

# Inclusive Education in Practice: Assessing the Current Implementation Status

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## Abstract:

Inclusive education has emerged as a fundamental principle in contemporary educational systems, advocating for equitable learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their talents, backgrounds, or impairments. This article evaluates the present state of inclusive education implementation by analysing recent research and international policy directives. It examines the concept and fundamental ideas of inclusive education, the progression of regulations, classroom methodologies, and contemporary research advancements. Furthermore, it delineates the major barriers that hinder successful implementation, including inadequate teacher training, insufficient resources, and systemic issues. The assessment concluded that, despite significant global gains, further efforts in teacher professional development, policy enforcement, and technological integration are essential for the realisation of successful inclusive education systems.

**Keywords:** Inclusive education; Implementation challenges; Teacher preparedness; key barriers.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Inclusive education has emerged as a significant emphasis in global educational changes. The principle underscores that all students, including those with disabilities and varied learning requirements, must have equitable access to mainstream education. The worldwide initiative for inclusive education accelerated notably after the Salamanca Statement, which advocated for schools to embrace all students irrespective of their differences. Subsequently, inclusive education emerged as a primary goal of the United Nations via Sustainable Development Goal 4, which seeks to provide inclusive and equitable quality education for all individuals.

Inclusive education fosters fairness, diversity, and engagement within educational settings. Nonetheless, the execution of inclusive education is inconsistent among nations and educational institutions. Although policies promoting inclusion are commonly embraced, their actual execution often encounters obstacles concerning teacher readiness, institutional backing, and resource accessibility (Florian, 2019). Inclusive education denotes an educational methodology that guarantees equitable learning opportunities for all pupils, including those with impairments, learning challenges, and varied social or cultural backgrounds. The implementation of inclusive education seeks to provide a supportive and equitable learning environment that enables full participation of every student in the educational process. This approach emphasises the modification of pedagogical techniques, curriculum, and educational infrastructure to meet the varied requirements of students, rather than requiring pupils to conform to inflexible structures.

Successful execution of inclusive education requires cooperation among educators, school leaders, guardians, and legislators. It encompasses educator training, the use of assistive technology, adaptable

curriculum design, and the cultivation of affirmative perspectives on diversity. Educational institutions must provide suitable support services, including special educators, counselling, and individualised learning plans, to facilitate the integration of students with diverse abilities in mainstream classes. Inclusive education is an educational methodology aimed at integrating all students into conventional classes by catering to varied learning requirements. Mel Ainscow posits that inclusive education entails recognising and eliminating obstacles that impede student engagement and learning (Ainscow, 2020). Tony Booth and Ainscow define inclusion as a strategy designed to enhance participation and diminish exclusion in educational institutions (Booth & Ainscow, 2016). The fundamental tenets of inclusive education are equality, accessibility, participation, and respect for variety. Inclusive education reorients the perspective from seeing students with disabilities as challenges to modifying educational settings to accommodate varied learning requirements. Researchers contend that inclusive education necessitates structural modifications in curriculum design, pedagogical approaches, and school culture to guarantee that all students can engage successfully in learning activities (Loreman et al., 2014).

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

Inclusive education has progressed from only ensuring physical access to schools to a more holistic framework that prioritises equal participation, excellent learning, and social inclusion for all students, irrespective of their ability or circumstances (UNESCO, 2015). Internationally, frameworks like the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006) and Sustainable Development Goal 4 have solidified inclusive education as a fundamental human right. Nonetheless, whereas policy frameworks provide direction, research regularly reveals a disparity between policy intentions and actual implementation (Ramadhan et al., 2022; Juariyah et al., 2024). Numerous studies underscore the pivotal influence of national and regional policy in promoting or hindering inclusive education. Ramadhan et al. (2022) examined Indonesia's inclusive education policy and observed that while legal frameworks are in place, variable regional implementation diminishes their efficacy. Juariyah et al. (2024) also emphasised discrepancies in elementary school implementation resulting from unequal resource allocation and the absence of standardised protocols. UNESCO's (2015) thorough analysis emphasises that systemic support, including finance, monitoring procedures, and policy consistency, is crucial for effective inclusion.

Teacher readiness is a prevalent focus in inclusive education research. Loreman, Forlin, and associates contend that educators need comprehensive initial training and continuous professional development to properly execute inclusive methods (Loreman et al., 2010; Forlin & Chambers, 2011). Alzahrani (2020) also discovered that insufficient pedagogical preparation constrains instructors' capacity to modify teaching for various learners, leading to incomplete or superficial inclusion. These results suggest that inclusive education is both a policy concern and a difficulty related to professional development and capacity building. The implementation of inclusive policies in classroom practice is significantly influenced by pedagogical tactics. Differentiated instruction, scaffolding, and co-teaching are widely recognised as successful methodologies (Tomlinson, 2014; Friend & Cook, 2010). Jackson-Summers et al. (2024) synthesised worldwide research on inclusive pedagogy, revealing that adaptable, learner-centred methodologies are more effective in improving participation and educational results. These findings indicate that inclusive classrooms need deliberate instructional design and ongoing modification to accommodate varied student requirements.

