

Inclusive Education System: A Study in Indian Context for Children with Special Needs

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the development and present situation of the inclusive education system in India, with a particular emphasis on children who have unique medical requirements. It examines the progression from segregated education models to inclusive frameworks, analyzing key policy initiatives such as the Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC), the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act. In order to evaluate the levels of school attendance, gender inequities, and academic achievement among children with disabilities, the research makes use of data obtained from the Census in 2011. Among the key problems that are identified are the implementation of policies, the attitudes of society, the opposition of parents, and the requirement for the integration of research and skill-based instruction. The findings emphasise the need of implementing comprehensive measures to improve the efficiency of inclusive education. These strategies should ensure that all students, regardless of their ability, are provided with equal chances. This research makes a contribution to the continuing discussion on educational equity and offers suggestions for policymakers, educators, and other stakeholders concerning how to create an educational climate in India that is more welcoming to people of all backgrounds.

Keywords: Inclusive Education System, e-books, philosophy, Children

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to education, inclusive education is a philosophy that advocates for the inclusion of students with varying abilities in regular classrooms. This helps to create an atmosphere in which every kid has the opportunity to get a quality education. To ensure that the concepts of inclusive education are put into practice, professional development is of the utmost importance. This is because it provides educators with the information, abilities, and mindsets that are required to effectively serve students from varied backgrounds. The present condition of professional development in inclusive education in India is investigated in this study, with a focus on the difficulties, progress, and potential solutions that are currently being faced.

In the context of education, the term "inclusive education" refers to the provision of conventional classroom environments to all students, regardless of their disabilities, while also providing them with the necessary support to participate fully in their classes. In order to create inclusive education practices in a sustainable manner, it is necessary to increase the ability of instructors to integrate and support students with disabilities in general education classes while taking into consideration the context of the teaching environment. One method for bringing about systemic change in schools for the purpose of a meaningful implementation of inclusive education to be carried out in conjunction with local stakeholders is through the formation of professional development school partnerships.

The literature that is now available emphasises that professional development schools have mostly concentrated on teacher education, professional development, and research, but they have seldom been utilised as a social justice instrument to desegregate schools and promote inclusive education since their inception. We are able to promote the mission of the National Association for Professional Development Schools, which is to "advance the education profession by providing leadership, advocacy, and support to sustain professional development schools as learning communities that improve student learning, prepare educators through clinical practice,

provide reciprocal professional development, and conduct shared inquiry." We are able to do this through the work that we do at our professional development school. Our work in the field of professional development schools is a response to the request made by Damiani and Elder (2023) to incorporate a critical social justice lens into the work and research that is done in the field of professional development schools. Additionally, it builds on the work that has been done and the strategies that are advised for school integration. We discuss the ways in which we have utilised our professional development school partnership in a suburban elementary school for grades 4–6 in order to promote inclusive education and to facilitate the transition of students of colour who have disabilities from self-contained special education classrooms to general education classrooms that are inclusive. The evidence that we offer in this study shows that this program has had a good influence not just on instructors but also on kids of colour who have impairments and their families, as well as on the culture of inclusive schools. When we talk about "stakeholders," we are referring to kids who have disabilities, as well as their parents, school administrators, instructors of general education and special education, and professional service providers.

Inclusive Education System

It is necessary to reform the whole education system in order to implement inclusive education. This includes the law and policy, as well as the methods for financing, administration, design, delivery, and monitoring of education, as well as the way schools are organised.

To assist children in attaining their full potential and leading productive lives as engaged members of their communities is the objective of education for children with disabilities, which is the same objective as education for children who do not have impairments. For children with impairments, specialised services and supports are frequently necessary in order for them to learn the material that is being taught. Unfortunately, in many countries, specialised education services are provided in the form of segregating students with disabilities into separate classrooms or schools.

