

From Classroom to Community: A Multi-Dimensional Study on Teaching Challenges and Support Structures in Rural West Bengal, India

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Abstract

This study investigates the challenges faced by teachers and the support systems available to them in secondary and higher secondary schools across Purba Medinipur district, West Bengal, India. The research focuses on understanding teachers' professional development needs, the frequency and nature of administrative and community support, and the perceived impact of parental involvement on student achievement. Using purposive sampling, data were collected from 395 teachers across 79 schools through in-depth interviews conducted between September 2024 and February 2025. The findings reveal that limited parental involvement, large class sizes, and a lack of student motivation are major instructional barriers. While most teachers occasionally receive training, there is a growing demand for workshops on modern teaching methods, subject-specific knowledge, and technology integration. The study also highlights significant gaps in teacher-parent communication and varying levels of administrative and community support. The results underscore the need for a holistic approach to teacher empowerment through structured training, stakeholder collaboration, and policy interventions to enhance teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes.

Keywords: Classroom Practices, Community Participation, Professional Development, Teacher challenges.

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1. Introduction

The quality of education in secondary and higher secondary schools is largely influenced by the capacity and support structures available to teachers. As the frontline facilitators of learning, teachers face multifaceted challenges in the classroom, including large class sizes, a lack of teaching materials, low student motivation, and limited parental involvement. These barriers can significantly hinder instructional effectiveness and student outcomes (Komba & Nkumbi, 2008; UNESCO, 2017). In resource-constrained regions, such as many districts in India, these challenges are further compounded by infrastructural deficiencies and disparities in access to professional development opportunities.

Professional development has been recognized globally as a key driver in improving teaching quality and student performance (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). However, in many government and rural schools, professional training for teachers remains irregular, generalized, and often disconnected from practical classroom needs (Pandey, 2012). Teachers frequently report a strong demand for targeted training in modern teaching methodologies, classroom management, subject expertise, and technology integration, critical components of 21st-century pedagogy (OECD, 2020).

In addition to professional growth, support from school administration and local stakeholders is vital for sustaining teacher motivation and effectiveness. Administrative leadership plays a pivotal role in facilitating access to resources, mentoring, and a conducive teaching environment (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Likewise, active parental involvement has consistently been linked to improved student engagement and academic achievement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Epstein, 2011). Despite this, communication between teachers and parents often remains sporadic, especially in rural or underprivileged contexts.

This study focuses on secondary and higher secondary schools in Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal, India, aiming to explore the current challenges teachers face, their professional development needs, the extent of administrative and community support, and their perceptions of parental involvement. By

examining these interconnected factors through direct input from teachers, the study seeks to provide meaningful insights for policy-makers, educators, and school administrators to strengthen the overall teaching-learning ecosystem.

Objectives of the Study:

This study aims to investigate the various dimensions of professional development, administrative support, and community involvement that influence teaching effectiveness and student academic outcomes. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To assess the demand for different categories of professional development training among the teachers.
2. To examine the extent of support provided by school administration in terms of access to teaching resources and opportunities for professional growth, as perceived by teachers.
3. To analyze the frequency and quality of teacher-parent communication regarding students' academic progress and its implications on educational outcomes.
4. To evaluate the degree of support received from parents and the local community in the student learning process, categorizing responses from highly supportive to non-supportive attitudes.
5. To understand teachers' perceptions of parental involvement and its perceived impact on students' academic performance.

Methodology of the Study:

This study employed a descriptive and qualitative research design to explore the professional development needs of teachers, administrative support structures, and the role of parental and community involvement in student learning. Data were collected from 79 secondary and higher secondary schools located across Purba Medinipur district, West Bengal, India. Among the 79 schools included in the study, the majorities (74.94%) were Government Sponsored, followed by Government-Aided institutions accounting for 20.76%, and a smaller proportion (4.30%) comprised Private schools. Regarding their

geographical locations, 65.57% were situated in rural areas, while 18.48% were located in urban settings and 15.95% in semi-urban regions. Using purposive sampling, five in-service teachers from each school engaged in teaching at the secondary or higher secondary level were selected, resulting in a total sample of 395 teachers. The data collection took place between September 2024 and February 2025, using a self-constructed interview schedule designed to capture in-depth insights on teaching challenges, training needs, stakeholder support, and communication practices. The responses were analyzed descriptively, and key findings were presented through visual representations to facilitate interpretation and support the study’s objectives.