The efficacy of inclusive education is contingent upon students' social experiences. Poikola et al. (2024) highlighted that students' feeling of belonging and peer support substantially affect inclusion results.

Avramidis and Norwich (2002) identified that negative attitudes, segregation, and bullying persist as obstacles in many circumstances, illustrating that structural inclusion is inadequate without social and cultural acceptance. Comparative analyses uncover trends and obstacles across many situations. Mendoza and Heymann (2022) performed a thorough study in low- and lower-middle-income countries, revealing that constrained resources, insufficient teacher preparation, and ineffective monitoring systems impede successful implementation. Jobir (2024) analysed Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions, emphasising distinct issues within non-traditional educational environments. Okyere et al. (2019) examined Africa, highlighting that children with intellectual impairments experience ongoing marginalisation despite the existence of inclusive education regulations. These studies demonstrate that context-specific methods are essential for effective implementation.

#### **Integration and research deficiencies:**

The research suggests that while inclusive education is broadly supported, its execution is variable. Primary obstacles include inadequate teacher training, restricted resources, discrepancies between policy and practice, and societal attitudes (Ramadhan et al., 2022; Loreman et al., 2010; Poikola et al., 2024). Furthermore, the majority of research focuses on particular settings, with few studies offering longitudinal or cross-contextual evaluations. There is a notable deficiency of research that includes learner voices and intersectional perspectives, indicating potential avenues for further investigation.

### **3. CURRENT IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIA:**

Inclusive education in India seeks to provide equitable learning opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities, socio-economically disadvantaged groups, and marginalised communities. In the last twenty years, India has implemented several laws and initiatives to foster inclusion in mainstream education. Nonetheless, the implementation demonstrates both progress and ongoing difficulties.

#### **3.1. FRAMEWORK FOR POLICIES PROMOTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:**

International organisations have significantly contributed to the advancement of inclusive education. UNESCO promotes inclusive education as a basic human right and urges states to implement inclusive policies and practices. UNESCO (2020) asserts that inclusive education is vital for attaining educational fairness and social inclusion. These policies often emphasise the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream educational institutions, enhancing teacher training initiatives, and offering support services such as assistive technology and tailored learning resources. Notwithstanding these policy measures, scholars contend that a disparity often exists between policy development and its actual implementation in the classroom (Miles & Singal, 2010).

India has developed a robust legal and regulatory framework for inclusive education. These initiatives demonstrate India's dedication to educational justice and inclusion.

- The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 ensures free education for children aged 6 to 14 and allocates 25% of places in private schools for economically weaker sections (EWS).
- The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016 mandates inclusive education for children with disabilities.
- Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan — consolidates inclusive education initiatives for children with special needs.
- The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 underscores the need of equal and inclusive educational settings.

### 3.2. CURRENT PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

Progress has been achieved in the implementation of inclusive education.

#### Augmented Enrolments:

- According to UDISE+ statistics, about 2.2 million students with disabilities are enrolled in schools across India.
- Government initiatives provide assistive equipment, scholarships, and transportation subsidies to aid these students.

#### Technological and Institutional Assistance:

- The use of Braille devices and assistive technology in certain schools has enhanced accessibility for visually impaired pupils.
- NEP 2020 promotes digital learning resources and adaptable pedagogical approaches to accommodate varied learners.

### 3.3. RECENT DATA ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOLLOWING THE ENACTMENT OF NEP 2020:

Following the implementation of the National Education Policy 2020, India has enacted many structural modifications to enhance access, equality, and inclusion in school education. Recent statistics, particularly from the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE+), provide insights into the present condition of inclusive education.

#### 1. Enrolment of Children with Special Needs (CWSN):

- In the academic year 2021–22, over 22.67 lakh Children with Special Needs (CWSN) were enrolled in schools across India, reflecting a 3.45% rise from the prior year.
- Recent estimates indicate that over 2.1 million (21 lakh) CWSN students were enrolled in 2024–25, constituting roughly 0.86% of total school enrolment.
- The NEP policy aims to identify and assist 2.5–3% of pupils as Children with Special Needs (CWSN), indicating that efforts for identification and inclusion need further enhancement.

