



STUDENTS with DISABILITIES AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Abstract:

Inclusive education strives to create an environment where every child, including those with disabilities, has equal opportunities to learn and participate in mainstream educational settings. This paper explores the significance of inclusive education for disabled children, emphasizing its positive impact on both academic and social development. By fostering an inclusive educational environment, disabled children are provided with tailored support to meet their unique needs. This approach not only promotes academic achievement but also enhances their social integration, fostering a sense of belonging and reducing stigmas associated with disabilities. Inclusive education goes beyond mere accommodation; it encourages diversity and nurtures a culture of understanding and empathy among students. Research indicates that disabled children benefit from exposure to diverse learning experiences, contributing to their cognitive and emotional development. The inclusive model emphasizes collaboration among educators, parents, and support staff to create individualized education plans that address the specific challenges each disabled child may face. This collaborative effort enhances the overall effectiveness of inclusive education. Moreover, inclusive education prepares all students for a diverse society by instilling values of acceptance and respect for differences. It breaks down barriers, fostering a sense of community that extends beyond the classroom. As disabled children engage with their peers in inclusive settings, it promotes mutual understanding and breaks down preconceived notions about disabilities. In This paper discusses important obstacles that students with disabilities face in inclusive learning settings. It examines the discrepancies between policy and practice, illuminating issues related to the physical, social, and educational spheres such as inadequate infrastructure, a dearth of teacher preparation, and social stigma. conclusion, the implementation of inclusive education for disabled children is a crucial step towards

building a more equitable and compassionate society. It not only enhances the educational experience for disabled students but also contributes to the broader goal of creating a community that values diversity and inclusion.

Keywords:

Meaning of inclusive education, person with disabilities, students, women with disabilities, programs, and policies.

Introduction:

Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Enhancing the educational outcomes for persons with disabilities is a crucial component of our country's strategy to provide equal opportunities, complete involvement, self-sufficient living, and economic independence for people with disabilities. The education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by setting high expectations for them and making sure they have as much access to the general education curriculum in regular classrooms as possible, as nearly thirty years of research and experience have shown. Leaders in the educational domain (Kochhar, West, Taymans 2011).

Most frequently, the term "inclusive education" refers to the inclusion of people with mental and physical disabilities, including those with autism spectrum disorders, intellectual disabilities, cognitive disabilities, sensory or mobility impairments, language difficulties, and behaviour disorders. There is no agreed-upon definition of inclusion that is applicable to all situations, nor is there agreement on a set of guidelines that must be followed when putting it into effect. The goal of an inclusive classroom is to strive to accommodate each student's unique learning requirements without excluding them from the classroom. This is one way to differentiate inclusion from mainstreaming, another non-segregationist method. On the other hand, when special needs children are mainstreamed, it typically means (in two main ways) that the students, despite their differences, are expected to follow a single, standard curriculum or that certain students are removed from the classroom for a significant portion of the day in order to receive their lessons and services. Therefore, inclusion is sometimes understood to be the purposeful and conscious design of classroom and school environments to be inclusive of students with disabilities as well as those who may be excluded or disempowered because of their race, social class, gender, culture, religion, immigration background, or other characteristics (Kirschner 2015 pp. 1-2).

A new strategy called inclusive education aims to educate persons with disabilities and learning challenges with typical students under one roof. All children's learning needs are addressed, with a special emphasis on those who are most at risk of marginalization and exclusion. It means that students with and without disabilities can attend classes together and share resources such as community education settings, schools, and shared early childhood programs, along with a suitable support system. Only a flexible education system that takes into account the demands of a wide variety of students and adjusts to suit their needs can make this achievable (Sanjeev, K., & Kumar, K. 2007).

Education plays a crucial role in guaranteeing inclusive growth. Economic Survey 2006-07 states that "the inclusive nature of the growth itself will be conditioned by the progress that is made in the areas of education" [Ministry of Finance 2007:] Therefore, as a tool for attaining goals and a component of inclusive growth, education requires particular attention. This is acknowledged by the Planning Commission, which states that "new emphasis on education, health, and other basic public facilities calls for a strategy of inclusivity and broad-based participation in the development process" (Tilak 2007).