This means that these students do not have the opportunity to interact with their peers who do not have disabilities, and they frequently do not have access to the curriculum that their peers are learning. To move away from segregation and towards including all students in general education classrooms and schools, it is necessary to provide all students in these classrooms with the specific supports and services that they require in order to participate in the classroom in an effective manner.

These supports and services may include access to assistive devices, teacher assistants, and a curriculum that has been adapted to meet their needs.² This adjustment is often a significant one that calls for patience, political will, and a knowledge of the advantages that inclusive education can provide for all kids.

- Commitment and investments from education ministries. the process of changing systems requires both time and the expenditure of money.
- In order to overcome obstacles to learning, it is necessary to give support for both students and instructors. instructors require training and direction, while students require assistance to overcome obstacles.
- It is necessary to take action in order to combat negative attitudes and prejudices that are directed towards children who have impairments. This includes the promotion of inclusive learning and respect for diversity.
- pupils should be held to high standards, and instructors should make an effort to invest in and provide assistance for all pupils. students cannot learn if they are afraid of their instructors or if they are bullied by other students. Therefore, it is essential that children have access to safe and inclusive surroundings.
- Partnerships between parents, organisations that serve individuals with disabilities, and educational institutions that provide inclusive education will reap the benefits of the most extensive accumulation of experience and information conceivable.

- Methods for tracking progress - it is of the utmost importance to determine whether or not the situation is getting better, and if it is not, what more adjustments are required.

Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs

As part of the formerly known Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) RTE and RMSA programs, one of the most significant initiatives has been the implementation of inclusive education for CWSN. Starting in the 2018-2019 school year, Samagra Shiksha will place a strong emphasis on enhancing the quality of education for all students, including those attending CWSN. In light of this, the intervention in question is an integral component of Samagra Shiksha. Support is provided for a variety of student-oriented activities, such as the identification and evaluation of students with special needs (CWSN), the provision of aids, appliances, corrective surgeries, Braille books, large print books and uniforms, therapeutic services, the development of teaching-learning material (TLM), assistive devices and equipment, an environment building and orientation program to create a positive attitude and awareness about the nature and needs of CWSN, the purchase Additionally, the component places an emphasis on the implementation of the Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 for children who have special needs and are between the ages of 6 and 14 years old. In addition, specialised resource support, which includes financial aid towards the salaries of special educators, is also made available in order to effectively meet the requirements of CWSN inside the school.

Significance of the study

Since it tackles a crucial component of social justice and educational fairness, research on the inclusive education system for kids with special needs in India is extremely important. Children with special needs in India still face significant obstacles to receiving high-quality education, even in the face of multiple improvements in legislation and administrative frameworks. With a particular focus on the degree to which students with special needs and disabilities are successfully included into regular educational institutions, this research attempts to investigate the present status of inclusive education in India.

The potential for this research to offer a thorough grasp of the opportunities and difficulties within the inclusive education system is what makes it significant. It will draw attention to the current deficiencies in curriculum adaption, teacher preparation, infrastructure, and social attitudes that impede the successful inclusion of children with special needs. Additionally, the study will assess how inclusive schooling affects these kids' academic, social, and emotional growth, providing information on how inclusive practices can improve results and improve their general wellbeing.

This study intends to educate stakeholders, educators, and policymakers on the essential interventions and reforms needed to enhance educational access for children with special needs by analysing the advantages and disadvantages of the existing inclusive education system. It will support the continuous initiatives to make India's educational system more accessible and inclusive, guaranteeing that all children, regardless of ability, can get a top-notch education and realise their full potential. In the end, this study supports equality and opportunity for all children by being in line with international principles of human rights and inclusive education.

Research Topic

“Inclusive Education System: A Study in Indian Context for Children with Special Needs”

Objectives

1. To examine previous commissions on education that have examined inclusive education.
2. To determine potential fixes for the outstanding issues in light of inclusive education.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Past educational commissioners set the groundwork for inclusive education, but lack of resources and training hinders implementation.