#### 2. Allocation of Children with Special Needs across Educational Levels (2024–25):

Recent UDISE+ statistics illustrate the distribution of children with impairments throughout several educational stages:

- Approximately 943,512 children are enrolled at the primary level (Classes I–V).
- Approximately 698,544 pupils are enrolled in upper primary (Classes VI–VIII).
- Total enrolment at the primary level (Classes I–VIII): 1,642,056 pupils

Notwithstanding advancements in identification and enrolling, these pupils constitute fewer than 1% of overall primary school enrolment, underscoring enduring inclusion disparities.

#### 3. Gender Disparity among Students with Disabilities:

- Boys represent around 57% of the enrolment of Children with Special Needs (CWSN), whilst girls comprise roughly 43%.
- This gender difference illustrates societal obstacles, accessibility issues, and less reporting or recognition of girls with disabilities.

#### 4. Comprehensive Educational Metrics:

Recent national educational data after the adoption of the NEP illustrate the magnitude of the education system:

- 24.8 million kids enrolled in school instruction during the 2024–25 academic year.

- 14.72 lakh educational institutions in India.
- Over 1.01 crore instructors, being the first instance of the teaching workforce exceeding one crore. These statistics demonstrate the school system's growing ability to support different learners.

### 5. Transition and Retention Metrics:

The transition rates among educational stages have enhanced in recent years.

- Preparatory to middle stage: elevated from 88.8% to 92.2%
- Middle to secondary stage: elevated from 83.3% to 86.6%
- Foundational to preparation stage: rose somewhat to around 98.6%

Higher transition rates indicate enhancements in student retention and development, particularly among individuals from underprivileged backgrounds.

### 6. Comprehensive Infrastructure and Accessibility:

Notwithstanding advancements, obstacles to accessibility persist:

- Approximately 55% of educational institutions are entirely barrier-free, indicating that some facilities still lack ramps, accessible restrooms, or other infrastructure.
- Access to digital learning resources is increasing, with more than 63% of schools equipped with computers and internet access.

These metrics underscore advancements while also indicating the need for more infrastructure development.

### 7. Enrolment Patterns among Disadvantaged Populations:

Post-NEP implementation data also reveal challenges:

- In the 2023–24 academic year, total school enrolment decreased by around 3.7 million pupils compared to the preceding year.
- Enrolment among Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes saw a little drop. This indicates that socioeconomic obstacles persist in hindering inclusive participation in schooling.

### Comprehensive Analysis:

Post-NEP 2020 data indicate modest advancements in inclusive education, including enhanced identification of children with impairments, better transition rates, and an expanded teaching staff. Nonetheless, obstacles persist regarding gender inequities, accessible infrastructure, and the comprehensive inclusion of children with special needs, signifying that ongoing policy support and budget allocation are necessary.

### 3.4. ADVANTAGES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:

Studies demonstrate the advantages of inclusive education for students with impairments and their classmates. Academic performance often improves when students engage in inclusive settings, attributed to collaborative learning and peer assistance (Florian, 2019). Inclusive education fosters social development by facilitating contact among students with diverse abilities. Ainscow (2020) asserts that inclusive classrooms cultivate empathy, tolerance, and respect for diversity among pupils.

Moreover, inclusive education fosters enduring social inclusion. Students educated in inclusive settings are more inclined to engage actively in societal and career prospects in the future (UNESCO, 2020).

### 3.5. OBSTACLES IN EXECUTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:

Notwithstanding its advantages, several obstacles impede the successful execution of inclusive education.

- **Insufficient Teacher Training:** A prevalent concern is inadequate teacher preparation. Educators oft-

en possess insufficient training in inclusive pedagogical methods, classroom governance, and the use of assistive technology (Florian, 2019).

- **Restricted Resources:** Resource deficiencies substantially impact the execution of inclusive education. Numerous educational institutions are deficient in specialised personnel, accessible facilities, and suitable instructional resources for students with impairments.
- **Attitudinal Obstacles:** Adverse perceptions of disability among educators, parents, and students may hinder the effectiveness of inclusive policies. Studies indicate that educators' views and attitudes substantially affect the efficacy of inclusive education (Loreman et al., 2014).
- **Discrepancy between Policy and Practice:** Despite the adoption of inclusive education laws by several nations, a disparity often exists between the aims of these rules and their implementation in classroom settings. Implementation may be erratic owing to insufficient oversight and constrained institutional backing (UNESCO, 2020).

### 3.6. SUGGESTIONS FOR ENHANCING EXECUTION:

To guarantee the successful implementation of inclusive education, it is crucial to tackle systemic deficiencies including policy execution, infrastructure, educator training, and community awareness. The following suggestions may enhance inclusive practices in educational institutions and further the objectives established in the National Education Policy 2020, as well as global commitments like UNESCO's vision for inclusive and equitable education.

