

A teacher stated *“No... there is no discrimination of any sort in our school, all the students are equal for us and all of them participate in curricular and co-curricular activities”*.

The study found that students do not face any discrimination for participation in the curricular and co-curricular activities. The school promotes fair environment which encourage the students from all communities to participate in activities organized in the school.

4.2.2 Gendered discrimination exists in Schools

The prejudices and discrimination based on gender still exists in our society. The gender stereotyping, gender roles and the gender inequality is evident in all forms of the social activities. Gender rules or norms still exists in the school, the girls are perceived to be less strong than the boys. The gender bias is also evident in most of the schools in India.

The interviews with the principal and the teachers revealed that all the 20 principals of senior secondary schools and 30 teachers of senior secondary schools mentioned that there is no gendered discrimination in the schools however the data collected from focus group discussion revealed that 10 girl students mentioned that there exists gender discrimination in the schools.

A girl stated “... *girls are not selected for school captains, our teachers consider boys as more stronger than us. We are selected only as vice captains and can only conduct morning assemblies when the captain is absent*”.

The Girl students mentioned that boys are favoured more as compared to girls when the teacher selects class captain (monitors). Boys are preferred as class captain, school captain, and house captain. Girls are chosen as vice-captain which sends the message that girls students cannot lead. They also shared that the girls and boys are choosed separately as per the task. For example, when the work is related to distribute food or tea or sweeping then generally girls are allotted the work. This study highlighted that gendered discrimination in allotment of curricular and co-curricular task exists in schools. Gender disparities are also evident in social context, there are norms in the society that restricts the access of women to various opportunities, institutions and resources e.g in a Hindu society the woman on her menstrual cycle is still not allowed to visit religious institutions and take part in the festivals and rituals thereby creating gender discrimination. The other form of gender inequality that exists in the society is the disparity in the labour market. Women are paid less as compared to the males in the labour sector. These forms of the gender stereotyping also creates emotional stress for the girl child who witness these gender forms that are evident in all forms of activities in the society.

4.2.3 Higher Girls participation in the academics

Academic achievement is one of the important attribute of measuring the participation in school education. The participation of girls in education have been increasing in number and performance as well. Researches also reveal that the girls outnumber boys in the academic participation and also with the grades in terms of academic

achievement. Researches have also revealed that the participation of girls is higher in academics. (Houtte, 2004) argued that ‘boys culture is less study oriented than the girls culture and that this differences can be held responsible for the gender differences in achievement, at least in general schools’.

Table 53

Higher Girls Participation in the Academics

Boys	Girls
50%	70%

The above table revealed that 100 percent of the principals of the schools mentioned that 50 percent of the boys participate in the academics and 70 percent of the girls participate in the academic activities.

A principal stated “...girls these days are quite more like, they are smarter than the boys so they get equal opportunities, School I mean provides equal opportunities to them and the girls also actively participate in all these activities”.

A girl stated “yes... I like studying, especially science and mathematics subjects, I also like singing and dancing... yes I participate in quiz competitions”.

The qualitative data also revealed that the girls preferred more academic, cultural and literacy activities over the boys. The quantitative data and qualitative data corroborated and proved that girl’s participation in the academics is higher than the boys. Despite social discrimination, girls participation in academic activity is higher. They are more involved in activities like quiz, essay writing, debate and elocution.

They have started choosing the subjects which is considered masculine like mathematics and science.

4.2.4 Higher participation of boys in the sports

Sports and games are one of the important aspect in the school where the students can socialize and participate for recreation as well as for physical development. Various researches conducted on the participation of students in sports have revealed that the boys participate more actively in the sports than the girls (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993) and (Hastie, 1998).

Table 53

Participation in the Sports

Boys	Girls
80%	30%

The above table revealed that of the principals of 20 school mentioned that 80 percent of boys actively sports in sports and 30 percent of girls actively participate in sports.

The interviews with the principal and teachers and the focus group discussion with the students revealed that all the 10 girls mentioned that they participate in sports however 22 teachers and the 20 principals mentioned that the boys preferred sports and physical activities more as compared to girls.

The researches have also revealed that ‘the huge majority of heroes, are men and it is boys who admire sports stars...for the girls interviewed, they did not have functional role models’ (Biskup & Pfister, 1999). This hero worship might have led to increasing

participation of boys in sports. The study found that higher number of boys participate in sports as they are encouraged more to participate in sports.

4.3 TO ANALYSE THE POLICY PERSPECTIVES ENSURING EQUITY IN ACCESS AT THE SENIOR SECONDARY LEVEL IN SIKKIM.

The government of Sikkim follow and adopts the National policy in the state in order to have the uniformity with the education pattern with other states. So, the state do not have separate state policy on Education. The researcher analyzed two policy perspectives which are, National policy on education 1986 and Samagrah siksha abhiyan (SSA).

- **National policy on education 1986**

After a long wait for 18 years, since the formulation of National policy of 1968, a new education policy was formulated in the year 1986 and the plan of action was formulated in 1992. The policy aspired to create better access to educational facilities for the learners and creation of the equalization of opportunity. Through the policy perspectives the policy envisages to create a quality education in India. The part 4, of the National Policy on Education 1986 states regarding the educational disparity as- *“The new Policy will lay special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalize educational opportunity by attending to the specific needs of those who have been denied equality so far”* (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1998).

The policy emphasises on ensuring the equitable access to all the educationally deprived students. This deprived category of learners can be viewed in broad sense as – students from socio-economically disadvantaged group, students from marginalised sections and children with special needs. The different forms of inequities with regard

to education are evident in our country-the gender inequity, inequity with regard to locale and low economic background and the inequities with regard to children with special needs. The National Policy on education 1986 envisages to cater the specific needs of these learners who have been denied of the opportunity so far.

- **Samagrah siksha abhiyan**

Samagrah Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a centrally sponsored programme to ensure the inclusive and equitable framework in school education for primary level to senior secondary level schools. 'It is envisaged to improve quality of education ensuring equity and inclusion at all levels of school education' (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018). It subsumes the existing three structures –Sarva siksha abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya madhyamik siksha abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher education (TE). The samagrah siksha abhiyan is thus a comprehensive scheme that caters the needs of the learners from the primary level to the senior secondary level.

4.3.1 Gender equity in education

The national policy on education 1986 in part 4, under 4.2 has also stated that -

' Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of woman. In order to neutralize the accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well-conceived edge in favour of women. The National Education System will play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women. It will foster the development of new values through redesigned curricula, textbooks, the training and orientation of teachers, decision-makers and administrators, and the active involvement of educational institutions. This will be an act of faith and social engineering. Womens studies will be promoted as a part of various courses and educational institutions

encouraged to take up active programmes to further womens development' (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1998).

The policy also emphasised to provide a special arrangement for the women empowerment through positive and interventionist role as it stated clearly in its policy document. The national policy on education 1986 also stressed on the development of a value system through the redesigning of the textbooks and the curriculum, however the gender biased contents in the textbooks are still present. Mostly gendered languages are used and gender neutral textbooks are still not available. The policy had also emphasised on the orientation of different stakeholders of the society for reducing the gender disparities in education. It is a fact that gender bias still exists in the society. The policy also aspired to start women studies as a part of various courses however not much have been done in the context of women studies.

Focussing on the gender perspective, the policy also highlighted in the part 4 under 4.3 as-

'The removal of womens illiteracy and obstacles inhibiting their access to, and retention in, elementary education will receive overriding priority, through provision of special support services, setting of time targets, and effective monitoring. Major emphasis will be laid on womens participation in vocational, technical and professional education at different levels. The policy of non-discrimination will be pursued vigorously to eliminate sex stereo-typing in vocational and professional courses and to promote womens participation in non-traditional occupations, as well as in existing and emergent technologies' (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1998).

The policy has also emphasised on removing the barriers and obstacles of women with regard to the access and retention in education. The policy has also mentioned about the support services, time targets and monitoring for curbing the problems of access and retention and participation of women in education, however there is no specific and separated service for women to address their problem of access and retention. The policy also aspires to pursue non- discriminatory provisions for removing the stereo-typing in the different structure of the courses, however, the policy fails to provide the elaborative context of this non-discriminatory provisions. The implementation mechanism and the strategies were however did not made any profound impact on the educational context. The policy also highlights the importance of women's participation in vocational, technical and professional education but their enrolment in the vocational stream has not been encouraged. It is also evident that the new education policy (1986) and its Plan of Action 1992, has failed to include gender perspective and the problems in a detailed manner.

The samagrah siksha abhiyan in chapter 3 under 3.1 states -

'Bridging gender and social category gaps at all levels of school education is one of the major objectives of the Integrated Scheme. Consequently, the Integrated Scheme attempts to reach out to girls, and children belonging to SC, ST, Minority communities and transgender. The scheme also gives attention to urban deprived children, children affected by periodic migration, and children living in remote and scattered habitations. The Integrated Scheme also focuses on the identified SFDs on the basis of adverse performance on various indicators of enrolment, retention, and gender parity, as well as based on

higher concentration of SC, ST and minority communities' (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018).

Samagrah siksha abhiyan mentions about the gender gap in school education. The policy also focusses on bridging the gender gap along with the social gap and focusses on mainstreaming and providing the equitable access in education to the SC, ST, Minority communities and transgender students. The scheme also emphasises on the retention and improving the gender parity among the students from SC, ST, Minority communities and transgender students sections which indicates that the scheme is inclusive in nature.

The Samagrah siksha abhiyan in chapter 3 also states that

'Equity would therefore, mean focus on addressing exclusion of girls and children belonging to SCs, STs, Marginalized communities and of the other deprived affected and vulnerable groups who constitute the bulk of excluded children in the country. It will also mean including gender and other equity issues within the quality goal' (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018).

As the education falls under the concurrent list in India, and the policy frameworks are prepared by the union government, the responsibility of implementation lies on the state government. Samagrah siksha abhiyan also focusses on the corroboration with the sustainable development goals for ensuring equitable access and quality education among the learners which is one of the important and laudable step of the government. The scheme also talks about ensuring gender equity for the girls belonging to SC, ST and marginalised and other vulnerable groups, however the policy has failed to address 'other equity issues' in details. There is no specific policy

or programme to address exclusion of girls. However, samagrah siksha abhiyan to a large extent covers the education of girls.

Samagrah siksha abhiyan in chapter 3 further states-

'In the context of implementing the Scheme, the approach in shifting to quality would be enriched whereby the curriculum, textbooks, teaching-learning materials, the use of space in the classroom, infrastructure, assessment and teacher trainings are looked at holistically and mutually reinforce each other. Each of these issues would need to be addressed from a gender equality perspective' (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018).

Samagrah siksha abhiyan also aspires on enriching the various facets of curriculum particularly textbooks, teaching-learning materials, the use of space in the classroom, infrastructure, assessment and teacher trainings through the gender context. This scheme is expected to make gender-friendly classroom and provide a framework for the gender inclusive pedagogy. This enables the facilities of better access to education. However, in the reality the curriculum is still largely gendered, no training has been conducted on reducing the gender bias, enrichment of the teaching learning materials has not been emphasized and teacher training has not much been conducted.

The samagrah siksha abhiyan scheme on chapter 3 states

'The scheme envisaged setting up of hostels with lodging and boarding facilities in the EBBs and areas nearing concentration of above target groups so that the girl students are not denied the opportunity to continue their study due to societal factors... Girls belonging to SC, ST, OBC, Minority communities and BPL families and studying in classes IX-XII in a recognized school in the EBB (run by any

authority, State, District or NGO) with a valid certificate from school Head Master are eligible to stay in the hostels. At least 50% of the girls admitted to the hostels belong to SCs, STs, OBCs and Minority communities’ (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018).

Hostel are considered as important aspects of ensuring equity in access in education. The scheme also focuses on establishment of the hostels specifically for the girls belonging to SC, ST, OBC, Minority communities and BPL families which is also an important step for promoting the gender equity in access to education. According to the 2016-2017 data, there are 10 percent of the schools in Sikkim have hostel facilities for girls.

4.3.2 Inclusion of children from different ethnic communities

Samagrah siksha abhiyan in chapter 3 states -

‘Children from SC, ST and Muslim communities have both common as well as unique needs and challenges impeding attempts to their inclusion... The Integrated Scheme recognizes that the problems of exclusion often take highly local and context specific forms and the above mentioned issues that have emerged from the studies conducted so far, needs to be addressed urgently’ (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018).

The scheme also regards the needs and challenges of the children from marginalized and minorities. The scheme also claims to bridge the gap in access to education among the Marginalized and the minority section of the learners.

The scheme in the same chapter highlights-

'There is undue harshness in reprimanding SC children. Time and attention is not given to SC children in the classroom. They are excluded in the public functions; made to do menial jobs and sometimes denied the use of school facilities including water resources and making derogatory remarks about their supposed inability to keep up with academic work. Teachers are also not sensitized towards the needs of SC children. The system also excludes them by not implementing the incentive schemes meant for them. The Integrated Scheme recognizes that the problems of exclusion often take highly local and context specific forms and the above mentioned issues that have emerged from the studies conducted so far, needs to be addressed urgently... The interventions for children belonging to SC communities have to be based on an intensive micro-planning, addressing the needs of every child...A reporting system may be developed to monitor the discriminatory practices happening in the school, timely redressal of such cases and norms of behaviour within the school for both teachers and students. Curricular activities including sports, music and drama should be encouraged as they help to break social barriers' (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018).

The scheme also addresses the social-issues faced by the ethnic communities particularly the scheduled caste students in the society. It also mentions that the system excludes these learners by not implementing the policies for them. The scheme also emphasizes on the address of these issues. It has also stated about ensuring proper interventions for the children for inclusion in the school level and have given more responsibilities for the teacher for ensuring inclusionary practice for the learners in the school. However, the teachers are not trained on sensitizing the needs of scheduled caste students. So far there is no reporting system for SC students to report against biasness by teachers or their friends. However in our society they are

encouraged to participate in music and drama, which has helped them to break social barriers to a large extent.

The proper implementation of the schemes for the ethnic communities will definitely fulfill the vision for making education inclusive for these sections of the society.

The scheme also focuses on the ensuring the access to the scheduled tribe students. It states-

'The ST children can be assisted for learning in local language by native speakers. Educational material should be developed in local languages using resources available within the community. Resource centres should be used in tribal dominated states for providing training, academic and other technical support for development of pedagogic tools and education materials catering to multi lingual situations. Teacher should be sensitized to tribal culture and practices and trained to teach in multilingual education. They can incorporate local knowledge in the curriculum and textbooks. Community members can be involved in school activities to reduce social distance between the school and the community. Special training should be given for non-tribal teachers to work in tribal areas, including knowledge of the tribal dialect' (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018).

The scheme has also emphasized on the community members participation towards the equity in access to education amongst the tribal students. Since the main problem for the tribal students is the language, the scheme also mentions the participation of native speakers for helping the tribal learners for language learning, however, without proper appointment and the incentives to these native speakers this idea will be nothing more than a utopian dream. The idea of establishing a resource center in the

tribal areas and sensitization of the teachers for the tribal culture and for the multilingual education is a wonderful step. The community participation as stated by the policy seems soft and tender technically as the scheme relies more on ‘Can’ than ‘Should’ with regard to community involvement in the case of the education of marginalized students. In the state of Sikkim, the local or tribal language books are available only for the language learner but not to the other learner so that language learning has become confined to few learners only. So there is no single resource center in the tribal dominated areas. No teacher training are held to sensitize on tribal culture and practice. The local knowledge was largely excluded in the curriculum and textbooks. However, recently SCERT (State Council of Educational Research and Training), Gangtok produced books from class I-V which has included the local knowledge and practices.

4.3.3 Education of the socio-economically disadvantaged group (SEDGs) and the minorities

The national policy in education 1986 and POA 1992 in part 4 under 4.7 states that -

“Suitable incentives will be provided to all educationally backward ward sections of society, particularly in the rural areas. Hill and desert districts, remote and inaccessible areas and islands will be provided adequate institutional infrastructure” (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1998).

The policy has also emphasised on the importance of the incentives for the educationally backward sections of the society and is also vocal on providing the incentives to the educationally backward sections of the society, most importantly for the students of the rural areas and the students of hill and desert regions as well as the

students of the inaccessible areas. The policy is also vocal about providing adequate infrastructural facilities in the schools, however, with the interviews with the principals of schools and the focus group discussion with the students, it was found that there is no such incentives for the educationally backward students. No such policies are implemented for educationally backward and inaccessible areas.

The samagrah siksha abhiyan in chapter 3 under 3.5.1 states-

'Measures would include transport, escort, counselling, helping them negotiate domestic work burdens, community support mechanisms and academic support depending on the nature of the problem... Attention would be paid to addressing the particular needs of girls from other disadvantaged groups or those living in difficult circumstances (street children, migrant children, and girls in conflict situations), who are particularly vulnerable and face several security concerns' (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018).

