

Inclusive Education: Concept, Needs, Aims & Scope

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Note: The term '*disabled student*' will be used frequently in this study material for convenience. However, refrain from using this term as it is deemed inappropriate in modern times. Instead, use the terms '*student with disability*' or '*person with disability*', especially in tests, exams and academic publications. Terms like '*special needs*' and '*differently-abled*' are also inappropriate and offensive and should never be used. If you come across other study material, book, journal etc., which uses these two terms, they were (probably) written several years ago.

CONCEPT

Inclusive education (IE) is a new approach towards educating the children with disability and learning difficulties with that of normal ones within the same classroom. It seeks to address the learning needs of all children with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. It implies all learners – with or without disabilities being able to learn together through access to common schools and community educational setting with an appropriate network of support services. This is possible only in flexible education system that includes the needs of different types of learners and adapts itself to meet their needs.

Inclusive Education addresses the diverse needs of all learners by reducing barriers inside schools. It is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners. This educational approach provides all students greater opportunities for academic and social achievement. This includes opportunities to participate in the full range of social, recreational, arts, sports, music, day care and afterschool care, extra-curricular, faith based, and all other activities.

Inclusive education argues that all children irrespective of the nature and degree of disability should be educated in general schools with non-disabled children. The schools and classrooms operate on the idea that, with right amount of support, students with disabilities can be as competent as students without disabilities.

There are 2 types of Inclusive Education:

1. **Partial Inclusion:** Children with disability are educated in the regular classrooms for most time of the day. For the rest of the day, they leave their regular classrooms to be with their special education teacher aide in a resource room to work on individual academic skills or behavioral goals
2. **Full Inclusion:** A child needs to be isolated because of a skill he uniquely needs. It means that the disabled students get all the special services they need in the regular classroom and stay there all day

There are 2 methods of adopting Inclusive Education:

1. **Accommodation:** It is employed when the student is anticipated to learn similar curricular content. It is carried out when there are little changes in the services or arrangement that do not alter the learning outcomes of the students. But the student may be taught in a different way or may require some changes in the environment.
2. **Modification:** It applies to student with severe disabilities. It is implement when there are changes in the curriculum to fit the student's ability. It is usually used when a student is expected to learn a different curricular content.

Needs and Importance of Inclusive Education

1. Differentiated Instruction: All students learn differently and their individual needs should be taken care of. This is more so important for students with disabilities. Teachers meet everyone's needs by presenting lessons in different ways and using **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**. One key teaching strategy is to break students into small groups. By using small groups, teaching can be tailored to the way each student learns best. This is known as differentiated instruction.

2. Reduced Stigma: Stigma is a strong feeling of disapproval that most people in a society have about something. In developing nations, there is a stigma towards people with disabilities. Inclusive classrooms are filled with diverse learners. This lets students talk about how everyone learns in their own way, thus developing understanding about each other's strengths and weaknesses. They may find that they have more in common with other kids than they thought. This can go a long way in reducing stigma for students with learning and attention issues. It can also help them build and maintain friendships. Inclusion in schools goes a long way in helping remove the negative stigma in society towards disabled people.

3. Effective Use of Resources: In more traditional special education settings, many students are provided related services, like speech therapy or for other specialized instruction. An inclusion

class often brings speech therapists, reading specialists and other service providers into the classroom. These professionals can provide information and suggestions to help not just disabled students, but also to abled students. A non-inclusive classroom usually has the usual subject teacher that don't provide anything special to the students.

4. Basis for Inclusive Society: A society that embraces and integrates an inclusive education will naturally introduce the same culture of inclusion in its concepts of civic participation, employability and community relationships. The seeds of inclusion need to be planted in the young students so that they will learn the values, skills and knowledge to include others who are different from them. Those with disabilities can become pioneers of public projects and programs.