Findings and Discussion:

A) Challenges Faced by the Teachers in Teaching-Learning in the Classroom: The data presented in Table 01 highlights the key challenges faced by teachers in the classroom environment. The most significant issue identified is limited parental involvement, affecting 40.25% of teachers, which underscores the critical role of parental engagement in student success. Large class sizes (22.53%) and students' lack of interest or motivation (18.23%) also emerge as prominent concerns, reflecting difficulties in managing classroom dynamics and maintaining student engagement. Additionally, lack of teaching materials and resources (12.15%) and inadequate classroom infrastructure (5.57%) point to persistent systemic issues that hinder effective instruction. Although language barriers (0.76%) and limited use of technology (0.51%) are less frequently cited, they still represent relevant concerns, especially in diverse and under-resourced educational contexts. Collectively, these findings suggest that a multifaceted approach is required to support teachers, involving infrastructural improvements, parental collaboration, and strategies to boost student motivation.

Table 01: Challenges Faced by the Teachers While Teaching-Learning in the Classroom

Categories of Challenges Faced By The Teachers	Percentage
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Large Class Sizes	22.53
Lack of Teaching Materials and Resources	12.15
Inadequate Classroom Infrastructure	5.57
Limited Parental Involvement	40.25
Students' Lack of Interest or Motivation	18.23
Language Barriers (e.g., Students Speaking a Different Language at Home)	0.76
Limited Use of Technology	0.51

B) Method Followed for Addressing Various Learning Needs of Students:

Table 02 illustrates the various instructional strategies employed by teachers to address the diverse learning needs of students. The most widely adopted method is extra remedial classes (C), with 34.94% of teachers utilizing this approach, indicating a strong reliance on additional instructional time to support learners. Differentiated instruction (A) and peer support (B) are also fairly common, followed by 21.27% and 15.19% of teachers, respectively, reflecting efforts to tailor instruction and encourage collaborative learning. Notably, a significant proportion of educators (8.10%) implement a combination of all three strategies (A + B + C), while others employ selective combinations such as A + C (8.10%), A + B (5.57%), and B + C (4.30%), suggesting a flexible and integrative approach to pedagogy. Only a minimal fraction (2.53%) reported using no specialized methods, indicating a general acknowledgement among teachers of the need to adapt teaching strategies to meet varying student needs.

**Table 02: Method Followed for Addressing Various Learning Needs
of Students**

Categories of Different Method	Percentage of Teachers Followed the Method
Differentiated Instruction (A)	21.27
Peer Support (B)	15.19

Extra Remedial Classes (C)	34.94
A + B	5.57
A + C	8.10
B + C	4.30
A + B + C	8.10
None	2.53

C) Views of Teachers Regarding Learning Outcomes between Students from Rural and Urban Areas: The following Figure 01 presents teachers' perceptions of learning outcomes between students from rural and urban areas. A majority (54.94%) of teachers believe there is no significant difference in performance based on geographic location, suggesting a perceived equity in educational outcomes. Meanwhile, 21.52% of respondents feel that urban students perform better, possibly reflecting advantages in access to resources and infrastructure. Conversely, 12.15% believe rural students outperform their urban counterparts, which might be attributed to stronger community ties or fewer distractions. A smaller portion (11.39%) are uncertain, indicating either a lack of comparative experience or variability in outcomes across contexts. These insights highlight the diverse perspectives among educators and suggest that while urban-rural divides may exist, many do not view them as definitive indicators of learning achievement.

