

**INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AT THE FOUNDATIONAL: STAGES THE
BENEFITS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:
NEW CHALLENGES FOR TEACHERS**

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Introduction

The education system in the entire world is changing and evolving constantly. Experts in Educational Sciences are directly involved in developing their own skills to be competent and able to meet the challenges of a socio-economic environment in a continuous process of change. Inclusive education is one of the most sensitive ongoing issues, because not all children enjoy an education experience that enables them to develop to their full potential. Children can change the world and education can change the way children perceive the world. Inclusion refers to all children, because inclusive education is one in which all children have access to quality education in an inclusive environment that provides three components:

The Indian Constitution guarantees equality, freedom, justice, and dignity to all individuals and mandates an inclusive society that comprises people with disabilities. An inclusive school aims to meet everyone's educational needs by having them supported by their peers and other members of the school community. The importance of inclusive education can be clearly evident through its benefits to students, teachers and the society at large. Some of the benefits of inclusion are listed below.

Goals of inclusive teacher education Inclusive teacher education has two aspects. The first one is preparation of teachers for inclusive education and the second one is teacher preparation that is inclusive in nature, though both are complementary. The goal of inclusive teacher education is to create a work in which all people are knowledgeable about and supportive of all other people. One of the most significant impediments to accomplishing this goal is teacher preparation at the pre-service level. At present the capacity of teacher education program to take care of disabled and disadvantaged children in inclusive setting is quite limited. To do justice to inclusive education and to provide it to the challenged learners in the manner

it was conceived, teacher education program has to be suitably strengthened incorporating relevant components.

- Children with disabilities demonstrate high level of social interaction with nondisabled peers in an inclusive setting compared to segregated settings
- Children with diverse abilities improve their social competence and communication skills in an inclusive setting
- Children with disabilities in inclusive settings often have more vigorous educational program resulting in improved skill acquisition and academic gains
- Normal children get benefit from improved instructional technologies in the classroom, as, children with diverse abilities will require the use of technology to help them learn and hence these can be utilized by the normal children when they are not required by the differentially abled children • All children are enriched by the opportunity in which they learn and care for each other and hence gain the right attitudes, skills and values needed for community living
- Inclusive education promotes the social value of equality
- Inclusive setting led to independent thoughts, positive competency and improved self esteem In the present scenario hence, we need schools that promote inclusive education, the wider dimension of social acceptance.
- all children mean “children with disabilities, gifted children, homeless children, children belonging to nomadic groups, children belonging to linguistic minorities, ethnic or cultural, children with HIV or belonging to any other vulnerable groups” per Salamanca’s Declaration (1994);
- quality education - means creating real opportunities to achieve success in the learning experience; in other words, the quality of education is not measured in terms of performance, graduation, infrastructure, technology and comfort, but the system capacity, the school and the teacher to create learning opportunities for every child;
- inclusive environment - which means that environment is welcome, protect and educate all children, regardless of gender, physical, intellectual, economic, linguistic or other characteristics (UNESCO). Inclusive education is one of the top challenges in today’s world, and whilst educational systems make efforts to become more inclusive, new teachers must be developed to be more inclusive in their future practice. University teachers involved in Education Studies arguably must address this in the theory and practice that they deliver on Teacher Training courses. Nowadays Romania is facing huge economic and political crises. The level of the economic stress is high, affecting both

adults and children. It is therefore appropriate to explore the conditions of inclusive education in Romania today and ask how far the current anxiety about children's rights is justified – and to ask ourselves: How can university teachers develop their own competencies to become truly inclusive? Is this theme a current pressing priority for their own training? These important questions were investigated in a university from Romania. The attitudes, opinions and lived experiences of inclusive education of future teachers were investigated and this research is focused on the opportunities created by listening to their opinions and the challenge is to harness their richness to produce better solutions. The vision of an expert in education from London

“Inclusive education is a process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners by increasing participation in learning and reducing exclusion within and from education” (UNESCO, 1994). This means that all children have the right to quality education that caters to their individual needs. Inclusion, in other words, is the educational practice of educating children with disabilities in classrooms with children who do not have disabilities. It means that all students, regardless of their abilities or deficiencies, will be included in mainstream education. Through inclusive education, all community members — teachers, students, and other functionaries – build a sense of belonging. The use of special schools or classrooms to separate kids with disabilities from students without impairments is rejected by inclusion. It is a process towards access, participation and achievement for all in education. In this Unit you will read more about this concept and develop in-depth understanding of inclusive education.

