

# INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIA- STATUS, IMPORTANCE AND ROLE

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University of Lucknow, Lucknow**ABSTRACT**Article DOI URL: <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra3444>

*Inclusive Education is a new approach towards educating the disabled children. It is the most effective way to give all children a fair chance to go to school, learn and develop the skills they need to thrive. It means all children in the same classrooms, in the same schools. Inclusive education is real learning opportunities for groups who have traditionally been excluded not only disabled children, but speakers of minority languages too. Inclusive education allows students of all backgrounds to learn and grow side by side, to benefit of all. As per the census, 10% of the world's population lives with a disability, and 80% of these people with disabilities live in developing countries (Chatterjee, 2015). An estimated nearly 50% of children with disabilities are not in school. Estimated eight million children out of school in India. Many children are marginalised by dimensions such as gender, caste, disability, and poverty. After attaining independence, Indian Government developed several policies for providing special education and also attempted to implement them. However, the implementation efforts have not resulted in an inclusive system of education, nor it was able to attain the goal of "education for all" in the country. In this paper discusses in detail the concept of inclusive education, its importance, and the role of inclusive education.*

**INTRODUCTION**

As per the census, 10% of the world's population lives with a disability, and 80% of these people with disabilities live in developing countries (Chatterjee, 2015). The services accessible for such people differ widely between developed and developing countries. One of these services is education. The international community, as per the United Nations Convention on People with Disabilities, has introduced with different models of special education. The three basic models of special education include segregated, integrated, and inclusive. Inclusive education is a model of education which is helpful for improving the growth and progress of children with disability. While receiving inclusive education, children spend most of their time in schools with children without special needs. It helps them in developing friendships with their peers or class mates and makes them feel less isolated. When this model was introduced it was highly supported by government and non-government organizations, non-profit organizations, and humanist activation agencies. They all were in favour of right to education in the form of inclusive education to the children with special needs.

However, even being defined in the constitution, India is one of those few countries where education of children with disability doesn't fall within the purview of human resource development ministry. After attaining independence, Indian

Government developed several policies for providing special education and also attempted to implement them. However, the implementation efforts have not resulted in an inclusive system of education, nor it was able to attain the goal of "education for all" in the country. This could be due to a variety of reasons like, poor infrastructure, lack of skilled persons, lack of awareness, and lack of resources. Therefore, it is important to bridge the gaps in the Indian education system to develop a strong structure of inclusive education. Previous studies and research work have been done to fulfil this gap by focusing on skilled faculties, resources, awareness among people, and infrastructure (Patra, 2017; Gifford-Lindsay, 2007; Pavenkov, et al., 2016). However, a lack of study has been reported to identify the issues and challenges faced by children to attain inclusive education. Therefore, this study has been initiated to identify the issues and challenges of differently able children in attaining inclusive education. The study will analyse the problems faced by children in attaining inclusive education on the basis of their friends, family, teachers, and school management.

**HISTORY OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIA**

India has always been considered a land of culture and education. From Vedic period, the education has been provided

by GURUKULS and RISHIKULS where students use to live with their teachers and learn by practical study and debates. There was no such special education provided to the students with disabilities however, PATANJALI was one to provide Yoga therapy to disabled persons. Later during MAURYA Dynasty, it was strictly prohibited to abuse both verbally or behaviourally to people with disability. Later, King ASHOKA established hospitals and asylums for treating disable people. After that, VISNUSARNAM a courtier developed 'THE PANCHATANTRA', a legend to use animal fable for teaching children in an easy and entertaining way.

Then comes the great MUGHAL Empire which made a great progress in education followed by British East India Company which English and Convent education in the country. At the end of the second world war, SIR JOHN SARGENT an educational advisor to the Government of India prepared a Sargent Report in 1944. He recommended that, there should be a provision for people with handicaps and they should be sent to school for special children (Sargent Report 1944). After Independence, education came under Ministry of Education, under which the Government of India had created several policies for providing special education to the children with special needs (Chatterjee, 2015). Also, in 1964 the visionary Kothari Commission did recommend the inclusion of all children with disabilities in mainstream schools in their plan of Action (Gupta, 1984; Jangira, 1995; Julka, 2005). However, after independence in 1947, many acts have been passed by Central Government of India to facilitate education to all the children in the past few years, but it was difficult to cross the attitudinal barriers to inclusive education.

In 1953 the Central Social Welfare Board was created between 1960 and 1975 several committees were appointed to recommend a national policy which must focus especially on the needs of children of low socio-economic areas. It results in the formulation of the National Policy for Children in 1974 as also the National Children's Board. The major achievement was however the launch of the ICDS program also in 1974, The Integrated Child Development Program, (ICDS) as a part of India's Fifth five-year plan. This is an excellent concept but the prime initial objectives were the decrease in infant mortality and training women in health care and nutrition. It broadened its scope only in 1975 to include a psychosocial component on nonformal early childhood education but as just one of the totals of 6 components it was designed to support. The DPEP the District Primary Education Program, which followed focused on integration in the areas of teacher training, removing architectural barriers and in providing appropriate aids and did fare better but was unable to include a vast majority of children with disabilities in mainstream education (Pandey & Advani, 1995).

