

Social and Academic Factors That Foster Inequality and Discrimination Against Students With Disabilities in Public Schools in the New Amsterdam, Berbice Area

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Abstract

Inequality and discrimination significantly affect the social and academic development of students with disabilities, limiting their ability to access equitable and inclusive education. These challenges can negatively influence self-esteem, academic performance, and opportunities for upward mobility. This quantitative study investigated the social and academic factors that contribute to inequality and discrimination against students with disabilities in public schools in the New Amsterdam, Berbice area. Critical Disability Theory served as the theoretical framework guiding the research, while a conceptual framework was developed to guide the data collection process. A sample of 80 students was selected from public schools within the New Amsterdam area. Data were collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. Findings revealed that curriculum and pedagogical barriers, inadequate physical accessibility, and negative societal attitudes and cultural beliefs were major contributors to discrimination experienced by students with disabilities. The study recommends strengthening inclusive education practices, improving school infrastructure, increasing access to assistive technologies, and implementing awareness programs to challenge societal stereotypes regarding disability.

Keywords: disability, discrimination, inequality, inclusion education, learning difficulties

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Introduction

Globally, the main objective of education in any democratic society is to provide learners with quality education that enlightens them to be productive members of the society Kundu and Tutoo (2000).

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals' personal, social, and economic development. However, many students with disabilities encounter barriers that prevent them from fully participating in the educational system. These barriers often lead to inequality and discrimination, which can negatively affect their academic achievements and social integration.

Inequality and discrimination in schools continue to affect the achievement of inclusive education and equitable education. These issues affect students' academic performance, emotional well-being, and overall development.

Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative effort from educators, policymakers, and communities inclusive of parents, caregivers and guardians. By advocating for or promoting equality, improving accessibility, and fostering positive attitudes, schools can create a learning environment where all students may have the opportunity to succeed.

Background to the Problem

Students with disabilities frequently face challenges such as inaccessible school facilities, lack of specialized educational support, and negative societal attitudes. These challenges not only limit their access to quality education but also impact their self-esteem and future opportunities. In many educational systems, including those in developing regions, policies supporting inclusive education may exist but are not always effectively implemented.

In the New Amsterdam, Berbice area, concerns have been raised regarding the level of inclusion experienced by students with disabilities in public schools. Understanding the factors that contribute to discrimination and inequality is essential for creating policies and practices that support equitable education.

This study therefore seeks to investigate the social and academic factors that foster inequality and discrimination against students with disabilities in public schools in the New Amsterdam, Berbice area.

Research Questions

The following questions were constructed to gather data on the social and academic factors that foster inequality and discrimination against students with disabilities in public schools in the New Amsterdam, Berbice area.

1. What are the major social factors that contribute to discrimination against students with disabilities in public schools?
2. To what extent do curriculum structure and teaching pedagogy influence the level of inclusion of students with disabilities in public schools?
3. To what extent does the physical accessibility of school's impact students with disabilities?

Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

This study is guided by a conceptual framework that explains how academic and social factors contribute to the inequality and discrimination experienced by students with disabilities in public schools. The framework identifies three independent variables: curriculum and pedagogical barriers, physical accessibility of school infrastructure, and societal attitudes and cultural beliefs. These factors are believed to directly influence the dependent variable, which is the inequality and discrimination experienced by students with disabilities.

Independent Variables

- Curriculum and pedagogical barriers
- Physical accessibility of school infrastructure
- Societal attitudes and cultural beliefs

Dependent Variable

- Inequality and discrimination experienced by students with disabilities

These variables were measured through questionnaire responses and analyzed to determine their relationship with discrimination in schools.

