

Research Article

The Nature of Inclusive Education Concept in India

Ven Kalubovitiyana Soratha* 

Department of Education, University of Jammu, Jammu, India

Abstract

We must create an inclusive learning design to make education enjoyable for all children so that education is inviting, learner-friendly, and helpful to them, and they feel a part of it rather than apart from it. Inclusion emerged as a viable solution to the problem of how to better teach these children. A good inclusive education permits all students to participate equally or nearly equally in all elements of the classroom. For the establishment of stronger and more inclusive schools, educators, parents, and community leaders must work together to solve the difficulties. The Indian government is working to enhance its education system by emphasizing an inclusive approach. India is no new to the concept of inclusiveness. In today's world, the emphasis is still on providing an inclusive atmosphere for all children. Inclusive education refers to the education of all children in conventional schools, including those with and without impairments. It is a method that considers each child's individual qualities, interests, abilities, and learning needs. In today's educational system, inclusive education is gaining traction. Inclusion without 'sufficient' general school preparation will not produce satisfactory results. The capacity for inclusive education must be built at the community level, with activities such as community involvement and mobilization being included. The Researcher has collected data from a variety of sources, including websites, journals, articles, e-books, reports, commissions, national education plans, and articles published in local, national, and worldwide publications. Secondary data sources for this review study include books, articles, libraries, reports, personal sources, journals, newspapers, websites, government documents, and online data, among others. This article delves into the notion of inclusive education, including its issues and challenges, requirements, significance, obstacles, implementation strategies, existing policies and future prospects in India. However it is an endeavor to address the individual requirements of each child, including those with disabilities. The current study contributes to a better understanding of the necessity of inclusive education in schools. There are numerous advantages to inclusive education. The goal of universal education is achieved by such inclusive education. When inhibitions and boundaries are removed, education's position is elevated. It has been concluded that the incorporating children with disabilities in education is a difficult endeavor that necessitates widespread community mobilization and participation as well as the provision of suitable answers to a wide range of learning needs of special children in both formal and non-formal contexts.

Keywords

Education, Equitable, Flagship, Inclusive, Programs

1. Introduction

Inclusive education has been characterized in a variety of ways to address the learning requirements of children who are

differently abled. Over the last five decades, the Indian government has worked hard to provide a broad range of services

*Corresponding author: sorathakalubovitiyana@gmail.com (Ven Kalubovitiyana Soratha)

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for the education of children with disabilities. The Integrated Education for Disabled Students (IEDC) scheme was established in 1974 to give equal opportunities for children with disabilities in mainstream schools and to aid their retention. The government's efforts in the area of inclusive education can be traced back to the 1986 National Educational Policy, which set a goal of "integrating the handicapped with the general community at all levels as equal partners, preparing them for normal growth, and enabling them to face life with courage and confidence." The World Declaration on Education for All, which was adopted in 1990, offered a boost to the country's numerous activities. The Rehabilitation Council of India Act of 1992 established a training program for professionals to cater to the requirements of disabled students. The National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, published in 2006, aims to establish the framework within which the government, public society, and private sector must function in order to promote a dignified life for disabled people and support for their caregivers. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (2009) is the most recent improvement, which guarantees all children between the ages of six and fourteen the right to free and compulsory education. The statute must be interpreted in connection with Chapter V of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995, when it comes to schooling for a disabled kid. Every child with a handicap has the right to a free education until they reach the age of eighteen, according to Chapter V of the PWD Act. With this in mind, the Indian government has hastened the new Inclusive Education scheme in order to meet the aim of Education for All by 2010 [1], (Mondal, 2021, 21, P). Inclusion is an endeavor to ensure that various learners those with disabilities, those who speak different languages and cultures, those who come from different homes and families, and those who have different interests and learning styles – are included. Inclusive education refers to the inclusion of all students in mainstream education, regardless of their skills and deficiencies. It is obvious that India's education policy has shifted to a greater emphasis on children and adults with special needs, with inclusive education in conventional schools being a main policy goal. In practically every country, inclusive education has become one of the most pressing educational concerns. With the publication of the Salamanca Statement by UNESCO in 1994, a large number of developing countries began reformulating their policies to promote the inclusion of students with disabilities into mainstream schools. Settings collaborate more and spend more time planning, learn new techniques from one another, participate in more professional development activities, demonstrate a greater willingness to change, and use a wider range of creative strategies to meet students' needs. All school children, whether disabled or not, have the right to an education because they are the country's future citizens. Today, it is universally agreed that including all students enhances their potential, protects their rights, and is the best educational strategy for the twenty-first century.

