



Inclusive Education: Meaning, Concept & Objectives

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Abstract

Inclusive education means all children in the same classrooms, in the same schools. It means real learning opportunities for groups who have traditionally been excluded – not only children with disabilities, but speakers of minority languages too. The school and classroom operate on the premise that students with disabilities are as fundamentally competent as students without disabilities. Therefore, all students can be full participants in their classrooms, in the local school community and in the societies they live in. Much of the movement is related to legislation that students receive their education in the least restrictive environment (LRE). This means they are with their peers without disabilities to the maximum degree possible, with general education the placement of first choice for all students (Alquraini& Gut, 2012). Successful inclusive education happens primarily through accepting, understanding, and attending to student differences and diversity, which can include physical, cognitive, academic, social, and emotional. This is not to say that students *never* need to

spend time out of regular education classes, because sometimes they do for a very particular purpose — for instance, for speech or occupational therapy. But the goal is this should be the exception.

Key words: 1. Meaning of Inclusive Education, 2. Concept of Inclusive Education, 3. Definition of Inclusive Education, 4. Aims and Objective of Inclusive Education, 5. Principles of Inclusive Education, 6. Merits of Inclusive Education, and 7. Role of teacher in inclusive Education.

Inclusive Education: Meaning, Concept & Objectives

Introduction

Inclusive education is a means of creating effective classrooms where the educational needs of all children including children with disabilities are addressed.

At present, there is a growing awareness about inclusive education among educators. In special school concept, the special education component is a part of the general education system, whereas in integrated approach, the special education is a part of the general education. Inclusive education goes one step further. In this approach, the special education is an integral part of the general education system. The need for inclusive education has to be viewed in the background of the reality of services for children with disabilities in India.

The challenge now is to formulate requirements of a school for all, since all children have the right to education. The learning needs of the children with disabilities demand special attention. Steps need to be taken to provide equal access to education to every category of the disabled as an integral part of the education system.

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994) strongly promote “Inclusive Education” or “Schools for All”.

What is Inclusive Education?

“Inclusive Education refers to the educational practice base on the philosophical belief that all learners, those with disabilities and those without, have a right to be educated together in age appropriate class groups, and that all will benefit from education in regular classrooms of community schools. Within these settings teachers, parents and others work collaboratively using appropriate and sufficient resources to interpret and enact the regular curriculum in a flexible manner in accordance with the individual abilities and needs of all learners.”

Prof Gary Bunch Ontario

Meaning of Inclusive Education

“Inclusive Education is defined as a learning environment that promotes the full personal, academic and professional development of all learners irrespective of all learners, irrespective of race, class, colour, gender, disability, sexual preference, learning styles and language.”

Inclusion offers a different perspective on the education of child with disabilities in ordinary schools. Inclusion means all children are welcome regardless of differences. In this system the emphasis is not on treating the deficit but on adapting the environment to accommodate the disability perceiving it as a normal difference. Within the inclusion model there is less emphasis on trying to make the child as much like a seeing child as possible. The differences are not only to be accepted and respected but also to rejoice to the fact that no two human beings are same or equal.

As an inclusive school is a place where everyone belongs, the child is accepted and is supported by his/her peers and other members of the school/community in the course of training for his/her educational needs. Inclusive education is a flexible and individualized support system and is provided in regular schools, committed to an appropriate for all. Inclusive Education recognizes and responds to the diversity of the children's needs and abilities-including differences in their ways and pace of learning.

Concept of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education in special education is a recent concept, and also an accepted approach in general education in the Indian context. A teacher in the regular school focuses on the average learner but is also experienced in handling academically talented as well as slow learners. The general classroom teacher teaches those who differ in their level of intelligence. Thus inclusion with reference to this category is already taking place. Therefore, in the present day context there arise a need to include the sensorial impaired viz., the visually impaired and the hearing impaired into the general stream of education.

The major similarity between non-disabled and the disabled children is their cognitive abilities. This proves to be a very supportive factor for these children to study along with their normal peers in the inclusive set up with the learning of the plus curriculum enabling them to cope with their disabilities.

The idea of integration categorizes a child on the basis of some, identifiable differences and separates him from the 'normal' group. In educational terms, the deficit of the child needs compensation by special educational inputs in a special educational set up. If the child has to be mainstreamed, he has to be given special attention to cope in the regular class. A key notion associated with integration is the “adaptation” of the impaired child to school.

