
SIGNIFICANCE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND MEASURES FOR ITS EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

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Abstract

Providing instruction to all students in traditional classrooms while meeting their varied needs, regardless of their physical and mental capabilities, backgrounds, skills, or inadequacies, is known as inclusive education. Reaching out to all students, regardless of their physical or mental limitations, emotional disturbances, or other deficiencies, is a priority. All learners are given the best possible environment and resources to help them reach their full potential. This essay discusses the importance of inclusive education in the contemporary environment. Discussed include the need of inclusive education as a fundamental human right, enhancing social adjustment, ensuring equality in a democracy, and maximising the potential of special-needs students. Measures for the successful implementation of inclusive education are detailed, including teacher training, curriculum adjustment, attitude changes among all stakeholders, child-centered teaching, networking with other organisations, and infrastructural upgrades. Additionally, the report conducts a critical analysis of existing studies on inclusive education and looks at their key conclusions in light of the current investigation.

Keywords: Inclusive education, Special children.

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Introduction

Inclusive education involves imparting education to all children in mainstream schools and catering to their diverse needs irrespective of their physical and mental abilities, background, talents or deficiencies. Efforts are made to reach out to all the learners whether physically handicapped or mentally challenged, emotionally disturbed or deficient in any other manner. Provisions are made for giving all learners the most appropriate environment and facilities to maximize their potential. It is based on the concept of equity as needs of those learners, who have not been able to get appropriate environment and infrastructure for teaching learning till now are being focused upon.

Special schools for students with disabilities were established in India in the 1880s. The first school specifically for blind children opened its doors in Amritsar in 1887, while the first school for the deaf opened its doors in Mumbai in 1883. Special schools began opening up across the nation around 1900. Following Independence, Article 45 of the Constitution allowed for the provision of education for kids with special needs. The state should attempt to offer free and compulsory education for all children under the age of fourteen, according to this article. All kids, including those with special needs. With the introduction of the "Integrated Education for Disabled Children" programme in 1974, there was a trend away from separate schools for the disabled and towards integration. This programme, however, fell short of being truly inclusive since it concentrated on integrating students with mild to moderate impairments into regular classrooms rather than on integrating kids with severe disabilities. Children with modest impairments should attend mainstream schools, while those with moderate to severe disabilities should attend segregated schools, according to the National Policy of Education (1986).

The Equal Opportunities and Rights of People with Disabilities Act of 1996 promoted integrating disabled children into regular education settings. Children with disabilities have the right to receive education in a free and suitable setting until they are 18 years old, according to Chapter 5 of this Act. Additionally, all resources, including transportation, books, scholarships, and other aid, should be made available by the government for the education of these kids. All children between the ages of 6 and 14 have the legal right to free and required education under the Right to Education Act (2010). Children with impairments are included, and the Act specifically emphasises the educational rights of such children. According to the history of inclusive education, there has recently been a paradigm shift away from special needs students receiving separate education and towards their inclusion in regular classrooms.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the relevance of inclusive education in the present scenario.
2. To enlist the measures for effective inclusion of disabled children in mainstream schools.
3. To critically analyze the recent research studies on inclusive education.

Relevance of Inclusive Education in the Present Scenario

1. Social compatibility

If segregation is practised from an early age, normal kids are more likely to be biased against disadvantaged kids and have trouble integrating with them later in life. Also children with disabilities get used to living in an isolated environment exclusively in the company of their disabled peers and later have problems in adjusting to the whole society. On the other hand, inclusive education helps in social compatibility and acceptance of people with disabilities by the community.

2. Economic benefits

As per Census records (2011) there are 78,64,636 children with disabilities in India . As per UNESCO report 'State of the education report for India 2019- Children with disabilities', three - fourth of the children with disabilities aged five years and one - fourth between 5 to 19 years do not go to any educational institution.

At present, separate schools and infrastructure available to cater to the needs of disabled are highly inadequate. Establishing separate schools to provide education for disabled children will involve a lot of expenditure in terms of constructing buildings, providing infrastructure, providing salaries for teachers and special equipment for the disabled. After making certain changes to the current infrastructure, it would be extremely desirable from an economic standpoint to set up the education of children with disabilities in a regular school.

3. Self actualization of disabled children

When disabled children study in a separate school, the standards of expectations from them are not too high and they get a restricted range of experiences. This may lead to an inferiority complex and loss of confidence in these children. On the other hand, in inclusive education disabled children have the same experiences as their normal peers, face the same challenges and are able to reach their maximum potential.

4. Basic human right

As human beings, children with disabilities have the fundamental human right to be a part of the normal society. Excluding disabled children from the regular mainstream schools amounts to marginalizing them and taking away their right to live and learn with other members of the society. Isolating them from normal children is unethical from humanitarian point of view. Thus Inclusive

education is imperative to fulfill their fundamental human right to be included as an active member of the society.

5. Provision of equal opportunities in a democracy

Providing equal opportunities to all citizens is a major characteristic feature of a democratic country like India. Segregating or isolating disabled children into special schools is against the principles of a democracy, as it does not provide equal opportunities to the disabled children.

Measures for Inclusive Education

At school level, the following measures can be taken to include children with special needs in mainstream schools:

1. Deciding the action plan

Initially, it is desirable to assess the present situation in context of children with special needs. After a review of the infrastructure available and the practices being followed by the school, appropriate plans can be formulated to cater to the needs of the special children.

2. Identification and inclusion of children with special needs from an early age

Problems of children with special needs should be diagnosed in early childhood, so that their needs can be catered to in an inclusive school in an appropriate manner.