Government recognized that, people with disabilities also have the right to education as other citizens but the necessities of the nation which is grappling with problems like poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, malnutrition, and sheer survival needs of its people made it difficult to sustain focus on the development of services for disabilities.

In 1974, a major change in education for disable children was achieved with the launch of the comprehensive Integrated Education for the Disabled Child (IEDC) whose aim was to provide children with both facilities and financial support.

This was implemented in 15,000 schools in 26 states and union territories and reportedly covered 65,000 children with disabilities in mainstream schools. In a bid towards the implementation of this project, the Government launched Project Integrated Education Development (PIED), which provided teacher training, methodology for identification of children and school facilities as support services. However, later it was withdrawn due to its criticism for covering only children with mild or moderate disability.

Thus, in 1986, Parliament of India adopted the National Policy on Education (NPE) in which for the first-time equality of opportunity was formally stated as a goal of education and the phrase "education for the handicapped" was used. Although, the same policy was initiated earlier in 1968 and reformulated in 1985 but this time it focused only on the integration of children with loco motor disabilities and others with mild disabilities in mainstream schools. A team of experts was set under the Chairmanship of BEHRUL ISLAM in 1987 to study the problems and challenges of disable children which promoted in developing the DISABILITIE ACT of 1995.

The Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 stresses the need to provide free of cost education to all children in an appropriate environment till they are 18 years old. It further emphasizes on the right of the disabled on the following measures:

- a) Transport facilities to the students with disabilities or alternative financial incentives to parents or guardians to enable their students with disabilities to attend schools;
- b) The removal of architectural barriers from schools, colleges or other institutions imparting vocational and professional training.
- c) The supply of books, uniforms and other materials to students with disabilities attending school.
- d) The grant of scholarship to students with disabilities.
- e) Setting up of appropriate fora for the redressal of grievances of parents regarding the placement of their students with disabilities.
- f) Suitable modification in the examination system to eliminate purely mathematical questions for the benefit of blind students and students with low vision.
- g) Restructuring of curriculum for the benefit of students with disabilities.
- h) Restructuring the curriculum for benefit of students with hearing impairment to facilitate them to take only one language as part of their curriculum.

The National Trust Act (National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disability), 1999 also came in to existence. This landmark legislation seeks to protect and promote the rights of persons who within the disability sector, have been even more marginalized than others. It was first of its kind in the category of persons addressed

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994) emerged as a result of deliberations held by more than 300 participants representing 92 governments and 25 international organizations in June 1994. For furthering the objectives of Education for all, it considered the fundamental policy-shifts required to

promote inclusive education. It emphasizes that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. India was a signatory to the Salamanca Statement. In this perspective the Human Resource Development minister of India SRI ARJUN SINGH on the 21st March 2005 assured in the RAJYA SABHA that, MHRD has formulated a comprehensive action plan for the Inclusive Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities. The government will now be committed to provide education through mainstream schools for children with disabilities in accordance with PWD ACT, 1995 and all the schools in the country will be made disabled friendly by 2020. Rupees 10 billion have been outlaid to fulfil the needs of disabled persons between the ages of 14 and 18 years through a revised plan for Inclusive Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities (IECYD). In 2005-06, the Project Approval Board has allocated an amount of Rs.187.79 crores under this component for a total 20.14 lakh Children with Special Needs (CWSN) identified. The commitment of the Government of India to Universalize the Elementary Education (UEE) cannot be fully achieved without taking care of special educational needs of the physically and mentally challenged children. Now, with the changes initiated by Government such as instead of speaking disable it should be people with special ability, a focus of education has changed a lot. Initiating policies like SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN government is providing an umbrella for all education schemes, which aims to universalize elementary education for all.

However, it is easy to criticize the apparent lack of critical engagement of government officials, teachers or resources in providing elementary education but also there is an unwillingness to engage with barriers of entry and participation in education system faced by disable children due to poverty, social status, discrimination from peers and teachers, and many more things (Singhal, 2005). Therefore, this study will take into consideration the issues and challenges faced by children in attaining inclusive education.

#### **MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (MHRD) ACTION PLAN**

MHRD has developed an action plan to spread the education to all the masses of society irrespective of their age, gender, or any socio-economic status. It was focused on catering to the needs and requirements of children with disability to enable them learn and literate. An outline of MHRD action plan for disable children has been presented below:

