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INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES**

**SPECIAL ISSUE OF INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR CUM WORKSHOP ON  
ENVISIONING INCLUSION: TRANSFORMING VISION INTO REALITY**

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### **Editorial**

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, the pursuit of inclusion stands as a beacon guiding us towards equitable and transformative learning environments. It is within this spirit of progress and collaboration that we are delighted to bring out this journal dedicated to the webinar titled "Envisioning Inclusion: Transforming Vision into Reality," hosted by Sadhana Education Society's Smt. Kapila Khandvala College of Education. The webinar unfolded on the 19th and 20th of January 2024, and served as a platform for educators, researchers, practitioners, and stakeholders to converge, engage, and envision a future where diversity, disability, and inclusion are not just aspirations but lived realities. The webinar got an overwhelming response as the participants gathered within the confines of the C.M. Trivedi Hall, both physically and virtually, embarking on a journey of introspection, dialogue, and action.

At the heart of this webinar was a profound commitment to understanding and addressing the multifaceted dimensions of inclusion. Set against the backdrop of the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020, this event emerged as not just a forum for dialogue but a catalyst for actionable change. With objectives ranging from unravelling unconscious biases to championing inclusive research, the seminar embarked on a multifaceted journey aimed at deepening our understanding and commitment to inclusivity. Through insightful keynote addresses, panel discussions, and interactive workshops, participants delved into diverse themes such as access, disability, diversity, inclusive practices, and research in education. The sessions by experts from across the continents provided a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the inclusion journeys of Kenya, Paraguay and Serbia. These sessions simplified the complexities surrounding inclusion. The various papers presented at the webinar offered practical strategies and solutions to foster inclusive learning environments.

At its core, the seminar hinges on the narratives of resilience and triumph over exclusion, as the resource persons at the various sessions shared their lived experiences, becoming beacons of inspiration for a society poised for transformation. The sessions, carefully curated to traverse global landscapes, unveiled a tapestry of inclusive practices from diverse corners of the world, transcending geographical boundaries to underscore the universality of the pursuit of inclusion. Central to the webinar's objectives was the imperative to bridge the gap between theory and practice, rhetoric, and action. By sensitizing participants to unconscious biases, advancing the understanding of student diversity, nurturing creative approaches to inclusivity in research, the aim was to catalyze tangible change within educational spaces. Through shared experiences and collaborative dialogue, a global network of change-makers committed to championing inclusive education was developed.

Moreover, this webinar served as a testament to the enduring legacy of Sadhana Education Society's Smt. Kapila Khandvala College of Education. With a rich history of nurturing excellence in teacher education, the institution continues to be a trailblazer in fostering innovative and humane pedagogies, by creating new pathways towards inclusive futures this legacy was honoured and its vision was being fulfilled.

Post the webinar as we embark on this transformative journey, let us heed the call to action, let us harness the power of collective vision, dialogue, and collaboration to pave the way for a more inclusive tomorrow. Together, let us transform the vision of NEP 2020 into reality, forging a brighter and more inclusive future for all.

This publication is a compilation of the varied papers (of different levels some highly professional, extremely rich in quality while some novice) on the theme, authored by the participants of the webinar. Hopefully the ideas presented and suggestions made reported in this journal will be taken up by educationists so as to ensure that we prepare proficient and caring teacher professionals in inclusive educational spaces.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the participants of the webinar on the theme. I would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the expert resource persons for their thought-provoking ideas and for enthusing the spirit and hope to make dents in the educational environments so as to make it more and more inclusive and to make inclusion a way of life.

**Dr. Smita Gupta**



***Sadhana Education Society's***  
**Smt. Kapila Khandvala College of Education (Autonomous)**  
**Santacruz W**

**Two Day International Seminar cum Workshop on**  
**Envisioning Inclusion: Transforming Vision into Reality**  
**19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2024**

The two day international Seminar cum Workshop started with the inaugural session consisting of college prayer followed by lighting of the ceremonial lamp by the Chief Administrative Officer of Sadhana Education Society Mr. Vijay Parmar, Principal Dr. Jayashree Inbaraj, Convenor and co-convenor of this event Dr. Smita Gupta and Ms. Deepali Sarode; and our faculty member Dr. Megha Dsouza in the presence of the Chief Guest Dr. Bhushan Punani who had joined online.

In her welcome address, Dr. Inbaraj stated the significance of inclusion and diversity in organizations including educational spaces; for if organizations are inclusive, individuals find it easier to survive. She urged all to make the best of this Seminar cum Workshop, participate actively and engage in dialogues. CAO Mr. Parmar too pressed upon all participants to deliberate actively and make the most of this precious opportunity.

The keynote address 'Inclusion – a Mandate' was delivered online by Dr. Bhushan Punani – General Secretary BPA and Vice President ICEVI Global. Introduced by Dr. Sunil Rajpurkar, Dr. Punani's address FOCUSED on looking at Inclusion as a way of life, as something integral to our social system. His session was interspersed with empowering stories of real people like Shruti Singh, a blind and deaf physiotherapist and sportswomen Bhavina and Sonal Patel – both paralympians with Bhavina also being an Arjuna Award recipient. Through these stories, he highlighted the outcomes of inclusion not just in metros, but even in smaller towns and the existing policy support (including reservation and Inclusive Education of Children with Disabilities at Secondary level) for inclusion of each and every child who needs it. He talked about the RPwD Act 2016 which recognizes 21 disabilities. He also touched upon the vision of the NEP 2020 of providing equity, affordability and accessibility of quality education to all. Dr. Rajpurkar proposed the vote of thanks.

The next session was a Panel Discussion with real stories narrated by real people on their 'Battles for Inclusion'. The moderator for this face to face session was Dr. Madhura Nagchoudhuri from Center for Disability Studies and Action, TISS and she was introduced by Dr. Megha Dsouza. All the panelists were introduced by Dr. Sheetal Zalte.

The first speaker was Dr. Ivan John, a faculty member at Sophia College who very bravely shared his own life experiences and battles as a queer teacher – the battles which usually and typically begin with self-realization. He emphasized on the need for a gender inclusive curriculum and the use of gender sensitive language in educational spaces. It was a captivating and powerful session which concluded with his appeal to all - to just be open to change and new ideas.

The next speaker Dr. Sapna Mishra shared her own experience of raising an autistic child and her opening quote 'Being a mother is about raising the child you have and not the child you wanted to have' set the tone for the session. Besides providing an insightful commentary on autism, she took the participants through her journey from denial to eventual acceptance and the challenges it entailed. Dr. Mishra concluded her session by reinforcing the need for the society as a whole to be truly inclusive – right from washrooms to classrooms to security checks at airports/shopping malls – every possible space since each of these has a potential of becoming an enormous challenge.

Panelist no. 3 was Dr. Abhida Dhumatkar, a visually challenged faculty member from Sathaye College. She too shared her journey and her challenges as a student as well as a teacher and the supportive role played by her parents in getting her educated. Her challenges as a visually challenged learner in mainstream educational spaces included assessments (which had to be oral many a times) as well as finding readers and writers to help with exams. The final panelist was Dr. Samya Shinde, a member of faculty at Raheja College. She spoke of caste based discrimination in higher education and the difficulties faced by the marginalized groups. she advocated strategies like reservation, curriculum, friendly admission processes, fee concessions and scholarships to promote inclusion.

The moderator Dr. Nagchoudhuri too shared her valuable insights, experiences and reflections and later invited audience questions. Some questions raised were:

- On institutional preparedness with respect to including some groups like visually challenged and autistic children especially in terms of learning resources

- Necessity for a teacher to let the students know of one's sexual orientation or the pronouns one uses
- Challenging the very premise of caste based differentiation and thus reservation if all human beings are created equal
- Benefits of reservations being availed by the ones who are economically stable and don't really need reservation.

The session ended with Dr. Zalte who proposed the vote of thanks.

The post lunch Session 2 focused on Inclusion Practices around the world – more specifically in Kenya, Paraguay and Siberia. All the resource persons for this session joined online. Ms. Anne Musalia, CEO of Infinite Care Consultants and Senior Special and Inclusive Education Consultant based in Nairobi was introduced by Ms. Nikita Gomes. Ms. Musalia walked the participants through her own understanding of the concept of Inclusion as well as inclusive practices in Kenya which included restructuring, transformation of schools into barrier free environments to accommodate all learners and up skilling the teachers. She also spoke of government's initiatives like loan facilities for learners with special needs. A major highlight of Kenyan practices was the use of Competency Based Curriculum, Competency Based Assessment and Stage Based Assessments. She concluded by touching upon their constraints.

Ms. Gomes proposed the vote of thanks.

The next session gave insights into Inclusion practices in Paraguay. The resource person Dr. Nancy Elias, School Coordinator of Colegio Del Sol School was introduced by Ms. Deepali Sarode. A pre-recorded video of Dr. Elias was shared where she emphasized on three main ideas – the recent spotlight on inclusion in education, facilitating factors to achieve inclusion identified by her in her work and increasing offerings in professional development. Dr. Elias underlined the overarching need of establishing an inclusive education system catering to various disabilities, learning differences (including intellectual giftedness) and diverse personal histories – highlighting the inaccuracies in existing definitions of the term. She then shared three facilitating factors in terms of Methods of teaching (including Universal Design for Learning), Organizational Changes (in terms of provision of materials and resources) and consideration of the views of the students. Dr. Elias concluded by emphasizing the need for improved infrastructure, materials, trained instructional practitioners and conditions for teaching. Ms. Sarode proposed the vote of thanks

Finally there was Ms. Anamarija Vicek, Secretary, Ministry of Education and Incharge of Inclusive Education to talk about practices in Serbia. Introduced by Dr. Ruchi Mittal, Ms. Vicek initially gave a comprehensive overview of the Serbian education system. She also shed light on the evolving concept of inclusive education and highlighted the role of educational institutions and local self-governments in providing equal learning opportunities to every child through funding, managing accessibility and providing need based additional services. She highlighted autonomy in developing legal policies coupled with centralized quality monitoring and curriculum development at national as well as provincial levels as a showcasing feature of educational governance in Serbia. Dr. Vicek described their evolutionary journey in inclusion since it was first initiated in Serbia in 2009 and a roadmap to reach the desired goal by 2030. An emphasis on quality education as a pathway to genuine inclusiveness was a notable aspect of her discourse. She also shared that the number of children with disabilities enrolled in special schools in Serbia showed a reduction of 25% since these children were now a part of mainstream education with specially devised IEPs. Another distinctive feature was the individual identification number for every learner which remains unique throughout the period of education. She concluded with description of their challenges like need for extensive teacher training, quality assurance, professional development and building a community of practitioners. Dr. Mittal proposed a vote of thanks.

With this presentation, session 2 came to an end. These sessions provided a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the inclusion journeys of Kenya, Paraguay and Serbia. Next came paper presentations conducted simultaneously in two groups in the hybrid mode. The online participants were divided into two breakout rooms and the face to face groups too were split into two groups. Presentations in Group 1 were chaired by Dr. Veena Deshmukh, ex faculty member KKCE and presentations in Group 2 were chaired by Dr. Apoorva Panshikar from Department of Special Education at SNDT Women's University. A total of 16 papers were presented by the participants (both online and face to face) on the four pre-identified themes which were:

- Theme A: Access, Diversity and Inclusion in Education
- Theme B: Inclusive School Environment, Curriculum and Pedagogies
- Theme C: Research in the areas of Inclusion and Inclusive Education
- Theme D: Voices of marginalized and excluded individuals regarding Inclusive Education

With this, the proceedings of Day 1 came to an end.

Day two of the seminar cum workshop started with college prayers setting the tone for a contemplative session 4 titled 'NEP 2020: Fostering the Inclusivity and Accountability of Teachers'. The resource person for this face to face session Dr. Sujata Bhan, Head of Department of Special Education, SNDT Women's University was introduced by Dr. Megha Dsouza. Dr. Bhan started her talk by highlighting the current scenario of inclusion in our country and emphasized on SDG No. 4 Quality Education. She discussed the contribution of NEP 2020 in implementing policies for this goal and emphasized on the importance of comprehending the true context of marginalized populations as not only children with disabilities, but also the disadvantaged sections of our society. She raised a question about how to address children with special needs and emphasized on the key role of teachers as well as all stakeholders to make the required accommodations including respecting the privacy of the child. Dr. Bhan highlighted the significance of the Human Rights model and the attitudinal barriers to inclusion. She also briefly touched upon mental health issues and the stigma still surrounding them. She gave wonderful real life examples to explain equality and equity as the basis for fairground. She had a list of do's and don'ts for teachers when dealing with children with disabilities. Dr. Bhan quickly touched upon the practices followed by SNDT University to encourage inclusion before ending the session with a positive quote that "People with disabilities are more like us than different from us". Some significant questions were raised - pertaining to role of teachers when institution does not support inclusion, sensitization of students, financial challenges for some families to hire special educators, and more. These were addressed by Dr. Bhan. There were ample takeaways from this stimulating session. Dr. Dsouza proposed the vote of thanks.

This was followed by Paper Presentations. Just like Day 1, the presentations were conducted simultaneously in two groups with online participants divided into two breakout rooms and face to face participants split into two groups. Presentations in Group 1 were chaired by Dr. Kalpana Kharade and the presentations in Group 2 were chaired by Dr. Rukmini Jamdar from Seva Sadan's College of Education. A total of 13 papers were presented by the participants (both online and face to face) on the same four themes, making a total of 29 papers in two days - conceptual as well as research based. Some even emerged from personal experiences.

The post lunch session was the final session of this International event which was a workshop on research for Inclusion titled 'Forging Inclusive Pathways in Research'. The facilitators for this interesting and creative online session Dr. Neetha Joy, Ms. Sharon Smith & Ms. Julia Barnes -

all research scholars from University of Birmingham were introduced by Mr. Ravi Mishra. The session began with back and forth conversations between the presenters through which they discussed their individual approaches to developing innovative and inclusive ways of undertaking research by including those who are marginalized and cannot speak for themselves in the research endeavor rather than researching about them, thus making the endeavor truly inclusive. They shared their personal experiences of working with the disabled. Dr. Joy's shared that her motivation to work in the area of inclusion came from her experiences with her disabled aunt who was a teacher but faced immense obstacles socially. She described her qualitative research using poetic descriptions put forth by teachers her respondents who were differently abled teachers themselves. Ms. Barnes shared valuable insights from her research work and emphasized on the significance of physiotherapy and language therapy for those with multiple disabilities. She also highlighted the use of ethnography and Gopro cameras to interpret the responses of her subjects during her research work. Ms. Smith described her zine-making workshop and scrapbook workshop and the use of collages as a creative endeavor. The three researchers strikingly showcased their shared values of embracing those with disabilities wholeheartedly. Participants were kept engaged through some short activities. They were also invited to create collages or poetic transcriptions with the materials provided to them and unleash their creativity in forging a collaborative manifesto for inclusive research practice. Few participants shared their thought-provoking and insightful creations. Mr. Ravi Mishra proposed the vote of thanks. Dr.Smita Gupta the

The two-day seminar cum workshop conducted in the dual mode itself became a live example of inclusion in educational spaces with varied participants across different nations and across India with different abilities and encountering different types of exclusion being well included by allowing their voices to be heard as experts and as equal participants in a fair manner.

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## HARNESSING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR INCLUSIVE SOCIETAL PARTICIPATION

Nikita Sneal Gomes & Dr. Mary George Varghese

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### *Abstract*

*A considerable proportion of people in today's society experience social isolation as a result of their disability and related difficulties. This essay explores the revolutionary role that artificial intelligence (AI) plays in reducing these problems and provides invaluable support to enable people with disabilities to participate more fully in society. Given its efforts to promote diversity and improve accessibility, artificial intelligence has a significant impact on the day-to-day lives of those with disabilities. AI becomes a driver for significant advances in the daily lives of people with impairments by offering creative solutions. Everyone has the intrinsic right to receive services, regardless of their backgrounds or disability, as the inclusion principle is highlighted. AI not only makes this access easier, but it also expands autonomy, opening exposing surroundings to a wider range of people. This study looks into the many uses of AI technology that can be used to people of different capacities and skill levels. It investigates how artificial intelligence (AI) might be customized to improve accessibility, tackling issues with everyday chores, communication, and navigation. The creation of inclusive AI technologies that empower those with impairments continues to be the key focus. This research strives to produce deeply significant and novel solutions via the lens of computer vision and machine learning techniques. AI promotes a more inclusive and accessible society by tackling unique issues that people with impairments confront. The main ideas discussed in this work are summarized by the keywords artificial intelligence (AI), accessible, natural language processing (NLP), and inclusion, demonstrating the mutually beneficial relationship between AI technology and its capacity to change how people with disabilities engage in society.*

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence (AI), accessible, Natural Language Processing (NLP), Inclusion, accessibility

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In today's rapidly evolving technological landscape, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a powerful force with the potential to transform various aspects of human life. One area where AI can have a profound impact is in enhancing accessibility for individuals with disabilities. This paper aims to explore the ways in which AI technology can be harnessed to empower people with diverse needs, creating a more inclusive and equitable society. People with disabilities often face challenges in engaging with the world due to societal barriers and limited accessibility. The right to access services, regardless of one's profile and disabilities, is a fundamental aspect of inclusivity. AI has the potential to break down these barriers by providing innovative solutions that cater to the unique needs of individuals with disabilities. This paper provides a background on the social issues faced by people with disabilities and introduces the concept of using AI to enhance accessibility.

Digital transformation revolutionizes the world, turning it into an inclusive place for people with and without disabilities. Artificial Intelligence has turned out to be one of the most game-changing

endeavors which science has gifted in our life-time. The integration of AI into everyday life has the potential to revolutionize the experiences of individuals with disabilities. From assistive technologies to personalized solutions, AI can provide valuable assistance in various aspects of daily living. The core principle of inclusivity is ensuring that everyone has the right to access services and participate fully in society. AI plays a crucial role in promoting inclusivity by providing tools and technologies that bridge the gap between individuals with disabilities and the wider community.

One of the significant benefits of AI for individuals with disabilities is the increased autonomy it offers. AI technologies can be customized to cater to specific needs, providing individuals with greater control over their environment and daily activities. AI technology, such as computer vision and machine learning algorithms, can be used to create solutions that are tailored to the unique problems that people with disabilities confront. AI-driven navigation systems, for instance, can help people with visual impairments in real-time by providing them with guidance and efficient routes in the field of mobility. These technologies enable users to navigate diverse situations with confidence and independence, so empowering them.

Applications of Natural Language Processing (NLP) can also help break down obstacles to communication, AI-powered speech and language models. Improving accessibility for people with impairments via AI technologies entails implementing creative solutions strategically to break down obstacles and encourage inclusivity. The main objective is to use AI's capabilities to make the world more equal and accessible for individuals with a range of requirements. Accessibility is no longer a one-size-fits-all solution but rather a customized experience when these technologies are customized to meet the demands of each individual. Furthermore, as AI continues to progress, more complex and user-friendly applications are made possible, guaranteeing that people with disabilities can keep up with the most recent technological innovations that improve their accessibility.

AI technology, such as computer vision and machine learning algorithms, can be used to create solutions that are tailored to the unique problems that people with disabilities confront. AI-driven navigation systems, for instance, can help people with visual impairments in real-time by providing them with guidance and efficient routes in the field of mobility. These technologies enable users to navigate diverse situations with confidence and independence, so empowering them.

To put it simply, the advancement of inclusion via cutting-edge AI-driven solutions represents a paradigm shift in the way society views the needs of people with disabilities. Artificial intelligence (AI) technologies provide a more accessible and compassionate environment by identifying and resolving the particular difficulties experienced by this population.

### **Research Studies:**

In the paper, "Impact of AI on the inclusion of Learners with Special needs: Public Policy Perspective in Contemporary Scenario", the researcher **Muhammad Umar Riaz Abbasi** investigated how AI technologies might help students with unique needs. He examined the role AI-powered resources played in fostering inclusive learning environments, including assistive technology, adaptive assessments, and personalized learning platforms. The assessment also emphasized the role of public policies in determining the acceptance and execution of AI projects meant to advance educational inclusivity.

The important implications for educators, practitioners, and policymakers involved in promoting sociocultural inclusivity in education are examined by Senka Zobeida Salas-Pilco et al. in their paper, "Artificial Intelligence and New Technologies in Inclusive Education for Minority Students: A Systematic Review." Stakeholders make educated judgments on the integration of AI and new technologies into educational practices by knowing the benefits and difficulties of these tools in a variety of sociocultural contexts. Furthermore, investigating significant facets of inclusive education that tackle the sociocultural variety of pupils can result in more efficient and fair educational experiences for every student.

In the book Artificial Intelligence And Education: A critical view through the lens of human rights, democracy and the rule of law Holmes Wayne et. al sheds light on the intricate interactions between AI and the core values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in education. It emphasizes how important it is for legislators, educators, and tech developers to give ethical AI practices that protect people's rights and promote democratic values top priority. Strong regulatory framework development, stakeholder participation in AI governance procedures, and the encouragement of AI literacy and awareness in educational settings are among the recommendations.

### **Applications of AI for Accessibility:**

The specific applications of AI, focusing on machine learning algorithms and computer vision. By leveraging these technologies, innovative solutions can be developed to address challenges in navigation, communication, and daily tasks. Real-world examples and case studies highlight the effectiveness of AI in enhancing accessibility for individuals with diverse needs. Machine Learning and Natural Language Processing are integral components of AI that play a crucial role in developing accessible solutions. These technologies can be tailored to create AI applications that understand and respond to the unique requirements of individuals with disabilities, particularly in the context of communication and information access. The following are the various applications of AI for Accessibility:

#### **1. Speech-to-Text Applications:**

Instantaneously accessible programs or services that allow you to speak, view the outcomes on your screen in (almost) real time. This is excellent for quickly taking notes and composing emails without having to type. In addition to these productivity benefits, this software makes typing easier for those with carpal tunnel syndrome or other limitations. It increases everyone's accessibility to technology.

Some of the key-features are:

- **Precision:** These applications have an accuracy of around 90%. Whatever is said is being typed in almost real time.
- **Simplicity of use:** The interface is user-friendly and simple enough for everyone to understand in a matter of seconds.
- **Voice commands:** Voice commands are accessible. During dictation, you can add "instructions" like punctuation, beginning a new paragraph, or more intricate directives like capitalizing every word in a sentence.
- **Multi-lingual:** It supports multiple languages thereby relieving the end user of grammatical errors.
- **Versatile:** The software could adjust to various situations, applications, and systems making it adaptable and versatile.

**Examples:** These applications are mostly integrated with the smart phones. Otter, Amazon Transcribe, Google's Gboard, Speechnotes are few examples in this category.

## 2. AI for Images:

The field of picture recognition apps is constantly changing as a result of technological advancements giving our smartphones amazing new capabilities. These apps use the combination of artificial intelligence and smartphone cameras to reimagine interactions with the visual environment, ranging from object detection to image-based searches.

- **Microsoft's Seeing AI:** When it comes to helping people who are visually impaired, Microsoft Seeing AI is a great resource. This software tells users the story of the planet with the use of Artificial Intelligence and state-of-the-art image recognition. Seeing AI is able to read text aloud, recognize faces, and identify and describe objects. Because of its adaptability, it is a very useful tool that helps people with visual impairments become more independent and accessible. Microsoft Seeing AI is a prime example of how technology can improve people's lives by fusing the strength of artificial intelligence with a dedication to inclusivity.

- **Google's Lookout:** Google's Lookout is a prime example of the company's dedication to accessibility. The application speaks alerts about text, objects, and people around the user using picture recognition.

With real-time auditory cues, the software increases mobility and independence for people with visual impairments. Lookout is proof positive that technology can improve the lives of people with disabilities even as it continues to shatter barriers.

## 3. Reading and Writing with AI

These are developing quickly and are now at a place where, under the right conditions, they can be quite helpful. When used properly, these AI text generators can make your job easier and faster while producing professional and consistent content.

Examples include Jasper, Ryter, Grammarly, Anyword, Quilbot, are some great innovate tools.

### Challenges and Ethical Considerations:

While AI holds great promise for improving accessibility, there are challenges and ethical considerations that must be addressed. The issues such as bias in AI algorithms, privacy concerns, and the need for universal design principles to ensure that AI solutions are truly inclusive and do not inadvertently perpetuate discrimination. The following are the challenges faced:

- **Performance inconsistencies:** It's critical to solve performance discrepancies in the context of AI for accessibility. The efficacy of AI systems can vary depending on the needs and scenarios of different users. Variations in user preferences, the transient nature of web material, and the complexity of accessibility regulations are some of the reasons for these disparities. Researchers and developers need to concentrate on improving AI algorithms so that they can support a variety of accessibility challenges with consistent and dependable performance.

- **Acquiring Inclusive Data:** It is difficult to acquire data specifically from the disabled group as people are not comfortable sharing the same. The caliber and inclusivity of the training data form the cornerstone

of any AI system that performs well. When creating AI solutions for accessibility, gathering inclusive data is crucial. A wide range of user profiles, disabilities, and usage patterns should be represented in the dataset that AI models are trained on. By ensuring inclusion, the AI system can better identify and address the varied demands of people with impairments, resulting in a more comprehensive and just solution.

● **Accessible Verification:** In order to guarantee that AI applications are accessible, verification techniques are essential. It is crucial to put in place accessible verification procedures that assess AI system performance in comparison to accepted accessibility guidelines. These verification processes ought to be created with a variety of user interactions in mind and to resemble real-world situations. Testing the AI system's adaptability to changing content and technological advancements is another aspect of accessibility verification that confirms the system's dependability and efficiency in offering accessible answers.

