**Inclusive Education: A Paradigm Shift for 21st Century**

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1. **Introduction**

The goal of inclusive education is to provide schools, classrooms, programs, and activities where all children can learn and engage in activities together. Every person of India has the fundamental right to education under Article 45(a) of the constitution. Since its independence, India's government has worked to ensure that all of its citizens have equitable access to quality education. Through the provision of additional educational facilities to underdeveloped regions and economically, socially, and culturally disadvantaged groups like OBC, SC, and ST, efforts have been made to address the regional imbalance. This has somewhat corrected the disparities in the equity of educational possibilities for all Indian nationals.

The current educational system must take into account these students' requirements and aptitudes, and as a result, the physical, psychological, and learning environments must be changed to promote the healthy growth of these people. In other words, better physical access for these students, a teaching-learning environment that accommodates their disabilities, supportive systems for successful integration of these students with the general population, and appropriate changes to examination and evaluation systems are all urgently needed for better inclusive education, whether at the secondary or postsecondary levels.

The placement of kids with exceptional educational needs in regular classrooms as opposed to segregated special students and special courses has increased significantly over the past two to three decades in the majority of developed countries. This action has also been referred to more recently as mainstreaming integration. It is assumed that students with impairments will attend classes with typically developing peers. Receiving relevant instruction, the required assistance, and active teaching techniques (Smith 2004). It is essential for all other kids to have a regular educational environment and a comprehensive, balanced, and relevant curriculum since the fundamental tenets of the integration inclusion movement are anti-discrimination, equality, social justice, and fundamental human rights (UNESCO, 1994 Knight it, 1999).

1. **Inclusive Education**

According to Salend (2001, p. 5), inclusion is a "philosophy that brings together students, families, educators, and community members to create schools and other social institutions based on acceptance, belonging, and community." According to theory, inclusion is a strategy used in schools to create environments that are friendly, encouraging, and caring for students as well as the accommodations they require to study (Salend, 2001). The essential need for inclusion is that students with disabilities will benefit from taking regular education classes rather than struggling to stay up academically.

According to Salend (2001), there are four basic ideas that serve as a framework and encapsulate the philosophies underpinning inclusive practices: 1) Diversity 2) Individual needs 3) Reflective practice 4) collaboration.

1. **Nature of Inclusive Education**

In India, inclusive education is a relatively new idea that has also gained acceptance as a general education strategy. A teacher at a conventional school focuses on the average learner but also has expertise working with both slow and academically gifted students. Children with varying levels of intelligence are taught in the mainstream classroom. As a result, inclusion for his category has already begun. Therefore, it becomes necessary in the modern environment to integrate the sensory impaired, specifically the visually and hearing impaired as well as the physically and orthopedically disabled, into the main stream of education.

Children with and without disabilities share a lot of similar cognitive abilities. As a result, it is highly helpful for these kids to learn in an inclusive environment with their typical peers while also using the plus curriculum to help them deal with their difficulties. The concept of integration divides a youngster from the typical group by classifying him based on some distinguishable distinctions. In terms of education, the child's deficit requires a particular educational setup with special educational inputs. If the child needs to be mainstreamed, he will need extra support to function in the usual class. The ability of the disabled youngster to adjust to school is an important idea related to integration.

1. **Concept of Inclusive School**

Everybody belongs in an inclusive school, where the child receives help from his or her peers and other members of the school and community in order to meet their educational needs. Regular schools offer inclusive education, which is a flexible and personalized support system devoted to providing a suitable education for everyone. The needs and talents of each child are different, as are their learning styles and rates, and inclusive education acknowledges this diversity and adapts instruction accordingly. Stainback (1992) asserts that when general and special education staff, curriculum, and instructional strategies are blended to deliver an educational experience that meets the requirements of the children in an integrated setting, inclusion promotes integration in school systems. The Salamanca statement and framework for action (1994) strongly promote “inclusive education “of schools for all.

# Emphasize Inclusive Education in India

In India, special education programs for kids with impairments first appeared at the start of the 19th century. Most of the nation's special education services were started by foreign missionaries. In the years following independence, inclusivity has become a common theme in national education documents. Better services are guaranteed to people with disabilities under Article 45 of the Indian Constitution. The Education Commission Report from 1966–1966 advised integrating impaired children into regular classrooms as much as feasible. National Policy on Education (NPE), published in 1986. Had a comprehensive chapter on "Education of the Handicapped" and put out recommendations for action. The growth of integrated education programs is imperative, according to the NPE. The NPE gave the centrally supported integrated education for impaired children (IEDC) program, which was inaugurated in 1974, a boost. As a result, attempts were made to include everyone.

# Inclusion promoted through the Persons with Disabilities Act 1995

The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act of 1995 treats the subject of services for children with disabilities as one of human resources development. The services provided to children with disabilities are now viewed as a right of the impaired child rather than as a welfare activity as a result of this Act. The PWD Act's primary goal is to outline the obligations of the federal and state governments with regard to services for people with disabilities. The Act also guarantees that people with disabilities live complete lives and can contribute fully despite their disabilities. The seven disabilities covered under the Act are blindness, low vision, leprosy cure, hearing impairment, locomotors disability, mental illness, and mental retardation. The Act mandates that the federal and state governments work together to guarantee that every child with a handicap has access to a free, suitable education until they turn 18 years old. The Act also emphasizes the introduction of non-formal education, functional literacy programs, the provision of assistance and appliances, education through open schools and colleges, etc. It also suggests that in order to adequately prepare teachers for special education, the government should provide teacher training facilities. The Act also plans to boost research on assistive technologies. At the federal and state levels, numerous plans are being developed to put this Act into effect. As a result, the PWD Act of 1995 actively promotes inclusive educational practices whenever possible.