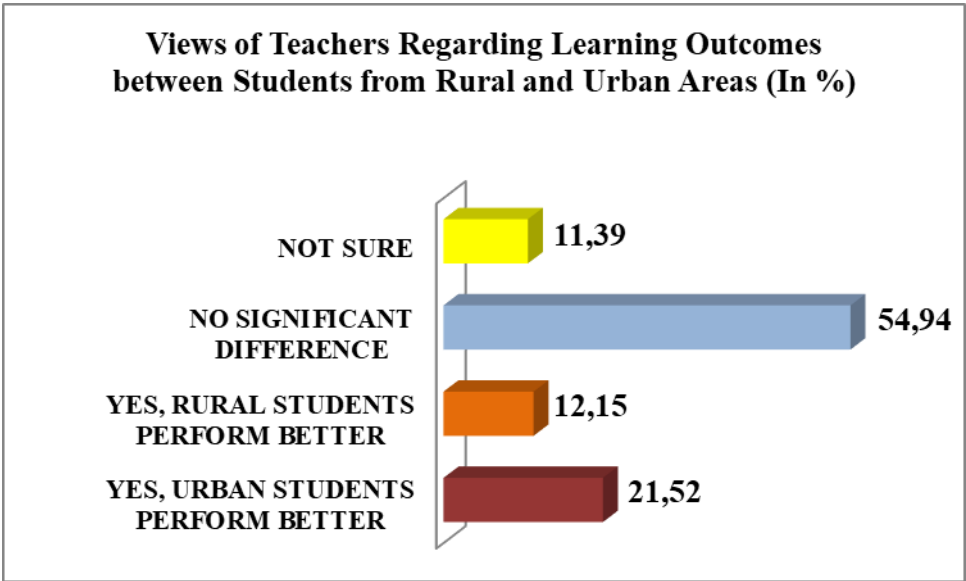


Figure 01: Views of Teachers Regarding Learning Outcomes between Students from Rural and Urban Areas

D) Participation of Teachers in Training or Workshop on Teaching Methods and Pedagogical Knowledge: Figure 02 illustrates the frequency with which teachers receive training or workshops on teaching methods and subject knowledge. A significant majority (88.61%) of teachers report receiving such professional development occasionally, indicating some level of institutional support for teacher growth, though not consistently. Only 9.87% of teachers participate in training regularly, highlighting a potential gap in continuous professional development that could impact teaching quality. Alarming, 1.52% have never received any such training, underscoring the need for more inclusive and structured professional learning opportunities. Overall, while most teachers are exposed to training, the findings point to a need for more frequent and systematic programs to enhance instructional effectiveness.

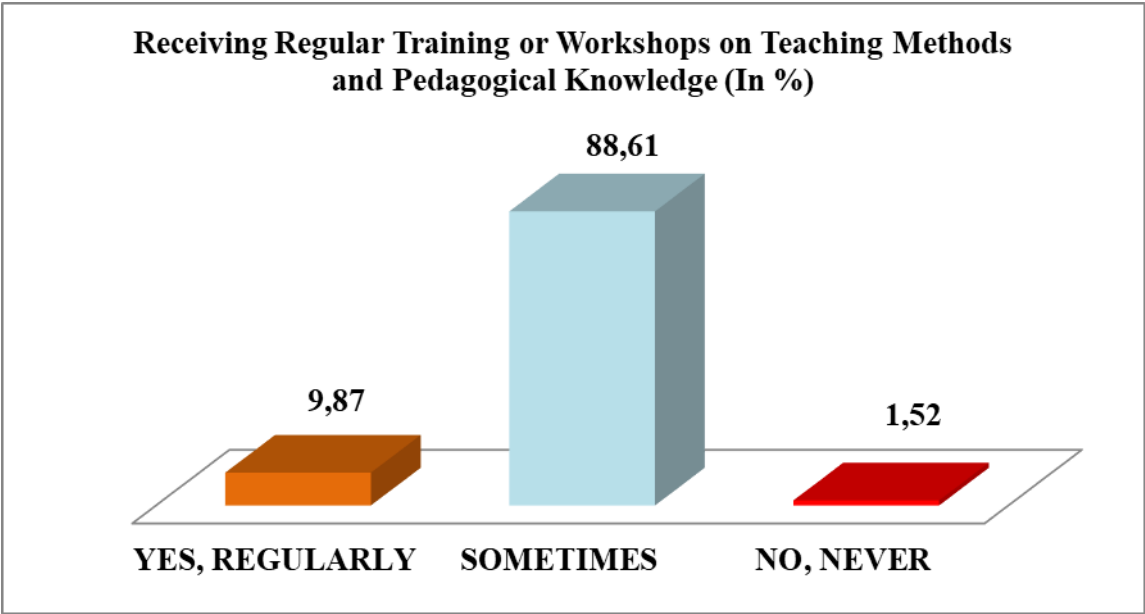


Figure 02: Participation of Teachers in Training or Workshop on Teaching Methods and Pedagogical Knowledge