### **Future Directions and Emerging Technologies:**

It is essential to incorporate accessibility considerations from the outset of technology development to provide inclusive and user-friendly solutions. This entails using testing procedures, coding standards, and design concepts that put accessibility first. Developers may guarantee that products and services are accessible to a diverse range of consumers, including people with disabilities, by taking proactive measures to identify and resolve any impediments. The incorporation of accessibility considerations at an early stage fosters a technological landscape that is more egalitarian and inclusive.

Laws and policies that hold companies responsible for the accessibility of their digital products must be developed quickly due to the rapid growth of technology, particularly in the area of artificial intelligence. These rules ought to prioritize more than just compliance with accessibility guidelines while also addressing the possibility of biased results from AI systems. Timely implementation of such laws and policies serves as a buffer against inadvertent biases and discriminatory choices, supporting a more just and accessible digital world.

Developing rules and standards for the responsible application of AI in digital accessibility requires ethical discourse. This entails taking into account the moral ramifications of AI algorithms, especially in situations where decisions may have an effect on people with disabilities. Creating ethical guidelines makes it possible to guarantee that AI technologies are applied in a way that respects user privacy, justice, and openness. These guidelines aid in the creation of a framework that supports the ethical application of AI, shielding others from potential damage and building confidence in digital accessibility tools.

### **Conclusion:**

The transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence in enhancing accessibility for individuals with disabilities. By leveraging machine learning algorithms and computer vision, AI can address challenges in navigation, communication, and daily tasks, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and equitable society. However, careful consideration must be given to ethical concerns and the ongoing development of technologies that prioritize inclusivity. The journey towards a truly accessible world through AI requires collaboration, innovation, and a commitment to ensuring that no one is left behind.

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## ATTITUDE OF TEACHERS TOWARDS MULTICULTURAL SCIENCE EDUCATION

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### *Abstract*

*India is renowned for its cultural diversity, stemming from a long history of coexistence and integration of various ethnicities, languages, religions, and traditions. India's cultural heritage is deeply rooted in its ancient history, with contributions to Philosophy, Science, Mathematics, Literature, and Arts. This multicultural ethos is not only a source of national pride but also plays a crucial role in shaping India's dynamic and inclusive identity on the global stage. This research paper focusses on studying the attitude of teachers towards Multicultural Science Education. The findings of the study revealed teachers strongly believe that the philosophy of Multiculturalism is need of the hour. The students certainly develop many thoughts while being taught and tend to relate the scientific concepts to their own roots and cultural backgrounds. The teachers feel that the scope of Science should be widened and must include multicultural views which will promote the holistic development of the students studying in the classroom. Varied cultural views, beliefs must find place in the Science textbooks in order to enhance the interest level of the students towards the subject. The focus would shift from viewing Science as a mix of facts and cultural aspects.*

**Key Words:** Multicultural Education, Science, Diversity

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### **Introduction**

Education should aim to cultivate a sense of equality, where individuals from diverse backgrounds are treated with fairness and respect. By incorporating multicultural education, promoting intercultural communication, and providing opportunities for cross-cultural learning experiences, educators can help students develop the necessary skills and attitudes to thrive in a globalized society.

### **Concept of Multicultural Education:**

According to Banks (1997) Multicultural education is an idea, an educational reform movement, and a process. As an idea, multicultural education seeks to create equal educational opportunities for all students, including those from different racial, ethnic, and social-class groups.

Science education plays a vital role in promoting scientific literacy and helping individuals understand and appreciate the natural world. It equips students with critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and a foundation of scientific knowledge that can be applied in various contexts. By incorporating effective science pedagogy, educators can create engaging learning experiences that foster curiosity, inquiry, and a deeper understanding of scientific concepts.

### **Rationale of the Study:**

It is important to create an inclusive and engaging learning environment. Thus, giving them equitable opportunities for scientific literacy, real Life problem-based situations, adapting teaching methods to cater to a range of students' needs, creating open-minded students, multicultural Science education, by recognizing

the contributions of scientists from various backgrounds, integrating culturally relevant examples in lessons, and ensuring that science is presented as a universal and inclusive endeavour. The researcher was not able to locate any research done on multicultural education and Science teaching in India. With the growing diversity of the student body in Indian schools, it is increasingly imperative to connect with, and interact effectively with these pupils. Thus, the researcher was influenced and felt the need to investigate the effectiveness of multicultural education in teaching of Science.

**Aims of the Study:**

1) To study the attitude of teachers towards multicultural Science education.

**Objectives of the Study:**

To find out the attitude of teachers towards multicultural Science education with respect to the following aspects:

- 1) Teaching science with a multicultural perspective will help individuals to be more open minded.
- 2) Multiculturalism in the classroom has a substantial impact on the science teachers striving to create a classroom in which all students can learn.
- 3) Use of books and magazines from different cultural backgrounds in science classrooms.
- 4) Multiculturalism and science education go hand in hand.
- 5) Discussion of scientific topics from varied cultural perspectives will help students to understand the topic better.
- 6) If a child belongs to an urban setting then science education should focus more on the information applicable in urban settings.
- 7) Students develop a superiority complex when only the contributions of a few dominant cultures are discussed in science.

**Scope and Delimitations of the study:**

The present study has been restricted only to Science education. The study takes into account only the Science teachers' views and perspectives. The survey is restricted to Mumbai region school teachers only and does not include teachers from colleges and other higher institutions. Significance of the study: By understanding teachers' perspectives, curriculum developers gain valuable insights into the practical challenges and opportunities associated with incorporating multiculturalism into science education. The research can contribute to the development of a more holistic curriculum by integrating cultural aspects, students can see the relevance of scientific concepts in the context of their own lives and prepare for the interconnected world. This helps in deeper understanding of the subject and students are motivated to explore and learn more.

**Methodology:**

**Research design:** For the present study Survey method was used.

**Sample:**

For the present study, the population comprises of 92 Science teachers from English medium schools affiliated to SSC, CBSE and ICSE board, situated in Mumbai.

**Sampling technique:**

For the present study the sampling technique used was convenient and snowball sampling to collect the data.

#### **Tools for data collection:**

For the present study the tool was prepared by the researcher to study the teacher's perspective with respect to multiculturalism and Science education. It was a four-point rating scale – Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (DA) and Strongly disagree (SD). The tool consisted of total 21 items which included positive and negatively worded items.

#### **Analysis and Interpretation of the data:**

For the present study, Percentage was used to analyse the teacher's perspective for the following:

- 1) Teaching science with a multicultural perspective will help individuals to be more open minded.
- 2) Multiculturalism in the classroom has a substantial impact on the science teachers striving to create a classroom in which all students can learn.
- 3) Use of books and magazines from different cultural backgrounds in science classrooms.
- 4) Multiculturalism and science education go hand in hand.
- 5) Discussion of scientific topics from varied cultural perspectives will help students to understand the topic better.
- 6) If a child belongs to an urban setting, then Science education should focus more on the information applicable in urban settings.
- 7) Students develop a superiority complex when only the contributions of a few dominant cultures are discussed in Science.

**Table 1.1 Percentage-Wise analysis of the Objectives for the Total Sample**

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>SA (Strongly Agree) %</b>	<b>A (Agree) %</b>	<b>DA (Disagree) %</b>	<b>SD (Strongly Disagree) %</b>
1. Teaching science with a multicultural perspective will help individuals be more open minded	45.65	49	5.43	0
2. Multiculturalism in the classroom has a substantial impact on the science teachers striving to create a classroom in which all students can learn or not	53.30	44.50	2.20	0
3. Teachers should make use of books from different cultural backgrounds.	48.9	46.7	4.34	0
4. Multiculturalism & science education go hand in hand.	18.47	72.82	8.69	0

Objectives	SA (Strongly Agree) %	A (Agree) %	DA (Disagree) %	SD (Strongly Disagree) %
5. Discussion of scientific topics from varied cultural perspectives will help students to understand the topic better	40.21	51.08	8.69	0
6.If a child belongs to an urban setting then science education should focus more on the information applicable in urban settings	19.56	36.9	39.1	4.34
7.Students develop a superiority complex when only the contributions of a few dominant cultures are discussed in Science	27.17	48.91	21.73	2.17

Fig 1.1

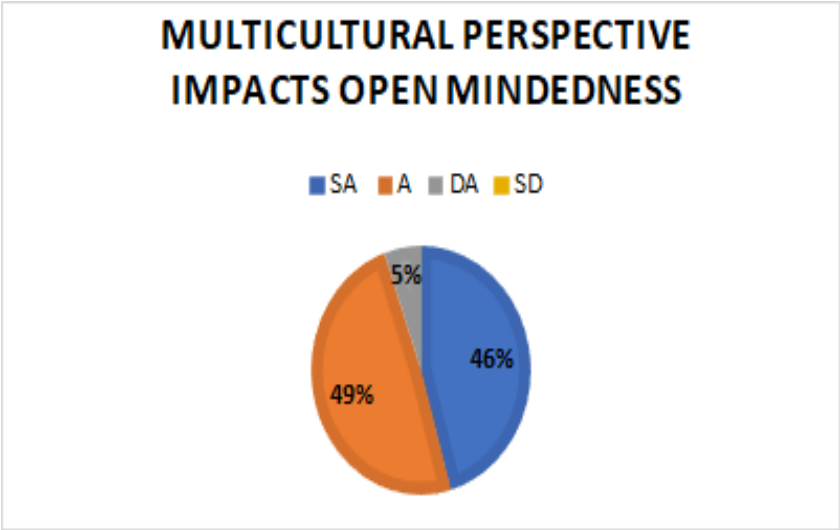


Fig 1.2

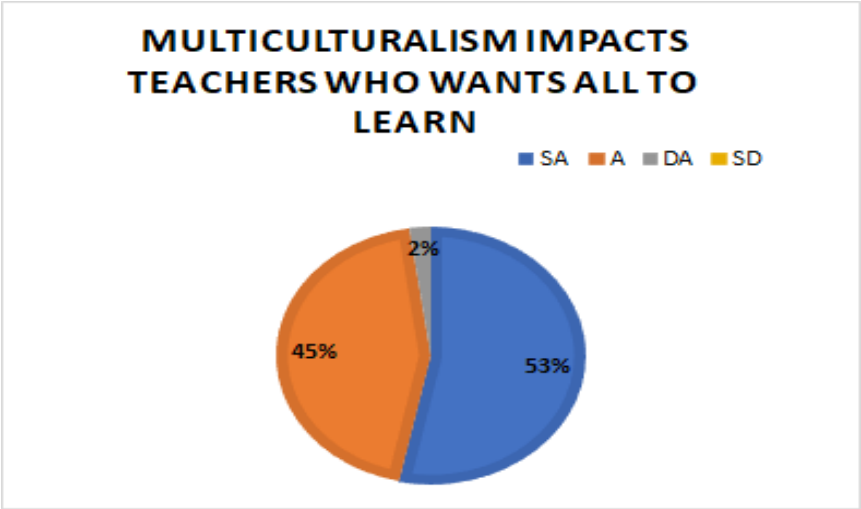


Fig 1.3

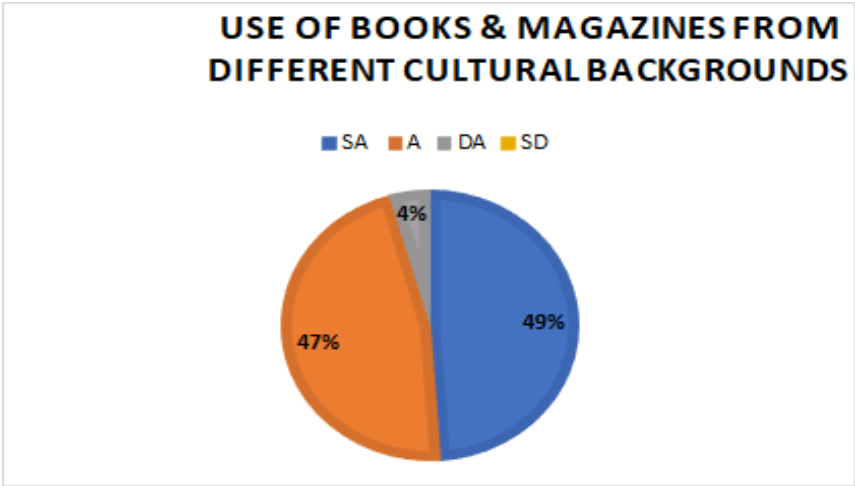
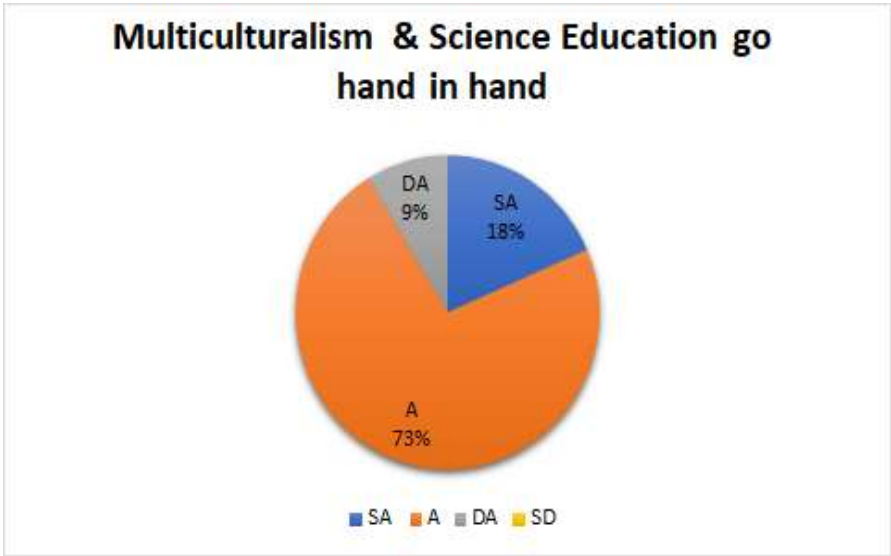
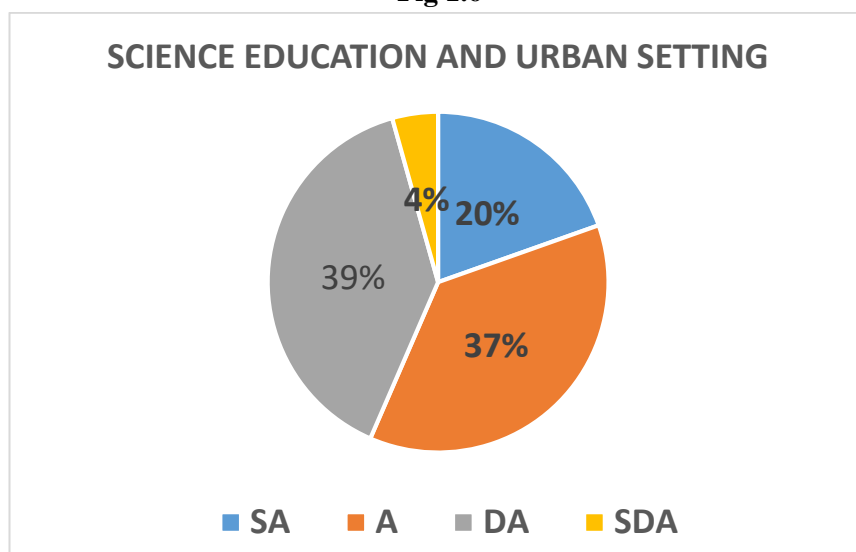
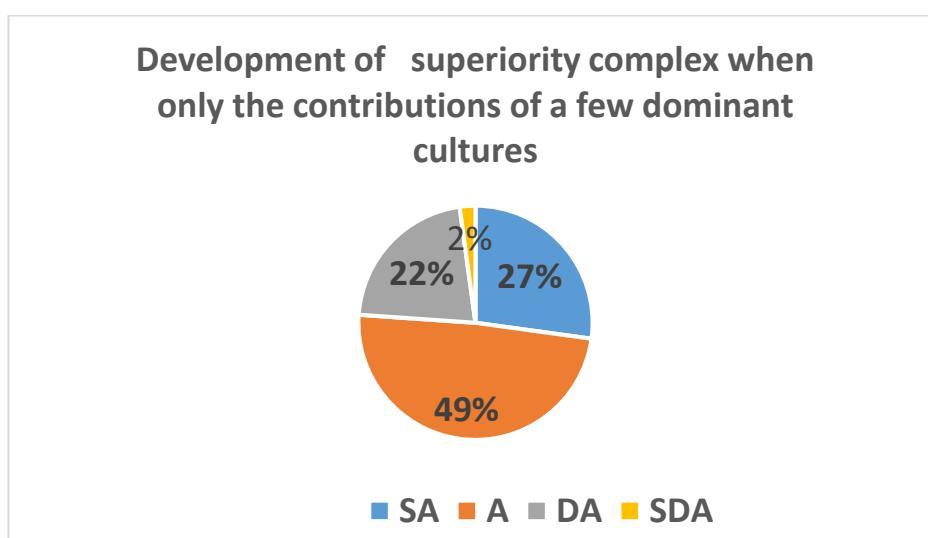


Fig 1.4



**Fig 1.5**

**Fig 1.6****Fig 1.7****Major findings & Discussion:**

- Figure 1.1 represents percentage wise data of teachers' perspectives on enhancement of open-mindedness of students due to multicultural science education, to which 46% of them have strongly agreed and 49% of them have agreed. Only a mere 5% of the teachers have disagreed. Thus, we conclude that majority of the teachers believe that multicultural Science education does increase the open-mindedness of students. According to the researcher, while delivering of science content, if

aspects from different cultures are also touched upon, the students are able to understand the subjects from a holistic view and this broadens their outlook towards different scientific concepts; ultimately leading them to be open-minded.

- 2) Figure 1.2 seeks to know from teachers how multiculturalism impacts their efforts in creating a classroom where every student can learn. To this, 53% have strongly agreed and 45% have agreed. A mere 2% of them have disagreed. Here, we can conclude that Multiculturalism does impact the efforts of science teachers in developing a classroom conducive for all to learn. The teachers who have agreed to this, must be taking all efforts to ensure that all students irrespective of their cultural background, have access to quality education. When their scientific teaching is supplemented with Multiculturalism in the class, their efforts turn out fruitful.
- 3) Figure 1.3 seeks to understand teachers' opinions on whether books from different cultural backgrounds should be used in science education. To this, 49% have strongly agreed whereas 47% have agreed. Only 4% of the teachers have disagreed. Therefore, majority of the teachers agree that books from different cultural backgrounds should be utilised in their Science class. This view may have developed as a result of having students coming from varied backgrounds under one roof. The teachers may feel the need to let each one understands the subject and its concepts from their own cultural view. This can be facilitated through the discussion initiated with the help of different cultural books. The mere 4% of teachers who disagree may be of the view that Science is a factual subject and so there is no scope for cultural views arising in it.
- 4) Figure 1.4 seeks to understand teachers' views on whether Multiculturalism and Science go hand in hand. To this, 18% have strongly agreed, 73% have agreed while 9% of the teachers have disagreed. We see that the majority of the teachers agree to this particular point. The teachers who have agreed to this statement, may be of the opinion that to broaden the outlook of the students and enable them to view the scientific concepts from cultural aspects as well, it is necessary to treat Science and Multiculturalism as 2 sides of the same coin. The 9% of the teachers who do not agree here, might be viewing Science as a fact-based subject leaving no scope for multicultural views being fostered into it.
- 5) Figure 1.5 seeks to know teachers' opinion about the incorporation of different cultures into the Science curriculum. To this, 40% teachers strongly agree, 51% agree whereas 9% of them Disagree. Majority of the teachers agree to this since, they feel that the curriculum of Science should not be limited to only facts and figures, experiments, etc. This limits the thought processes of the students and hinders the development of a wider view of the subject. The curriculum of Science if developed by incorporating several cultural views, will surely make the content more relatable and applicable in the students' lives. The 9% teachers who disagree to this may feel that Cultural aspects would bring in more of philosophy and beliefs of the cultures, which may not fit well into a practical and factual subject like Science.
- 6) Figure 1.6 throws light on if a child belongs to an urban setting then science education should focus more on the information applicable in urban settings. To this 19.56 % strongly agree, 36.9 % agree.



The reason could be that teachers feel need-based curriculum will have a greater impact on the students learning and its application in the real life situations.

- 7) Figure 1.7 focuses on teachers view on students developing a superiority complex when only the contributions of a few dominant cultures are discussed in science. To this 27.17 Strongly agree, 48.91% agree. Around 21.73% disagree and just 2% strongly disagree.

May be teachers feel that focus on contributions of scientist from only few dominant cultures especially from developed countries may again give rise to superiority complex and neglecting the other groups.

### **Conclusion:**

Through this research, it is clearly understood that majority of the teachers wish to have a classroom wherein teaching is not only restricted to fact-based information and lecturing but there needs to be a strong linkage between Science teaching-learning and multicultural views. They strongly believe that the philosophy of Multiculturalism is a need of the hour. The students studying in a Science classroom are young and do not have a one-track mind. They are bound to develop many thoughts while being taught and tend to relate the scientific concepts to their own roots and cultural backgrounds. The teachers feel that the scope of Science should be widened and must include multicultural views and aspects to it which will promote the holistic development of the students studying in the classroom. Varied cultural views, beliefs must find place in the Science textbooks in order to enhance the interest level of the students towards the subject.

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## PERSPECTIVE OF SCHOOL TEACHERS ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS CWSN

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### **Abstract**

*This research study delves into the critical topic of inclusive education, focusing on the perspectives of school teachers regarding children with special needs (CWSN). The study aims to comprehensively understand teachers' experiences, challenges, attitudes, strategies, and recommendations in implementing inclusive education within mainstream classrooms. Through a phenomenological approach, data was collected from 9 experienced female teachers affiliated with the ICSE board, revealing three core themes: Beliefs about Inclusive Education, Emphasizing Support and Specialized Education for Children with Special Needs, and Overcoming Challenges in Teaching Children with Special Needs: Adapting Effective Teaching Methods. The findings showcase teachers' commitment to fostering inclusive environments, emphasizing support, and promoting specialized education for CWSN. The study's insights underscore the need for teacher support and inform future research in areas like school leaders' perspectives, parental involvement, curriculum adaptation, and assistive technology. In conclusion, this research advances the discourse on inclusive education, underlining its practical implications in educational settings and aiming to create inclusive, diverse, and equitable learning environments for all children.*

**Keywords:** *Inclusive education, children with special needs, teacher perspectives, phenomenological research, Teacher support*

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### **INTRODUCTION:**

In 2020, Malala Yousafzai emphasized the significance of embracing diversity within education, viewing it as an opportunity for mutual learning and growth. The study's focus on perspectives of school teachers regarding inclusive education for children with special needs.

It highlights the importance of creating a sense of belonging for all students and problematizes the challenges of implementing successful inclusive practices.

As classrooms welcome an increasing number of students previously excluded from mainstream education, it becomes evident that mere placement within these settings is insufficient. True inclusion requires these students to be recognized as equal and valued members of the classroom community. Classroom teachers must allocate resources, assess the diverse instructional needs, adapt teaching methods, and provide support to all students. Their role is pivotal for the successful organization of heterogeneous classrooms. Therefore, to understand the dynamics of inclusive classrooms, we position

the classroom teacher as the primary unit of focus.

The implementation of successful inclusive educational programs has been strongly associated with teachers' attitudes toward inclusion (Moody, Vaughn, Hughes, & Fisher, 2000). To nurture truly inclusive schools, teachers must become proactive change agents, prepared to challenge stereotypes and discriminatory behavior. They should critically engage with their environments and the educational materials they use. Building classrooms that respect all children and their differences is an ongoing, challenging endeavor.

This study sets out to explore classroom teachers' perspectives regarding their roles in classifying students for special education programs and implementing inclusive models. In this endeavor, the classroom teacher becomes the foundational unit of analysis. Within the field of education, teachers bring varying curricula, reputations, and access to resources. They compete in these arenas, each attracting different levels of prestige and reputation. Research and educational practice must take into account a given teacher's position in relation to their peers to critically understand teachers' perspectives concerning their students.

#### **NEED OF THE STUDY:**

This study takes a comprehensive approach to advance teacher training by analyzing teachers' experiences and aligning with Darling-Hammond's (2017) research on effective inclusive teaching. It emphasizes fostering collaboration among teachers, specialists, and stakeholders to create inclusive education ecosystems, guided by Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory. Grounded in inclusive pedagogy and Universal Design for learning principles, it advocates for instructional approaches benefiting all students. By understanding teachers' Perspectives, the study informs evidence-based strategies, enhancing education quality and inclusivity.

#### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

1. What are your beliefs about Inclusive Education?
2. With regards to CWSN: What trainings did you receive to deal with CWSN? If yes/no Do you feel experience itself is enough? Why?
3. How would you implement Inclusive Education in classroom?

#### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The aim of the study is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences, challenges, attitudes, strategies, and recommendations of teachers in implementing inclusive education practices within mainstream classrooms and understand teacher's beliefs about Inclusive Education.

#### **DEFINITION**

Inclusive education ensures equal access to quality learning for all students, including those with disabilities, in regular classrooms. It breaks down barriers, adapts teaching methods, and provides support for full engagement and academic success. (UNESCO,2017)

#### **SCOPE:**

The scope of this transcendental phenomenological study, aims to comprehensively explore teachers' perspectives in inclusive education for children with special needs. It delves into their interactions, instructional methods, collaborations with professionals, and support systems. By

uncovering teachers' lived experiences and viewpoints, this research offers valuable insights to enhance inclusive education, benefiting children with special needs.