# The Role of the Rehabilitation Council of India in Inclusion

The Parliament approved the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) Act in 1992. The Act was developed by the former Ministry of Welfare (now the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment) to govern programs for developing human resources in the field of special education for children. RCI has projected the need for a significant amount of staff to support education for all impaired children, even though it does not deal specifically with the promotion of services at the school level. A total of 100 institutions have been approved by the RCI to offer special education and rehabilitation manpower development programs throughout India, and more than 50 courses have been produced to date. Disability-related institutions are encouraged to create manpower development programs in particular categories, and recognition is given to the institutions when they meet the standards established by the RCI. The RCI Act of 1992's passage went a long way in bringing professionalism to serving people with disabilities and accrediting special education manpower development programs in the nation. The RCI's projected workforce is designed to support all impaired children's access to education. Therefore, the RCI also supports the inclusive education policy.

# Factors are vital for the Success of Inclusive Education

Building capacity in general education: General classroom teachers require training on recognizing the educational needs of these children in order to effectively execute inclusive education for all types of impaired children. The pre-service teacher preparation course itself is the best place to teach about special needs children. The National Council for Teacher Education's (1998) curriculum framework recommends that the pre-service teacher preparation course cover material on children with exceptional needs. If suitable disability-specific assistive technologies are made available, teachers will be able to meet the educational needs of impaired students in general classes after receiving the necessary training. Specialist teachers may on occasion aid normal classroom teachers in their duties.

1. **Adopting need-based instructional strategies**

A child with a handicap cannot simply be enrolled in a regular classroom as inclusive education. Helping the child manage the normal classwork is necessary. Consequently, a child-centered strategy is required. Children with disabilities of all kinds and levels would be included in the ideal inclusive environment. They might not all need the same kind of help. While some people may only occasionally need advice, others demand constant assistance.

1. **Exchange of manpower and material resources:**

The effectiveness with which all State and local departments can contribute to the overall development of the impaired child will determine if inclusive education is successful. Since inclusive education is a community-based initiative, the level of interaction between the various community development actors determines its effectiveness. The execution of the program is to involve the District Rehabilitation Centers, neighborhood hospitals, braille presses, special schools, etc. in close detail.

1. **Enlisting parents and community’s participation:**

Parental involvement in school is a key component of ideal inclusive education systems. Parent-interact organizations are crucial for improving the standard of inclusive education. Parental participation not only enhances inclusion but also influences how the community views people with disabilities.

1. **Improving child-to-child learning:**

The effects of non-disabled children on the academic achievement of disabled children and vice versa are remarkable, even when ordinary classroom teachers and special teachers are available to give services to children with disabilities in every region. The finest teachers for helping impaired children develop appropriate concepts are the children who are not disabled. The importance of child-to-child learning is also highlighted in India because of the sizeable classrooms there. To raise everyone's accomplishment, including that of impaired children, inclusive environments should make effective use of the child-to-child learning technique.

# Advantages of Inclusion for Regular Education Students

Students are given the opportunity to be more understanding of individual diversity, which is a positive ("Rational for and benefits of inclusion" 2004). The basic objectives of special education may not be achieved by general education students, but inclusion can help them understand their differences, other people's needs, and how to deal with them. Recent studies have demonstrated that placing students with disabilities in regular education classes has many positive benefits on inclusion education for these kids ("special education inclusion" 2001).

There are several advantages for a kid with a handicap when they are placed in a regular education classroom. In contrast to the conventional special education classroom setting, it typically can offer a more stimulating atmosphere ("Rational and benefits of intrusion", 2001). According to "What does an inclusive classroom look like?" (2004), this setting frequently promotes the special education student's enriching growth and learning. According to research, students with disabilities who are enrolled in inclusion programs spend more time learning actively and are exposed to two more economic activities (Salend, 2001). Hopefully, this exciting environment will result in increased academic success. Making new friends and sharing new experiences is another benefit of inclusion for kids in special education (see "Rational for and benefits of inclusion", 2004). A completely new area of students is shown to the pupil.

The student with a disability's self-respect and self-esteem are also improved by inclusion ("Benefits of inclusive classrooms for all", 1999). They start to develop a feeling of self-worth when they begin to interact with regular education kids and teachers. They have positive feelings about who they are and their time at school in general. Their perception of themselves as a person who can partake in some of the same opportunities and experiences as their classmates who are not disabled can start to change ("Benefits of inclusive classrooms for all", 1999).

Inclusion has been linked to better standardized test scores, reading proficiency, mastery of IEP goals, and other outcomes for students with disabilities, according to research (Salend, 2001). The regular educational program and the learning environment as a whole can benefit from an inclusive setting ("Rational for and benefits of inclusion", 2004).

1. **Conclusion**

Numerous studies have shown how important it is for legislators, parents, and teachers to work together to ensure that all students are included. Impairments in a typical educational atmosphere. As a result, educators, the government, and specifies at large are now concerned about including kids with disabilities in conventional educational settings. One of the key elements ensuring the success of the inclusive education of students with special needs is the attitude of the teachers. The attitudes of teachers should be understood since they may have an effect on how they treat and accept such special education students.

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