Definition of Inclusive Education

According to **Stainback** (1992), “Inclusion facilitates integration in school systems when general and special education personnel, as well as curriculum and instructional procedures, are combined to provide educational experiences to meet the needs of the students in an integrated setup.”

According to **UNESCO (1994)**, “Inclusion is seen as diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation a process of addressing and responding to the in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education (Booth, 1996). It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children.”

Inclusive education is concerned with providing appropriate responses to the broad spectrum of learning needs in formal and non-formal educational settings. Rather than being a marginal theme on how some learners can be integrated in the mainstream education, inclusive education is an approach that investigates how to transform education systems in order to respond to the diversity of learners. It aims to enable both teachers and learners to feel comfortable with diversity and to see it as a challenge and enrichment in the learning environment, rather than a problem.

Aims and Objective of Inclusive Education

The aim is to identify and enroll children with disabilities in regular schools, to provide them with effective academic support and to provide them with the knowledge on how to face the challenges in and around the society they are a part of.

1. **Education of all:** It is giving all children in the same classroom in the same school get real learning opportunities that have been excluded. An inclusive school aims to meet everyone’s educational needs by having them supported by their peers and other members of the school community. Children with disabilities demonstrates high level of social inter action with non-disabled peers in an inclusive setting compared to segregated setting. Children with disabilities in inclusive setting often have a more vigorous educational program in improving their skills and academics gains. Normal children get the benefit from improved instructional technologies, in the classrooms. All the children will be given equal opportunity and an equal chance to learn to the best of their abilities, the devices in the classrooms should meet the special education needs.
2. **Protection of rights:** Protect the rights to education of person with disabilities and also giving the right to education of person with disabilities. The Indian Constitution guarantees equality, freedom, justice, and dignity to all individual and mandates an inclusive society that comprises people with disabilities. Inclusive education aims to strengthen the human dignity and to remove many stereotypes from each other’s mind and accept the fact that nobody is perfect. In 1974 the Government of India launched the

Integrated Education for Disabled Children scheme (IEDC) in 1987 the Project Integrated Education (PIED) for disabled. The District Primary Education Program (DPEP) with aims to move towards “universalization of elementary education”. The objective of integrated education for disabled children scheme (IEDC Scheme) was to provide educational opportunities for disabled children in common schools to facilitate their retention in the school system, to also integrate the disabled children with the general community at all levels as equal partners and to prepare them for normal growth and to face life with courage and confidence.

3. **Identification of skills:** The skills in inclusive education includes following instructions given by the teacher obeying classroom rules and skills in problem solving and self care. Inclusive education promotes the social value of equality; inclusive setting leads to independent thoughts, positive competency and improved self-esteem. All the children are enriched by the opportunity in which they learn and care for each other and hence gain the skills and values needed for community living. Inclusive Education also aims to give disable pupils the opportunity to become a part of the school community, and also get a realistic idea of what a multiform and competitive society looks like as their own possibilities and limitations.
4. **Development of social consciousness:** Social consciousness and social action are decidedly associated with education since it is there in that, both specific cognitive abilities and attitude to social reality are largely developed. Emotionally disturbed children are those that, in terms of their emotional make-up and behavior, depart significantly and persistently from the majority of children of their age and social group, negatively influencing their adjustment to their self and social surroundings.
5. **To prepare for new challenges:** To engage every student, teachers must be innovative in their instruction. Everyone's expectation for children's inclusion and admiration throughout their lives is reflected in inclusive education. Every youngster may take part in their community, feel a feeling of belonging, and be better equipped for adulthood. Children have a range of skills, and as a result, they have diverse reasons for wanting to learn in a classroom with their classmates. The child's abilities and talents can be developed through successful inclusion efforts.
6. **Development of brotherhood:** Children come from a variety of origins, and while they may differ from one another in terms of their physical prowess, mental prowess, and even learning preferences, they still share in all the privileges. Children learn to respect both their own and other people's originality. When they cultivate tolerance, patience, and compassion for their fellow students, students raise their emotional intelligence. They get the ability to tolerate the positives and negatives of others. Children who assist their peers often develop friendships that last a lifetime in addition to receiving great satisfaction from doing so.
7. **To improve the quality of education:** All children receive higher-quality education thanks to inclusive systems, which also play a crucial role in eradicating prejudice. Schools offer the setting for a child's first encounter with the world outside of their families, facilitating the growth of social bonds and

interactions. Students with different skills and backgrounds play, interact, and study together, which fosters respect and understanding. With segregated and exclusive education, historically oppressed communities continue to face prejudice. Concepts of work, community life, and civic engagement are all more inclusive when education is.

