

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION:

Now days the education is growing every day to give all type of student normal or with special needs a better education. Many organizations like “UNICEF” have played a vital role to bring forward inclusive education. According to UNICEF “An education system that includes all students, and welcomes and supports them to learn, whoever they are and whatever their abilities or requirements. This means making sure that teaching and the curriculum, school buildings, classrooms, play areas, transport and toilets are appropriate for all children at all levels. Inclusive education means all children learn together in the same schools. No-one should be excluded. Every child has a right to inclusive education, including children with disabilities. As stated by the “Department of School education and Literacy” The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 emphasizes that, “Education is the single greatest tool for achieving social justice and equality” which has implications for development of an inclusive community and society at large.

In order for policy to translate to practice, educational barriers, facilities and services for Children with Special Needs (CwSN) must be addressed. The NEP has infused the aspects of disability inclusion throughout the policy document with a dedicated chapter on equitable and inclusive education, focusing on issues, challenges and recommendations for bridging the gaps reducing the disparities in access and participation of all learners. The issues and recommendations for inclusion of underrepresented students groups including children with disabilities has been subsumed in the policy and covered under the SEDGs i.e. Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) which is an umbrella term covering gender identities, socio-cultural and socio-economic identities, geographical identities as well as disabilities.

OBJECTIVE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

As stated by the “NCTE” there are various objectives of inclusive education they are as follows:

1. Minimally controlled environments include more intensive education for children with mild disabilities.
2. Emphasis on meeting the specific educational needs of the child rather than class.
3. Determining ways to improve the mind set of normal classmates and to develop a collaborative attitude towards a classmate with disabilities.
4. Gradually reducing social distance through sharing of various facilities and on the basis of mutual understanding.
5. Eliminate the frustration, inferiority complex of students with disabilities.

BACKGROUND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:

The government of India is constitutionally committed to ensuring the right of every child to basic education. The Government of India has created numerous policies around special education since the country’s independence in 1947. One of the earliest formal initiatives undertaken by the GOI was the Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) scheme of 1974 (Seventh all India School Education Survey - NCERT, 2017). The Kothari Commission (1966) which highlighted the importance of educating children with disabilities during the post-independence period (Sharma B., 2011), In 1980s the then ministry of Welfare, Govt. of India, realized the crucial need of an institution to monitor and regulate the HRD programmers in the field of disability rehabilitation. Till 1990s, ninety percent of India’s estimated 40 million children in the age group- four sixteen years with physical and mental disabilities are being excluded from mainstream education. The National Policy on Education, 1986 (NPE, 1986), and the Programmers of Action (1992) stresses the need for integrating children with special needs with other groups. The Government of India implemented the District Primary Education Project (DPEP) in 1994–95. In late 90s (i.e. in 1997) the philosophy of inclusive education is added in District Primary Education Programmer (DPEP).

ROLE OF INSTRUCTOR.

NEEDS AND IMPORTANCE:

It removes the boundaries and obstacles. The purpose of universalization of education becomes possible. Inclusive education has the potential to create nicely built nation.□ All children can assimilate themselves in their community and develop a sense of□ belongingness. Gives students opportunity of vocational services to all children with disabilities.□ Helps teachers to recognize their students' strength and weaknesses .As a result they□ prepare instructional program accordingly. Students learn their responsibilities of caring for one another. It motivates them towards□ self-discovery. Its aim is to enable child to lead a happy life. A healthy environment is created in his□ surroundings. It maintains social balances by providing equal opportunity to all. It removes all kinds of□ prejudices and discrimination. It provides new manners, methods and parameters to education for all.□ It promotes self-reliance and enables children to acquire coping skills. Critical thinking,□ decision making power and problem solving skills are also developed

CHALLENGES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education faces many challenges, including:

- Lack of resources: Schools may not have the resources to support students with different needs, such as trained staff, digital textbooks, and assistive technology.
- Financial constraints: Schools may not have the budget to implement inclusive education policies and programs.
- Lack of awareness: Educators, parents, and the community may not understand disabilities and inclusive education, which can lead to a failure to accommodate students' learning needs.
- Curriculum inflexibility: Schools may not have a relevant curriculum, or teachers may not be able or willing to modify their teaching methods.
- Classroom management: Schools may face challenges with classroom management.
- Social stigma and bullying: Students may face social stigma and bullying.
- Cultural and linguistic barriers: Cultural and linguistic barriers can be a challenge.
- Limited parental involvement: Parents may not be involved in their child's education.
- Inadequate assessment methods: Schools may not have adequate assessment methods.
- Lack of collaboration among staff: Schools may not have adequate collaboration among staff.

INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Indian education system is one of the largest and most diverse in the world, serving over 1.5 billion people across a vast geographical and cultural landscape. It encompasses various levels of education, from pre-primary to higher education, and is managed by both central and state governments. This article provides a detailed overview of the Indian education system, including its structure, key features, challenges, and recent reforms.

