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## An Overview of Inclusive Education in India

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**Abstract:** Almost 63.6% of Indian population still lives in rural areas with minimum wages barely fulfilling their minimum living expenses. There are various social and economic Stata still exists and due to less availability of nutrition, the ratio of disabled is high. Millions of children are unable to go schools and many of them are marginalized with dimensions such as poverty, gender, disability, and caste. In present scenario, the role of inclusive education is very important in the inclusive and sustainable development of country. Various education policies came in this direction starting with the centrally sponsored scheme for Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) in 1974; many more efforts are still needed for the creation and maintenance of quality inclusive campuses and thus the inclusive India. Keeping these in view, this article discusses the concept, importance and challenges of the inclusive education in the Indian context. What has been done and what measures are still needed to develop an inclusive education system that leads to an inclusive society.

**Keywords:** Inclusive Education, Persons with disability, Inclusion etc.

Inclusive education means to provide quality education for all regardless of their disability, social and economic status by catering their diverse requirements with supportive common learning environment. Students are supported to learn by equal participation and contribution in all activities of the schools. Inclusion is a way to design and develop our institution, programs, activities, teachers and supportive staffs for collective participation of all students without any fear disrespect and humiliation. It is carried out in an inclusive platform where learners from various abilities and backgrounds learn together. Learners can use the institutional facilities e.g. libraries, gym, performance theatres, music rooms, cafeterias, playgrounds etc. At the same time, the common learning environment should provide individual learning needs and promote a sense of belonging among the learners, and ensure the progress of appropriate social and academic goals. The moral standard for inclusive education is to provide education with maintaining the respect, dignity, diversity, human rights and values with mutual responsibility. Inclusion means the human essence without categories, genetic pattern, cast creed or abilities. All humans should be nurtured intellectually, socially mentally and physically. Inclusive education is being studied internationally for success in higher education. [Chantelle Day](#) et al<sup>1</sup> studied empirically the engagement and success of young adults carers in higher education. He performed an empirical case study examining the educational experiences of 18–25-year-old carers and found that the financial assistant is beneficial in carers engagement, retention and success in higher education. [Roxanne Fin](#) et al<sup>2</sup> studied the role of pedagogical diversity on parallaxes of competence towards more inherently inclusive school. The research reveals that child-centered pedagogy supports a more inherently inclusive school. [Anabel Morina](#)<sup>3</sup> analyzed the role of faculty member for inclusive education of student teachers. The paper concluded that teaching student teachers involve being consistent and acting as a role model, by being coherent and an inclusive faculty in the university classes. The Study throw lights on how universities should teach with a view to promote lifelong learning in which all students feel welcome. Neha B. Upadhayay et al<sup>4</sup> studied the learning outcomes of children with disabilities in Pakistan by taking household survey in four administrative units. In terms of learning outcomes of children with disabilities, they saw a small gap between children with and without disability. In 2017, UNISEF published the way to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) recognition of the right to inclusive education for all persons with disabilities<sup>5</sup>. The report defines Inclusive Education as “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.” The report suggested that states should act on compulsory, free primary education for all children and removing any forms of discrimination that stop people with disabilities from getting an education with reasonable accommodation. Sally Lindsay et al<sup>6</sup> studied qualitatively and descriptively by taking a purposive sample of 13 elementary school teachers who have experience in teaching children with ASD within two cities in Ontario, Canada. Their main recommendations for successfully including children with ASD in mainstream classrooms are: (1) advocating for resources and essential training; (2) tailored teaching methods; (3) teamwork within the school; (4) building a rapport with parents and students; and (5) building a climate of acceptance within the classroom through disability awareness, education and sensitivity training. Derrick Armstrong et al<sup>7</sup> reviewed the progress of inclusive education internationally and said it is by choice not by chance. They conclude that the idea of inclusion continues to provide an opportunity in education and society in general, to identify and challenge discrimination and exclusion at an international, national and local level. [Mel Ainscow](#) et al<sup>8</sup> reviewed the way