The scheme also mentions about the out of the out of the school children particularly from the marginalised and the minority groups and aspires them to provide a cohesive implementation by providing them the essential supports in the form of transport facilities, escort facilities , counselling negotiation for the domestic work burden of the learners providing community support and academic support. The scheme also mentions about the security concerns of the children living under vulnerable conditions and aspires to provide attention to these learners however, the facilities mentioned by the scheme looks good in the paper only the facilities as mentioned in the scheme has not been implemented in its true sense in the schools. In Sikkim there is no special transport, escort facility for girls to access the schools, neither

community support mechanism. Any girls of migrant parents may have to survive along with a larger group of children as there is no such measures for them.

The National educational policy (1986) and the POA under the part 4, under 4.6 has also highlighted that – *“The following measures will be taken urgently to bring the Scheduled Tribes on par with others:*

i) Priority will be accorded to opening primary schools in tribal areas. The construction of school buildings will be undertaken in these areas on a priority basis under the normal funds for education, as well as under the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, Tribal Welfare schemes, etc.

ii) The socio-cultural milieu of the STs has its distinctive characteristics including, in many cases, their own spoken languages. This underlines the need to develop the curricula and devise instructional materials in tribal languages at the initial stages, with arrangements for switching over to the regional language.

iii) Educated and promising Scheduled Tribe youths will be encouraged and trained to take up teaching in tribal areas.

iv) Residential schools, including Asharam Schools, will be established on a large scale.

v) Incentive schemes will be formulated for the Scheduled Tribes, keeping in view their special needs and life styles. Scholarships for higher education will emphasise technical, professional and para-professional courses. Special remedial courses and other programmes to remove psycho-social impediments will be provided to improve their performance in various courses.

vi) Anganwadis, Non-formal and Adult Education Centres will be opened on a priority basis in areas predominantly inhabited by the Scheduled Tribes.

vii) The curriculum at all stages of education will be designed to create an awareness of the rich cultural identify of the tribal people as also of their enormous creative talent” (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1998).

The policy aspired to open up of the new primary schools in tribal areas. The policy also stressed on the opening of the schools as the top priority. In the context of Sikkim, the schools are constructed as per the demand of the community but no on the basis of tribal area. Beside the tribal language books, no other books like science, social studies are developed in tribal languages. Sikkim has no record of residential schools for tribal children. Since the school education is free so there is no scholarship for tribal children. The non-formal and adult education centres are not opened in tribal areas. The tribal students in Sikkim are receiving free education so to a large extent, it covers their need however, it is important to include awareness of their rich curriculum, so that their indigenous knowledge do not vanish without being recorded.

The policy has also realised the importance of regional language in the teaching and learning process. The policy envisaged to develop the curriculum as per the tribal language at the lower stages and focus on the regional language in the higher level. Having understood the importance of community participation in the teaching and learning process, the policy also aspires to encourage and train the tribal youth for teaching in their respective areas. This is the promising initiative taken in the new education policy 1986 and the plan of action 1992. The education policy further emphasised to open up more residential and ashram schools in the tribal areas, however in the context of Sikkim, there are few residential schools. The policy

emphasised on the designing the curriculum according to the needs and aspirations of the tribal students which is a laudable step.

4.3.4 Education of the children with special needs

The samagrah siksha abhiyan scheme also states that-

“The scheme will cover all children from pre-school to senior secondary stage studying in Government, local body and Government-aided schools, with one or more disabilities as defined under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016) namely:

- 1. Blindness*
- 2. Low-vision*
- 3. Leprosy Cured persons*
- 4. Hearing Impairment (deaf and hard of hearing)*
- 5. Locomotor Disability*
- 6. Dwarfism*
- 7. Intellectual Disability*
- 8. Mental Illness*
- 9. Autism Spectrum Disorder*
- 10. Cerebral Palsy*
- 11. Muscular Dystrophy*
- 12. Chronic Neurological conditions*
- 13. Specific Learning Disabilities*
- 14. Multiple Sclerosis*
- 15. Speech and Language disability*

16. *Thalassemia*

17. *Hemophilia*

18. *Sickle Cell disease*

19. *Multiple Disabilities including deaf blindness*

20. *Acid Attack victim*

21. *Parkinson's disease*” (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018).

The scheme also provides wide range of coverage of children with special needs, the scheme also states that it covers the specific learning disabilities however it fails to cover the various forms of learning disabilities.

The scheme also states -

“All special educators should be registered with Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI). These educators should mandatorily be available for all CWSN including the children with high support needs as well. The educators may be posted at the block or cluster level or as per the requirement and can operate in an itinerant mode, covering a group of schools where children with special needs are enrolled so that each child with special need is adequately covered” (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018).

The scheme also aspires to provide the resource teachers registered under the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) for the learners with special needs however in the reality the resource teachers are available at few Block Administrative Centre (BAC) level only. The objective of inclusive education will fail if the resource teachers are not appointed in each BAC.

The scheme also states –

'In case of non-availability of resources required for education of children with special needs and training of teachers teaching CWSN, assistance from special schools may be taken. These special schools can work as resource centers for providing resources like development of curricular materials and TLMs, providing support services to CWSN and training of teachers etc... In some cases, special schools can also impart special training to CWSN for facilitating age appropriate placement in the classroom for a specified period of time. NGOs working on education of children with chronic health impairments like leukemia, heart diseases and cancer etc, may also provide resource support for pertinent care and health related needs and capacity building of teachers' (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018).

The scheme emphasizes on the corroboration of the schools with the special schools for the better access to education facilities among the children with special needs. It also emphasizes that that the non-governmental organizations to provide the supports of resources. It also directs the special schools to provide the adequate support for the inclusive schools. The training of the teachers on the needs of the Children with special needs is not done, however non-governmental organizations and the health department conduct awareness on some common diseases.

The national policy on education 1986 and the Plan of Action (POA) 1992, in part 4 under 4.9 have discussed about the children with special needs. The policy has however used and umbrella term Handicapped for the children with special needs. The policy states-

'The objective should be to integrate the physically and mentally handicapped with the general community as equal partners, to prepare them for normal growth and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence. The following measures will be taken in this regard:

i) Wherever it is feasible, the education of children with motor handicaps and other mild handicaps will be common with that of others.

ii) Special schools with hostels will be provided, as far as possible at district headquarters, for the severely handicapped children.

iii) Adequate arrangements will be made to give vocational training to the disabled.

iv) Teachers training programmes will be reoriented, in particular for teachers of primary classes, to deal with the special difficulties of the handicapped children; and

v) Voluntary effort for the education of the disabled will be encouraged in every possible manner.

a) establishment of continuing education centres of diverse kind to enable adults to continue their education of their choice;

b) workers education through the employers, trade unions and government;

c) wider promotion of books, libraries and reading rooms;

d) use of radio, TV and films -- as mass as well as group learning media;

e) creation of learners groups and organisations; and

f) programmes of distance learning' (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1998).

The policy is inclusive in nature and has recommended to integrate the physically and mentally disabled (handicapped) to the mainstream developing the confidence among the divyang learners. This is one of the wonderful provision for the children with special needs. The policy has also suggested of inclusion of the motor and other mild handicapped learners in the inclusive education. The policy has not specifically mentioned about the category of the mild handicapped learners. Though the inclusionary practice in the education is one of the most aspiring feature of the policy, however the inclusionary provisions need more inclusionary practices and strategies. There are no separate schools with hostels in each district, however there is a blind school at Namchi and special school (Sikkim Spastic Society) at Gangtok. No training of teachers on orientation towards children with special needs are held. The policy fails to highlight the facilities for making education more inclusive and accessible for the children with special needs. The policy also highlighted opening up of the special schools in each district which is the felt need for ensuring more inclusive approach in education. The policy has also emphasised on the opening of the distance learning programs wherein the differently abled learners can also work from the free environment of their home.

4.4 TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISM FOR EQUITY IN ACCESS AT THE SENIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION LEVEL IN SIKKIM.

Regarding the implementation of the Samagrah siksha abhiyan in Sikkim 'MHRD is the nodal central government ministry to coordinate RMSA with the help of RMSA

State Implementation Societies (SIS) in each state. However, there are a lot of support arrangements and institutions available for better implementation of RMSA. A National Resource Group (NRG) provides guidance for bringing about reforms in teaching learning processes, curriculum, teaching learning material, ICT education and mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation. The Technical Support Group (TSG) supported by MHRD, is a constituent of the NRG and has a direct reporting relationship with the ministry. TSG provides technical and operational support and expertise to national and state level teams. Besides this, various sub-committees like Curriculum Reform Subcommittee, Teacher and Teacher Development Subcommittee, ICT Subcommittee and Planning and Management Subcommittee have been constituted under NRG. These subcommittees comprise members from the TSG and meet thrice a year to apprise themselves of the progress made on mutually set goals and commitments. In addition, NCERT and NUEPA support through dedicated RMSA units. RMSA-TCA has also been set-up for capacity building support with the assistance of DFID. In terms of financial inputs, the central share is released to the implementing agencies directly, whereas the applicable state share is also released to the agencies by the respective State Governments' (Education Department, Government in Sikkim, 2021). The administrative academic implementation of samagrahsiksha can be understood with the Organisational structure.

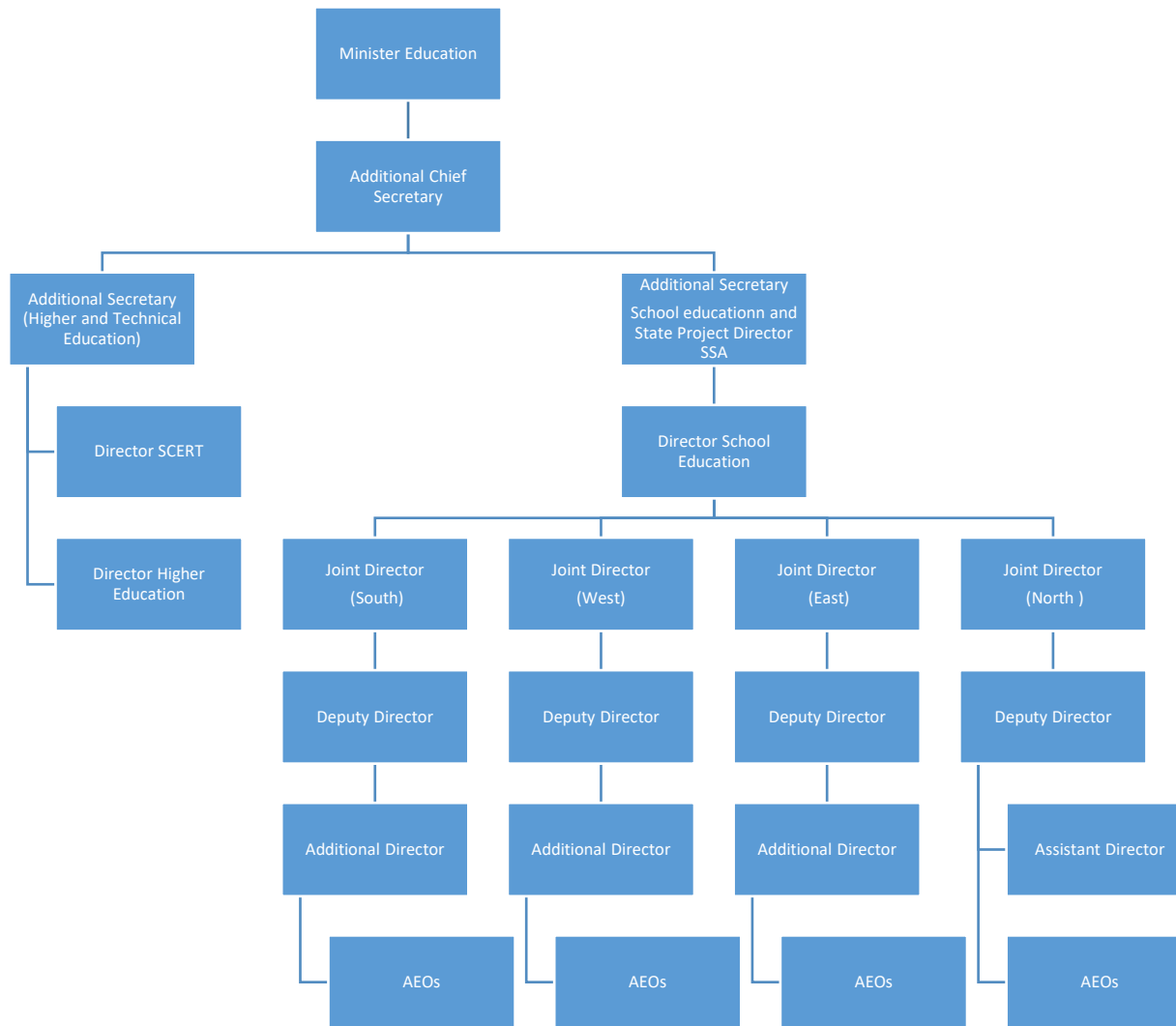


Figure 24 Implementation mechanism of samagrah siksha abhiyan (administrative structure) committee



Figure 25 Implementation mechanism of samagrah siksha abhiyan (academic structure) committee

4.4.1 Infrastructural Development

Regarding the infrastructural development samagrah siksha abhiyan for secondary and senior secondary schools states –

“For New/Upgraded Secondary and Senior Secondary school infrastructure support will be provided for the following:

i) The facilities would include class rooms with furniture, library, laboratory (stream-wise for Senior Secondary and integrated for secondary level), vocational lab, computer room, room for guidance and counseling services cum medical room, Head Master room, staff room, Art and Craft room, toilet blocks, safe drinking water, separate toilets with water facility for boys, girls and CWSN.

ii) Norms for classrooms 4 class rooms for 2 section school / 2 class rooms for 1 section school for Secondary Schools. 4 class rooms for 2 section school / 2 class rooms for 1 section school for Senior Secondary Schools for each stream i.e. Science, Arts and Commerce.

- 1 integrated Science Laboratory for Secondary School.

- 4 laboratory for physics, chemistry, Biology & Maths for Senior Secondary” (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018).

The samagrah siksha abhiyan has thus provided an elaborative arrangement for the infrastructural facilities in the schools.

4.4.1.1 Completion of the infrastructural facilities

As per the official data the following have been completed as a part of infrastructural development in Sikkim:

Table 54

Infrastructural Facilities Provided to the Schools

Sl. No.	Infrastructure	Completed (Units)
		Cumulative
1.	Construction of Block Resource Center	9
2.	Construction of Cluster Resource Center	95
3.	Building for new Pry. School	52
4.	Addl. Rooms for PS & UPS	1
5.	Addl. Rooms for earthquake affected	555
6.	Rooms for Monastic Schools	9
7.	Electricity Connection	120
8.	Drinking Water	617
9.	Repairs (minor)	546
10.	Major Repair (Primary)	216
11.	Major Repair (U/Primary)	121
12.	Toilets	684
13.	Girls Toilet	556
14.	CWSN Toilet	11

15.	Boundary Wall/Fencing	376
16.	Boundary Wall/Fencing in running meter	11688
17.	Child Friendly Activity	31
18.	Ramps and Handrails	218
19.	Difference cost Approved by PAB	22
20.	HM's room	92
21.	Construction of kitchen shade	263
22.	Upgraded UPS in Lieu of UPS	56
23.	Augmentation of training facility in BRC	29
24.	Environment Assessment, School Layout Plan, 3 rd Party Evaluation	782
25.	Infrastructure for setting libraries including books	0
26.	Primary School (per school)	782
27.	Upper Primary School (per school)	349

Source: <https://sikkim.gov.in>

As per the official records, under the head of the rashtriya madhyamik siksha abhiyan which falls now under the purview of the samagrah siksha abhiyan has completed civil works in the school of Sikkim in the following number:

4.4.1.2 Civil works completed in schools

The schools also require some minor and major repairs and as per the official data the following civil works have been completed in the schools of Sikkim.

Table 55

Civil Works Completed in Schools

Sl. No	Civil works completed in Schools (In the year)	Total
1	2012-13	18
2	2013-14	12
3	2014-15	45
4	2015-16	28

Source: <https://sikkim.gov.in>

The table revealed that the civil work was completed in 18 schools in the year 2012-13, 12 schools in the year 2013-14, 45 schools in the year 2014-15 and 28 schools in the year 2015-2016.

The data indicates a remarkable progress in the civil works in the schools of Sikkim.

4.1.1.3 Supply of Furniture

Furniture are also the important components of the infrastructural facility and as per the official data, the following types of furniture have been provided to the schools in Sikkim:

Table 56

Supply of Furniture

Sl. No.	Type of furniture	Cost
1	Additional classroom furniture	74@ 1 lakh per classroom.
2	Science lab furniture	51 @ 1.5 lakh per lab.
3	Computer room furniture	44@ 0.40 lakh per computer room.
4	Art & Craft furniture	87 @ 0.40 lakh per art & craft room.
5	Library Furniture	78@ 1 lakh per library

Source: Source: <https://sikkim.gov.in>

The above table revealed that the Education Department, Government of Sikkim has sanctioned additional classroom furniture for 74 schools, science laboratory furniture for 51 schools, computer room furniture for 44 schools, art and craft furniture for 87 schools and library furniture for 78 schools.