There have been significant changes in the field of special education in recent years. Facilities for students with disabilities have grown, resources have expanded, and special educators' reputations have improved. Major social, political, and educational changes have been brought about primarily by the coordinated efforts of special interest organizations, court rulings, and legislative requirements (Abramson, Willson, Yoshida, Hagerty 1983).

Students with disabilities have a grossly underrepresented experience in higher education. A Research by the Indian Ministry of Human Resource Development in 2018-19 found that out of 37.4 million students enrolled in higher education, 85,877 Persons with Disability (PWDs) between the ages of 18 and 23 were enrolled. Public areas that are inaccessible, regulations that promote inclusion but are poorly implemented, and societal stigma and prejudice are all frequently blamed for the low enrolment in higher education. The literacy, educational standards, and employment levels of people with disabilities are adversely affected by these institutional, cultural, and environmental impediments. According to the 2011 Census found that over 70% of people with disability are jobless. at order to better understand the experiences of students with disabilities at higher education institutions across the nation, Sarthak conducted this study in the context of inadequate education and the ensuing low employment. Finding the barriers that students with disabilities face in higher education institutions was the aim. Comprehending these obstacles and suggesting ways to get over them would therefore contribute to Sarthak's overarching objective of facilitating employment and empowering the disability population. Based on the social model of disability, which views disability as the result of discriminatory attitudes and inaccessible circumstances, the study aimed to determine the difficulties encountered by students with disabilities in academic contexts, such as classrooms, campuses, and hostels (Sarthak Educational Trust 2020).

UNESCO (1994) states that "Inclusion is seen as diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation a process of addressing and responding to the learning, cultures, and communities, and reducing exclusion from and within education..." A shared vision that encompasses all children within the proper age range and the belief that the regular system has the duty to educate all children are at the core of these adjustments and adaptations in content, methods, structures, and techniques. The goal of inclusive education is to figure out how to adapt educational structures to accommodate a diverse student body. It attempts to make diversity in the classroom feel natural and to help educators and students view it as an opportunity for growth and enrichment rather than as a hindrance (Sahani, Patel 2023).

Inclusive education in higher education for disabled students is crucial for creating an equitable learning environment. This approach aims to accommodate diverse needs, ensuring that every student, regardless of their abilities, has an equal opportunity to succeed. Implementing inclusive practices involves various strategies, such as accessible facilities, adaptive technologies, and support services. One key aspect of inclusive education is physical accessibility. Campuses should be designed to accommodate individuals with mobility challenges, ensuring ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms are available. Additionally, classrooms and lecture halls should be designed with adequate space for wheelchair users, and materials should be presented in formats that cater to different learning needs. Technology plays a pivotal role in fostering inclusivity. Universities can provide assistive technologies like screen readers, speech-to-text software, and adaptive keyboards to facilitate a more accessible learning experience. Online courses should be designed with accessibility in mind, incorporating captions for videos and ensuring compatibility with assistive devices. Support services are essential for disabled students in higher education. Offering academic assistance, counselling, and mentorship programs can contribute to their success. This includes providing note-taking services, extended exam time, and alternative assessment methods tailored to individual needs. Faculty training is crucial to fostering an inclusive educational environment. Professors should be educated on diverse learning styles and be prepared to make accommodations. This involves creating a culture of understanding and empathy within the academic community, where differences are embraced rather than stigmatized. Inclusive education also involves fostering a social and cultural environment that celebrates diversity. Student organizations and campus events should promote awareness and inclusivity, helping break down stereotypes and fostering a sense of belonging for everyone. Challenges persist in implementing inclusive education, including budget constraints and resistance to change. However, the benefits far outweigh the challenges. An inclusive higher education system not only empowers disabled students but also enriches the entire academic community by promoting diversity, understanding, and collaboration (Veck 2014).

Aims:

The aims are to locate and register disabled persons in mainstream schools, colleges universities and any other educational institution to offer them efficient academic help, and to arm them with the skills necessary to navigate the obstacles that exist in society.

1. Education of all: It's providing actual learning chances that have been denied to every student in the same classroom at the same institution. By providing assistance from classmates and other members of the school community, inclusive education seeks to address each student's unique educational requirements. Student with disabilities exhibit a high degree of social engagement in an inclusive environment with classmates who are not impaired.

