



## **Impact of Inclusion on Social and Academic Development of Children with Special Need**

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### **Abstract**

Inclusive education provides an equal and unbiased learning environment for children with and without special ability. This kind of settings nurtures values of diversity and encourages the unique contribution every child brings to the space. Inclusive education provides special needs children with social acceptance and a boost of excel academically. This paper reviews literature on impact of inclusion on the academic and social outcome on children with special needs. Suggestions and recommendation are provided on revising and strengthening the current inclusive education and the need for mixed-method teaching practices.

**Keywords: Inclusive education, Academic and Social Development, Children with and without special needs**

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### Introduction

According to the United Nations research, around the world children with special needs are one of the most marginalized and excluded group. These children are most seen to be excluded for their differences compared to their peers without disabilities. Even though they join school they are most likely to not complete their primary and secondary education and see a pattern of growing inequality as the level of education advances. And most of the times children with special needs never enter education systems and this result in unfair educational access as well as causing denied life choices and opportunities.

The passage of Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016, in India provided a legislative back to 'inclusive education. The RPWD Act defines 'inclusive education' as "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 for Children with Disabilities (CWDs) in India has been recognised by the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009, the Sarva Siksha Abhyaan, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD Act) 2016 and the recent New Education Policy 2020, there exists ambiguities with regards to a uniform framework for inclusive education in the country. The legal and policy commitment towards inclusive education has been motivated by the need to comply with international conventions like the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which India signed in 2007.

United Nations Headquartered in New York adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its Optional Protocol ([A/RES/61/106](#)) on 13 December 2006 and was opened for signature 30 March 2007. The purpose of the present Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental

freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. (The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006)

The CRPD stresses on the fact that inclusive education is a fundamental human right of every child with disability. Inclusive education system should be one that accommodates all students no matter their abilities or needs at all levels,— pre-school, primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational and life-long learning.

### **What is Inclusive Education?**

According to the Salamanca Statement, 1994, 'inclusion in the context of education is based on the idea that all children should learn together, regardless of differences or disability.' Inclusive education begins with an understanding that every child has unique abilities, characteristics, interests and particular learning needs. Inclusive education recognizes the need to provide equal access and opportunities to children with special needs. It values the differences and diversity making space for learning opportunities that such diversity offers.

An education system that supports and welcomes all kinds of learners and should have appropriate infrastructure such as school buildings, classrooms, play areas, transport and toilets that suit their needs. The curriculum should be designed such that it matches the learning capacity of every child even those who do not need special care.

### **Importance of Inclusive Education**

- Improves learning for both – children with and without disabilities
- Reduces discrimination and strengthens social integration
- Children with special needs are given equal opportunity to work and contribute to the economy and society as a community.

### **Key Elements of Inclusive Education**

- **Inclusion:** All children should have the opportunity to learn together, should have equal access to the general education system, and should receive individual accommodation where needed based on disability or other difference. Inclusion in the CRPD favours transition from separate, segregated learning environments for persons with disabilities to schooling within the general education system with the necessary supports to make inclusion meaningful. The principle of inclusion is a component of accessibility, availability, acceptability and adaptability.
- **Accessibility:** Educational institutions and programmes must be accessible to persons with disabilities, without discrimination. Accessibility, reflected in Article 9 of the

CRPD, has three overlapping dimensions, including non-discrimination together with reasonable accommodation; physical access; and economic access.

- **Non-discrimination** and reasonable accommodation in education requires that education be accessible to all persons, including the most vulnerable persons with disabilities, without discrimination on the basis of disability. Non-discrimination also requires that persons with disabilities be accommodated in accessing their right to education at all levels (primary, secondary and university education, along with tertiary education).
- **Reasonable accommodation** is defined in the CRPD as “necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”<sup>7</sup> In the context of education, an example would be developing an independent education plan that lays out the reasonable accommodations needed by a particular student.
- **Physical accessibility** as applied to education means that schools must be within safe physical reach and they must be accessible for persons with disabilities, both in terms of getting to the school, and moving around within the school building and all facilities. Physical reach may mean access through attendance at some reasonably convenient geographic location (e.g. a neighbourhood school) or, provided not used as a means of segregation, it can encompass access via modern technology (e.g. access to a "distance learning" programme provided by a university).
- Education must be economically accessible in the sense that it must be affordable to persons with disabilities. International law requires that primary education be available "free to all," which must apply equally to students with disabilities. In the case of secondary and higher education, States are required to achieve access on the basis of progressive realization.
- **Availability:** the concept of availability in securing the right to education implies that functioning educational institutions and programmes for students with disabilities must be available in sufficient quantity within the jurisdiction of a State. This is often a problem for students with disabilities who may need to travel to a distant urban area to find a school that is able to accommodate their needs.

