

Disability-Inclusive Education Practices at Foundational Level- A Study on the Indian Context

D. Bindhu

Research Scholar
bindhuranjith11@gmail.com

Namreen Asif V.A

Research Scholar,
namreenasif@gmail.com

Chethanraj

Faculty
Institute of Management & Commerce, Srinivas
University, Mangalore
rchethan621@gmail.com

Abstract

Global commitments to the education of disabled children have resulted in progressive policy developments in India as well as an increase in the enrolment of children who have previously been dropped from the formal education system. This paper investigates disability-inclusive education practices in schools as well as various schemes provided by the Indian government for disabled children. It also considers how government policies benefit disabled children. The data was analysed using a detailed synthesis of recent literature from 2021 to 2023. The data on disabled inclusive education practises in India was gathered by visiting the Scopus online database, various published scholarly research articles, Government websites, UNESCO reports, etc. The current study examines the status of disabled education, infrastructure, and various policies pertaining to disabled education in India. As a result, inclusive schools must address the needs of all children in every community, and inclusive classrooms must be managed by the federal and state governments. With these questions in mind, this article delves into the concept of inclusive education, including its importance, challenges, and measures for implementing inclusive education in India.

Keywords: *Disability, Inclusive Education, Foundational level, Childrens.*

Introduction

Education is an effective instrument for social transformation that frequently promotes growing social movements. As a result, the disparity between several different categories of society is closing (Mikropoulos & Iatraki, 2023). Over the years, the educational environment in the country has changed dramatically, resulting in enhanced educational opportunities and practises. Inclusion of children with

special needs in educational institutions has become a primary service option since adopting UNESCO's Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education. Children with special needs (CWSN) will be an inherent part of that diversity in a school that strives to acknowledge the diversity and differences in the learning needs of its students. If the school system is organised to take into consideration such diversity, children and young people with special needs will not be represented or stigmatised. Although different people define inclusion differently, it is generally understood to mean the extent to which a school or community recognises and respects children with special needs as full members of the community at large (Nieminen, 2023). The children are actively involved in and welcomed by a mainstream school and community. Thus, inclusive education is concerned with the presence, participation, and achievement of all learners. Inclusive education means integrating disabled children in regular classrooms designed for children without disabilities (Tai et al., 2023). It is a socially just educational practice that promotes all children, regardless of physical, intellectual, emotional, or learning disabilities, to have equal chances at educational opportunities. Inclusive education is an effort to acknowledge and account for similarities among learners while also acknowledging differences and diversity among individuals. Inclusive education is not a reform of special education. It is the result of the need to restructure the public education system to meet the needs of a changing society. They go on to say that it is a system that benefits both typical students and students with special requirements (Nguyen et al., 2021). Their premise is that inclusive education is not just a feature of a democratic society; it is required for it to function. It is an attempt to meet each child's unique needs in a regular school setting. All children, regardless of disability, strive to participate in all aspects of school life (Morgan et al., 2023). The goal of inclusive education is to eliminate historical isolation within and outside of the school by enacting or changing legislation, policies, and educational management practices to promote educational system reorganisation and acceptance of all students regardless of socioeconomic status.

Distinctions between students can be explained as disability, gender, size, colour, or ethnicity, and disability is one of these distinctions that does not limit a person's strength and abilities (Deveci Topal et al., 2023). Differences are valuable and contribute to creativity, and it is through them that ideas are shared and experienced, according to inclusive education. In other words, rather than incorporating people with disabilities into existing frameworks, inclusion entails transforming systems to be inclusive of all people. Inclusive education expands the school's scope to include a broader range of students (Smith et al., 2023). The primary goal of the research is to gain a better understanding of the concept of inclusive education in the context of India.

