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RESEARCH ARTICLE

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: PROGRESSIVE REALIZATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

Inclusive education refers to the rights of children and their parent to access the main stream education in which the children's needs and the parents wants is satisfied. IE is a new approach of educating the differently abled children with the normal ones under the same roof. Inclusive education is a recognition that learners have diverse abilities and interests, and that they come from diverse ethnic and social backgrounds. In inclusive classrooms we can see students of different learning styles, talents, powers and ability levels. It embrace a wide panel of multi-talented students including ordinary learners, students with disabilities like physically handicapped, mentally retarded, multiple disorders, visual and hearing problems, transgender etc. Provision of Inclusive Education involving studies with disabilities based on the belief that those with disabilities should not have to depend on specialized services alone, to benefit from educational resources activities and practices that are otherwise available to all. Inclusive education can therefore be simply defined as 'Education that Fits'. In other words, education must fit the diversity of learners we find (or should find) in every school, in every classroom, in every country. Expressed another way, an inclusive school is 'A School for everyone'. Many educational institutions have made an attempt towards inclusion in education and studies proved that it led to great improvement in educational quality index. "Inclusive Education implies all young learners, young people – with or without disabilities being able to learn together through access common pre-school and schools with an appropriate network of support services."

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Introduction:-

Inclusive education in its real sense is nothing but a process of creating a system of education that caters to the needs of all children, which is not practised in India. Further, inclusive education has in the past dealt predominantly with children with disabilities, and the need to focus on these children remains the main objective, as they generally face exclusion due to various reasons. This unit aims to bring forth a background and synopsis of crucial issues, theories and schemes in relation to inclusive education, which are pertinent to circumstances where economic means and retrieval of information is limited.

Inclusive education encompasses an extensive range of approaches, activities and processes that try to administer reality of the worldwide right to quality, age-appropriate and suitable education for all. It acknowledges that the

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process of learning starts at the time of birth and carries on till the last breath of an individual. The process of learning carries on in an informal way at home, in the society, and in a formal way at the educational institutions. It is a self-motivated process which continually evolves with respect to the needs of the culture and context. It pursues to facilitate societies, organizations and structures to fight discrimination, rejoice diversity, stimulate contribution and overcome obstacles to learning and participation for all people. All dissimilarities related to age, gender, culture, language, health as well as economic status, religion, disability, life-style and other forms of discrepancies are accepted and respected. Inclusive education is part of a wider approach encouraging comprehensive development with the aim to create a world filled with harmony, acceptance, viable use of resources and social justice; where the fundamental requirements and rights of all are met. It deals with altering the system to fit the learner, and not changing the learner to fit the system. It locates the 'problem' of exclusion strictly within the system, not the individual or their individualities.

How can Inclusive Education be implemented?

Mitchell (2015) presented a model of Inclusive education is a multi-dimensional concept, its successful Implementation requiring consideration of what could be called the 'Magic Formula'.

Inclusive Education = V + P + 5As + S + R + L

V = Vision: Inclusive education requires a commitment from educators at all levels of the system.

P = Placement: Placement in age-appropriate classrooms in learners' neighbourhood schools is a necessary (but not sufficient) requirement for inclusive education.

5As=(i) Adapted Curriculum: Making appropriate adaptations or modifications to the general curriculum is central to inclusive education and is probably the biggest challenge to educators.

(ii) Adapted Assessment: It is essential that assessment serve educational purposes by promoting learning and guiding teaching, not simply functioning as a tool for sorting and selecting learners for advancement.

(iii) Adapted Teaching: Inclusive education challenges educators to develop a wide repertoire of evidence-based teaching strategies. There is sound evidence that teaching strategies such as the following are effective for learners with special educational needs: co-operative group teaching, peer tutoring, supportive classroom climate, social skills training, cognitive strategy instruction, self-regulated learning, memory strategies, phonological awareness and phonological processing, behavioural approaches, functional, behavioural assessment, direct instruction, review and practice, formative assessment and feedback, assistive technology, and augmentative and alternative communication. Indeed, most of these strategies have been shown to be effective for all learners (Mitchell, 2008).

(iv) Acceptance: Inclusive education relies on educators, learners and their parents accepting the right of learners with special educational needs to be educated in general education classrooms and to receive equitable resourcing.

(v) Access: For learners with physical disabilities to be included, adequate access to classrooms must be provided, e.g., ramps and lifts, adapted toilets and adequate space for wheelchairs.

