

## PROMOTING INCLUSION PREVENTING EXCLUSION THROUGH INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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### **Abstract**

One of the greatest problems the world is facing today is the growing number of persons who are excluded from the meaningful partnership in the economic, social, political and cultural life of their communities. Such a society is neither efficient nor safe. Inclusive Education can be seen as a stepping stone for a future of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all children, youth and adults through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. Inclusive education, seeks to address the learning needs of all children, youth and adults with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. It implies all learners, young people-with or without disabilities being able to learn together access to common preschool provisions, schools and community educational setting with an appropriate network of support services. Inclusive education, thus lays the foundation to an inclusive society accepting, respecting and celebrating diversity. Inclusive education has grown from the belief that education is a basic human right and that it provides the foundation for a more just society. All learners have a right to education, regardless of their individual characteristics and any other disparities. The constitution of India applies uniformly to all citizens of India whether or not they are disabled or non disabled. The constitution provides the right to education to all citizens including the disabled. Government of India has enacted many acts for disable children. The main objectives of those acts are to promote education among disable children, to provide every child with disability, free of cost, special books and equipment needed for education. So, inclusive education is the means for all those people who are lag behind from main stream school system due to some reasons to achieve education. Through inclusive education their exclusion can be removed.

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## Introduction

Education is seen as a human right in today's context. As it concerns with reform in education, it goes without saying that it is related to restructuring of existing education system. In a democratic country like ours every child has the right to education. All children should be given an equal opportunity to learn to the limits of their capacities. Every child should get education is the aim of nation. Inclusive education is the step towards providing opportunity to all children to come and learn in schools. No child is deprived of education due to some disabilities. We have to devise a classroom which welcomes all children with and without disabilities, a classroom which meets the special educational and other related needs of children. Education is usually defined as the process which seeks to promote the maximum development of every boy and girl in terms of his unique nature and needs. It is this view of education which makes us dedicated not only to the education of the average child but also devoted to the fullest development of every child regardless of the degree to which he may be different. Children differ from one another in a variety of ways. They differ from one another physically, intellectually, socially and emotionally. Generally, such differences are of little importance. At times, however, some children deviate from the 'average' or 'normal' to such a degree that they need special attention. These are exceptional children. Exceptional children need special education. Special education concerned with the identification of and provision for children who are unlike the average, whether this be in the regular classroom or in some combination of both. Inclusive education is an approach to educating students with special educational needs.

## Concept of Inclusive Education

In looking up a dictionary definition of the term "inclusion" we are directed to the verbal form, 'to include' which is defined as: 'to have as a part; contain in addition to other parts or to put in with something or someone else; take in or consider as part of a group. (Longman's English dictionary). In education, 'inclusion' refers to the placement and education of children with disabilities in regular education classrooms with children of the same age who do not have disabilities. The underlying premise of inclusion is that all children can learn and belong to the mainstream of school and community life. Inclusion is a basic value that extends to all children. Inclusion is the provision of services to students with disabilities in their neighbourhood schools with necessary support services and supplementary aids for both children and teachers. It means

meeting the needs of children with disabilities for a free and quality public education in the least restrictive and most effective environment. The goal of inclusion is to ensure that all children, regardless of any individual differences they may have, are fully included in the mainstream of life. Inclusion does not mean 'dumping' children with special needs into the regular classroom. We have to accept their diversity, respect their individuality, create opportunities for their participation in all activities of the school, and provide support to both children and teachers so that children can realize their full potential and teachers will be able to improve their performances.

Inclusion gives a message:

“Everyone belongs to the school  
Everyone is welcome to the school”

Inclusive education is a commitment to seeing education as fundamental to development both of individuals and of societies. Inclusion is rather a democratic ideology as it advocates that all children should be included in the education system. The movement for Education for All acts as a gateway towards inclusive education. Based on the democratic ideology that all students can learn and have the right to be educated alongside their same age peers to the maximum extent possible a 'zero-reject' policy exists so that typically no student is excluded from the general education class and other integrated environment.

### **Need for Inclusive Education**

Inclusive education is a human right, it is good education and it makes good social sense. All children have the right to learn together. Children should not be devalued or discriminated against by being excluded or sent away because of their disability or learning difficulty. There is no legitimate reason to separate children for their education. Children belong together-with advantages and benefits for everyone. They do not need to be protected from each other. All children need an education that will help them develop relationships and prepare them for life in the mainstream.