Research Methodology

The secondary data was used for the study and the data was analysed using a detailed synthesis of recent literature from 2021 to 2023. The data on disabled inclusive education practises in India was gathered by visiting the Scopus online database, various published scholarly research articles, Government websites, UNESCO reports,

Inclusive Education in The Indian Context

In India, we have a rich cultural legacy of inclusive education, and the country has perpetually been and continues to be an inclusive society in the sense that a diverse range of cultural and religious beliefs coexist. The Sargent Report, published in 1944, was the first to advocate for the inclusion of disabled children in mainstream schools, and the Kothari Commission followed suit in 1964. Given this, progress has been slow, with special education categorization dominating until recently. The Equal Opportunities and Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act of 1995 was a comprehensive revolutionary piece of legislation that provided individuals who have disabilities with education and economic rehabilitation. It states that disabled children up to the age of 18 must receive free education in a suitable environment. The

government introduced the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). The purpose of this suggestion is to implement the 'universalization of elementary education' (UEE) in a mission mode, to deliver high-quality elementary education to all children aged 6 to 14. Inclusive education is a critical component of SSA's goal of achieving 'education for all' by 2010. Recent programmes have had only limited consequences. Around 30 million children are disabled in India, according to UNICEF's Report on the Status of Disability 2000. According to the Sixth All-India Educational Survey (NCERT, 1998), extracurricular education is required for 20 million of India's 200 million school-aged children (6-14 years). Even though the national average for gross school enrolment is over 90%, only about 5% of children with disabilities are enrolled. An estimated 25 million children in India are out of school (MHRD 2003 statistics, cited in World Bank, 2004), many of whom are marginalised due to factors such as poverty, gender, disability, socioeconomic status, and furthermore. As a result, the concept of inclusive education is undeniably relevant to our current situation, in which differences in religion, faith, gender, ethnicity, and ability are frequently viewed as a threat rather than a source of richness and diversity. Inclusive education advocates for school improvement in all dimensions to meet the educational needs of all children (Holland et al., 2023).

Characteristics of Inclusive Education

The main characteristics of inclusive education are as follows:

- 1.) Acknowledges that all children can learn.
- 2.) Acknowledges and respects differences in children; age, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, HIV & TB status etc.
- 3.) Enablers education structures, systems and methodologies to meet the needs of all children.
- 4.) Is part of a wider strategy to promote an inclusive society.
- 5.) Is a dynamic process that is constantly evolving (Aljedaani et al., 2023).

Need for Inclusive Education in India

According to UNESCO (1994), regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective in combating discriminatory attitudes, building an inclusive society, and achieving education for all. Furthermore, UNICEF (2003) estimates that "70% of children with disabilities, including those with mild mental retardation, can attend regular schools provided the environment is designed to be accessible and the institution is willing to accommodate them" in the foreword to a report on inclusive education in India.

- 1) RTE stipulates that all children aged 6 to 14 receive mandatory and free schooling. The primary goal of RTE-SSA is the universalization of elementary education (UEE). The Constitutional (86th Amendment) Act, which established free and compulsory elementary education as a Fundamental Right for all children aged 6 to 14, has aided UEE's goal even further. As a result, inclusive education has become an essential facet of SSA.
- 2) More than 90% of disabled children in India live in rural areas. The number of special schools and integrated education programmes is limited, and they cannot serve all disabled children. As a result, inclusive education is required to ensure that all disabled children have equal educational opportunities.
- 3) Disabled children of various categories can be found throughout the country. As a result, the disabled child must rely on the general school for education. As a result, these children must be included (Chinere et al., 2023).

Educational Schemes Favouring Students with Disabilities

Union Minister for Human Resource Development Dr Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' informed about the government's efforts to ensure education for students with disabilities (Mattison et al., 2023). Here is a list of government programmes available to students with disabilities:

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan went into effect in 2000. The primary goal of this programme is to achieve universal elementary education for all. New schools are built in areas where such facilities do not exist. Existing school infrastructure is strengthened by the addition of new classrooms, restrooms, drinking water, maintenance grants, and school improvement grants. Additional teachers are appointed as needed. Teachers receive extensive training to help them build their capacity. Teaching-learning materials and a support structure are provided to schools at the cluster, block, and district levels. The SSA ensures that every child with special needs, regardless of the type, category, or degree of disability, receives an appropriate education. As a result, it is also known as the disability-inclusive programme. It follows a "zero rejection" policy, which states that no child is excluded from the educational system. The following areas of inclusive education are covered by this programme i.e.