### **GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR INCLUSION IN INDIA:**

The Indian constitution is firmly committed to providing basic education to all children up to the age of 14, emphasizing equality of status and opportunity. This commitment was reinforced by a 2002 amendment that made education a fundamental right for children aged 6 to 14. Over the years, various policies and acts, such as the Kothari Commission, the Integrated Education of Disabled Children (IEDC) scheme, and the Persons with Disabilities

Act (PWD 1995), have aimed to ensure inclusive education for children with disabilities. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the Right to Education (RTE) Act of 2009 further emphasized inclusive education and support for children with disabilities. Despite these efforts, there remains a need for continued improvements, particularly in providing disability-friendly facilities in schools.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW SUMMARY:**

In the field of inclusive education, researchers have extensively explored educators' attitudes, perspectives, and practices through qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods studies. Qualitative research, such as Dubey et al. (2016) and Chhabra et al. (2018), delves into the social dynamics and foundational stages of inclusive education, offering context-specific insights from various regions like India, Botswana, Greece, and Bangladesh.

Quantitative studies, including those by Avramidis et al. (2000), Al-Zyoudi (2006), Agbenyega (2007), and Yao et al. (2021), provide comprehensive insights into teachers' attitudes and concerns across diverse cultural and educational contexts. These studies enrich the global understanding of inclusive practices through surveys and quantitative analysis.

Mixed methods research, exemplified by Das et al. (2013), Tiwari et al. (2015), and Suc et al. (2016), integrates qualitative and quantitative approaches, offering holistic understandings of inclusive education implementation complexities. Their studies comprehensively assess teachers' preparedness, attitudes, and practices, highlighting the need for specialized training and adaptive strategies.

Implications drawn from these studies underscore the importance of addressing key topics such as teacher attitudes, professional development needs, classroom practices, collaboration, and resource allocation. Recommendations include fostering positive attitudes, addressing diverse needs, promoting collaboration, and implementing adaptive strategies for inclusive practices.

Additionally, contributions from researchers like David, R., Kuyini, A. B., Das, A. K., Chhabra, S., Bose, K., Ghimire, A., Tiwari, A., Agbenyega, J., Petersson-Bloom, L., Holmqvist, M., and others further enrich the literature. Their studies, conducted in various geographical and educational contexts, offer valuable insights into inclusive education.

For instance, David and Kuyini (2012) shed light on social inclusion in Tamil Nadu, India, while Das et al. (2013) emphasized teacher preparedness in India, including preferences for professional development. Bhatnagar and Das (2013, 2014) focused on secondary regular school teachers' attitudes in New Delhi, India, contributing insights into urban settings.

Singh and Agarwal (2015) discussed challenges and prospects of inclusive education in India, while

Kundu and Rice (2019) explored educators' perceptions in supporting inclusion in secondary schools. Sharma (2019) provided context-specific insights into teachers' perspectives on children with disabilities in inclusive schools.

Moreover, Juyal (2023) examined preservice teachers' perspectives, adding to our understanding of future educators' perceptions. The collective work of these researchers underscores the complexity and importance of inclusive education, aiming to create more inclusive and supportive learning environments for all students.

Additional studies, such as Rose et al. (2021), Ahmed & Ali (2021), Nath (2021), Pati & Khamari (2022), Warman (2021), Maryanti et al. (2021), Moriña & Carballo (2017), and many others, further contribute to the diverse body of literature on inclusive education, spanning across various regions and contexts. These studies offer valuable insights into different aspects of inclusive education, including provision, access, professional autonomy, challenges, practical applications, governmental policies, and educators' perceptions, enriching the discourse and informing practice and policy decisions.

## **DESIGN OF THE STUDY:**

### **METHOD**

For the present study the researcher has used phenomenological type of qualitative approach on understanding teachers' viewpoints, utilizing words rather than numerical data for analysis. Inductive reasoning is employed, allowing the researcher to develop concepts, identify patterns, and derive themes, motifs, and categories from the data. By immersing in the data, the researcher seeks to capture and discover meaningful insights into the topic.

### **SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE**

In this study, a sample of 9 female teachers from various content areas with varying years of experience, all affiliated with the ICSE board, was selected. Data was collected through focus group interviews to gather insights and information for the study.

The researcher utilized a combination of criterion and convenience sampling techniques in the present study. These approaches enabled the selection of cases that met specific criteria while also providing practical benefits, such as ensuring quality assurance and saving time, money, and effort in data collection.

### **TOOLS USED IN THE PRESENT STUDY**

For the purpose of the present study, focus group interview was conducted to collect the data from the respondents, as it gives freedom to the participants to present their views, thoughts, and opinions. In addition, the researcher also prepared personal data sheet for the purpose of the data collection.

A brief description is as follows:

1. Personal Data Sheet- The teachers were required to give personal information such as their name, gender, qualification, subject they teach and years of experience.
2. Focus group Interview- It involves a small group of participants discussing a specific topic under the guidance of a moderator to gather in-depth insights and perspectives.

### **DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE**

Data analysis is a crucial and challenging aspect of qualitative research, and in this study, it was

conducted through a combination of manual and computer-assisted methods. The researcher assigned codes (F1, F2, F3, etc.) to the responses from female participants. Analysis commenced immediately after the focus group interview, following transcription. Careful examination of the transcribed responses led to their segregation into distinct codes at an individual level. The analysis of these codes was then meticulously performed to form various categories. Microsoft Word was utilized for data storage and analysis, employing options like highlighting and tabulation to facilitate the process. Ultimately, themes emerged through the organization of categories. The data analysis technique is visually represented in the following diagram.

### **RESULTS AND CONCLUSION:**

The themes that have emerged from data analysis are as follows:

#### **THEME 1- Beliefs about Inclusive Education**

This dimension consists of following categories

1. Catering to the needs of special children
2. Implementation of NEP for integration of subjects
3. No Discrimination in Terms of Capabilities and Capacity

#### **INTERPRETATION OF THEME 1**

Teachers are at the forefront of addressing the needs of special children, emphasizing the importance of inclusive practices that incorporate visual aids, interactive sessions, and individualized attention. They advocate for a nurturing and discrimination-free environment, where all students, regardless of their abilities, have equal access to diverse teaching methods, fostering empathy and equal opportunities.

In addition, teachers stress the need for practical training, particularly in light of the National Education Policy (NEP), to effectively support diverse behaviors in mainstream schools. They believe in the power of inclusive education, emphasizing the integration of special children with their peers without discrimination. Recognizing the unique capabilities of special children, teachers are committed to providing the necessary attention and support to help these students realize their academic potential. Their collective view is one of positivity and a dedication to fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all.

#### **THEME 2- Emphasizing Support and Specialized Education for Children with Special Needs**

This dimension consists of following categories

1. Guidance and support needed for special children
2. Role of stakeholders to support special children

#### **INTERPRETATION OF THEME 2:**

In the realm of supporting special children, teachers emphasize the need for practical training and the valuable role of shadow teachers in providing individualized support. They appreciate the positive impact of integrating special children into mainstream classrooms, where peers contribute to motivation and assistance, creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Teachers also stress the importance of tailoring support to each child's individual needs, including accommodations like scribes or customized question papers.



Acknowledging the presence of special children in mainstream classrooms, they emphasize the need for specialized training to enhance teaching approaches and better cater to the diverse needs of these students. Overall, teachers share positive experiences and perspectives on effectively nurturing the learning and development of special students.

### **THEME 3- Overcoming challenges in teaching children with special needs: Adapting Effective Teaching Methods.**

This dimension consists of following categories

1. Challenges in understanding the need of special children
2. Positive impact of effective teaching on special children
3. Difficulties faced by teachers in the absence of shadow teachers
4. The need for skill development and child-centric approaches

#### **INTERPRETATION OF THEME 3:**

In the context of understanding the needs of special children, teachers emphasize the significance of practical training and openly discuss the challenges they encounter when interacting with these students, particularly those with auditory deficiencies. While they acknowledge the positive impact of shadow teachers and counselors, there's a clear call for specialized training to address unique needs and ensure an inclusive learning environment. Teachers stress the need for effort, understanding, and a proactive approach in dealing with special students to promote their growth and development.

Teachers also underline the importance of treating all students equally and creating an inclusive environment. They share strategies for handling challenging behaviors and take pride in the progress observed in special students. Even in the absence of shadow teachers, they emphasize the value of collaboration and communication. They share instances of motivating special students, achieving success, and stress the need to avoid seeing them as burdens, focusing instead on understanding and effectively managing their needs. Overall, there's a shared commitment to continuous skill development and child-centric approaches in the classroom.

#### **RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The study provides valuable insights into the experiences of teachers forming positive relationships with special children. To enhance our understanding of inclusive education for children with special needs, future research should explore teachers' perspectives on fostering inclusive practices, in diverse geographic regions or districts. This would allow for a comprehensive examination of how the formation of positive relationships may vary based on teachers' content, level, or teaching style.

Additionally, focusing on effective teacher training programs that equip educators to cater to diverse needs would foster more supportive learning environments. Parental involvement research can provide valuable insights into enhancing student outcomes. Exploring strategies for positive peer interactions and social integration would promote inclusivity. Understanding the impact of curriculum adaptation and assistive technology on academic progress is essential, as is studying teacher-student relationships.

Moreover, it would be beneficial to replicate the study with school leaders' participation to understand

their perspectives and roles in supporting teachers in forming positive relationships with special children. Collaborative efforts among education professionals can improve support services, and analyzing policies would guide more inclusive education systems.

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## STEERING THE LANDSCAPE OF ACCESS, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION AMONG TEACHER EDUCATORS

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### **Abstract**

*In the ever-evolving landscape of education, the pursuit of knowledge extends beyond the mere accumulation of facts. This research navigates the intricate interplay of access, diversity, and inclusion in education, collectively striving towards the empowerment of minds. The current study embarks on an exploration of the multifaceted dimensions encapsulated in the theme "Empowering Minds: Navigating the Landscape of Access, Diversity, and Inclusion in Education." It involves thorough examination of the current landscape of access to education, unraveling the influence of socio-economic factors, geographical locations, and institutional structures. This investigation seeks to assess the democratization of knowledge through equitable access to education. The study aims to identify effective strategies to enhance diversity within educational settings, considering variables such as race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and gender. It also evaluates existing initiatives and practices in fostering a diverse student body and learning environment. It delves into the role of intentional inclusion, investigating how it surpasses accommodation to contribute significantly to the empowerment of learners from diverse backgrounds. The study explores the impact of inclusive practices on academic achievement, social-emotional development, and overall well-being. It also contribute the Challenges and opportunities associated with creating a holistic and inclusive educational approach. This exploration seeks to identify barriers and potential solutions, aiming to create a more inclusive learning environment. The study investigates how technology can improve access for diverse learners and evaluates the implications of digital tools, assistive technologies, and online resources in fostering an inclusive learning environment. It focuses on the impact of culturally responsive teaching in creating an inclusive educational environment. This investigation identifies best practices and strategies for educators to integrate diverse perspectives, cultural sensitivity, and inclusivity into their teaching approaches. As we navigate this intellectual journey, the study contributes to the ongoing dialogue shaping educational policies, practices, and initiatives. Through a comprehensive exploration of access, diversity, and inclusion, the research envisions a future where education is universally accessible, diversity is celebrated, and inclusion is embedded in the very fabric of pedagogy, ultimately leading to the empowerment of every learner, irrespective of their background.*

**Keywords:** Education, Access, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity.

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### **Introduction**

In the diverse tapestry of humanity, education stands as a beacon of hope, a gateway to opportunity, and a catalyst for societal progress. However, the journey towards educational equity, inclusion, and access has been riddled with challenges, disparities, and systemic barriers. While strides have been made to ensure that education is a fundamental right for all, there remains a pressing need to navigate the intricate landscape of access, diversity, and inclusion in education.

In this research paper, we embark on a journey to explore the multifaceted dimensions of empowering minds within the educational sphere. We delve into the complexities of access, acknowledging that for many individuals, barriers exist that impede their entry into educational spaces. Whether due to socio-economic constraints, geographical remoteness, or systemic discrimination, millions around the globe are deprived of the transformative power of education. Our investigation extends to the importance of diversity, recognizing that the richness of human experience flourishes when a multitude of perspectives, backgrounds, and identities converge within learning environments. However, achieving true diversity requires deliberate efforts to dismantle biases, challenge stereotypes, and foster an inclusive culture that celebrates differences.

Central to our inquiry is the concept of inclusion, which transcends mere representation to embrace a sense of belonging for all learners. Inclusive education recognizes and accommodates diverse learning styles, abilities, and needs, ensuring that no individual is left behind. Yet, achieving inclusive practices necessitates systemic changes, teacher training, and a commitment to equity that permeates every facet of the educational system.

As we navigate through the landscape of access, diversity, and inclusion in education, we confront both the triumphs and tribulations encountered along the way. We uncover inspiring stories of resilience, grassroots movements driving change, and innovative approaches that challenge the status quo. Simultaneously, we confront the harsh realities of educational inequities, systemic injustices, and the urgent imperative for reform.

Through rigorous analysis, critical reflection, and a commitment to amplifying marginalized voices, this research paper seeks to contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding educational equity and inclusion. By shedding light on the barriers that impede access, the importance of embracing diversity, and the transformative potential of inclusive education, we strive to empower minds and ignite action towards a more just and equitable educational landscape for all.

### **Review of related literature**

Understanding the significance of access, diversity, and inclusion is crucial across various fields, prompting numerous researchers to delve into related literature. Here is an overview of the key themes and findings from the existing literature:

Suggestions:

Researchers have extensively studied the implications of access to resources and opportunities across different socio-economic strata. This includes access to education, healthcare, employment, technology, and other essential services.

Studies consistently show that unequal access perpetuates disparities, hindering social mobility and exacerbating inequality. Lack of access can lead to marginalized groups being left behind, widening existing gaps in society.

### **Diversity in Perspectives and Experiences:**

The literature emphasizes the importance of diversity in viewpoints, backgrounds, and experiences in fostering innovation, creativity, and problem solving.

Research suggests that diverse teams and environments are more effective in decision-making and problem-solving processes, leading to better outcomes in various domains, including business, education, and research.

**Inclusion and Equity:**

Inclusion involves creating environments where all individuals feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute fully. It goes beyond mere representation to ensure that diverse perspectives are actively solicited, heard, and incorporated.

The literature highlights the positive outcomes associated with inclusive practices, such as higher employee morale, greater organizational productivity, and enhanced innovation.

Studies also underscore the intersectionality of identities, recognizing that individuals may experience multiple forms of marginalization or privilege based on factors such as race, gender, sexuality, ability, and socio-economic status.

**Policy and Practice Implications:**

Scholars explore the role of policies and interventions in promoting access, diversity, and inclusion across different contexts. This includes legislative measures, organizational policies, and community initiatives aimed at reducing barriers and promoting equity.

Research often evaluates the effectiveness of specific interventions and identifies best practices for promoting inclusion and equity in various settings.

**Challenges and Future Directions:**

Despite progress, challenges persist in achieving meaningful access, diversity, and inclusion. These include structural barriers, implicit biases, and resistance to change.

Future research directions may focus on addressing these challenges through interdisciplinary approaches, community engagement, and advocacy efforts. Additionally, there is a growing emphasis on centering the voices and experiences of marginalized communities in research and decision-making processes.

**Objectives of the study**

- To examine the current landscape of access to education:
- To investigate the factors influencing access, such as socio-economic considerations, geographical disparities, and institutional structures.
- To assess the extent to which access to education contributes to the democratization of knowledge.
- To identify strategies to enhance diversity within educational settings:
- To analyze the role of intentional inclusion in educational empowerment:
- To explore challenges and opportunities in creating a holistic and inclusive educational approach:

**Need of the study:** The need for the proposed study is evident in its potential to fill a gap in existing literature, deepen understanding, inform policy and practice, empower marginalized groups, and contribute to academic discourse. By addressing this need, the study can make meaningful contributions to the ongoing efforts towards creating more equitable and inclusive educational systems.

**Aim of the study:**

To study Steering the Landscape of Access, Diversity, and Inclusion among Teacher Educators

**Methodology of the study:**

The research methodology employed in the study "Empowering Minds: Navigating the Landscape of Access, Diversity, and Inclusion in Education" utilizes both qualitative and descriptive survey methods. The combination of these two methods allows researchers to gather both qualitative insights into the nuanced perspectives of teachers on access, diversity, and inclusion in education, as well as quantitative data through the survey to provide a broader understanding of the prevalence and distribution of certain viewpoints among the population. Once data is collected, qualitative analysis techniques are utilized to analyze the qualitative data obtained from interviews or open-ended survey responses, allowing researchers to identify themes, patterns, and insights. These analyses help in drawing conclusions and generating recommendations based on the findings of the study.

**Sample of the study:**

The sample consisted of 42 school teachers Educators

**Sampling Technique :** The simple random sampling technique was used for the selection of sample.

**Limitation of the study:**

The study is limited to 42 school teachers Educators

**Tools used for data collection:**

A descriptive questionnaire was used for data collection.

**Data Collection:**

The tool was administered on 42 school teacher educator.

**Analysis of data:**

A Qualitative analysis of data was done.

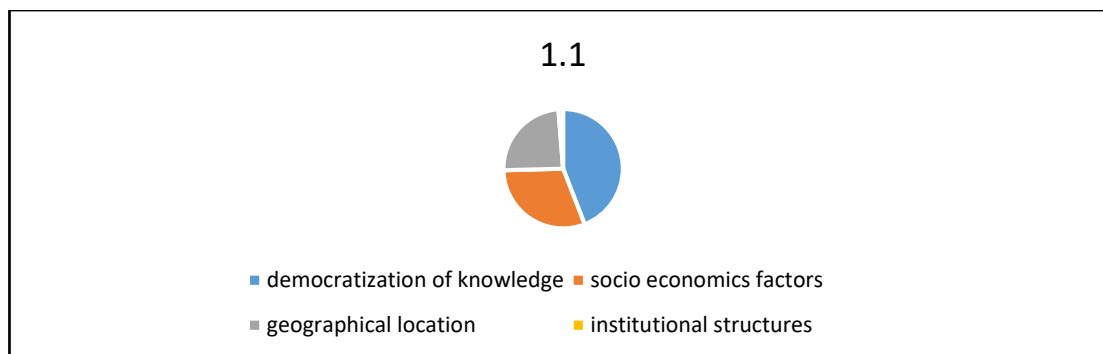
**Research Question**

1. **How does the current landscape of access to education impact the democratization of knowledge, considering the influence of socio-economic factors, geographical locations, and institutional structures?**

**Increased Access to Education:**

Findings: 42 teachers are implementing policies and initiatives that break down barriers to access education for marginalized and underrepresented groups.

Interpretations: Expanding educational infrastructure, providing financial aid, and leveraging technology for remote learning to reach diverse populations.



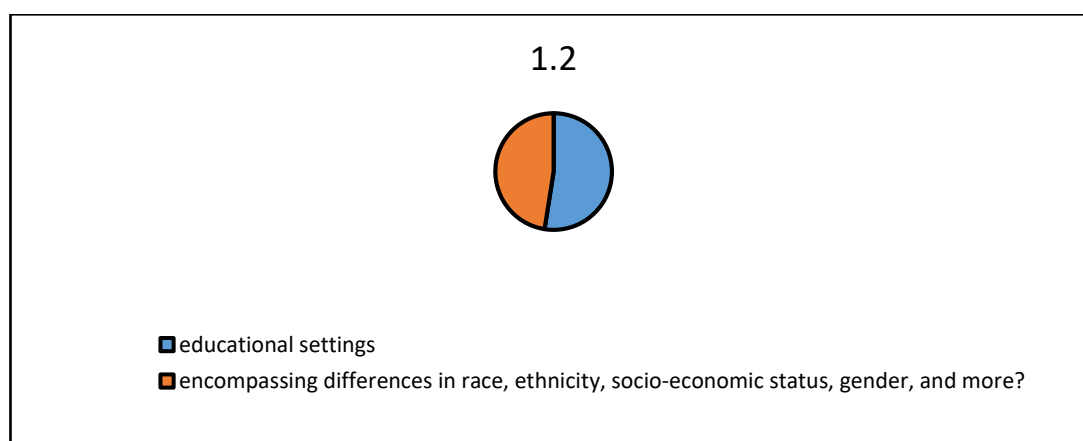
2. **Strategies and initiatives can be identified that enhance diversity within educational settings, encompassing differences in race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, and more?**

**Accessible Learning Technologies:**

Findings: 16 Teachers are ensuring technology is accessible to all students, regardless of their socio-economic status or physical abilities.

Interpretation

Interpretation: Providing affordable devices, internet connectivity, and assistive technologies to create a level playing field for all students.

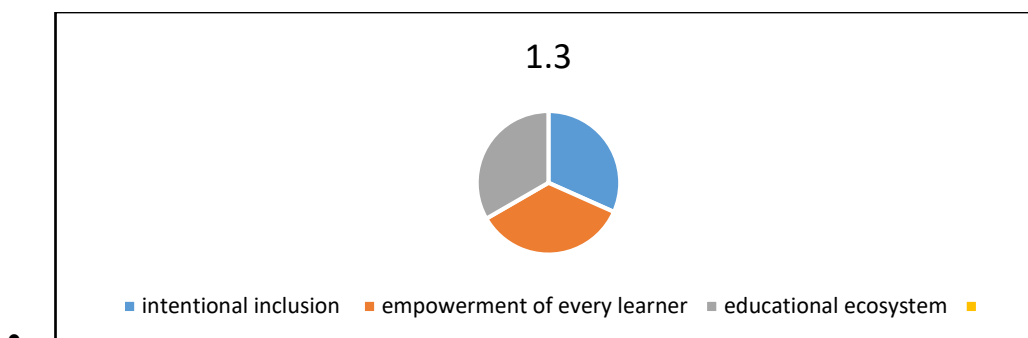


3. **In what ways does intentional inclusion go beyond accommodating differences, and how does it contribute to the empowerment of every learner within the educational ecosystem?**

**Diverse Curriculum Development:**

Finding: 29 Teachers are with the Designing and implementing curricula that reflect diverse perspectives, cultures, and histories.

Interpretation: Inclusion of global perspectives, underrepresented voices, and culturally relevant content to create a well-rounded and inclusive educational experience.

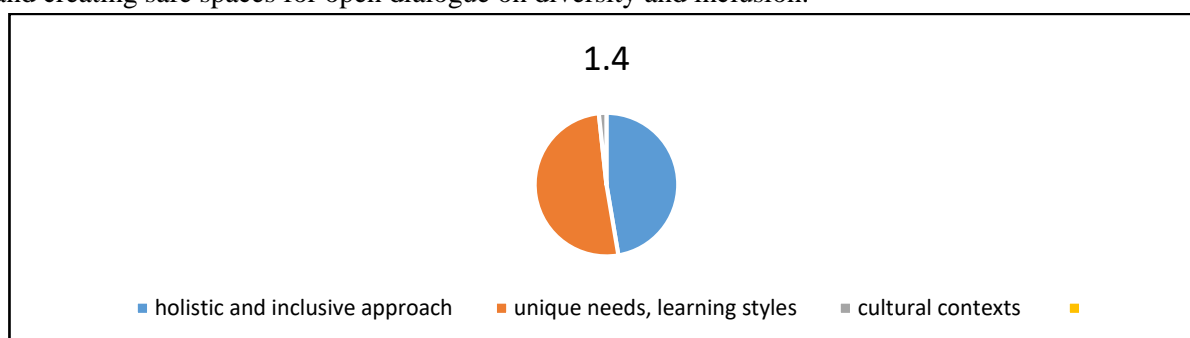


4. **Existing challenges and opportunities associated with creating a holistic and inclusive approach that considers the unique needs, learning styles, and cultural contexts of each individual learner?**

**Inclusive Learning Environments:**

Findings: 31 Teachers are Fostering environments where all students feel valued, respected, and included.

Interpretation: Implementing anti-bullying programs, promoting cultural competency among educators, and creating safe spaces for open dialogue on diversity and inclusion.

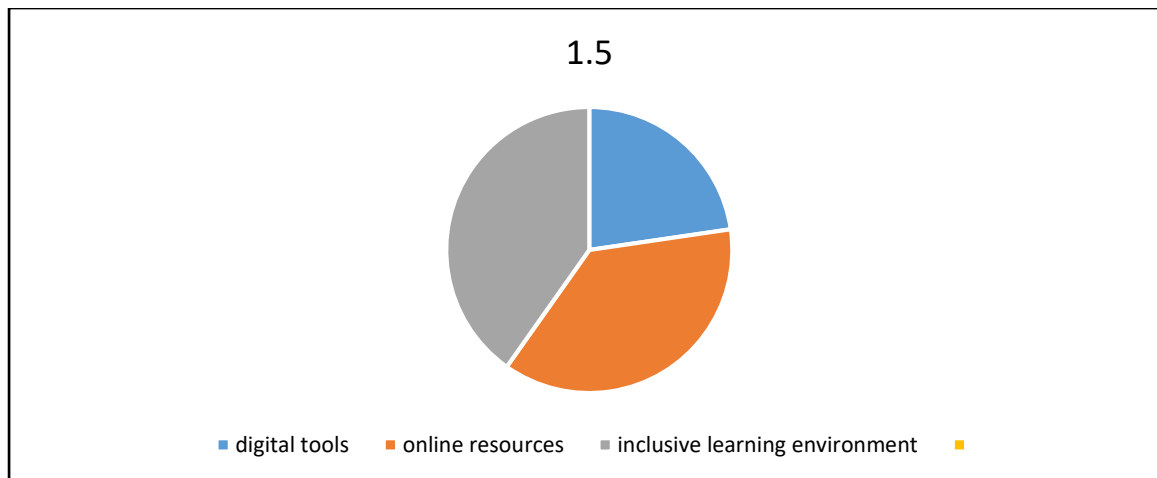


5. **How can technology be effectively leveraged to improve access, diversity, and inclusion in education, and what are the implications of digital tools and online resources in fostering a more inclusive learning environment?**

**Equitable Educational Resources:**

Findings: 33 Teachers Ensuring all students have access to quality resources and tools regardless of their background.