Figure 1

Independent and Dependent Variables

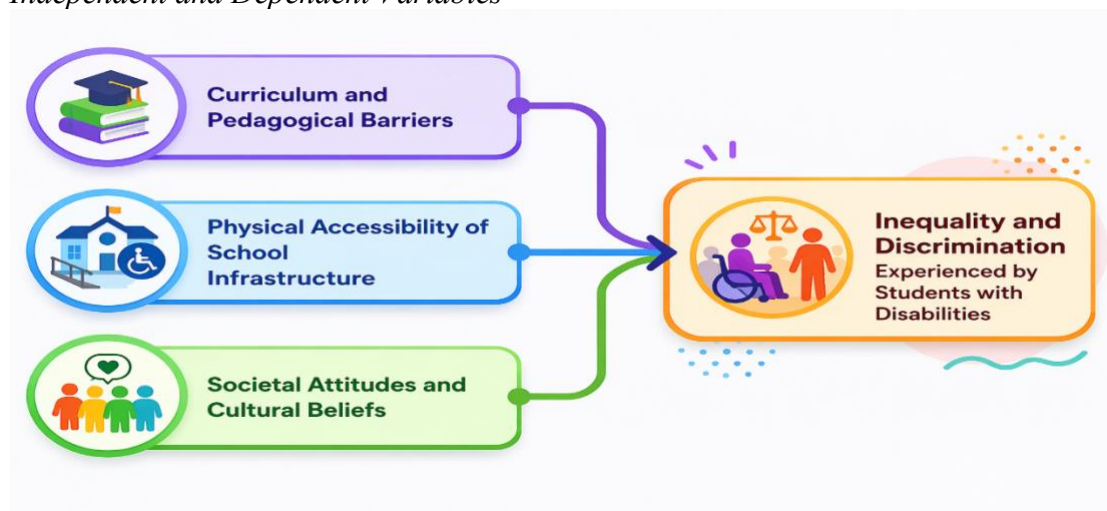


Figure 1 shows the Independent and Dependent Variables that were used in the study.

Curriculum and Pedagogical Barriers

Pedagogy

Teachers are considered important role models for students because they have an impact on helping shape, create, support and, establish students' strengths, goals and knowledge.

Therefore, it is essential to be aware of the knowledge, skills, methodologies and characteristics that one brings into a learning environment that caters for all categories of learners.

A research conducted by Karaouglu (2008) highlighted that the learning environment significantly affected a student's motivation and how students perceive the learning environment could have significant implications on how they are stimulated or willing to achieve the course outcomes. In support of the findings by Karaouglu, a study conducted by Ebata (2008) also concluded that a friendly atmosphere characterized by student-centered learning where specific student needs are met and are sufficiently motivates encourages the student to learn more.

Curriculum and pedagogy play an important role in shaping students' educational experiences but, when they are not inclusive or adaptable, they can create barriers that contribute to inequality and discrimination for learners with disabilities and those from marginalized backgrounds. Flexible teaching strategies, adapted learning materials, and individualized support systems are essential for promoting academic inclusion.

Effective classroom practice that is based on inclusive pedagogy, continuous assessment and evaluation, high expectations, and direct instruction and feedback significantly contributes to learner success and the realization of inclusive classrooms (Faubert, 2012).

Faubert (2012) further explain that it is important that teachers try out a range of pedagogical approaches that they can use flexibly in different situations, in order to improve their everyday classroom practice. Support in inclusive classrooms should fit into the on-going details of the daily classroom instruction; be perceived by teachers as effective for students with disabilities as well as other students in the classroom, and enhance and build on the teacher's current repertoire of instructional practices (Waldron & McLeskey, 2010).

Teachers may lack adequate training in differentiated instruction, making it difficult to support students with disabilities. To ensure that quality education is provided to students with disability to improve outcomes, it is necessary that educators do not only rely on classroom practices they have experienced or observed when determining what are effective classroom practices, as there may be inadequate empirical support to demonstrate their effectiveness in improving student outcomes.

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is a means of creating effective classrooms where the educational needs of all children, including children with special needs, are addressed (Priyadarshani & Thangarajathi, 2017). The inclusion of students with special educational needs into regular mainstream classrooms has been a focal point of debate in education systems across the world (Schmidt & Cagran, 2023; Zakaria, 2017).

Inclusive education according to Bui et al. (2010), is when all students, regardless of any challenges they may have, are placed in age-appropriate general education classes that are in their own neighborhood schools. It receives high-quality instruction, interventions, and support that enable them to meet success in the core curriculum.