Hypothesis 2: Addressing curricular and social awareness concerns in inclusive education would improve its efficacy.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative descriptive research design was chosen by the researcher because it is a type of research methodology that aims to describe or document the characteristics, behaviours, attitudes, opinions, or perceptions of a group or population that is being studied.

The researcher chose to conduct the study with ten expert purposive samples (selecting the sample from the special schools of national interest) from various regions of India. The educators who have been working in the subject of inclusive education over the past twenty years were taken into consideration by the researcher. An expert-validated opinion questionnaire was distributed to the experts in order to determine the issues that have not been resolved in the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) in relation to inclusive education.

Next, a personal telephone interview was carried out with the specialists in order to determine the issues that were still present and the measures that might be taken to fix them.

Data analysis

The statistical analysis of India's inclusive education policy indicates a progressive and systematic approach to integrating persons with disabilities into the mainstream school system. This strategy is accompanied by a gradual and systematic methodology.

Beginning with the Sargent Report of 1944, which established the groundwork for special education, there has been a consistent evolution in the development of policy. Immediately following the country's attainment of independence, the Ministry of Education prioritised the provision of specialised education. Additionally, the Kothari Commission (1964–1966) and the Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC – 1974) developed and enlarged upon the idea of inclusive education.

It was during the Five-Year Plan (1980-1985) that increased financing and policy development played a crucial role in promoting integration. This integration was further advanced by the Project Integrated Education for Disabled Children (PIED - 1987) through the training of teachers and the implementation of localised techniques.

Both global and national obligations were strengthened by subsequent initiatives such as the modifications to the International Environmental Declaration of 1992 (IEDC) and the Salamanca Statement of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1994.

These efforts were supported by programs such as the District Primary Education Project (DPEP - 1994) and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA - 2001), which demonstrated a favourable trend in the implementation of policies. Strong legal support was provided by the inclusion of Article 24 in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), as well as by the passage of the Right to Education Act (2010) and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016).

It was a substantial expansion that was characterised by the National Education Policy (NEP - 2020), which reaffirmed the government's commitment to inclusive education. Based on the findings of the analysis, a comprehensive and ever-evolving framework has been established with the objective of providing persons with disabilities with educational opportunities that are equal.

India's Status of Inclusive Education as of the 2011

Census Disable Students Attendance According to 2011- Census

Sixty-one percent of pupils who are unable to attend school due to a disability are enrolled in academic programs. Twelve percent of the students and students with disabilities who were enrolled in the schools were considered to be disabled.

A total of twenty-seven percent of the pupils who were classified as having impairments had never attended school before.

