

MODULE V

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

5.1. Definition, Concept and significance of Inclusive Education

Inclusion in education is an approach to educating students with special educational needs. Under the inclusion model, students with special needs spend most or all of their time with non-special needs students. Inclusion rejects the use of special schools or classrooms to separate students with disabilities from students without disabilities.

Inclusive education means different and diverse students learning side by side in the same classroom. They enjoy field trips and after-school activities together. They participate in student government together. And they attend the same sports meets and plays.

Inclusive education values diversity and the unique contributions each student brings to the classroom. In a truly inclusive setting, every child feels safe and has a sense of belonging. Students and their parents participate in setting learning goals and take part in decisions that affect them. And school staff have the training, support, flexibility, and resources to nurture, encourage, and respond to the needs of all students.

Inclusive education means that all students attend and are welcomed by their neighborhood schools in age-appropriate, regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the life of the school.

Inclusive Education is part of a broader goal of creating an inclusive society. Not developing yet more methods and systems, but nurturing inclusive values and beliefs. Inclusion is the process of educating children in such a way so that it benefits all students and entails a clear participation as well. Hence, it focuses not only on students with special needs but others as well. This is why the inclusive approach is considered as 'education for all'. Now in the modern education system, inclusion is considered as the best option as it discards labels and barriers that hold back students and encourage full participation.

Implementation of inclusive practices varies. Schools most frequently use the inclusion model for selected students with mild to moderate special needs. Fully inclusive schools, which are rare, do not separate "general education" and "special education" programs; instead, the school is restructured so that all students learn together.

Definitions:

- Teaching that take in to account the increasing range of differences between pupils is often called Inclusive Education- Leeman and Volman, 2001

- Inclusive education does not simply refer to the placement of children with special needs in to normal schools. But it is also concerned with the conditions under which we can educate effectively all children- Barton 1997.

- Inclusive education as the process with which schools try to respond to all pupils as individuals, reviewing the organization and provision of their curriculum.-Sebba and Ainscow, 1996

5.2. Education of Children With Special Needs (CWSN)

The conceptualization of ‘Children With Special Needs’ – CWSN- determines the policy, research and practice in special needs education. In an effort to dispel the stigma associated with the negative labels of the past, the old language, which labeled disabled people as lame, defective, crippled, less fortunate, mentally retarded, spastic, deaf and dumb- all of which focused on their imperfections, was abandoned and replaced by the new language where by children with disabilities described in boarder, more general terms such as Children With Special Needs (CWSN). The modern approach towards them is changed and individual differences are accepted more by the society.

Children with special needs are unique individuals. Their uniqueness may be noticed in different dimensions like vision, hearing, movement, communication, perceptual- motor, social-emotional, intelligence and adaptive behaviour. These children were previously regarded as children with diverse abilities.

Special needs children deviate from the normal children either in the positive direction or in the negative direction. Various types of Special need children are:

- ▶ Children with Hearing impairment
- ▶ Children with visual handicap
- ▶ Children with mental retardation
- ▶ Children with learning disability
- ▶ Children with speech handicaps
- ▶ Children with multiple handicap
- ▶ Children with orthopedic handicap
- ▶ Children with emotional disturbance
- ▶ Children with Superior intellectual ability/ gifted children
- ▶ Children with creative talents

Inclusion	Integration
------------------	--------------------

- ▶ Children with social disadvantages
- ▶ Children with delinquent tendencies

5.3. Difference between Special Education, Integrated Education and Inclusive Education

Inclusive education differs from the 'integration' or 'mainstreaming' model of education, which tended to be concerned principally with disability and special educational needs, and learners changing or becoming 'ready for' or deserving of accommodation by the mainstream. By contrast, inclusion is about the child's right to participate and the school's duty to accept the child.

Integration means disabled children or children with learning difficulties attending mainstream school. The child is accepted into the ordinary school, but is often taught in a separate classroom. The school makes minimal attempts to address any specific academic or social needs a child might have and the child must adapt them self to the environment. The child has little or no contact with his/her non-disabled peers. While Inclusion means that the whole school considers what measures it must take for the school to be accessible to all children (including disabled children and children with learning difficulties).

The key difference between inclusion and integration is that, in integration, the special need child is absorbed into the mainstream education but, in inclusion, this does not take place.

Benefits all students and entails a clear participation	Students with special needs are absorbed into the mainstream education.
The focus is on all students	The focus is on students with special needs
Informal support and the expertise of mainstream teachers	Professionals, specialist expertise and formal support
Rights of all students	Needs of all Students
Changing the School	Changing or remedying the subject
Good teaching for all	Technical interventions (Special teaching, Therapy)

Inclusive education also differs from special education. Special education is specially designed instruction, support, and services provided to students with an identified disability requiring an individually designed instructional program to meet their unique learning needs. Special education (also known as special needs education, aided education or exceptional education) is the practice of educating students with special educational needs in a way that addresses their individual differences and needs. Ideally, this process involves the individually planned and systematically monitored arrangement of teaching procedures, adapted equipment and materials, and accessible settings. These interventions are designed to help individuals with special needs achieve a higher level of personal self-sufficiency and success in school and in their community that may not be available if the student were only given access to a typical classroom education. Students attending special schools generally do not attend any classes in mainstream schools. Special schools provide individualized education, addressing specific needs. Student to teacher ratios are kept low depending upon the needs of the children. Special schools will also have other facilities for children with special needs which are necessary for treating students with certain conditions.