4.4.2 Inclusive Education for the Disabled at Secondary stage (IEDSS)

Samagrah siksha abhiyan has also prioritized the inclusive education for the disabled at the secondary stage. This model of inclusive education envisages to ensure equity in access in education for the differently abled learners. *‘The Scheme of Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) was launched during 2009-10 and replaces the earlier scheme of Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC). The aim of this scheme is to enable all students with disabilities to pursue four years of secondary education in an inclusive and enabling environment, after completing eight years of elementary schooling. The scheme covers all children studying in classes IX to*

XII in Government, local body and Government-aided schools, with one or more disabilities as defined under the Persons with Disabilities Act (1995) and the National Trust Act (1999). The type of disabilities range from blindness, low vision, leprosy cured, hearing impairment, locomotor disability, mental retardation, mental illness, autism and cerebral leprosy, speech impairment, learning disabilities etc. Girls with disabilities are provided with special attention to help them gain access to secondary education, information and guidance for their developing potential. Moreover, the scheme envisages to set up model inclusive schools in every state' (Education Department, Government in Sikkim, 2021).

4.4.2.1 Implementing agency

The Scheme of Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) is a centrally sponsored programme with the states acting as the nodal agencies for the implementation of the programme. This scheme comes under the department of school education under the education department of the states. This scheme envisages to ensure equitable opportunities for the differently-abled learners the education department under the Indian union provides 100 assistance for the scheme and the state government is required to pay rupees six hundred for the differently abled learner per annum. The scheme also seeks the participation of various non-governmental organizations working on the area of differently abled learners for ensuring equitable access for the differently abled learners.

4.4.3 Vocationalisation of secondary education

The vocationalisation of secondary education is a flagship scheme initiated by the ministry of education, government of India. The scheme aims to provide vocational education from the secondary stage. *‘The specific objectives of the centrally sponsored scheme of vocationalisation of secondary and higher secondary education are – to enhance the employability of youth through demand driven competency based modular vocational courses, to maintain their competitiveness through provisions of multi-entry multi-exit learning opportunities and vertical mobility/interchangeability in qualifications, to fill the gap between educated and employable and to reduce the dropout rate at the secondary level’* (Education Department, Government in Sikkim, 2021).

4.4.3.1 Implementation mechanism of vocationalisation in secondary education

The Implementation of the scheme is based under a sharing basis between union and state government wherein the union provides 75 percent share and the state has to bear 25 share in implementation of the scheme. However for the north-eastern states of India, the share percentage between union and the states in 90:10 wherein 90 percent of the share is born by the union and 10 percentage share has to be made by the respective state in the implementation of the scheme. Sikkim being a state located in north eastern India also has the privilege of receiving 90 percent share from the union government.

CHAPTER - 5

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The present study followed embedded design under mixed method research which aimed to investigate the equity in access and participation in senior secondary education on the basis of select indicators in Sikkim. To investigate the problem both qualitative and quantitative method was used for the data collection. For understanding the status of equity in access and participation, quantitative data was collected through the questionnaire prepared by the researcher. For triangulation of the data, the researcher also used the qualitative enquiry in the form of the interviews with the principals of senior secondary schools and the focus group discussion with the students. Thus for studying the first and second objectives of the study the qualitative and quantitative data was corroborated. For studying the third and fourth objectives of the study, policy analysis of the policy documents were conducted. The quantitative and qualitative data are triangulated by integrating the qualitative information, observation and dialogues with the quantitative data. The coded qualitative data was converged with percentage of data collected through questionnaire. This is done to validate the data and avoid false interpretation. The findings of the study are arranged as per the objectives.

5.1 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study are:

1. To explore the status of equity in access at the senior secondary level

The enrollment of girls and boys students projected equity. The study found that all the senior secondary schools of Sikkim provide equity in access to all the gender students. There is no inequity in admission based on gender. Majority of the schools in Sikkim are co-educational schools where both the boys and girls get equal opportunity for admission in the schools. In all the 20 schools, the enrolment of girls are higher, which shows that girls have access to come to school and they are being benefitted from the opportunity of free and compulsory education. Free education has been provided by the government of Sikkim for the students up to the graduation level. This idea of free education has helped both the gender to have better access to the schools. Free education policy also helps the students from the socio-economically disadvantaged group to have a better access to education.

The study found that 85 percent school students have equity in infrastructure. It is a matter of concern that 15 percent school do not provide equity in access of furniture due to inadequate availability of the furniture. Furniture in the school are the basic benchmark of ensuring equitable access for the learners. The unavailability of the adequate furniture in the classroom and the laboratories hinder the academic progress and achievement of the learners. The learners get distracted during the teaching and the learning process due to the constraint in the sitting space resulting in low participation in the classroom.

It is a fact that, the common rooms play important role in the socialization process. It helps the learners to interact with their peers and build a collaborative learning environment in the teaching and the learning process. It was found that 95 percent schools do not have common rooms for boys and girls in the school. The reason provided is that common rooms are not required in schools so these rooms are used for other purposes. This reveals that there exists inequity with regard to the common room among the senior secondary students. The common rooms must be available for the learners to ensure their participation in socialization process among their peers.

Further, All the senior secondary schools mentioned that the schools have sanitary pad dispensing machines installed for the sanitary purpose however, the focus group discussion with the students revealed that the sanitary machine is not working in 60 percent of the schools in Sikkim. This revealed that there exists inequity with regard to the sanitary pad dispensing machine. The Sanitary pad dispensing machine is needed in the schools to ensure the sanitary hygiene among the girls. The availability of the sanitary pad dispensing machine in the schools create more equitable opportunity in education for the girls. Regarding the fee for using the sanitary pads, the qualitative study revealed that the girls' students shared that they pay a nominal charge of five rupees each time they use the sanitary pad from the installed vending machine. The menstrual cycle is a biological phenomenon and the fees should not be levied on the biological phenomena. The fees levied on the biological phenomena creates inequity for the girls with regard to access in education. It was also found that 85 percent of the schools do not have separate changing room for the girls. This reveals inequity in access to the proper sanitary facilities for the girls. The separate changing rooms are required to maintain privacy for the girls during

the menstrual cycle. It also provides a good sanitary hygiene for the girls during the menstrual cycle.

It is a fact that proper library facilities are a must in the present education system. Adequate books in the library allow the students to have a better access to the reference materials. The students can develop proper reading habits when get an opportunity to visit the library. It was found that all the senior schools have a library room, however the qualitative study revealed that though there are library room in all the schools but the rooms are very small and do not have adequate books. This creates inequities in access to the library facilities for the learners.

It was found that all the schools have separate toilet for boys and girls in the school. However the focus group discussion revealed that 12 students mentioned that they don't have clean toilet in the school, it revealed that there exists inequity of clean toilets for the learners. Clean toilets ensure better hygiene and sanitation, unhygienic and dirty toilets spread germs and may lead to various diseases.

The laboratories play important role in teaching of science subjects. The science subjects require practical classes and a separate laboratory is essential for the practical based papers. It was found that 25 percent of the school have integrated laboratories for science subjects and 75 percent of the schools have separate laboratory for the science subject in the school. The 25 percent schools do not provide equity in access of facilities of laboratories in science to all the students. Additionally they face inequity as compared to the students from the schools that have laboratories for all the science subjects. It was also found that 100 percent of the school do not charge any fees from the students for

using the equipment in the laboratory, this indicate that the equity in access exist in all the schools for all the students studying the science subject. The study also revealed that 67 percent of the students mentioned that there is adequate sitting space in the laboratory in their school and 33 percent students mentioned that there is no adequate sitting space in the laboratory. The findings of the study indicate that inequity while conducting experiments of science subjects exists as the sitting space are inadequate. The space in the laboratories should be improved so that all the students can study and conduct experiments in laboratory and do not face inequity.

The study found that 100 percent of the school have the availability of the playground for learners. This indicates that there is equity in access with regard to the playground for the learners in the school. Playground is an important aspect in the schools as it provides an opportunity for the students to participate in the games and sports. The playground also helps the learners to develop the motor skills. It was found that 30 percent of the schools do not have adequate sports materials in the schools. The focus group discussion also revealed that 12 students have mentioned that the school does not have adequate sports materials this reveals that the inequity persists in the equity in access of the sports material. The sports materials are required for the learners for the games and sports activities and the unavailability of these materials leads to the inequity in participation in the co-curricular activities. It was also found that 70 percent schools do not have indoor game facilities. The study indicates that there exists inequities with regard to the availability of indoor game facilities as only 30 percent schools have indoor game facilities available for the students. Sikkim experiences a rainy season and the indoor

game facilities are important for the learners during the rainy season when the co-curricular activities cannot be conducted in the playground.

The study also revealed that 100 percent of the school have computer room with the functional computers for the learners. The interviews with the principals also revealed that there are computer rooms with functional computers in the school. This indicates that equity is maintained in all senior secondary schools with regard to access to computers. The functional computers are important to access the information online and work on the assignments and projects. The availability of the functional computer ensures opportunity to better access to online resources. The study also revealed that 100 percent of the school have access to electricity supply. Having a proper electricity facility in the school ensures the power supply required for using the computers and other electronic gadgets. The interviews with the principal and focus group discussion with the students also revealed that all the schools have availability of electricity in the schools.

The study also revealed that 70 percent schools do not have access to generator facilities. The study indicates that though all the schools have access to proper electricity and computer facilities, however in case of power-cuts, the students of 70 percent schools cannot have access to computer facilities. Sikkim located in the hilly region experiences frequent power cut off and generator or inverter facility is much needed to ensure adequate power supply when the power facility is unreliable so that no normal functioning of the school gets affected.

It was also found that 30 percent of the school do not have auditorium hall. Auditorium halls are required to conduct multi-purpose activities like indoor sports and school

assemblies. The availability of the auditorium halls in the schools help in smooth conduction of the indoor activities. The qualitative data revealed that the schools without auditorium are recently upgraded to senior secondary school and they use a room in the school for functions as the auditorium hall.

The study also revealed that 30 percent of the schools have additional rooms under construction, the additional rooms can be used for different purposes like building the laboratory, library, addition of the classrooms and other essential rooms required in the school. These additional rooms will increase the equity in access of infrastructural facility to all the students accessing senior secondary education. It was also found that 85 percent of the schools do not have art, craft and culture rooms in the school. Art, craft and culture rooms help in developing the creativity among the learners. The availability of these rooms help the learners for developing their potentials. However, the study found that the students do not have equity in access to Art, Craft and Culture rooms in the schools.

The study found that 100 percent of the school have drinking water facilities in the schools. Availability of drinking water is required in the schools to keep the students hydrated and maintaining a proper sanitation hygiene in the schools. Though the purified drinking water is not available in all the schools, however tap water is available in all the schools. The tap water is available throughout a year in the school. This indicates that the students have access to drinking water facilities in the school.

The study found that the Principals of senior secondary school mentioned that the subject specific teacher prepare the teaching and learning materials with charts, paper and pen and also with the materials which are indigenously available. The indigenously available

materials reduces the cost of the teaching learning materials that are available in the market. The indigenously available materials are cheap and environment friendly in nature. The study revealed that 40 percent schools do not have the teaching learning materials prepared through indigenous resources for the teaching learning process to be conducted inside the classroom. The focus group discussion also revealed that 18 students mentioned that the schools do not have teaching learning materials prepared through indigenous resources. It was found that most of the schools from urban areas do not have teaching learning materials prepared through indigenous resources. The study also revealed that 75 percent of the school do not have audio-visual aids in the schools. The available audio visual aids include the laptops, projectors and speaker boxes. It was also found that the smart class were in the process of installation in the schools.

The study found that 25 percent of the school mentioned that there is a social welfare group (having teachers in in the group) to cater the needs of the economically weaker sections students. The social welfare groups help the children in needs and provide them free uniform, books and copies and other materials they require in Schools.

It was found that 60 percent of the school mentioned that they have 10-20 percent students from economically weaker section of the society, and 40 percent schools mentioned that they have 20-30 percent students from economically weaker section of the society. 15 percent of the school mentioned that there are dropouts from the economically weaker section. The qualitative data from interview with the principals also revealed that there are 2 (two) dropouts each in three schools in the senior secondary level. The major reasons of the dropout at the senior secondary level are for job and early marriage. It was

also found that 100 percent of the principals mentioned that they do not have any specific incentives for the economically weaker section students. The qualitative data revealed that the students from the economically weaker section can avail Chief Minister's scholarship beside which there are no separate incentives for them.

The study also found that 85 percent of the principals mentioned that there are no resource teachers for the divyang learners in the school. The qualitative data collected through the focus group discussion with students and the interview with principals of school also revealed that there are resource teacher for teaching the divyang learners in 15 percent of the schools. There are divyang learners in the schools and the resource teachers are required to cater their needs. Lack of resource teacher in the school leads to the increase in inequity for the divyang learners. All the schools have mentioned that there is no proper mechanism to identify the differently-abled learners in the school. The identification of these divyang learners are done by the teachers, the principal and the other staffs who do not have the technical knowledge of identifying the divyang learners. A resource person for the divyang learners is available only in the Block Administration Centre (BAC) who visits the school on timely basis. The study also found that all the 20 principals of senior secondary school mentioned that there are no learning disabled learners and the emotionally disturbed learners in the school. This revealed that there is no proper mechanism to identify the learning disabled and emotionally disturbed learners in the school. The study also revealed that 25 percent principals mentioned that they do not have facilities to cater the needs of divyang learners in the school. However, the interviews with the principals and the focus group discussion with the students also revealed that 15 schools which stated about the facilities for the CWSN (Children with

Special Needs) have only ramps and the CWSN (Children with Special Needs) friendly toilets available in the school. There are no braille scripts in the school for the visually impaired learners, there are no hearing aids for the hearing impaired learners and there are no wheelchairs for the orthopedically handicapped learners in the school. This leads to the increase in inequity for the children with special needs.

The study found that 25 percent schools mentioned that there is difference in the enrolment pattern among urban and rural students. The study revealed that 100 percent of the school mentioned that there is no inferiority complex among the rural students. The qualitative data collected among the 30 participants of the focus group discussion however revealed that among the 30 students, 17 students mentioned that they feel inferior when they compare themselves with the students from urban background. The focus group discussion with the students revealed that 17 percent students mentioned that they have inferiority complex being the students from the rural background and 13 percent of the students mentioned that they don't have inferiority complex being from the rural background. The qualitative data also revealed that the feeling of inferiority complex among the students lie in the following areas: better facilities in the school, project and lab based subjects, coaching facilities, disadvantage of geographical background. The students during the focus group discussion mentioned that they do not have good transportation facilities; they have to travel on foot to the school. The students get tired travelling on foot to the school which hinders their academic performance. The students also mentioned that there are more facilities of equipment in the laboratories, adequate books inside the library in the urban schools. The feeling of inferiority complex among the rural students is also due to the unavailability of the coaching institutions in

the rural areas. Students of rural schools also mentioned that they do not have adequate coaching institutes like in urban areas. The participants of the focus group discussion mentioned that they feel inferior studying in the rural school as they perceive that the students studying in the school located urban school have better access to the facilities in the school as they perceive that the urban school has better facilities.

2. To find the status of participation to achieve equity in access in senior secondary education in Sikkim.

The study revealed that 100 percent of the school do not discriminate between students from different communities. Focus group discussion (FGDs) however revealed that a soft form of discrimination exists in the schools for the students of different ethnic communities. The focus group discussion also revealed that the students from different ethnic communities feel discriminated not by the teachers or the principals but from their friends. The focus group discussion revealed that the students from different ethnic communities feel discriminated from the friends during their activities in the schools. The study also revealed that these students feel discriminated in the social activities.

The study also revealed that 100 percent of the school mentioned that Girls participation in the academics is higher than the boys. The qualitative data also revealed that the girls preferred more academic, cultural and literacy activities over the boys. The focus group discussion revealed that the girls mentioned that they are interested more in academic activities. The girls also mentioned that they love to participate in debate, quiz and extempore. The study also revealed that 100 percent principals among 20 school mentioned that boys participate actively sports in sports. The qualitative data also

revealed that the boys preferred sports and physical activities. However the data collected from focus group discussion also revealed that 10 girls mentioned that they have interest in sports. The study also revealed that the boys who stay in the rented houses often bunk the classes or do not come to the school, they stay in their rooms and play games all day long. The interviews with the teachers revealed that these students come from home in the pretext of attending the classes but do not come to the school. The study also found that one of the teacher mentioned that upon the investigation, it was found that the students are interested in mobile gaming and used to stay in their rooms and play games with their friends. The data collected from the interview also revealed that the girls' student are serious about their studies than the boys.

