

Inclusive Education as a Pathway to an Equitable and Inclusive Society

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Abstract- *For the highest development of a country, it is very necessary that the nature of its society be equitable and inclusive. A society which has both equity and inclusion at its core. Inclusive education has the potential to build an equitable and inclusive society. The basic philosophy of inclusive education is that “children who learn by living together, learn to live together.” Inclusive education aims to provide equal learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or needs. This approach supports the development of a more equitable society by promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within educational settings. Inclusive education is not a new concept, it is already underway. RPWD Act 2016 is an updated Act for inclusive education, all the provisions of which have been fully accepted in NEP 2020. In the National Education Policy 2020, more emphasis has been laid on making inclusive education equitable so that learning can be ensured for all. In the present study, inclusive education has been seen as a major tool in building an equitable and inclusive society because inclusive education is based on such fundamental beliefs that teach the people of the country things like mutual goodwill, non-discriminatory vision, equality, participation, respect, acceptance, sense of duty and living together. This paper explores the conceptual framework of inclusive education, principles and assumptions of inclusive education, its benefits, challenges, and best practices, and provides recommendations for fostering inclusive environments in schools.*

Indexed Terms- *Inclusive Education, Equitable and Inclusive Society, Principles and Assumptions, Benefits and Challenges, Practices & Recommendations.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The first basis of progress of any nation is its citizens. This cannot be imagined unless the citizens of the country are educated and well-organized and there is mutual coordination among them. For this, there is a need for an education system which can establish equality in the society and can include all the units of the society. For this, inclusive education seems to be emerging as a better option. Inclusive education is a pedagogical approach that seeks to address the diverse needs of all learners by reducing barriers to learning and participation. It emphasizes the importance of creating supportive and accommodating educational environments where every student has the opportunity to succeed. Inclusive education is grounded in the principles of equity, diversity, and social justice, and is recognized as a fundamental human right (UNESCO, 2020).

In the National Education Policy 2020, more emphasis has been laid on making inclusive education equitable. Equitable and inclusive education means an education system which is both equitable and inclusive. It is a system that makes learning accessible to all, no matter what their barriers. Equitable and inclusive education is not only an essential goal in itself, but also an essential step towards building an equitable and inclusive society, in which every citizen has the opportunity to dream, develop and contribute to the national interest. This education policy moves forward with such goals that circumstances related to birth or background should not hinder the opportunities of learning and progress of any child in India. (NEP 2020)

II. EQUITABLE INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Equitable means one which has equality at its core, that is, a society in which the distribution of resources

is not on the basis of equality but according to the needs of the people. For example, the most assistance should be given to the socially and economically weakest people, less assistance should be given to the socially and economically average people and very little or no assistance should be given to the socially and economically prosperous people. Many people remain confused about equity and equality. Here we will try to understand 'equality' and 'equity' better through an example, suppose a country has Rs 100 crore which it wants to spend on education for the welfare of the people and that country has 100 crore students are studying in which the financial condition of some students is very pathetic, the financial condition of some students is normal and the financial condition of some students is very good. Now, if the government, keeping in mind the economic condition of the students, according to their needs, gives five thousand rupees each to the students with the weakest economic condition, two thousand rupees each to the students with normal economic condition and to those whose economic condition is very good, if no financial assistance is given then it would be an example of equality. On the contrary, if the government had distributed this amount equally to all the students on the basis of equality without keeping in mind the economic condition of the students, then each student would have got Rs 100, then it would have been called equality.

It is clear from the above example how important equity is here. If the government had followed equality here and distributed all the money equally then this distribution would have been meaningless. This does not at all mean that equity should be adopted instead of equality in every case. In some cases, equality is necessary, like - if we talk about the freedom of an individual, then equality is better here because every person needs freedom equally, whether the person is rich or poor. Equity and equality complement each other, equity is adopted only to establish equality in the society. I hope that now you have understood equality and equity very well and have also understood where we should follow equity and where we should follow equality.

Inclusive society means a society which is based on inclusion. That is, in which there is no discrimination on the basis of caste, religion, gender, sect, creed,

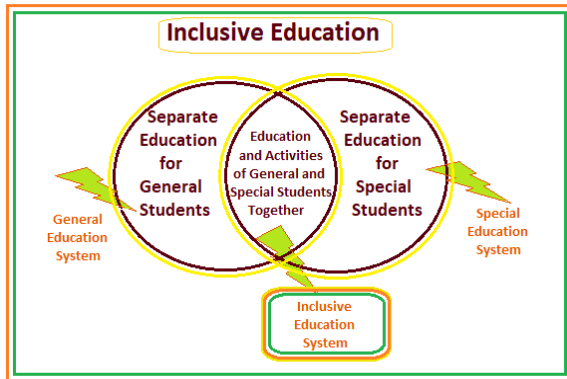
language, culture, region, class, economic and social status etc., in which there is no discrimination on the basis of interaction, eating and drinking, touching, marriage etc., in which there should be no sense of superiority and inferiority on the basis of educated- uneducated, rich-poor, officer-employee, laborer, farmer, sweeper etc., in which all the people of the society should be treated without any discrimination and There should be equal opportunities for interaction and development in the form of obstacles. A society in which there is equity, equality, dedication, acceptance, fraternity and brotherhood. Every person in the society should be connected to each other and should not feel any kind of isolation. There should neither be pride in anyone nor inferiority in anyone; All people work as a unit. Thus, an egalitarian and inclusive society means an ideal society which has both equality and inclusion at its core.

III. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Legal provisions related to disabilities in India are considered to have started from Sargent Scheme 1944. But the Salamanca Conference 1994 proved to be a milestone in the development of inclusive education in India. (Singh, 2014) The main decision of this conference was - 'Education for all, including providing education to children, youth and people with special needs in the general education system.' (UNESCO, 1994) Today, inclusive education is considered as an equitable and inclusive society. Being seen as a tool in construction. The basic philosophy of inclusive education is that "children who learn by living together, learn to live together." (Uttarakhand Open University) That is why inclusive education provides equal opportunities and environment to all the children and provides education to all together. It believes in constitutional and social values like equality, respect, participation and community and organizes the school as a community and believes that if all the children learn to live together then they will be able to live together in future. They will not face any problem; it is very important for the development of any nation that its citizens live together.

Inclusive education is a new progressive exploratory system of education for children with various disabilities, normal children, gifted children, deprived

children, minority children, disadvantaged and marginalized children etc. which believes that every child has some unique quality or different qualification. Therefore, it sees all children as human resources. Instead of considering any child as a burden, it expects them to contribute to the development of the country. Inclusive education system is not only for disabled students but also for general students. Its objective is to provide educational opportunities and facilities to disabled students by including them in all the physical activities of normal students (reading-writing, eating-drinking, playing-jumping etc.). NCF (2005) Under this, all types of children, including normal children, disabled children, backward children, talented children, deprived children, linguistic, racial, minority, deprived etc., come together who receive education together.



In the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016), inclusive education has been defined as follows - “Inclusive education” means a system of education wherein students with and without disability learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities.

Inclusive education is a system based on a social model in which the child does not have to mold himself according to the school, rather it is the responsibility of the school to mold itself according to the child. Schools will adapt themselves to an inclusive environment, keeping in mind the differences of every child, and will make arrangements for building construction, furniture, drinking water and toilets etc. as per their needs so that no child faces any inconvenience in being included in

the school environment and receiving education. (PWD Act 1995)

Inclusion is a process that goes on continuously. It is not that if you make arrangements in a school only once, then that school becomes integrated forever; When another child with different abilities comes to take admission in this school, then changes will have to be made in the school again as per the needs of that child.

IV. PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The core principles of inclusive education include:

1. Equity: Ensuring all students have access to quality education and necessary resources.
2. Diversity: Valuing and respecting the unique backgrounds, abilities, and needs of each student.
3. Participation: Encouraging active involvement of all students in the learning process.
4. Support: Providing appropriate support to students, teachers, and families to facilitate inclusive practices.

V. ASSUMPTIONS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education is an emerging powerful concept which is based on the following educational, social, ideological and philosophical beliefs:

1. All children can learn; therefore, everyone should have equal opportunities to learn.
2. Children who learn by living together, also learn to live by living together.
3. Creates a positive environment by recognizing the continuous needs and abilities of children.
4. Adapts the physical elements, curriculum related facts and teaching expectations to the needs of the children.
5. Encourages positive change in the current environment.
6. Emphasizes on developing the school's capabilities to understand and meet the needs of each student.
7. Strengthens the feeling of social acceptance.
8. Provides many opportunities for social interaction which cannot be found in separate education.
9. Inclusive education means including everyone.
10. Disability has to be accepted because it is social responsibility.

11. Children do not fail; they only reflect the failure of the school.
12. Acceptance of differences is a celebration of diversity.
13. Inclusion is not just limited to people with disabilities.
14. Participation is our strength; it is necessary in every situation.
15. Disability is constructed by society, please dismantle it.
16. Learn human rights and overcome human errors.
17. Recognize their strengths, not their shortcomings.
18. Teaching together is beneficial for every child.
19. All good teaching practices are practices of inclusion.
20. The needs of every child coming to school are different.
21. The progress of the common school system depends on how the school and the community strive together to prepare citizens for an adjusted society.

Inclusive education system is implemented in almost all the schools, but including, educating and taking care of all the children in the school together is a big challenge for the teachers and the people related to this system because there are many problems in adjusting them which are studied. It is very important to do this and find a solution.