5.4. Significance of Inclusive Education for the education of all children in the context of right to education

Inclusive systems provide a better quality education for all children and are instrumental in changing discriminatory attitudes. Schools provide the context for a child's first relationship with the world outside their families, enabling the development of social relationships and

interactions. Respect and understanding grow when students of diverse abilities and backgrounds play, socialize, and learn together.

Education that excludes and segregates perpetuates discrimination against traditionally marginalized groups. When education is more inclusive, so are concepts of civic participation, employment, and community life.

All children benefit from inclusive education. It allows them to:

- ▶ Develop individual strengths and gifts, with high and appropriate expectations for each child.
- ▶ Work on individual goals while participating in the life of the classroom with other students their own age.
- ▶ Involve their parents in their education and in the activities of their local schools.
- ▶ Foster a school culture of respect and belonging. Inclusive education provides opportunities to learn about and accept individual differences, lessening the impact of harassment and bullying.
- ▶ Develop friendships with a wide variety of other children, each with their own individual needs and abilities.
- ▶ Positively affect both their school and community to appreciate diversity and inclusion on a broader level.
 - ▶ **Families' visions of a typical life for their children can come true.**

All parents want their children to be accepted by their peers, have friends and lead “regular” lives. Inclusive settings can make this vision a reality for many children with disabilities.

- ▶ **Children develop a positive understanding of themselves and others.**

When children attend classes that reflect the similarities and differences of people in the real world, they learn to appreciate diversity. Respect and understanding grow when children of differing abilities and cultures play and learn together.

- ▶ **Friendships develop.**

Schools are important places for children to develop friendships and learn social skills. Children with and without disabilities learn with and from each other in inclusive classes.

- ▶ **Children learn important academic skills.**

In inclusive classrooms, children with and without disabilities are expected to learn to read, write and do math. With higher expectations and good instruction children with disabilities learn academic skills.

- ▶ **All children learn by being together.**

Because the philosophy of inclusive education is aimed at helping all children learn, everyone in the class benefits. Children learn at their own pace and style within a nurturing learning environment.

Basic Elements of Inclusive Education

- **Use of teaching assistants or specialists:** These staff have the potential to be inclusive or divisive. For instance, a specialist who helps teachers address the needs of all students is working inclusively. A specialist who pulls students out of class to work with them individually on a regular basis is not.
- **Inclusive curriculum:** An inclusive curriculum includes locally relevant themes and contributions by marginalized and minority groups. It avoids binary narratives of good and bad, and allows adapting the curriculum to the learning styles of children with special education needs.
- **Parental involvement:** Most schools strive for some level of parental involvement, but it is often limited to emails home and occasional parent–teacher conferences. In a diverse school system, inclusion means thinking about multiple ways to reach out to parents on their own terms.

Benefits of Inclusive Education

The benefits of inclusive education are numerous for both students with and without disabilities.

Benefits of Inclusion for Students with Disabilities

1. Friendships
2. Increased social initiations, relationships and networks
3. Peer role models for academic, social and behavior skills
4. Increased achievement of IEP goals
5. Greater access to general curriculum
6. Enhanced skill acquisition and generalization
7. Increased inclusion in future environments

8. Greater opportunities for interactions
9. Higher expectations
10. Increased school staff collaboration
11. Increased parent participation
12. Families are more integrated into community

Benefits of Inclusion for Students without Disabilities

1. Meaningful friendships
2. Increased appreciation and acceptance of individual differences
3. Increased understanding and acceptance of diversity
4. Respect for all people
5. Prepares all students for adult life in an inclusive society
6. Opportunities to master activities by practicing and teaching others
7. Greater academic outcomes
8. All students needs are better met, greater resources for everyone

5.5. Issues and problems in Inclusive education

There are Issues and problems regarding the implementation of inclusive education in India. Children with disabilities often require extra adults in the room. Children with disabilities need special equipment. In the case of a blind or severely visually impaired child, school districts may not be able to afford Braille's or talking tapes that aid children in reading.

Mainstream classrooms may not be an appropriate fit for students with disabilities because the other children may not know how to deal well with their differences. The student may find himself in a situation where he is always the final choice for teams for games in physical education class.

Depending on the nature of a child's disability, it can affect the way that student behaves. It can also be frustrating for the teacher attempting to teach in such an environment. As a result of the adults having to control that child's behavior, mainstream population children can lose out on valuable classroom time

- ▶ **The challenge of poverty associated with disability:** A large number of children with disabilities live in families with income significantly below the poverty level. While disability causes poverty, it is also possible that in a country like India, poverty causes disability. The combination of poverty and disability results in a condition of "simultaneous deprivation." Recently, the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, has allocated 3 percent funds in poverty alleviation programs targeting families

of children with disabilities. However, motivating poor families, with all the associated costs to send their child to school, is proving to be a big challenge.