S = Support: Inclusive education for learners with special educational needs requires support from a team of professionals in addition to regular classroom teachers. These would include such people as teacher aides/assistant teachers, specialist advisers and appropriate therapists.

R = Resources: Clearly, inclusive education requires adequate levels of funding (but no more than would normally be provided in special schools).

L = Leadership: To bring all of the above elements of the 'Magic Formula' together, leadership is required at all levels: government, national and local education authorities, principals and classroom teachers.¹

Scope and Objectives of Inclusive Method of Education

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."²

¹Mitchell, David. (2015). Inclusive Education is a Multi-Faceted Concept. Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal. 5. 9-28. Retrieved from <https://ojs.cepsj.si/index.php/cepsj/article/view/151/79>

²UNESCO (1994) The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000098427?posInSet=1&queryId=e4dff3ab-2bd9-4805-8f3d-ca06be7057bb>

The inclusive method of education is the result of various impacts:

(a) Societies: This implicates pre-colonial and native methods of education, and community-based programmes.

(b) Campaigners and Promoters: Refers to the united expressions of principal stakeholders—representatives of groups of learners are many a times removed and side-lined from education.

(c) Movement in favour of quality education and improvement of schools: The issues of worth, access and inclusive education are powerfully connected, and contribute to the appreciation and exercise of inclusive education as being the responsibility of education systems and schools.

(d) Movement in favour of need for special education: The concept and practical implementation of special needs is challenging in developed and developing nations. Nevertheless, the 'new thinking' of the special needs movement is creating a positive impact on inclusive method of education, facilitating schools and systems to respond well to a wide range of multiplicity.

Inclusive Education in India Education

Provision of inclusive and equitable education remains one of the most important steps for the achievement of an inclusive society. The past decade in India has been monumental in bringing out positive change in the education space, moving towards universalisation of education and right to education for all. The international framework comprising the UNCRPD and the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG 4 and Agenda 2030 provide a strong vision and a set of goals that have guided India's processes of fostering inclusion in schools. The Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009 and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD) Act 2016 have helped create a comprehensive legal framework for inclusive. The Agenda 2030 is a commitment to achieving sustainable development by 2030 world-wide. Under this, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 is Quality Education for all. SDG 4 focuses on addressing gender gaps, inequality and development of decent employment through education.³ Teacher training and a shift to the home-based education for PwDs has been underway since the declaration of RPWD Act in 2016.

According to census of India (2011) Government of India, Literacy status: Literate 121, 96,641 and Illiterate 146, 18,353 of disabled population by residence in India.⁴

However, there are a few ambiguities about where children with disabilities should study and who should teach them. Gaps remain in the changing of norms and standardisation of educational institutes across the nation, along with addressable of cultural, social and political barriers to education.

Despite reservation in educational institutions for PwDs under the Rights for Persons with Disability Act 2016, the enrolment numbers of students in higher education institutes are dismal. A study conducted by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Higher Education in 2016 titled 'All India Survey on Higher Education (2015-2016)' across India estimates that there are 74,435 PwD students, out of a total of 4 crore PwD between the ages of 20-2937 enrolled in higher education, in comparison to a total of 346 crore non-disabled students. Out of the PwD students, 39,718 (53.3%) are male and 34,717 (46.7%) are female students. A total of 44,356 institutions, colleges and universities were a part of this study over two years.⁵

Equitable and Inclusive Education with reference to NEP 2020

India has experienced a drastic change and improvement in the education sector for the last few years. Especially, after implementing the Right to Education Act, 2009 India has gradually observed improvements in infrastructure and enrolment. Besides these all significant advancements, Indian system education is still facing challenges of inequalities

³<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000368780/PDF/368780eng.pdf.multi>

⁴Census of India (2011). Census India, 2011. Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. Retrieved from <https://censusindia.gov.in/>

⁵The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act (2016), the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. Published by Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India. Retrieved from <http://www.tezu.ernet.in/PwD/RPWD-ACT-2016.pdf>

and exclusion such as higher dropouts, out of school children in different areas of our country. Access to equitable, quality school education is still a dream for many children belonging to marginalized section of the society.⁶

The National Educational Policy 2020 is considered a notable effort after thirty four year of NEP, 1986 which emphasis on eliminating the growing inequalities from the Indian education system. The Policy of 2020 gives stress on improving right from the pre-primary stage to higher education along with professional and technical education. The NEP 2020 has recognized the growing changes and technological advancements in the world and suggested a structural change i.e., 5+3+3+4 in the education system of the nation. NEP 2020 aimed at to make India as a knowledge super power with bridging the gap between different social groups in terms of inequalities such as access to education, participation and learning outcomes etc. NEP 2020 gives recommendations for both school education and higher education stage to ensure the equitable and inclusive quality education for all.