- **Acceptability:** The concept of acceptability relates to the form and substance of education. As emphasized by the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, the realization that socialization is a key element of an acceptable education means that inclusiveness is highly prioritized over segregation. Other aspects of acceptability include choice of the language of instruction. For children with disabilities this could include, for example, provision of sign language. It could also encompass the provision of instructional materials in alternative formats such as Braille or plain language or easy-to-read formats.
- Curricula and teaching methods must be provided in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual student. This might include, for example, teaching in sign language for students who are deaf or providing educational materials in Braille or audio formats for students who are blind.
- **Adaptability:** The concept of adaptability as applied to education for persons with disabilities pertains to flexibility to meet the needs of students with disabilities. At least two aspects of adaptability are essential in order to meet the needs of students with disabilities. These include: (1) the provision of reasonable accommodation, where needed, to meet individual student needs; and (2) the provision of support within the general education system to facilitate education. Adaptability also requires responsiveness to the changing nature of education. For example, in the transition to inclusion, adaptability would mean recruiting teachers with disabilities.(UNDESA, 2016)

### **Impact of Inclusive education on Social Development of children with special needs**

Inclusive education is beneficial to every child that is part of system, no matter his mental or physical abilities. The education system offers equal opportunities to all children, building an atmosphere of encouragement and positivity. When children are dealt with, without biases they tend to learn and grow faster. An atmosphere of inequalities and comparisons have shown to disturb their mental growth.

Children with special needs face difficulties when trying to learn social skills. Especially for children suffering from intellectual disability, a language disorder, or autism, it is difficult to communicate their feelings clearly. These children find it hard to make verbal request or using their behavior and actions to express themselves. For this reason, aggressive behavior culminates. This often results in other children complaining about the aggressive behavior of these children and refusing to play with them.

Factors such as development delays and various diagnoses affect the child's emotional growth and therefore affect their social development. They may face challenges in everyday tasks such as following instructions, waiting for their turn, reaching a compromise and sharing their concern as well as expressing empathy.

An inclusive environment helps create an environment of trust and empathy. Social learning and human interactions are considered as key pedagogical underpinnings. Vygotsky highlighted the importance of social play and interaction in the development of atypical students' communication and behaviour. (Blake, 2008). Inclusive education is beneficial as "schooling constitutes a form of collective social activity with specific forms of interpersonal communication". (Daniels, 2005) Children grow up to become adults who need to survive in a world that has more people and most of whom will be different to themselves. And thus interacting with other people is one of the major learnings from inclusive education. Daily social, physical and academic interaction between children with special needs and other students help develop;

1. **Greater Sensitivity.** As children learn side-by-side with special needs children in an inclusive education, they tend to become more sensitive. They become more aware about their words and actions which can hurt and therefore learn to empathise.
2. **Better understanding of Strengths/Weaknesses.** Children learn to appreciate their differences and how to work together in order to accomplish something
3. **Become More Tolerant.** Children value other human beings – no matter what that person looks or sounds like. Inclusive education helps students understand that physical and mental differences do not equate to a lesser value.
4. **Builds Empathy** and creates a positive and empathetic culture in the school and the community that appreciates diversity and inclusion
5. **Reduces impact of Harassment and Bullying.** Inclusive environment helps develop a sense of respect and belonging as they are given an opportunity to be seen with their differences and let others accept the same, lessening the impact of harassment and bullying.
6. **Integration in Community life.** Inclusive schools create a successful integration of individuals with and without disability in community living and employment space. They provide equal opportunity for children to build their skills, values and attitudes that are needed to live in a diverse society.
7. **Creates a sense of belonging & acceptance** as they attend local schools without facing segregation. Belonging is a human need for all people. When children with

special needs are welcomed in their community and are able to make friends that tend to learn and grow better.