2. Concept of Inclusive Education

The placement and education of children with disabilities in ordinary educational classrooms with children of the same age who do not have disabilities is referred to as inclusive education. It entails normal schools and classrooms adjusting and altering in a true way to meet the needs of all children, as well as celebrating and valuing differences. All children have the ability to study and participate in school and community life. It is pushed as a way to break down barriers, improve outcomes, and eliminate discrimination. Students with special needs are provided with the essential support services and extra assistance for both children and teachers. It entails satisfying the needs of all students, including those with disabilities, for a free and high- quality public education in the least restrictive and most effective setting possible. It is widely acknowledged that all children can be educated to their full capacity in a common school. Throughout history, the Indian government has taken numerous initiatives to provide educational opportunities to children with impairments. In 1974, the IEDC was established with that goal in mind. Inclusionary education was advocated by NPE 1986 as a "objective to integrate the handicapped with the general population at all levels as equal partners to prepare them for normal growth and to enable them to confront life with courage and confidence." It is obvious that India's educational policies have shifted to a greater emphasis on children and adults with special needs.

3. Definition of Inclusive Education

According to Loreman and Deppeler 'Inclusive Education' is "complete inclusion of children with various abilities in all aspects of schooling that other children are able to access and enjoy". Inclusion is a concept that can be characterized as an attitude or a dedication to appreciating differences and accepting that all children can achieve their full potential in a common school. [2], (Malaviya, Tulika, 2008, 52, p). It necessitates boosting the capacity of traditional institutions to respond creatively to greater diversity. It also entails developing instructors' abilities to deal with a diverse student population and acquiring pedagogical qualities that assist the learning of all students in the Classroom. Everyone belongs, is accepted, and is supported by their classmates and other members in mainstreaming at an inclusive school. Integration and mainstreaming will no longer be essential if inclusive schooling is completed since no one will be left out.

4. Disabilities and Their Types

- 1) Visual disability
- 2) Hearing impairment
- 3) Mental Retardation are all possibilities
- 4) Physically challenged or Orthopedically handicapped

- 5) Disabilities in learning
- 6) Disabilities in communication
- 7) Emotional discord that leads to behavioral issues

5. Principles of Inclusive Education

The following are important principles of inclusion

- 1) Sharing responsibilities of functionaries working at various levels
- 2) Providing additional support to children
- 3) Development of a collaborative framework to meet the additional needs and interests of children
- 4) Implications for various types of disabilities
- 5) Knowledge of children's family and social environment
- 6) Modifications in Teaching-Learning strategies and modalities
- 7) Ensuring community support and help from other functionaries working at various levels
- 8) Improving professional competencies of Instructor [3], (Peerzada, 2019, 24, P)

5.1. Characteristics of Inclusive Education

The following are the main characteristics of inclusive education.

- 1) Recognizes that all children have the ability to learn
- 2) Recognizes and respects the diversity of children, including age, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, HIV/TB status, and so on
- 3) Facilitates the development of educational institutions, methods, and approaches that address the needs of all students
- 4) Is part of a larger effort to foster a more inclusive society
- 5) It is a dynamic and ever-changing process [4], (Ainscow, Mel, 2008, 75, P)

5.2. Standards for Inclusive Education

- 1) Every student has the right to an education based on equal opportunity.
- 2) No student should be denied an education because of their race, color, sex, language, religion, social status, nationality, disability, birth, or poverty, among other factors.
- 3) All students have the ability to learn and benefit from education.
- 4) Rather than students adjusting to the demands of the school, the school should adapt to the needs of the students.
- 5) Maximum participation of all students in their preferred community schools.