Inclusive Education: Principles/Theories & Merits

Principles of Inclusive Education

- 1. No Discrimination with students:** There should be no discrimination in educational institutions, the students should be equally treated regardless of social background, race, gender, religion, Children with disabilities must be able to access education without discrimination and on the basis of equality. This means the right not to be segregated, and to be provided with all the support they need. All barriers must be removed - legal, physical, communication and language, social, financial and attitudinal barriers.
- 2. Equal Education opportunity to all:** There should be equality of opportunity in education, where everyone has fair and equal access to a good quality education regardless of being disabled, social background, race, gender or religion, and where people achieve success in education according to their efforts and ability, free of any form of discrimination.
- 3. The students view are listened to and taken seriously:** Children have the right to be able to express their views on all matters affecting them and to have those views taken seriously, in accordance with the child's age and maturity. This does not mean that you must do whatever children want. However it does mean that their feelings, concerns and ideas should be taken into account when you are making decisions about them especially in school. This involves both listening and taking on board what the children say.
- 4. School adapt to the need of students:** Inclusive education provides such learning environment that promotes all round development of all learners together in the same educational settings. The content, the teaching process, assessment and evaluation, and the physical environment may be modified to help students to achieve success in the classroom. The kind of activities chosen by the teacher, including group activities, must be flexible and reflect the background knowledge of small groups or individual students. School adaptation refers to adjusting assessments, material, curriculum or classroom environment, to accommodate a student's needs to enable him/ her to participate in and achieve the teaching-learning goals, modifications involve making changes to learning goals, teaching processes, assignments and/or assessments to accommodate a student's learning needs. One of the keys to adapting activities for young children with disabilities is to make the materials or activity only as special as needed. Materials for young children with disabilities don't have to come from special catalogs or cost a lot of money. Often regular age-appropriate toys can be used with little or no adaptations.

5. **Individual differences between students are a source of richness and diversity, and not a problem:**

The importance of individual differences in education has been known for a long time. Adjusting the learning environment according to the individual needs of the student and preparing the curricular by considering these individual differences will help the development of individuals. It is very important for a teacher to understand the individual differences of each and every learner so that effective teaching-learning takes place. A teacher should understand the various psychological, personal, social, religious, and other factors within the classroom. A teacher should decide teaching-learning strategies according to the individual differences of students in the class. Develop a curriculum that suits the needs of individual differences needs. Consider the individual differences of the class and construct the environment in such a way so that it provides equal opportunities to all.

Merits of Inclusive Education

1. **Friendly attitude:** Having a friendly attitude towards inclusive education is very important as it is considered to encourage the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular classrooms. A positive or friendly attitude towards students is something that goes deeper and has an effect beyond surface cheer while showing a negative attitude promotes fear. To be disabled or having a disability can also affect an individual's mental health so by displaying a friendly attitude like smiling, kind behavior, showing empathy, patience and positive attitude towards the students promotes in inclusion and openness for the affected individual. When it comes to school, an individual's mental attitude plays a role not just in how others perceive, but on one's performance. Inclusive Education can only grow and develop in a system, which generates positive or friendly attitude. So one must change their negative attitudes towards inclusive education.
2. **Increased social initiations, relationships and networks:** Individuals with disability often show low levels of social engagement and low social affect. By embedding social interaction in inclusive education, individuals who are having a disability may be more motivated to seek out and engage with other people. Having a positive social interactions have a wide range of both physical and mental benefits of an individual like increased cognitive ability, a good mental health, communication skills, being independent, and helps in improving their physical health. By increasing more positive initiations can also help an individual to develop strong language skills, creativity, empathy, communication, and confidence. Promoting a good relationship between peers is very important to ensure the success of inclusion of an individual with disability. Inclusive learning environments provide students having a disability with many opportunities to establish relationships with their peers. Relationships form the beginnings of friendships that are a source of fun and enjoyment, and an essential source of emotional support during challenging times and it contributes most to one's quality of life. Therefore, the opportunity to connect with a diverse group of peers is an important outcome of inclusion for all students. In inclusive education one of the most important things is that no two learners are alike, and so

inclusive schools place great importance on creating opportunities for students to learn and be assessed in a different kind of ways.

