



An Inclusive Education in India: Challenges, Importance and Need

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education (IE) is an innovative approach to educating students with and without impairments or learning differences in the same classroom. All students, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses, are integrated into the classroom and school community in an effort to reach each individual's full potential. It's one of the best ways to help people learn to accept one another. Eighty percent of India's population is located in rural areas, where there is a severe lack of specialized educational opportunities. How can the goal of inclusive education be realized given the current conditions? Please explain how a welcoming setting would accommodate children with special needs. How do we ensure that all kids have access to a high-quality education? Therefore, federal and state governments are responsible for overseeing inclusive classrooms and ensuring that they meet the requirements of all students in every community. In light of these concerns, this essay explores the concept of inclusive education, examining its significance, challenges, and solutions for implementation in India.

Introduction

Education that is inclusive of students of varying abilities has been defined in a number of ways. The government of India has made significant efforts over the past half century to improve the educational available to children with special needs. In order to ensure that children with disabilities have equal

access to educational opportunities and are more likely to remain in regular classrooms, the Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) program was established in 1974 with funding from the national government. In 1986, the government issued the National Educational Policy, which stated that one of its goals should be "to integrate the handicapped with the general community at all levels as equal partners, to prepare them for normal growth, and to enable them to face life with courage and determination. This policy laid the groundwork for the many subsequent initiatives the government has taken in the area of inclusive education. In 1992, the Indian government passed the Rehabilitation Council of India Act, which mandated the creation of a training program for educators to better serve students with special needs. Every child with a disability has the right to a free public education up to the age of eighteen, as stated in Chapter V of the PWD Act. The government of India recognizes the need to achieve Education for All (EFA) by the year 2010 and, as such, has accelerated the implementation of the new inclusive education scheme. The goal of inclusion is to provide equal education for all students, regardless of abilities, backgrounds, languages, socioeconomic statuses, or areas of interest. All children, regardless of their strengths and shortcomings, should have access to and participate in regular classroom instruction; this is the goal of inclusive education. In recent years, it has been clear that inclusive education in normal schools is a central policy goal in India's education strategy, with a particular focus on children and adults with needs. One of the most urgent issues in education today is making sure that all students have equal access to learning opportunities. After UNESCO's 1994 publication of the Salamanca Declaration, several developing countries rethought their approaches to educating students with special needs.¹

Because they are the country's future citizens, all children of school age, regardless of disability, need equal access to quality education. Inclusion is the finest educational method for the twenty-first century since it allows the vast majority of students to reach their full potential while also safeguarding their rights.

The Philosophy of Inclusive Education

Inclusion is a philosophy and approach to education that promotes students' social and academic growth. This includes anything from social gatherings to artistic pursuits to athletic competitions to musical performances to religious services to before- and after-school programs. The United Nations's Standard Rules for the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities lend more support to the idea of

inclusion. a public proclamation of openness and inclusion. The term "inclusive education" (IE) refers to a strategy for meeting the needs of all students by eliminating obstacles to and within the classroom. The child is enrolled in a regular classroom at a nearby school and given individualized assistance (UNICEF, 2007). The goal of inclusive education is to ensure that all students have equal opportunity to and benefit from the educational opportunities available to them. The statement urges countries to make inclusive education a national priority and to prioritize inclusive education systems.²

Project Integrated Education for Disabled Children (PIED) was created in India in 1987 by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in partnership with UNICEF to better integrate children with disabilities into normal classrooms. Recent years have seen an expansion of the idea of education beyond the realm of children with disabilities, to include all kids who may be at a disadvantage. Taking a more holistic view of curriculum, policymakers were able to create the National Curriculum Framework (NCF-2005), which places a premium on enrolling and keeping children in school through a program that affirms each child's value and gives them the tools they need to feel respected and capable of succeeding academically.³