5.3. Prospects of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is an approach for making education universal, regardless of the learner's impairment, and maintaining societal equality. It highlights that students with special needs can be integrated into the mainstream education system without being separated. Inclusive education is a developmental method that aims to meet the learning requirements of all children, teenagers, and adults, with a special emphasis on those who are marginalized and excluded. A growing number of publications, policy papers, workshops, and other events have endorsed the inclusion concept. However, several organizations and individuals question whether a regular classroom can deliver a high-quality education for impaired children. The Flagship objective is the most important goal of inclusive education. Recognizing the right to education, the Flagship aims to bring together all Education for All partners in their efforts to ensure that every child, adolescent, and adult with a disability has access to a high-quality education. An alliance of different groups, including global disability organizations, international development agencies, intergovernmental agencies, and professionals in the field of special and inclusive education, has come together to form the Flagship. To achieve this purpose, all parties must include full participation of people with disabilities and their families in the planning of all Flagship activities. Encourage full participation of people with disabilities and their families in the creation of policies and guidelines for people with disabilities' education at the local, national, regional, and global levels. Ensure that all governments, donors, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) support the universal right to education for all children, youth, and adults with disabilities. As a result, we as teachers, parents, teacher, educators, and others must make it easier to implement inclusive education not only as a program but also as an ideology—an ideology based on human rights principles that emphasizes the importance of the individual and respects their potential in the teaching-learning process.

6. Inclusive Education in the Indian Context

We have a long cultural tradition of inclusive education in India, and the country has always been and continues to be an inclusive society in the sense that a wide range of cultural and religious beliefs coexist. The Sargent Report in 1944 and the Kothari Commission in 1964 both offered recommendations to send children with disabilities to mainstream schools [5], (Julka, 2005). Despite this, progress has been gradual, with segregation in special schools predominating until recently. The Equal Opportunities and Rights of Persons with Impairments Act of 1995 was ground breaking legislation that provided for the education and economic rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities. It stipulates that children with

disabilities, up to the age of 18, are entitled to free education in a suitable environment. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was just launched by the government (SSA). This proposal seeks to undertake 'universalization of elementary education' (UEE) in a mission mode, with the goal of delivering high-quality elementary education to all children aged 6 to 14. SSA includes inclusive education as a key component, with the goal of making "education for all" a reality by 2010. According to UNICEF's Report on the Status of Disability in India 2000, there are around 30 million children in India who are disabled in some way. According to the NCERT's Sixth All-India Educational Survey (NCERT, 1998), 20 million of India's 200 million school-aged children (6–14 years) require special education. Despite the fact that the national average for gross enrolment in school is above 90%, only about 5% of children with disabilities attend school. In India, an estimated 25 million children are out of school (MHRD 2003 numbers, quoted in World Bank, 2004), with many of them being marginalized due to issues such as poverty, gender, disability, caste, religion, and so on. As though, the concept of inclusive education is unquestionably pertinent to our current situation, in which variations in religion, faith, gender, ethnicity, and ability are frequently viewed as a threat rather than a source of richness and diversity.

6.1. Policy and Legislative Framework in India

Various programs and efforts have been implemented in India over the years with the goal of making education a right for all children. The key legislative provisions are as follows:

- 1) Constitutional provisions: Article 21 A, Article 45 and Article 51 A (K)
- 2) The Mental Healthcare Act, 1987, revised in 2017
- 3) Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 revised in 2016 (The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act)
- 4) Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992, revised in 2000
- 5) Right to Education Act-2009, revised in 2018
- 6) National Trust Act 1999

The planned objectives of the Right to Education Act (RTE) have not been fully met due to a lack of essential infrastructure, adaptive teaching-learning material, and a variety of other problems.

6.2. National Policies

The National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1986 and the Program of Action (PA) of 1992, which arose from the NPE, reaffirm the acceptance of integrating physically or mentally impaired children as equal partners with the general category in order to prepare them for normal growth. The NPE stressed the importance of expanding integrated education programs. Policies that have recently been implemented include:

- 1) The National Action Plan for Inclusion of children and

youth with disabilities, 2005

- 2) National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, 2006
- 3) The National Plan of Action for children, 2016
- 4) The Draft National Policy on Education, 2019

6.3. Why Inclusion Is Necessary

According to research, there are numerous advantages to being included.

- 1) Students learn to value one other's unique qualities and strengths.
- 2) Students are encouraged to help each other.
- 3) Students with special needs are able to develop friendships in a natural way and in a natural setting.
- 4) Students who are not disabled have the opportunity to acquire favorable views toward those who are disabled.
- 5) The sensation of belonging to a community helps to build self-esteem and a feeling of achievements for kids with disabilities.
- 6) It is common for students to learn desirable social behaviors from one another.
- 7) Children achieve their developmental potential and learn to adapt to a variety of situations.