- Early detection and identification,
- Functional and formal assessment,
- Educational placement,
- Aids and appliances,
- Support services,
- Teacher training,
- Resource support,
- Individual educational plan,
- Parental training and community mobilization,
- Planning and management,
- Strengthening of special schools,
- Removal of architectural barriers,

Research

Monitoring and Evaluation

This programme provides Rs 1200/- per child with a disability per year to be spent on assistive devices, materials for alternative learning formats, and anything else that helps them be included in the mainstream classroom. (<http://ssa.nic.in>). Assistive devices are considered a "right" of disabled children and can be obtained for less than Rs 1200. However, SSA provides these devices through collaboration with external programmes. A disabled child can obtain these devices by meeting the requirements of outside programmes, such as a doctor's note. Another important aspect of SSA is that each district has the freedom to plan for educating CWSN based on the number of children identified and the resources available to effectively implement inclusive education (Dovari, 2023).

Samagra Shiksha

Samagra Shiksha is an integrated school education scheme launched in 2018-19 by the Ministry of School Education and Literacy. It covers children with special needs from classes 1 to 12. The provisions of the RTE Act, 2009 govern and regulate the Scheme. The programme meets a variety of educational needs for disabled children, including

Identification and assessment camps

Provision of aids

Appliances

Assistive devices

Teaching-learning materials (TLMs)

ICT resources like JAWS & SAFA

Transportation

Escort and scribe allowances

Stipend for all girls with special needs (Thomas, 2023).

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009

Students with disabilities are entitled to free compulsory elementary education and schooling under this programme. Section 3(2) of the RTE Act emphasises the importance of primary education for all disabled children (Mondal & Islam, 2023).

Community School Programme by UN (CSP)

UN agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, and the ILO are assisting community school programmes to achieve UEE. This programme is being carried out in the following states: Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. This programme is based on Salamanca principles and UNESCO guidelines.

Main objectives of this programme are

- a. To bring effective school management and protection of the child right
- b. To address the educational needs of the working children, children with disabilities and adolescent girls,
- c. To increase the enrolment and retention of the school aged children and mainly girls (Batalla, 2023).

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

To promote the cause of UEE, the Pre-school Education Project was implemented as a school readiness programme in tribal and rural areas. In the NPE, 1986, was renamed Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) to reflect the holistic nature of child development and to give it high priority through Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). This programme assists in relieving girls of the burden of sibling care, allowing them to attend school. The Central Government, State Government, various local bodies, panchayats, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have all taken steps to implement this scheme.

Important policies relevant to provision of ECCE in India are:

1. National Nutrition Policy (1993) - this policy gave priority to children of high risk below 6yrs,

2. National policy on Empowerment of women (2001) - this policy made provision of childcare facilities and crèches at work place for working women,
3. Convention on Right of the child (1992) - This convention prepared a National Charter for children. National commission for Children has also been set up. Main objective of this commission was to safeguard/protect the rights of children,
4. National Plan of Action for children (2005) - this plan of action includes universalisation of ECCE. It ensures care, protection and development opportunities for children below 3 yrs. and pre-schooling opportunities for 3-6 yr. old children,
5. National Curriculum Framework (2005)- it also emphasizes on two years pre-schooling

According to a DPEP evaluation, girls' enrolment and school attendance are higher in the DPEP States with ECCE centres than in those without. According to research findings, children with disabilities are not found in Anganwadi's, and workers are not trained to handle their needs. This finding indicates that the government is not focusing on ECCE for CWSN. As a result, the government should reform the ICDS programme by incorporating an inclusive policy. It will aid in the early identification and intervention of disabled children. Due to a lack of technical knowledge on identification and assessment, District Rehabilitation Centres have not made significant progress in ECCE. To address this shortcoming, DRCs should collaborate with the primary health care system rather than working in isolation. Similarly, primary healthcare workers are unaware of ECCE skills. It is critical to include ECCE practical skills and knowledge in the curriculums of medical, nursing, and health workers. To ensure the success of inclusive policy, ECCE programme implementers and primary health care personnel should collaborate (Shaik, 2023).