Interpretation: Reducing resource disparities, investing in low-income schools, and leveraging technology to bridge gaps in educational materials.

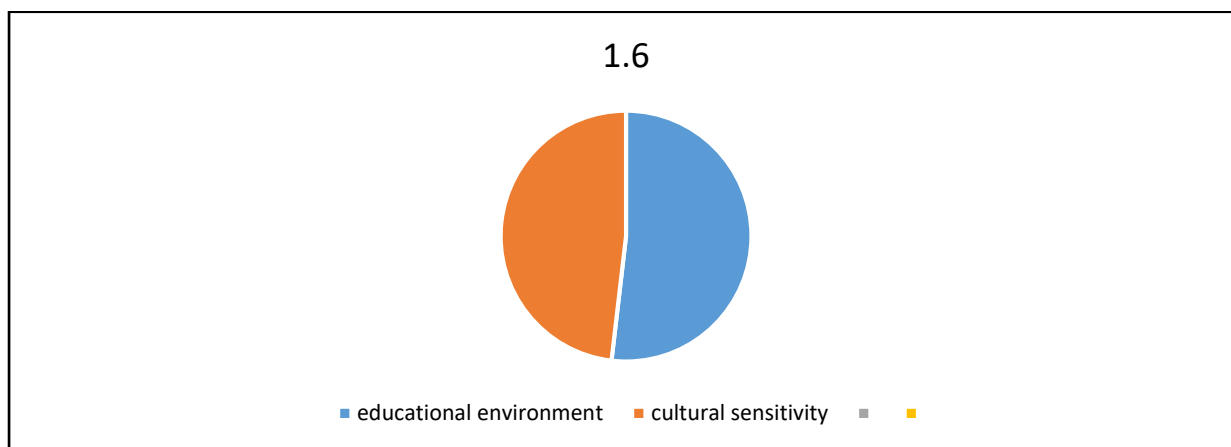


6. **What impact does culturally responsive teaching have on creating an inclusive educational environment, and what are the best practices and strategies that educators can employ to integrate diverse perspectives and cultural sensitivity into their teaching approaches?**

**Faculty and Staff Diversity:**

Findings: 39 Teachers required to Increasing diversity among educators, administrators, and support staff.

Interpretation: Implementing recruitment strategies that prioritize diversity, providing professional development on cultural competence, and fostering an inclusive workplace culture.



**Conclusion :**

"Empowering Minds: Navigating the Landscape of Access, Diversity, and Inclusion in Education" encapsulates a multifaceted approach to fostering a more equitable and inclusive educational landscape. Through our exploration of this theme, several key outcomes and considerations have emerged.

Firstly, it is imperative to recognize the intrinsic value of diversity in educational settings. Embracing diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences enriches the learning environment and prepares students for participation in an increasingly interconnected global society.

Secondly, ensuring access to quality education for all individuals is paramount. This includes addressing systemic barriers such as socioeconomic disparities, geographical limitations, and institutional biases. By implementing proactive measures to enhance access, we can strive towards leveling the playing field and promoting equal opportunities for academic success.

Moreover, fostering inclusion goes beyond mere representation; it entails creating an environment where every individual feels valued, respected, and empowered to thrive. This necessitates proactive efforts to dismantle discriminatory practices, foster a culture of belonging, and provide adequate support systems for marginalized communities.

Furthermore, effective policies and initiatives are essential for driving systemic change. This involves collaboration between educational institutions, policymakers, community stakeholders, and advocacy groups to enact policies that promote equity, diversity, and inclusion at all levels of the education system. Ultimately, the journey towards a more inclusive educational landscape requires collective action and ongoing commitment. By embracing the principles of access, diversity, and inclusion, we can unlock the full potential of every individual, cultivate a more just society, and pave the way for a brighter future for generations to come.

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## CHALLENGES FACED BY KATKARI STUDENTS IN OBTAINING EDUCATION: AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

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### ***Abstract***

*This research paper explores the multifaceted challenges encountered by Katkari students in their pursuit of education, shedding light on the barriers that impede their access to quality learning opportunities. Drawing on socio-economic, cultural, and systemic factors, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the hurdles faced by Katkari students and proposes potential solutions to enhance their educational prospects.*

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### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Background**

The Katkari community, predominantly residing in Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Karnataka, faces significant hurdles in accessing education. This is one of the most marginalized and vulnerable tribal groups in the country. Despite various government initiatives and constitutional provisions aimed at ensuring their rights and welfare, the Katkari community continues to face numerous socio-economic challenges, with access to education being a prominent concern. Poverty, lack of infrastructure, cultural barriers, and systemic neglect have compounded these challenges, leaving many Katkari children without access to quality education. Cultural barriers also play a significant role in inhibiting Katkari children's access to education. In light of these challenges, there is an urgent need for targeted interventions and policy measures to address the educational needs of the Katkari community. Efforts must be made to improve access to schools, enhance infrastructure, provide culturally sensitive and inclusive education, and address socio-economic barriers that hinder educational attainment. Only through concerted action and holistic approaches can the barriers faced by Katkari students in obtaining education be effectively addressed, paving the way for their socio-economic empowerment and inclusion in mainstream society. This research delves into the complexities of these challenges and underscores the need for targeted interventions to create a more inclusive educational landscape.

### **Socio-economic Challenges**

#### **2.1 Poverty as a Barrier**

A pervasive challenge for Katkari students is the economic disparity within their community. Poverty often restricts access to essential educational resources, hindering enrollment and regular attendance.

#### **2.2 Lack of Infrastructure**

In many Katkari villages, inadequate educational infrastructure exacerbates the difficulties faced by students. The absence of well-equipped schools, trained teachers, and proper facilities further limits educational opportunities.

## **Cultural Barriers**

### **3.1 Discrimination and Social Stigma**

Katkari students frequently encounter discrimination and social stigma within mainstream educational institutions. These negative attitudes contribute to a hostile learning environment, impacting both academic performance and mental well-being.

### **3.2 Cultural Dissonance in Curriculum**

The curriculum in mainstream schools may not reflect the cultural context of the Katkari community. This dissonance creates challenges in comprehension and engagement, leading to a lack of interest in academic pursuits.

## **Systemic Issues**

### **4.1 Inadequate Policies and Implementation**

Existing educational policies may not adequately address the unique challenges faced by the Katkari community. Furthermore, shortcomings in policy implementation exacerbate disparities in access to education.

### **4.2 Limited Representation and Participation**

The Katkari community is often underrepresented in educational decision-making processes. Limited participation in planning and policy formulation hampers the development of tailored solutions for their specific needs.

## **Recommendations**

### **5.1 Economic Empowerment Programs**

Initiatives aimed at alleviating poverty within the Katkari community, such as vocational training and income-generation programs, can enhance their economic status and contribute to improved access to education.

### **5.2 Community Sensitization**

Educational institutions and policymakers should engage in community sensitization programs to address stereotypes and biases. Raising awareness about the importance of education and combating discrimination is crucial for fostering an inclusive learning environment.

### **5.3 Policy Reforms**

Governments and educational authorities should reassess existing policies to ensure they are inclusive and address the unique challenges faced by Katkari students. Implementation mechanisms must be strengthened to bridge the gap between policy formulation and execution.

### **5.4 Program Design and Implementation**

Programs can be designed to provide support for transportation, infrastructure improvement, and culturally sensitive curriculum development.

### **5.5 Capacity Building and Professional Development**

Training programs can be developed to equip educators and community workers with the knowledge and skills needed to address the specific needs of Katkari students. This may include training on cultural competency, inclusive teaching practices, and community engagement strategies, empowering

practitioners to create supportive learning environments that facilitate the educational success of Katkari students.

### Conclusion

Understanding and addressing the challenges faced by Katkari students in obtaining education is imperative for fostering an inclusive and equitable educational system. By focusing on socio-economic empowerment, cultural sensitivity, and systemic reforms, stakeholders can work towards dismantling barriers and creating an environment conducive to the educational advancement of Katkari students.

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## ACCESS, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND ITS CHALLENGES IN INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

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### *Abstract*

*Access to education forms the cornerstone of inclusive societies, ensuring that individuals from all backgrounds, regardless of geographical, financial, or socio-cultural barriers, have the opportunity to engage in quality learning experiences. However, achieving universal access remains an ongoing challenge, necessitating concerted efforts to address disparities and remove systemic barriers that impede educational participation. Inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the access to education system to reach out all learners. It involves restructuring the culture, policies and practices in schools so that they can respond to the diversity of students in concerned region. Inclusive education is a strategy of making education universalized irrespective of any disability within the learner and to maintain equity in the society. However, for achieving success in inclusive education in India many challenges such as, lack of positive attitude among teachers, non-inclusive curriculum, lack of resources, infrastructural problems, unawareness among parents, irregular plans, improper execution of policies are creating hurdles for extending the concept of inclusive education in India. This Present paper highlights Access, Diversity, Inclusion and its challenges in Indian Education System*

**Keywords:** Access, Diversity, Inclusion, Challenges

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### **Introduction:**

In recent years, there has been increasing recognition of the importance of providing equal educational opportunities for all students, regardless of their background. However, the Indian education system faces various challenges in ensuring access, promoting diversity, and fostering inclusion. These challenges can include socioeconomic disparities, regional variations, language barriers, and cultural biases. By exploring these issues, we can gain a deeper understanding of the obstacles that need to be addressed to create a more inclusive and equitable education system in India.

In terms of access, there are disparities based on socioeconomic factors, with children from marginalized communities often facing barriers to quality education. Additionally, regional disparities exist, with certain areas having better educational infrastructure and resources than others. When it comes to diversity, India's vast cultural and linguistic diversity can pose challenges in ensuring inclusive education for all. Language barriers, for instance, can create obstacles for students who speak regional languages. Lastly, cultural biases can affect the inclusivity of the education system, as certain groups may face discrimination or limited representation. By examining these challenges, we can work towards creating a more equitable and inclusive education system in India.

There are many reasons for the success of teaching process. One of these is inclusion. Inclusion is one of the most widely studied topics in the teaching and learning process in the educational fields. A lot of researches have been done about its importance, its effect and the way it is applied. The Chinese proverb, (IRC, 2006), says, "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn." The classroom is built upon interaction, cooperation, group work, and participation. These can be done through inclusion. If there is exclusion, teaching process would not be successful. Inclusion is one of the elements which, if applied properly, school achieves success. Inclusion lexically means the act of including or the state of being included. Therefore, Hudson (2009) explained that successful teachers should include their students as well as making their students included. Inclusion is about equal opportunities for all pupils. Pupils should all be included regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, attainment and background. It gives attention and concentration to all pupils. In my opinion successful inclusion is a must inside the classroom. When pupils are included properly, they will equally have the same chance to achieve, learn and acquire new experiences inside their school. But exclusion means bias, failure and drawback. Pupils should be taught, assessed, evaluated and supported equally. But teachers should consider that some pupils need more support or provision to have an equal chance of success. Inclusion needs planning and teaching inclusively. Therefore, each unit gives supported tasks to reach inclusion inside classrooms. To achieve a high rate of inclusion, teachers should put no limit for pupils' involvement. Broadly, inclusion not only means to include pupils inside their classrooms but it also means to include classrooms inside their schools. (Hudson 2009)

**Concept of Inclusive Education:**

Inclusive education is a concept that aims to ensure that all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, have equal opportunities to learn and participate in the educational environment. It promotes the idea that every student has the right to access quality education and be included in regular classrooms alongside their peers.

Inclusive education goes beyond just physical inclusion. It involves creating an inclusive and supportive school culture where diversity is celebrated, and individual differences are respected. It recognizes that students have unique learning needs and seeks to provide appropriate support and accommodations to meet those needs.

In an inclusive education system, students with disabilities, special educational needs, or any other barriers to learning are provided with the necessary resources, support, and accommodations to fully participate in the classroom. This can include specialized instruction, assistive technologies, modifications to curriculum and assessments, and support from trained professionals such as special educators or therapists.

The benefits of inclusive education are numerous. It not only promotes academic achievement but also fosters social integration, empathy, and understanding among students. It prepares students for the diverse and inclusive society they will encounter outside of school.

Implementing inclusive education requires collaboration among educators, administrators, parents, and the community. It involves creating inclusive policies, providing professional development for teachers, adapting teaching strategies, and ensuring the accessibility of physical spaces and learning materials.

Inclusive education promotes the idea that every student has the right to access quality education, participate in the regular classroom setting, and receive appropriate support and accommodations to meet their individual learning needs. It recognizes the diverse abilities and learning styles of students and strives to create a welcoming and accepting environment for everyone.

The key principles of inclusive education include:

1. Diversity and Individuality: Recognizing and celebrating the unique strengths, abilities, and challenges of each student.
2. Equal Opportunities: Ensuring that every student has equal access to educational resources, facilities, and opportunities for learning and growth.
3. Collaboration and Support: Encouraging collaboration among educators, support professionals, parents, and the community to provide the necessary support and accommodations for students with diverse needs.
4. Universal Design for Learning: Implementing teaching strategies and instructional materials that are flexible and can be adapted to meet the diverse learning needs of students.
5. Positive School Climate: Creating a positive and inclusive school climate where respect, acceptance, and understanding are fostered among students, staff, and the wider community.

#### **History of Inclusive Education in India:**

In the 1980s, India started taking significant steps towards inclusive education. The government recognized the importance of providing equal educational opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities or special needs.

In 1986, the National Policy on Education was introduced, which emphasized the integration of students with disabilities into mainstream schools. This policy aimed to create an inclusive education system by providing support services, special education programs, and inclusive classrooms.

In the 1990s, the government launched various initiatives to promote inclusive education. The Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) scheme was implemented to support the integration of children with disabilities into regular schools. Resource rooms were established to provide additional support and specialized instruction to students with disabilities.

In India, the history of inclusive education can be traced back to the enactment of the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act in 1995. This legislation aimed to promote equal opportunities, protection of rights, and full participation of persons with disabilities in various aspects of life, including education.

Since then, there have been significant efforts to implement inclusive education practices in India. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) program, launched in 2001, played a crucial role in promoting inclusive education by ensuring education for all children, including those with disabilities. SSA focused on providing universal access to quality education and supporting the inclusion of children with disabilities in regular schools.

The Right to Education Act (RTE) of 2009 further strengthened the foundation of inclusive education in India. It made education a fundamental right for children aged 6 to 14 and emphasized the importance of providing free and compulsory education in inclusive settings.

Over the years, various initiatives, policies, and programs have been implemented to enhance inclusive education practices in India. These include the establishment of resource centers, training programs for teachers to support inclusive classrooms, and the development of accessible learning materials.

While progress has been made, challenges still exist in fully realizing inclusive education in India. Barriers such as lack of infrastructure, limited resources, inadequate teacher training, and societal attitudes towards disability continue to pose challenges. However, the commitment to inclusive education remains strong, and efforts are ongoing to address these challenges and create a more inclusive and equitable education system in India.

**Challenges:**

1. Lack of positive attitude among teachers : It is important for teachers to have a positive mindset and believe in the potential of every student, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. A positive attitude helps create an inclusive and supportive learning environment where all students feel valued and included. Encouraging teacher training programs and workshops that promote inclusive teaching practices and foster a positive attitude can help address this challenge.
2. Non-inclusive curriculum : The non-inclusive curriculum is indeed a significant challenge in achieving inclusive education in the Indian education system. A curriculum that does not reflect the diversity of students' backgrounds, experiences, and abilities can create barriers to their learning and participation. It is crucial to have a curriculum that is inclusive, culturally sensitive, and addresses the diverse needs of all learners. By incorporating diverse perspectives, inclusive pedagogies, and inclusive content, we can create a more equitable and inclusive education system for all students in India.
3. Lack of resources and infrastructure : Inadequate infrastructure, such as accessible classrooms, ramps, and assistive technologies, can pose challenges for students with disabilities. The availability of resources, such as specialized teaching materials and support staff, is also crucial for inclusive education.
4. Unawareness among Parents : Many parents may not have a clear understanding of what inclusive education entails and the benefits it offers to their children. This lack of awareness can lead to misconceptions and hesitation in embracing inclusive practices. It is crucial to raise awareness among parents about the importance of inclusive education, its positive impact on their children's development, and the support and resources available to them. By fostering open communication and providing information, we can help parents become advocates for inclusive education and create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students.
5. Irregular plans : Irregular plans can certainly pose a challenge to inclusive education in the Indian education system. When there is inconsistency in lesson schedules, curriculum implementation, or support services, it can disrupt the learning process for students with diverse needs. It's important to have a well-structured and consistent plan in place to ensure that all students receive the necessary support and accommodations. By promoting effective communication and coordination among educators, administrators, and support staff, we can work towards creating a more inclusive and stable educational environment for all students.
6. Improper Execution of Policies : Improper execution of policies can indeed be a major challenge in achieving inclusive education in India. Even when inclusive policies are in place, their effective



implementation is crucial for creating an inclusive environment for all students. Inconsistent enforcement, lack of clarity, and inadequate training can hinder the successful execution of these policies. It is essential to ensure that policies are implemented consistently, with proper training and support for educators, administrators, and support staff.

7. Lack of Individualized Support: Inclusive education aims to provide individualized support to students with diverse needs. However, due to large class sizes and limited resources, it can be challenging to cater to the specific needs of each student, hindering their progress and development.

8. Financial Constraints: Inclusive education often requires additional resources, such as specialized materials, assistive devices, and support personnel. However, financial constraints can limit the availability of these resources, making it challenging to provide the necessary support for students with diverse needs.

By addressing these challenges and promoting a culture of inclusivity, we can work towards a more equitable and inclusive education system in India.

### **How to Overcome these Challenges:**

To overcome the challenges of inclusive education in the Indian education system, several strategies can be implemented:

1. Strengthen Policy Implementation: It is crucial to ensure that inclusive education policies are effectively implemented at all levels. This includes providing adequate training and support to educators, administrators, and support staff to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to cater to the diverse needs of students.
2. Increase Teacher Training: Enhancing teacher training programs to include modules on inclusive education can greatly benefit students with diverse needs. Teachers should be equipped with strategies to create inclusive classrooms, adapt teaching methods, and provide individualized support to students.
3. Improve Infrastructure: Creating physically accessible infrastructure is essential for inclusive education. Schools should be designed to accommodate students with disabilities, including ramps, elevators, accessible washrooms, and specialized equipment as needed.
4. Promote Awareness and Acceptance: Raising awareness about the importance of inclusive education and addressing societal attitudes and stigmas towards students with disabilities or special needs is crucial. This can be done through awareness campaigns, workshops, and community engagement initiatives.
5. Foster Collaboration and Partnerships: Collaboration among educators, administrators, parents, and support professionals is key to the success of inclusive education. Establishing strong partnerships and communication channels can ensure that students receive the necessary support and accommodations.
6. Allocate Sufficient Resources: Adequate financial resources should be allocated to support inclusive education initiatives. This includes funding for assistive technology, specialized materials, and support personnel.

**Conclusion:** In conclusion, inclusive education in the Indian education system is a vital step towards providing equal opportunities for all students. However, it does face challenges such as irregular planning and improper policy execution. By implementing well-structured plans and providing proper training and support, we can overcome these challenges and create a more equitable and inclusive education system. Together, we can make a positive impact on the lives of students and promote inclusivity for all. Right to Education Act 2009 ensures education to all children irrespective of their caste, religion, ability, and so



on. It is essential to build an inclusive society through an inclusive approach. In doing so, we have challenged commonly held beliefs and developed a new set of core assumptions. Inclusion is more than a method of educating students with disabilities. It stresses that each child, regardless of the intensity and severity of his or her disabilities, is a valued member of society and is capable of participating in that society. A good inclusive education is one that allows all the students to participate in all aspects of classroom equally or close to equal. To meet the challenges, the involvement and cooperation of educators, parents, and community leaders is vital for the creation of better and more inclusive schools. The Government of India is trying to improve its education system focusing on the inclusive approach.

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## BARRIERS TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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### Abstract

*Inclusive Education is the need of the hour. It is not today's talk but it has been discussed and deliberated earlier too. It is not so easy to implement theory into practice. 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 in school. There are a lot of challenges coming in the way of inclusive education. The barriers come in the way of achieving the objective of inclusive education. Barriers include both internal and external forms. The internal barriers include attitudinal barrier, physical barrier, inappropriate curriculum, untrained teachers, organization of the education system etc. The external barriers to inclusive education includes school location, school enrolment, educational barrier, social stigmatization and economical condition etc. This paper deals with the different barriers which come in the way is an obstacle to inclusive education. It also discusses some suggestions to overcome such barriers. The role family in inclusive education as one of the strategy to achieve inclusive education is also highlighted in this paper.*

**Key words-** barriers, inclusive education , strategies

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### Introduction

The education being provided to persons with disabilities is of three types of special education. The one is 'segregated education' which occurs when students with disabilities learn completely separated from their peers. The another one is 'integrated education' which is a step towards inclusion. Students, in this model, usually are integrated but are expected to fit in the school culture already existing. In 'inclusive education' the school, classrooms and programmes and activities are designed and developed in such a way that all students learn and participate together. Inclusion assumes that children with special needs are part of the regular stream

Inclusive education means that: "Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups." (The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, 1994)

### Challenges and Barriers

Although the Government of India has attempted to create policies that are inclusive for people with disabilities, their implementation efforts have not resulted in an inclusive system of education, nor have they reached their goal of "education for all" across the country (Kohma, 2012). It is because of various barriers which according to Johan (2002) and Jha (2007) are both external and internal as well. These

barriers, being faced by children with disabilities are summarized below. The education being provided to persons with disabilities is of three types of special education. The one is 'segregated education' which occurs when students with disabilities learn completely separated from their peers. The another one is 'integrated education' which is a step towards inclusion. Students, in this model, usually are integrated but are expected to fit in the school culture already existing. In 'inclusive education' the school, classrooms and programmes and activities are designed and developed in such a way that all students learn and participate together. Inclusion assumes that children with special needs are part of the regular stream..It is because of various barriers which according to Johan (2002) and Jha (2007) are both external and internal as well. These barriers, being faced by children with disabilities are summarized below.

### **Barriers to inclusive education**

The different barriers and obstacles which come in the way of achieving inclusive education can be internal as well as external in nature.

The internal barriers include

- 1) Attitudinal barrier
- 2) Infrastructural barrier
- 3) Inappropriate curriculum
- 4) Untrained teachers
- 5) Organization of educational system.

The external barriers include

- 1) School location
- 2) School enrolment
- 3) Educational barrier
- 4) Social stigmatization
- 5) Economical conditions of the learners

### **Types of barriers**

#### **1) Inappropriate curriculum**

The content in the curriculum caters to normal children who are in maximum number. The special children find it difficult to cope up with such curriculum. Even the assessment strategies also is continuous in nature and pre planned. Different type of strategies to cater to special children is overlooked upon which becomes another hurdle to inclusive education.

#### **2) Diversity among the learners**

There are different types of learners in a classroom. So cater to all types of students becomes a difficult task. Children with disabilities may be overlooked or neglected by the teacher given the whole classroom for teaching. Children come from varied backgrounds and experience. They may lack in different abilities. This has to be observed and dealt with by the teachers. A common instructional strategy used by the teacher may be a barrier for children with disabilities.

#### **3) Physical barriers and Poor infrastructural facilities.**

Physical barriers which include lack of accessibility to school buildings, playground, washrooms, library etc. Due to non availability of ramps to move about. Moreover lack of lifts to cater to the needs of such

special children are also less. Seating arrangements are also available in the first floor in many schools. So such special children drop out from school because they are not accommodated in the ground floor due to lack of infrastructure facilities in schools. A classroom need to be disable friendly for special children. Use of ramps, lifts, open playground, accessibility of bathroom are some of the important facilities need for children with disability. All the children like to move freely in the school, playground so that they can interact with others. However a child with a loco motor ability on a wheelchair cannot move or go to school in spite of being interested to learn, due to lack of ramps in the school. They cannot go to school if they have such disability. Seating arrangements are also not made in the ground floor for such children due to lack of classrooms available in the ground floor. In such cases they are helpless ad become a dropout in the long run. This is also a severe barriers for such children.

#### **4) Parental assistance**

Parents are the persons responsible for their success, failure, defects etc. they need to be a part in their children's achievements and failures. Parents of children with disabilities is far more responsible for their child's development. However it is seen that parents neglect such children because they feel such children are a burden on them. They also compare their special children with normal children. Moreover due to lack of financial support they tend to let go the development of such children . the attitude of some parents are negative towards their special children. They do not support or assist the child in his special need with reference to education, social behavior cognitive development, emotional development etc.

#### **5) Attitudes**

Attitudes are basic and pervasive aspects of human life. They guide us in deciding whether we like or dislike someone or something and whether we are going to approach or avoid that person or thing. The greatest barrier to inclusion is the attitude of teachers. If teachers hold unfavorable or negative attitude towards inclusion of children with special needs in the regular classroom, if they possess negative beliefs about the educability of such children in the regular classroom then inclusion will not be successful. In some cases attitude of parents of non- disabled children also creates bottle necks. Some parents are not in favor of sending their children to schools where there are special children who learns together with their normal children. They feel that the education of their children will be affected by including disabled children in the regular class an that their children will imitate the undesirable behaviors and manners of the disabled children.It has been noted that disable students suffer from physical bullying or emotional bullying. These negative attitudes result in social discrimination and thus lead to isolation, which acts as a barrier to inclusive education.