1. Structure of the Indian Education System

1.1. Pre-Primary Education

Pre-primary education, often referred to as early childhood education, is the foundation for a child's educational journey. It typically includes:

Play Schools/Nurseries: For children aged 2-4 years, focusing on basic social and cognitive skills.

Kindergartens (KG): For children aged 4-6 years, providing a more structured learning environment.

Pre-primary education is not mandatory, but it is increasingly recognized for its role in preparing children for primary school.

1.2. Primary Education

Primary education in India covers classes 1 to 5 and is generally for children aged 6 to 11 years. It focuses on fundamental subjects such as:

Language (Hindi, English, and regional languages)

Mathematics

Environmental Science

Social Studies

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, mandates free and compulsory education for children aged 6 to 14 years, ensuring access to primary education for all.

1.3. Secondary Education

Secondary education is divided into:

Lower Secondary (Classes 6-8): Ages 11-14 years.

Upper Secondary (Classes 9-12): Ages 14-18 years.

At the upper secondary level, students typically choose between different streams:

Science: Includes subjects like Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Mathematics.

Commerce: Includes subjects like Business Studies, Accountancy, and Economics.

Humanities/Arts: Includes subjects like History, Geography, Political Science, and Literature.

Secondary education culminates in board examinations, which play a crucial role in determining students' academic and career paths.

1.4. Higher Education

Higher education includes:

Undergraduate Programs: Typically, a 3-4 year course leading to a Bachelor's degree (e.g., B.A., B.Sc., B.Com.).

Postgraduate Programs: Typically, a 2-year course leading to a Master's degree (e.g., M.A., M.Sc., M.Com.).

Doctoral Programs: Research-based programs leading to a PhD or MPhil.

India has a diverse range of higher education institutions, including universities, deemed-to-be universities, and autonomous colleges.

1.5. Vocational and Technical Education

Vocational and technical education provides practical skills and training for specific careers. This includes:

Polytechnic Institutes: Offering diploma courses in engineering and technology.

Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs): Providing skills training in trades such as plumbing, carpentry, and electrical work.

Skill Development Programs: Initiatives aimed at enhancing employability and vocational skills.

2. Key Features and Challenges

2.1. Decentralized Administration

The Indian education system is administered at both central and state levels. The **Ministry of Education** at the central level formulates policies, while state governments are responsible for implementing these policies and managing local education systems. This decentralization can lead to variations in educational quality and access across different states.

2.2. Language Diversity

India's linguistic diversity poses challenges in education. The medium of instruction can vary widely, with many states using regional languages alongside Hindi and English. This can create disparities in educational resources and opportunities.

2.3. Quality and Equity Issues

There is significant variation in the quality of education between urban and rural areas, as well as between public and private schools. Rural and underserved areas often face issues such as:

Infrastructure Deficits: Many schools lack basic facilities like classrooms, sanitation, and access to learning materials.

Teacher Shortages: There is a shortage of qualified teachers, particularly in remote areas.

Educational Disparities: Socio-economic factors contribute to disparities in educational outcomes, with marginalized communities often facing barriers to accessing quality education.

2.4. Examination System

The examination system in India is highly competitive, with board exams at the end of secondary and higher secondary education playing a significant role in students' academic and career prospects. The focus on rote learning and highstakes testing can sometimes overshadow holistic learning approaches.

3. Recent Reforms and Developments

3.1. National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

The NEP 2020 is a significant policy reform aimed at overhauling the Indian education system. Key highlights include:

School Education: Emphasis on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), National Educational Technology Forum (NETF), and integration of vocational education from Grade 6.

Higher Education: Expansion of higher education opportunities, emphasis on multidisciplinary education, and establishment of Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs).

Teacher Training: Enhanced focus on teacher training and continuous professional development.

Assessment and Examination: Shift towards holistic and competency-based assessment methods.

3.2. Digital Education Initiatives

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital education in India.

Initiatives such as:

SWAYAM: A platform offering Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).

DIKSHA: An online platform providing educational resources for teachers and students.

eVidya: A program aimed at delivering digital education content to students.

These initiatives have expanded access to education but also highlighted issues related to digital divide and infrastructure.

3.3. Skill Development Programs

The Indian government has launched various skill development programs, such as:

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY): Aims to provide industry-relevant skill training to youth.

National Skill Development Mission: Focuses on creating a skilled workforce and promoting entrepreneurship.

Inclusive education is a transformative approach designed to integrate students with diverse needs into mainstream classrooms. It aims to provide equitable educational opportunities for all learners, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. In India, inclusive education is gaining momentum as part of a broader effort to create an equitable and accessible education system. This article explores the integration of inclusive education within the Indian education system, examining historical developments, current practices, challenges, and future prospects.

Historical Development of Inclusive Education in India

Early Initiatives

Historically, the Indian education system was characterized by a segregated approach to education for children with disabilities. Special schools and institutions catered to students with specific needs, reflecting a limited understanding of the benefits of inclusion. The primary focus was on segregation rather than integration.