District Primary Education Project (DPEP)

The Government of India implemented DPEP in 1994, with World Bank assistance. DPEP focuses on districts with female literacy rates that are less than average. This programme covers 176 districts across 15 states. This programme benefits approximately 60% of the country's child population. Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) was formally incorporated into the DPEP in 1997. This programme collaborates with IEDC, other government programmes, and non-governmental organisations to include more children with disabilities in regular schools (www.unicef.org/rosa/inclusive). Ind.pdf).

Main objectives of DPEP are given below-

Increase the enrolment and retention of children between 6-14 years.

Promotion of adult literacy.

Quality improvement in primary education.

Ensuring improvements in classroom process.

Provision of decentralized academic support.

Capacity building of institutions.

Development of skills and competencies amongst teachers.

To realize above objectives the DPEP includes following provisions, i.e.

In service training of general teachers for early detection of children with disabilities.

In-service training of general teachers for early assessment of children with disabilities.

In service training of general teachers for using aids meant for children with disabilities.

Developing and providing appropriate infrastructural facilities in schools.

Opening new schools wherever necessary.

Community mobilization (Khanna, 2023).

National Programme for Rehabilitation of persons with Disability (NPRPD)

The National Programme for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities was launched at the state level in 1999. The NPRPD programme includes both community-based and institutional-based rehabilitation approaches. This program provides services at four levels: Gramme Panchayat, Block level, District level, and State level. At the Gramme Panchayat and Block levels, a community-based rehabilitation approach is being implemented. At the district and state levels, an institutional-based rehabilitation approach is used. Two community-based rehabilitation workers are assigned to each Gramme Panchayat to raise community awareness about the importance of cleanliness and a sanitary environment in preventing disability. Community-based rehabilitation (CBR) workers also screen at-risk children (prenatal and postnatal) and expectant mothers to prevent disability. They raise awareness about disability prevention and empower people with disabilities. CBR workers also counsel and advise the community, people with disabilities, and their parents on ways to reduce disability incidence. At the block level, two Multipurpose Rehabilitation Workers (MRWs) work. MRWs' functions include providing basic rehabilitation services (such as heat therapy and physiotherapy), performing simple repairs on assistive devices, and referring people with disabilities to appropriate educational, health, and vocational training institutions. To provide better services to people with disabilities, MRWs should be given multipurpose kits. To provide better services, MRWs should collaborate with personnel from health, education, and vocational institutions.

District centres offer specialised services such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, audiological evaluation, corrective surgery, and so on. At the district level, the primary goal is to provide educational services and vocational training to people with disabilities. Each state establishes one resource centre to provide all types of specialised rehabilitation services to all categories of disabilities. 90% of total service costs are incurred at the grassroots level (Gramme Panchayat and Block level). The primary goal of NPRPD is disability prevention and timely intervention so that minor ailments do not lead to major disabilities (National Policy For Persons with Disabilities, 2006)

Challenges Faced by Stakeholders

Teachers, schools, and administrators are key stakeholders in inclusive education, as are parents of children with physical and intellectual disabilities, as well as the local community. Adequate academic and administrative support is essential for the successful inclusion of disabled children in general schools. Simply enrolling these children will not achieve inclusion. Respecting each child's needs is a significant challenge for teachers and administrators. The following are the primary challenges that stakeholders involved with inclusive face:

Teachers

Many teachers are unprepared to teach children with disabilities and complain that they need more time to do so. Teachers are found to lack the necessary attitude, skills, and competencies to deal effectively with children with various special educational needs. The number of skilled and trained teachers available to support inclusive practices is insufficient to meet the needs of various types of disabilities.