3. To understand the implementation mechanism for equity in access at senior secondary level in Sikkim.

The study found that regarding the implementation of the Samagrah siksha abhiyan in Sikkim, the MHRD acts a key player in the implementation of the scheme as it is a central ministry which coordinates with the Rashtriya Madhyamik Siksha Abhiyan (RMSA) of the state to implement the Samagrah Siksha abhiyan in the state. MHRD also releases funds to the states directly for the implementation of the of Samagrah siksha abhiyan in the state. The study also found that for the implementation of the Samagrah siksha abhiyan in the state, MHRD is envisaged to provide supports in the forms of infrastructural facilities like the additional classrooms, libraries, laboratories, vocational rooms, rooms for the staffs, toilets and other rooms to the new or upgraded schools.

The study also found that there was a remarkable civil works done in the schools since 2012. Civil work was completed in 18 schools in the year 2012-13, 12 schools in the year 2013-14, 45 schools in the year 2014-15 and 28 schools in the year 2015-2016. The study also found that Education Department, Government of Sikkim has sanctioned additional classroom furniture for 74 schools, science laboratory furniture for 51 schools, computer room furniture for 44 schools, art and craft furniture for 87 schools and library furniture for 78 schools. This shows a remarkable initiative from the state government to ensure the implementation of the samagrah siksha abhiyan in its true sense. The study also found that School Education Department of any State Government/Union Territory (UT) Administration is the main implementation agency for the samagrah siksha abhiyan in the states. Educating the differently abled learners have been taken as the priority areas and 100 percent assistance is given to the states to enable the learning environment for the differently abled learners. It was also found in the study that all the financial sharing for the items for the differently abled learners will be taken care of by the MHRD, however the states are requires to provide Rs. 600 per disabled child per annum in the form of scholarship for the divyang learners.

The study found that that the sharing pattern of all components for vocationalisation of education between the centre and the state is 75:25, however with regard to the north eastern states, the sharing of the funds for all components of the scheme is in the ratio of 90:10

The study also found that for the implementation of the samagrah siksha abhiyan in the state, the central government releases the 90 percent of the share to the state government

and 10 percent of the share is to be borne by the state governments which the state government has to release to the respective stake holders.

4. To analyse the policy perspectives ensuring equity in access at the senior secondary level in Sikkim.

The study found that the new education policy is gender inclusive and has suggested reason for any gender gap for the development of the society. For the first time transgender students are mentioned under gender and to cover them under the gender friendly classroom. The policy has highlighted some important aspects to ensure gender equity in education. The study also revealed that the new education policy also talks about providing additional funds to the states for ensuring access to schools under the sanitation, toilets, transport facilities and conditional cash transfers this will reduce the gender gap in the schools and will also increase access to education. The study found that samagrah siksha abhiyan also focusses on providing an equitable framework to the rural students particularly girls where the students need to travel far for going to schools.

The study found that the educational policies have also been focusing on the value education. The national policy on education 1986 also stressed on the development of a value system through the redesigning of the textbooks and the curriculum, however the gender biased contents in the textbooks are still present. The policy has also emphasised on removing the barriers and obstacles of women with regard to the access and retention in education. The policy has also mentioned about the support services, time targets and monitoring for curbing the problems of access and retention and participation of women in education, however there is no specific and separated service for women to address

their problem of access and retention. It was also found in the study that the national policy on education 1986 also aspires to pursue non- discriminatory provisions for removing the stereo-typing in the different structure of the courses, however, the policy fails to provide the elaborative context of this non-discriminatory provision. It was also found that Samagrah siksha abhiyan aspires on enriching the various facets of curriculum particularly textbooks, teaching-learning materials, the use of space in the classroom, infrastructure, assessment and teacher trainings through the gender context.

The Study revealed that samagrah siksha abhiyan focusses on bridging the gender gap along with the social gap and focusses on mainstreaming and providing the equitable access in education to the marginalised and the minority students. The National policy on education 1986 also highlights the importance of women's participation in vocational, technical and professional education but their enrolment in the vocational stream has not been encouraged.

It was also found that Samagrah siksha abhiyan also focusses on the corroboration with the sustainable development goals for ensuring equitable access and quality education among the learners which is one of the important and laudable step of the government. The scheme also talks about ensuring gender equity for the girls belonging to SC, ST and marginalised and other vulnerable groups, however the policy has failed to address 'other equity issues' in details. The study revealed that Samagrah siksha abhiyan regards the needs and challenges of the children from marginalized and minorities. The scheme also claims to bridge the gap in access to education among the Marginalized and the minority section of the learners. It was also found that Samagrah siksha abhiyan also emphasizes

on the address of these issues which is laudable step. It has also stated about ensuring proper interventions for the children for inclusion in the school level and have given more responsibilities for the teacher for ensuring inclusionary practice for the learners in the school. The study also revealed that samagrah siksha abhiyan has also emphasized on the community members participation towards the equity in access to education amongst the tribal students. The study also revealed that the national policy on education 1986 also aspires to provide more opportunities of access to all the educationally backward students belonging to the different sections of the society which is indeed a new initiative of its kind and has opened a new array of hope for dis-advantaged sections of the society. It was also found that the national policy on education emphasizes on providing adequate infrastructural facilities in the schools, however, with the interviews with the principals of schools and the focus group discussion with the students, it was found that there is no such incentives for the educationally backward students. The study also revealed that Samagrah siksha abhiyan aspires to provide more opportunities of access to all the educationally backward students belonging to the different sections of the society which is indeed a new initiative of its kind and has opened a new array of hope for dis-advantaged sections of the society

The study found that the samagrah siksha abhiyan also mentions about the security concerns of the children living under vulnerable conditions and aspires to provide attention to these learners. The study also found that Samagrah siksha abhiyan also emphasizes construction of more rooms and creation and the creation of the girls toilet and the CWSN friendly toilets in the school, it is a laudable scheme of the government. Ensuring the availability of the toilets in the schools provides more opportunity for

equitable access for the learners. It was found that the national education policy 1986 has also realised the importance of regional language in the teaching and learning process. The policy envisaged to develop the curriculum as per the tribal language at the lower stages and focus on the regional language in the higher level. It was also found that the policy also highlights the importance of the co-curricular activities. It ensures the availability of the adequate learning materials in the classroom. The policy also talks about engaging the students in co-curricular activities like sports, arts, crafts and vocational education. It was also found that samagrah siksha scheme emphasizes on the corroboration of the schools with the special schools for the better access to education facilities among the children with special needs. It also emphasizes that that the non-governmental organizations to provide the supports of resources.

5.2 DISCUSSION

The discussion is made based on the research question and analyzed the findings with the citation of related research. The discussion has also answered the research question posed at the beginning of the research. The findings are analyzed within the context of previous studies.

5.2.1 To explore the status of equity in access at senior secondary school of Sikkim.

The study reflected that there is no inequity in enrollment of girls and boys students. This indicate that all the senior secondary schools of Sikkim provide equity in access to all the gender students. The findings of this study is contrast to the study conducted by (SADEV, 2010) which reveals that low enrolment of the girls in the schools is one of the

actor affecting gender inequity in education. The study also revealed that the enrolment of girls are higher, this indicate that girls are getting chance to come to school and they are being benefitted from the opportunity. The study is contrasting to the study conducted by (Østby, Urdal, & Rudolfson, 2016) that states though the free education has been provided in majority of the developing countries with regard to secondary education, however, there still exists gender inequity in educational settings in those developing countries. It was evident in the schools of Sikkim that there is no discrimination on the basis of gender. The schools provide equitable opportunity with regard to the admission of the students. Some of the schools also mentioned that the student are given the opportunity in admission on the basis of first come and first serve basis, others mentioned that the admission in senior secondary level is based on the merit. The study also revealed that all girl students are well adjusted in the schools, this indicated that girl students are not facing adjustment problem and the school environment is congenial for them to study. Most of the schools in Sikkim follow the co-educational framework wherein both the girls and the boys are provided admission and share the common classroom and the common desks and benches thus they are well adjusted in the schools and do not have a problem of adjustment in the school. This also reveals that the classrooms in the schools of Sikkim are gender friendly. The focus group discussion (FGD) with the students and the interviews with the principals of the school revealed that the girls aspire to be financially independent. This reveals that the girl students are concerned about their future. The young girls want to take charge of their lives and have a successful career and become financially independent. The focus group also revealed that the girls mentioned that they wanted to break the social stereotype of a girl getting married at a young age.

The study also corroborates to the research conducted by the (Selvan, 2017) as it was observed in their study that usually the parents fix their daughters marriage in between of their educational process. The girls want to break this social stereotype of getting married early and it is a laudable step on the part of the students that they are more concerned about the future. The focus group discussion revealed that 100 percent girls mentioned that they require educational and personal guidance.

The study also revealed that the girls feel inadequate and believe that they are deficient in every aspect as compared to boys. The study corroborates to the study conducted by (Sahin, 2014) the patriarchal nature of families inherited through the ages also has led to gender inequity in education. This patriarchal nature of the families had led to increase in the feeling of the inequities among the girls. The focus group discussion revealed that the reason for feeling inferior is that society expects all the household chores from the girls, they feel they cannot express freely as well as do not feel freedom of choice in personal matter, their movement and dresses. The study corroborates to (Global Campaign for Education, 2005) and (Klein, et al., 1994) that state that the gender- stereotypical expectations are evident in the society and have highlighted important factors like cultural and social beliefs that act as barriers for girls' education. The gender stereotypical expectations in the forms of house hold chores are still prevalent in the society.

Researches have revealed that failing to provide the basic infrastructural facilities in the school creates exclusion and gender inequity (Global Campaign for Education, 2005). The better access to infrastructural facilities ensures the equitable access to education.

The study revealed that 85 percent school students have equity in infrastructure. It is a matter of concern that 15 percent school do not provide equity in access of furniture due to inadequate availability of the furniture which is a matter of concern in the state. 95 percent schools do not have common rooms for boys and girls in the school, five percent school have the common rooms for boys and girls. The qualitative data also revealed that 19 schools do not have a separate common room for boys and girls. The reason provided is that common rooms are not required in schools so these rooms are used for other purposes. It was found that there is lack of awareness among the principals regarding the importance of the common rooms in the schools.

It was also found that all the principals of 20 senior secondary schools mentioned that these schools have the sanitary pad dispensing machines installed for the sanitary purpose. The qualitative data also revealed that the sanitary vending machine has been installed in all the 20 schools. The focus group discussion with the students revealed that the sanitary machine is not working in their schools. Regarding the fee for using the sanitary pads, the qualitative study revealed that the girls students shared that they pay a nominal charge of five rupees each time they use the sanitary pad from the installed vending machine. The sanitary pads vending machine is very important in the schools from the point of view of the gender equity. The working condition of the sanitary pads vending machine creates more equitable access for the girls in schools. The study also highlighted that 15 percent of the school have separate changing room for the girls for sanitary purpose and 85 percent of the schools do not have separate changing room for the girls, which is also a matter of concern. The separate changing room is required to ensure the privacy for girls during the menstrual cycle. Some schools have separate

toilets for the boys and girls but may not have separate units in the toilets, this leads to the deprivation in the use of the sanitary pads by the girls during their menstrual cycle.

The quantitative data revealed that 100 percent schools have a library room, however the qualitative study revealed that though there are library room in all the schools but the rooms are very small and not with adequate books. Having a library with inadequate books and small rooms may not serve the purpose of establishing the library in the school.

The study also revealed that the cleanliness of the toilet are the major problem faced by the learners in the school, the research highlighted that though 100 percent of the school have separate Toilets for boys and girls in the school. However the focus group discussion revealed that 40 percent students mentioned that they don't have clean toilet in the school. The toilets that are not properly cleaned look dirty and also creates barriers to the access for a hygienic toilets among the students. School toilets are one of the most basic facilities that ensure the access of the learners (Global Campaign for Education, 2005). Failing to provide the basic facilities like clean toilet results in exclusion and inequities in education.

Science laboratories also plays important role for ensuing better access for the learners to the quality education. 25 percent of the schools have integrated laboratories for science subjects and 75 percent of the schools have separate laboratory for the science subject in the school. The 75 percent schools do not provide equity in access of facilities of laboratories in science to all the students. The students of the schools which don't have a proper laboratory facility in the school face inequity as compared to the students from the

schools that have laboratories for all the science subjects. This might also lead to the development of the inferiority complexes among the students. The study also revealed that 100 percent of the school do not charge any fees from the students for using the equipment in the laboratory, this indicate that the equity in access exist in all the schools for all the students studying the science subject. This is an indicative of ensuring equitable access to the students from socio-economically dis-advantaged groups. The students from the socio-economically disadvantaged groups have their own problems, due to the unavailability of adequate resources and with just meager resources the students may not afford to join the schools for education. Thus ensuring free access to equipment in the library leads to more equitable opportunity for the students of all categories. The study also found that 67 percent of the students mentioned that there is adequate sitting space in the laboratory in their school and 33 percent students mentioned that there is no adequate sitting space in the laboratory. The findings of the study indicate that inequities while conducting experiments of science subjects exists as the sitting space are inadequate. Laboratories in science subjects are very important to provide hands on learning or experimental learning opportunities for the students. The space in the laboratories should be improved so that all the students can study and conduct experiments in laboratory and do not face inequity.

The study with regard to the facilities of playground in the schools also shows that 100 percent of the school have playground for the learners. Which is a very positive indication for the students studying in the school. The study also found that 70 percent of the schools have adequate sports materials for the students and 30 percent of the schools do not have adequate sports materials in the schools. Though majority of the schools

provide the adequate materials required for the students however still the inequities in exists in the availability of the sports materials for the students. The study also revealed that only 30 percent of the schools have facilities for the indoor games and 70 percent schools do not have indoor game facilities. The study indicates that there exist inequities with regard to the availability of indoor game facilities for the students.

With regard to the availability of the computer facilities in the school, the study found that 100 percent of the schools have computer room with the functional computers for the learners. The interviews with the principals also revealed that there are computer rooms with functional computers in the school. Computers have become integral part of our day to day lives. The online education is also increasing aspect of education. The availability of computers in the schools provides opportunities for the learners to have a better access to the technology. The study also revealed that 100 percent of the schools have access to electricity supply. The interviews with the principal and focus group discussion with the students also revealed that 100 percent schools have availability of electricity in the schools. This is also a positive indication. It was also observed that 30 percent of the school have access to generator facilities and 70 percent schools do not have access to generator facilities. The importance of generator or inverter facilities in the schools can never be undermined. Adequate facilities for the inverter and generator in the school help the smooth functioning of the day to day activities even when there is no electricity facility in the school. The study indicates that though all the schools have access to proper electricity and computer facilities, however in case of power-cuts, the students of 70 percent schools cannot have access to computer facilities.

The study also found that 15 percent of the senior secondary schools have art, craft and culture room in the school and 85 percent schools do not have art, craft and culture rooms in the school. The study found that the students do not have equity in access to Art, Craft and Culture rooms. The availability of arts and culture rooms helps the learners not only for the recreation facilities however it also helps the learners to improve their creative abilities. The study also found that 95% of the senior secondary schools do not have art and craft resource teacher in the school and 5% of the schools have art, and craft resource teacher in the school. This indicates that the students do not have equity in access to Art and craft resource teacher in the school. The lack of resource teacher defeats the objectives of having arts and craft room in the school. The availability of the arts and craft teachers is important and has to be made available in the schools.

The study also found that 100 percent of the school have drinking water facilities. The focus group discussion and the interview with the principals also revealed that 100 percent schools have drinking water facilities, this study indicates that the students have access to drinking water facilities in the school. The drinking water facility is also important aspect of ensuring better access to education. The availability of the adequate drinking water facilities in the school thus highlights that there is equity in access to drinking water facilities in the school for the learners.

The study also found that 60 percent of the school have availability of the teaching learning and 40 percent schools do not have the teaching learning materials prepared through indigenous resources for the teaching learning process to be conducted inside the classroom. The focus group discussion also revealed that 60 percent students mentioned

that the schools do not have teaching learning materials prepared through indigenous resources. The teaching learning materials play a significant role for helping the learners for a better learning outcomes. The study indicates that majority of the schools have the availability of the teaching learning materials prepared through indigenous resources which helps the learners for better learning outcomes. The study also revealed that 25 percent of the school have availability of the audio-visual aids inside the classrooms and 75 percent of the school do not have audio-visual aids in the schools. These audio visual aids also play a significant role for the learning outcomes of the learners. However the study indicates that the students do not have equity in access with regard to the audio-visual aids in the school.

The study also found that 60 percent of the school mentioned that they have 10-20 percent students from economically weaker section of the society, and 40 percent schools mentioned that they have 20-30 percent students from economically weaker section of the society. It was also revealed that 15 percent of the school mentioned that there are dropouts from the economically weaker section of students and 85 percent school mentioned that there are no dropouts from the economically weaker section. The study is contrast to (OECD, 2018) which highlights the existence of double deprivation in education. The qualitative data of interview with the Principals also revealed that there are 2 dropouts each in three schools in the senior secondary level. The qualitative data also revealed that the major reasons of the dropout at the senior secondary level are job aspiration and early marriage. This indicates that the inequities with regard to the access of economically weaker section students to educational facilities do not exist in schools.