2. Protection of rights: Preserve the rights of those with impairments to education while simultaneously granting them this right. The Indian Constitution requires an inclusive society that includes those with disabilities and guarantees equality, freedom, justice, and dignity to every individual.

3. Identification of skills: The competencies of inclusive education include problem-solving and self-care abilities as well as the ability to follow directions from the instructor and adhere to classroom regulations. The social value of equality is promoted by inclusive education, which also fosters autonomous thought, positive logo competency, and increased self-esteem. The chance for the persons to grow and care for one another, acquiring the values and abilities necessary for communal living, enriches them all.

4. Development of brotherhood: students come from diverse walks of life, and although they may have different abilities physical, mental, and even learning they all have the same advantages. Youngsters are taught to value individuality their own and that of others. Students' emotional intelligence increases as they learn to be patient, tolerant, and compassionate toward one another. They get the capacity to put up with both the good and bad in other people. Persons who help their friends make lifelong bonds and feel really good about themselves.

Unavailability of Learning Materials:

There is a shortage of learning resources in today's educational institutions, including diverse learning materials, formats, and learning-assisted audio-visual equipment necessary for students with disabilities to learn effectively. The study found a severe lack of instructional resources and audio-visual learning aids, such as Braille and figure-printed books for the blind, as well as problems with the audiovisual infrastructure that affect blind and hearing-impaired students in inclusive education systems. In many schools, there are not enough audio-visual lectures available for students who are blind or deaf. Regular reports of bullying incidents at school have been made by students with disabilities. Peer groups and inclusive social engagement are frequently denied to them. Students with disabilities have experienced mental health problems like sadness, stress, and anxiety as a result of their uneasy socioeconomic and sociolearning educational environments. The current educational framework has been found to not support an environment that is favorable to inclusive education for students with a range of disabilities (Vandana, Vandana & Sarif, Md & Khatun, Reshma & Sk, Md. 2023).

Setting up classrooms and institutions for inclusive education is a difficult endeavour. Students, instructors, and educators from various social, economic, cultural, and geographical groups must learn to tolerate one another. The proportion of physically challenged and socially and economically disadvantaged groups in educational institutions, schools is rising due to a variety of educational policies and restrictions. The adoption of these portions grew over time. Only in institutions supported by the government is inclusive education feasible. Sincere efforts are required to open more government-funded inclusive campuses around the nation in order to lessen this discrepancy. Additionally, we must improve the technological efficiency of our current universities. Government support is desperately needed in order for children who are economically, socially, and physically disadvantaged to study together and for colleges to be able to accommodate their individual needs. Universities should always have access to adequate funding for developing and maintaining an inclusive campus culture (Yadav 2022).

Women with disabilities in the field of education:

Women with impairments have not received enough attention in works about gender and disability. In the realm of education, there is a somewhat dismissive image of women with impairments. In a nation such as India, where girls' education is generally viewed as a liability, women who are triple handicapped are viewed as a social shame and are consistently refused access to education. The type of impairment a girl has, her family's financial situation, her race and ethnicity, whether she lives in an urban or rural region, and a host of other circumstances all have an impact on her capacity to access education. The persistent link between poverty and disability frequently serves as a major obstacle. Disability is a result of poverty, and women and girls are more prone than men to experience deprivation of basic essentials like food and medicine due to resource scarcity. In low-income households, the limited resources are typically allocated more toward the education of males than girls who require expensive special transportation or equipment connected to their impairment. This is especially for rural women who are disabled (Dawn, Ranjita 2016).

Despite the fact that more women are enrolling in higher education, not much focus has been placed on the calibre of their experiences or the obstacles that stand in their way of learning in the classroom. In the past, universities' procedures, courses, and creators were men, for men. We argue that while women have been included in this century simply by virtue of their admittance, equal participation has not been attained, and this is particularly true for women in other underrepresented groups. We suggest that women bear a heavy price for these accomplishments, even though the sheer number of degrees awarded (at least at the undergraduate level) indicates the effectiveness of this accommodation. In this world of men, we battle more than our male counterparts with identity and self-worth (Litner, Rossiter, Taylor 1992).