of developing inclusive education systems of developed and developing nations. This paper argued that leadership practice is a crucial element in gearing education systems towards inclusive values and bringing about sustainable change. They concluded that the organizational culture and leadership is crucial in fostering inclusive cultures. Susie Miles et al<sup>9</sup> reviewed the history of education of all and inclusive education; conflicts and opportunity. They concluded that offering a re-conceptualization of the relationship between education for all and inclusive education, argues for greater collaboration and synergy between these currently parallel initiatives. It is a challenging task to prepare institution and classrooms for inclusive education. We have to develop the acceptance for all among students, teachers and educators belonging to diverse social, economic, cultural and regional groups. The various education policies and reservations in education increase the ratio of physically disabled and socially/economically weaker sections. With time, the acceptance of these sections enriched.

The education system of the nation plays an important role in the development of any nation. Inclusive education is paramount for the development of quality education to all citizens, because under inclusive education, all types of physically & mentally handicapped, economically weak and socially backward and highly intelligent students are given equal environment under one roof. Inclusion is the medium of education by which the socio-economic and physical diversity of the student ends the obstacle in the way of his getting education. Like reservation in services<sup>10</sup>, reservation in admission<sup>11</sup> in educational institution in India has contributed significantly to social and economic inclusion. When reservation in admission<sup>11</sup> was implemented in educational institution in India, it immediately created a sense of grudge between different communities, but over the time people started studying and working together, thus increasing inclusion. Today at least children of every class study together, which is very important for inclusive development of our country. The Right to Education Act 2009<sup>12</sup> has played an important role in incorporating inclusive education in the Indian education system. In addition to the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009<sup>12</sup>, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan<sup>13</sup>, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act 2016<sup>14</sup> have contributed and with the New Education Policy 2020<sup>15</sup> are going to play an important role in the development of inclusive education. The results of 76th round of National Sample Survey 2018<sup>16</sup> was alarming. It was found that among persons with disabilities of age 7 years and above, only 52.2% were literate, of age 15 years and above, only 19.3% had highest educational level as secondary and above. Percentage of persons with disabilities of age 3 to 35 years, who were ever enrolled in ordinary school, was only 62.9%. It was suggested that tremendous effort is needed to integrate children with disabilities into the mainstream of education, as their participation in education is very low. There is a great need for inclusive education in India because in addition to physical disability, economic social inequality is also crucial and generates bias and conflicts in the name of language, caste, place, gender and culture. In 2022, the World Inequality Report<sup>17</sup> came out, in which the inequality prevalent in India was worrisome. It is said in the report that 22% of the country's national income is with the top 1% of the people and 57% of the national income is with the total 10% of the people. The tuition and accommodation expenditure of private Indian higher institutions is too high to be borne by economically weaker sections despite government scholarship. This is detrimental for the inclusive education and thus in inclusive growth of the country. In this scenario, the inclusive education is possible only in Government funded institutions. To reduce this disparity sincere efforts are necessary to open more government funded inclusive campuses across the country. We need to make our existing universities technically efficient as well. For this, there is a great need of government assistance so that the physically challenged, mentally challenged, economically, socially backward children can sit and study together, and universities are able to meet their specific needs. Sufficient funds should be always with the universities for the creation and sustainability of inclusive environment and culture in campuses.

Now the need for inclusive education becomes very important so that everyone can get equal opportunities of education. In the National Education Policy 1986<sup>18</sup>, more emphasis was laid on the development of inclusive education and it was said that apart from the socio-economically backward, the opportunity of education should also be ensured for the disabled, the participation of women in education should be ensured. After independence, various government policies are milestones in the development of Inclusive education system although a lot remains to be done for the development of inclusive education in India. The government is making significant efforts for inclusive education in the new education policy 2020. We hope that we will be successful in making a fully inclusive country as implied in Government slogan "Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas".

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