3. **Peer role models for academic, social and behavior skills:** Peer modeling is another support that can be used to help students to learn academic, processes and classroom routines. It also provides the classroom teacher opportunities to use peers to assist with instruction, clarifying directions and give social reminders with little or no disruption to the lesson cycle. It is an excellent way for peers to provide appropriate behavioral models of students who need to improve their social skills and can provide an individual's with the opportunity to learn social skills and can also improve the ability to make and keep friends, express them appropriately, have empathy towards others, and develop self-confidence. Having peers who have a positive attitude and behaviors toward education will allow and teach each other to set goals that include opportunities to learn and achieve. If peer models do not convey positive attitudes toward learning, then the students observing these models will not prioritize learning in their own lives. The interaction one has with each other within the classroom can promote meaningful learning, and help them develop a sense of self and of belonging and is an education method that helps students share their knowledge by teaching each other. Peer relationships provide a different context in which an individual learn a range of critical social emotional skills, such as empathy, cooperation, and problem-solving strategies.
4. **Increased achievement of IEP goals:** The IEP goals work as a roadmap for ensuring the unique educational needs of each special education student is met. A good IEP (Individualized Education Programme) will clearly present levels of performance for the student and offer insight into how to best use their strengths and interests to improve the areas they are weakest. Then the focus will shift to problem areas that need to be addressed and the learning goals that the plan needs to cover like:
 - Academic skills
 - Communication development
 - Emotional/social skills
 - Increase independence
 - Demonstrate personal awareness and control
5. **Greater access to the general curriculum:** Access to the general curriculum means providing students with disabilities meaning being involved in and progress in the general curriculum can be viewed as providing specific details about how the concept of access is to be achieved. Therefore like:
 - IEP goals must address how the student will be involved in and progress in the general curriculum;
 - The IEP must specify appropriate supplementary aids and services, accommodations, modifications, or supports; and
 - The IEP must include an explanation if the student will not participate in the regular class.

- The IEP must also contain “measurable annual goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives to enable the child to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum”
6. **Enhanced skill acquisition and generalization:** Generalizing skills are an important component of any classroom that uses direct teaching as a technique. Generalization (or transfer) of learning is the ability to take skills or concepts learned in one context and apply them to novel problems in different contexts. Assessment can also play an important role in teaching for generalization. Student success hinges on the acquisition and generalization of many skills, including cognitive skills and academic skills. Cognitive skills, such as memory, attention, processing, and sequencing, provide a foundation that is critical for other kinds of learning, both in and out of school. Educators build on this foundation through academic instruction – teaching students how to read, perform mathematical computations, place current events in a historical context, etc. Despite the differences in these skill sets, generalization is crucial for both cognitive and academic skills.

Difference between inclusive education and special education

Sl.No.	Inclusive education	Special education
1.	Education for all	For Special Children like HI,VI,MR,OH
2.	Least restrictive	May have low self-esteem
3.	Class teacher	Special educator
4.	Curriculum and methodology child centered constructivist	Special curriculum and methodology
5.	Equal opportunities for participation	Limited opportunities for participation
6.	Teacher effectiveness in including all in the learning process	Teacher effectiveness limited to the group
7.	Rights recognised and actualised	Charity oriented
8.	Most cost effective	High cost
9.	Normal schools (Neighborhood)	Special school

Role of teacher in inclusive classroom

1. **Interaction with parents:** Parents of children in diverse classrooms are often skeptical about their classroom conduct and day-to-day activities. So, the teacher must help the parents feel comfortable. They do this by addressing their concerns and keeping them updated about their child’s progress.
2. **To be able to solve their problems:** There are often students in an inclusive batch that require some extra support. But the need for support can vary greatly from student to student in such classrooms. For

example, some students might require a recap of everyday lessons at the end of the class, while others might not. To ensure proper learning for all the students, teachers assist in various ways. They assign peers as helpers to work on classroom projects together and complement each others' skills. They spend more time with students who require additional prompts during their learning process in the class.