Inclusive schooling is the practice of including everyone-irrespective of talent, disability, socioeconomic background, or cultural origin in supportive mainstream school and classrooms where the needs of all students are met. By educating all children together, children with disabilities have the opportunity to prepare for life in the community, teachers improve their

professional skills, and society makes the conscious decision to operate according to the social value of equality. Including handicapped and non handicapped children in the classrooms has the potential to create an appropriately demanding environment for the handicapped children –an environment that will facilitate continued development. Inclusive classrooms create the opportunity for handicapped children to imitate the behavior of non handicapped models. When these positive effects are contrasted with the negative effects of exclusion, the benefits of inclusive schools become even more pronounced.

In our society we have people from different cultural, religious and ethnic background. Our people must accept, respect and appreciate each other's background. Thus our children must be educated accordingly right from their primary education level. For this, we need schools that promote wider social acceptance, peace and cooperation. Inclusive schools promote acceptance, respect and support among children with and without disabilities. Inclusive education makes good social sense. Segregation teaches children to be fearful, ignorant and breeds prejudice. All children need an education that will help them develop relationships and prepare them for life in the mainstream. Only inclusion has the potential to reduce fear and to build friendship, respect and understanding. (CSIE Report, 2002).

One important reason for including all children in the mainstream is that it is the fair, ethical, and equitable measure to do. Inclusive education promotes the value of equality. But separation is not equalizing. Thus all students should be a part of the educational and community mainstream. All children whether they are disabled or not have the right to education, as they are the future citizens of the country. Inclusive education is a human right.

Thus, Children should not be devalued or discriminated against by being excluded or sent away because of their disability. The child with disability should have the same range of opportunities, experiences and conditions of everyday life that are typically available to non-disabled children in the community and that appropriate development and educational programs should be provided to enable the disabled child to share in, contribute to and benefit maximally from everyday life. It seems that the only way we can be sure that disabled children will have the same range of educational opportunities and experience as non disabled children is to have their education provided for in the same setting, i.e., inclusive education.

## **Policies concerning Education of children with Disabilities in India**

Inclusive education has grown from the belief that education is a basic human right and that it provides the foundation for a more just society. All learners have a right to education, regardless of their individual characteristics or difficulties and any other disparities.

The constitution of India applies uniformly to all citizens of India whether or not they are disabled or non disabled. The constitution of India and the educational policies envisaged in post-independent India reflect a perseverance and commitment to the fulfillment of UEE. In 1968, the National Educational Policy followed the commission's recommendations and suggested the expansion of educational facilities for physically and mentally challenged children, and the development of an 'integrated programme' enabling challenged children to study in regular schools.

Two decades later, the National Policy on Education(NPE1986) stressed the removal of disparities in education, while attending to the specific needs of those who had been denied equality so far (MHRD,1986). Education of children with disability has been part of the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 and the Programme of Action (1992). In 1987, to fulfill the provisions for disabled children in the NPE, the government declared that, the education of children with motor handicaps and other mild handicaps will be in common with that of others.

A policy of inclusion needs to be implemented in all schools and throughout our educational system. The participation of all children needs to be ensured in all spheres of their life in and outside the school. Schools need to become centers that prepare children for life and ensure that all children, especially the differently abled children from marginalized sections, and children in difficult circumstances get the maximum benefit of this critical area of education (NCF,2005).

The last decade viewed the passing of three major legislations on disability by the Government of India. The Rehabilitation Council of India Act (1992), Persons with Disability Act (1995), and National Trust Act (1999) have been enacted and implemented both at the central and State level.

The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCERT 2000) has recommended inclusive schools for learners with special educational needs by making appropriate modifications in the content, presentation and transaction strategies, preparing teachers and developing learning friendly evaluation procedures.

### Legal Provision

The constitution provides the right to education to all citizens including the disabled.

Different acts have been passed by governments which are concerned with disability. The act is significant in the sense that it requires the appropriate government and local authorities to ensure that every child with a disability has access to free education in an appropriate environment till he/she attains the age of 18 years.

### **Rehabilitation council of India Act (1992)**

In order to serve the purpose of inclusion, disabled children must be provided with support from trained and qualified professionals. In fact, disabled children have the right to be served by trained and qualified rehabilitation professionals. Until 1992 a large number of institution were running a variety of training programs based on different models. There was no uniform standard. There was no control. So the Government of India decided to regulate all such training of rehabilitation professionals. For this purpose the Govt. of India enacted the Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992 (RCI, Act, 1992).

The main objectives of the RCI Act are:

- a) To constitute the Rehabilitation Council of India as a statutory body.
- b) To regulate the training of rehabilitation professionals.
- c) To promote research in rehabilitation and special education.