5. Human Resource Capitalization: If one of the motivation for uplifting women's education was to make the best use of a nation's work force, the same logic can be applied to students with disabilities. Like any minority group, disabled people can also reach their maximum potential with additional help. Through Inclusion policies in the education system, a country can expand its workforce by creating individuals who may be disabled through unfortunate circumstances but fully abled and functional in productivity.

6. Better Academic performance: Research has shown that students learning together in the classroom improves academic excellence. Students set higher expectations for themselves due to the presence of others with diverse abilities. Students with disabilities challenge themselves to perform optimally like their classmates, while other students also spontaneously set a high standard for themselves.

7. Development of leadership skills: Students in an inclusive education environment naturally learn to take up the responsibility of caring for one another. There are situations where students stand up and speak up to protect their friends who are bullied. This naturally can lead to a leadership skill. The school environment also encourages self-discovery as students with diverse abilities find themselves performing roles and functions they usually would not be exposed to if they had been separated.

8. Parental Involvement: Parents participation in the education of the child in an inclusive system can ultimately define its success. Inclusive education involves coming up with innovative and strategic methods of getting parents involved and noticed by children in the learning process. The process of creating educational contents and other learning activities in an inclusive system ensures a significant contribution of parents through the planning stage. Parents can be actively involved in their child's education and other school activities. Parents love to witness the performance of their children during events such as debate, quiz competition, sports and other

programs. It also drives a higher commitment to the school by the parents as they become more involved in the school program.

9. Building Self Esteem and Self Worth: Attending classroom settings that depict the true nature of the similarities and differences that exist in the world helps children appreciate diversity. It is essential that a child's education introduces him/her to the reality of the world out there beyond the walls of just an academic environment. Playing and learning alongside with other children of different cultures and abilities assist children to grow in understanding people that are unique in skills due to physical, social or other challenges. The culture of respect for one another also grows when children are allowed to play with one another without segregation.

10. Economical: Most developing nations like India have problem of funding in education. There is a lack of schools as well as teachers. By converting schools into inclusive schools, we not only save the expense of constructing a new establishment, but also get to retain the experienced staff. However, the existing staff will require additional training, which despite its additional cost, is still more economical in the long term.

Aims and Objectives of Inclusive Education

1. To develop and utilize Individualized Education Programmes (IEP) as a means to impart personalized and need based educational experiences to all students, abled or disabled.
2. To develop democratic thinking in young students and make democratization of education (a vital goal of NPE 1992) possible.
3. Provide educational opportunities to all students, irrespective of their backgrounds and capabilities
4. To provide appropriate vocational services to students with disabilities and direct them to careers suited for them
5. To provide Transition Services and develop a post-secondary school plan for each student with a disability, so that they can acquire help and adjust at the higher levels of education.
6. To provide a coordinated and comprehensive instructional program from kindergarten through high school.
7. Help teachers in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of students and provide appropriate assistance wherever and whenever required.
8. To make use of the latest ICT based and non-ICT based teaching learning tools in classroom to enhance the learning capabilities of not just disabled students but also fully abled students as well.
9. Making use of specialized instructors, medical experts, therapists, support agents and various experts in the process of education.

10. To encourage students with disabilities to take up leadership roles and responsibilities, making them more independent and less reliant on other's help.
11. Getting parents to be actively involved in their child's education by constantly communicating and coordinating the child's learning activities.
12. Develop the value of tolerance and acceptance towards persons who are different in looks, color, race, gender, abilities etc.
13. Sensitize the abled students about the problems and hardships faced by their disabled classmates, and helping them appreciate what they have, which develops mature sensibility and outlook towards the world around them.
14. Teachers in inclusive settings tend to develop new skills and well as understanding about the different needs of students, thus leading to professional development.
15. Create social acceptance and awareness regarding inclusive education through various awareness programs, which not only encourages people to send their disabled children to school but also remove the social stigma around disabilities

Scope of Inclusive Education

The concept of Inclusion is often discussed as though it applies only to students with disabilities. In reality, Inclusive Education has much wider scope.