### **Impact of Inclusive education on Academic Development of children with special needs**

Children develop life-style patterns during early childhood and behaviors are established in adolescences. Inclusive education aids diverse set of skills that impact the future patterns of their behavior, health and physical wellbeing. Mainstream schooling is beneficial to the educational outcomes of students with special needs as they are given an opportunity to build their behavior while interacting with other children. Inclusive education values diversity and supports every child's complete participation and reduces exclusion of those with limited or special needs. High quality teaching, which incorporates cognitive, creative and emotional prerequisites for positive functioning, is needed for these students to reach their potential (UNICEF, 2012).

Inclusive education provides a great way to build the academic skills for an specially able child. Skills taught in school environment are the abilities, strategies and habits that can help succeed in academic settings. This includes the knowledge of technical subjects like mathematics and science as well as building their mastery of literacy. Academic skills like ability to read and write, interact with other students, take tests, as well as take decisions are taught. These skills apply to all parts of life and most importantly in professional settings.

Following are some of the skills a child will learn while growing in an inclusive educational environment.

1. **Communication and Collaboration** are key components of an effective classroom setting. Inclusive education creates a perfect base for verbal and no verbal communication in multiple ways. Sharing space with other children encourages communication, which means increased attention span, learning to share personal space, using and understanding physical conduct and enjoying each other's company. They learn ways to communicate their feelings and thoughts while observing others.
2. **Time management** is an important yet one of the most important skills to be taught to children with disabilities such as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, and language-based learning and other disabilities. An inclusive environment teaches students to work together and in way manage time. They learn how to dedicate specific amount of time for a given task as they work in groups. This builds awareness of the multiple steps that may be involved in a single task and to develop their perception of how much time it takes to complete that task.
3. **Goal Setting**

When working with other children of their own age they learn to work on their individual goals while. They learn to set goals that are directly linked to their desire. Sharing their dreams and aspiration with others motivate them to work towards them and improve in subjects that will help them reach there.

4. **Better learning opportunities** for children with special needs; when children with varying learning abilities learn in company of other children they often feel motivated. Inclusion reduces fear and builds friendships which leads to boosting their confidence in the diversity.
5. **Access to Diverse Learning Environment and Resource Material** is the way to engage more special need learners in an inclusive environment. Children have access to a diverse range of material both visual and audio. Learning environment supports children with special need reach their full potential.

#### Ways to improve Inclusive Education

- **Differentiated Instruction**

In an inclusive environment, teachers should adjust the level of challenge in particular topics to meet every child's need. They might have to increase or decrease the complexity of a topic so that children who are slow learners can follow along with others.

- **Co-teaching and Multidisciplinary Teams**

Building a partnership between educators and specialist who come together to design unique curricula. This kind of teaching can cater to the diverse needs of children with special needs within the general classrooms, using varied and creative teaching methods. Their instructions are meant to reduce stigma for children with special needs and improve for all students. It provides diverse opportunities for students

- **Role of Families**

Families play an important role in the process of inclusive education. They are the first to know the child and one who are continuously part of their growing up journey, across the lifespan. Better relationship between schools and families also help families develop skills to work with professionals as their child matures.

- **Creative Teaching**

Use of creative technology and methods is the best way to ignite curiosity and improve engagement in an inclusive classroom. One can also use experiential and inquiry based learning, making use of group discussions, experiments and



## EduInspire-An International E-Journal (Peer Reviewed)

demonstrations. The use of art-based teaching like dance and body movements, collage technique, music and art helps children express better.

### Conclusion

Inclusive education has proven beneficial to both children with and without special needs. Every child has a different learning ability and inclusion helps them grow better with their differences. Inclusive education is designed based on participants needs to ensure easy adaptability and application of skills in real life. The hands on approach that comprises of role play, art, group discussions and exercises help them improve their social as well as academic development.

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