NEP 2020 Equity and Inclusiveness in Education

NEP 2020 believes in the concept of Equity and Inclusiveness. Consulted More than 1000 Institutions for Inclusive Approach. Includes:

1. Gender Inclusiveness
2. Empowering Divyangs
3. Inclusion of LGBTQ communities
4. Religious Minorities
5. Linguistic Minorities
6. Promoting SEDGs

NEP 2020: Making education more inclusive

The New Education Policy (2020) is India's third policy which replaces the 1986 NEP. According to the Government, the NEP 2020 is formulated after having considered over 2 lakh suggestions from different levels of local self-bodies, 2.5 lakh gram panchayats, 6,600 blocks, 6,000 ULBs and 676 districts with the aim of holistic productivity and contributing citizens for building an equitable, inclusive, and plural society with an increased Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 50% by 2035.⁷ The National Education Policy, 2020 has conveyed the structural change in the education system which aims to make India the global knowledge superpower ensuring equity and Inclusion.

Equity and Inclusion:

The aim of equity and inclusion is now at the heart of new NEP. In the fields of higher or school education, inclusion involves restructuring the whole system with the aim of ensuring the wide range of educational opportunities; this includes curriculum, pedagogy and recreational opportunities, etc. The policy is designed to avoid segregation and isolation of ethnic and linguistic minorities, those with disabilities and also those who face learning difficulties due to language barriers and are at the risk of educational exclusion. We make sense of the world through language and this creates and recreates power, authority and also legitimization.

Inclusion of community participation:

An attempt has been made to develop conscious awareness of roles and duties and inclusion of community participation which would minimize the exclusion of students on the basis of language and disability. This will motivate students to learn more about the diverse culture of India, its knowledge system and tradition and also to sensitize them on human values, empathy, tolerance, human rights, gender equality, inclusion, and equity which will develop respect for diversity.

Gender equality and inclusion:

Gender equality and inclusion are vital in achieving these aims and leaving no one behind. Education needs a greater focus on accessibility, equity and quality. Remarkable signs of progress have been noticed in the past few years in

⁶Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009. Retrieved from Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India website https://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/rte.pdf.

⁷Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009. Retrieved from Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India website https://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/rte.pdf

respect of female participation up to secondary level. Such progress could be because of Government's policies and programmes run for girl child-like "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao", "Sukanya and Balika Samridhi Yojana" and many more.

NEP's biggest effort is to bring gender sensitivity as an integral part of curriculum and gender inclusion fund to be raised up to class 12 which covers all the socio-economically disadvantaged groups and also the transgender. Alternative and innovative education centres will lead to multiple pathways of effective learning and widespread participation of students of different groups.

Inclusion of new Pedagogical system for Early Child Care Education:

Inclusion of this system will help children of early age to attain optimal outcomes in the domains of physical and motor development, cognitive development, socio-emotional-ethical development, cultural/artistic development, and the development of communication and early language, literacy, and numeracy. The division of Pedagogical system has been done with an intention to include the children of early education with the age group 3-5 into Formal education and also to include this stage of education into the school curriculum as per Global standard which was not done earlier.

Inclusion of Skill Courses:

Students learn life skills when they complete their schooling so that they can be self-reliant by then. By including contemporary subjects, vocational courses and extra-curricular activities from the school level will pull back students towards their schools. "Bal Bhavans" as a special daytime boarding school, will be established to support mechanisms tailored to suit their needs and vitalize students to participate in art-related, career-related, and play-related activities.

Inclusion of Graduation Research and Exclusion of M.Phil.:

Inclusion of four years of undergraduate programme will help those students who could not continue their studies due to many anomalies. They have multiple exit and entry options. Students can go for a one-year sabbatical.

Those who have completed their graduation with research will have to do one year PG. MPhil remains a less frequently chosen and awarded qualification whereas, PhD is awarded the world over. Therefore, scrapping two years of M.Phil. Degree will save the time of students to move and decide their future ahead. Yes, it is going to affect those centres and institutions which are having M.Phil. And PhD as main degree programmes and students get direct admission in the M.Phil. course after the completion of M.A. degree. Scrapping M.Phil. will leave only one course left at the centres, i.e. PhD. Promoting high-quality research will uplift society and exclusion from Inclusion will be done through a new knowledge system.⁸

Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education: NEP 2020

Education is the single greatest tool for achieving social justice and equality. Inclusive and equitable education - while indeed an essential goal in its own right - is also critical to achieving an inclusive and equitable society in which every citizen has the opportunity to dream, thrive, and contribute to the nation. The education system must aim to benefit India's children so that no child loses any opportunity to learn and excel because of circumstances of birth or background. This Policy reaffirms that bridging the social category gaps in access, participation, and learning outcomes in Higher education will continue to be one of the major goals of all education sector development programmes.