According to Booth and Ainscow, Inclusion in education involves:

1. Valuing all students and staff equally.
2. Reducing student 's exclusion from schools and focusing their increase participation in the cultures, curricula and communities of local schools.
3. To respond to the diversity of students in the locality, there is a need for restructuring the culture, policies and practices in schools.
4. Reducing barriers to learning and participation for all students in the schools. Especially those who are categorized as having special educational needs.
5. Learning from attempts to overcome barriers to the access and participation of particular students to make changes for the benefit of students more widely.
6. Viewing the difference between students as resources to support learning, rather than as problems to be overcome.
7. Acknowledging the right of students to an education in their locality.
8. Improving schools for staff as well as for students.
9. Emphasizing the role of schools in building community and developing values, as well as in increasing achievement.
10. Fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and communities.
11. Recognizing that inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society.

The Scope of Inclusive Education on the basis of the persons it caters to can be described as ones who are covered under the title of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) as well as ones who are fully abled, yet are at a very disadvantaged position.

CWSN includes children facing the following problems:

1. **Physical/Motor** – muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, chronic asthma, epilepsy, etc.
2. **Developmental/Intellectual** – down syndrome, autism, dyslexia, processing disorders
3. **Behavioral/Emotional** – ADD, bi-polar, oppositional defiance disorder, etc.
4. **Sensory Impaired** – Blind, visually impaired, deaf, limited hearing etc.

Children in disadvantaged positions includes:

1. Children engaged in workforce (through child labour or family profession)
2. Children in remote and secluded areas with minimal access to the outside world.
3. Children of migrant laborers and refugees (owing to natural calamities or war)
4. Female Children living in unfavorable circumstances (sex trafficking, child marriage)
5. Children of minority group (exclusion based on caste, religion, race etc.)
6. Children suffering from abuse at home (from parents)

Concept and History of Special Schools

A special school is a school catering for students who have special educational needs due to learning difficulties, physical disabilities or behavioral problems. Special schools may be specifically designed, staffed and resourced to provide appropriate special education for children with additional needs. Students attending special schools generally do not attend any classes in normal schools.

Special schools provide individualized education, addressing specific needs. Student to teacher ratios are kept low, often 6:1 or lower depending upon the needs of the children. Special schools will also have other facilities for children with disabilities, such as soft play areas, sensory rooms, or swimming pools, which are necessary for treating students with certain conditions.

In recent times, places available in special schools are declining as more children with special needs are educated in mainstream schools. However, there will always be some children, whose learning needs cannot be appropriately met in a regular classroom setting and will require

specialized education and resources to provide the level of support they require. For eg. Students with intellectual disability are often sent to Special schools.

An alternative to Special Schools are **special unit** or **special classroom**, which is a separate room or rooms dedicated solely to the education of students with disabilities within a larger school that also provides general education. These classrooms are typically staffed by specially trained teachers, who provide specific, individualized instruction to individuals and small groups of students with special needs. Special needs students are rarely moved to normal classrooms and rarely experience inclusive experience. So despite such schools calling themselves 'Inclusive', in reality they are just miniature Special Schools fitted inside a Normal School. The system of Special Classroom is often criticized by educationists and education policy makers.

One of the first Special Schools in the world was the *Institut National des Jeunes Aveugles* in Paris, which was founded in 1784. It was the first school in the world to teach blind students. The first school in U.K, for the Deaf was established in Edinburgh by Thomas Braidwood, with education for visually impaired people beginning in the Edinburgh and Bristol in 1765.

However, these schools were in very poor conditions and the practices of the teachers was very cruel and harsh. Such attention to the downtrodden conditions of people with disabilities brought resulted in reforms in Europe including the re-evaluation of special schools. In the United States reform came more slowly. Throughout the mid half of the 20th century, special schools, termed **institutions**, was encouraged by the government. Students with disabilities were made to sit with people with mental illnesses. Students who suffered due to this practice were the mildly disabled students who could have received a much better educational experience in normal schools (despite them being inferior to normal students).