E) Demand of Professional Development Course/ Training for Improving Teaching Quality: Table 03 presents the types of professional development courses or training that teachers demand to improve teaching quality. The most sought-after category is workshops on new teaching methods and technologies (B), with 40.76% of teachers expressing interest—highlighting a strong need for innovation and technological integration in pedagogy. This is followed by subject-specific workshops (C) at 26.33%, reflecting a desire to deepen content expertise. Training on classroom management (A) also appears significant (7.59%), underscoring the importance of maintaining effective learning environments. Combinations of training preferences reveal that 12.66% of teachers favour both B and C, aligning with the twin needs of updated pedagogy and subject knowledge. Other notable combinations include A + B + C (4.81%), A + B (4.30%), and A + C (1.01%), indicating that many educators see value in a multi-faceted training approach. In contrast, leadership and soft skills (D) and peer learning (E) are much less

prioritized, with only 1.27% each, suggesting these are either undervalued or less urgently needed in current teaching contexts.

Table 03: Demand of Professional Development Course/ Training for Improving Teaching Quality

Categories of Professional Development Course/ Training	Percentage
Training On Classroom Management [A]	7.59
Workshops On New Teaching Methods And Technologies [B]	40.76
Subject-Specific Workshops [C]	26.33
Leadership And Soft Skills Training [D]	1.27
Peer Learning And Collaboration [E]	1.27
[A] + [B] + [C]	4.81
[A] + [B]	4.30
[B] + [C]	12.66
[A] + [C]	1.01

F) Support from School Administration in Terms of Teaching Resources and Professional Growth:

Figure 03 illustrates the extent to which teachers perceive support from school administration concerning teaching resources and professional growth. A significant majority (67.59%) reported that they always receive support, indicating a generally positive administrative environment that fosters educational effectiveness and professional development. Additionally, 25.57% of teachers indicated they are sometimes supported, suggesting that while support is present, it may not be consistent across all contexts or institutions. A smaller proportion of respondents expressed dissatisfaction, 4.31% noted that they rarely received support, while 2.53% claimed they never did. These figures, though minor, highlight gaps that may still exist in certain schools, emphasizing the need for more inclusive and uniformly implemented support systems. The overall results reflect that a well-supported teaching force is increasingly becoming the norm, which is promising for long-term educational improvement.

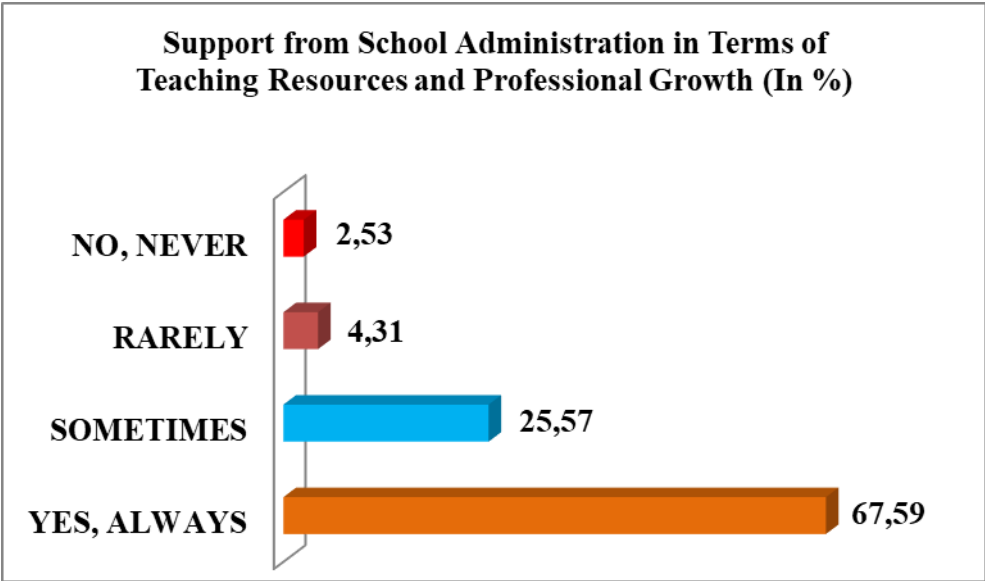


Figure 03: Support from School Administration in Terms of Teaching Resources and Professional Growth

G) Frequency of Communication with Parents regarding Their Children's Progress: The data in Figure 04 reveals that a significant portion of teachers (43.81%) rarely communicate with parents about their child's progress, while only 23.37% do so frequently (once a month or more). About 29.95% communicate occasionally, typically once per term, and a small percentage (2.87%) never engage in such communication. This indicates a clear gap in consistent parent-teacher interaction, suggesting the need for improved communication practices to foster better collaboration and support for students' academic development.