6.4. Need and Importance of Inclusive Education

It removes the boundaries and obstacles. It is now possible to achieve the goal of universalizing education. Inclusive education has the capacity to build a well-constructed nation. Every children has the ability to assimilate into their community and acquire a sense of belonging. All children with impairments are given the opportunity to participate in vocational services. Teachers in recognizing the strengths and shortcomings of the students. They prepare instructional program accordingly. Students are taught about the importance of caring for one another [6], (Lakshmi, 2018, 18, P). It inspires people to learn more about themselves. Its goal is to help children live happy lives. In his home, a healthy environment is developed surrounds. It maintains social balance by giving everyone an equal chance. It eliminates a wide range of contaminants. Prejudice and discrimination are two words that come to mind when thinking about prejudice and discrimination. It introduces new ways of learning, methodologies, and parameters for everyone. It encourages youngsters to be self-sufficient and helps them develop coping skills, thinking critically, the ability to make decisions and solve problems is also enhanced.

6.5. Inclusion - Equitable Education

Inclusion in education is based on the premise that if every child is given equal opportunity to participate in school, is given the resources for needs, and is taught in a way that is relevant to her requirements, it may learn and reach her full

potential. In an ideal world, a child should be educated in the least restrictive environment possible, one that is most conducive to his or her needs. This means that general education is the primary choice for all children with disabilities, as it allows them to be as integrated as possible with their classmates who do not have disabilities. This type of instruction is known as Inclusive Education. For the total growth and development of all children in both academic and co-curricular domains, it is the most effective and equitable of the many educational models. Children that attend an Inclusive school gain confidence and learn to share and participate in activities. As a result, inclusion is a fundamental human right, not a privilege. Throughout the 19th century, children with special problems were institutionalized, segregated and blithely prejudiced. In the late 1980s, the term inclusive education appeared in literature as an alternative to special education, allowing students with special needs from a variety of backgrounds to participate. Children with impairments were once regarded as uneducable, with the belief that they required special educational arrangements, and there was little societal acceptance. Special education was established for those kids who did not suit the standard strict system and phrases like congenital disabilities, inabilities and low IQ were introduced and justified with the help of medical and neurological sciences. Exclusive educational systems were constructed all over the world, and the term 'disabilities' was intentionally created for a huge number of youngsters (30% to 40%) [7], (Rao etc., 2020, 58, P).

6.6. Right to Education

The right to education is a crucial component of ensuring equal rights and social inclusion for children with disabilities. The goal of universalizing primary education was recognized as a Directive Principle of State Policy in India's Constitution until 2002. Directive Principles are not justiciable rights, but they do define a government's policy priorities. The provision of universal primary education was recognized as a Fundamental Right under Article 21A in 2002, ensuring a justiciable right to free, obligatory primary education for all children aged 6 to 14. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act) was passed by the central government in order to underline this constitutional duty and the method in which it would be implemented. The RTE Act specifies that all children have the right to free and compulsory basic education, precisely defining and include children from 'disadvantaged groups' in its scope. Children with disabilities are included in the broad definition of 'marginalized children'. A separate category, 'a child significant disability' is recognized by the RTE Act.

7. Issues and Challenges in Inclusive Education

From Special Education to Integrated Education, and from Integrated Education to Inclusive Education, the education of children with special needs has come a long way. Children with Special Needs (CWSN) required ordinary schooling, education in their own community, and instruction from regular teachers. It recognizes that every learner has a fundamental right to learn and that each child has distinct abilities and needs. Children with Special Needs (CWSN) experience a variety of concerns and challenges in inclusive education, including:

1. Individual Pupil Characteristics

As we all know, in a varied classroom, all of the children are seated together. Many students are affected by various disabilities. It's difficult to pick them out of a crowded classroom.

2. Lack of mainstream access

Currently, approximately 4% to 5% of the 30 million children with special needs have access to education. Many schools are unwilling to accommodate the demands of these children.

3. Lack of awareness and attitude

Due to a lack of awareness, a positive attitude, and sensitivity on the part of instructors, classmates, parents, and the community, the entire goal of inclusive education is destroyed, and as a result, these children face prejudice.

4. Insufficiently trained teachers

Teachers lack the ability and willingness to adapt their teaching methods to meet the needs of children with special needs and other children.