Further, Sharma and Singh (2008), clarify that inclusion is not just about providing students with disabilities access to regular classrooms; instead, it means providing all children,

regardless of race, language, class, geographical location and disability, equitable and practical education that responds to their needs as learners. This emphasizes that inclusion is an educational approach and philosophy providing all students with outstanding academic and social achievement opportunities. These opportunities can be described as participating in the full range of social, recreational, arts, and academia. Additionally, Allan (2014) noted that inclusive education is presented as an ideology that guides practice to respect the right of all learners to quality education.

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, inclusive education ensures that schools accommodate the diverse learning needs of all students and that inclusive education benefits both students with disabilities and their peers by promoting diversity, empathy, and equal opportunities.

Physical Accessibility

The World Health Organization (2025) highlights that accessible environments are necessary for ensuring equal participation for individuals with disabilities. Physical accessibility is a human right which mandates guaranteeing inclusive and equitable spaces in public schools. This is also in keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals, especially with goal 4, that speaks of inclusive and equitable quality education, goal 10, which aims to reduce inequalities by promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities, and goal 11 which seeks to create sustainable and accessible environments (World Health Organization, 2025). All formal educational institutions must adhere to the principles of universal accessibility to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their abilities, can navigate and use their facilities independently and safely.

An increasing number of countries are trying to make their educational systems inclusive for persons with disabilities, removing barriers and addressing discrimination on the grounds of disability. In particular, many countries have included protections in their constitutions, laws or policies. Physical infrastructure accessibility has many components, both within and outside the school. It includes things like signage, accessible entrances, corridors, toilets with grab bars, switches and controls, ramps, elevators, accessible desks, playgrounds, canteens, water taps, as well as the design of outdoor facilities like roads, footpaths, and transport that is needed to reach the school. For a school to be accessible, it must allow all children, teachers and parents to safely enter, use all the facilities including recreational areas, participate fully in all learning activities with as much autonomy as possible.

Physical accessibility is a fundamental component of inclusive education, whereby students with disabilities can independently access and participate in all aspects of the school environment. It involves the design and modification of physical structures such as buildings, classrooms, and facilities to accommodate diverse mobility and sensory needs. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, inclusive schools must remove physical barriers that prevent equal participation and learning opportunities for all students.

Physical barriers remain one of the most visible forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities. Many schools lack ramps, elevators, accessible bathrooms, and other structural accommodations required for students with mobility challenges.

Accessible infrastructure includes features such as ramps, elevators, wide doorways, and handrails that support students with mobility impairments. Classrooms should be organized with adequate space for movement, adjustable furniture, and appropriate lighting to accommodate students with visual challenges. In addition, sanitation facilities must be designed with accessibility in mind, including grab bars, wheelchair-accessible toilets, and non-slip flooring to ensure safety and independence.

It is noted that many schools, particularly in developing regions such as New Amsterdam, Berbice, face challenges in providing adequate physical accessibility. These challenges include limited funding, outdated infrastructure, and a lack of awareness regarding inclusive design standards. As a result, students with disabilities often experience restricted access to classrooms, libraries, and other essential facilities, which negatively impacts their academic performance and social integration.

Societal Attitudes and Cultural Beliefs

Societal attitudes and cultural beliefs toward students with physical disabilities impacts their educational experiences and overall development. In many societies, disability is often misunderstood and viewed through a lens of stigma, pity, or limitation rather than capability and diversity. Negative stereotypes for example, students with physical disabilities are less competent or require constant assistance which can lead to discrimination, social exclusion, and reduced expectations from teachers, peers, and even their family members. Cultural beliefs may also reinforce these attitudes, particularly in communities where disability is associated with misfortune, dependency, or shame. Because of such belief, students with physical disabilities may experience isolation, bullying, or lack of participation in classroom and extracurricular activities, which can negatively impact their self-esteem, academic performance, and their socialization.

Cultural beliefs and stereotypes may lead to social exclusion and reduced educational opportunities. A study conducted by Consiglio et al. (2015) found that students who had contact with students with a disability held more positive and less prejudicial views about people with a physical disability when compared to students who had not had such contact. The study also revealed that non-disabled students attending inclusive schools demonstrated less prejudice, patronizing, or pitying behaviors toward students with a disability when compared to students attending non-inclusive schools. Tafa and Manolitsis (2003) in their study noted that children educated in inclusive programs with children with special educational needs have increased respect, awareness, and acceptance of their peers' needs, develop fewer prejudices, and learn to be more helpful and supportive toward people with disabilities, according to parents' perspectives.