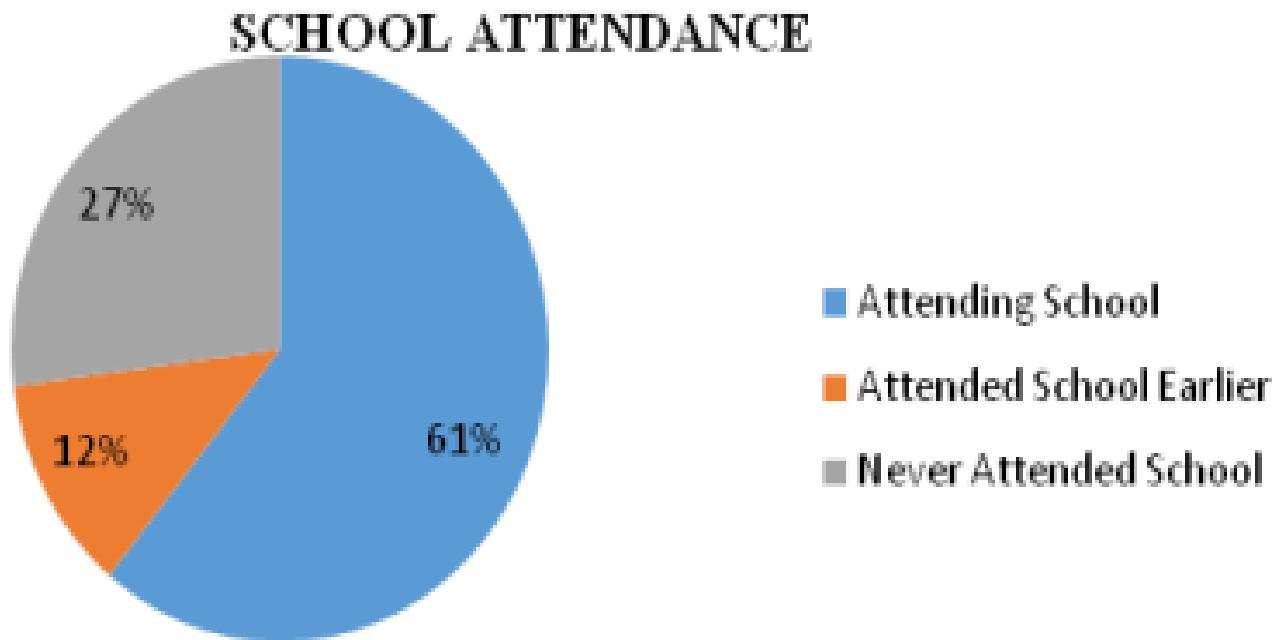


Figure 2 Disable Students Attendance According to 2011- Census

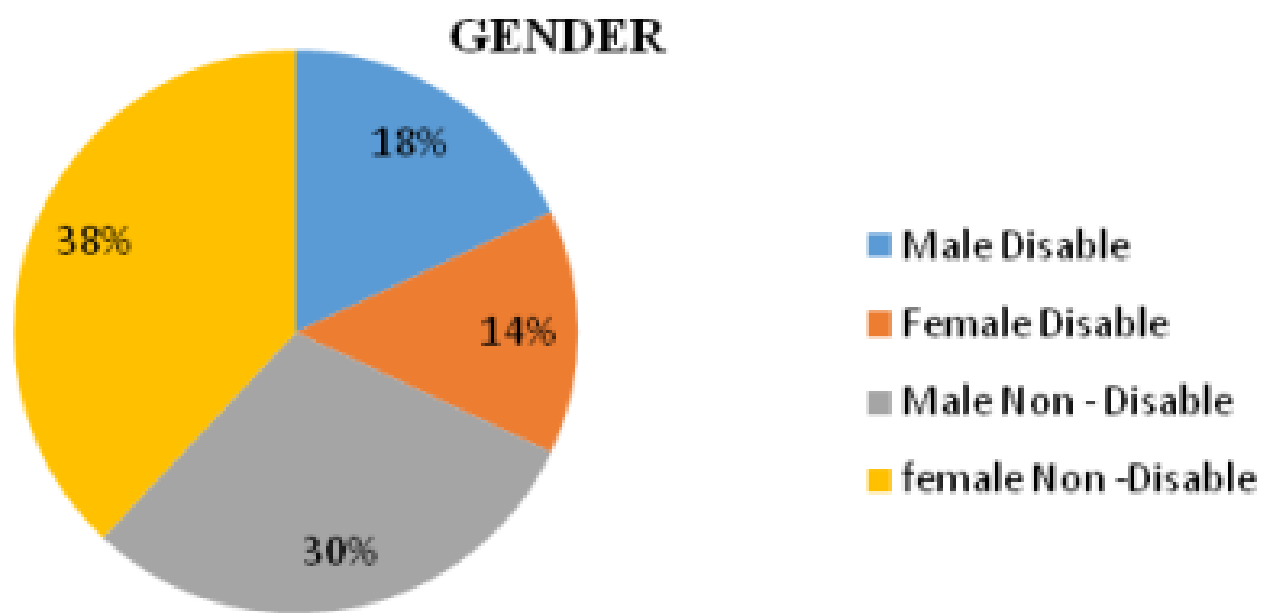


Figure 3 Gender Ratio in Inclusive Schools According to 2011- Census

Gender Ratio Attending Inclusive Schools According To 2011- Census

Inclusive schools have thirty percent of male students who do not have disabilities enrolling in such institutions. Eighteen percent of male students who have disabilities are enrolled in schools that encourage inclusive education.