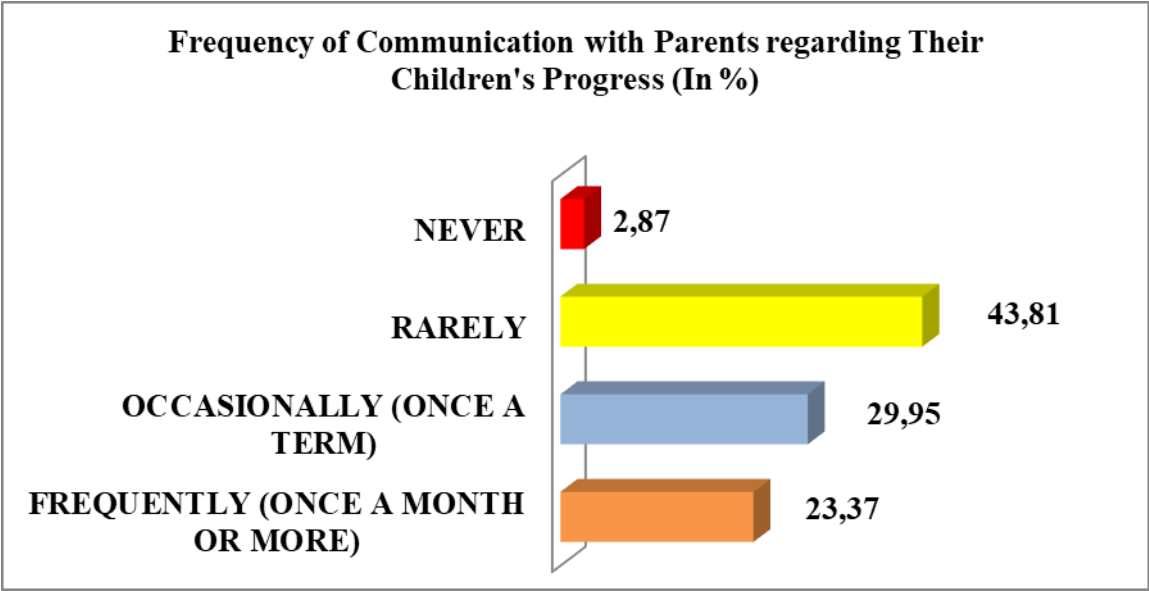


Figure 04: Frequency of Communication with Parents regarding Their Children's Progress

H) Getting Support from Parents and Local Community in the Learning

Process: Figure 05 indicates that nearly half of the teachers (46.84%) reported receiving strong support from parents and the local community in the learning process, while 34.43% found the support to be somewhat helpful. On the other hand, 17.46% felt that the support was not very strong, and a small minority (1.27%) stated they did not receive any support at all. This suggests that while community engagement is generally positive, there is still room to enhance consistent and active involvement from all stakeholders.

