

# Status of Inclusive Education for Visually Impaired Students of India in 20<sup>th</sup> Century

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**Abstract:** *Every individual is unique and are born with some special abilities. Education is a powerful force which helps people to realize their potentials and nurture their inner abilities. When an individual is substantially limited in terms of one or more major life activity it is called disability. Like all other impairments, visual impairment disables a person to a great extent. In fact children with visual impairment face a number of challenges in acquisition of formal education which is considered as the most powerful weapon to overcome disability. In 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is of utmost importance for the society to bring all children regardless of caste, creed or abilities under the same umbrella educationally. This necessitates inclusive educational systems where general education is provided to all students through high-quality instructions, intervention, proper infrastructure and support. With the help of secondary data, the present study aims to explore the status of inclusive education in India, for visually impaired students. The objectives of the present study are to understand the concept of inclusive education in 20<sup>th</sup> century; know the difference between inclusive education and special education; enumerate the problems of inclusive education in India; and suggest ways and means to solve such problems. From an extensive review of related literature it has been found that it is difficult to have proper, functional inclusive set-ups in India. The major problems are lack of infrastructure, trained teacher, funding etc. However such education is important for visually impaired students because in India about 2.21% of the total population is disabled, out of which 19% are visually impaired. Nobody likes to be treated differently. Inclusion increases self confidence and helps these children to easily blend into the core of the society.*

**Keywords:** Inclusive education, Visually Impaired, Special Education.

## 1. Introduction

Every individual should have equal access to all the benefits offered by the society. Today education has become a fundamental right. It is a powerful weapon to initiates upward mobility in social structure. It enables to bridge the gap among different sections of the society. According to new estimates by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), 73 million children of primary school age were out of school in 2010. The figures were 110 million in the mid 1990s. Thus access to education is on the rise. Inclusive system of education guarantees education for all. In such set up all students can be equally involved in learning process regardless of caste, creed or abilities with proper infrastructure. Provision of inclusive education involving students with disabilities and impairment is based on the faith that those with impairment should not be dependent on specialized services alone. They too should benefit from educational activities, practices and resources that are otherwise available to all. Impairment, terms related to inclusive education, is most commonly used today. Impairment encompasses illness, injury or complexities leading to difficulty in the way our body work (Dosh & Vikaar). Among all senses, impairment to the sense of sight i.e. visual impairment has considerable impact on teaching-learning in the classroom because everyone relies significantly on this sense for learning. Teaching visually impaired students with all other students increases their self confidence and helps them to blend into the core of the society. The Indian Constitution also assures all Indians the right of equality and also guarantees provision of equal access to opportunity. With regard to the Salamanca Statement in 1994 (UNESCO), a large number of developing countries including India have started reformulating their policies to promote the inclusion of students with disabilities into mainstream school.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

A number of research studies have been conducted to know the status of inclusive education in 20<sup>th</sup> century India. Some of them are:

Sing, J.D. (2016), in an article titled "Inclusive Education in India- Concept, Need and Challenges" concluded that it is essential to build an inclusive society. Inclusion is more than a method of educating students with disability. To meet the challenges, the involvement and cooperation of educators, parents and community leaders is vital for the creation of better inclusive schools. Therefore, inclusion arose as a good solution to the question of how to educate these children more effectively.

Bishaw, K. (2013), conducted a study on "The practice of inclusive teaching to disabled students: with particular reference to Visually Impaired Students in English Language Teaching (ELT) settings". The study revealed that inclusive education, which is believed to create equity of education to children with disability, is applied in different situations and contexts globally. The result of the study indicated that both teachers and visually impaired students were found to have positive attitude towards inclusive teaching-learning process. Sanjeev, K. & Kumar, K. (2007), in a journal titled "Inclusive education in India" concluded that in India teacher training in special education is imparted through both face-to-face and distance mode. Different kind of teacher training programmes is implemented under SSA. Capabilities of teachers required to deal Childrens with special needs are out of mainstream schools.

Rao, I. (2003), in an article titled "Inclusive education in Indian context", concluded that Inclusive education must respond to all pupils as individuals, recognizing individuality as something to be appreciated and respected.

Volume 9 Issue 7, July 2020

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Inclusive education responding to special needs will thus have positive returns for all pupils. It is the school system of a country that must be adjusted to meet the needs of all its children.

### 3. Objectives

The objectives of the present paper are to:

- 3.1. Understand the concept of inclusive education in 20<sup>th</sup> century;
- 3.2. Know the difference between inclusive education and special education;
- 3.3. Enumerate the problems of inclusive education in India; and
- 3.4. Suggest ways and means to solve such problems

The present study is based on secondary data.

#### 3.1. Concept of inclusive education in 20<sup>th</sup> century

Inclusion, as way of integrating children with special needs into regular schools, gained prominence in India since 1970 (IEDC, 1970). Inclusion is a term which evolves commitment to educate each child to the maximum extent. Inclusive education is a kind of approach where every student irrespective of case, gender, religion, race, ability can learn together with proper infrastructure under the same roof.

