Research Paper

Inclusive Education: Challenges and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

A modern strategy for schooling children who have learning difficulties and disabilities alongside usually growing kids under one roof is known as inclusive education. It attempts to support every student in realising their full potential by bringing them together in one classroom, irrespective of their weaknesses and strengths. Providing equal access to education for all students is the main challenge facing educational institutions worldwide, both in industrialised and poor nations. Children with impairments have significantly more frequently enrolled in schools during the last twenty years for a variety of reasons, including favourable laws and the expanded availability of aids and appliances, among others. Yet, there hasn't been much focus on the effectiveness of the education and learning that children with disabilities receive. Still the primary concern is on assimilation into a mainstream system, which is filled with many challenges. The inclusive education includes transforming the environment of the conventional educational system with focus on action learning, practical curriculum, appropriate evaluation techniques, multilevel teaching approaches, and improved attention to varied student needs. This paper concerns with challenges and opportunities in efforts towards country's inclusive education.

Keywords: *Children with disabilities, Inclusive Education, India, Challenges, Opportunities*

Indiia's population increased to 1.21 billion people in 2011, according to census data, being the second-most populous nation in the world as a result. There are around 26 million people in the country with disabilities or around 2.1% of the entire population. After gaining independence, Indian Government has taken numerous initiatives to educate children with disabilities. The government's efforts, though, have not yet had a big impact. However, a sizable portion of children with disabilities continue to be educated outside of the formal education system. The new method of educating students with people with average talents, with a variety of skills, and learning difficulties in a consistent manner is known as inclusive education. It attempts to fulfil every child's educational need who are most at the risk of marginalisation and exclusion. The implication is that all pupils, both those with as well as those without disability, together will be able to learn through access to educational facilities in the community and schools that have a sufficient infrastructure of aid services. It is possible only with a flexible educational system that includes the

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requirements of a variety of pupils and changes itself to fulfil those needs. The goal of inclusion is to guarantee that all learners, including individual with disabilities, from varied households and cultures, with a variety of interests and learning styles, are included in the learning process. According to inclusive education, all students will participate in the main stream of instruction, regardless of their talents and shortcomings. In India, it is clear that inclusive education in regular schools has risen to the top of the nation's agenda, where the prime concern on children and people with special needs has increasingly expanded. In 2015 the Prime Minister announced that the word viklaang should be replaced with divyaang in official nomenclature.

Historical Background
The idea of inclusive education was initially presented during a UNESCO conference in 1994 on special needs in education held in Selamenta, Spain. By removing obstacles from the learning environment as well as inside it, inclusive education is a strategy that takes into account the unique needs of every learner. It comprises the child receiving particularly developed support while they attend an age-appropriate class at their local school. (UNICEF, 2007). The Jometin World Conference (1990) held in Thailand declared goal 'Education for All'' and stated that Education opportunities must be accessible to everyone that would match their basic learning requirements. The right to an education extends to all children, regardless of their level of disability. Thus, many developing nations began to change their policies in order to encourage the inclusion of underprivileged pupils in regular classes.

Inclusive Education in India
The Indian government has introduced a number of programmes and initiatives to offer variety of services for the purpose of educating children with disabilities. Indian Education Commission stressed the value of educating children with impairments in 1966. The Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) scheme was one of the first official initiatives the GOI launched in 1974, aimed to give disabled children equal opportunities in general education settings and support their retention. Both the NPE (1986) and the POA (1992) highlighted the importance of integrating children with special needs in other groups. A professional development programme was created to address the requirements of students with impairments under the Rehabilitation Council of India Act of 1992. The District Primary Education Programme, introduced in 1994, likewise adopted the inclusive education ethos. In this programme, extra emphasis was paid to the inclusion of kids with mild to mid-range difficulties. The Persons with Disability, (2006) Act, which has been acknowledged as a significant turning point in the delivery of educational and many other services to persons who have disabilities, has clarified a set of guidelines that the government, private and civil society must follow to ensure a dignified existence and encouragement for their career paths. The most recent development guarantees that all children between the age of 6-14 has the right to free and compulsory education. It was passed in 2009 and is known as The Right of Children for Free and Compulsory Education. One such initiative, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was introduced in 2001 with the objective of providing primary education to everyone. Three essential elements of Universal Elementary Education are the access, enrolment, and retention of all the children between 6 to 14 years of age. In accordance with the SSA's zero-rejection policy, regardless of the kind, degree, or severity of their impairments, all Children with Special Needs (CWSN), are guaranteed gateway to a meaningful learning. The idea of inclusive education has grown in recent years to encompass all children who could be at a disadvantage, not just those with impairments. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF-2005), which underlines the worth of every child and provides all students with the opportunity to experience dignity and the