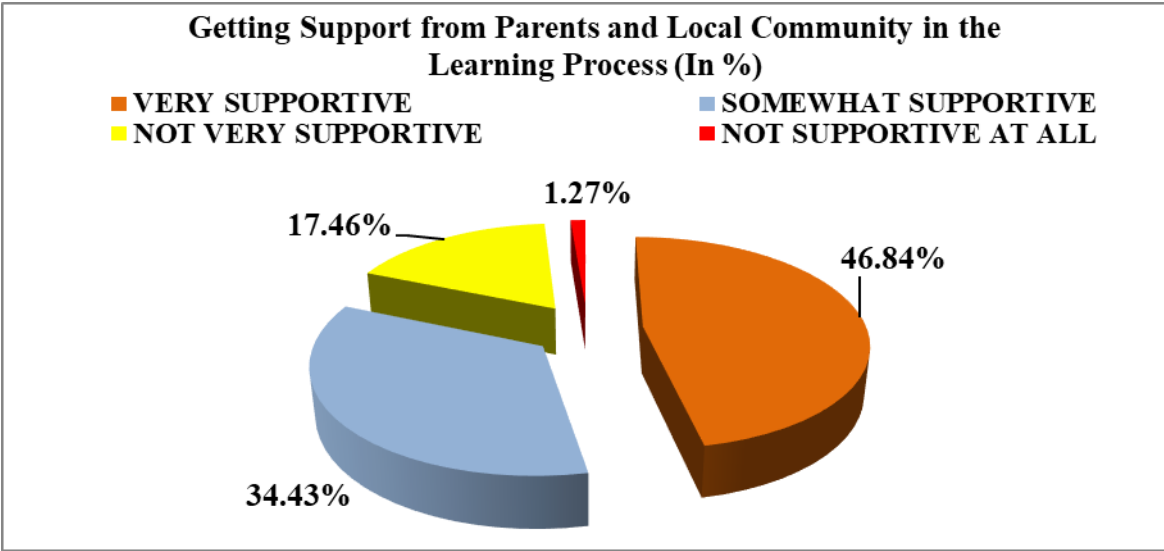


Figure 05: Getting Support from Parents and Local Community in the Learning Process

I) Perception of Teachers regarding Parental Involvement has a Positive Impact on Students' Academic Performance: The data in Figure 06 reveals that a vast majority of teachers (92.66%) believe that parental involvement has a positive impact on students' academic performance. Only a small percentage (3.29%) disagreed, while 4.05% remained uncertain. This overwhelming consensus highlights the importance of encouraging parental engagement in the educational process.

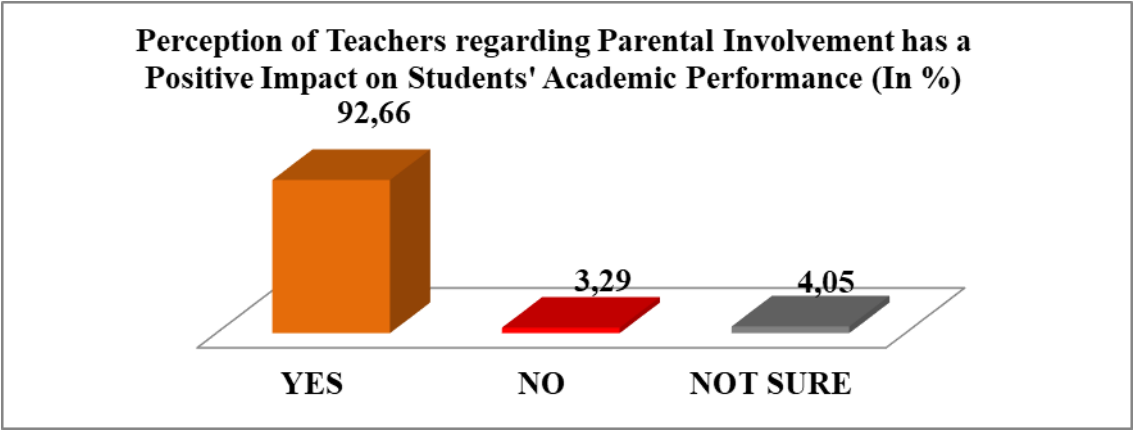


Figure 06: Perception of Teachers regarding Parental Involvement has a Positive Impact on Students' Academic Performance

Major Findings:

The study revealed several key insights into the current state of teaching practices, challenges, support mechanisms, and stakeholder involvement in secondary and higher secondary schools across Purba Medinipur district.

1. Limited Parental Involvement and Large Class Sizes emerged as the most pressing challenges faced by teachers, with 40.25% and 22.53% respectively, reporting these as significant barriers to effective instruction. Lack of motivation among students (18.23%) and insufficient teaching materials (12.15%) were also highlighted as notable concerns.
2. In addressing diverse learning needs, the majority of teachers (34.94%) rely on extra remedial classes, while others implement differentiated instruction (21.27%) and peer support strategies (15.19%). Combinational methods were also used, reflecting a growing inclination towards integrated pedagogical approaches.
3. Teachers largely perceived no significant difference in academic performance between rural and urban students (54.94%), though some believed urban students performed better (21.52%), while a smaller group found rural students more capable (12.15%).