Societal perceptions can influence policy implementation and resource allocation, leading to inadequate support systems within schools. Addressing these issues requires a shift in mindset through awareness campaigns, inclusive education policies, and the promotion of positive representations of individuals with disabilities, ensuring that all students are valued, respected, and given equal opportunities to succeed.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is a structure that identifies and describes the major elements, variables, or constructs that organize your scholarship. In addition, it is an empirical study that

refers to the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that informs the research (Ennis, 2024).

For the purpose of this research, the Critical Disability Theory was used. Critical Disability Theory (CDT) is an interdisciplinary framework that examines disability as a socially constructed phenomenon influenced by power, inequality, and systemic barriers rather than solely as a medical condition. CDT challenges traditional perspectives that locate disability within the individual and instead emphasizes how social, political, and economic structures contribute to the marginalization of persons with disabilities (Goodley, 2017).

A central idea in CDT is that disability is shaped by societal conditions rather than purely biological impairments. According to Oliver (1990), disability arises when environments, institutions, and attitudes fail to accommodate diverse needs. For example, inaccessible school infrastructure or rigid curricula can disable students more than their impairments themselves.

Critical Disability Theory focuses on issues such as power and inequality, highlighting how institutions such as the education system may unintentionally perpetuate discrimination against students with disabilities and occurs when institutions fail to accommodate diverse needs. These inequalities are often reinforced through limited access to inclusive educational resources, lack of assistive technologies, and insufficient teacher training in inclusive practices. As a result, students with disabilities may limit their participation affecting their academic achievement.

Summary of the Literature Review

The literature review highlights that inequality and discrimination against students with disabilities in public schools are influenced by three major factors: curriculum and pedagogical barriers, physical accessibility, and societal attitudes.

Firstly, the curriculum and teaching methods can either support or hinder inclusion. Research shows that student-centered teaching, flexible instructional strategies, continuous assessment, and individualized support improve learning outcomes for students with disabilities. However, when teachers lack training in inclusive pedagogy or rely on rigid teaching methods, students with disabilities may be excluded from full participation.

Secondly, physical accessibility is identified as a key requirement for inclusive education. Schools must provide ramps, elevators, accessible toilets, wide doorways, signage, and safe pathways so students with disabilities can move independently and participate fully. Many schools, especially in developing regions, still lack these facilities due to limited funding and outdated infrastructure, creating barriers to education and social interaction.

Also, the review discusses how societal attitudes and cultural beliefs often create stigma and stereotypes toward students with disabilities. Negative perceptions may cause bullying, exclusion, low expectations, and limited participation in school activities. In some communities, disability is associated with shame or dependency, which further affects students' confidence, academic performance, and social development. Overall, the literature review shows that addressing these three barriers is essential to creating equitable and inclusive schools for all learners.

In addition, the Critical Disability Theory (CDT) as the theoretical framework, views disability as a social issue shaped by power, inequality, and systemic barriers rather than only a medical

condition. It argues that disability is often created when institutions and environments fail to accommodate diverse needs. In education, barriers such as inaccessible buildings, inflexible curricula, lack of assistive technology, insufficient teacher training, and negative societal attitudes can lead to discrimination and exclusion for students with disabilities. CDT helps explain how these structural factors limit equal opportunities, participation, and academic success. Therefore, this theory is appropriate for the study because it highlights how systemic conditions contribute to inequality in educational settings.

Methodology

Research Design

This study used a quantitative research design to analyze the factors contributing to discrimination against students with disabilities. According to Bryman (2001), the quantitative approach entails the use of statistical data as a tool that saves time and resources. The use of statistical data for the research descriptions and analysis reduces the time and effort spent on completing the study. This data collection technique is also advantageous because it enhances the development of ideas for a study and allows flexibility in the study.

The data which includes numbers, percentages, and measurable figures can be calculated by a computer using a Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) (Connolly, 2007; Gorard, 2001) which saves a lot of energy and resources.