6) **Labelling by teachers** also affect the self concept of disabled children, rejection by peers, and creates a sense of helplessness, inferiority and stigmatization. Disabled children feel that they are neglected and feel insulted due to labelling and ultimately ending in exclusion from the system which acts aa a major barrier to inclusive education.

#### **7) Peer rejection**

Children with special needs may be enrolled in the regular class, but they may not be accepted and respected by their age peers. Under this circumstance, the child with the disability may be teased or bullied by his peers. This also acts as a barrier to inclusive education.

**8) Partnership**

We must realize that the whole foundation of inclusion of children having SEN in the community and community institutions like schools rest on building partnerships. No one person can achieve as much as can be achieved through team efforts. Partnerships between teachers and parents, regular education teachers and special education teachers, school and the community is an essential condition for the success of inclusion. If this partnership is missing, inclusion will not be successful. Lack of linkage between special schools and inclusive schools is a barrier to inclusion.

**9) Accountability of teachers.**

When a special need child is placed in the general school he/she is considered to be the sole responsibility of the special education teacher. In the absence of such teacher then no one takes the responsibility and accountability which is a barrier to inclusive education.

**10) Methods of teaching**

Traditional method of teaching cannot cater to the needs of special children. Different techniques as per the need of the special child is not practiced in regular schools. Lack of attention to such children in the class demotivates and creates lack of interest and attention among them. Such traditional method of teaching also is a barrier to inclusive education.

**11) Untrained teachers**

The teachers who teach in normal school are having general B.Ed degree. They need to deal differently with special children in their class, if any. However due to lack of training as to how to handle such children, the level of patience one needs to possess and different ways of tackling learning issues as a major barrier to inclusive education.

**12) Social Barriers**

Disabled children are socially excluded by non-disabled people in the society may be due to the attitude of fear, ignorance, lack of awareness, and traditional prejudices. Some people believe that educating a special child is not worth it. The social exclusion and negative attitudes result in social discrimination and thus leads to isolation. Violence, poor health services and other social factors make create barriers even for traditional learners and these challenges make inclusion difficult.

**Strategies to overcome such barriers to inclusive education**

- The teachers need to be trained with respect to dealing with special children
- The curriculum needs to be modified and made flexible for such children by giving them choice of more subjects to choose from.
- Providing more recreational space in school for such special children
- Attitudes of teachers, parents and society in general need to change from negative to positive and learn to accept such children
- Parents should be more supportive to their special children and help them in all the ways they could.
- More congenial environment to be provided in schools so that special children feel they are one among others and enjoy learning in the school

- Provision of more ramps, and infrastructure facilities will make the life of special children more comfortable.
- Child friendly evaluation
- Adapting simple classroom management techniques

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**MAKING SCHOOLS GENDER INCLUSIVE: KEEPING IN WITH EDUCATIONAL POLICY****Ivan Mathew John***Research Student, Smt. Kapila Khandvala College of Education, Mumbai*

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**Abstract**

*For learners within the formal system of education, the school is a place where nearly one-fourth of the day is spent engaging with fellow learners, and various school staff. The interactions, whether formal, or at peer-group level, are bound by explicit and implicit behaviours, based on past experiences, deep-seated rational and irrational notions about what constitutes the "normal" or otherwise. his paper examines the role of the school climate and school experiences in building an enabling environment for learners and school personnel from a wide gender perspective. The academic climate may help construct new understandings that promote inclusion in thought, word, and deed. For this, it is paramount for educators to themselves be sensitive to gender issues. It would be necessary to critically evaluate if schools are offering its learners a cultural agenda that concretizes heterosexism and patriarchy, promotes a specific way of being and living or whether they provide fertile grounds for the promotion of equality and social justice. If educational spaces are meant to serve all learners, irrespective of one's identity, it is imperative that the school climate, curricular experiences, and community outreach are inclusive. Schools owe it to the wider society to promote a healthy understanding and 'social wellness' among members of society by making equitable opportunities to engage and learn, in an atmosphere of mutual respect, understanding and growth for all. The values of inclusive education and gender education are embedded in the National Education Policy, 2020. However, the agenda of gender equality always encounters numerous road blocks, at the micro and macro level. A collective and concerted effort is encouraged, to move towards greater gender equity and inclusion.*

**Keywords:** *Gender inclusion, sexuality education, gender sensitization, gender policing, gender expression*

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**Introduction**

The school has a significant role to play in the lives of those who are a part of the school system. The stakeholders within education are part of the wider society - in their roles as learners, parents of learners, "finished products" of the school system, the community of which the school is a part, the State, and the nation at large.

When one speaks about development of the nation *as a whole*, this includes every region and people across the land, one has no choice but to be inclusive of all people. The National Educational Policy 2020 emphasizes "full equity and inclusion as the cornerstone of all educational decisions to ensure that all students are able to thrive in the education system." (MHRD, 2020) However, the need for inclusion stems from the fact that there has been plenty of exclusion. The very notion of 'inclusion' must necessarily be something that does not consciously or otherwise, exclude any section of a given society, however small numerically, or in terms of any other characteristic.



In this paper an effort is made to examine and introspect upon “inclusion” from a ‘gender’ perspective. Typically, one thinks of ‘gender’ in terms of the widely understood and internalized gender binaries of girl/woman and boy/man. This paper explores the need for ‘gender inclusion’ to be a part of the school climate as can become an enabling environment for learners, staff, and all agencies that interacts with the school. The paper focuses on ‘gender’ in its broad dimensions – as an identity, as a form of expression and as well as one’s sexual orientation. At the start, the concepts of sex identity, gender identity and school climate, are defined operationally, in order to avoid any confusion.

### **Sex Identity**

The term ‘sex’ as a category is typically understood in terms of the ‘sex binary’ - female and male. This binary understanding leaves out a section of the population who identify as ‘intersex’ who have been highly neglected and invisibilized. We are socialized into believing that there is a compulsory alignment between sex and gender i.e. a male should identify as boy/man; likewise, a female should identify as girl/woman. As a theoretical construct, the term ‘cisgender’ is used to describe persons whose sex and gender identity are in alignment. However, one cannot assume that all people are cisgender.

### **Gender Identity**

There is a tendency to normalize the gender binary (i.e. girl/woman, boy/man,) at the cost of ignoring the existence of ‘transgender’ people, who do not fit in with the binary construct. Thus, in contrast to the term ‘cisgender’, the term ‘transgender’ is used to describe individuals who feel trapped in the wrong body. Thus, a ‘transwoman’ is person whose sex is male assigned at birth and who identifies as girl/woman. A ‘transman’ is a person whose sex is female assigned at birth and who identifies as boy/man. The ‘gender identity’ (GI) of an individual does not have to be in aligned with one’s sex identity nor one’s sexual orientation (SO).

### **School Climate**

The term ‘school climate’ refers to the overall environment of the school: this includes its physical aspect, what it offers, what it does to the members who participate in multiple ways within this environment, how the school affects its members, especially its learners, and society at large. The school climate can and does expand beyond the physical space of the school. Schools operate within a community. Hence there is a dynamic relationship between school, community and society.

### **Measures to be more inclusive:**

As envisaged in the NEP 2020, the school has the potential to play a dynamic role in its interactions with all stakeholders, within and outside the school environment, to build up an inclusive community of people, that goes well beyond the school borders.

“The primary goal of overhauling the service environment and culture of schools will be to maximize the ability of teachers to do their jobs effectively, and to ensure that they are part of vibrant, caring, and inclusive communities of teachers, students, parents, principals, and other support staff, all of whom share a common goal: to ensure that our children are learning.” (MHRD, 2020)

Gender continues to be “performed” by all people, daily; each performance reinforces or challenges the subsequent performances of gender. School leaders and their personnel consciously or otherwise conform to gender expectations and gender stereotypes. The school climate needs to be one that



questions the blind reproduction of the status quo as regards gender and sexuality. A learning environment that fosters curiosity and enquiry, critical reflection and problem solving helps to open our minds and others' too. This is one of the hallmarks of a dynamic academic environment.

The school as an agency of cultural reinforcement becomes a tool in the hands of curriculum developers who reinforce notions of gender and sexuality that conform to heterosexuality as the only possibility. Thus, labelling students who are gender variant (gender non-conforming) or gender fluid become a form of gender policing. It prevents learners from being their authentic selves, when they are coerced to perform a gender that does not fit their own sense who they are. "Research indicates that both proper teacher training and SOGI-inclusive resources are required to ameliorate harm and harassment of student populations." (Kedrick 2019) Gender policing is rooted in ignorance, homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. While school syllabi can push the agenda for the elimination of gender discrimination, one way to bring in desirable change is by starting gender sensitization programmes at multiple levels within and outside the school. Schools have the potential to spearhead changes in mindsets, demolish redundant ways of thinking, and fostering newer and more equitable ways of being.

If our academic spaces are broad enough to engage with multiple conversations surrounding gender and sexuality, these discussions will connect with learners who quietly identify within the spectrum. It would be a way for individuals to value their self-worth as the curriculum would then pay heed to the plurality of sexes, genders, and sexualities. Such experiences will go a long way in building positive individuals with confident self-images of themselves. It will also create a constructive understanding of gender and sexuality among heterosexual students and the wider population. One of the purposes of education is to enable the growth and development of all individuals.

In order to be gender inclusive, school can explore each of these dimensions:

- (i) **Infrastructure:** The *physical dimension* relates to the school campus and its infrastructure. In terms of gender and sexuality, upper most in one's mind are rooms and restrooms for the specific use of Transgender students. Transgender may not necessarily be comfortable with using washrooms that are exclusively for girls and boys, respectively. Hence, in order that they have a facility where they can feel safe and secure, it becomes imperative for schools to provide restrooms (toilets) for the exclusive use of transgender students.
- (ii) **Curriculum:** The curriculum lies at the heart of school life, of which the syllabus is a large part. The syllabi, be it with reference to the study of Languages, Mathematics, Science, Indian Knowledge Systems, Social Sciences, Art, Music, and so forth, occupies the largest amount of school time that is specially devoted to it. A typical school day lasts at least six hours, a majority of which is spent within the classroom, in transacting the syllabus. The question one needs to ask is, whether school curricular experiences are gender inclusive for all persons in school and parents of students.
- (iii) **Subject Content:** Subjects on offer can be representative of all kinds of people/identities. It would be an useful exercise to examine the extent of gender inclusion within school subjects. In Literature, students may have some lessons that include women writers but none on lesbian poets. In the Science curriculum, large sections of science syllabi revolve around the contributions of male scientists. In the Social Sciences there may be reference to the impact of the women's movement but rarely any

mention of the LGBT movement as a historical movement. Much of our History is based on what has been recorded by men, and through a male gaze, thus often leaving out herstories. Social justice and equality rights issues leave out the struggles of certain vulnerable sections of society, such as, 'intersex', 'bisexual', 'asexual', and 'gender variant' persons. Gender and sexuality also intersect with race, language, geographic location, ethnicity, economic class, educational class, and rural-urban differences. If at all schools teach programmes on 'Sex Education' the content of such programmes is found to revolve around heteronormativity, patriarchy, an abstinence-only approach, health-centred or HIV/AIDS-centred. 'Sex Education' is disallowed in many schools. Despite these shortcomings, there are concerted efforts to bring in oral histories and alternative histories of women and LGBT people; there is also greater awareness of sexual and gender minorities – their identities, issues, and challenges.

- (iv) **Instructional process:** The function of schools is to go beyond transmission of data and develop critical, analytical, and creative minds. The curriculum can provide avenues for critical reflection of educational content surrounding sex, gender and sexuality. There is plenty of scope for engagement with all kinds of learners for knowledge building about types of genders, the sexuality spectrum, gender pluralism and gender fluidity – all of these are positive steps in the direction of gender sensitization and gender inclusion. One can also “extend these conversations to give teachers actionable ways to improve classroom and school environments...” (Pennell, 2017)
- (v) **School Policy:** Schools with a clearly expressed gender inclusive policy that has 'zero tolerance' for bullying, harassment, labelling, abuse, or violence towards anyone and on any ground is one indicator of gender inclusion. School staff and students can develop skills to be alert to instances of gender-based violence, abuse, harassment, or discrimination. School Policy that is explicitly supported with concrete action becomes demonstrable.
- (vi) **Staff recruitment:** School managements, which are open to appointing staff, and which do not discriminate between staff on grounds of sex, sexuality, and gender could serve as role model schools insofar as gender inclusion is concerned. “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion” is a catch phrase; its implementation will help to widen everyone's understanding. It can promote harmony and wellbeing within the microcosm of society – school. The studies reviewed have consistently shown the positive effects of teachers and school campuses which are gender inclusive, LGBT-friendly, those which teach about comprehensive sexuality and whose school climate values gender and sexuality diversity.
- (vii) **Transgender Students:** Admitting/re-admitting students who identify as Transgender is a step that needs attention. Many transgender students drop out from formal education due to various reasons such as lack of support, harassment, abuse, violence, labelling, teasing, depression, loneliness and so on. The NEP2020 makes a conscious effort to promote the education of Transgender students. The policy however does not refer to LGBTQAI+ identity though it uses the phrases “gender education” and “inclusive education.” It is possible that some Transgender persons may identify as 'Hijra' ('Kinnar' or 'Aravani') or 'Third Sex.' Schools would need to provide age-appropriate inclusive Sexuality Education that can promote healthier understanding of all genders and respects for all

persons, irrespective of one's sex, gender, and sexuality. There will be a need for staff and students to integrate Transgender learners within the school system.

- (viii) **Inclusive language:** The use of appropriate and *inclusive language* in school, can go a long way in making gender and sexual minorities feel at home with their identities, expression, and sexuality. Imagine years of formal education that emphasizes and presents ideas, notions, behaviours, theories that only fit the boxes of the sex binary and gender binary, masculinity and femininity, heterosexuality, and patriarchy. Even to use the male pronoun such as he, him and his to include all others within its ambit, is unfair, biased, and contested today. Citing examples only from a patriarchal and heterosexist perspective again closes the doors on people who are egalitarian and other than heterosexual.
- (ix) **Role of Textbooks/Resource materials:** In the school system, textbooks are known to become the centre of instruction and testing. The language use in most school textbooks much gender stereotypes and the language is male-biased; thus, they become exclusivist. For example, men make investments, caring roles are associated with women, aggressive behaviours are expected of male characters. Heterosexism and patriarchy also adversely affect boys and men. Extreme stereotyping can lead to toxic masculinity or toxic femininity. There are efforts to rectify these anomalies of unfair representation.
- (x) **Role of Teachers:** Teachers (i.e. facilitators and enablers) are a vital component of the school system. They may have the requisite knowledge about their subjects, be learner-friendly, and/or disciplinarian in their approach. "The most consistent theme in all responses is that justice-oriented curriculum work is achieved almost exclusively within the informal, conversational spaces in classrooms..." (Kedrick, 2019) If teachers can connect with *all* learners, including sexual and gender minorities, by respecting and accepting them for who they are, it will help to develop healthy learners with positive self-images, and who can feel confident to realize their full potentialities and capabilities.

### Conclusion

The need of the hour is to present the ground realities of life as they exist. Some might say that "education is political"; well, it certainly is political, as there is always an implicit or explicit agenda. This paper proposes an explicit agenda for action that is pro-people of diversity, specifically sexual diversity, gender diversity and sexuality diversity. Such an agenda can only help in making all people rethink relationships, rethink gender, rethink our language use and even deconstruct it. A school climate that considers all kinds of learners - with varying sexual orientation and gender identities (SOGI); one that provides rich and varied exposure and learning experiences that facilitate critical evaluation of culture and its concomitant elements will go a long way in building enriched citizens. "The inclusion of SOGI-focused measures akes possible new efforts to study policies and practices at the school-level linked with information on health and well-being at the student-level." (Day et al, 2019) It can probably even create a world where there is greater equity between genders.

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## FROM MONOLITHS TO MOSAICS: TAILORING TEACHER PREPARATION FOR THE KALEIDOSCOPIC CLASSROOMS IN NEP 2020 ERA

**Narendra & Kalpana Kharade**

### **Introduction:**

NEP 2020 envisions an equitable, quality education system for India, aligned with global sustainability goals. A key pillar is reimagining teacher education to prepare educators for diverse, inclusive classrooms where every student thrives.

This paper proposes a new teacher preparation framework tailored for India, emphasizing the centrality of acknowledging, embracing, and celebrating student diversity. Beyond mere inclusivity, it advocates for fostering collaboration, empathy, and respect within classrooms.

Through a comprehensive exploration, this paper aims to equip pre-service teachers with the essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes to create and sustain these kaleidoscopic classrooms, where every student's potential can truly flourish.

- **Objectives**

The paper aims at attaining the following objectives:

1. To propose a framework for teacher preparation for inclusive classroom within the context of NEP 2020.
2. To shift the paradigm of teacher preparation moving beyond mere acknowledgement of diversity to active integration and celebration, fostering collaboration, empathy, and acceptance within educational and social dynamics.

- **Bridging the Gaps: NEP 2020 and SDG 2030's Inclusive Education Imperative**

NEP 2020 strides towards SDG 4's vision of inclusive and equitable education, echoing its call for lifelong learning and empowering marginalized communities (UNESCO, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development). The policy focuses on early childhood care and education, where play-based learning fosters inclusivity from the ground up (OECD, Starting Strong V: Early Childhood Education and Care Systems, 2019). Recognizing the role of mother tongue instruction in empowering diverse learners, aligning with research on the critical role of languages in cognitive development (Cummins, 2017), the commitment to disability inclusion through barrier-free access and specialized pedagogy resonates with the Salamanca Statement's emphasis on inclusive education for all (UNESCO, Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Educational Needs, 1994). Furthermore, flexible pathways and a dynamic curriculum cater to varied strengths and learning styles, paving the way for holistic development, as advocated by frameworks like the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 (UNESCO, SDG 4.7: ),

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all despite these strengths, NEP 2020 needs to bridge the gap in teacher preparation. Equipping educators with skills and awareness for inclusive practices, multilingualism, and multiculturalism is crucial, drawing upon frameworks like Ainscow et al.'s Index for Inclusion (2006) and Paris & Okafor's

culturally responsive pedagogy model (2010). Regular professional development in disability awareness and inclusive strategies must be prioritized, utilizing resources like UNESCO's Guidelines for Teachers on Inclusive Education (2017) and the World Bank's Inclusion Quality Framework (2013). Robust monitoring mechanisms are also essential to ensure effective resource utilization and true inclusivity in classrooms, drawing inspiration from models like the Education

### **Quality Monitoring System (EQMS) used in India.**

- **The Model**

Title of the model:” Creating Harmony in Learning Horizons: Empowering Inclusive Educators through the Synergy of Knowledge, integration and Collaboration"

- **Vision**

To ignite a systemic transformation within the College of Education and beyond, where: pre-service and in-service teachers are actively empowered to create inclusive classrooms, academic structures embrace diversity, physical and social environments celebrate feeling of belonging, and collaborative partnerships with the community nurture an inclusive society where all members learn, thrive, and contribute.

- **Mission**

To cultivate a transformative model for teacher preparation that:

- Equips pre-service and in-service teachers with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to effectively support diverse learners.
- Fosters an inclusive culture within teacher education institutions that reflects the diversity of their learning communities.
- Promotes collaboration and partnerships with schools and communities to propagate for, implement, and sustain inclusive education practices.

The conceptual model represents a three lared structure based on following verticals:

Fig 1.

- Layer 1: Foundational Bricks - Building Inclusive Educators- A dedicated course on inclusive education
- Layer 2: Weaving the Fabric - Weaving Inclusivity into the System- Creating academic and social infrastructures
- Layer 3: Beyond the Walls - Amplifying Impact Through Community Connections- Institutional and community collaboration and participation

- **objectives**

The model is geared towards attaining the following objectives:

#### **Layer 1: Dedicated Course on Inclusive Education:**

- Knowledge: Equip teachers with a comprehensive understanding of the foundations, principles, and legal frameworks of inclusive education.
- Skills: Develop effective inclusive pedagogical strategies for UDL, differentiated instruction, collaboration, PBIS ( Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports,), and reflective practice.
- Attitudes: cultivate empathy, respect for diversity, and a commitment to creating equitable learning environments for all.



**Layer 2: Academic and social infrastructure at institutional level:**

- Curriculum: Integrate inclusive education components throughout the teacher education program, ensuring every future teacher acquires these critical Concepts effectively.
- Infrastructure: Create a physically and socially accessible college environment that reflects the values of inclusivity.
- Support: Provide ongoing mentorship and professional development opportunities for faculty and staff and students to refine their inclusive practices.
- Learning Community: Foster a collaborative culture within the college that embraces diverse perspectives and promotes continuous improvement.

**Layer 3: Community collaboration and participation:**

- Partnership: Collaborate with schools to provide targeted support and training for practicing teachers, encouraging best practices in inclusive education.
- Advocacy: Propagate policies that support inclusive education initiatives at local, regional, and if possible national levels.
- Engagement: Raise awareness and understanding about inclusive education within the broader community through outreach programs and resource sharing.
- Sustainability: Create and share resources, decimate best practices, and research findings to ensure the longitudinal impact and continuous improvement of the model.

**Theoretical underpinnings**

The model's underpinnings are rooted in well-established theoretical frameworks.

1. Social Model of Disability: This model emphasizes that disability arises from the interaction between individual impairments and societal barriers. Therefore, the model's focus on infrastructure and community Engagement emphasises the need to remove these barriers.
2. Universal Design for Learning (UDL): UDL emphasizes creating learning environments and materials accessible to all learners from the entry level, rather than retrofitting them later. The model's focus to academic and environmental infrastructure aligns with this by focusing on building inclusive systems.
3. Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT): CRT requires understanding and incorporating diverse perspectives into curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. The model focus on community-orientedness resonates with this by encouraging teachers to engage with and learn from the communities they serve.
4. Critical Pedagogy: This approach calls for questioning power structures and inequalities within education system. The model's emphasis on institutional academic, social and physical infrastructure aligns with this by encouraging teachers to critically examine and advocate for positive changes within educational spaces

5. Intersectional Theory: This framework highlights the interconnectedness of various social identities (e.g., race, gender, class, disabilities etc) and how they impact educational experiences. Of diverse learners. This model's focus on multiple domains acknowledges the need to address various intersecting disadvantages faced by learners.

- **Components of the model**

- **Layer 1. Foundational Bricks - Building Inclusive Educators- A dedicated course on inclusive education**

Fig 2.

- This dedicated course on inclusive education is designed to prepare teachers for the dynamic challenges of the 21st century inclusive classroom. Grounded in a holistic approach, the course integrates foundational knowledge, cutting-edge pedagogical strategies, and Immersive enrichment fostering an inclusive learning environment.

- **a.: Igniting the Spark of Justice: Empowering Knowledge for an Equitable World**

1. Foundations of Inclusive Education:

- Foundations of inclusive education: philosophy, principles, legal frameworks.
- Understanding diverse learners: disabilities, learning styles, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL): creating accessible and engaging learning environments for all.
- Differentiated instruction and assessment: strategies for adapting curriculum and assessment to individual needs.
- Collaboration and co-teaching models: working effectively with colleagues and specialists.
- Positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS): creating a safe and inclusive classroom climate.
- Assistive technology (AT): tools and resources to support diverse learners.
- Reflective practice: self-evaluating and continually improving inclusive teaching skills.

o. In addition to this the focus will be also on:

- Deepen understanding of diversity:

Integrating discussions of intersectionality and how various identity markers interact within the context of inclusion.

- Focus on social-emotional learning: Including modules on trauma-informed teaching, mindfulness practices, and fostering resilience in diverse learners.
- Technology integration: Going beyond the basics of UDL and AT. Explore emerging technologies like AI and VR for accessibility and personalized learning.
- Global perspectives: Introducing international case studies and comparative examples of inclusive education practices around the world.

- **b. : Pedagogical Pathways: Teaching with Inclusivity in Mind : Pedagogy- Interactive and engaging methods like case studies simulations, role-playing, and collaborative projects**

- Incorporating technology-based learning: Utilize educational apps, simulations, and gamified learning experiences to enhance engagement and cater to diverse learning styles.
- Active learning: Shifting from lecture-based format to student-centered activities like debates, problem-based learning scenarios, and project-based learning.