Regarding the children with special needs or the divyang learners, the principals of senior secondary schools mentioned that there are divyang learners in the school. However, it was found that there are no resource teachers for divyang learners in 85 percent of the schools. According to the framework of inclusive education, all the schools need to make special arrangements to cater the need of the divyang learners. The most important aspect of the providing equitable access to the divyang learners is the resource teachers for the divyang learners. The equity in access to education for the divyang learners cannot be achieved in the absence of the teachers in their classrooms. The study indicates that majority of the schools in Sikkim do not have resource teachers for the divyang learners. Regarding the identification of the divyang learners, it was also evident through this study that there is no proper mechanism to identify the differently-abled learners in the school. The data revealed that it is the concerned class teacher, subject teachers and the head of the school who identifies these divyang learners. The class teacher, concerned subject teacher or the principal may not have the adequate knowledge on the identification of the divyang learners, thus taking the responsibility of identifying the differently abled learners may not be appropriate.

The study also revealed that there are no learning disabled learners and the emotionally disturbed learners in the school. The lack of proper mechanism for the identification of the learning disabled learners and the emotionally disturbed learners may be the reason for not having these learners in the school. The study also revealed that the Schools have the facility of only the ramps and the CWSN (Children with Special Needs) friendly toilets available in the school which does not corroborate with the facilities as stated in

samagrah siksha abhiyan. In order to provide more equitable opportunities in access to education for the divyangs, more facilities should be made inside and outside the schools.

With regard to the equity in access among the urban and rural students the study highlighted that there is stability in enrolment among the urban and rural students in the school and 25 percent schools mentioned that there is no stability of enrolment of urban and rural students. The qualitative data collected among the 20 school heads and from the 30 participants of focus group also revealed that students from both the urban and rural areas have access to the school. As the enrolment is an important indicator of ensuring equity in access in education, and there is the stability in the enrolment of the learners from both the urban and rural areas, it is evident that there is no inequity with regard to the locale. The study also revealed that 57 percent of the students believed that they have inferiority complex being the students from rural background. They have mentioned that they lack better facilities in the school, project and lab based subjects, coaching facilities, disadvantage of geographical background being the students of rural areas. The students from rural background have their own expectations and needs. It is evident through this study that the students from rural background do not have adequate facilities like coaching and access to different facilities they require for their studies. The study also found that the participants feel inferior over the project and laboratory based subjects. They also mentioned that the students studying in the school located in the urban outskirts have better access to the coaching and tuition facilities which they require out of the school. The rural students also revealed that they feel the disadvantage of being from rural background as they have to travel on foot to the school and get tired after reaching

back from the school and it relatively creates impact on their academic achievement. Catering the needs of the children is important in order to provide equity in education.

It was found that to a large extent there is equity in access in terms of admission. The equity in access is also visible infrastructural facilities like toilets, computers drinking water, playground however the facilities like common rooms and laboratories need to be emphasized. The adequate arrangements to address the needs of socio-economically disadvantaged group and the divyang learners need to be prioritized.

5.2.2 To find the status of participation to achieve equity in access in senior secondary education in Sikkim.

The study found that all the 20 school do not discriminate between students from different communities. Focus group discussion (FGDs) revealed that students from different community do not face discrimination in schools and they equally participate in all the activities. It was also evident in the schools that all the students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds enjoy in the school and participating in the events organized by the schools.

The study however revealed that the girl students mentioned that boys are favoured more as compared to girls when the teacher selects class captain (monitors). Boys are preferred as class captain, school captain, and house captain. Girls are chosen as vice-captain which sends the message that girls students cannot lead. They also shared that the girls and boys are choosed separately as per the task. For example, when the work is related to distribute food or tea or sweeping then generally girls are allotted the work. This study highlighted

that gendered discrimination in allotment of curricular and co-curricular task exists in schools. Gender disparities are also evident in social context, there are norms in the society that restricts the access of women to various opportunities, institutions and resources e.g in a Hindu society the woman on her menstrual cycle is still not allowed to visit religious institutions and take part in the festivals and rituals thereby creating gender discrimination. The other form of gender inequality that exists in the society is the disparity in the labour market. Women are paid less as compared to the males in the labour sector. These forms of the gender stereotyping also creates emotional stress for the girl child who witness these gender forms that are evident in all forms of activities in the society the study corroborates to (Sahin, 2014)(Global Campaign for Education, 2005)(Klein, et al., 1994) that the gender stereo-typical expectations, patriarchal nature of the society and other socio-cultural factors creates barriers for access and participation in education among the girls.

The study further reveals that the academic achievement is one of the important attribute of measuring the participation in school education. The participation of girls in education have been increasing in number and performance as well. Researches also reveal that the girls outnumber boys in the academic participation and also with the grades in terms of academic achievement. Researches have also revealed that the participation of girls is higher in academics. (Houtte, 2004) argued that ‘boys culture is less study oriented than the girls culture and that this differences can be held responsible for the gender differences in achievement, at least in general schools’. It indicates that there is no gender inequity in participation.

The qualitative data also revealed that the boys preferred sports and physical activities. However the data collected from focus group discussion also revealed that 10 girls mentioned that they have interest in sports. The researches have also revealed that ‘the huge majority of heroes, are men and it is boys who admire sports stars...for the girls interviewed, they did not have functional role models’ (Biskup & Pfister, 1999). This hero worship might have led to increasing participation of boys in sports. The study also revealed that boys are more interested in gaming like Pub-G and are more active in social media platforms than the girls. The interview with the principals revealed that the students have easy access to the mobile phones. The principals also mentioned that the boys have more interested in gaming. It was also found through the interview that the boys who stay in the rented houses often bunk the classes or do not come to the school, they stay in their rooms and play games all day long. The data collected from the interview also revealed that the girls student are serious about their studies.

It was found that the schools encourage the participation of all the students from different sections of the society. There is no community wise biasedness in the school however a soft form of gender bias still exists in the schools.

5.2.3 To understand the implementation mechanism for equity in access at senior secondary level in Sikkim.

Regarding the implementation of the Samagrah siksha abhiyan in Sikkim ‘MHRD is the nodal central government ministry to coordinate RMSA with the help of RMSA State Implementation Societies (SIS) in each state. However, there are a lot of support arrangements and institutions available for better implementation of RMSA. A National

Resource Group (NRG) provides guidance for bringing about reforms in teaching learning processes, curriculum, teaching learning material, ICT education and mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation. The study highlights that regarding the up gradation or the establishment of new schools the facilities would be provided in class rooms with furniture, library, laboratory (stream-wise for Senior Secondary and integrated for secondary level), vocational lab, computer room, room for guidance and counseling services cum medical room, Head Master room, staff room, Art and Craft room, toilet blocks, safe drinking water, separate toilets with water facility for boys, girls and CWSN.

The study also reveals that civil work was completed in 18 schools in the year 2012-13, 12 schools in the year 2013-14, 45 schools in the year 2014-15 and 28 schools in the year 2015-2016. The data indicates a remarkable progress in the civil works in the schools of Sikkim.

The Education Department, Government of Sikkim has sanctioned additional classroom furniture for 74 schools, science laboratory furniture for 51 schools, computer room furniture for 44 schools, art and craft furniture for 87 schools and library furniture for 78 schools, this will lead to more equitable opportunities for the access to education. The study also reveals that The Scheme of Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) was launched during 2009-10 and replaces the earlier scheme of Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC). The aim of this scheme is to enable all students with disabilities to pursue four years of secondary education in an inclusive and enabling environment, after completing eight years of elementary schooling. The

implementing agency for the scheme is School Education Department of any State Government/Union Territory (UT) Administration acts as the implementation agency and 100 percent Central assistance is provided for all items covered in the scheme. The prerogative to involve NGOs having experience in the field of education of the disabled, in implementing the scheme, completely lies with the implementing agency. The State Governments are only required to make provisions for a scholarship of Rs. 600 per disabled child per annum.

5.2.4 To analyse the policy perspectives ensuring equity in access at the senior secondary level in Sikkim.

The policy perspectives have been analyzed under different sub themes for the study. The following themes have been categories—

- Gender equity in education.
- Education of the socio-economically disadvantaged group (SEDGs) and the minorities.
- Inclusion of children from different ethnic and the marginalized communities
- Education of the children with special needs.

5.2.4.1 Gender equity in education.

The new education policy is gender inclusive and has suggested reason for any gender gap for the development of the society. For the first time transgender students are mentioned under gender and to cover them under the gender friendly classroom. This is a laudable step from the government. Transgenders are also the important part of our

society and need special attention, this is the first national policy on education that has provided an arrangement of ensuring equitable provision for the transgender learners in the school.

It was also found that the new education policy talks about providing additional funds to the states for ensuring access to schools under the sanitation, toilets, transport facilities and conditional cash transfers this will reduce the gender gap in the schools and will also increase access to education. Providing the adequate funding in for the school is important as the schools with adequate funds can plan for the more equitable access for the learners. The samagrah siksha abhiyan also focusses on providing an equitable framework to the rural students particularly girls where the students need to travel far for going to schools. The samagrah siksha abhiyan also focusses on bridging the gender gap along with the social gap and focusses on mainstreaming and providing the equitable access in education to the marginalised and the minority students. Samagrah siksha abhiyan also focusses on the corroboration with the sustainable development goals for ensuring equitable access and quality education among the learners which is one of the important and laudable step of the government. The scheme also talks about ensuring gender equity for the girls belonging to SC, ST and marginalised and other vulnerable groups, however the policy has failed to address 'other equity issues' in details. Samagrah siksha abhiyan aspires on enriching the various facets of curriculum particularly textbooks, teaching-learning materials, the use of space in the classroom, infrastructure, assessment and teacher trainings through the gender context. Thus both the two important policy perspectives i.e. The new policy on education and the samagrah

siksha abhiyan are both gender inclusive and have opened new doors for ensuring equitable provisions for different genders in education access.

5.2.4.2 Education of the socio-economically disadvantaged group (SEDGs) and the minorities.

Samagrah siksha abhiyan regards the needs and challenges of the children from marginalized and minorities. The scheme also claims to bridge the gap in access to education among the Marginalized and the minority section of the learners. It also emphasizes on the address of these issues which is laudable step. It has also stated about ensuring proper interventions for the children for inclusion in the school level and have given more responsibilities for the teacher for ensuring inclusionary practice for the learners in the school. Samagrah siksha abhiyan has also emphasized on the community members participation towards the equity in access to education amongst the tribal students. The new policy on education highlights a realization of the existing disparities in various forms in education and envisages to cater the needs of these disparities. This policy aspires to provide more opportunities of access to all the educationally backward students belonging to the different sections of the society which is indeed a new initiative of its kind and has opened a new array of hope for dis-advantaged sections of the society. Samagrah siksha abhiyan aspires to provide more opportunities of access to all the educationally backward students belonging to the different sections of the society which is indeed a new initiative of its kind and has opened a new array of hope for dis-advantaged sections of the society. Thus both the policy perspectives have focused on providing equity in education among the disadvantaged sections of the society.

5.2.4.3 Inclusion of children from different ethnic and the marginalized communities

The samagrah siksha abhiyan also mentions about the security concerns of the children living under vulnerable conditions and aspires to provide attention to these learners. The new education also reflects that this policy is concerned about the under representation in access of minorities in education and acknowledges the importance of interventions for promoting access to education for the minorities.

5.2.4.4 Education of the children with special needs.

Samagrah siksha abhiyan also emphasizes construction of more rooms and creation and the creation of the girls toilet and the CWSN friendly toilets in the school, it is a laudable scheme of the government. The CWSN friendly toilet is the need of the hour in the school. it is the basic infrastructural facility that ensures equity in access for the children with special needs. The policy emphasizes ensuring the equitable and inclusive education to the divyang learners or the children and recognizes the importance of creating enabling mechanisms for the opportunities in access. The CWSN learners or the divyang learners also have different aspirations and expectations. The policy highlights the creation of the enabling mechanism which is a laudable step in the process of inclusion. The new education policy also highlights that the framework of the policy is in complete consonance with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016 which is a wonderful step for the Children with Disabilities. The corroboration of the new educational policy with the RPWD act will also give a new impetus for the CWSN learners with regard to the equity in access. The policy is quite vocal in the context of the

children with special needs. It ensures the availability of the adequate learning materials in the classroom. The policy also talks about engaging the students in co-curricular activities like sports, arts, crafts and vocational education.

The policy also talks about the incorporation of the new technologies in education for the orientation of the parents and care givers along with the dissemination of learning materials which will boost the learning outcomes of the Children with special needs. The new policy on education also provides the training and orientation opportunity to the teachers for catering the needs of the differently-abled learners in the school. The samagrah siksha abhiyan emphasizes on the corroboration of the schools with the special schools for the better access to education facilities among the children with special needs. It also emphasizes that that the non-governmental organizations to provide the supports of resources for the schools. Emphasizing the community participation for ensuring the better access to education for the children with special needs is indeed a commendable step.

The policies are forward looking and to a large extent focuses in equity in access. Now it largely depends on implementation by the union government, state government, officials and the stake holders of education.

CHAPTER - 6

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 SUMMARY

This chapter presents the summary of the study, recommendations and conclusions of the study.

6.1.1. Introduction

Educational access and participation and economic status are such forms of inequities which still exist in our Indian Society. Equity in education in general can be said as the ideal situation where all is respected in schools, taking into consideration the numerous differences between children in regards to their social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. Senior secondary education is one of the important structures of the educational setup as it is not merely a preparatory stage for the learners for their future however; it is a complete unit itself. Our country has a history of various undesirable social norms and gender biases right from the ancient civilizations. Various policy frameworks have helped our country to get rid from various ill-social norms yet it is an undeniable fact that the inequities in education are still evident (Govinda & Bandyopadhyay 2008). Equity in access to education thus has been the focal area of the various policy documents for the past few decades and much have been done to remove the inequities in educational structure. The access to education in India was initially based on the idea of inherited merit. The concept of inherited merit relates access to education to the circumstances of birth (being born to prosperous parents)(Varghese,

Sabharwal, & Malish, 2018). The secondary and senior secondary education is no different in terms of the principles as stated above as the inequalities in the higher education is evident as a result of the existing inequities in the lower levels of education. The history of Indian education reflects that the inequity with regard to access in early education has been rested on various personal and social factors as- gender, socio economic class, ethnicity, religion, region, caste which has created the hindrance in the harmonious development of the society.

6.1.2 Constitutional Provisions (with regard to equity in access)

The constitution is considered as a basic legal document of a country. Indian Constitution being the largest document has a special provision with regard to equity in access in education. Article 15 of our constitution prohibits the discrimination by the state on account of the race, religion, sex and place of birth, Article 16 on the other hand talks about the equality of opportunity in terms of public employment, Article 29, states “(1)Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same. (2) No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them” (Government of India, 2021), article30 of our constitution provides a special arrangement for the minorities based on religion or language to establish the educational institution of their choice, article 45 of our Indian constitution directs the state to provide the free and compulsory education to all children of the age 6-14 years of age in such a manner as the state may, by law determine.

6.1.3 Policy Framework For Educational Development In India

The development of the secondary education post-Independence can be traced back to 1952-1953, the Mudaliar Commission or the secondary education commission is the first education commission in India which paved a way to cater the learner's interest area in the curriculum structure. The comprehensive structure of education and the educational re-construction is evident in the Education Commission (1964-66), the commission which is popularly known as the Kothari commission. The Kothari commission also focusses elaborately on the idea of equalization of educational opportunities for the school education through the various aspects - tuition fees and other private costs, scholarships, education for the handicapped children, regional imbalances in education, education of girls and education of scheduled tribes. The National Policy on Education (1986) put forward the issues of educational equity, reorganization of education at different stages and management of education as the guiding forces for their recommendations. The new education policy 2020 has led much emphasis on the issues of equity, access and universal inclusion in the school education. The policy clearly highlights that 'Education is the single greatest tool for achieving social justice and equality. Inclusive and equitable education - while indeed an essential goal in its own right - is also critical to achieving an inclusive and equitable society in which every citizen has the opportunity to dream, thrive, and contribute to the nation (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020)'.

6.1.4 International Policy on Equity, Access and Quality in Education

Various international organizations have been vocal about the issues of equity, access and quality in education. Global Education First Initiative, a five year initiative launched by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon prioritizes to expand and improve access and quality education. The Global Education First Initiative has listed the above priority areas for the education however it has also been focusing on social cohesion and environmental care. The study commissioned by the Education International (EI) Research Institute University of Exeter which had carried out the case studies Canada, New Zealand, Ireland, England, Poland and Zambia have focused on elusive equities issues.

The resolution of the Sustainable Development Goals also known as ‘Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ highlights some important areas with regard to the important areas of education like – quality education, gender equality, and reducing inequalities.