### **The Persons with Disabilities Act (PWD) (1995)**

It is the result of proclamation, which was made at Beijing during December 1992 to launch the Asian and Pacific Decade of the Disabled Persons, 1993-1992, which was convened by the Economic and social Commission for Asian and Pacific Region. India was a signatory to the said proclamation and therefore, it became obligatory for India to pass a suitable legislation for the benefit of the disabled. The Persons with Disabilities (Equal opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act was passed in 1995.

The PWD Act (1995) provides:

- Ensure that every child with a disability has access to free education in an appropriate environment till he attains the age of 18 years.
- Endeavor to promote the integration of students with disabilities in the normal schools.
- Promote setting up of special schools in government and private sectors for those in need of special education, in such a manner that children with disabilities living in any part of the country have access to such schools.

- Endeavor to equip the special schools for children with disabilities with vocational training facilities.

Act spells out the responsibility of the state towards the prevention of disabilities, protection of rights, provision of medical care, education, training, employment and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities. It also provides for creating a barrier-free environment for persons with disabilities; to remove any discrimination against persons with disabilities in the sharing of development benefits; to counteract any situation of the abuse and exploitation of the disabled persons; to lay down strategies for comprehensive development programs and services for equal opportunities for disabled persons and for their integration into the social mainstream.

**Article 29(2)** of the constitution provides that no citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the state or receiving aid out of state funds... This also means that every child has the right to receive education in an educational institution of his choice which is preferably the neighborhood school. This also implies that every child with a disability has the right to receive education in inclusive setting and the authority concerned cannot deprive the child of his right unless there are compelling reasons to do so.

**Article 45** of the constitution directs the state to provide free and compulsory education for all children (including the disabled) until they attain the age of 14.

**Article 21A, 86<sup>th</sup> amendment** of the Constitution of India has made education a fundamental human right for children in the 6-14 age group thereby making it mandatory for all children to be brought under the fold of education. This includes children with disability.

#### **Other efforts by government**

**Integrated Education Model.** This model of education was developed in India in mid 1950's, named Integrated Education Model. Integrated Education provides for common education for all children, whether disabled or non disabled. In recent years the principle of Integration has been guidance for reforms in the field of disability care and special education. Its goal is to help the child, develop such skills and such confident self concept that are necessary for satisfactory participation in ordinary social life and work.

**Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC)** The government launched this scheme in December, 1974 to provide educational opportunities to CSWN in regular schools, to facilitate their retention in the school system, and to place children from special schools in common schools.

**District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)** This scheme had a powerful impact on the integration of the disabled children. The main advantage of this scheme is that it takes care of all the areas identification, assessment, enrolment, and provision of appliances to total integration of disabled children in schools with resource support, teacher training and parental counseling.

**Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan** To uphold its commitments for achieving Education for All (EFA) by 2010, the Government of India had launched Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2000-2001. Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan gives prime importance to good quality education to all children including those with disabilities. It has a special mandate to serve children with disabilities at the district level. The scheme has a provision that Rs.1200 to be spent on every child with disability identified with the district.

#### **National/Apex-level Institutes set up**

- National institute for the Visually Handicapped(1982),Dehradun
- National Institute for the Orthopedically Handicapped(1982),Calcutta
- National Institute for the Mentally Handicapped (1984),Hyderabad
- Ali Yavar Jung National Institute for the Hearing Handicapped(1983),Mumbai
- National Institute of Rehabilitation, Training and Research(1984),Orissa
- Rehabilitation Council of India(1986),Delhi
- Institute for the Physically Handicapped(1976),Delhi

Most of the educationally developed countries like USA, Canada, Australia, UK, Norway and Finland, etc. have already made necessary policies by conducting plenty of discussions including the people like teachers, researchers, parents, politicians and special children too but above all social participation is a vital role to play in Inclusive Education.

#### **Conclusion**

Every child with and without disability has enormous potential for growth. A disabled child also has the potential to be extremely successful in independent community living and career of his



choice. He can find jobs for himself and live as a self supporting, and socially competent member of society. The ability of the child with disability to succeed in the community is directly related to the amount of training and support that he receives while he is in school. Inclusive school is the appropriate setting to help these children realize their full potential. Inclusive education is a process of removing barriers and enabling all students, including previously excluded groups, to learn and participate effectively within general school systems. It is possible to provide education for all with mutual cooperation among teachers, students, parents and governments. Today's children are tomorrow's citizens. If we take care of the present generation, the future will become good. Inclusive schooling is needed because of its belief on social value of equality. We have to teach students by example that despite differences, we all have equal rights. In contrast to the past experiences of segregation, inclusion reinforces the practice of the idea that differences are accepted and respected.

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