3 Availability and accessibility

Schools should not only be available but also accessible to the disabled. Transport facility should be provided. Also lifts, ramps and broad doors should be there to make the classrooms accessible to the disabled.

4. Orientation and training of teachers and other staff

Pre-service and in-service training should be provided to teachers so that they are well equipped to cater to the special needs of the children. Other staff members should also be trained to have a sensitive and affectionate attitude towards these children.

5. Allocation of funds

Government should allocate more funds for promoting inclusive education by providing appropriate infrastructural facilities, learning materials and teaching aids for the disabled students.

6. Appointment of special educator

A special educator qualified and trained to cater to the needs of special children must be appointed. The special educator can not only take care of the special children on a one to one basis but also provide the desired help to the school teachers to deal with these children.

6. Remedial classes for children with special needs

As it is not possible for the teachers to cater to the specific needs of disabled children in a regular classroom, it is desirable that remedial classes should be provided to these children either by the special educator or the subject teachers. This will help them a lot in coping with the other children.

7. Low student - teacher ratio

The teacher student ratio should be kept low so that teachers can provide individual attention to students of different mental levels and abilities. Extra attention and support from the teacher is required for children with disabilities to help them cope with the rest of the class.

8. Positive attitude

Children with special needs should not be ridiculed. Teachers, parents and peers should treat them with respect. A welcoming attitude would go a long way in developing their self confidence.

9. Inclusion in class activities and specific measures

Teachers should provide them equal opportunities and include them in classroom activities. Interaction with other students should be encouraged so that they don't feel isolated. Teachers

should take specific steps for students with low vision and hearing problems such as making them sit in the front row, speaking clearly and loudly and using appropriate teaching aids.

10. Provision of appropriate infrastructure and resources

School should ensure that architectural barriers are not there. Also books in Braille, specific instructional material and teaching aids for mentally retarded and physically disabled children should be made available along with the regular infrastructure. Provision can be made for clay modeling, handicraft and instrumental music for those students with loco-motor difficulties or visual impairment.

11. Flexibility in curriculum

Activities in curriculum should be modified for the children with special needs by including multi-sensory teaching learning materials and activities to cater to the specific needs of these children.

12. Modifications in pedagogy

Methods of teaching should be changed to encourage active participation of all students. Cooperative learning methods may be adapted to provide peer support for the children with special needs. Project method, manipulation of materials and apparatus and use of teaching aids should be encouraged to provide multisensory experiences for the children as they learn better through concrete experiences.

13. Assessment techniques

Different set of question papers may be used for those with mental disorders as they may not be able to understand the questions in written form. Question paper may be presented in pictorial manner. Writer should be provided to Blind Students and extra time should be provided to those students with physical disabilities.

14. Support of other agencies

Support can be sought from voluntary organizations, special schools and parent volunteers to enable the school to cater efficiently to the diverse needs of these children. Help may be obtained in terms of finances, equipment or organization of remedial classes by volunteers. School teachers can be trained by resource persons from Special schools.

15. Inclusive environment

An inclusive attitude should pervade the school environment. Catering to the needs of the special children is not the responsibility of the special educator or school counselor alone. All teaching and non teaching staff as well as parents should be included in promoting inclusive education.

Critical Analysis of Researches on Inclusive Education

Walsh (2018) investigated the methods that educators should use to successfully integrate students with special needs into their classes. These techniques included focusing on each child individually by making individualised plans for them, ensuring that children with special needs actively participate in class activities, and working together with other instructors to explore ways to meet the needs of unique kids.

In Ireland's ordinary schools, King and Ryan (2019) looked into the social growth of kids who had general learning difficulties. They discovered that by being integrated into regular classrooms, these kids with general learning difficulties gained in their social development.

Research by Mngo and Mngo in 2018 on Teachers perception of inclusion showed that more experienced teachers with some training were more supportive of inclusive education. The less experienced teachers with no training in special education were less enthusiastic about inclusive education and doubtful about their ability to deal with students with disabilities. They suggested that regular in-service training programs should be organized for teachers in special education to

deal effectively with children with special needs and equip them with effective inclusive classroom teaching strategies.

Madan and Sharma (2013) have given guidelines for preparing the teachers, parents and school students for accepting the children with special needs. Bringing about basic infrastructural changes and a resource room for children with special needs has also been recommended. At least a few regular school teachers should undergo specialized training to work with children with special needs.

The national longitudinal transition study conducted by Wagner, Newman, Cameto and Levin in 2006 concluded that children with disabilities benefited in general education classroom as they showed less disruptive behaviour and lesser absenteeism.

Walton and Majid 2001 studied the academic achievement of students with disabilities in inclusive and traditional settings. Their research study showed that inclusive education had a positive impact on the academic achievement of students with disabilities. Students with mild disabilities had an equally good or in many cases even better academic experience compared to the traditional educational settings.

Conclusion

An analysis of the researches in the past two decades lead to the following findings:

1. There is improvement in social skills of children with special needs and better social development compared to segregated educational settings.
2. Students with special needs show better academic achievement in inclusive settings rather than traditional settings.
3. Teacher training has a great impact on the success of the inclusive education program.
4. A Whole School approach needs to be adapted for inclusive education to be successful. Not only the teachers but also the parents and normal peers need to be prepared to accept the children with special needs.
5. Appropriate infrastructural changes are also required for achieving successful inclusion. Not only Ramps, lifts and disabled friendly toilets but also a special resource room for such children should be available.

The measures recommended in this study match with the findings and suggestions of the previous research studies. It is recommended that further research studies should be carried out in the Indian schools to investigate the problems being faced in inclusion of children with special needs. Then only these children would be able to get their basic human right of being included in a mainstream school and reach their maximum potential.

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