In the National Education Policy 2020, inclusive education has been fully aligned with the RPWD Act 2016 and fulfills all the recommendations proposed by it in relation to school education and also provides priority to children with disabilities through ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education). Giving importance to experts related to disability in curriculum development, provision to appoint teachers who have received training related to the needs of children with special needs and provision to open a resource center wherever necessary for children with severe or more than one special need. Will further strengthen inclusive education. To further strengthen communication with children with disabilities in the classroom, emphasis has been laid on updating and making technological equipment and teaching materials universally accessible, as well as on developing modules using sign language to teach other basic subjects. Has gone.

According to the RPWD Act 2016, fundamentally disabled children will have the option to choose regular or special school education, and children who are unable to go to school or have severe disabilities will also have the option of home-based education (home schooling). Special teachers will help the parents in this 'home based education'. The special thing is that this 'home based education' will be considered equivalent to general education. In fact, this system will prove to be a milestone in reducing the obstacles coming in the way of disability. The negative side of this policy is that the responsibility of education of disabled children has been left to the states.

In inclusive education, special arrangements have been made for the education of Socio-Economically Deprived (SEDG) students, especially girls, because among all the groups of deprived class, the most injustice has been done to the women of these classes. It has been said that half of the population is girls, hence making arrangements for quality education of girls from socio-economically deprived sections will be helpful in the educational upliftment of their present and future generations. In this, a lot of emphasis has also been laid on the education of girls and transgender students and there has been talk of setting up a 'gender inclusive fund' for them. An 'Inclusion Fund' will be constituted for similar problems of other socio-economically deprived students. In fact, this system will prove to be a boon for providing equitable education to women and transgender students of socially and economically deprived sections and enhancing the capabilities of the country.

VI. BENEFITS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

1. Academic Benefits: Research indicates that inclusive education leads to improved academic outcomes for all students. Studies show that students with disabilities who are educated in inclusive settings perform better academically compared to those in segregated settings (Hehir et al., 2016). Furthermore, inclusive education fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills among all students.
2. Social Benefits: Inclusive education promotes social cohesion and reduces stigma associated with disabilities. Students learn to appreciate diversity and

develop empathy, leading to more positive social interactions and relationships (Siperstein et al., 2007). Inclusive settings also prepare students for participation in diverse and inclusive societies.

3. Emotional Benefits: Inclusive education supports the emotional well-being of students by creating a sense of belonging and acceptance. Students in inclusive environments are more likely to develop positive self-esteem and resilience (Frederickson & Cline, 2015).

VII. CHALLENGES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Despite its benefits, inclusive education faces several challenges:

1. Resource Constraints: Implementing inclusive education requires adequate resources, including trained staff, assistive technologies, and adaptable curricula. Many schools, particularly in low-income areas, lack these resources (UNESCO, 2020).

2. Teacher Training: Effective inclusive education relies on teachers who are well-trained in inclusive practices. However, many educators lack the necessary skills and knowledge to support diverse learners (Forlin & Chambers, 2011).

3. Attitudinal Barriers: Negative attitudes and misconceptions about disabilities can hinder the implementation of inclusive education. Overcoming these barriers requires ongoing advocacy and awareness-raising efforts.

VIII. BEST PRACTICES IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

1. Collaborative Teaching: Collaborative teaching involves co-teaching arrangements where general and special education teachers work together to plan, deliver, and assess instruction. This approach ensures that all students receive the support they need (Murawski & Swanson, 2001).

2. Universal Design for Learning (UDL): UDL is an educational framework that provides multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression to accommodate diverse learners. It emphasizes flexibility and accessibility in teaching methods and materials (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014).

3. Family and Community Engagement: Engaging families and communities in the educational process is

crucial for successful inclusive education. Strong partnerships between schools, families, and communities support student learning and well-being (Epstein, 2010).

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FOSTERING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

1. Policy Development: Governments should develop and implement policies that promote inclusive education and allocate adequate resources for its implementation.

2. Professional Development: Ongoing professional development opportunities should be provided to educators to enhance their skills in inclusive practices.

3. Inclusive Curriculum: Schools should adopt curricula that reflect the diversity of students and incorporate inclusive teaching strategies.

4. Awareness and Advocacy: Continuous efforts are needed to raise awareness about the benefits of inclusive education and advocate for the rights of all students.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that for the progress of any country, it is very necessary that there should not be any kind of internal discord among its citizens and this is an essential condition for a country like India where people of many castes, religions, sects and cultures live. In such a situation, the concept of an equitable and inclusive society can prove beneficial for a country like India in many ways. This will further strengthen the basis of 'Unity in Diversity is India's specialty'. This is why inclusive education is being seen as a tool in building an equitable and inclusive society. Inclusive education is based on beliefs like equity, equality, inclusion, participation, respect, acceptance. This education has the potential to create a strong nation by creating an equitable inclusive society and inclusive culture by inculcating values like universal brotherhood, philanthropy, sense of duty, human rights, equality, goodwill, acceptance, respect for all, non-violence and compassion among the people.

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