The Sustainable Development Goals state that the education of people with disabilities, particularly women with disabilities (WWDs), has become a major global priority in academic circles. In a similar vein, the Incheon Declaration said that educational objectives should not be achieved unless they are achieved by all. Therefore, it is promised that all education policy must center on the marginalized, especially people with disabilities, including WWDs (UNESCO, World Education Forum, 2015). The concept of an inclusive education system was developed in a number of nations early in the 18th century to teach all students, regardless of their differences. Research studies have highlighted the necessity of treating students with impairments similarly in terms of facilities and opportunities. Women with disabilities can become independent and self-reliant by obtaining higher education, which gives them the knowledge, skills, and credentials they need. It gives individuals the resources needed to achieve their objectives, make wise decisions, and take an active role in society. For women with impairments, a college education offers up a world of job options. It makes them more employable and raises their chances of landing fulfilling, well-paying careers. They can become financially independent and contribute to the workforce with the information and skills they get from a higher education. It encourages the development of the individual. It fosters self-assurance and critical thinking in women with impairments.

Higher education also encourages women with disabilities to participate in society and be included. It gives students the chance to engage with many groups of people, which promotes empathy, understanding, and respect for various points of view. Additionally, a college education equips students to participate in civic and communal activities that advance societal advancement and well-being. Additionally, institutions of higher learning frequently offer accommodations and support services to students with impairments. Assistive technology, accessible educational materials, academic help, counseling, and resources tailored to those with disabilities are some examples of these services. Women with disabilities show their potential and break social norms by going after higher education. Their presence in universities dispels myths and encourages the inclusion and acceptance of people with disabilities. by funding women with disabilities to pursue higher education We can build a more equal and inclusive society that respects and upholds the rights and ambitions of every person (Sarkar 2023).

Policies/Programs for inclusivity:

It is now time for policies and ideas surrounding inclusion to advance as we firmly enter the twenty-first century, wrapping around a variety of issues pertaining to identity, learning, community, and belonging. It is imperative that inclusion be conceptualized with regard to not only visible disabilities and social justice, but also community, social capital, equality, and respect—as well as other aspects of school life (Thomas 2013).

Numerous nations worldwide have enacted legislation and established policies aimed at promoting inclusivity. International and non-governmental groups have also made inclusive education mandatory. For instance, the United Nations Salamanca Declaration (1994) and the UNESCO Dakar "World Declaration on Education for All" (2000) both emphasize the significance of inclusive education in terms of guaranteeing that all children have access to educational opportunities, fighting discriminatory attitudes, and educating the next generation to be more accepting of diversity in all its forms (Kirschner 2015 p. 4).

The Preamble of the Indian Constitution, which was adopted on November 26, 1949, makes it very evident that everyone is entitled to equality of opportunity and position. The right to employment, education, and public aid in certain circumstances—including disability—is supported by Article 41 of the Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution. Additionally, Article 45 guarantees that all children up to the age of 14 will get free and mandatory schooling. This led to the parliament passing the Constitution (86th Amendment) Act of 2002, which established education as a basic right for all children between the ages of six and fourteen (Sanjeev Kumar: 2007).

Most recently, the Right to Free and Compulsory Education (2009) was passed, ensuring that all children between the ages of six and fourteen have the right to free and compulsory education. When interpreting this act in relation to Chapter V of the Persons with Disability Act of 1995, special attention must be paid to the education of children with disabilities. All disabled children have the right to free education up until the age of eighteen, according to Chapter V of the PWD Act. Keeping this in mind, the Indian government expedited the launch of the new inclusive education program in order to meet the 2010

deadline for Education for All (EFA). Encouraging diverse learners—those with impairments, those from varied households and cultural backgrounds. All students will participate in mainstream education, regardless of their skills and shortcomings, according to inclusive education. It is evident that inclusive education in ordinary schools has emerged as a key policy goal in India, where the emphasis on children and people with special needs has steadily expanded. Many developing nations began redrafting their laws to encourage the enrolment of disabled pupils in regular classrooms. Studies demonstrate that educators working in inclusive environments collaborate more, plan more, share new skills with one another, take part in more professional development activities, are more open to change, and employ a greater variety of innovative tactics to meet the needs of their students. Enhancing the educational system's ability to engage with all students is the goal of inclusive education (Singh 2016).