Population and Sample

The target population for this study consisted of students enrolled in the secondary public schools in the New Amsterdam, Berbice area. These students included both those with disabilities and those without disabilities, as the study aimed to assess inclusive practices within the general classroom environment. Also, a sample of 80 students was selected from the target population. The study utilized a simple random sampling technique to ensure that each student had an equal chance of being selected. This method helped to reduce bias and ensured that the sample was representative of the population.

Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on a 5 point Likert scale. This format allowed for easy quantification and statistical analysis of responses. Participants responded to statements using the following scale:

- 1 – Strongly Disagree
- 2 – Disagree
- 3 – Neutral
- 4 – Agree
- 5 – Strongly Agree

The questionnaire included sections addressed the following variables:

- Curriculum and pedagogical barriers
- Physical accessibility of school infrastructure
- Societal attitudes and cultural beliefs

Validity of the Instrument

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts in education and research methodology. Their feedback was used to refine the items to ensure that they accurately measured curriculum and pedagogical barriers, physical accessibility of school infrastructure and, societal attitudes and cultural beliefs. Further, the instrument was aligned with the study's research objectives and questions.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha to determine internal consistency. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher was considered acceptable, indicating that the questionnaire items consistently measured the intended variables.

Data Collection Procedure

Permission was obtained from relevant s authorities before the distribution of questionnaires and the actual data collection process. The questionnaires were distributed to students and completed under supervision to ensure clarity and accuracy. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Data collected were analyzed using the **Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22** and the following statistical techniques were used to summarize and describe the data. Inferential statistics were also used to identify relationships between variables.

Descriptive Statistics –These includes; Frequencies, Percentages, Means, and Standard deviations.

Results From the Variables

Figure 2

Bio Data: Respondents According to Their Gender

Gender Distribution of Participants (n=80)

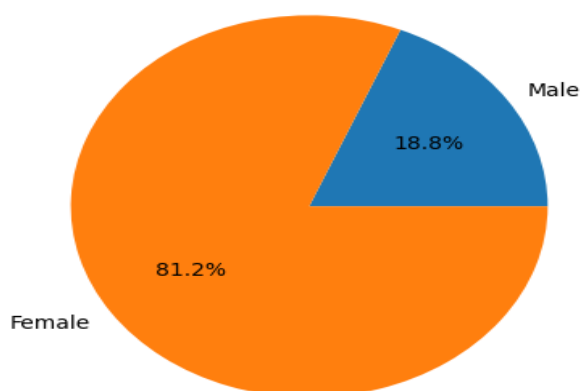
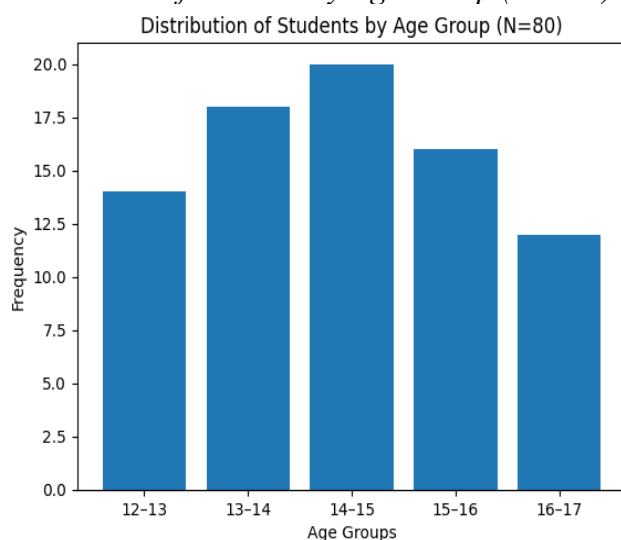


Figure 2 shows the percentage breakdown of the participants according to their gender. From the 80 participants, 15 were male and 65 females. This indicates that a significant number of participants were females.

Figure 3

Distribution of Students by Age Group (N = 80)



The data above shows that the largest proportion of students (25.0%) falls within the 14–15 age group, indicating that most respondents are in the middle adolescent stage. The 13–14 age group (22.5%) and 15–16 age group (20.0%) also represent a significant portion of the sample, suggesting a fairly balanced distribution across early to mid-adolescence.

However, the 12–13 age group (17.5%) and 16–17 age group (15.0%) have slightly lower representation, indicating fewer respondents at the youngest and oldest ends of the sample.