6.1.5 Visions and Objectives of Rashtriya Madhyamik Siksha Abhiyan

In the Indian context, Rashtriya Madhyamik Siksha Abhiyan (RMSA) was launched by the ministry of Human Resource Development Department (HRDD). Rashtriya Madhyamik Siksha Abhiyan (RMSA) is a flagship programme on secondary education in India launched by the Ministry of Human Resource Development Department, Government of India in the year 2009. The main aim of the RMSA is to ensure access to secondary education and ensure the quality education. ‘It is envisaged to achieve an

enrolment rate of 75% from 52.26% in 2005-06 at secondary stage of implementation of the scheme by providing a secondary school within a reasonable distance of any habitation(Department of School Education & Literacy, MHRD, 2021)’.

Samagrah Siksha Abhiyan, an integrated scheme for school education has been implemented as a centrally sponsored scheme under the Ministry of Human Resource Department (MHRD). The basic idea regarding the implementation of the Scheme was to attain a convergence between the two schemes launched by MHRD as two separate schemes – Sarva Siksha Abhiyan and Rashtriya Madhyamik Siksha Abhiyan before the implementation of the of the samagrah siksha abhiyan.

The second chapter highlights some important issues- universalizing and expanding quality school education, ensuring equity in access to the schools for all the marginalized and deprived sections of the society, ensuring the availability of adequate infrastructural facilities in the school, focus on achieving 100 per cent retention from pre-school to the senior secondary school and school area mapping. There has been remarkable progress in senior and senior secondary education in India post-independence.

6.1.6 Understanding Equity in Education

The idea of equity in education have been defined differently by educationists and researchers throughout their studies and researches. The terms equity and equality have been used synonymously as a catch phrase in conversations as well as in ordinary business.

The terms equity and equality have been used synonymously as a catch phrase in conversations as well as in ordinary business. Both these terms may seem identical in their appearance however these two terms have different meanings. The access to education can be seen as a first step in equitable provision (Wood, Levinson, Postlethwaite, & Black, 2011). The access is the main parameter that ensures equity in education. (O.E.C.D, 2007) defines equity as the broad area that emphasizes both equity in opportunities and equity in educational outcome. (Barth, 2006) Further clarifies the equality and equity as - 'Equality in education is achieved when students are all treated same and have access to similar resources. Equity is achieved when all the students receive the resources they need so they graduate prepared for the success after their high school'.

6.1.7 Overview of School Education in Sikkim

Nestled in the north-eastern part of India, Sikkim is a beautiful and the organic state of India declared by the hon'ble prime minister of India in the year 2018. Sikkim became the integral state of India in 16th May 1975 by the 36th amendment act, 1975. The male literacy rate in Sikkim is 87.3 percent, female literacy rate is 76.4 percent and the overall literacy rate is 82.2 percent as per the census data of 2011. The difference between male and female literacy is 10.9. Understanding the issues of equity in access and participation in senior secondary education becomes an important aspect for understanding the significance of the education and the education policy of a country. The recent education policy programmes have emphasized highly on ensuring equity in access and participation in the secondary education.

6.1.8 Needs and Significance of the study

The significance of secondary and senior secondary education can be understood with the fact that the demand of higher education in the country is ever increasing. Secondary and senior secondary education plays an important role in the educational structure of our country as it is the stage that opens up two distinct dichotomies of courses for the learners i.e. higher education and the vocational education. The curriculum of primary education and the elementary education are the basic curriculum or the core curriculum in nature and are only the preparatory structure for the learners. It is only on the stage of secondary and senior secondary education clear bifurcations of the above mentioned dichotomies are clearly visible. The secondary and senior secondary education thus opens the opportunities for the learners to pursue the subjects and areas that interests them.

Understanding the issues of equity in access and participation in senior secondary education becomes an important aspect for understanding the significance of the education and the education policy of a country. The recent education policy programmes have emphasized highly on ensuring equity in access and participation in the secondary education. Equalizing opportunities for the secondary and senior secondary education has become significant in our country. The educational researches conducted in our country reveals that inequities in equalization of opportunities with regard to education is still visible. India being a geographically diverse, economically diverse and culturally diverse country has array challenges with regard to establishing equitable framework in the education. Sikkim a beautiful state located in the north-eastern part of the country has its own diversities and challenges. Understanding the issue of equity in access and

participation in education in Sikkim is important as some of the students in Sikkim still are the first generation learners and have their own issues and problems. The society of Sikkim is patriarchal in nature and there are gender inequities still existing in the society. Majority of the population of Sikkim still belong to the rural background and also face inequities in access to various facilities. The state is located in a hilly terrain and also faces the disadvantage of unavailability of the technologies. The study therefore is significant in exploring various dimensions of equities and inequities in educational opportunities in the state.

Understanding the equity and inequity in access and participation in the secondary and senior secondary education is also important from the point of view that it also helps us to understand the retention rates. Such study also helps us to explore on the dimension of the dropouts and the possible causes of dropouts and wastage if any.

6.1.9 Statement of the Problem

The study on Equity in access and participation in senior secondary schools was made using the mixed method design. The study explored the equity in access based on the broad indicators i.e. gender, locale and ethnicity. The participation of students were investigated in order to study the equity in access through the lens of gender, locale and ethnicity. The quantitative and qualitative strand of the study simultaneously assisted the data to be augmented and understand equity in access with clarity.

6.1.10 Research Question

The research question of the study was -

- How is the status of equity in access at the senior secondary schools of Sikkim?
- How is the status of participation to ensure equity in access at senior secondary level in Sikkim?
- What is the implementation mechanism for equity in access at the senior secondary education level in Sikkim?
- How are the policy perspectives ensuring equity in access at the senior secondary level in Sikkim?

6.1.11 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study was:

- To explore the status of equity in access at senior secondary schools of Sikkim.
- To find the status of participation to achieve equity in access in the senior secondary schools of Sikkim.
- To understand the implementation mechanism for equity in access at the senior secondary education level in Sikkim.
- To analyze the policy perspectives ensuring equity in access at the senior secondary level in Sikkim.

6.1.12 Delimitations and Limitations of the study

The study was delimited to Government Senior Secondary Schools of Sikkim and the limitations of the study was there were less statistical official records related to equity and access and participation in the schools of Sikkim . In the quantitative strand of the study all the senior secondary schools couldn't be covered, so study relied on data from 20 senior secondary schools.

6.1.13 Reviews of related Literature

The review of related literature has been presented thematically under the themes of - Gender equity in education, Equity in education based on ethnicity, marginalization and socio- economic status, Access to education based on gender, Access to education based on locale, Access to education based on ethnicity, Access to education based on socio-economic status.

The researches conducted with regard to the theme of gender equity highlights that the double deprivation for girls are still existing in the society. Girls belonging to the marginalized section of the society, minorities and Social- economic disadvantaged groups have a high risk of getting dropout from the schools and face this double deprivation. The researches also suggests that that gender stereotypical expectations still exists in the society. The cultural factors, economic factors, social beliefs and perceptions, attitudes of parents, parent's preference of the boy child, early marriage, house hold activities, inadequate infrastructural facilities and the fees of the schools also act as the barrier for a girl child for equitable access in education. The researches also

revealed that only the gender gaps and gender parity index are not a proper parameter for measuring equity in access and participation. The studies reveal that the basic idea of equity in access can be understood through how the schools cater the needs of the learners in the real sense. The studies also mention that with regard to academics, the participation of girls is low in the mathematics, science and technology as the researchers have found that there are subjects with occupational choices that creates inequity among the students. The studies have also revealed that there are factors responsible for the gender inequity in education and are ‘Low enrolment; Low retention rate; widening gender gap at higher education levels; Low achievement in school (SADEV, 2010)’. The researches also reveal that the ‘patriarchal nature of families (Sahin, 2014)’also leads to the gender inequity in the society. The gender inequalities in schools have also been mentioned by the researches with regard to the teachers as the studies have highlighted that the percentage of female teachers are higher in the elementary and the secondary level however there are male heads or in charges of the school predominantly for this female teachers. ‘Silent exclusion’ (Hossain & Benjamin, 2010),is also visible in the schools as the students belonging to the weaker sections are silently exclude themselves in the participation in the schools.

The reviews on the theme of equity in education based on ethnicity, marginalization and socio- economic status highlights that there is consistent enrolment and retention of girls in the schools. The scheduled caste and scheduled tribe populations also have access to schools and the retention in the schools and shows improvement in the figures. The researches under this subtheme also talks about the ‘double deprivation’ faced by the girls from the marginalized and the minorities with regard to the education. The research

highlights that a girl belonging to the economically weaker section of the society, marginalized section of the society or the minority group has higher chance of facing inequitable access to education than a girl belonging to the other sections of the society. It has also been found that the demand of quality education and equitable access to education has been in a huge demand by the economically weaker section of the society, marginalized section of the society or the minority group however the supply side dynamics of this demands have not been achieved to the fullest. Researches have also found that the students from the minorities and marginalized sections of the society are less likely to go to school and if they go to the school, the ‘Silent exclusion (Hossain & Benjamin, 2010)’, is also visible in the schools as the students belonging to the weaker sections are silently exclude themselves in the participation in the schools. They are unable to show their presence in the academic and co-curricular activities.

The reviews on the theme of access to education based on gender highlighted that the weaker section the girls are more sincere and sensitive towards the participation in the school activities as compared to the boys. It is quite evident from the studies that the girls still face inequities in education as compared to the boys. There are various factors leading to this disparities among the girls with regard to the education. Studies have revealed that the attitude of girls towards the academic activities are also positive as compared to the boys and once enrolled they are likely to continue education more as compared to boys (Hussain, 2018) however the social perceptions create hindrance for the girls with regard to their education. Lack of awareness on the value of education of girls, particularly among the economically weaker section of the society is visible and to create better opportunities of access in education, the awareness among the parents for

the education of the girls needs to be emphasised as the parents often fix the marriages of the girls in between their educational process. The researches also reveal that due to the wrong perception and lack of proper counselling about the subject matter, percentage of the girls pursuing science and mathematics as a subject is relatively lower. The studies also reveal that the girls need counselling on higher education for the better and equitable access to education. The studies further reveal that the teachers should emphasis on the identification of educational choice of girls to help them for equity and inclusion in education. Researches also suggest that more funds should be allocated for the primary, elementary and secondary level to ensure gender equity in the schools. It was also revealed in the researches that ‘one-fifth of the dropouts are at the primary stage in case of girls’ (Kaur 2015).

The reviews on the theme of access to education based on locale highlights that the students from the remote locations face various problems with regard to access in education. It was found through the studies that the students of remote villages do not have access to education. Due to the low income, illiteracy and ignorance among the parents of economically weaker sections of the society it becomes difficult for the parents to give quality education to their children (Tejaswani and Sridevi, 2012). The studies have also revealed that the students of the villages do not have equity in access to schools, the teacher student ratio is disproportionate in the government schools in villages. The schools located in villages have problem in the procurement of the adequate funds and have a huge problem in the basic infrastructural facilities thereby reducing the facilities of access among the students.

Reviews on access to education based on ethnicity highlights that the students among Gujjar and Bakarwal population were first generation learners and have very low academic achievement. The researchers also reveal that the schools face huge problems in managing the migratory learners. The studies also revealed that most of the parents of the scheduled tribe students are illiterates and the tribal population have a high illiteracy rates and are economically disadvantaged due to which their children's access to education is very low. The home environment also played a crucial role for the low turnout and irregular attendance as a result led to the low academic achievement of the tribal students. The studies also revealed that there are dropouts from these category of learners and was due to the lack of interest among children, socio-economic, cultural and psychological factors, unavailability of electricity at home, lack of enough learning facilities at home, hostel facilities, lack of parental guidance, lack of awareness about the importance of education, poor exposure to mass media, difficulty due to school language, lack of awareness about the reservation of posts for tribals in government departments' (Babu, 2013).

The reviews on access to education based on socio-economic status highlights that the students from the moderate income families have access to the internet facilities for the resources available online but overuse the internet facilities whereas the students from economically weaker sections feel deprived of the basic internet facilities and face inequities in access to the online resources. The studies also revealed that the immigrant status of the students also faced inequities in access to education. it was also revealed in the studies that the students from the economically weaker sections of the society are also risk of leaving the school early due to the low income of the parents as compared to the

moderate income families. The studies however also revealed that there was a weak positive relationship between Family Total Income per Month (FTIPM) and student academic achievement measured by CGPA (Gobena, 2018).

6.1.14 Research Method

The present study used the convergent parallel design mixed method design. The researcher used the convergent parallel mixed method design for the study as the study used both qualitative and quantitative data.

6.1.15 Population and the Sample

The population for the study is 87 principals of senior secondary schools of Sikkim. Out of 87 senior secondary schools, 72 senior secondary schools are located in rural areas and 15 schools are located in urban areas. The population of teachers for the study is 4456, out of which 3653 teachers are from rural schools and 803 teachers are from urban schools. The population of the students is 7100.

6.1.16 Sample for the study

The sample for the quantitative study includes 20 principals of senior secondary schools of Sikkim. The sample for the qualitative study includes 20 principals of senior secondary schools, 30 school teachers and 30 students of senior secondary schools of Sikkim

6.1.17 Tools for data collection

The researcher prepared a questionnaire for the quantitative data collection. The

researcher used the questionnaire as a tool for the collection of the quantitative data as the data collection through the questionnaire as it is an economical method and puts less pressure on the respondents. The researcher used semi-structured interviews with the 20 principals and 30 teachers of senior secondary schools. Similarly, the researcher collected the data through semi structured interview through focus group discussion with 30 students studying in senior secondary level.

6.1.18 Procedure of data collection

The researcher prepared the informed consent form and made and gave to the principal and teachers. They signed voluntarily. For the interviews with teachers a vacant room was selected, two chairs and a table was managed and made the teacher to sit facing the interviewer. For the focus group discussion, purposive sampling was used by the researcher to select the schools for focus group discussion.

6.1.19 Data Analysis and Interpretation

In the analysis of the data, first the quantitative data was collected. After the collection of the quantitative data, the organization of the data was done by the researcher in excel format. The organization of the data was based on the different indicators of the study. After the data was organized, the researcher used the scoring of the data. The researcher used the percentage wise scoring of the data and the data was finally analyzed according to the indicators of the study.

For the analysis of the qualitative data, the data collected through the interviews was organized in proper sequence as the extensive data were of large files. The interviewed

data was then transcribed, reduced to categories, followed by simple coding and arranging it thematically. The researcher finally reported the findings in the form of narrative discussion. For the policy documents, the researcher followed content analysis of the policy documents where the researcher evaluated the policy perspectives related to the education. The data was then interpreted as per the analysis of the data. The study was analyzed and interpreted as per the objectives of the study.

6.1.20 Findings and Discussions

The findings of the study have been presented according to the objectives of the study. The study revealed that the enrollment of girls and boys students projected equity, free education has been provided by the government of Sikkim, the study found that 85 percent school students have equity in infrastructure, it was found that 95 percent schools do not have common rooms for boys and girls in the school, there exists inequity with regard to the sanitary pad dispensing machine, It was found that all the senior schools have a library room, however the qualitative study revealed that though there are library room in all the schools but the rooms are very small and do not have adequate books, It was found that all the schools have separate toilet for boys and girls in the school however there is a problem of the cleanliness of the toilets, 25 percent of the school have integrated laboratories for science subjects and 75 percent of the schools have separate laboratory for the science subject in the school, the study also revealed 33 percent students mentioned that there is no adequate sitting space in the laboratory, there is equity in access with regard to the playground for the learners in the school, the study also revealed that 100 percent of the school have computer room with the functional

computers for the learners, there is availability of electricity in the schools, 70 percent schools do not have access to generator facilities, 30 percent of the school do not have auditorium hall, 30 percent of the schools have additional rooms under construction, students have access to drinking water facilities in the school, the dropout at the senior secondary level are for job and early marriage, 85 percent of the principals mentioned that there are no resource teachers for the divyang learners in the school, there is no proper mechanism to identify the learning disabled and emotionally disturbed learners in the school, there is no inferiority complex among the rural students, school do not discriminate between students from different communities, girls participation in the academics is higher than the boys, girls' student are serious about their studies than the boys, remarkable civil works done in the schools since 2012, educating the differently abled learners have been taken as the priority areas and 100 percent assistance is given to the states, sharing pattern of all components for vocationalisation of education between the centre and the state is 75:25, samagrah siksha abhiyan also focusses on providing an equitable framework to the rural students particularly girls where the students need to travel far for going to schools, educational policies have also been focusing on the value education, policy has also emphasized on removing the barriers and obstacles of women with regard to the access and retention in education, samagrah siksha abhiyan focusses on bridging the gender gap along with the social gap and focusses on mainstreaming and providing the equitable access in education to the marginalised and the minority students, samagrah siksha abhiyan has also emphasized on the community members participation towards the equity in access to education amongst the tribal students, samagrah siksha abhiyan also mentions about the security concerns of the children living under vulnerable

conditions and aspires to provide attention to these learners. The samagrah siksha abhiyan also stresses on equalization of opportunities for the children with special needs.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study in ‘equity in access and participation in senior secondary education, an analysis of select indicators in Sikkim’ has made several findings and the study makes humble recommendations to ensure absolute equity in senior secondary schools in Sikkim.