- ▶ **The challenge of modifying deeply held attitudes:** Attitudes of the non-disabled are proving to be a major barrier in the social integration of persons with disabilities. The disability in India is not seen as something "normal" or "natural," rather it is seen as an "evil eye." Guilt, stigma and different kinds of fears tend to be paramount in such families. The prejudice, mental and irrational myths concerning disability, existing in Indian society should be eradicated."
- ▶ **Dissemination and public education:** People, including parents and school personnel, are largely unaware of the full intent of the recent legislation passed by Indian Parliament. A large number of school personnel are also not aware of funding available to include students with disabilities in regular schools. There is also a greater need to have a National Resource Center for Disabilities. The necessary steps should be taken to fulfill the role of scrutinizing all mass communication programs (TV, radio and even entertainment programs) to ensure that disability is not portrayed in a negative manner.
- ▶ **The challenge of providing adequate levels of training to key stakeholders:** The majority of school personnel in India are not trained to design and implement educational programs for students with disabilities in regular schools. Most teacher training programs in India do not have a unit on Disability Studies. The universities, which do cover some aspects of special education in their teacher training programs, fail to train teachers adequately to work in integrated settings.
- ▶ **Inadequate resources:** The majority of schools in India are poorly designed and few are equipped to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities. The lack of disability friendly transportation services and accessible buildings are considered by some to be far greater problems than social prejudice and negative attitudes. Both the Central and State governments will have to provide increased resources to this aspect of education to ensure successful implementation of integrated practices in schools.

Over and above some of these challenges that India shares with other developing countries are some distinctive features that will make the implementation of educational reform particularly difficult. India is a multilingual, multicultural, multireligious country, and its people are stratified along sharp socio-economic and caste lines. Therefore, unless the challenges are carefully identified and systematically addressed, inclusion will remain a policy on paper. The forthcoming section presents some strategies that policy makers in India may find useful to implement integrated education successfully.

Possible strategies to address some of the challenges

- Need to design innovative system of training Need for collaboration between different ministries to stop the waste of already limited resources. There is a need for streamlining administrative arrangements so that funds provided to different ministries for persons with disabilities can be used effectively.
- Involve NGO's in implementing integrated education programs
- Establish an alternate system of examination: Most school educators in India are concerned that integration of students with disabilities would result in lowering school standards because these students won't be able to pass exams. This seems to be a genuine concern of teachers because it can influence their promotion. Thus, it is necessary to establish an alternative system of examination for students with disabilities. Students in this system are asked to do activities that demonstrate their abilities rather than disabilities
- School-university partnership: The multilingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious nature of India is often cited as a challenge in implementing any educational reforms. Local universities in each of the States and Union Territories may play a significant role in overcoming this challenge. Pilot projects involving local schools could be initiated by universities to explore strategies that may be appropriate for each region. Also, texts on practical strategies can be produced in the common language spoken by educators in each of the States.

To advance inclusive education

To make inclusive education a reality we need to do the following:

- Ensure that educators have the training, flexibility, and resources to teach students with diverse needs and learning styles
- Ensure that kindergartens and schools receive adequate and sustainable financial support so that all activities and services are fully inclusive
- Empower parents to assert their children's right to education in inclusive settings.
- Enable the entire community—including mainstream and special educators, social workers, parents, and students—to work together and participate in the design, delivery, and monitoring of education, thereby reframing inclusive education as a shared responsibility.
- Hold governments accountable for implementing antidiscrimination legislation, legal mandates for inclusion, and policies to remove barriers.

5.6. Teacher preparation for inclusive education- developing attitudes and competencies for Inclusion

Teacher training, or lack thereof, can become an issue in inclusive education. The teacher, who is responsible for the education of all the students, may not have the necessary specialized training to address the needs of students with special needs. The main problems faced

by teachers in an Inclusive classroom could be managing the classroom, the special-needs students, the time they need to succeed academically, provide education for all students in the same learning environment etc: If integrated education is to become a reality in India, then the training of teachers has to become a top priority. The educational authorities in India may adopt a policy of training one teacher from each school or a cluster of schools.

The teacher would need to be provided with intensive training to work with various disabilities and could then act as an integration specialist or an inclusion facilitator for one or a number of schools located in close proximity. A similar strategy has already worked well in certain parts of India when several school teachers were specifically trained to work in integrated settings under the PIED program and is recommended by several researchers in India. Also in-service teachers would need continued training to update their skills and knowledge of integrated education strategies.

It is clear that regular school educators need training in issues related to the implementation of integrated education. The curriculum for pre-service training programs should be carefully developed, incorporating feedback from special and regular educators. The educators need basic skills, professional knowledge, communication and interaction, knowledge about assessment techniques, and resource management knowledge of multigrade teaching, instructional techniques, and peer-tutoring and cooperative learning techniques to include students with disabilities into regular classes.
