



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIA POST-INDEPENDENCE

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Abstract

Near about 10% of the world's population is affected with a disability, and a large amount of these people live in developing countries. India is a country with strong disability legislation. The Government of India has started numerous plans and policies in the field of special education after the independence. This paper explores about the important policy perspectives and provides an overview of the national supported programmes which have a focus on inclusive education. Successful implementation of a programme is essential for its success and thus this paper also tries to identify the gaps in the system of implementation. The Government of India needs to bridge the gaps in their education system to build a strong system of inclusive education in India.

Keywords: *inclusive, education, implementation*



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Introduction

India is the largest democracy and has nearly 17% of world population. Out of which nearly 200 million children are enrolled in elementary classes. Due to the diversity in its language, culture and socio economic status, a great variation is seen in terms of educational participation and this may result in inequalities in relation to the educational access, participation and achievement for certain groups particularly the children with disabilities. As per the planning commission's report of 2013, inequality in education has significantly decreased. One of basic need and services for children with disabilities is education. India is acknowledged as a country that has a strong focus on education and has a positive legal framework in relation to education of children with disabilities.

Inclusion after independence

Historically, in Indian policy discourses, the education for children with disabilities has been included as a part. After the independence, the Government of India has started numerous plans and policies in the field of special education. The Indian Constitution has included the inclusive education as a fundamental right for all citizens. Part IX, Article 45 of the Constitution states, the state shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years. This was reaffirmed in 1993 and in the 86th

amendment to the constitution, section 21A reads, “The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine.” The Government of India created the Kothari Commission in 1964, named after its chairman, P.S. Kothari. This commission was created because the Government of India wanted to create a plan of action to improve the education system. The plan of action created by the Kothari Commission included people with disabilities. The Kothari Commission recognised this in 1966 when it stated that, “education of the handicapped children should be an inseparable part of the education system”.

The National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1986 states that children with “mild” disabilities should be included in mainstream classrooms, whereas children with “moderate to severe” disabilities should be placed in segregated schools. The 1992 Program of Action (POA), created to implement the 1986 NPE, says that once children with disabilities acquire basic living skills, which would be learned in resource rooms or special schools, that they should be mainstreamed. In 2002, the 86th amendment to the constitution was made, mandating free and compulsory education to all children ages 6-14. And with the help of World Bank, Government of India Initiated Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in India. In order to functionalise the education policy objectives, the government currently supports two national level programs, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA).

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan aims to provide accessible and good quality primary education. Its key interventions include financial support, special training for children with special needs to prepare them for school, guideline for curriculum adaptation, teacher training and barrier-free access and training manual for teachers. Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) is a centrally sponsored scheme of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. It aims for the development of secondary education in public schools throughout India. It was launched in March 2009. The implementation of the scheme has started from 2009-2010 to provide conditions for an efficient growth, development and equity for all. Thus, both these Programs focus on improving access, quality and outcomes for all children at primary and secondary level, and within each program there is a solid focus on children with disabilities. The one of the objectives of Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan is to eradicate gender, socio-economic and disability barriers. Inclusive education has been emphasised to bring about expansion in terms of meeting to the

needs of the mentally and physically disadvantaged children. These schemes continue to include several components for meeting with integrated child development services for early interventions, especially Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan(SSA) for the particular group at the elementary level, and special schools. Scheme of Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) has been launched from the year 2009-10. This Scheme replaces the prior scheme of Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) and offers assistance for the inclusive education of the disabled children in classes IX-XII. This scheme now listed under Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) from 2013. The scheme covers all children studying at the secondary stage in Government, local body and Government-aided schools, with one or more disabilities as defined under the Persons with Disabilities Act (1995) and the National Trust Act (1999) in the class IX to XII, namely blindness, low vision, leprosy cured, hearing impairment, locomotor disabilities, mental retardation, mental illness, autism, and cerebral palsy and may eventually cover speech impairment, learning disabilities, etc. Girls with the disabilities receive special emphasis to help them gain access to secondary schools, as also to information and guidance for developing their potential. Setting up of Model inclusive schools in every State is envisaged under the scheme. Appointment of special education teachers, allowances for general teachers teaching children with special needs, resource rooms in every block, provision of barrier-free accessible environments etc are some of the key interventions of the scheme.

Implementation of the policies

There are many policies and schemes to support the inclusive education but to find the effectiveness of its implementation and to find the possible solutions of the problems are always important. Since the mid-1990s there has been a significant increase in the enrolment of children with special needs in primary education (NUEPA, 2014b). In the year 2012-13 the Department of Education of Groups with Special Needs (DEGSN) has conducted an evaluation study titled —Evaluation of implementation of the scheme IEDSS in India—as well as one regional consultation to strengthen the implementation of IEDSS in the north-eastern states. The evaluation study revealed that though the scheme launched in 2009 needs to gain momentum as the states are facing problems with respect to planning and lack of awareness among the educational administrators involved in the implementation. Some of the important recommendations were-

- a) A compulsory course on inclusive education should be included at all levels of the teacher training programmes.
- b) The teacher training should have provision for hands on experience of teaching in regular, inclusive as well as special schools.
- c) Thorough training in curriculum adaptations as per the child's need and context of the children with special needs should be preferred.
- d) Innovations and modification in evaluation procedures should be encouraged.

So, from the above discussion we can understand that even though there are numerous schemes which are provided by the government through different policies the implementation of these are not on a full swing. Factors which are very essential to achieve inclusive education in our country can be clustered around four main themes.

1. Training of mainstream teachers are very essential. Poor infrastructure, large class sizes, lack of clarity and lack of confidence in teaching children with disabilities are highlighted. (Sharma et al., 2009; Singal, 2008; Das et al., 2013).
2. The role of special educators is very important in various programs on inclusive education. Special educators provide help in preparing individualized educational plans, supporting general teachers in lesson planning and coordinate different activities. Singal, De and Bhutani (2016) in their analysis of the RMSA noted the significantly low numbers of special educators being currently trained in relation to the need in efforts to achieve inclusive education.
3. Physical infrastructure of schools has undergone significant changes in recent years. Use of cost effective teaching aids and its adaptations to school infrastructure are another crucial factor for the successful implementation of inclusive education.
4. Children with disabilities should not face any exclusion from teaching-learning activities in a classroom, from playing activities and from friendship groups. Supporting children with disabilities in mainstream schools is another crucial factor for the success of inclusive education.

CONCLUSION

The Inclusive education means education of all students, where all students are equal participants in the learning process. Training teachers in teaching methods that include students of all ability levels, as well as spreading awareness to teachers about the importance and benefits of inclusion, is one of the most important parts of implementing a system of

inclusive education, because the teachers are the people on-the-ground who are going to accommodate the students (Aruna, Singh.K,Lal.M 2016).In many states enrolment rates are increasing for children with disabilities, still there are variations in relation to gender and types of impairments. Most significantly, schools themselves remain ill-prepared to effectively include children with disabilities. Teachers lack confidence and do not feel fully prepared when teaching classrooms with diverse learners (Singal 2008)Pre-service training to be strengthened, as currently the majority of teachers have had little to no special training to prepare them to work with children with disabilities (Das et al., 2013). The poor infrastructure, both human and material, which causes significant challenges in the classroom and leaves Indian teachers often unprepared to work with diverse classrooms. Progress to be made in the provision of resources, specifically special educators as well as assistive technology. There are very strong legal frameworks for the implementation of the inclusive education in India but their implementation efforts have neither resulted in an inclusive system of education, nor have they reached their goal of “education for all” across the country. The Government of India needs to bridge the gaps in their education system to build a strong system of inclusive education in India.

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