Table 1

Perception of Curriculum and Pedagogical Barriers

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	30	37.5%
Agree	28	35%
Neutral	12	15%
Disagree	6	7.5%
Strongly Disagree	4	5%

Table 1: The data show that most respondents expressed a positive view toward the statement being measured. Out of the total responses, 30 students (37.5%) strongly agreed and 28 students (35%) agreed, giving a combined 72.5% of respondents who held a favorable opinion. This indicates that nearly three-quarters of the participants supported the statement, suggesting that the issue being examined is widely accepted or recognized by the group.

A smaller portion of the respondents, 12 students (15%), selected neutral, which suggests that some participants were either uncertain, undecided, or did not feel strongly one way or the other. Meanwhile, only 6 students (7.5%) disagreed and 4 students (5%) strongly disagreed,

for a total of 12.5% expressing a negative opinion. This relatively low percentage of disagreement shows that opposition to the statement was limited.

Table 2
School Infrastructure Accessibility

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	32	40%
Agree	25	31%
Neutral	10	12.5%
Disagree	8	10%
Strongly Disagree	5	6.5%

The data above shows the responses from participants regarding the variable accessibility. All 80 participants responded to the statement. 32 respondents (40%) strongly agreed with the statement, representing the largest proportion of responses. 25 respondents (31%) agreed, therefore, these two categories account for 71% of the total responses, indicating a strong overall agreement among participants.

Also, a smaller proportion of respondents, 10 individuals (12.5%), selected a neutral position, suggesting that they neither strongly supported nor opposed the statement. This may indicate uncertainty, lack of sufficient information, or indifference toward the issue being measured.

On the other hand, 8 respondents (10%) disagreed, while 5 respondents (6.5%) strongly disagreed. Together, these negative responses make up 16.5% of the sample, which is significantly lower than the proportion of positive responses. This indicates that only a minority of participants held unfavorable views.

Table 3
Societal Attitudes Toward Disability

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	27	34%
Agree	29	36%
Neutral	13	16%
Disagree	7	9%
Strongly Disagree	4	5%

The data revealed that the majority of respondents expressed positive views toward the statement. Out of the total responses, 29 students (36%) selected Agree, 27 students (34%) selected Strongly Agree. Together, these two categories account for 70% of all responses, indicating that most participants held a favorable opinion. However, a smaller proportion of respondents gave neutral or negative responses. 13 students (16%) selected Neutral, 7 students (9%) selected Disagree and 4 students (5%) selected Strongly Disagree, giving a combined 14% negative response rate. The findings suggest a largely positive trend, with the responses heavily concentrated in the “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” categories, while neutral and negative opinions were less common.

Discussion and Findings

This study examined the social and academic factors contributing to inequality and discrimination against students with disabilities in public schools in the New Amsterdam, Berbice area. The findings indicate that discrimination against students with disabilities in public schools is influenced by multiple interconnected factors. It was revealed that curriculum barriers, inaccessible infrastructure, and negative societal attitudes significantly contribute to the marginalization of these students. These results are consistent with global research, which highlights that rigid curricula, lack of appropriate teaching materials, and insufficient teacher training often prevent students with physical disabilities from participating in the teaching and learning process effectively. Curriculum barriers limit the ability of students with disabilities to engage fully in academic activities. In addition, these barriers significantly limit the ability of students with physical disabilities to fully engage in academic activities. Many traditional curricula are developed with the assumption that all students can participate in the same way, without considering diverse physical needs. In addition, teaching methods often lack flexibility and inclusivity. Teachers may not incorporate differentiated instruction strategies, such as alternative ways of completing assignments or demonstrating understanding. For instance, a student who has difficulty writing due to a physical disability may not be provided with options like oral presentations, assistive technology, or modified tasks. This rigidity can result in reduced participation, lower academic performance, and feelings of exclusion.

Furthermore, curriculum barriers are often reinforced by a lack of teacher training and awareness. Educators who are not equipped with the knowledge and skills to implement inclusive teaching practices may unintentionally exclude students with physical disabilities. This can lead to a cycle where students are less engaged, may become demotivated, receive fewer opportunities to participate, and ultimately achieve less academically.