Legislative Milestones

1. **The Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995:** Enacted in 1995, this act marked a significant shift by mandating equal opportunities and rights for individuals with disabilities, including the right to education. It emphasized the need for accessibility and accommodations in educational settings, although implementation challenges persisted.
2. **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009:** The Right to Education (RTE) Act extended compulsory education to children aged 6 to 14 years, emphasizing inclusive education by mandating that schools accommodate children with

disabilities. This act laid the groundwork for integrating children with diverse needs into mainstream schools.

3. **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016:** This act further reinforced the principles of inclusive education by aligning with international standards, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). It expanded the scope of inclusivity to ensure equal access to education, vocational training, and higher education.

Current Practices in Inclusive Education

Policy Framework

The Indian government has introduced various policies to promote inclusive education:

- **National Policy on Education, 1986** (revised in 1992 and 1998): This policy highlighted the need for educational institutions to be inclusive and accessible to all children, including those with disabilities.
- **National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005:** Advocated for a child-centered approach and the integration of diverse learning needs within the curriculum.
- **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** Emphasizes Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and aims to integrate vocational education from Grade 6, further supporting inclusive practices.

Implementation at the School Level

Inclusive education in practice involves integrating students with disabilities into regular classrooms with appropriate support. Key strategies include:

- **Individualized Education Programs (IEPs):** Tailored educational plans that address the specific needs of students with disabilities, including customized teaching methods and accommodations.
- **Assistive Technologies:** Tools such as screen readers, hearing aids, and speech-to-text software that support students with diverse learning needs.
- **Specialized Support Staff:** Inclusion of special educators, counselors, and therapists who provide additional support within mainstream classrooms.

Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Education

1. Infrastructure and Accessibility

Many schools, especially in rural areas, lack the necessary infrastructure to support inclusive education. Issues include:

- **Physical Accessibility:** Inadequate facilities such as ramps, accessible restrooms, and adapted classrooms.
- **Learning Materials:** Scarcity of specialized educational materials and resources for students with disabilities.

2. Teacher Training and Professional Development

Teachers often lack specialized training in inclusive education. Challenges include:

- **Insufficient Training:** Limited exposure to strategies for managing diverse classrooms and addressing individual learning needs.
- **Professional Development:** Need for continuous training and support to stay updated with best practices and new technologies.

3. Curriculum and Pedagogy

The traditional curriculum and teaching methods may not be suited to diverse learning needs.

Challenges include:

- **Rigid Curriculum:** Difficulty in adapting standard curricula to accommodate different learning styles and needs.
- **Assessment Methods:** Traditional assessment methods may not accurately reflect the abilities of students with disabilities.

4. Attitudinal Barriers

Negative societal attitudes and misconceptions about disabilities can hinder inclusive education. Issues include:

- **Stigma and Discrimination:** Prejudice against students with disabilities may lead to exclusion or marginalization.
- **Awareness and Sensitivity:** Lack of awareness about the benefits of inclusive education and the capabilities of students with disabilities.

Opportunities for Advancement

1. Strengthening Policy Implementation

To enhance inclusive education, there is a need for robust implementation of existing policies.

This involves:

- **Infrastructure Investment:** Allocating funds to improve school facilities and accessibility.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establishing mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of inclusive education policies and practices.

2. Expanding Teacher Training

Improving teacher training is crucial for successful inclusive education. Recommendations include:

- **Specialized Training Programs:** Offering professional development focused on inclusive teaching strategies and special education.
- **Collaboration with Experts:** Engaging with special education professionals and organizations to provide guidance and support.

3. Developing Inclusive Curricula

Creating flexible and adaptable curricula is essential for meeting diverse learning needs. Strategies include:

- **Curriculum Adaptation:** Designing curricula that can be modified to accommodate various learning styles and abilities.
- **Inclusive Pedagogy:** Implementing teaching methods that promote active participation and engagement from all students.

4. Promoting Awareness and Changing Attitudes Addressing attitudinal barriers requires:

- **Awareness Campaigns:** Conducting campaigns to educate communities about disabilities and the benefits of inclusive education.
- **Community Involvement:** Engaging parents, local organizations, and communities in supporting inclusive practices.

5. Leveraging Technology

Technology can play a significant role in inclusive education by:

- **Assistive Technologies:** Providing tools that enhance accessibility and learning for students with disabilities.
- **Online Resources:** Utilizing digital platforms to offer additional learning materials and support.

Case Studies and Success Stories

Several initiatives in India have successfully implemented inclusive education practices:

- **Vidya Vikas Academy, Bangalore:** Known for its inclusive education model that integrates students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms with support.
- **Inclusive Education Program by Rural Development Trust, Andhra Pradesh:** Focuses on creating inclusive educational environments in rural areas, demonstrating effective integration of inclusive practices.

Conclusion

Inclusive education represents a vital step toward achieving educational equity and social justice in India. While significant progress has been made through legislative frameworks and policy initiatives, challenges related to infrastructure, teacher training, curriculum adaptation, and societal attitudes remain. By addressing these challenges and leveraging opportunities for advancement, India can further its commitment to inclusive education, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to succeed in an equitable and supportive learning environment.

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