4. A majority of teachers (88.61%) reported that they occasionally receive training, with only 9.87% receiving it regularly. This indicates a lack of structured and ongoing professional development programs.
5. There is a strong demand for workshops on new teaching methods and technologies (40.76%), followed by subject-specific training (26.33%) and classroom management programs (7.59%), reflecting teachers' evolving professional needs.
6. Most teachers (67.59%) reported that they always receive support from school administration, particularly in terms of teaching resources and growth opportunities, while 25.57% received occasional support.
7. Communication between teachers and parents was found to be infrequent, with 43.81% rarely and 29.95% occasionally engaging in academic discussions, indicating a communication gap that may hinder collaborative student support.
8. The level of support from parents and the local community was perceived as high by 46.84% of teachers, while 34.43% found it somewhat supportive. However, 17.46% indicated limited or no support, revealing a disparity in stakeholder involvement.
9. A striking 92.66% of teachers agreed that parental involvement positively influences students' academic performance, underscoring the critical role families play in supporting student success.

Recommendations:

In light of the major findings, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen teaching effectiveness, professional development, and stakeholder engagement in secondary and higher secondary education:

1. **Enhance Parental Involvement Initiatives:** Given that limited parental involvement is a significant challenge, schools should develop structured programs to encourage regular parent-teacher interaction. This could include scheduled meetings, digital communication platforms, and awareness campaigns to sensitize parents about their critical role in supporting student learning.

2. **Address Classroom Size and Student Engagement:** Educational authorities should aim to reduce class sizes where possible and promote interactive, student-centred teaching methods to address student disengagement. Teacher training should also focus on techniques for managing large classrooms effectively.
3. **Regular and Need-Based Professional Development:** Professional development programs should be more frequent and aligned with teacher-identified needs. Emphasis should be placed on training in new teaching methods, classroom technology integration, and subject-specific content to keep teachers current with evolving educational practices.
4. **Strengthen Administrative Support Systems:** Since administrative support is crucial to teacher satisfaction and effectiveness, school leadership should ensure consistent access to teaching resources, mentorship opportunities, and platforms for teacher feedback and collaboration.
5. **Institutionalize Remedial and Differentiated Learning Support:** Given the reliance on remedial classes, schools should formalize such support structures, providing teachers with time, tools, and training to conduct differentiated instruction effectively for diverse learners.
6. **Encourage Data-Driven Community Engagement:** Community involvement should be fostered through school-community partnerships and outreach activities. Sharing student progress data (while maintaining privacy) with parents and community stakeholders can create more informed and active engagement.
7. **Improve Communication Mechanisms Between Teachers and Parents:** Schools should adopt regular and systematic communication frameworks—such as digital diaries, mobile apps, or parent portals—to bridge the current communication gap and enhance trust and collaboration between home and school.
8. **Promote Equity in Rural and Urban Education:** Although many teachers perceive no major difference between rural and urban learners, targeted interventions should be developed to ensure that resource gaps in rural schools are addressed and that both contexts are equally supported.
9. **Policy-Level Interventions:** At the district or state level, education departments should integrate these findings into planning and policy-

making, ensuring that teacher voices are considered in decision-making processes regarding curriculum, resources, and school governance.

Conclusion:

The present study offers a comprehensive view of the multifaceted challenges faced by teachers and the support systems surrounding them in secondary and higher secondary schools in Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal. The findings highlight critical areas that require immediate attention, including limited parental involvement, large class sizes, irregular professional training, and gaps in teacher-parent communication. While a significant number of teachers report receiving administrative and community support, disparities still exist, particularly in rural and under-resourced schools.

Teachers expressed a strong demand for professional development, especially in modern teaching methods, subject-specific knowledge, and technology integration demonstrating a clear interest in continual learning and improvement. Moreover, the overwhelming belief in the positive impact of parental involvement on student outcomes underscores the need to strengthen home-school partnerships.

In conclusion, enhancing the quality of education requires a holistic approach that addresses classroom realities, empowers teachers through targeted training, fosters consistent administrative support, and promotes active community engagement. By responding to these interconnected factors, educational policymakers and institutions can create a more enabling environment where both teachers and students are positioned to thrive.

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