OBJECTIVES

After reading this paper, you will be able to:

- define inclusive education • explain the importance of inclusion
- describe the aims and objectives of inclusive education
- identify the principles of inclusive education
- summarize the problems of inclusive education
- differentiate among impairment, disability and handicap
- define various types of disability.
- differentiate the various strategies of inclusive education
- define concept of inclusive teacher education
- illustrate the goals of inclusive teacher education

Concept of Inclusive education:

Human beings, by nature, have considerable misgivings about others who appear to diverge significantly from them in one or more personality characteristics, regardless of whether these differences are bad or favourable. So, from the time immemorial, the exceptional children have a long history of being intimidated, harassed, isolated and segregated from the mainstream of the society. It runs against to the principles and philosophy of institutionalization, separation, or segregation, which were developed to meet the needs of constructing institutions and special schools for the care and teaching of children with special needs. Inclusive education is achieved by enrolling all of society's children in the same school. Here the school has to experience changes to include all of its students to be a part of it. So, inclusive education is the act of ensuring all children, regardless of their differences, have the opportunity to be in the same classroom as other children of their age and, as a result, have the best possible exposure to the curriculum. Inclusion has emerged as an educational reform in the education of children with disabilities that gained momentum since 1994. The concept of inclusive education conveys the message 'every one belongs to the school and that everyone is welcome to the school'. Over the last three to four decades, a variety of terms have been used for calling a halt to the institutionalization and isolation of exceptional children and directing resources toward educating them together with their non-disabled peers. The most often used terms are deinstitutionalization, normalization, least restrictive environment, integration, mainstreaming and inclusion.

Understanding Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is an educational philosophy and approach that seeks to provide equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their individual backgrounds, abilities, disabilities, or special needs. The core principle of inclusive education is to create learning environments where every student, regardless of their differences, can participate, learn, and thrive together. Inclusive classrooms are where diversity is celebrated, and individual differences are regarded as valuable assets, not roadblocks. Here, the aim is not just to teach tolerance but to revel in the symphony of life that students compose together. In this inclusive educational journey, each student becomes an essential part of the collective learning experience, creating a harmonious and enriching environment for all.

The Role of Teachers in Inclusive Education

In a classroom, children are like the vibrant beads, and teachers act as the thread that weaves them into a stunning necklace of captivating learning. Without proactive teachers, inclusive education would be a mare's nest.

Teachers do more than just share knowledge; they also care for students' feelings, encourage them to adapt, and help nurture their talents. Let's explore some key roles teachers play in inclusive education:

1. Creating an Inclusive Classroom Environment

The first step in inclusive education is setting the stage for an inclusive classroom. Teachers play a pivotal role in creating an environment where every student feels welcome, respected, and valued. This means using inclusive language, promoting empathy, and fostering a culture of acceptance.

2. Understanding Diverse Needs

Teachers must be knowledgeable about the diverse needs of their students. This involves identifying learning disabilities, behavioural challenges, and any other special requirements. Once identified, teachers can tailor their teaching methods and materials to meet these needs.

3. Differentiated Instruction

Inclusive education thrives on differentiated instruction. Teachers must adapt their teaching strategies to accommodate various learning styles and abilities. This may involve modifying lesson plans, using alternative assessment methods, or providing additional support.

Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Education

In the realm of inclusive education, where every student is unique in their own kind, teachers find themselves at the forefront of a noble mission. However, this journey is not without its share of challenges.