3. **To develop new learning strategies:** Special education teachers help craft the lessons for inclusive classrooms to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities are considered. Teachers may work together to develop a curriculum that is accessible to all students, or the special education teacher might make modifications to the general education teacher's lesson plans. A special education teacher will also create supplemental learning materials for specific students, including visual, manipulative, text, and technology resources, and determine when one-on-one lessons might be needed. Teachers must examine students' strengths, weaknesses, interests, and communication methods when crafting lessons. The students' individual education plans must be carefully followed to meet achievement goals. As many general education teachers have limited training in inclusive learning, it is important for the special education teacher to help the instructor understand why certain accommodations are needed and how to incorporate them.
4. **To be able to develop self confidence:** A major barrier in the learning and participation of children in classroom activities is the lack of self-esteem and self-confidence. In supporting learners, the inclusive teacher has a crucial role to play in encouraging all children's social and emotional learning. Atmosphere and dynamics in the classroom and school can be managed in order to encourage self-confidence and participation. Diversity in society is enriching. As a teacher you must model this by adopting a fair attitude towards all children and plan activities that allow them to work together, interact and build their learning together. We need to encourage inclusive social behaviors such as mutual appreciation and respect, listening, tolerance and empathy.
5. **To be able to provide special facilities:** Aids and appliances, assistive devices, ICT (Information and Communications Technology) resources like JAWS (Job Access with Speech), as well as transportation, escort & scribe allowances to the children with special needs as per requirement and stipend for all girls with special needs (from pre-primary to XII) are specific facilities needed to be supplied in inclusive education. Also, supplying appropriate teaching learning materials, medical facilities, vocational training support, guidance and counseling services and therapeutic services to children with special needs as per their requirement in convergence with line departments. General school teachers are also to be sensitized and trained to teach and involve children with special needs in the general classroom.
6. **To be able look after their personal needs:** The educator has to consider whether the learning environment supports their students; that is, socially, emotionally and behaviorally e.g., length of time for instruction or information sharing, groupings, positive role models, number of transitions. Another

factor is physically e.g., placement of furniture, equipment, materials; and academically e.g., instructional materials, assessments, as well as expectations.

7. **To be able to recognize their hidden talents:** One of the most important roles that an inclusion teacher plays in a diverse classroom is identifying their students properly. The teachers identify their special students' social, emotional, behavioral, physical, and academic strengths. They consult the students' parents or guardians to get more information about their needs. The teachers create individualized education plans and proper accommodations based on this information. For instance, a visually impaired student would require course material in larger print, or another student might need preferential seating based on their ability to focus in the classroom. Similarly, teachers provide varied levels of classroom assistance to the students to learn without feeling overwhelmed.
8. **To inculcate positive attitude in the able-bodied children:** When children attend classes that reflect the similarities and differences of people in the real world, they learn to appreciate diversity. Respect and understanding grow when children of differing abilities and cultures play and learn together. Also, when children with and without disabilities learn in the same classroom, they develop relationships they may not have considered otherwise. The interaction among peers in inclusive classrooms fosters unique friendships that result in open-mindedness.

Conclusion

Inclusive Education is a means of creating effective classroom where the educational needs for all children including children with disabilities are addressed. Inclusive Education provides the opportunities for children from different backgrounds to learn in a safe environment. Inclusive Education plays a paramount role in enabling disabled persons to live successful lives. It is not only necessary to support children in their academic activities, but it is also necessary to help them in their day to day activities and it will also prepare them to face challenges and barriers that the real world has to offer. Education provides the opportunity for the children to promote and carry on the knowledge that have been taught throughout their lives and try to impart positive change in the world. Educating the children will help them in improving their behavior, attitude, and will also teach them how to interact with different groups of people coming from different backgrounds. Education also plays a vital role in these children's life as they can use the knowledge that have attained and apply it in different situations they would come across, outside the school setting. Hence, Inclusive Education plays an important role as it will enhance a child's ability to learn and it will also encourage the child to pass on the knowledge that he or she has acquired.

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