- **Policy makers**

The study found that inadequate infrastructural facilities in the senior secondary school is a matter of concern as it may prevent equity in access it is recommended that adequate infrastructural facilities like furniture and extra rooms must be made available in the school to cater the needs of the learners. It was found that there are integrated science laboratories in some of the schools, these integrated laboratories should be converted into separate laboratories for each science subject so that students can learn through experiments in each science subject. It was found that some of the schools are recently upgraded schools and lack the adequate infrastructural facilities, it is recommended that the policy makers should ensure that the adequate infrastructural facilities should be made available in the schools through formulation of the policies. It is also recommended that the policy makers should make the policies for appointment of the art and craft resource teacher in the schools as the art and craft education plays important role in education.

It is also recommended that the incentives for the economically weaker sections of society must be made available so that the children of economically weaker sections can have access to education and they do not dropout due to poor economic status at home. It was also found that there is no proper mechanism for identification of the divyang learners, it is recommended that a proper mechanism for the identification of the divyang learners should be made available. Proper policies should be framed so that the CWSN friendly classrooms and facilities inside the classroom will be made available to the divyang learners. It is also recommended that the adequate laboratory facilities should be made available in the rural schools. It is also recommended that the adequate funds should be made available in the schools so that the schools may have autonomy in planning various strategies like transportation facilities for ensuring equity in access to education. It was found that at in many textbooks gendered language are used, it is recommended to the policy makers to play the interventionist role to publish the textbooks which are written in gender neutral languages.

The study also found that there is no specific and separated mechanism established in the schools. The hostel facilities for the girls is also an important issue, there are less schools with the hostel facilities for the girls, it is recommended that the policies should be framed to increase the hostel facilities for the girls to ensure the equity in access to education. It was found that in Sikkim, the local or tribal language books are available only for the language learner but not to the other learners so that the language has become confined to few learners only, it is recommended that the policy makers should also emphasize on making the tribal language books available for all the learners or their stories in other subjects to be included. It was also observed that there are no single

resource center in the tribal dominated areas, it is recommended that the tribal resource centers should be established in the tribal dominated areas to educate the tribal children. It was found that there are very few resource teachers to teach the differently abled learners in the schools, it is recommended that resource teachers should be appointed in every schools of Sikkim to meet the objective of inclusive education.

- **State Council for Educational Research and Training (SCERT)**

It is found that training of teachers on the issues other than purely academics are requires as school is a social unit. SCERT needs to plan training for teachers of senior secondary schools on gender sensibility so that teachers can work for the gender equality. There is a need of training of teachers on handling special children and divyang children so that inclusive education is ensured in the state. Also SCERT should train teachers on sensitivity towards SC/ST and minorities. There is also a need to prepare books using the gender neutral language which can help in reducing the gender inequity in the classrooms. The programmes on gender equalities should also be emphasized. There is also a need to train the master trainers of school and the block level.

- **District administration**

It was found that there are inadequate infrastructure facilities in the schools, the district administration should ensure the supply of the infrastructural facilities like desk and benches to the schools. It was found that the teachers are not trained on sensitizing the needs of the scheduled caste students, it is recommended that the district administrative centers should play a key role in the training of the teachers. It was also found that there

is no reporting system for the scheduled caste students to report the biasness of the teachers, friends and the society, it is recommended that a committee on a block level should be organized so that these students can report any form of discrimination against them. It was found that the training of the teachers on the needs of the children with special needs are not done in Sikkim, it is recommended that the facilities for the training of the teachers to cater the needs of these learners need to be taken care of at the district level. It is also recommended that the schools should be provided with the generator or the inverter facilities, sports materials. The schools should also be encouraged and instruction should be given to use the teaching learning materials in the class. It is also recommended that the district administration should make the supply of projectors, inverter or generators. It is also recommended to the district administration to conduct surveys to identify dropout students and organize bridge course to bring them back to the school system or help them to be educated through National Institute of Open Schooling.

- **Recommendations for the Principals**

It is recommended that the principals should ensure the availability of the adequate books and bigger library room in the schools so that reading habits are developed among students. It was observed that there exists inequities with regard to the indoor games facilities in the schools, it is recommended that the principals should make adequate arrangement for the indoor activities. The principals should also make the availability of art and craft rooms, resources for art and crafts in the schools. The principals should also emphasis on the use of the teaching and learning materials for the classroom. It is also

recommended that the principals should ensure the availability and the use of the audio visual teaching resources in the schools

Though, the sanitary pads vending machine have been installed in the schools, however it was found that it was not working in most of the schools, the principals should ensure the working status of sanitary pad vending machine so that girl students use it when they need and feel valued and accepted in schools. There is no separate changing room for the girls in the schools as it is a must to ensure the good hygiene for the girls during their menstrual cycle. It is recommended that a separate changing room for the girls must be made available as it is required during the menstruation cycle. It is also recommended that the teachers should be encouraged to participate training on gender issues, preparation or the teaching learning materials and handling the divyang learners.

- **Recommendations for the teachers**

It was observed that there are no adequate sitting space in the science laboratories, the proper sitting arrangements should be maintained by the teachers for ensuring equitable access to the laboratory facilities. The teachers should also ensure that the adequate sports materials, kits should be made available for the students. The teachers should also emphasize on creating awareness regarding gender inequity, gender-bias, gender expectations and gender stereo-typing in the schools. It is also recommended that more guidance and counselling should be made available for the girls in the schools. It was also found that there are dropouts from the economically weaker sections of the society, the causes of dropouts should be studied in more detailed manner by the teachers. The

teachers should make arrangement of the proper facilities for the divang learners outside the classroom.

6.3 CONCLUSION

The present study is important contribution in the field of education in Sikkim. Senior secondary education plays a prominent role in education as it opens the door for higher and professional education. Understanding equity in access and participation in education thus becomes crucial for understanding the status and the implementation of the policies on education. This study aimed to fill the research gap in the existing researchers by bringing the more ideas and dimensions on equity in access and participation in senior secondary education in Sikkim. The equity in access in enrolment is available in all the senior secondary schools of Sikkim. This also showed that free school education have provided the opportunity to all the students from various background and gender have access to the school education. However, when the study explored further, it is found that equity in access to infrastructure is not absolute as yet there are schools with inadequate furniture like desk and bench, small library rooms and integrated laboratory which may not permit learning of science subject with experiments. The schools have electricity connections however the optional arrangement in case of no electricity supply like inverter, solar panels and generators are not available, in such cases, students in senior secondary schools may not be able to access the computer which are available in the school. The schools have shown sensitivity towards gender to a large extent in infrastructure by installing sanitary pad dispensing machine and separate toilets, however, it is important to manage these infrastructure otherwise the objective of being gender

sensitive will not be achieved. It is disheartening to see that none of the schools have a mechanism to identify the divyang learners, children with special needs and children with emotional problem. It is imperative to frame policies for these learners in order to provide inclusive education in the state. The study found that the students of economically weaker sections are facing difficulty in continuing their education so, the policy is required to for providing incentives to the students of these categories. The education department has to pay special attention to the schools located in the rural areas so that they not only have free education with equity in the areas of infrastructure and participate in learning process.

It is laudable that schools promote equal participation of students in all academic activities as well as cultural and sports activities. The principal and teachers do not show any discriminatory practices against the students of any cultural background and the gender. However, it is interesting find that the students themselves experience and practice the discriminatory act especially against scheduled caste students. It may be the reflection of the societal practices. The schools should be sensitive towards such act and eliminate such act by making students understand of equality in the society. There is a need of counselling on the importance of human life and avoid discrimination on the basis of gender and community. It is also encouraged to explore that girl students are coming forward to participate in academic activities, despite the social obligations they face. This could also be because of the encouraging enrolment provided in the schools. By saying this, we cannot ignore boys as it is imperative to bring forward both the gender for the development of the society. The study found that boy students participate more in sports activities and get engaged in digital games as a result their participation in the

academic activities have become less. The school should have plan to include students of both the gender in all the activities so that later, they can assist in developing egalitarian society which is the benchmark of developed society. The policies analyzed are encouraging and aim towards equity and equality in education. The policies to a large extent are the torch for the equity in education. Now, the need of an hour is the implementation by the state education department, schools and school management committees towards achievement of quality education.

The study made a comprehensive study of the equity in access and participation with regard to different key indicators in senior secondary schools of Sikkim. The study also conducted intensive study of the policy documents to understand the policy perspectives ensuring equity in education in Sikkim and to understand the implementation mechanism of the policies for ensuring equity in education in Sikkim. The study also suggested few recommendations to the Policy makers, SCERT, District Administration, Principals and Teachers that might help in ensuring equity in access and participation among the students of different ethnic communities, different socio-economic categories and may bridge the gender gap in access to senior secondary education in Sikkim.

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QUESTIONNAIRE ON EQUITY IN ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Section – A: School Information

1. Address of The School

Name of the School: _____

Constituency: _____

Sub- Division : _____

District: _____

.....

1. Any Dropout in Senior Secondary Level the current year **Yes / No**

Total number of Dropouts

CLASS	BOY/ GIRL	CATEGORY	ANY FORM OF DISABILITY	ANY KNOWN REASON FOR DROPOUT

Section – B: Infrastructural Facilities

1. Adequate furniture available in the classroom **Yes / No.**

List of Furniture inside the classrooms:

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Availability of the Hall in the School **Yes / No**

Intake Capacity of the Hall

3. Availability of the common rooms for boys and girls **Yes / No**

4. Other-Rooms Under Construction

Yes / No

5. Laboratories in the School:

Subject	Yes	No
Physics		
Chemistry		
Biology		
Computer		
Language		
Geography		
Mathematics		

Any arrangements to cater the special needs of Divyangs (Differently-abled) Learners in the Laboratory
Please specify:

.....

.....

.....

6. Materials available for the activities to be conducted inside the Classroom:

.....

.....

.....

.....

7. Any Audio- Visual Teaching Aids available? (If yes, please Specify)

.....

.....

.....

.....

8. Availability of the computer room

Yes / No.

9. Number of computers available in the school

10. Number of seats for the students in the computer laboratory

11. Availability of Art/Craft/Culture rooms Yes / No.
12. Availability of Art/Craft/Culture resource teachers Yes / No.
13. Whether the Resource teacher is qualified to teach the differently-abled learners Yes / No.
14. Materials available for teaching the crafts : .

.....

.....

.....

15. Availability of the toilets for boys Yes / No
16. Number of boys toilets
17. Availability of the toilets for girls Yes / No
18. Number of girls toilets
19. Requisite Number of the toilets for boys and girls Yes / No
20. Adequate drinking water facilities for the staffs and the students Yes / No
21. Source of drinking water

22. The school has a playground of its own Yes / No

If No, Where do the children play?

.....

23. Enrolment at Senior Secondary Level (Class 11 and 12)

a. Humanities

ENROLMENT			
CLASS	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL

b. Science

ENROLMENT			
CLASS	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL

c. Commerce

ENROLMENT			
CLASS	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL

d. Vocational Course I (please specify)

.....

ENROLMENT			
CLASS	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL

e. Vocational course II (Please Specify)

.....

ENROLMENT			
CLASS	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL

24. Number of Children with special needs (CWSN at Senior Secondary Level) if any

Sl. No	Type of Disability	No. of Students
1	Visual Impairment	
2	Hearing Disabilities	
3	Mentally Retarded	
4	Physically Handicapped or Orthopedic Handicap	
5	Learning Disabilities (a) Dyslexia (b) Dysphasia (c) Dysgraphia (d) Dyscalculia. (e) Aphasia (f) Alexia	
6	Speech Disabilities	
7	Emotional Disturbance a. Attention deficit disorder (hyper activity) b. Hyper active or Hypoactive c. Anxiety disorder d. Shy and withdrawal tendencies e. Depression	

25. Authority for identification the disability

26. Any provision for adaptation to general classroom for Children with special needs

Yes / No

If Yes, please specify the provisions available:

.....
.....
.....

27. Does the school receive any grants under integrated education for the Disabled?

Yes / No

If yes, how:

.....
.....
.....

28. Any special teachers for teaching the differently- abled learners

Yes / No

If yes specify the specialisation of the resource teacher –

.....
.....
.....

29. Facilities for barrier free access to the differently-abled learners outside the classroom:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

30. Facilities for the differently-abled learners inside the classroom:

.....

31. Co-curricular activities conducted in schools (at Senior Secondary Level)

Literary & Creative Skills						
SL.NO	SKILLS	NO. OF STUDENTS	CLASS	CATEGORY	GENDER	ANY DIFFERENTLY ABLED LEARNERS
1.	Debate					
2.	Declamation					
3.	Creative Writing					
4.	Recitation					
5.	Drawing					
6.	Poster - Making					
7.	Slogan Writing					
8.	Quizzes					
9.	On-the-Spot Painting					
10.	Theatre					
<i>Scientific Skills</i>						
1.	Science Club					
2.	Projects					
3.	Maths Club					
4.	Science Quiz					
5.	Exhibition					
6.	Olympiads					
<i>Aesthetic Skills</i>						
1.	Music					
2.	Vocal					
3.	Instrumental Dance					
4.	Drama					
5.	Craft					
6.	Sculpture					

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difficulties in access to the schools. The modes of transport (any convenient form of transport) are sometimes totally cut-off for days due to the natural calamities and thus the access to the school is influenced by these forces.

b. Distance of Schools

It was also found that most of the principals of schools in South and west Sikkim that the distance of the Schools from the residence of the learners also plays an important role in ensuring the access to the schools. The Senior Secondary Schools might not be the nearest school from the house and the modes of travel is not always feasible for the learners thus the problems of access to the schools is visible as a result of the more distance of the school from the residence of the learners.

It was also found by the researchers that the retention of the learners was also another pertinent issue that was affecting the access to education. The principals also highlighted that due to the retention in the senior secondary level (even though there used to exist the structure of the improvement tests) the dropout rate is still visible. This dropout rates thereby decreases the retention rate and finally the access to and participation in senior Secondary education decreases at a significant rate.

Majority of the Principals also voiced that that since many learners after the successful completion of their Secondary Schooling, go to the other places (some out of the states and some of them even travel abroad) for their studies and thus the actual rate of the access to the senior secondary education may not be the true replica of the ground reality.

The research endeavour also highlighted that the idea of inclusion is directly related to the infrastructural facilities. During the interviews with the Principals, it was also found by the researchers that the facilities to cater the needs of the Children with Special Needs are not up to the expected level and in some schools there are no facilities for the Divyangs as such which also influences the access and participation of the learners in Senior Secondary Schools. It was also highlighted by the Principals that most of the Schools lack basic infrastructural facilities like-

a. Adding classrooms for:

- I. Laboratories.
- ii. Libraries.
- iii. Art and Class rooms.
- iv. Resource rooms.
- v. Drinking water.
- vi. Laboratories.
- vii. Equipments.
- viii. Furnitures
- ix. Playground.
- b. ICT Enabled Campus.
 - I. Computer.
 - ii. Adequate hardware/software.
 - iii. Teaching through ICT resources.
 - iv. Projectors / OHPs.
- c. Arrangement of Access to Children with Special Needs.
 - I. Screening the CWSN.
 - ii. Ramps for CWSN.
 - iii. Braille Script.
 - iv. Magnifying glasses.
 - v. Resource Teachers.
 - vi. Barrier Free toilets.
 - vii. Hearing Aids.
- d. Hostel Facilities
 - I. Hostels for learners for deprived children.
 - ii. Separate girls/boys hostels.
 - iii. Residential schools.

The lack of all the above mentioned facilities hinders the access to education.

It was understood by the researchers that the Scholarships plays very important role for providing access and participation in education for the learners. The scholarships may be of various categories:

- a. The state Sponsored Scholarships.
- b. The central Scholarships.
- c. The Scholarships provided by Various NGOs and other Institutions.

These scholarships may serve as a boon for the learners from the low socio- economic background and thus may significantly ensure the access and participation in Education.

Conclusions

The access and participation are the two entities

their study are the Paucity of record keeping, poor head teacher supervision of teacher attendance, output of work, misuse of instructional hours, inadequate teaching and poor pedagogy, the teachers' lack of strategies for identifying the signs of dropping out of school and teaching of heterogeneous age groups as if they were homogeneous, teacher absenteeism, lateness and use of corporal punishment and violence against pupils. The teachers indeed need to be held accountable for their actions, they need to show that they are worthy of the salaries and status that their position affords. The psychological principle also states that the learners imitate the teachers so the teachers must act as the examples of good behaviour for children and families to encourage hard work, regular punctual attendance and excellence in education.

Method of the Study

Because of the diverse field of the research, it is important to select the methodology that suits the purpose. The specific qualitative method used for the study was the case study, with the purposeful selection of the participants (Stake, 1995). Since, the Qualitative research includes individual, person to person interaction and the selection of the participants or sample is relatively smaller (L.R.Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009), the researchers interviewed the 10 principals of Government Schools of three districts of Sikkim using the semi structured questions through the purposive sampling technique. Their answers were recorded in the research diary of the researchers and finally their answers were compiled.