- Peer learning and collaboration: Facilitating online communities or in-person groups where students can share experiences, support each other, and co-create inclusive learning materials.
- Critical reflection: Encouraging ongoing critical reflection through journals, portfolios, and group discussions to challenge assumptions and promote continuous improvement.
- In addition to this we aspire to provide following experiences:
  - Virtual Reality (VR) classrooms: Simulating diverse learning environments through VR scenarios, allowing pre-service teachers to practice with virtual students facing various challenges.
  - Augmented Reality (AR) learning experiences: Overlaying real-world classrooms with AR information on student needs, differentiation strategies, and assistive technology options.
  - Role-playing with AI-powered tutors: Interacting with AI-powered tutors simulating students with different disabilities or backgrounds, honing communication and support skills.
  - Gamified projects: Designing inclusive learning solutions for specific situations through gamified challenges, fostering teamwork and problem-solving skills.
  - Hackathons for accessibility: Hosting hackathons where pre-service teachers create innovative tech-based solutions to address accessibility challenges in classrooms.
  - Community-based co-creation: Collaborating with local stakeholders to design inclusive interventions for real-world community concerns, promoting social responsibility and cultural understanding.
- **c. : The Mosaic of experiences: Embracing Diversity in Perspectives: Providing experiential enrichment**
  - Community partnerships: Connecting students with local organizations, disability advocacy groups, and culturally diverse communities for service learning projects and real-world application of skills.
  - Mentorship programs: Pairing preservice teachers with experienced inclusive educators for ongoing support, guidance, and practical advice.
  - Guest speakers: Inviting not only experts but also individuals with lived experiences of disability, cultural differences, or other relevant perspectives to bring authenticity and real-world context.
  - Creative expression: Incorporating artistic activities like poetry, music, or drama to explore inclusive concepts and build empathy.
  - Dual-mentorship programs: Pairing pre-service teachers with experienced inclusive educators for co-teaching experiences, while also mentoring in-service teachers on new UDL strategies.
  - Community-based field placements: Placing pre-service teachers in diverse community settings (e.g., NGOs, early intervention centers) to broaden their understanding of inclusive practices beyond traditional schools.
  - Research partnerships with schools: Collaborating with schools on research projects focused on inclusive education best practices, allowing pre-service teachers to contribute to real-world knowledge generation.
  - Social media campaigns and podcasts: Utilizing social media platforms and podcasts to share inspirational stories of inclusive education success, reaching a wider audience and engaging diverse voices.

- Community partnerships for resource development: Collaborating with community organizations to create and share accessible learning materials, assistive technology resources, and inclusive teaching guides.

By combining foundational knowledge, innovative pedagogy, and diverse enrichment opportunities, this course will ensure that teachers emerge as adept and empathetic educators capable of creating truly inclusive 21st-century classrooms.

## **Layer 2: Weaving the Fabric - Weaving Inclusivity into the System( academic and social)**

Fig 3.

### **• a. : Threads of Support: Building an Inclusive Academic Infrastructure -Infusion of Inclusive Education Components**

- Curriculum integration: Including modules on inclusive education throughout the teacher education program, across core subjects and pedagogical courses.
- Specialized courses: Offering elective courses focusing on specific aspects of inclusive education, such as working with students with disabilities, culturally responsive teaching, or UDL implementation.
- Field placements: Ensuring field placements providing opportunities to practice inclusive teaching strategies in diverse classroom settings.
- Mentorship and support: Providing mentors who are knowledgeable about inclusive education to support pre-service teachers throughout their program.

### **b. Embroidered Environments: Cultivating Welcoming Spaces in Institution- Creating an Inclusive Environment in Teacher Education College**

- Physical accessibility: Ensuring all facilities and resources are accessible to students with disabilities.
- Diverse faculty and staff: Actively recruiting and retain faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds to role model inclusivity.
- Inclusive language and practices: Promoting gender-neutral language, cultural sensitivity, and respect for individual differences.
- Accessibility audits and ongoing improvement: Regularly assessing and Improving the inclusivity of the college environment.
- In addition to this :
  - Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Integrating UDL principles into college infrastructure and learning spaces. This will ensure accessibility for everyone,
  - Microaggression Awareness: Conducting workshops and sensitivity training for faculty and staff to address unconscious biases and microaggressions. This fosters a truly inclusive culture and equips educators to combat bias in classrooms.

- Celebrating Diversity: Organizing festivals, events, and guest lectures showcasing diverse cultures, abilities, and identities. This will create a vibrant learning environment that values and celebrates differences.

- Technology for Inclusion: Investing in assistive technology (AT) labs and training to equip educators with skills to utilize AT effectively in the classroom.

This will empower them to support diverse learners with varying needs.

### **Layer 3: Beyond the Walls - Amplifying Impact Through Community Connections**

Fig 4.

#### **a. •: Bridging the Divide: Community Partnership for Inclusion**

- Partnerships with schools: Collaborating with local schools to provide inclusive education training and support for teachers.
- Community awareness campaigns: Organizing events and workshops to raise awareness about inclusive education within the community.
- Resource development: Creating and sharing inclusive education resources and best practices with the community.

- Inclusive Family Workshops: Organize workshops on topics like supporting diverse learners at home, led by both educators and parents.

#### **• b. : Amplifying Voices: Policy and Advocacy for Equitable Change**

- Advocacy and policy engagement: Advocating for policies and funding that support inclusive education at all levels.

#### **• Success Indicators:**

- Pre- and post-course assessments: Measuring knowledge and skill gains in inclusive education among pre-service teachers.
- Student satisfaction surveys: Gauging student perceptions of the inclusivity of the coursework and campus environment.
- Job placement and retention rates of graduates: Tracking the success of graduates in inclusive teaching positions and their contributions to diverse classrooms.
- Community engagement metrics: Monitoring the reach impact of community-based initiatives, such as awareness campaigns and resource sharing.
- School partnership outcomes: Evaluating the effectiveness of school-college partnerships in improving inclusive practices and student outcomes within partner schools.

#### **• Sustainability measures**

The following measures can help to sustain the model for longer duration:

- Continuous Professional Development (CPD)
- Research and innovation
- Monitoring and continuous improvement
- Alumni Engagement
- Student-Led Initiatives
- Forming long time community partnerships
- Creating online resources and platforms for sharing resources, practices and experiences

Validation of the model

The model will be validated before its regular implementation as follows:

**Layer 1: Dedicated Course on Inclusive Education:**

- Content Validation:
  - Expert Review
  - Pilot Testing of the course
  - Surveys for seeking opinions from stakeholders
- **Pedagogy Validation:**
  - Observation of teacher led sessions and students activities and Feedback
  - Student Engagement Metrics for tracking students engagement and collaboration
  - Focus Groups: Conducting focus groups interviews for understanding students' experiences

**Layer 2: Institutional Level:**

- Curriculum Integration:
  - Mapping and Analysing the infused inclusive education component in the overall curriculum
- Creating an Inclusive Environment:
  - Conducting accessibility Audit of the college facilities and resources to identify and address any barriers.
  - Climate Survey among students and staff to assess the inclusivity of the college environment and identify areas for improvement.

**Layer 3: Community Level:**

- Partnership Evaluation with interviews and surveys
- Community Engagement Metrics for tracking the impact of community awareness campaigns through attendance data, media coverage, and social media engagement.
- Policy Advocacy Impact Assessment for tracking the progress and impact of advocacy efforts.

**Conclusion:** The imperative for teacher preparation in India , , aligned with NEP 2020 and global sustainability goals, is more critical than ever. This paper advocates a paradigm shift emphasizing diversity celebration, collaborative environments, and design of inclusive learning spaces. Embracing these pillars equips teachers to navigate diverse student needs, learning styles, and contexts, fostering educators capable of nurturing dynamic classrooms.

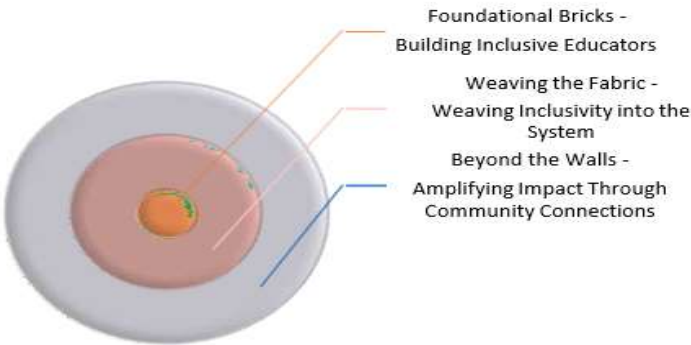


Figure 1

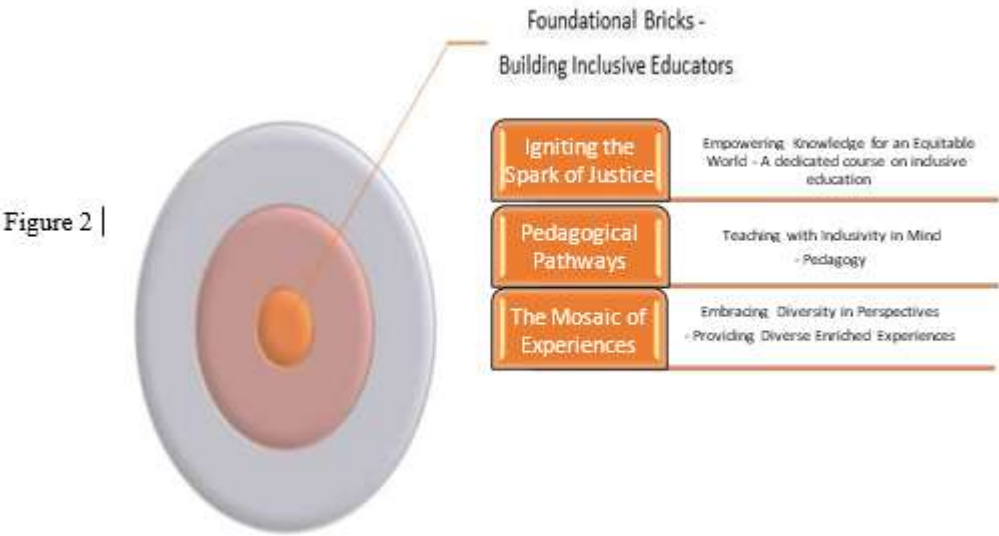


Figure 2 |

Figure 3

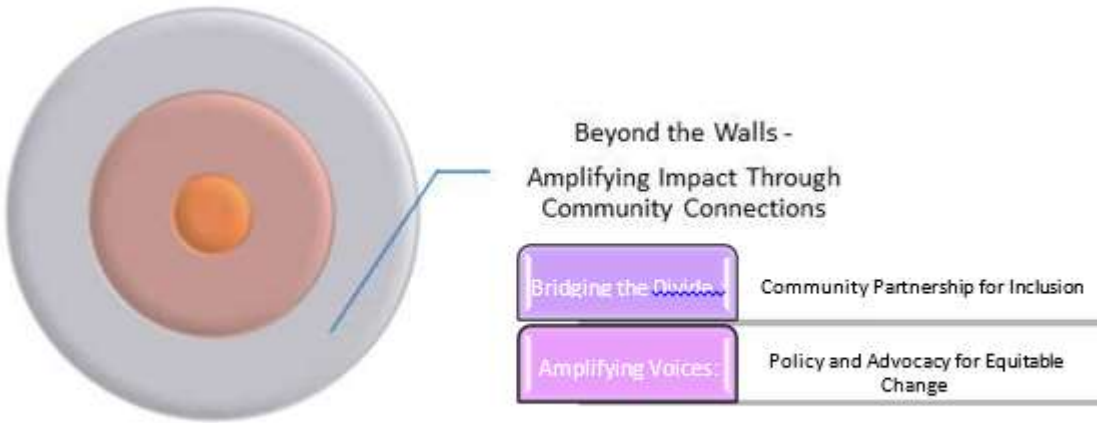
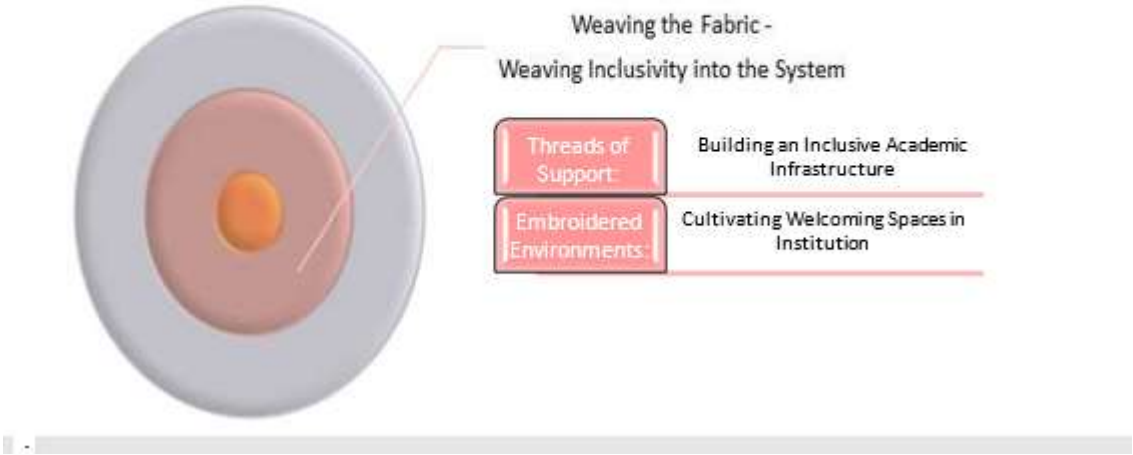


Figure 4

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## INNOVATIVE APPROACHES FOR FOSTERING INCLUSION: EXPLORING NOVEL STRATEGIES AND METHODS

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### Abstract

*In today's diverse and multifaceted society, the need to foster inclusion and mitigate discrimination has led to the exploration of innovative methodologies and novel strategies. This paper investigates a comprehensive examination of pioneering approaches across various domains, encompassing technological innovations, policy reforms, cultural initiatives, and educational interventions: all aimed at fostering equitable environments. Technological advancements are influenced to sensitively address biases and cultivate empathy among individuals from diverse backgrounds. Policy reforms and legal frameworks, such as workplace diversity policies, blind recruitment and anti-discrimination laws have emerged as fundamental tools in promoting equity. Cultural and educational initiatives play a vital role by integrating diverse perspectives into curricula to shape inclusive mind-sets. Despite these innovative steps, the paper also highlights some challenges including addressing intersectionality, overcoming institutional barriers, and balancing technological advancements. In the Indian context, fostering inclusion in education requires addressing the diverse cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds of students. At last, it was concluded that by navigating these challenges and combination of these new methods explored in this paper highlights their collective impact in advancing the objectives of inclusion and equity while recognizing the need for ongoing evolution and adaptation in addressing discrimination.*

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**Keywords:** Inclusion, Discrimination, Equity, Strategies, Innovations

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### INTRODUCTION

The term "inclusion" generally refers to the practice or policy of including individuals or groups who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized. It emphasizes the involvement and participation of all individuals, regardless of their differences, in various aspects of society, such as education, employment, social activities, and community life. (Smith, 2020, p. 45).

Inclusion encompasses the idea of creating environments, systems, and communities that are accommodating, supportive, and accepting of diverse individuals. It promotes equality, diversity, and equal opportunities for everyone, irrespective of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, abilities, disabilities, socio-economic status, or other characteristics.

In educational contexts, inclusion refers to the practice of providing students with diverse learning needs access to equal educational opportunities within the general education system. This involves adapting teaching methods, curriculum, and classroom environments to accommodate the diverse needs of all learners, including those with disabilities or special educational requirements.



Overall, the concept of inclusion emphasizes acceptance, respect, and support for individuals of all backgrounds, abilities, and characteristics, fostering a more equitable and accessible society where everyone has the chance to participate and contribute.

For equitable society, the quest for inclusion and the fight against discrimination remain critical requirements. Discrimination continues to manifest in various forms, including racial, gender-based, socioeconomic, and those rooted in disability or sexual orientation biases. Traditional methods to address these issues have evolved, incorporating novel strategies that harness technological advancements, legislative reforms, and cultural shifts to build more inclusive spaces. Conventional strategies to address these issues have evolved to incorporate innovative methodologies that connect technological advancements, policy reforms, and societal shifts to establish more inclusive environments.

In today's complex social landscape, the call for inclusion and the fight against discrimination are pressing concerns. Discrimination, whether based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, or other factors, persists across multiple spheres. In today's diverse and multifaceted society, the imperative to foster inclusion and mitigate discrimination has led to the exploration of innovative methodologies and novel strategies. These are; encompass technological innovations, policy reforms, cultural initiatives, and educational interventions: all aimed at fostering equitable environments.

### **TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS**

Technological innovations can play a crucial role in fostering inclusion and mitigating discrimination in various ways. (Smith et al., 2020). Here are some ways in which technology can contribute to these goals.

#### **Accessible Design and User Interfaces**

Technological advancements allow for the development of accessible design principles in software, websites, and applications. This includes features such as screen readers, voice commands, and adjustable font sizes, making digital content more inclusive for people with disabilities.

#### **Remote Work and Telecommuting**

Technology enables remote work opportunities, making it possible for individuals with disabilities or those in geographically remote areas to participate in the workforce without facing the barriers of traditional office setups.

#### **Online Education and E-Learning**

Digital platforms and educational technologies provide flexible learning environments, allowing individuals with diverse needs and backgrounds to access educational resources. This can include adaptive learning tools for students with different learning styles.

#### **Diversity in Technology**

Encouraging diversity in the technology sector itself can lead to the creation of more inclusive products. Diverse teams are more likely to consider a broad range of perspectives and needs during the design and development phases.

#### **Data-Driven Insights for Inclusion**

Analyzing data using technology can help identify patterns of discrimination and inequality. This information can be used to inform policies, interventions, and awareness campaigns aimed at promoting inclusion.

**Social Media and Networking**

Technology facilitates online social platforms that can be used to build communities, connect people with shared interests, and raise awareness about diversity and inclusion issues. Social media can be a powerful tool for amplifying marginalized voices.

**Language Translation Services**

Real-time translation services and language-learning apps can break down communication barriers, fostering inclusion by allowing people who speak different languages to communicate effectively.

**AI for Bias Detection**

Artificial intelligence (AI) can be used to detect and mitigate biases in decision-making processes, such as hiring or lending. By carefully designing algorithms and regularly auditing them, technology can contribute to fairer outcomes. (Caliskan et al., 2017)

It's important to note that while technology can be a powerful tool for inclusion, it should be implemented with care to avoid reinforcing existing biases. Ethical considerations and ongoing efforts to address potential issues are crucial in leveraging technology for the advancement of inclusion and the reduction of discrimination.

**POLICY REFORMS AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS**

Progressive legislative changes and policy reforms play a pivotal role in promoting inclusion. Diversity and inclusion policies in workplaces have evolved beyond tokenistic gestures, emphasizing measurable outcomes and accountability. "Blind recruitment" techniques, where candidate identification details are redacted to prevent unconscious bias, have been increasingly adopted in hiring processes, fostering greater diversity (Pierce, 2018).

Moreover, legislative measures such as affirmative action programs have been implemented to counter historical discrimination by actively promoting the representation of marginalized groups in educational institutions and workplaces.

Policy reforms and legal frameworks serve as fundamental tools in addressing discrimination and fostering inclusive environments. These initiatives encompass legislative changes, regulations, and organizational policies aimed at promoting diversity, equity, and fairness across societal and institutional domains.

**Workplace Diversity Policies**

Modern workplace diversity policies have evolved from symbolic gestures to comprehensive strategies focusing on measurable outcomes and accountability. Organizations are increasingly adopting policies that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) throughout their operations. These policies often include targeted recruitment strategies, mentorship programs, and diversity training initiatives to foster an inclusive workplace culture.

**Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Laws**

Affirmative action programs are designed to counter historical discrimination by actively promoting representation from marginalized groups in education, employment, and contracting opportunities. These programs aim to level the playing field by providing preferential treatment or quotas for underrepresented

groups. While controversial, affirmative action has been implemented in various countries to address systemic barriers and promote diversity.

Moreover, equal opportunity laws, such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in the United States, prohibit discrimination based on protected characteristics like race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. These laws ensure legal protection against discriminatory practices in employment, housing, education, and public accommodations.

### **Pay Equity Legislation**

Legislation aimed at ensuring pay equity seeks to eliminate wage disparities based on gender, race, or other protected characteristics. Laws mandate equal pay for equal work, aiming to bridge the gender pay gap and promote fair compensation practices within organizations.

### **Diversity Training Mandates**

Many jurisdictions and organizations mandate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training programs. These initiatives aim to raise awareness, challenge biases, and foster inclusive behaviors among employees and leaders. DEI training promotes understanding and sensitivity towards diverse perspectives, contributing to more inclusive work environments.

Policy reforms and legal frameworks are integral in promoting inclusivity and addressing discrimination. These initiatives establish guidelines and legal protections that contribute to creating fair and equitable environments, fostering diversity, and ensuring equal opportunities for all individuals.

## **CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES**

Cultural initiatives and educational interventions are instrumental in shaping inclusive mindsets. Incorporating diverse perspectives into curricula and educational materials can foster empathy and understanding from an early age. Cultural awareness campaigns, including inclusive media representation and public awareness drives, have the potential to challenge stereotypes and broaden societal perspectives (Dutt, 2021).

Cultural and educational initiatives encompass a range of strategies aimed at promoting inclusivity, challenging biases, and fostering a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives within society and educational institutions.

### **Inclusive Curricula and Educational Materials**

One key approach involves the integration of diverse perspectives, histories, and experiences into educational curricula and materials. By incorporating content that represents various cultures, ethnicities, genders, abilities, and backgrounds, educational institutions can promote empathy, understanding, and appreciation for diversity among students.

### **Cultural Competency Training**

Cultural competency training programs are designed to equip individuals, particularly educators, healthcare professionals, and organizational leaders, with the knowledge, skills, and awareness needed to effectively interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds

### **Diversity Awareness Campaigns**

Cultural awareness campaigns, including media representation initiatives, public awareness drives, and community-based events, play a crucial role in challenging stereotypes, promoting tolerance, and

broadening societal perspectives. By showcasing diverse narratives and representations in media and public spaces, these campaigns aim to dismantle prejudices and foster acceptance of differences.

### **Inclusive Campus and Organizational Cultures**

In educational institutions and workplaces, creating inclusive cultures is paramount. This involves establishing environments where individuals from diverse backgrounds feel welcomed, respected, and valued. Initiatives such as establishing diversity councils, affinity groups, and inclusive policies contribute to fostering a sense of belonging and equity within institutions.

Cultural and educational initiatives are vital components in the fight against discrimination and in promoting inclusion. These strategies focus on raising awareness, educating individuals, and creating environments that celebrate diversity. By integrating diverse perspectives into education and challenging societal norms through cultural initiatives, societies and institutions can work towards fostering a more inclusive and equitable future.

Some innovative novel strategies for fostering inclusion require creativity and a willingness to challenge traditional approaches (Panicker & Agrawa 2020 ). Some more novel approaches according to Indian perspectives are:

**Interactive Storytelling:** Engages students in decision-making within narratives to promote empathy and understanding.

**Gamification:** Uses game elements like points and rewards to motivate and personalize learning experiences.

**Design Thinking Challenges:** Encourages collaborative problem-solving for real-world issues, fostering empathy and creativity.

**Art and Creativity Workshops:** Provides non-verbal avenues for expression, encouraging exploration of diverse perspectives.

**Outdoor Experiential Learning:** Offers hands-on experiences in different environments, fostering teamwork and new skills.

**Peer-Led Initiatives:** Empowers students to create inclusive projects, promoting ownership and diversity awareness.

**Mindfulness and Meditation Practices:** Enhances self-awareness and empathy, creating a calmer, more inclusive learning atmosphere.

### **FOSTERING INCLUSION IN EDUCATION IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT**

In the Indian context, fostering inclusion in education requires addressing the diverse cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds of students. (Wadhwa,2024) . Here are some innovative approaches that can be effective:

**Multilingual Education:** Recognizing and incorporating the linguistic diversity of India into the curriculum can help include students from different language backgrounds. Using multilingual teaching materials and encouraging the use of multiple languages in the classroom can make learning more accessible to all students.

**Community Engagement:** Involving the local community in the education process can help create a more inclusive learning environment. Community members can contribute their knowledge and resources to enhance the curriculum and support students' learning outside the classroom.

**Inclusive Curriculum:** Developing a curriculum that reflects the cultural diversity of India and includes stories, histories, and perspectives from different regions and communities can help students feel more connected to their learning and promote a sense of inclusion.

**Peer Learning and Support Groups:** Creating peer learning and support groups can provide students with opportunities to learn from each other and support each other's learning. This approach can be particularly beneficial for students from marginalized communities who may face additional challenges in education.

**ICT Integration:** Integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into the classroom can help bridge the digital divide and provide students with access to educational resources and opportunities that may not be available otherwise.

**Teacher Training:** Providing teachers with training on inclusive teaching practices and strategies for addressing diversity in the classroom can help create more inclusive learning environments. This includes training on how to accommodate students with disabilities and how to create a welcoming and supportive classroom climate for all students.

**Flexible Assessment Methods:** Using flexible assessment methods that allow students to demonstrate their learning in different ways can help ensure that all students, regardless of their background or abilities, have the opportunity to succeed.

**Celebrating Diversity:** Organizing events and activities that celebrate the diverse cultures, traditions, and identities of students can help create a sense of belonging and inclusion in the school community.

These approaches can help create more inclusive learning environments in Indian schools and ensure that all students have access to quality education.

## **CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

While innovative approaches have been instrumental in fostering inclusion and mitigating discrimination, several challenges persist, and further advancements are needed to achieve more equitable and inclusive societies.

### **Intersectionality and Complexity**

One significant challenge is recognizing and addressing intersectionality—the interconnected nature of various forms of discrimination and identities. Individuals often experience multiple layers of discrimination based on intersecting factors like race, gender, sexuality, and socio-economic status. Future strategies need to consider these complex intersections to create more inclusive approaches that account for diverse experiences and needs.

### **Societal Attitudinal Shifts**

Changing societal attitudes and deeply ingrained biases pose a challenge. Attitudes towards diversity and inclusion may vary across different cultures, communities, and generations. Future initiatives must focus on long-term cultural shifts and behavior change strategies to challenge prejudices, stereotypes, and discriminatory beliefs entrenched in society.

### **Institutional Barriers and Resistance**

Institutional barriers within educational, governmental, and corporate structures can impede progress toward inclusion. Resistance to change, lack of representation in leadership positions, and insufficient

commitment to diversity initiatives can hinder effective implementation. Addressing these barriers requires robust policies, leadership commitment, and sustained efforts to create inclusive environments.