To achieve the goal of Universalization of Elementary Education, the Government has introduced few initiatives like Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), Minimum Level of Learning Programme, District Primary Education Programme and Non-formal education Programme. Hence, education of children with disabilities has also become an integral part of these national initiatives for obvious reasons as:

- Education for all is never possible without including each and every child, even the children with Special Needs.
- Schools in the village as well as urban areas have become the natural choice keeping in view its nearness, as every child has to attend the nearest school irrespective of all the odds.
- Issue of human rights prevents children with special needs from segregation and hence they are included in the mainstream school.

Inclusion is a broad concept in 20<sup>th</sup> century arena. It refers to the opportunity for persons with disabilities to participate fully in all of the educational, employment, consumer, recreational, community and domestic activities that typify every society (ILSMH, 1994). Salamanca framework for action, article No.53 states that "The success of the inclusive schools depends considerably on early identification and assessment and stimulation of the very young child with special educational needs" (Rao, 2003).

#### 3.2. Difference between inclusive education and special education

Special education nurtures segregation while inclusive education promotes integration.

Inclusive education is a kind of education system where each child irrespective of all odds can learn together in mainstream school whereas Special education is a separate system of education for disabled children outside the mainstream education. Inclusive education involving students with disabilities is based on the faith that these students need not depend on specialized services alone, they can benefited from mainstream education with all other students. In contrast Special education is based on the assumption that children with disability have some special needs, which cannot be met in mainstream school.

It has been observed that class teacher with some special training can teach in inclusive setting. However Special Educators are needed to teach in special education programme. Inclusive schools are most cost effective while special schools with its separate infrastructure, teachers etc. become expensive. Teacher effectiveness in including all in the learning process is much more in inclusive set up than in special schools. Curriculum and methodology of inclusive school is child centered and constructivist while that of special school are restricted to special children only. Thus in inclusive schools students gets equal opportunity for participation while in special setting school limited opportunity for participation.

The Rights of inclusive schools are recognized and actualized. Here formal planning is required to conduct the whole process. Most of the special schools are charity oriented. Planning is done according to the student's ability. Therefore an inclusive set up is much better than Special Schools.

#### 3.3. Problems of inclusive education in India

The main problems of Inclusive education are as follows:

**Inadequate trained teacher:**

Many teachers do not feel equipped to teach children with special needs and complain that they need more time to deal with them. Teachers also lack necessary attitude required to deal effectively with children with special needs.

**Problem of parents:**

Sometimes even parents don't know how to deal with the behavioral change of their child. At times families do not have proper knowledge about the child's particular disability. Parents of a child with disability may prefer a protective special school where their child gets proper attention of the teacher. On the other hand parents of a child without any special needs are also afraid that their child might behave in an odd manner by being with children with special needs.

**Poorly designed schools:**

Majority of schools of India are poorly designed, only very few are equipped to meet the needs of disabled students. But

the number of those schools is not enough to introduce inclusive education nationally.

#### Issues of equity:

Introducing inclusive setting in schools raises equity issues for the cultural or ethnic groups, mostly in rural area. Most people still discriminate others on the basis of race, caste and ability. As a result it is a challenge to make all learn under one roof.

#### Procurement of funds:

Ensuring the much needed funding essential for any reformation can be challenging. One of the main components of inclusive school is proper infrastructure. Without proper funding this is near to impossible.

#### Lack of knowledge of institution:

Many institutions are not well equipped internally to support and nurture inclusive education. They simply do not have the knowledge as well as expertise.

### 3.4. Ways and means to solve such problems

- Government should take more initiatives for Universalization of inclusive education.
- Both government and private agencies should donate fund for development of inclusive education.
- All institution should give proper training to the teachers.
- Government should arrange various awareness programmes for parents.
- Every teacher of inclusive schools should have proper knowledge of child psychology.
- Curriculum should be flexible and child centric.

### Some initiatives taken by Government for implementation of Inclusive education

#### The Constitution of India:

The constitution of India clearly states in the Preamble that everyone has the right to equality of status and opportunity. Article 41 of the Directive Principles supports the right to work, to education and to public assistance in certain cases including disablement. Article 45 commits to the provision of free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years.

#### The National Policy on Education, 1986 (NPE, 1986):

The objective to be achieved as stated in the NPE, 1986 is "to integrate the physically and mentally handicapped with general community as equal partners, to prepare them for normal growth and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence".

#### The Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Act, 1995:

PWD Act (1995) stressed the need to provide free of cost education to all children in an appropriate environment till they are 18 year old and further emphasize their right to measure like: transport facilities to students with disability, supply of books, uniforms, grants of scholarship to the students with disability etc.

#### Article 21(A):

The Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act, 2002 inserted Article 21(A) in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of 6 to 14 year as a fundamental right.

## 4. Conclusion

In this way, if we try to plan and implement the policy of inclusion with utmost sincerity and determination, then it can prove quite fruitful and viable policy for achieving the national targets of 'education for all' and 'equal educational opportunities' besides serving the interest of all types of children within the limited means and resources of the country. Such education can break the vicious cycle of poverty and exclusion. Disabled children can stay with their families and communities instead of being in the isolation of special schools. It will surely improve the quality of education for all and helps to overcome discrimination and promotes universal inclusion.

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