When it comes to female students who do not have impairments, inclusive schools have 38 percent of the student body enrolled. The percentage of female students with disabilities who are enrolled in inclusive schools is fourteen percent.

Academic Performance as of the 2011 Census

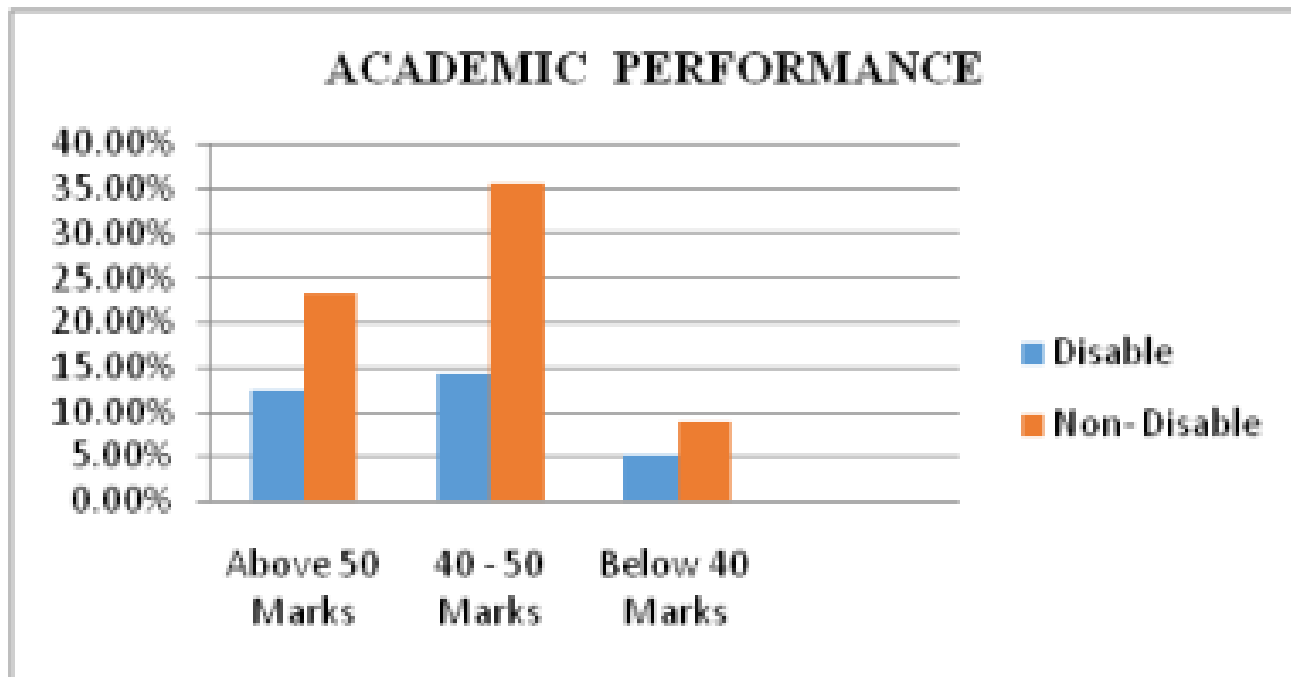


Figure 4 Academic Performance According to 2011- Census

There are a number of key ways in which the academic performance of children who have disabilities and children who do not have impairments is considerably different from one another. To put this into perspective, 12.31% of students who have disabilities have a high academic performance (above 50 marks), whereas 23.26% of students who do not have impairments have such a performance.