### **Technological and Ethical Challenges**

The use of technology in addressing discrimination poses ethical dilemmas. Issues such as biased algorithms, data privacy, and the potential reinforcement of biases through technology need careful consideration. Future technological innovations should prioritize fairness, transparency, and ethical considerations to avoid perpetuating discrimination inadvertently.

### **Lack of Accessibility**

Physical and digital environments that are not accessible pose significant barriers for individuals with disabilities (United Nations, 2006).

Addressing the challenges and charting future directions is imperative in advancing the goals of inclusion and combating discrimination. Understanding intersectionality, fostering attitudinal shifts, overcoming institutional barriers, and navigating technological and ethical challenges are crucial for developing comprehensive strategies that promote equitable and inclusive societies.

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the critical importance of innovative strategies across technological, policy, cultural, and educational domains to foster inclusion and mitigate discrimination in our diverse society.

However, despite these strides, persistent challenges remain, including addressing intersectionality, societal attitude shifts, institutional barriers, and ethical considerations regarding technological advancements. Addressing these challenges is crucial for crafting comprehensive strategies that promote equitable, diverse, and inclusive societies.

In the Indian context, fostering inclusion in education requires addressing the innovative methods, diverse cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds of students. This synthesis of innovative approaches emphasizes their collective impact in advancing the goals of inclusion and equity. Nevertheless, continued evolution and adaptation in addressing discrimination are imperative for sustained progress.

While innovative approaches have been instrumental in fostering inclusion and mitigating discrimination, several challenges persist, and further advancements are needed to achieve more equitable and inclusive societies. These are Intersectionality and Complexity, Societal Attitudinal Shifts, Institutional Barriers and Resistance to Technological and Ethical Challenges. So, navigating these challenges is crucial for developing comprehensive strategies that promote equitable, diverse, and inclusive societies. Hence, it was concluded that by navigating these challenges and combination of these new methods explored in this paper highlights their collective impact in advancing the objectives of inclusion and equity while recognizing the need for ongoing evolution and adaptation in addressing discrimination.

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## INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGIES: A PATHWAY TOWARDS EQUITY IN EDUCATION

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### **Abstract**

*In today's diverse and interconnected world, it is crucial for educational institutions to embrace inclusive curriculum and pedagogies. An inclusive curriculum ensures that all students feel valued, respected, and have equal opportunities to thrive in their educational journey. It goes beyond simply acknowledging diversity; it actively promotes empathy, critical thinking, and multicultural understanding. Likewise, inclusive pedagogies are teaching methods that cater to the diverse learning needs of students, fostering an environment that celebrates individual differences and encourages active participation from all learners. This conceptual paper explores the concept of inclusive curriculum and pedagogies in the field of education. It delves into the significance of incorporating inclusivity in educational practices to ensure equity for all learners. The paper emphasizes the role of educators in designing and implementing inclusive curriculum and pedagogical approaches that foster the development of diverse students.*

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**Keywords:** *diversity, inclusion, equity, pedagogy, curriculum*

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### **Introduction**

An inclusive curriculum refers to a teaching approach that aims to provide all students, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or learning styles, with equal opportunities to learn and achieve their full potential. It is a curriculum that is designed to be accessible, relevant, and engaging for all students, including those with disabilities, and students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

It is not just about accommodating students with special needs; but about creating a learning environment that is inclusive of all students' needs and abilities. It involves designing lessons that are flexible, adaptable, and responsive to the diverse learning needs of students. It also involves providing students with opportunities to learn at their own pace and level, and to work collaboratively with their peers.

Improving the portrayal and prominence of many cultures, races, genders, abilities, and socioeconomic origins is one of the main objectives of an inclusive curriculum. Through the integration of varied viewpoints, life stories, and experiences into the learning environment, pupils gain access to a wider variety of concepts and situations. This enhances their educational experience and aids in the development of a more thorough grasp of the world in which they live. An inclusive curriculum encourages students to challenge presumptions and widen their viewpoints by challenging stereotypes and prejudices.

### **Inclusive Curriculum: Scope**

The scope of an inclusive curriculum extends beyond the classroom walls. It involves working in partnership with parents, community organizations, and other stakeholders to ensure that students have access to the resources and support they need to succeed. It also involves promoting social justice and equity by addressing issues of inequality and prejudice in society. A curriculum that is designed to be



accessible, relevant, and engaging for all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds by creating a learning environment that is flexible, adaptable, and responsive to the diverse learning needs of students, and working in partnership with stakeholders to promote social justice and equity.

### **Inclusive Curriculum: Key Principles**

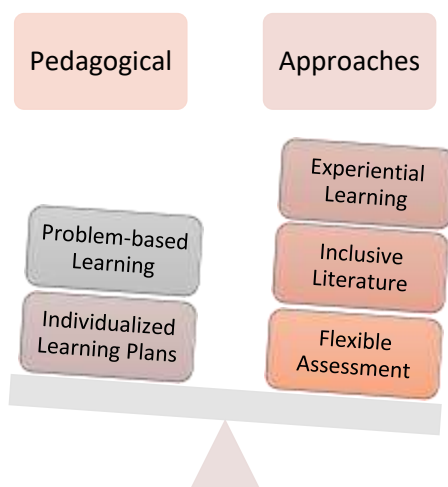
Moving away from the regular curriculum, we have tailor-made curriculum in such a way so as to adjust the maximum of students with flexibility and broader scope. Thus, this curriculum is based on certain vital principles which are-

1. **Differentiated Instruction:** This principle involves tailoring instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of students by providing multiple pathways, resources, and assessments.
2. **Collaborative Learning:** Inclusive curriculum promotes collaborative learning, where students work together in groups to share ideas, knowledge, and skills. This approach helps students learn from each other and develop social skills.
3. **Accessibility:** Inclusive curriculum ensures that all students have access to instructional materials, technologies, and facilities that meet their individual needs. Maintaining equality supported with equity is ensured here.
4. **Cultural Responsiveness:** This principle involves recognizing and respecting the cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of all students in the curriculum. It helps students feel valued and engaged in their learning.
5. **Assessment:** Inclusive curriculum includes a range of assessment methods that are fair, valid, and inclusive of all students' abilities and disabilities. It helps teachers identify students' strengths and weaknesses and adjust instruction accordingly.

### **Pedagogical Approaches to Inclusion**

Pedagogical approaches for inclusion refer to teaching strategies and practices that aim to integrate students with disabilities or special needs into mainstream classrooms alongside their peers without disabilities. The following are some pedagogical approaches for inclusion:

1. **Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** This framework endeavours to provide every student with an equal chance to acquire knowledge by creating educational resources and exercises that are versatile and adjustable to accommodate the varied learning requirements of learners.
2. **Collaborating in the same classroom** are two educators—one specializing in special education and the other in general education—who are practicing co-teaching. In the classroom, they work together to give all of the pupil's education, assistance, and accommodations.
3. **Differentiated Instruction:** Differentiated instruction involves tailoring instruction to meet the individual learning needs of students. Teachers use various strategies such as scaffolding, grouping, and assessment to ensure that all students are engaged in learning at their appropriate level.
4. **Assistive Technology:** Assistive technology refers to devices, software, and tools that can help students with disabilities or special needs to access the curriculum and participate in classroom activities. Teachers can use assistive technology to accommodate students' specific needs and provide them with equal opportunities to learn.



5. Collaborative Learning: As part of collaborative learning, students from various backgrounds and skill levels are grouped together to collaborate on assignments and projects. This method offers possibilities for peer assistance and learning while fostering socializing, communication, and teamwork skills in all students.
6. Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS): PBIS is a framework that focuses on promoting positive behaviour and social skills among all students in the classroom. Teachers use strategies such as clear expectations, positive reinforcement, and consequences to create a supportive learning environment for all students.

Other than the aforesaid techniques, there are few more approaches, shown in the below figure:

### **Benefits of Inclusive Curriculum and Pedagogies**

In today's diverse and ever-changing world, it is essential for educational institutions to embrace inclusivity in their curriculum and pedagogical approaches. An inclusive curriculum focuses on recognizing and valuing the diversity of students, ensuring that all learners feel represented, respected, and empowered. By implementing inclusive practices, educators can create a positive and supportive learning environment that caters to the unique needs of each student. In this article, we will explore the numerous benefits of an inclusive curriculum and pedagogies for students.

#### **1. Fostering a Sense of Belonging:**

An inclusive curriculum promotes a sense of belonging among students, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities. By incorporating diverse perspectives, experiences, and cultures into the curriculum, students feel represented and acknowledged. This fosters a positive classroom environment where students can freely express themselves, share their opinions, and engage in meaningful discussions.

#### **2. Enhancing Learning Outcomes:**

When students feel valued and included, they are more motivated and engaged in the learning process. An inclusive curriculum caters to different learning styles and abilities, ensuring that all students can actively participate and achieve their full potential. By accommodating various learning needs, educators can enhance learning outcomes and promote academic success among students.

**3. Developing Empathy and Understanding:**

By exposing students to diverse perspectives and experiences, an inclusive curriculum nurtures empathy and understanding. It encourages students to appreciate and respect differences, fostering a more inclusive and accepting society. Through discussions and activities that promote cultural competency, students develop a broader worldview and learn to celebrate diversity.

**4. Building Critical Thinking Skills:**

An inclusive curriculum encourages critical thinking by presenting students with various viewpoints and challenging societal norms. It prompts students to question biases, stereotypes, and inequalities, empowering them to become active and informed citizens. By engaging in critical discussions, students develop analytical skills, problem-solving abilities, and a deeper understanding of complex issues.

**4. Increased Student Engagement:**

Inclusive pedagogies promote a sense of belonging and support among students encouraging active involvement in the learning process. Collaborative activities and group discussions enable students to learn from each other allowing diverse backgrounds and experiences to mix. Students feel valued when their identities and experiences are acknowledged, leading to increased motivation and enthusiasm for learning.

**5. Promoting Social and Emotional Well-being:**

Inclusive pedagogies prioritize the social and emotional well-being of students. By creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment, educators can address the diverse needs of students, fostering positive relationships and emotional resilience. This enables students to feel safe, validated, and connected, enhancing their overall well-being and mental health.

**6. Preparing Students for a Diverse Society:**

An inclusive curriculum equips students with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in a diverse society. By exposing students to different cultures, identities, and perspectives, they develop cultural competence and are better prepared for future interactions in a globalized world. Inclusive pedagogies also promote collaboration, teamwork, and effective communication, essential skills for success in diverse workplaces.

**Conclusion**

To sum up the discussion it can be viewed that both educators and students may gain greatly from inclusive curricula and practices. Inclusive education boosts learning results, elevates student engagement, develops essential competencies, builds supportive learning environments, fosters empathy and respect, and advances social justice by embracing diversity and advocating equitable opportunity. For educators to create inclusive and equitable environments for learning that equip students for success in a world that is becoming more and more diverse, inclusive practices must be put into effect.

Positive transformation in society is fostered by inclusive education, which empowers students to fight for equality as well as inclusion in their surroundings. These inclusive methods of instruction seek to advance fairness, ease of use, and academic achievement for every student by giving them the tools, resources, and assistance they require to engage effectively in the learning environment.

It is noteworthy that the implementation of inclusive curricula and pedagogies necessitates a sustained commitment on the part of educators, as well as chances for professional development. To provide an inclusive learning environment, teachers must be armed with the information, abilities, and tools required. Developing and improving inclusive practices requires collaboration between educators, administrators, and the larger educational community. Teachers may continually improve their capacity to design welcoming educational environments that celebrate variety and provide all students a sense of empowerment by exchanging best practices, materials, and experiences.

In a nutshell educational organization must utilize inclusive educational programs and pedagogies in order to support the development of a more equitable and open society. While inclusive pedagogies support a variety of learning requirements and encourage critical thinking, an inclusive curriculum guarantees that every student feels seen, heard, and appreciated. By putting these strategies into effect, educational institutions can foster a culture that values diversity, gives all students a sense of agency, and gets them ready to take on active roles as citizens in a globalized society.

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## INCLUSIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT, CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGIES

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### Abstract

*The need of the 21st century in Inclusive Education is to give equal opportunities to the students of different needs. In an inclusive school environment, curriculum, and pedagogies would likely explore the principles, practices, and outcomes of creating an educational setting that embraces diversity, equity, and inclusion. It highlights the importance of fostering a supportive and welcoming school environment where all students feel valued, respected, and empowered to learn and grow. According the need of student's development and implementation of inclusive curriculum and pedagogical approaches that cater to diverse learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and individual needs. The paper also highlights the impact of an inclusive school environment, curriculum, and pedagogies on student achievement, well-being, and social integration. Ultimately, the aim is to advocate for the adoption of inclusive practices in schools, highlighting the transformative potential of creating learning environments that celebrate and support the full spectrum of human diversity.*

**Keyword:** Inclusive School Environment, Curriculum, Pedagogies, Socio-emotional learning

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### Introduction

Inclusive education refers to the practice of providing equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or disabilities. It is a fundamental human right and a key component of social justice and equity in education. Creating inclusive school environments, curriculum, and pedagogies is essential for promoting accessibility, participation, and success for all students. This conceptual paper will explore the definition of inclusive education, its importance, and the scope and objectives of creating inclusive school environments, curriculum, and pedagogies.

### Definition of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is a philosophy and a practice that aims to provide all students with equal access to quality education and opportunities for learning and development. It recognizes that every student is unique and has different needs, abilities, and learning styles. Inclusive education involves the following principles:

- 1. Valuing and respecting all students:** Inclusive education values and respects all students, including those with disabilities or special needs. It promotes social integration, equal access to resources, and active participation in school activities.
- 2. Collaborative partnerships:** Inclusive education involves collaborative partnerships between parents, teachers, and other professionals. It recognizes the importance of working together to support the learning and development of all students.
- 3. Appropriate accommodations and modifications:** Inclusive education provides appropriate

accommodations and modifications to meet individual needs. It recognizes that some students may require additional support or adaptations to participate fully in school activities.

**4. Ongoing professional development:** Inclusive education involves ongoing professional development for teachers and staff. It recognizes that teachers need specialized knowledge and skills to support students with disabilities or special needs.

**5. Positive attitudes towards disability and difference:** Inclusive education promotes positive attitudes towards disability and difference. It recognizes that disability is not a deficit but a part of human diversity.

### **Importance of Creating Inclusive School Environments, Curriculum, and Pedagogies**

Creating inclusive school environments, curriculum, and pedagogies is essential for promoting equity, accessibility, and excellence in education. Here are some reasons why:

1. **Promotes social integration:** Inclusive education promotes social integration by providing opportunities for students with disabilities or special needs to interact with their peers without disabilities. This helps to break down barriers between students with different abilities and backgrounds.

2. **Enhances academic achievement:** Inclusive education enhances academic achievement by providing appropriate accommodations and modifications to meet individual needs. This helps students with disabilities or special needs to participate fully in school activities and achieve their full potential.

3. **Fosters self-esteem and confidence:** Inclusive education fosters self-esteem and confidence by valuing and respecting all students, including those with disabilities or special needs. This helps students to develop a positive self-image and believe in their own abilities.

4. **Promotes active citizenship:** Inclusive education promotes active citizenship by preparing students with disabilities or special needs to participate fully in society. This helps students to develop the skills they need to be active members of their communities and contribute to society in meaningful ways.

### **Creating inclusive school environments, curriculum, and pedagogies involves several key objectives:**

1. **Promoting accessibility:** Inclusive education promotes accessibility by providing appropriate accommodations and modifications to meet individual needs. This includes physical accessibility (e.g., wheelchair ramps), sensory accessibility (e.g., sign language interpretation), communication accessibility (e.g., assistive devices), and curriculum accessibility (e.g., alternative formats).

2. **Promoting participation:** Inclusive education promotes participation by ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to participate fully in school activities. This includes academic participation (e.g., participating in class discussions), social participation (e.g., participating in extracurricular activities), and community participation (e.g., participating in service learning projects).

3. **Promoting success:** Inclusive education promotes success by providing appropriate support and resources to help students achieve their full potential. This includes academic support (e.g., tutoring), social support (e.g., peer mentoring), emotional support (e.g., counseling), and career support (e.g., vocational training).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Inclusive education is a complex and multifaceted concept that draws on a range of theoretical perspectives and models. This section will review three key theories and models related to inclusive

education: social justice theory, critical pedagogy, and disability studies in education. It will also discuss the principles and values that underpin inclusive education, including diversity, equity, and social cohesion.

**1. Social Justice Theory :** Social justice theory is a theoretical framework that focuses on promoting social equality, fairness, and human rights. It recognizes that social inequality is a structural issue that requires systemic change to address. In the context of inclusive education, social justice theory emphasizes the importance of addressing the root causes of educational inequality and promoting social justice through educational practices. Social justice theory is characterized by several key principles, including:

- Equity: Social justice theory emphasizes the importance of promoting equity in education by providing equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities.
- Access: Social justice theory emphasizes the importance of providing access to quality education for all students, including those with disabilities or special needs.
- Participation: Social justice theory emphasizes the importance of promoting active participation in education by involving students in decision-making processes and empowering them to take ownership of their learning.

**2. Critical Pedagogy :** Critical pedagogy is a theoretical framework that focuses on promoting critical thinking, social consciousness, and social change through educational practices. In the context of inclusive education, critical pedagogy emphasizes the importance of promoting critical thinking skills, challenging dominant ideologies, and promoting social consciousness among students. Critical pedagogy is characterized by several key principles, including:

- Critical thinking: Critical pedagogy emphasizes the importance of promoting critical thinking skills by encouraging students to question dominant ideologies, analyze complex issues, and develop their own perspectives.
- Social consciousness: Critical pedagogy emphasizes the importance of promoting social consciousness by encouraging students to understand the social, political, and economic contexts that shape their lives and communities.
- Empowerment: Critical pedagogy emphasizes the importance of promoting empowerment by providing students with the skills and resources they need to become agents of change in their own lives and communities.
- Collaboration: Critical pedagogy emphasizes the importance of collaboration by encouraging students to work together to solve complex problems and promote social change.

**3. Disability Studies in Education :** Disability studies in education is a theoretical framework that focuses on promoting understanding, acceptance, and inclusion of people with disabilities in society. It recognizes that disability is not a deficit but a part of human diversity that should be valued and respected. In the context of inclusive education, disability studies in education emphasizes the importance of promoting understanding, acceptance, and inclusion among students with disabilities or special needs. Disability studies in education is characterized by several key principles, including:

- Understanding: Disability studies in education emphasizes the importance of promoting understanding



among students by providing them with accurate information about disabilities and special needs.

- **Acceptance:** Disability studies in education emphasizes the importance of promoting acceptance among students by encouraging them to value and respect people with disabilities or special needs as equal members of society.
- **Inclusion:** Disability studies in education emphasizes the importance of promoting inclusion among students by providing them with opportunities to interact with people with disabilities or special needs in meaningful ways.
- **Collaboration:** Disability studies in education emphasizes the importance of collaboration among students with disabilities or special needs, their families, teachers, and other professionals to promote successful outcomes for all students.

### **Inclusive School Environment**

Creating an inclusive school environment is essential for promoting equity, accessibility, and success for all students, including those from diverse backgrounds and with varying abilities.

#### **1. Physical Aspects**

The physical aspects of creating an inclusive school environment involve providing appropriate accommodations and modifications to meet individual needs. This includes:

- **Accessibility:** Schools should provide physical accessibility for students with disabilities or special needs, including wheelchair ramps, lifts, and accessible classrooms and facilities.
- **Sensory accommodations:** Schools should provide sensory accommodations for students with sensory impairments or sensory processing disorders, including sign language interpretation, visual aids, and assistive devices.
- **Communication accommodations:** Schools should provide communication accommodations for students with communication impairments or communication disorders, including augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, speech therapy, and assistive listening devices.
- **Curriculum accommodations:** Schools should provide curriculum accommodations for students with learning disabilities or special needs, including alternative formats (e.g., braille, audio books), assistive technology (e.g., text-to-speech software), and individualized educational plans (IEPs).

#### **2. Social Aspects**

The social aspects of creating an inclusive school environment involve promoting social integration, active participation, and positive relationships among all students. This includes:

- **Collaborative partnerships:** Schools should promote collaborative partnerships between parents, teachers, and other professionals to support the learning and development of all students. This includes regular communication, joint planning, and shared decision-making.
- **Peer mentoring:** Schools should promote peer mentoring programs that pair students with disabilities or special needs with peers without disabilities or special needs to provide social support and promote active participation in school activities.
- **Extracurricular activities:** Schools should provide extracurricular activities that are inclusive of all students, including those with disabilities or special needs. This includes sports teams, clubs, and community service projects that promote active citizenship among students with disabilities or special



needs as well as those without disabilities or special needs.

- Cultural responsiveness: Schools should promote cultural responsiveness by recognizing the cultural backgrounds and identities of all students and providing culturally responsive teaching practices that are sensitive to their cultural experiences and perspectives.
- Religious accommodation: Schools should provide religious accommodation for students who have religious beliefs or practices by respecting their religious holidays and providing religious instruction or resources as needed.

**Inclusive Curriculum :** Creating an inclusive curriculum involves designing and developing a curriculum that reflects diversity, multiculturalism, and multiple perspectives. This section will explore strategies for creating a curriculum that is responsive to the needs and interests of all learners, while addressing issues of representation and inclusivity.

### 1. Reflection of Diversity

- Multicultural perspectives: The curriculum should include multicultural perspectives that reflect the cultural backgrounds and identities of all students. This includes incorporating diverse authors, artists, and historical figures into the curriculum.
- Multiple perspectives: The curriculum should provide multiple perspectives on complex issues to promote critical thinking and social consciousness among students. This includes encouraging students to analyze different perspectives and develop their own perspectives based on evidence.
- Multiple representations: The curriculum should provide multiple representations of information, including visual aids, audio aids, and text-based materials, to accommodate different learning styles and abilities.
- Multiple languages: The curriculum should provide instruction in multiple languages to accommodate students who are learning English as a second language (ESL) or who have language impairments or language disorders.

### 2. Responsiveness to Student Needs and Interests

- Differentiation: The curriculum should be differentiated to meet the individual needs of all students, including those with learning disabilities or special needs. This includes providing alternative formats (e.g., braille, audio books), assistive technology (e.g., text-to-speech software), and individualized educational plans (IEPs).
- Student choice: The curriculum should provide opportunities for student choice in learning activities to promote active participation and engagement among all students. This includes allowing students to choose their own topics for research projects or allowing them to choose their own reading materials based on their interests.
- Collaborative learning: The curriculum should promote collaborative learning activities that encourage students to work together in groups to solve complex problems and promote active citizenship among students with disabilities or special needs as well as those without disabilities or special needs.
- Real-world connections: The curriculum should provide real-world connections to promote relevance and applicability among all students. This includes incorporating community service projects into the curriculum or allowing students to apply what they have learned in real-life situations.

## Inclusive Pedagogies

Creating inclusive pedagogies involves using teaching strategies and approaches that support inclusive learning experiences for all students.

### 1. Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction involves tailoring instructional strategies to meet the individual needs of all students, including those with varying abilities and backgrounds. This includes: - Flexible grouping: Differentiated instruction involves flexible grouping strategies that allow teachers to group students based on their individual needs rather than their ability level or grade level. This includes ability grouping, mixed ability grouping, heterogeneous grouping, homogeneous grouping, cooperative learning groups, peer tutoring groups, small group instruction groups, one-on-one instruction groups, and independent study groups. - Adaptations: Differentiated instruction involves adaptations that accommodate different learning styles and abilities, including visual aids, audio aids, graphic organizers, mnemonics devices, manipulatives, simulations, games, role plays, cooperative learning activities, scaffolding strategies, modeling strategies, feedback strategies, assessment strategies, self-reflection strategies, goal setting strategies, self-advocacy strategies, self-monitoring strategies, self regulation strategies, self-assessment strategies, peer assessment strategies, teacher assessment strategies, technology integration strategies (e.g., text-to-speech software), assistive technology integration strategies (e.g., speech recognition software), multisensory integration strategies (e.g., kinesthetic activities), cultural responsiveness strategies (e.g., bilingual instruction), religious accommodation strategies (e.g., religious holidays), gender identity support strategies (e.g., gender neutral facilities), sexual orientation support strategies (e.g., anti-bullying policies), socioeconomic status support strategies (e.g., financial assistance), disability support strategies (e.g., accommodations for visual impairments), special needs support strategies (e.g., individualized educational plans).

**Conclusion:** Creating an inclusive school environment, curriculum, and pedagogies is essential for ensuring that all students have equitable access to quality education and opportunities for learning and growth. This conceptual paper has highlighted the foundational principles, theoretical frameworks, and practical considerations associated with fostering inclusive practices in education.

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## ENHANCING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION THROUGH DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

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### **Abstract**

*This research paper delves into the transformative potential of inclusive education through the lens of differentiated instruction. The study aims to elucidate the benefits of training in service teachers in the use of differentiated instruction to meet diverse learning needs of students. Further, the paper explores the effect of differentiated instruction on fostering a more inclusive environment. The current research is an experimental research employing pre-test post- test control group design. The paper examines the effect of using differentiated instruction on the learning of mathematics in second, third and fourth standard children. The findings presented herein seek to inform educators, policymakers, and researchers, fostering a deeper understanding of how the synergy between inclusive education and differentiated instruction can pave way for a more equitable and enriching experience for all students. Through a synthesis of empirical studies and theoretical frameworks, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on inclusive education and differentiated instruction offering insights into effective practices, challenges, and potential avenues for future research.*

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**Keywords:** *Differentiated Instruction, learning mathematics, teacher training, inclusive education*

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### **Introduction**

Inclusive education is a fundamental aspect of fostering equitable opportunities for all students. This paper delves into the realm of differentiated instruction in mathematics, specifically designed to cater to the diverse needs of primary children. By understanding the unique learning styles, abilities, and challenges within primary classroom, educators can implement strategies that promote an inclusive and supportive math learning environment.