Factors Affecting Access and Participation in Senior Secondary Education in Sikkim: Through the Voices of the Principals

The idea of inclusion in education has been floating continuously in the recent paradigm of higher education; however the concept of universal access is still a utopian dream. The interactions with the principals of senior secondary in Sikkim opened up various pertinent factors that affect the access and participation of learners in senior secondary education. All the Principals believed that the Socio- Economic condition of the learners was the most important factor that influenced the access and

participation of the learners in the senior secondary education. Through the interviews, it was also understood that the first generation learners are under the most vulnerable groups which have low access to the higher secondary education after the Secondary education. the researchers also found that due to the low level of awareness of education in the family the learners are often forced to search for a job. Within the socio economic factors, the researchers could trace the other co-factors that affect the learner's access to the senior secondary education and these factors are:

a. Social Status, Role of Parents and Profession of Parents.

The social status of parents is the key determining force with regard to access in Senior Secondary education as with a greater social status and role of parents in the society has the greater possibility of the learners having access to education and vice versa.

b. Number of Family members (siblings of learners)

The other factor responsible for the access to education as the researchers identified under the socio-economic status of the learners is the Number of family members. The more number of family members the less chance of the learner's access to education and vice-versa. The researchers also understood from the voices of the Principals that the unemployment of the siblings and marital status of the siblings also played a crucial for determining the learner's access to education in the senior secondary stage. The more unemployed and unmarried siblings in the family, the less is the probability of the learner going to the school and the less the unemployed and unmarried siblings, the more the probability.

The researchers also identified from the voices of the principals another important factor associated with the access to the education, the Geographical factor. The landforms of Sikkim being a hilly terrain play a very crucial role with regard to access to education. The researchers could identify co-factors of Geographical factors and are as under:

a. Natural calamities.

Majority of the principals believed that due to the hilly terrain and the areas being prone to the natural calamities like falling boulders the learners often face

certain courses or academic programs.

The equitable opportunity to the learners in school is the basic premise of ensuring access to the learners in school however in the inclusive model of the educational setting it is the barrier free environment which also comes to play in ensuring the access in education to the divyangs (differently-abled) learners. Sustained and meaningful access to education is critical to long term improvements in productivity, the reduction of intergenerational cycles of poverty, demographic transition, preventive health care, the empowerment of women, and reductions in inequality (Lewin 2007).

Reviews of the Related Literature

The access to education is the basic parameter for ensuring the quality education and the maximum participation of the learners in the educational setting. Access to education has become an embodiment of concern for the educational policy makers of our country. Different studies have highlighted different factors affecting the access to education. Formal restriction to the government schools is not only the factor affecting access to education, a range of factors come into play. For instance (Balagopalan, 2014) has identified various factors like cost of schooling, cumbersome admission procedures, the need for children to work to supplement to family incomes and the lack of adequate school spaces which plays a crucial role for determining the universal enrolment and ensuring the retention in the schools. With the formulation and implementation of the policies like Sarva Siksha Abhiyan and Right to Education Act (2009) the Government of India has indicated their commitment towards universal enrolment and retention in the elementary education which is a pillar to the senior secondary education.

The access to education can also be linked with the existing gender disparity in education. (Hawkins & Neubauer, 2011) have revealed through their studies that despite the advancement in education of the females at the pre-collegiate level, the gender disparity and gender stereotyping in tertiary education with males is far more numerous in science, technology, mathematics and engineering. Their study also reveals that the women are under-represented in higher education. In the context of

our country, the problem of access for the girls to the education is exacerbated by the existing parochial notion of the gender roles as our society perceives that a girl child is different from the boy.

Access to education can also be linked to wide range of economic factors. (Hawkins J. N., 2011), (Jesus, 2011) have linked learner's access to Schools to the Economic Factors. (Hawkins J.N., 2011) observed that the central problem of access and equity is the question of the cost. The cost of the education, affordability, and the mechanisms for financing the higher education are the factors affecting access in education. These whole mechanisms related to the cost have a variation across different regions. The low cost or state subsidised education creates more opportunities for the access to all the citizens of a country than the high personal cost and privatised funding.

The study of access to education in the North-Eastern states shows a different picture of the factors affecting access. For Instance (Zaidi, 2013) study on 'The access to Secondary Education in North-Eastern states' Reveal that the Hilly terrain, Low Density of population, Ill-equipped schools lacking even basic facilities available on the school premises are the key factors that play a significant role in the access to the education. The gray area in the north eastern states of India with regard to the educational facilities is the lack of the proper planning and management of the educational programmes and proper implementation of the centrally sponsored schemes.

Behaviour of the teachers and the motivations inside the classroom are also the important factors that determine the access and retention of the students. (Alhassan & Mensah, 2010) highlighted as how teachers' actions, behaviour and conduct interact to influence patterns of access to education they have revealed that positive relationship of the teachers with pupils shape motivations to learn and willingness to attend regularly. Their study reflected that the teacher absenteeism, lateness and use of corporal punishment and violence against pupils have all contributed to the incidence of dropout in basic schools. The factors that causes low retention rate and low access rates as per the findings of

that have a co-existence, whenever there is access to education, participation has its existence too. There are different factors that create significant influence for the access to the education, particularly with regard to the senior secondary education of which some have been discussed in detail in this paper. The voices of the Principals, thus reflects that among the different forms of the factors the socio-economic factors, the geographical factors, infrastructural factors, Scholarships etc plays a significant role in determining access to Senior Secondary Education in Sikkim. However, there may be more factors that may exist in the ground reality which is yet to be explored.

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Factors Affecting Access And Participation In Senior Secondary Education In Sikkim

Yugal Kishore Khanal*
Dr. Subhash Misra**

ABSTRACT

All individuals have a right to learn and to fulfil their responsibility as citizens of, and contributors to their society. The constitution of India has provided basic arrangements to all the citizens to ensure the education for all, however, despite Governmental efforts there exists, barriers and challenges for the certain section of the society. Educational access and participation and economic status are such forms of inequities which still exists in our Indian Society. Access is a catalytic process that enables interactions, contact and exchanges among individuals. Access indicates ability, the ability to accomplish physical presence at senior secondary level of education. While the focus has been laid largely on the school education in the Indian educational setup, the quality, equity, accessibility, participation and employability has become a debatable issue. The paper tries to identify the factors affecting access and participation in senior secondary education in sikkim.

Keywords : Access, Participation, Equity, Sikkim

Introduction

Our country India is known for the home of the Unity in Diversity. It is a home to the largest population of indigenous people of any country in the world. All the indigenous communities are scattered across the 3,287,263 square kilometres of our mainland which reflect our rich cultural and ethnic heritage. There are different sources of diversity in India which as a result makes it more complex to understand about its spectrum of diversity. However, the diversity in India can be viewed with respect to the origins (ethnic origin), geographical boundaries, religions, class, caste, languages, traditions, cultures, belief system as well as in the context of the gender. Each of these different forms of diversities has variety of ideas our country can share to the rest of the world.

Our state Sikkim is a beautiful state, nestled in the north- eastern part of India, it is also well known for the different forms of the Socio an cultural diversities. As per the Population Census data 2011, Sikkim is

demographically the smallest state of our country. The total area being 7096 sq. Kilometres, Sikkim has the population size of 610577. In terms of the average, Sikkim has just a share of 0.05 percent of the National Population.

Understanding Access to Education

The access to education is the basic parameter for ensuring the quality education and the maximum participation of the learners in the educational setting. Access to education is the basic pillar for the development of education in a country. The meaning of the term access is contextual and hence different researchers have given different meaning to it. The term **access** typically refers to the ways in which educational institutions and policies ensure or at least strive to ensure that students have equal and equitable opportunities to take full advantage of their education. Increasing *access* generally requires schools to provide additional services or remove any actual or potential barriers that might prevent some students from equitable participation in

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Is There A Gender Gap in Equity in Access at Senior Secondary Education in Sikkim?

Yugal Kishore Khanal²⁹
Dr. Yodida Bhutia³⁰
Dr. Subhash Misra³¹

Abstract

Equity in access in education has been the area of prime concern and all the policy frameworks have highlighted the same. Ensuring equity in education is important for ensuring that the opportunities of education reaches every stakeholders in the society. India has long been struggling to achieve various forms of Equity in Education, the chief form of Inequity among them is the Gender Inequity since women have been segregated from the mainstream for quite a long time. It was evident in our country that the educational opportunities were concentrated on the few elite classes and on the idea of Inherited merit. This paper focussed to understand whether the gender inequity is still evident in the context of education in Sikkim. This made an attempt to explore the idea of Equity in schools in Sikkim through the qualitative and quantitative data. The study found the absence of gender gap in equity in access to education in senior secondary schools of Sikkim.

Keywords: Equity, Inherited Merit, Gender gap.

Introduction

Since ages, our Indian society has been witnessing the various forms of exclusion in our society. The social exclusion can be seen in the context of gender, ethnicity, marginalization, socio-economic strata and various other contexts. No one can deny the fact that the gender gap interms of Equity in access in education is not just a problem of India, however the world is facing this menace. Researches reveal that gender inequity is evident in most of the countries of the world(Ostby, Urdal, & Rudolfson, 2016). Various inclusionary measures have been taken through various policy formulation and adoptions, however no one still deny the fact that these forms of exclusions are still evident in the society. This exclusion has led to the problem of inequities in the society. Education has also been widely affected by these various forms of inequities. Various other dimensions of education are

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embedded with the idea of Equity in education. Ensuring access to education, ensuring participation in education and providing quality education are the basic benchmark of equitable education. The expansion of equity in educational opportunities has become important for ensuring that all the sections of the society get fair opportunity of access to the school education.

Equity in Education From Gender Perspective

Gender equity in education has been a focal issue in all the policy perspectives around the globe. Women have always been a part of marginalized section of the society and have been alienated from various facilities in the society. Ensuring gender equity in education has become important in the present context as it is the only means to achieve the real ideals of democracy enshrined in the constitution. Gender Equality in Education is directly related to the equality in the labour force which has a significant influence over the economic development of a country. The unequal treatment in education thus has negative impact on the economic development of a country. Our country has witnessed since the decades of miserable life the women were facing. To uplift the condition of women, to change their status in the society and to get freedom for themselves, mainstreaming women has become an important area of concern in the education. Girls have been facing the 'silent exclusion' (Hossain & Benjamin, 2010) from the schools as it is an undeniable fact that being a girl child from the economically weaker section of the society has always been a double disadvantage for the girls. Researches also reveals that 'girls are more sensitive to the measured school characteristics' (Levtov, 2013) It also signifies that the teachers need to be cautious during the classroom instruction.

Demographic Profile of the North-Eastern States of India

As per the Population Census data 2011, Sikkim is demographically the smallest state of our country. The total area being 7096 sq. Kilometres, Sikkim has the population size of 610577. In terms of the average, Sikkim has just a share of 0.05 percent of the National Population. The 2011 census data further reveals the fact that Sikkim is the least populated state among the other North-eastern States of India. The following table shows the demographic profile of the 8 north-eastern states as per the 2011 census.

Table 1- Demographic profile of the North-eastern States of India.

Name of	Total	% of
---------	-------	------

the States	Population	Country's Population
<i>Arumachal Pradesh</i>	1382611	0.1142
<i>Assam</i>	31169272	2.5755
<i>Manipur</i>	2721756	0.2249
<i>Meghalaya</i>	2964007	0.2449
<i>Mizoram</i>	1091014	0.0902
<i>Nagaland</i>	1980602	0.1637
Sikkim	610577	0.0502
<i>Tripura</i>	3671032	0.3033

Source: Census of India 2011

With a mere 6.1 Lakh population (According to 2011 Census), Sikkim is the least populated state among the other State of North- Eastern India and share just 0.0502% of the country's Population.

LITERACY RATE IN SIKKIM

The literacy rate in Sikkim is visible as under:

Table 2 – Literacy Rate in Sikkim

Total Literacy	Male Literacy	Female Literacy	Decadal increase in Literacy (2001-2011)
82.2	87.3	76.4	+13.6

Source: Census of India 2011

The Census of India 2011 also reveals that the total literacy rate of Sikkim is 82.2 percent which is much higher than the national literacy rate that stands at 74.04 percent. The male literacy rate of Sikkim also stands higher than the national average as the literacy rate of males in Sikkim stands at 87.3 percent whereas the Male literacy rate at national level stands at 82.14 percent. *The position of*

female literacy rate in Sikkim is higher than the national average as it stands at 76.4 percent which is much higher than the national average that stands at 65.46 percent in the national level according to the census data of 2011. The basic inference from the census data shows that the position of female in Sikkim with regard to Access to education is more equitable than the National scenario.

ACCESS OF INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES

The access of Infrastructural facilities can with regard to gender perspective can be understood through the table as under:

Access of girls towards the facilities outside the classroom

Availability of Separate Toilet	Availability of Drinking Water	Play ground	Common rooms
100%	93%	100%	7%

The data collected from 15 senior secondary schools in Sikkim reveals that, all the schools have separate toilets for Girls. The availability of Drinking water facilities is also adequate as 14 schools out of 15 have adequate drinking water facilities for the learners. The data also reveals that 100% of the schools have their own playground for the Games and sports and other events to be conducted outside the classroom. The grey area in infrastructural facilities is however the common room for Girls as it was found that only one school out of 15 school has a separate common room for both boys and girls.

Table 4 - Access of girls towards the facilities inside the classroom

Availability Adequate furniture inside the classroom	Computer Rooms with functional computers	Laboratories for science subjects	Audio Visual teaching Aids
100 %	100%	93%	53%

The quantitative data collected from 15 senior secondary schools of Sikkim also highlight that all the schools had adequate furniture inside the classroom. It has also been found that there are functional computers with a separate room and adequate furniture available for both boys and girls. Out of 15 schools 14 schools have laboratories required for the science subjects (Some of them have integrated laboratory for Physics, chemistry and Biology subjects), only 1 school does not have a laboratory. Further, with regard to the audio-visual teaching aids, 53 percent of the schools have audio visual aids inside the classrooms.

Almost all the 15 sample schools have co-education arrangement, thus the access have been looked upon the context of these infrastructural facilities with regard to quantitative data collection.

ACCESS IN EDUCATION AS PER THE KEY INDICATORS

The researchers conducted a qualitative study using the semi structured interviews with the Principals of 10 senior secondary schools of Sikkim. The findings are as follows:

a. Enrolment

All the heads of the school believed that there is equal enrolment based on gender in the senior secondary level. It was also evident in almost all the schools the girls enrolment was higher than the boys in all the levels of the schooling.

b. Availability of 'Gender Friendly' Infrastructural Facilities.

It was also evident that the all the Schools have their own 'Pucca Building' with RCC structure. Some of the schools were undergoing renovations. The interviews with the different school heads also revealed that the schools have a good infrastructural facilities to cater the needs of a girl child in the school. The concept of 'Gender Friendly School' can be seen in making. The Interviews also revealed that almost all the schools have adequate seating arrangement and space and for the learners, however some of the schools which were upgraded recently from secondary schools to senior secondary schools revealed that they lack adequate seating arrangement for the learners and face the constraints of rooms.

All the schools have a separate toilet facilities for both boys and girls and almost all the schools have a sanitary pad vending machine installed are under working condition. In some schools, the students are required to pay a nominal amount of 5 rupees for using the sanitary pad vending machine. Whereas in most of the schools it was informed that the students can use it free. On the interactions with heads, it

was also found that only few schools have a changing room for the girls to be used for the sanitary purposes, whereas most of the schools do not have a separate changing room, however they have a separate toilet for girls.

The problem of a separate common room for both boys and girls were however evident in the schools. It was found that through the interaction with the head of the schools that none of the schools have a separate common room for the boys and girls.

c. Adjustment of the girl students.

Since only few schools in Sikkim are specifically designated as Girls School, rest all the schools follow the 'co-education' (a common school for both boys and girls), thus it was the need of the research to understand whether the girls feel comfortable in the class and the school as a whole. The semi-structured interview revealed that all the girls are well adjusted in the school, no maladjustment was seen.

Participation of the girl students

It was found that since the enrolment rates of girls were higher than the boys in most of the schools, the level of participation curricular and in co-curricular activities were comparatively higher than that of boys. It was also found that the girls outshine boys in most of the schools in terms of their academic achievement, which reflects the equitable treatment being given in the schools in the context of gender.

Conclusion

Ensuring equity in education has become one of the important aspect and is much needed in the present context. Educational equity directly corresponds to various other forms of equity. The study revealed that the Schools of Sikkim have educational facilities for the students. In terms of the Gender equity, both the Quantitative as well as qualitative data revealed that there are facilities available to ensure the gender equity with regard to access in the classrooms. Adequate sitting spaces, proper sanitation facilities, separate washrooms, drinking water facilities are the basic amenities that help the girls for the access and the retention in the schools. Keeping all these aspects into considerations and the context of study, we can infer that there is no apparent problem of gender inequity in Sikkim.

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
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