1. Entry into quality higher education can open a vast array of possibilities that can lift both individuals as well as communities out of the cycles of disadvantage. For this reason, making quality higher education opportunities available to all individuals must be among the highest priorities. This Policy envisions ensuring equitable access to quality education to all students, with a special emphasis on SEDGs.
2. The dynamics and also many of the reasons for exclusion of SEDGs from the education system are common across school and higher education sectors. Therefore, the approach to equity and inclusion must be common across school and higher education. Furthermore, there must be continuity across the stages to ensure sustainable reform. Thus, the policy initiatives required to meet the goals of equity and inclusion in higher education must be read in conjunction with those for school education.
3. There are certain facets of exclusion that are particular to or substantially more intense in higher education. These must be addressed specifically, and include lack of knowledge of higher education opportunities, economic

⁸NEP 2020: Making education more inclusive <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/voices/nep-2020-making-education-more-inclusive/>

opportunity cost of pursuing higher education, financial constraints, admission processes, geographical and language barriers, poor employability potential of many higher education programmes, and lack of appropriate student support mechanisms.

4. For this purpose, additional actions that are specific to higher education shall be adopted by all Governments and Higher Education institutions (HEIs):

Steps to be taken by Governments

- (a) Earmark suitable Government funds for the education of SEDGs.
- (b) Set clear targets for higher GER for SEDGs.
- (c) Enhance gender balance in admissions to HEIs.
- (d) Enhance access by establishing more high-quality HEIs in aspirational districts and Special Education Zones containing larger numbers of SEDGs.
- (e) Develop and support high-quality HEIs that teach in local/Indian languages or bilingually.
- (f) Provide more financial assistance and scholarships to SEDGs in both public and private HEIs.
- (g) Conduct outreach programmes on higher education opportunities and scholarships among SEDGs.
- (h) Develop and support technology tools for better participation and learning outcomes.

Steps to be taken by all HEIs

- (a) Mitigate opportunity costs and fees for pursuing higher education.
- (b) Provide more financial assistance and scholarships to socio-economically disadvantaged students.
- (c) Conduct outreach on higher education opportunities and scholarships.
- (d) Make admissions processes more inclusive.
- (e) Make curriculum more inclusive.
- (f) Increase employability potential of higher education programmes.
- (g) Develop more degree courses taught in Indian languages and bilingually.
- (h) Ensure all buildings and facilities are wheelchair-accessible and disabled-friendly.
- (i) Develop bridge courses for students that come from disadvantaged educational backgrounds.
- (j) Provide socio-emotional and academic support and mentoring for all such students through suitable counselling and mentoring programmes.
- (k) Ensure sensitization of faculty, counsellor, and students on gender-identity issue and its inclusion in all aspects of the HEI, including curricula.
- (l) Strictly enforce all no-discrimination and anti-harassment rules.
- (m) Develop Institutional Development Plans that contain specific plans for action on increasing participation from SEDGs, including but not limited to the above items.⁹

Conclusion:-

Inclusion is a process of reducing the gap between learners with and without special educational needs. It helps special needs students to develop interactional skills because of the exposure to a social environment. Even though Inclusive Education have many good intentions, inclusive education in practice faces numerous challenges today. Inclusive pedagogy in light of social Justice, in a study conducted, the author explores special educator's experiences, possibilities and challenges when applying IE. Finding reveals positive attitudes to the concept of inclusive class rooms. Teachers face more than a few grey areas that need to be put in place in order to achieve socially and cognitively inclusive class rooms. The major barriers to Inclusive Education are Special Education Needs, Attitudinal barriers, Curriculum framing, untrained teachers, Infrastructural Constraints.

Implementation of IE is possible only by the active involvement of the management, administrators, teachers and the parents of normal and differently abled children. To fulfil our constitutional responsibility and to develop a healthy citizenship and self-reliance, practicing Inclusive Education is highly essential in the modern educational era.

⁹Government of India. Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020. National Education Policy: 2020 retrieved from <https://www.education.gov.in/national-education-policy>.