Picture a landscape marked by three towering peaks, each presenting its own formidable obstacle.

1. Lack of Resources

In the world of inclusive education, teachers often face a tough challenge – a shortage of essential resources. It's like trying to cook your favourite meal but missing key ingredients.

In this resource-scarce environment, teachers need to use their teaching and problem-solving skills wisely. Working closely with school administrators can be a smart move. Together, they go on a quest to find creative solutions, turning limitations into chances for success. It's a journey where creativity is their guide, helping them create clever plans that fill the gaps and make sure every student's unique needs are taken care of.

2. Teacher Training

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, not all teachers receive the comprehensive training they need to navigate the diverse and dynamic terrain of inclusive education. It's like setting sail without a map or compass, hoping to reach uncharted shores.

To tackle this issue, the path to inclusive education becomes an ongoing journey of learning and improvement. Teachers play the roles of both students and guides, navigating through the complex world of specialised teaching methods and strategies. They rely on continuous professional development programs and access to helpful resources like a compass and map, empowering them to gain the skills and knowledge they need.

3. Resistance to Change

Implementing inclusive education often encounters resistance akin to formidable fortress walls. These barriers aren't just constructed of bricks and mortar but are composed of scepticism and fear, erected by various stakeholders – parents, students, and even some educators.

To conquer this challenge, teachers need skills like a diplomat's tact and an advocate's enthusiasm. Good communication is like a bridge that connects different opinions. Teachers must become skilled at speaking about inclusion, clearing up doubts, and fostering understanding. They take the lead in promoting the many advantages of inclusion. It's like a mission where the power of words can break down even the toughest obstacles, paving the way for a brighter, more inclusive future for everyone.

4. Best Practices in Inclusive Education

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, we have given below the best practices and approaches that empower teachers and schools to create better learning environments for inclusive education:

1. Collaborative Teaching

Collaboration between general education and special education teachers is a cornerstone of inclusive education. This approach allows for the sharing of expertise and resources, ultimately benefiting all students.

2. Individualised Education Plans (IEPs)

Developing and regularly reviewing IEPs for students with special needs is essential. These plans outline specific goals, accommodations, and support services tailored to each student's requirements.

3. Peer Support and Peer Tutoring

Encouraging peer support and peer tutoring can create a more inclusive classroom atmosphere. Students learn from and support each other, fostering a sense of community and empathy.

4. Choosing the Right School

1. Embrace the philosophy of inclusive education.
2. Provide ongoing teacher training and professional development.
3. Offer a range of support services for students with diverse needs.
4. Promote a culture of diversity and inclusion throughout the school.
 - Lack of access to the mainstream: Only 4 to 5% of children with special needs out of 30 million have access to education. Unfortunately, so many schools do not cater to the needs of these children. Several factors contribute to the failure of inclusive education, including a lack of awareness, a lack of positive attitudes, and a lack of sensitivity on the part of teachers, classmates, parents, and community members.

Consequently, these children face discrimination.

- Lack of trained teachers: Teachers are not trained and unwilling to modify their teaching methods to accommodate children with special needs and other children.
- Large class size: Typically, there are 60 to 70 students in a class, which makes it difficult to provide individual attention to students, and even more difficult for teachers who are dealing with children who are special needs.
- Lack of child-centred and relevant Curriculum: The curriculum is rigid and does not offer many choices to the children. Moreover, the teaching-learning materials are inappropriate for children with and without special needs.

Conclusion

As we conclude our exploration of the teacher's pivotal role in inclusive education, we uncover a profound truth – teachers are the foundation of inclusive education. The roots of earlier special education efforts, such as placing exceptional children in residential institutions, special schools, and special classes, can thus be traced and seen as a repetition and reminder of earlier practices of isolation, segregation, and separation, which were prevalent in most societies for the care and education of exceptional or disabled children. The concept of integrated or inclusive education represents the latest trend in the provision of placement or alternative programs suggested in the field of education to the exceptional and disabled children.



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