The 'Education for All' initiative was launched during the Jometin World Conference (1990) in Thailand, when it was declared that all individuals, including children, youth, and adults, would have access to educational opportunities that fulfilled their fundamental learning requirements. A concept and method of teaching called inclusion gives every student more chances to succeed academically and socially. This covers the complete spectrum of social, recreational, artistic, athletic, musical, daycare and after-school care, extracurricular, religious, and other activities (ibid).

A training program was started by the Rehabilitation Council of India Act of 1992 to help professionals become better equipped to meet the requirements of students with disabilities. The 2006 National Policy for Persons with Disability aims to make clear the parameters within which the public, commercial, and civil society sectors must function to guarantee a life of dignity for individuals with disabilities and assistance for those who provide care for them (ibid).

Article 24 of the UN Declaration on the Right to Education highlights the need for inclusive education and outlaws discrimination in the classroom on the basis of disability. All children with disabilities are entitled to this, including those with intellectual and psychological difficulties. The significance of international collaboration in programming for children with disabilities, as well as its role in assisting national governments, is further acknowledged in Article 32 of the CRPD. There are strong financial reasons to include children with disabilities. Across nations, the estimated costs of exclusion range up to 7% of GDP.⁴ Poverty is frequently the result of being excluded from education and the economic prospects that education offers to people. In addition to lowering welfare costs and preventing future dependency, educating disabled children frees up other household members to take up jobs or engage in other productive activities. It also raises the potential productivity and wealth creation of the children, which helps to reduce poverty (Singal 2015).

Education policies may exist, but children with disabilities may not be able to attend school if there are inflexible curricula, buildings that are inaccessible, teachers who lack special education training, and other issues. When establishing policies for individuals with disabilities, countries around the world were required to adhere to the UN Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. The development of pupils with disabilities is emphasized by these rules through inclusive

education. Representatives of 92 states and 25 international organizations, including India, agreed on the UNESCO Salamanca Statement, which was a declaration on the education of disadvantaged children. This statement's primary goal is to implore the governments of the various nations to embrace inclusive education and enroll all students in mainstream institutions (Gulyani 2017).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD 2007) recognizes that people with disabilities should be afforded the same respect, dignity, and opportunities for social inclusion as other members of society, with the goal of advancing an equitable society. According to the Convention, the issue of disabilities is crucial to development. The preservation and promotion of the human rights of people with disabilities must be taken into consideration by the signatory nations in all policies and programs, as stated in Article 4 of the Convention. Globally speaking, only approximately 2-3% of disabled children attend school in underdeveloped nations, and the majority of them continue to be illiterate (ibid).

It's time for both governmental organizations and mainstream establishments to acknowledge the ethically repugnant and human rights violating practice of segregating children with special needs. Indeed, there is no other way to educate the 36 million children with disabilities. The majority of Indians—78%—live in rural regions without access to special education. Thus, inclusive schools must meet the requirements of every kid in every neighborhood, and both the federal and state governments must provide teachers with the necessary training to run inclusive classes (ibid)

Conclusion:

According to the Commission on Growth and Development (2008), inclusivity is a crucial component of any growth strategy that works. It includes equity, equality of opportunity, and protection of the weaker segments of society throughout job and market changes. "With emphasis not only on the distribution of economic gains but also on the security, vulnerability, empowerment, and sense of full participation that people may enjoy in social life" (Tilak 2015)

The Indian government has implemented a new inclusive education program in (2010,) aimed at achieving the goal of Education for All (EFA). It is evident that India's education policy has progressively placed more emphasis on serving children and adults with special needs, and that providing inclusive education in ordinary schools has emerged as a key policy goal. Nevertheless, there is still more work to be done. One of the most important challenges in education today is inclusive education, which is seen in practically every nation. The majority of developing nations began implementing or "reformulating their policies to promote the inclusion of students with disabilities into mainstream schools" after the UNESCO Salamanca Statement in 1994 (Singh, Phool, Vishwavidyalaya, Mahila Kalan, Khanpur & Monika, Dr 2021).

In conclusion, the journey toward inclusive education in higher education for disabled students requires a multifaceted approach. It involves physical accessibility, technological advancements, support services, faculty training, and a cultural shift toward embracing diversity. By committing to these principles,

universities can create an environment where every student has the opportunity to thrive and contribute to the academic community.

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