The History of the Inclusive Education Programme

The Indian government has a constitutional duty to provide free primary education to all children. Ever since India's independence in 1947, the government has enacted a number of laws pertaining to special education. The Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) scheme was first implemented by the Government of India in 1974 (NCERT, 2011). The Kothari Commission (1966) advocated for the necessity of special education programs for children with special needs in the years following India's independence (Pandey, 2006). Human resource development (HRD) activities relating to the rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities in India were first recognized as needing a centralized body in the 1980s by what was then the Ministry of Welfare. Up until the 1990s, ordinary schools in India did not accept the estimated 40 million children with disabilities of four and sixteen age. Children between the ages of 6 and 14 should be eligible for and enrolled in UEE. A high-quality education is available to all CWSN under the SSA's zero-rejection policy, regardless of the type, degree, or classification of their impairment. With the publication of the NCF (National Curriculum Framework) in 2005, a solid foundation for inclusive education was established. The Ministry of Human Resource Development launched a National Action Plan to Include Disabled Children and Youth in Education in 2005. To further assist the education of children with disabilities in the Rashtriya

MadhyamikShikshaAbhiyan (RMSA) secondary school program commencing in 2013, the "Inclusive Education of the Disabled at the Secondary Stage" (IEDSS) was established in 2009-10. It is vital to bring young children to regular schools in order to help them socialize and gain confidence.⁴

The Importance and Necessity of Inclusive Education

Many people all across the world have tried to include disabled kids in regular classrooms. Children with special needs should be taken into account and integrated into regular classroom settings wherever possible. Especially considering the obstacles to learning and classroom participation that these kids face. Teachers in today's increasingly varied general education classrooms understand the purpose of catering to each student's personal needs. Teachers in effective inclusive programs modify lessons so that all students may participate, even if they have different learning objectives. Our research has shown that a more inclusive approach to education benefits students of all backgrounds. Studies have shown that when students are exposed to a wide variety of subjects, both their learning and performance improve. Children's academic performance improves in inclusive settings, and inclusion also provides opportunities for social growth, according to a growing body of research. Gaining friends, social skills, personal ideals, ease around people with needs, and supportive classroom surroundings are just a few of the benefits. Children who are not eligible for special education but who are struggling academically can benefit from individualized support in a general education classroom. Inclusive education has been shown to improve peers' social cognition and make them more sensitive to the needs of those around them. As a curious byproduct, many parents have reported increased ease in social situations involving people with special needs. Long-lasting friendships among students with disabilities are possible and can help them learn how to successfully navigate future social situations.⁵

India's Inclusive Education Implementation Challenges

There is a huge population of disabled people in India who face complicated issues with limited access to services and negative stigma from society. There are many obstacles and opportunities on the road to inclusive education. India is a country of many languages, cultures, and religions, as well as large class and societal divides. With a projected population of 1,210,000,000, India is only surpassed in population size by China. The point of including students is to offer them support. As schools try to serve students from more diverse backgrounds and skill sets, achieving this basic purpose has become increasingly challenging.

Official data from the 2011 Census of India (Government of India, 2011) estimate that 2.1%, or 26 million, Indian citizens are disabled. However, almost 30 million children in India are impaired, as stated in a 2000 report by UNICEF. About 10% of the global population is disabled, the vast majority of whom are located in developing nations. However, 75% of India's disabled population lives in rural place. The government has established various special education measures since the 1970s, when the country first gained its independence. Children with disabilities may face several challenges when attempting to learn in typical classroom settings. The Indian government has made attempts to create awareness that are accessible to PwD but the country's efforts to put such policies into practice have not produced an accessible educational system. In addition, there has been an uptick in the rate at which students, especially those living in disadvantaged areas, are abandoning their education. This causes more children to be forced into labour, which has negative effects on their health. Bad attitudes and behaviours on the part of both teachers and pupils provide their own distinct challenges. How parents of disabled children view their children's educational potential Most people with disabilities still do not have the same opportunities to pursue a regular education as everyone else. Another barrier to universal education in India is the country's large class sizes. In Delhi, India, Das, Kuyini, and Desai (2013) studied the current competence levels of regular primary and secondary school instructors in order to instruct students with disabilities in inclusive education settings. They found that over 70% of general education teachers had never taken a special education course and had no experience working with students who had disabilities. In addition, 87 percent of educators say they have no means of providing students with assistance. Many children with disabilities are born into families with earnings substantially below the federal poverty level. The vast majority of teachers and other school staff in India lack the necessary skills to develop and deliver an inclusive curriculum to students with special needs. Myreddi and Narayan (2000) found that the training programs for teachers in India included a studies component. Most of the schools infrastructure in India are poorly constructed, and even fewer are prepared to meet the needs of PwD. It's also important to note the challenges associated with acquiring and funding assistive technology. While there have been efforts in India to increase access to school for children with disabilities, about 94% of such students are not being served. Achieving educational reform in India would be extremely difficult due to a combination of common problems with other developing countries and a number of distinctive features. Universal Elementary Education (UEE) is a priority for the government of India, but it will not be fully fulfilled until the unique educational needs of children with physical and mental impairments are catered to. Although "inclusion" is quickly becoming a popular term in the field of education, many common myths persist. ⁶