Based on the data collected, physical inaccessibility particularly at secondary schools such as poorly designed school buildings and limited assistive resources remains a major obstacle to inclusive education, further restricting students' ability to engage meaningfully in the learning environment. Physical structure and accessibility play a pivotal role in shaping educational inequality, particularly for students with physical disabilities. When public schools are not designed with inclusivity in mind, they create barriers that prevent equal participation in academic and social activities. Inaccessible physical environments not only hinder movement but also restrict participation in classroom activities. Desks that cannot accommodate wheelchairs, poorly arranged classrooms, and inaccessible learning resources reduce engagement and interaction. This can lead to lower academic achievement, reduced confidence, and feelings of isolation. Over time, these disadvantages contribute to a widening gap between students with disabilities and their peers.

Apart from the physical accessibility of school infrastructure, societal attitudes and cultural beliefs play a critical role in reinforcing discrimination. Studies show that stigma and misconceptions about disability can lead to exclusion, low expectations, and reduced opportunities for students with disabilities both inside and outside the classroom setting.

Societal attitudes and cultural beliefs often times impact how individuals are perceived, treated, and included within public schools. In many societies, disability is still misunderstood and often associated with stigma, pity, or even fear. These negative perceptions can lead to discrimination, exclusion, and low expectations from teachers, peers, and the wider community. For example, some cultural beliefs may view disability as a sign of weakness,

misfortune, or dependence, which can result in students being marginalized or not given equal opportunities to participate in academic and social activities. Such attitudes significantly impact students' self-esteem and motivation.

When students with disabilities are constantly exposed to stereotypes or are treated as incapable, they may internalize these beliefs, leading to reduced confidence and lower academic performance. Additionally, peers may exclude them from group work or social interactions, further reinforcing feelings of isolation. Teachers, influenced by societal norms, may also unintentionally lower their expectations or fail to provide appropriate support, limiting students' potential for growth and achievement.

Likewise, cultural beliefs can also affect not only the learner but the family. In some cases, families may feel ashamed or reluctant to send children with disabilities to school due to fear of judgment or discrimination. This can result in reduced enrollment and attendance, denying these students access to education altogether. Furthermore, communities that lack awareness about disability rights and inclusion may not advocate for necessary changes in school systems, such as inclusive policies or accessible infrastructure.

To summarize, promoting inclusive education and improving accessibility can significantly reduce inequality and discrimination, ensuring that all learners regardless of their ability physically, have equal opportunities to succeed academically and socially. Inclusive education not only benefits students with disabilities but also fosters diversity, empathy, and social cohesion within the wider society, contributing to more equitable and just educational systems in the New Amsterdam area. According to the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (2025), inclusive education requires addressing not only physical and academic barriers but also the social and cultural norms that hinder full participation and belonging for all learners regardless of a disability or not.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made following the conclusion of this study:

1. The government should consider the implementation of inclusive curriculum strategies that caters for diverse learners. This involves adapting teaching methods, materials, and assessments to ensure that all students can be active participants in the teaching and learning process. When teachers incorporating differentiated instruction, flexible lesson plans, and alternative assessment methods, educators can create a more supportive and engaging academic environment that promotes equal opportunities for success.
2. Improve school infrastructure to ensure accessibility for students with disabilities. Many students with disabilities face physical barriers that affect their access to classrooms, restrooms, laboratories, and other facilities. Schools must invest in accessible designs such as ramps, elevators, wide doorways, and appropriate seating arrangements to ensure that all students can move freely and safely.
3. Educate teachers on inclusive teaching practices through professional development sessions and other formal training programs. When this is done, they will be equipped with the requisite knowledge and skills to address the unique needs of students with disabilities in general. Professional development programs should focus on strategies such as differentiated instruction, classroom management, and the use of assistive technologies. Well-trained teachers are better prepared to create inclusive classrooms that support all learners.

4. Conduct public awareness campaigns to change societal attitudes toward disability. By educating communities about the rights and abilities of individuals with disabilities, these campaigns can promote acceptance, reduce stigma, and encourage inclusive practices both within and beyond the school setting. Public sensitization campaigns, inclusive policies, and teacher training programs can help challenge stereotypes and promote acceptance. Encouraging positive representation of individuals with disabilities and fostering inclusive school cultures can also help break down these societal and cultural barriers, ensuring that all students are valued and supported equally.