- To complement and supplement IEDC and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programmes in the movement from integration to inclusion.
- To enroll and retain children with disabilities in the mainstream education system.
- To provide need based educational and other support in mainstream schools to children in order to develop their learning and abilities, through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource and partnership with their communities.
- To support higher and vocational education through proper implementation of the existing reservation quota in all educational institutions and creation of barrier free learning environments.
- To enable disability focused research and interventions in universities and educational institutions.
- To review the implementation of existing programmes, provisions to identify factors leading to success or failure of the drive towards enrollment and retention of children with disabilities in mainstream educational settings.
- To generate the awareness in the general community, activists and persons working in the field of education and more specifically among parents and children that the disabled have full rights to appropriate education in mainstream schools and that it is the duty of those involved in administration at every level including schools to ensure that they have access to education.
- To ensure the enrollment and intervention for all children with special needs in the age group 0-6 years in Early Childhood Care and Education Programs.
- To facilitate free and compulsory elementary education for children with special needs in the age group 6-14 (extendable to 18 yrs.) in mainstream education settings currently under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA).
- To facilitate for transition of young persons with disability wishing to pursue secondary education.
- To ensure physical access of children and youth with disabilities in schools and educational institutions by enforcing the requirement for provisions of universal design in buildings and provide support in transportation.
- To develop of national norms for inclusive education, to set standards of implementation, training, monitoring and evaluation for the program.
- To provide inputs in all pre-service and in-service training for mainstream and special education teachers to enable them to work with children with disability in an inclusive education system.
- To provide appropriate resource services support through appointment of special educators, rehab professionals, provision of resource rooms, etc to support mainstream school teachers in the classrooms.
- To put in place an effective communication and delivery system for specific delivery of TLM, aids and appliances, hardware/software.
- To participate in sports, co-curricular activities, and to promote all round ability development.
- To ensure the physical access for young persons with disabilities (18 plus age group) in all colleges and educational institutions by enforcing the requirement for provisions of universal design in buildings and provide support in transportation.

#### **ROLE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

Inclusive education is a new approach for educating the disable children or children with special needs along with the normal ones at same place. It emphasizes on the provision of equal opportunity for people with disability claiming for participation and equality for all. It addresses the learning needs of children with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. It is implied on all types of learners – with or without disabilities being able

to learn together in same school, or community. The principle of inclusive education was adopted at the “World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality” (Salamanca, Spain 1994) and was restated at the World Education Forum (Dakar, Senegal 2000). Inclusive education is not a test but a value which helps in educating people with or without disability altogether.

With the inheritance of inclusive education in India, more than 90% of abducted children with disability were provided with education which helped them in becoming financially independent and grow in the life. With the support initiated by United Nation’s Standard Rules on Equalization of opportunities for person with disability Indian education system also imbibed inclusive education in its curriculum. Inclusive education is one in which children in special schools were shifted to one where the whole school was encouraged to become more adaptable and inclusive in its day-to-day educational practices for all students.

### IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Education is indeed the most effective tool to attain social and economic empowerment. Inclusive education can play a paramount role in enabling disabled persons to live successful lives. It is not only necessary to support such children in their academic activities, but it is also necessary to promote their overall growth and development. They should also be motivated to participate in extracurricular activities such as dance, music, painting, drawing, craft and other creative work (Kacker, 2013).

Differently able children also have equal right to get education as per their needs and capability. Every stakeholder of the society has to understand his/her roles and responsibilities to work with cooperation and coherence to ensure that not a single child must left without school education. Differently able children should be treated equally as the normal children and instead of looking them in sympathy their talents and abilities should be recognized for their self-respect and welfare of the society. Government of India is trying to improve its education system focusing on the inclusive approach. With the initiation of Article-21, Indian constitution has also made education as the fundamental basic right of every individual and Article-15 clarifies that, there should be no discrimination among any citizen (Kumar, 2013). As per Article 29(2), it has also been made clear that, no one shall be denied admission to educational institute maintained by state. All these efforts were done to make inclusive education available to all the students without any discrimination or biasness.

However, current scenario explains a different picture of inclusive education in India. It explains that, even after having so many schools and special institutes to educate differently able children then too there is still a difference in what is expected and what has been received. Due to liberalization and privatization most of the schools and private institutes charge a very high fees or donation and it becomes impossible for people below poverty line to get their kids educated. Sometimes a lack of awareness, improper infrastructure, financial or social support hinders the access to education among disable children. Therefore, this study is important to identify the issues and challenges faced by differently able children in accessing inclusive education. The study will survey among the different schools and will take response from the children about their problems and challenges faced by them in

receiving inclusive education. This study will help in identifying the in-depth problems of inclusive education which can be further solved and made it easy for children to access it for their growth and development.

### CONCLUSION

From so many years there have been efforts taken at both national and international level to include differently able children in the educational institutions. In order to achieve truly inclusive education, it is important to think about and incorporate children with special needs into regular schools. Differently able children face some a lot of reluctance to get admission in schools and there are also social barriers for them while learning and participating in classroom activities.

In general, every classroom includes more and more diverse students and teachers realize the value of accepting each student as unique. In effective inclusive programs, teachers adapt activities to include all students, even though their individual goals may be different. It has been identified that; inclusive education is a better way to help all students succeed. Therefore, this study will be helpful in expanding the horizon of inclusive education to all the sections of the society without any discrimination or barrier. Thus, this study will bridge the possibilities of expecting and receiving inclusive education to all the sections of the society.

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