Some measures for establishing Inclusive Education

Children with disabilities benefit from inclusive education because they are able to develop a feeling of pride in the workplace. Even though he struggled in school, Albert Einstein overcame his impairment to become one of the century's most influential minds. One of the most effective methods of educating the Indian populace is to integrate the education of children with disabilities with that typically developing children. Every person living in India should have the opportunity to pursue higher education.

1. All schools and the entire Indian education system needs to embrace inclusion policies (NCF, 2005). To guarantee that all children, especially those from underrepresented groups and children in tough situations, receive the full benefit of this essential area of education, schools must convert into centers that teach children for life.
2. The aim of rural special education programs is to help disabled persons become contributing members of their local communities, teacher training for these schools should be structured differently.
3. The educational framework for inclusion should be flexible. The approaches and materials used to give these kids as much access to the regular curriculum as possible should reflect this flexibility.
4. To satisfy the needs of students with special educational needs, a school-based support team should establish solutions for the entire institution. Teachers who are having trouble with their classes could also reach out to this group for assistance.
5. Parents are entitled to a voice in any matters pertaining to their child. They need to be viewed as collaborators in the classroom. Teachers and schools benefit much from parent involvement because of the invaluable resources it provides.
6. Seven, schools need to make preparations to integrate children with special needs into regular classrooms. To make it easier for these kids to get around, we need better transportation options. Restrooms and other public service facilities should be designed with ramps and wide doorways to accommodate people using wheelchairs.
7. Children with special needs should be given the same opportunities as other kids, and instead of looking down on them, we should celebrate their unique talents and strengths.

8. An educational system that provide some unique conditions for exemplary practice in this area is necessary for the establishment and development of teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education.
9. It's not fair to put all the responsibility for inclusion on just one educator. Everyone needs to pitch in and do their share. The training of educators ought to be ongoing and reliable. Changing people's habits ought to be the primary focus.
10. Effective teacher preparation in terms of familiarity with inclusion and its concepts should occur in parallel with curriculum reform. The following curricula should be meticulously prepared by a professional group made of active special educators.

Conclusion

No child shall be denied the benefits of the education provided under the Right to Education Act of 2009 on the basis of race, creed, or ability. An all-inclusive society can't be built without an all-inclusive approach. We challenged commonly held beliefs and established new cornerstone principles as a result. Education for children with special needs that emphasizes inclusion does more than just that. It stresses the need to treat every child as an integral part of society, regardless of the severity of their handicap. All pupils are able to take part in most or all of the lessons in an inclusive classroom. Educators, parents, and community leaders must collaborate to create safer, more welcoming schools for all students. India's government is prioritizing diversity in its efforts to improve the country's education system. Therefore challenges are overcome by raising awareness of human rights and sharing success stories of students with disabilities who are thriving in mainstream classrooms. We need to develop a learning environment that is welcoming, student-friendly, and beneficial for all students so that they all feel like they belong in the classroom. Therefore, inclusion developed as a practical strategy for improving these kids' educational outcomes.

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