Conclusion

Addressing these challenges therefore requires coordinated and sustained efforts from policymakers, educators, and communities. Governments must implement inclusive policies, allocate adequate funding, and ensure teacher training programs emphasize inclusive pedagogies. Schools must adapt curricula, provide assistive technologies, and create accessible learning environments. At the community level, awareness campaigns are essential to challenge stereotypes and promote acceptance of individuals with disabilities.

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Appendix

Section 1-Bio data

1. **Gender** male ☐ female ☐
2. **Age range**
 - 12-13 ☐
 - 13-14 ☐
 - 14-15 ☐
 - 15-16 ☐
 - 16-17 ☐

Section 2

Likert-Scale Statements: Curriculum and Pedagogical Barriers

Instructions: Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement using the scale below:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

1. The school curriculum does not adequately meet the learning needs of students with disabilities.
2. Teachers rarely adapt lessons to accommodate students with disabilities.
3. Students with disabilities experience difficulty understanding lessons because teaching methods are not inclusive.
4. Learning materials are not modified to support students with disabilities.
5. Teachers lack adequate training in inclusive teaching practices.
6. Students with disabilities are often excluded from classroom activities because of unsuitable teaching methods.
7. The pace of teaching is too fast for some students with disabilities to follow.
8. Assessment methods do not fairly measure the abilities of students with disabilities.
9. Teachers do not provide enough individual support to students with disabilities during lessons.
10. Classroom instructions are not presented in ways that all students can understand.
11. Students with disabilities face challenges because assistive learning tools are unavailable.
12. Teachers show limited patience when working with students with disabilities.
13. Group activities are not structured to include students with disabilities effectively.
14. The curriculum places students with disabilities at a disadvantage compared to other students.
15. Improving teaching strategies would reduce discrimination against students with disabilities.

Likert-Scale Statements: Physical Accessibility

Instructions: Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement.

1 – Strongly Disagree | 2 – Disagree | 3 – Neutral | 4 – Agree | 5 – Strongly Agree

1. My school has ramps that allow easy access for students with mobility impairments.
2. Classrooms are spacious enough to accommodate students who use wheelchairs or mobility aids.
3. There are elevators or alternative access options for students in multi-story buildings.
4. Doorways and hallways are wide enough for easy movement of all students.
5. Handrails are available along staircases and walkways for support.
6. Classroom furniture is adjustable to meet students' needs.
7. Seating arrangements allow students with disabilities to participate comfortably.
8. Lighting supports students with visual impairments.
9. Restrooms are accessible to students with disabilities.
10. Safety features such as grab bars are available in restrooms.
11. Signs in the school are clear and easy to understand.
12. There are braille or tactile paths for visually impaired students.
13. Emergency exits are accessible to all students.
14. The school provides an environment that supports students with disabilities.
15. Improvements are needed to make my school more accessible.

Likert-Scale Statements: Societal Attitudes and Cultural Beliefs Toward Students with Disabilities

Instruction: Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement using the scale below:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

1. Students with disabilities are often treated unfairly because of negative societal attitudes.
2. Cultural beliefs in the community influence how students with disabilities are accepted in schools.
3. Some people believe that students with disabilities are less capable than other students.
4. Negative stereotypes about disability affect students' confidence and self-esteem.
5. Students with disabilities are sometimes excluded from social activities because of cultural beliefs.

6. Parents' attitudes toward disability can influence how children treat classmates with disabilities.
7. Teachers' personal beliefs may affect how they interact with students with disabilities.
8. Society does not do enough to promote positive attitudes toward persons with disabilities.
9. Students with disabilities often face discrimination because of traditional beliefs.
10. Community awareness programs can help reduce negative attitudes toward disability.
11. Cultural stigma surrounding disability creates barriers to equal education opportunities.
12. Students without disabilities are encouraged to include students with disabilities in activities.
13. Misunderstanding about disability contributes to bullying and teasing in schools.
14. Respect for diversity can improve the treatment of students with disabilities.
15. Changing societal attitudes is necessary to achieve inclusive education.