School & Administrators

The majority of schools in India are inadequately designed, and only a few are equipped to meet the special needs of students with disabilities. Some consider the lack of disability-friendly transport services and inaccessible buildings to be far more serious issues than social prejudice and negative attitudes. Aside from that, an architectural barrier is a significant impediment because school buildings lack facilities such as ramps, accessible toilets, and so on. In terms of school administration, rigid curriculum and teaching methodology act as a barrier. It is difficult to provide specialised materials and methods in a regular school setting. The curriculum lacks the necessary adaptability to meet the needs of children with disabilities. There are few developmentally appropriate teaching-learning materials available for both disabled and non-disabled children. In a limited way, the teaching-learning process addresses children's individual learning needs. In summary, there is a lack of physical facilities and inclusive infrastructure for those with disabilities, a lack of pre-service and in-service teacher training to "address the learning needs of all children, including those who are marginalised and disabled," a lack of pedagogical research for effective teaching in inclusive settings, a lack of inclusive culture and inclusive practises in schools, and a lack of "knowledge base about various impairments... and disabilities." point to the urgent need to rethink educational attitudes, organisational structures, curriculum, and pedagogical practises to guide a transformation towards the inclusion of all children.

Parents

Most parents want the best possible care for their children. They don't even know how to deal with their wards' behavioural issues. Families lack sufficient information about their child's specific disability, its effects, and the impact on their child's capacity. This frequently results in a sense of hopelessness. Parents may be concerned that their child will be mocked by other children. Parents of disabled children may prefer the protective special class to the large regular class, where their child may not receive adequate attention from the teacher. It is difficult for them to obtain appropriate services and programmes to meet the needs of their child. There have been instances where parents of children who do not have special needs were concerned that their child would 'behave' in an unusual way by being around children who do.

Community

Children, parents, families, teachers, and education officials all live in communities. To promote inclusive education, there has been a lack of community involvement and partnerships between government agencies and non-governmental organisations. According to UNESCO (2010), public attitudes are a barrier to equal education for people in India. According to studies, negative attitudes towards people with disabilities can lead to low expectations, which can lead to fewer learning opportunities. The provision of resources and community participation in identifying and getting involved in (Munyaradzi et al., 2023).

Suggestions

Implementing inclusive education necessitates a paradigm shift, necessitating changes in the following areas: attitudes, policy, and classroom-level interventions. Suggestions are laid out as practical functions at the macro (government policy/legislation), meso (education system), and micro (school/community) levels of implementation, which are used in the Inclusive Education Best Practices Matrix to indicate which level of the system needs to take responsibility for change. They are accompanied by supporting information about best practices, features of effective programmes, and the consequences of each recommendation's significance in advancement towards inclusion.

The importance of integrating inclusive education into the larger arenas of education reform and social change cannot be overstated. Individual activities to integrate disabled children will not be sustainable as long as the surrounding environment is not supportive of inclusion. As much as possible, all recommendations should include advocacy and behavioural change components, as these are critical and, in fact, maybe the most difficult barrier to overcome on the road to inclusion.

All suggestions, and indeed all focus on the disability sector, should be guided by the disability policy, which demonstrates a strong commitment to including people with disabilities in all the programmes.

Conclusions

Many factors influence the success of inclusive education in any context. Teachers are an important component in ensuring the quality of students' inclusion in schools and teacher education institutions. Preparing teachers with essential knowledge and skills for inclusive education necessitates the participation of all stakeholders. Many of the obstacles to full and successful inclusion implementation have been identified in the literature. Inclusion without 'adequate' general school preparation will not produce satisfactory results. Issues concerning infrastructure, curriculum modification, and educational materials must be addressed. Building inclusive education capacity must begin at the community level, with activities such as community involvement and mobilisation. To summarise, including children with disabilities in education is a difficult task that requires mass community mobilisation and involvement, as well as the provision of appropriate responses to a wide range of learning needs of special children in both formal and non-formal settings.