confidence to succeed, was developed as a result of this larger perspective of curriculum. It has also developed a defined framework for inclusive education. Name of the IEDC was also changed to "Inclusive Education of the Disabled at the Secondary Level" in 2009. The IEDSS programme gave every student with a disability who had finished 8 years of elementary education the chance to finish 4 years of secondary school in an inclusive setting. Beginning in 2013, this programme is now covered under the Rastriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA). For young kids to socialise and gain confidence, it's crucial that they attend conventional schools. In this regard perspective, the Indian government has expedited the new inclusive education programme to meet the 2010 'Education for All' (EFA) goal. The number of children with impairments enrolling in ordinary schools increased significantly, according to figures derived from the most recent statistics made available by Ministry of Human Resource Development.

Objectives
1. To understand the concept of Inclusive Education.
2. To examine various challenges and opportunities faced by India towards imparting Inclusive Education.

Challenges
- **Teacher Attitude:** Negative attitude and lack of support from teachers act as hurdle towards inclusive education. Inflexible styles of teaching and classroom management prevents from meeting diverse needs of learners.
- **Lack of Resources:** Architectural barriers lacked the basic units. These facilities include wheelchair accessibility, proper lighting, simple ramps and materials necessary to provide adequate education for learners with special needs.
- **Untrained Teachers:** The key human resource for achieving inclusive education is the educator. The lives of the pupils who are unique and have learning difficulties are significantly impacted by their competence and viewpoint. Regrettably, the most significant barriers to inclusive education can often be found in the teacher's abilities and attitudes.
- **Attitudinal Barrier**: Physical and emotional bullying is a serious learning barrier that isolates and eliminates inclusion chances for kids with disabilities.
- **Inadequate Curricula:** One of the main obstacles to the expansion of inclusive education is curriculum. It occurs because a wide range of diverse learners' needs are not satisfied. Its centralised design and rigid methodology make it challenging for instructors to experiment with new methods or adapt it to local conditions in many circumstances
- **Poor Organisation of the Education System:** The majority of decisions are taken at the top levels, and management continues to place more emphasis on ensuring that employees follow the rules than on ensuring that high-quality services are provided.

Opportunities
- Every school and the entire Indian educational system must adopt an inclusion policy (NCF, 2005). Schools must transform into places where students are taught to be lifelong learners, and they must make sure that all students, particularly those with disabilities from underrepresented groups and those living in challenging circumstances, benefit as much as possible from this crucial area of education.
- Encourage acceptance of individual diversity and foster a culture of belonging and respect.

- Children have diverse motivations to study in classrooms with their classmates since they have different capabilities and abilities.
- Provide opportunities for students to share their own experiences and perspectives.

CONCLUSION

Now every child has access to education thanks to the Right to Education Act of 2009, regardless of their caste, religion, aptitude, and other factors. Building an inclusive society through an inclusive strategy is crucial. By doing this, we have disproved widely held notions and created a fresh set of fundamental presumptions. A way of educating kids with disabilities is only one aspect of inclusion. In spite of the severity and kind of their handicap, every child is emphasised as a valuable society member who is able to contribute to society. All students should be able to engage in all elements of the classroom equally or nearly equally as part of a good inclusive education. In order to overcome the challenges, community leaders, parents, and teachers must work together. This will enable better, more inclusive schools to be built. Focusing on an inclusive approach, the Indian government is working to strengthen the nation's educational system. By increasing community understanding of human rights issues, the difficulties can be overcome also by highlighting success stories of handicapped people in inclusive settings and in life beyond school. To make learning enjoyable for all kids, we must create an inclusive learning environment that is inviting, learner-friendly, and helpful. This will help kids feel that they are a part of the education process rather than being treated differently. Hence, inclusion emerged as a practical response to the issue of how to educate such pupils most productively.

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Conflict of Interest
The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.