5. Large class size

A typical class has 60 to 70 students, making individualized attention challenging, and teachers find it even more difficult when dealing with children with special needs.

6. Lack of a child-centered and relevant curriculum

The curriculum is rigid and does not provide these youngsters a choice. The teaching-learning materials are likewise inappropriate for both special needs and non-special needs youngsters.

7. Inadequate infrastructure

Special needs children require a variety of teaching and learning tools. In India, the majority of schools lack adequate teaching and learning tools.

8. A lack of participatory activities

Children with special needs need a learning environment where they may participate in small groups and learn.

9. Parental and community involvement

As we all know, children with learning difficulties are less encouraging. As a result, the lack of parental and community involvement becomes a barrier.

10. Teacher accountability

Inclusionary education is hampered by a lack of teacher

responsibility.

11. Collaboration

Collaboration between parents, teachers, schools, and communities to ensure the program's success. We discovered that the software was missing.

12. Collaboration or consultation

Collaboration between various educational agencies such as the government, non-governmental organizations, and the community. We discovered that they don't work together very well.

8. Components for Teacher Preparation Programs

Many challenges such as, lack of positive attitude among instructors, non-inclusive curriculum, lack of resources, infrastructural problems, unawareness among parents, irregular plans, inappropriate execution of policies are generating hurdles for promoting the concept of inclusive education in India. Teachers are crucial to inclusion's success. Based on the experience of teaching teachers in different teacher education institutes, the following fundamental components should be introduced.

1. The Inclusive Teacher is an educator who is deeply committed to his or her community. Because they must be sensitive to the requirements of students and the environment, the Teacher Preparation Program should include subjects with a high social and community content.
2. The Inclusive Teacher is aware of individual differences and uses learning practices that are appropriate for all students. The educational intervention is geared at variety and supports learning methodologies for everyone (equality), not just a select few, and only one (equity). These are also important parts of teacher education programs. The ideas of excellence, equality, and equity should be transformed into practical educational intervention actions.
3. Collaborative work among educators facilitates inclusion and should be promoted in the Teacher Preparation Program. Inclusion is based on a group of teachers sharing knowledge, making decisions together, solving problems together, and generating actions to improve the school and increase learning for all. Because, all pre-service teachers should be aware of and build skills in this manner.
4. While a teacher is teaching, he or she is learning, and when students are learning, they are teaching.
5. We all take on leadership roles because we are protagonists.
6. When we make collaborative decisions, forming teams in the settlement of problems, and allowing everyone to learn or re-learn social skills, outcomes improve and identity is enhanced.

7. The results begin when we collaborate because no one will do it for us. Whatever we need to accomplish, let's do it together.
8. Economic resources are a result of joint effort rather than a requirement.
9. Heterogeneity brings a lot of variety.
10. In all communities, collaboration improves accountability and recognition procedures.

9. The Importance of Inclusive Education

The advantages of offering an inclusive education to all children have been demonstrated over time. Inclusive education when performed correctly is particularly essential because,

- 1) All children have the opportunity to be a part of their community, develop a feeling of belonging, and become better equipped for life as children and adults in the community.
- 2) It provides more learning chances. When children of varied abilities learn in courses with other children, they are more likely to be motivated.
- 3) All of the youngsters have higher aspirations. Successful inclusion aims to maximize a person's talents and abilities.
- 4) It allows students to work on personal goals while interacting with peers their own age.
- 5) It encourages parents to participate in their children's education as well as the activities of their local schools.
- 6) It promotes a sense of belonging and respect. It also allows students to become more aware of and accepting of individual diversity [8], (Jangira, Ahuja, 1996, 89, P).

10. Conclusion

It is critical to use an inclusive strategy in order to create a more inclusive society. Inclusion is more than just a means of educating disabled children. It emphasizes that each child is valued member of society who is capable of participating in that society, regardless of the severity and extent of his or her disability. The difficulties can be overcome by increasing community understanding of human rights and publicizing good examples of disabled children and people prospering in inclusive education and, as a result, in life beyond school. Children with special needs have come a long way in their education, from special education to integrated education and then to inclusive education. Inclusive education is a process of identifying and responding to the various needs of all children, youth, and adults by boosting involvement in learning cultures and communities and eliminating exclusion within and from education. It is a stepping stone to a future inclusion society.

Author Contributions

Ven Kalubovitiyana Soratha is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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