Reference

Aljedaani, W., Krasniqi, R., Aljedaani, S., Mkaouer, M. W., Ludi, S., & Al-Raddah, K. (2023). If online learning works for you, what about deaf students? Emerging challenges of online learning for deaf and hearing-impaired students during COVID-19: a literature review. *Universal access in the information society*, 22(3), 1027-1046.

Batalla, E. T. (2023). Competence of Entrants and Accounts on the Implementation of Senior High School Pre-Baccalaureate Maritime Program in Negros Occidental. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*, 4(7), 2452-2481.

Chiner, E., Gómez-Puerta, M., & Cardona-Moltó, M. C. (2023). Digital inclusion in Spanish mainstream and special schools: Teachers' perceptions of Internet use by students with intellectual disabilities. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 51(2), 195-204.

Deveci Topal, A., Kolburan Geçer, A., & Çoban Budak, E. (2023). An analysis of the utility of digital materials for high school students with intellectual disability and their effects on academic success. *Universal Access in the Information Society*, 22(1), 95-110.

Dovari, S. (2023). Problems And Prospects of Girl Child Education Through Sarva Siksha Abhiyan-A Study. *EPRA International Journal of Economic and Business Review (JEER)*, 11(8), 65-68.

Holland, K., Haegele, J. A., Zhu, X., & Bobzien, J. (2023). "Everybody Wants to be Included": Experiences with 'Inclusive' Strategies in Physical Education. *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities*, 35(2), 273-293.

<https://vikaspedia.in/social-welfare/differently-abled-welfare/policies-and-standards/national-policy-for-persons-with-disabilities-2006>

- Khanna, G. (2023). Large-scale education reform in general equilibrium: Regression discontinuity evidence from india. *Journal of Political Economy*, 131(2), 549-591.
- Mattison, R. E., Woods, A. D., Morgan, P. L., Farkas, G., & Hillemeier, M. M. (2023). Longitudinal trajectories of reading and mathematics achievement for students with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 56(2), 132-144.
- Mikropoulos, T. A., & Iatraki, G. (2023). Digital technology supports science education for students with disabilities: A systematic review. *Education and Information Technologies*, 28(4), 3911-3935.
- Mondal, A., & Islam, N. (2023). The Right to Education Act, 2009 in India after a decade: appraising achievements and exploring unkept promises. *Education 3-13*, 51(1), 87-106.
- Morgan, P. L., Woods, A. D., Wang, Y., Farkas, G., Hillemeier, M. M., & Mitchell, C. (2023). Which students with disabilities are placed primarily outside of US elementary school general education classrooms? *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 56(3), 180-192.
- Munyaradzi, M., Arko-Achemfuor, A., & Quan-Baffour, K. (2023). An Exploration of Comprehensive Student Support Systems in Technical Vocational Education and Training Colleges for Students with Disability. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 47(2), 106-122.
- Nguyen, A., Tuunanen, T., Gardner, L., & Sheridan, D. (2021). Design principles for learning analytics information systems in higher education. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 30(5), 541–568.
- Nieminen, J. H. (2023). Unveiling ableism and disablism in assessment: a critical analysis of disabled students' experiences of assessment and assessment accommodations. *Higher Education*, 85(3), 613-636.
- Shaik, N. (2023). Transforming Teaching and Learning in Early Childhood Care and Education During COVID-19 in a Poor Community of the Cape Flats, South Africa. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 51(5), 791-800.
- Smith, C., Tani, M., Yates, S., & Dickinson, H. (2023). Successful school interventions for students with disability during COVID-19: empirical evidence from Australia. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 32(3), 367-377.
- Tai, J., Mahoney, P., Ajjawi, R., Bearman, M., Dargusch, J., Dracup, M., & Harris, L. (2023). How are examinations inclusive for students with disabilities in higher education? A sociomaterial analysis. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 48(3), 390-402.
- Thomas, F. B. (2023). Status of Implementation of Inclusive Education Schemes for Students with Intellectual Disabilities in the State of Kerala. *Journal of Psychology and Political Science (JPPS) ISSN 2799-1024*, 3(03), 26-35.