- **Enhancing Educator Training and Professional Advancement:** Educators have a pivotal position in inclusive classrooms. Pre-service and in-service training programs must include extensive modules on inclusive pedagogy, differentiated education, classroom management, and the use of assistive technology. Opportunities for continuous professional development should be offered to assist instructors in successfully addressing varied learning requirements.
- **Enhancing Accessible Infrastructure:** Educational institutions must provide accessible physical settings that cater to students with impairments. This include the installation of ramps, accessible restrooms, tactile walkways, suitable classroom seating configurations, and assistive educational devices. Enhancing infrastructure will improve accessibility and participation for all learners.
- **Enhancing Early Detection and Intervention:** Timely identification of learning challenges and impairments is essential for delivering appropriate assistance. Enhancing screening protocols at the foundational and preparatory levels may facilitate the early identification of children with special needs and enable the provision of suitable educational interventions prior to the expansion of learning disparities.
- **Augmenting Support Services and Resource Accessibility:** Inclusive education necessitates cooperation among educators, special education professionals, counsellors, and therapists. Educational institutions have to possess access to interdisciplinary support frameworks, including resource rooms and individualised education plans (IEPs), to cater to the distinct requirements of each student.
- **Enhancing Community and Parental Involvement:** Awareness initiatives must be implemented to foster positive attitudes towards inclusion and mitigate stigma related to impairments. Involving parents, local communities, and civil society organisations may create a conducive atmosphere for inclusive education and promote school engagement among marginalised populations.
- **Enhancing Monitoring and Data Systems:** Robust monitoring and evaluation systems are crucial for evaluating the progress of inclusive education projects. Educational databases, such the Unified

District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+), need enhancement to monitor enrolment, retention, infrastructure availability, and learning results for children with special needs.

- **Augmenting Financial Resources and Policy Endorsement:** Sufficient financial resources must be designated for inclusive education initiatives, including teacher training, assistive technology, and infrastructural enhancements. Consistent policy dedication from governments and educational authorities is essential for the efficient implementation of inclusive education programs throughout all tiers of the school system.
- **Advocating for an Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment:** Curricula must be flexible and adaptive to various learning styles and capabilities. Alternative assessment approaches, like project-based assessments and adapted tests, may guarantee that students with special needs are evaluated equitably and substantively.

Executing these proposals may address current deficiencies in inclusive education and foster more fair learning environments. Enhancing institutional capacity, increasing accessibility, and cultivating collaborative relationships may advance education systems toward the objective of excellent education for all learners.

### 3.7. DISCUSSION:

This review's results demonstrate that inclusive education has advanced significantly in recent decades, especially regarding policy formulation and pedagogical innovation. International organisations like UNESCO have significantly contributed to the advancement of inclusive education via global initiatives and policy frameworks. Nonetheless, the examination also uncovers enduring obstacles that impede efficient execution. A significant difficulty is the absence of thorough teacher training programs that equip educators for inclusive classroom settings. Inadequate training may hinder instructors' ability to adjust instructional tactics and address varied student requirements.

Resource constraints can pose considerable obstacles. Numerous educational institutions are deficient in the necessary infrastructure, assistive technology, and specialised personnel essential for the implementation of inclusive education initiatives. These issues are more pronounced in developing nations and rural educational environments. Notwithstanding these obstacles, recent advancements in inclusive pedagogy and educational technology have significant prospects for enhancing inclusive practices. Strategies like Universal Design for Learning and differentiated teaching illustrate that inclusive education may be successfully executed provided educators have sufficient support and training.

Inclusive education represents a significant shift towards more egalitarian and accessible educational institutions. Despite worldwide legislative frameworks promoting inclusive practices, the execution of inclusive education varies significantly across different settings. Ongoing obstacles, such as inadequate teacher preparation, few resources, and dominant attitudinal barriers, hinder advancement. Addressing these challenges via improved teacher training, effective resource distribution, and cooperative efforts is essential for creating truly inclusive educational institutions. Continuous research and persistent policy dedication are essential to achieve inclusive education for all students.

### 4. CONCLUSION:

Inclusive education is acknowledged as a worldwide need for promoting fairness and social justice in educational institutions. Despite the adoption of supporting legislation by various nations, the execution of inclusive education remains variable. Ongoing obstacles, such as poor teacher training, limited resources, and existing societal barriers, hinder advancement. Improving teacher training, augmenting

financial investment, elevating public awareness, and optimising monitoring procedures are essential strategies for attaining successful inclusive education. Continuous research and persistent policy dedication are essential to achieve inclusive education for all students. The execution of inclusive education in India demonstrates considerable advancement however remains partially unfulfilled. Despite regulatory attempts, heightened enrolment, and technology assistance suggesting progress, obstacles such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teacher preparation, and societal hurdles persist in obstructing complete inclusion. Enhancing teacher training, upgrading school infrastructure, and elevating community awareness are crucial for realising genuine inclusive education in India.

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