Students who have disabilities have an average academic performance that ranges between 40 and 50 marks, whereas students who do not have impairments have an average performance that ranges between 35.65% and 14.35%. In terms of academic achievement, 8.91% of students who do not have a disability and 5.22% of students who do have a disability demonstrate poor performance (below 40 points).

Challenges in Inclusive Education

When it comes to the implementation of policies, those in authority should be serious and committed enough to implement inclusive education policies and to respect the rights and requirements of the constitution without taking into consideration any technicalities or loopholes.

Social Attitude Towards Disability: We need to organise activities with the goal of increasing public awareness of impairments and building a social environment that is constructive for children who are marginalised and have different abilities.

Parental Resistance: Awareness efforts, as well as advertisements in print and digital media, should spread information about the rights and provisions of these children to the families and parents of these children.

In order to improve the quality of instruction that is focused on skills, candidates for traditional teacher education programs should also get training on how to interact with children of this age.

Research and practice ought to be connected by means of studies that are centred on disabilities, chaired disability studies at universities, and the formation of centres for disabilities studies in academic institutions.

Coaching by Peers: In inclusive educational environments, coaching by peers is a vital component for enhancing both teaching and learning.

RESULTS/DISCUSSION

Despite the fact that inclusive education in India has achieved significant progress, it is still confronted with a great deal of resistance, all of which are brought to light by the Census that was conducted in 2011. According to data on student attendance, a significant 27% of children with disabilities had never registered, which suggests that there are barriers to access. This is despite the fact that 61% of these students attended school to get their education. It is true that inclusive schools have a gender gap; the number of male and female students with disabilities who attend is lower than the number of children who are normally developing. When compared to children who do not have impairments, a smaller percentage of students with disabilities attain high academic results, and their overall performance in school is lower.

In order to address these challenges, a number of significant subjects are brought up for discussion. For the purpose of ensuring that inclusive education is effectively implemented, free from technicalities and loopholes, it is necessary for authorities to exhibit a greater level of sincerity and dedication to the execution of policies. Awareness campaigns should be conducted with the objective of establishing a social environment that is supportive of children who are considered to be disadvantaged in order to bring about a change in the views that society has about disability. In order to overcome the reluctance of parents, it is essential to educate them about the rights and educational provisions that pertain to their children through targeted awareness campaigns and activities in the media.

An focus is placed on education that is based on skills, and there is a requirement for programs that prepare teachers to include techniques for working with pupils who have special needs. By integrating research and practice through studies that concentrate on disability and the formation of dedicated centres at academic institutions, it may be possible to improve both the understanding of inclusive practices and their application. In conclusion, it is widely acknowledged that peer coaching is an essential component of inclusive classrooms due to the fact that it enhances both the learning of students and the efficacy of teachers. To summaries, all of these aspects lead us back to the necessity of a comprehensive plan that takes into consideration law, societal attitudes, parental participation, teacher training, research integration, peer support, and inclusive education in India as a whole in order to overcome the problems that we are now facing.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of inclusive education, it is possible to establish a classroom setting that is accommodating to the requirements of all students, including those with disabilities. This helps to cultivate a secure educational atmosphere in which children from a variety of backgrounds may flourish. Inclusive education is the most important factor in ensuring that handicapped individuals are able to lead successful lives. It is of the utmost importance to provide children with support not just in their academic endeavours but also in their day-to-day life. This is because it will equip them with the skills necessary to overcome obstacles and problems that they will encounter in the real world. As a result of this, in addition to the government, instructors and parents are also required to have adequate information of inclusive education in the classroom. Not only that, but every youngster is required to take part in educational activities. Every single kid need to be treated with the same level of respect and decency, without any exceptions of any kind. Only then will inclusive education in our country be able to achieve its full potential.

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