**Annual Status of Education Report (ASER- 2018) “Without solid foundations, adolescents struggle in real-life scenarios”. The findings of this report suggest that over half of the children lack basic numeracy skills thought necessary in their last year of compulsory schooling. By grade seven 44% of children can do division.**

Their lack of foundational math and literacy skills is further emphasized when applied to real-life scenarios such as calculating time or financial decision-making. No more than 47% of 14- to 16-year-olds were able to correctly answer a time-calculation question, while just 29.6% were able to figure out the price of a t-shirt after a 10% discount is applied, highlighting how many children are leaving school without the basic skills required in adult life.

**Theoretical Framework**

Differentiated instruction (DI) is grounded in various theoretical frameworks, including Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory and Gardener's multiple intelligences. Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development emphasizes on the student teacher relationship as collaborative. The areas of social interaction, engagement between teacher student, physical space and arrangement, meaningful instruction, scaffolding, student ability and powerful content all become elements to consider within the realm of contemporary education. Howard Gardner's theory focuses on eight intelligences, while highlighting the need for problem-solving (Campbell, Campbell, and Dickinson, 1999). An instructional technique or program that is heavily reliant on one of the intelligences, minimizes opportunities for students who may not possess a propensity to learn in this way (Gardner, 1999). These students, who may not achieve in the traditional way, may become lost to both the school and the community at large (Campbell et al., 1999; Gardner, 1999). Therefore, creating opportunities for all students, by enriching the classroom through multiple techniques and assessment forms, develops students and brings out their strengths (Campbell et al., 1999; Gardner, 1999; Green, 1999)

Research in the field of neuroscience have indicated that our brain processes are as different and unique as our fingerprints. It further professes the use of Universal Designs for Learning.

The principles and guidelines of UDL ensures that all learners can access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities by providing multiple means of representation, multiple means of engagement and multiple means of action and expression. There multiple pathways for the information to be acted upon and it is unique to an individual, therefore to expect the learning to happen in the same way for all learners is not adequately challenging and neither is it adequately engaging for the others. Differentiation is a pathway to achieving Universal designs of learning through individualization. If we want to promote inclusive education, therefore, it is vital that teachers are learning, about, experiencing and practicing inclusive approaches to teaching and learning from day one of (and throughout) their professional development (Kaplan and Lewis, 2013; Das, Kiyuni, Desai, 2013).

If all children have to be educated in rights based model proactive approach and teacher readiness to respond to the diversities becomes a key factor in the education system. In order to provide equal access to quality education teacher expertise need to be geared up. Differentiated Instruction looks promising in order to cater to the individual needs of diverse learners. Differentiated instruction is an approach that gives students multiple options for knowledge based learning. It is teaching theory based on the premise that instruction should vary and the curriculum should be adapted to individual and diverse students in the classroom. (Tomlinson, 2014)

As stated by Tomlison (2014), "Teachers who differentiate provide specific alternatives for individuals to learn as deeply as possible and as quickly as possible without assuming that one student's road map to learning is identical to anyone else's".

Studies on Mathematics Learning Using Differentiated Instruction (DI):

Hood (2012) examined the lack of achievement for the ethnic minorities in the field of mathematics using an experimental design. A classroom intervention using Differentiated instruction (DI) based on learning

styles theory was implemented. The results indicated excel in mathematics when DI is used, thus indicating that DI does work for children with difficulties in learning mathematics.

Math literacy is just as crucial a skill as reading and writing, and consequences of not having it are just as catastrophic-both for the individual and for the country. Helping children understand mathematics, therefore, is every bit as important as teaching them to read and write. In India, as in most countries we are failing miserably on this count. The most recent ASER study revealed that more than half of 12-14 year olds cannot do a simpler division. Chopra, J.M. (in article "education" dated 8<sup>th</sup> April 2019)

Mathematics is everywhere: It is experienced and practiced by every culture and must be incorporated into school mathematics curriculum. Instead of instilling fear and loathing, math education should foster a great understanding of how mathematics is applied in our increasingly technologically-driven world. Mathematics instruction should reflect/embrace the cultural diversity of our classrooms, and of our increasingly interconnected world. (Brandt & Chernoff, 2015)

Bosnjak (2012) presents the results of a research which offers verification of the impact of differentiated instruction on achievement in mathematics in primary school students. The study was conducted on a sample of 78 third grade pupils. The result obtained indicated that learning using differentiated instruction compared to traditional teaching methods contributed a significant increase in the overall educational performance.

Underlying the process of inclusion is the assumption that the classroom teacher has certain knowledge and understanding about the needs of different learners, teaching techniques and curriculum strategies (Lal, R. 2018).

Based on the above studies it can be concluded learning styles of diverse learners can be accommodated using differentiated instruction and thus the policies can be brought to practice.

## **METHODOLOGY**

**Research question:** "Will there be a change in the learning of mathematics in students taught by DI trained teachers?"

**Research objective:** "To study the effect of DI on the learning of mathematics in standard second, third and fourth students."

**Design:** Experimental research pre-test post- test control group design.

**Variables:** Independent variable is the differentiated instruction in mathematics given by trained teachers & Dependent variable is learning of mathematics in students of second, third and fourth standard.

**Sample:** It comprised of teachers teaching mathematics in standard 2 to 4 in English medium SSC board schools and students who were studying in the same standards.

**Sampling technique:** Sample selection was done using multistage sampling. The schools for research was selected using random sampling technique based on criteria. And cluster sampling was used to select teachers and students from those schools. Thus all the students and teachers in a particular school were included in either experimental or control groups. Assignment to experimental and control was done using random selection technique.

The students of the experimental group were given treatment in the form of differentiated instruction while the control group students were given instruction using traditional teaching. The results were analyzed using quantitative measures.

### Measures for data Collection

#### Pre-Test and Post-Test Tool

Mathematics tool based on the curriculum of second, third and fourth standard was used. The tool comprised of the topics to be taught in the SSC board syllabus. Maximum score was 20 marks for a correct response. There was no negative marking. The curriculum based assessment tool consisted of 10 items. The items were generic based on the topics of number sense & number value, computation, fractions, patterns, measurement and its conversions.

Content validity was obtained from the mathematics teachers teaching mathematics in respective standards.

#### Results and Discussion:

The study had six hypotheses based on the research objectives-whether differentiated instruction makes a difference on the learning of mathematics in students of standard second, third and fourth standards on experimental and control groups before and after instruction. The tables 1 to 6 shows the descriptive and inferential statistics for pre and post-test data. The null hypotheses for experimental group was rejected and alternative hypotheses that there will be a statistically significant in the mean scores from pre-test to post-test was accepted based on the results obtained in tables 1,3 and 5. Similarly, the null hypotheses for control group was accepted. The control group was not exposed to DI, therefore there will be no significant difference in the mean scores from pre-test to post-test was accepted based on the results obtained in tables 2, 4 and 6.

1. The following table represents the mean scores on learning of mathematics in students of second standard in pre experimental and post experimental group.

*Table 1: Mean scores on learning of mathematics of students in second standard in the experimental group*

Experimental	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Level of significance
Pre	574	4.4373	1.60	573	19.56	0.05
Post	574	6.3902	1.70	573		

\*t critical value (df=1146) = 1.962 at 0.05

In the table 1 the mean scores of students in second grade on learning of mathematics in the experimental group is 4.43 on pre -test and 6.39 on post- test. The mean difference is statistically significant. The calculated t-value is 19.56 which is more than the tabulated t-value which is 1.962 at 0.05 level of significance. The mean scores on learning of mathematics of students in the second grade taught using Differentiated Instruction in an inclusive classroom was found to be useful.

2. The table below represents the mean scores on learning of mathematics in students of second standard in pre and post control groups.

*Table 2: Mean scores on learning of mathematics of students in second grade in the Control group*



Control	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Level of significance
Pre	569	4.80	2.26	568	0.0652	NS*
Post	569	4.79	2.21	568		

\*Not Significant  $p=0.948 > 0.05$  \*t critical value (df=1136) =1.1962 at 0.05

In the table 2 the mean scores on learning of mathematics by second grade students in control group is 4.80 at pre-test and 4.79 at post-test. The mean difference is not statistically significant. The calculated t-value is 0.0652 which is less than the tabulated t-value of 1.196 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, we can infer that the difference in pre and post control groups is not statistically significant. Thus the traditional teaching method did not result in any change in the learning of mathematics.

3. The table below represents the mean scores on learning of mathematics in students of third standard in the pre and post experimental groups.

*Table 3: Mean scores on learning of mathematics of students in third standard in the Experimental group*

Experimental	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Level of significance
Pre	530	4.49	2.16	529	20.8	0.05
Post	530	6.95	1.71	529		

\*t critical value (df=1058) = 1.962 at 0.05

In the table 3 the mean scores on learning of mathematics by third standard students in the experimental group is 4.49 on pre-test and 6.95 on post-test. The mean difference is statistically significant. The calculated t-value is 20.8 which is more than the table t-value of 1.962. Therefore, it can be inferred that the differentiated instruction was useful.

4. The table below represents the mean scores on learning of mathematics in students of third standard in the pre and post control groups.

*Table 4: Mean scores on learning of mathematics of students in third standard in the Control group*

Control	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Level of significance
Pre	560	4.23	2.17	559	0.03	NS*
Post	560	4.22	2.08	559		

\* Not Significant  $p=0.976 > 0.05$  \*t critical value (df=1118) = 1.962 at 0.05

In the table 4 the mean scores on learning of mathematics by third grade students in control group is 4.23 at pre-test and 4.22 at post-test.

The mean difference is not statistically significant. The calculated t-value is 0.03 which is less than the tabulated t-value of 1.196 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, it can be inferred that the traditional method of teaching has not contributed to any change.

5. The table below represents the mean scores on learning of mathematics in students of fourth standard in the pre and post experimental groups

*Table 5: Mean scores on learning of mathematics of students in fourth standard in the Experimental group*

Experimental	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Level of significance
Pre	530	3.8	1.82	529	19.2	0.05
Post	530	5.68	1.72	529		

\*t critical value (df=1058) = 1.962 at 0.05

In the table 5 the mean scores on learning of mathematics by fourth grade students in the experimental group is 3.8 on pre-test and 5.68 on post-test.

The mean difference is statistically significant. The calculated t-value is 19.2 which is more than the table t-value of 1.962. Therefore, it can be inferred that differentiated instruction was beneficial.

6. The table below represents the mean scores on learning of mathematics in the students of fourth standard.

*Table 6: Mean scores on learning of mathematics of students in fourth standard in the Control group*

Control	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Level of significance
Pre	525	3.79	1.83	524	0.13	NS*
Post	525	3.81	1.82	524		

\*Not Significant  $p=0.896 > 0.05$  \*t critical value (df=) = 1.962 at 0.05

In the table 6 the mean scores on learning of mathematics by second grade students in control group is 3.79 at pre-test and 3.81 at post-test.

The mean difference is not statistically significant. The calculated t-value is 0.13 which is less than the tabulated t-value of 1.196 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, it can be inferred that the learning in mathematics using traditional method did not result in any change.

### Research Findings:

Based on the above results it is found that there is a significant change in learning of mathematics when differentiated instruction is used in the inclusive classroom.

Teachers trained in the use of differentiated instruction will optimize the learning of students in diverse classrooms.

**Conclusion:** Primary children exhibit a wide range of learning styles and preferences. Therefore, it is necessary to recognize the importance of accommodating these differences in context of mathematics instruction. By using DI, educators can tailor their instruction to meet the diverse and individual needs and promote a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts.

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## REVIEWING THE INTERDEPENDENCY OF INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM, PEDAGOGIES AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

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### Abstract

*'Right to Education' is a fundamental right given by majority constitutions of the world and to truly exercise this right in its full capacity, it is necessary to have an education system that is for all and holds the capacity to cater in the society without leaving or excluding anyone. The education system of India thus far, does not fit the criteria and thus, there is a need to have a more developed education system on the lines of inclusivity. Inclusive education stands on the principle of 'Diversity' which ranges from intellectual, social, cultural to ethnic diversity and an education system catering to all these tangents needs to be robust in its foundation and needs to stand strong on three pillars: Inclusive Curriculum, Inclusive Pedagogies and Inclusive School Environment. These three disseminated into the education system, will make it 'inclusive'. The question now arises, why these three? These three factors are interrelated and having inclusivity in these three, will make the education system truly inclusive in a way that will have its manifestation both within and without. Having an inclusive curriculum needs pedagogies that are inclusive too thus, inclusive pedagogies of teaching and teaching an inclusive curriculum will only thrive when the schools, its environment and its classrooms are welcoming to inclusivity and endorse and follow an inclusive approach. Thus, these three are interrelated. The present paper explores the impact of Salamanca Statement (1994) in marking the journey of inclusivity for India, then discusses Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (2001) and NEP (2020) to show the journey of inclusive education in India. Concepts of Social and Cultural Capital (Bourdieu, 1986), ISA (Louis Althusser, 1970) are discussed followed by Multicultural Curriculum (Bennett, 2003), some hindrances in the practice of the same, followed by certain suggestions on inclusive pedagogies. Inclusive education is an approach to schooling in which students with many different kinds of disabilities and learning needs are educated in classes with non-disabled and typically developing students (Sage, 2015). Inclusive Education needs a curriculum that recognizes, respects, represents and embodies these differences and 'includes' them into one curriculum fit to be studied and taught to all. This can only be accomplished when teaching strategies and school ambience is the kind that supports and encourages this kind of teaching and learning, hence, having inclusive pedagogies and inclusive school environment becomes a necessity to have an inclusive education system.*

*Keywords: Diversity, Inclusive Education, Curriculum, Pedagogies and School Environment.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is an approach to schooling in which students with many different kinds of disabilities and learning needs are educated in classes with non-disabled and typically developing students (Sage, 2015). Inclusive Education needs a curriculum that recognizes, respects, represents and embodies these differences and 'includes' them into one curriculum fit to be studied and taught to all. This can only be accomplished when teaching strategies and school ambience is the kind that supports and encourages this

kind of teaching and learning, hence, having inclusive pedagogies and inclusive school environment becomes a necessity to have an inclusive education system.

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

The studies mentioned encompass various aspects of inclusive education across different contexts. Somma and Bennett (2020) conducted research at Brock University, Canada, focusing on special educators transitioning from segregated to inclusive classroom settings. Mukminin et al. (2019) highlighted Indonesia's shift towards inclusive education and proposed multicultural curriculum as a solution. MacJessie-Mbewe et al. (2023) examined the implementation of inclusive education in Malawi, finding challenges at both primary and secondary school levels. Athira and Rajendran (2023) explored the foundational principles of inclusive education, tracing India's journey towards inclusivity in education. Overall, these studies shed light on the complexities, challenges, and evolving approaches within the realm of inclusive education.

### **UNDERSTANDING STUDENT DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ISSUES IN INDIA**

According to the Census of India (2011) all over 61% of population of disabled children were attending to educational institutions and the rest were out of the educational institutions. The biggest challenge faced was to retain them in the educational institutions and this was a clear marker showing how 'inclusive' is the education system of India. The government bodies dealing with education and its policy formation have come up with many nationwide education policies that had been at par with global standards of education. One such policy was Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan of 2001. This was a joint venture of Government of India and World Bank that was significant. This was the venture that became the beacon of our education system towards becoming an inclusive one disability wise. This initiative by World Bank however failed to take into account the societal and social factors that hinders the truly inclusive model to run. Factors such as peer influence and school authorities having the autonomy to an extent to decide whom to give admission and whom to not. "Provision of free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality to children from disadvantaged and weaker sections" (The Right of children to free and compulsory education act, 2009) shows that this act of 2009 does a good job at recognizing factors beyond medical model of disability at play that are core to the concepts of 'exclusion' and 'inclusion'.

#### **Government Schemes And Policies To Promote Nationwide Inclusive Education:**

**Accessible India Campaign:** In December of 2015, Government of India launched under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan) aims to make buildings, public transportation, and information and communication technology accessible to persons with disabilities.

**National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** The NEP 2020 emphasizes the need for inclusive education by ensuring equitable access and quality education for all, including students with disabilities. It advocates for the development of special educators, infrastructure, and resources for inclusive education.

**Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016:** This legislation mandates inclusive education and prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in educational institutions. It emphasizes the creation of barrier-free access to education and reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities.

“SENSITIZING TOWARDS THE NEED OF INCLUSION” can be replaced with “PRACTICALITY OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL REASONS MAKING ‘EXCLUSION’ POSSIBLE”

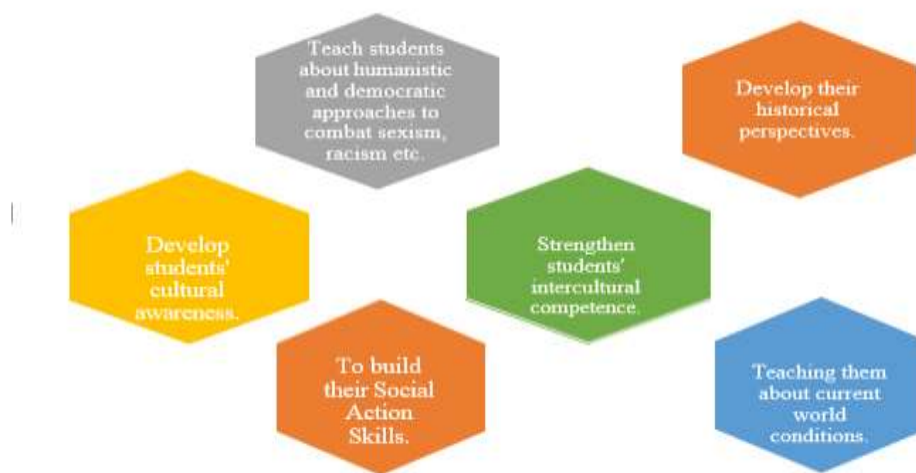
### **MANIFESTO FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

Salamanca Statement (1994) was a pivotal move in bringing about a huge landscape shift for education system of India in the sense that signing this declaration marked India's journey of moving towards an inclusive education system. Another very plausible reason for the major shift in the education system could be the advent of LPG (Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization, 1992). The LPG policy being at its almost peak in the outward manifestation of its implementation caused our country to open up to the outer world—the Western World and with this came the western influences also in the ideology of education system that made it necessary for India to step up its game and come at par with the western models of inclusive education. Ideological shift from ‘individual with the disability’ to the idea of ‘disabling or excluding factors’ became the core fundamental idea for inclusive education. This stark difference in ideology shows the very core of the inclusive education and the building blocks of it. It is very crucial to keep in mind that exclusion takes on a different approach and manifests differently when comes to India with India having societal structures in place that made it normative in the past to consider exclusion and segregation as the norm. India does not only have the medical model of disability to look at but also the social and cultural model of disability. Meaning, India has religious and cultural pluralism and every culture and religion has its own way of living, thinking and being thus, it is important for India to also think about these tangents when engineering the models for Inclusive Education. New Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 does have many elements and features which do adhere to the principle of inclusive education. NEP of 2020 is more inclusive in its approach since it has considered the factors such as gender non-binary as well and has suggested pointers and action items to have them righteously included in the education system and make sure they get the education that is well in their right. Showing that our education system is open to truly try and be as inclusive as possible. Inclusive education cannot strive only by ‘including’ certain societal, cultural and social factors but also needs negation of certain factors and things from the education system to have our education system truly be an inclusive one. Just like factors such as rights of non-binary genders needs to be taken into account when comes to inclusive education, it is equally important to eliminate socio cultural factors and backgrounds as factor for exclusion of certain specific cohort of students if we truly want our education system to move towards equity and equality.

**SENSITIZING TOWARDS THE NEED OF INCLUSION** Another factor when comes to inclusion and exclusion in education system is the concept of ‘Cultural Capital’ (Bourdieu, 1986) which goes hand in hand with the concept of ‘Ideological State Apparatus’, ISA (Louis Althusser, 1970). Ruling Classes of a society practice Ideological State Apparatus to continue to rule in the society by creating false class consciousness. ISA is practiced by owning working classes ideology in a way that creates Cultural Reproduction (Bourdieu, 1986) wherein the working class keep on ‘reproducing’ their culture of remaining a working-class population and this is done by ruling classes through various state/social institutions such as schools, workplaces, churches. This reflects how ruling classes or bourgeoisie gain the major say and control everything in the society and primarily in an ideological way own the working

classes or the proletariat to keep having things their way. Cultural Capital of Ruling Classes is quite rich and vast and they leverage that to keep ruling the society and have things their way and working classes have a very limited Cultural Capital which hinders their Upward Social Mobility (Pitirim Sorokin) and this perpetual cycle of reproduction of class is all a part of ISA. These factors cause a major setback for inclusivity in education system as in it is really difficult to have a just balance of all these non-tangible assets for every child in the education system. All these factors are so covert and woven tightly into the social tapestry that often trying to tap into these factors and engineer solutions for these factors is incredibly arduous and oftentimes almost impossible, thus causing exclusion in the education system in terms of equal opportunities and equal and fair chances to attain success and upward social mobility. The central theme of all of this complexity is the fact of social exclusion and the notion of ‘owning’ intellectual, state based, cultural, material and social resources by a certain class and using it to ‘exclude’ certain communities and classes from having a rightful say in the use of these resources and creates exclusion in the education system as well.

**IMPORTANT COMPONENTS FOR INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM** Whilst we talk about inclusion and exclusion in education system, it is also necessary to consider our curriculum and how having that as inclusive or exclusive can impact the whole point of inclusive or exclusive education system. A curriculum well versed in multi perspective approach is a big yes but so is a curriculum designed to include the voices, experiences and perspectives of the students themselves to make the curriculum inclusive in the truest sense. There are six major components to a Multicultural Curriculum (Bennett 2003). Multicultural Curriculum is a closer and widely accepted version of Inclusive Curriculum.



**FIGURE 1: COMPONENTS OF A MULTICULTURAL CURRICULUM**

These components by Bennett (2003) are quite robust and wholesome in articulating and disseminating ‘Inclusivity’ in curriculum. This model if implemented will give teachers a chance to pave a way for critical pedagogy. Critical Pedagogy ensues many elements that makes it so effective of which one is:

the three levels of effective teaching-learning process. It will imply proper application of 'Memory' stage of teaching (Herbert); 'Understanding'

stage of teaching (Morrison) and 'Reflective' stage (Bigge & Hunt) of teaching-learning process these three are the outward manifestation of the proper application of the six components of the Multicultural Curriculum (Bennett 2003). Pedagogies are a very crucial part of having a proper execution of the inclusive curriculum and are the final cog in the disseminating machine of the education system aiming for inclusivity. To truly have an inclusive school environment, an outward manifestation of the inclusivity at work behind the scenes up till now is a very important yet an incredibly arduous task to accomplish.

Teachers mainly face the issue of the fact that their classes usually comprise of students coming from myriad backgrounds with varied experiences, perspectives, language abilities, physical abilities etc. A class has students who are truly 'gifted' and who face psychological or physical/medical impairments also sit in the same class and learn at the same time with the same teacher and oftentimes it is very challenging for teachers to have truly be 'Inclusive' in their pedagogical approach to teaching.

### **METHODS AND WAYS TO ENCOURAGE INCLUSION AND ALLEVIATE DISCRIMINATION**

There are certain elements and factors that we need to consider that have really the ability to hinder us from having a truly inclusive curriculum, these are:

Firstly, the already held perceptions, perspectives and beliefs of the school staff that are usually against the minority groups students, coming from cultures other than the mainstream and elite groups of the society. If we truly want an inclusive curriculum, we have to consider this and try and change this at the heart of it all.

Secondly, is the formalized curriculum, instructional media, and the hidden curriculum that favor the traditional and mainstream knowledge and voices. Such as biases in textbooks (Banks, 2002; Bennett, 2003; McMahon, 2003; Nieto & Bode, 2008; Ryan, 2006).

Thirdly, the reform is about the learning, teaching, and cultural groups that are practiced in the schools which mostly tend to go hand in hand with the ideologies and methods of learning of the 'mainstream' 'rich and elite' groups of the society. It also includes the some very restricted and specific styles or modalities of learning such as only visual, only auditory etc. which is not truly in agreement with what inclusive curriculum is and which endorses some age-old ways of learning that may come off to being obsolete and not a true amalgamation of multi-media or multifaceted ways of learning and teaching.

Fourthly, languages and dialects used in schools too may disadvantage certain groups of students who may not be counted as 'mainstream'. Lastly, the way assessments and conducted also need to change because they favor the mainstream groups over certain other minority groups. Much of these changes are not in any capacity only valid for one particular country but also apply to every country trying to inclusive on their curriculum. In India, the NEP (2020) is to a large extent trying to mould the education system around being inclusive with 'language' component of the teaching-learning aspect of the curriculum and has also given consideration to certain genders the social right to rightful and just education which was vastly stigmatized and discriminated in the past. Thus, India is somewhere on the right track to achieve the objective of Inclusivity in our system and curriculum.



**SUGGESTIONS FOR INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGIES OF TEACHING IN A CLASSROOM**

The authors of the present paper would like to put forth some suggestions for inclusive pedagogies of teaching in a classroom: Teachers should use an amalgam of methods that suit 'gifted' as well as the physically or mentally impaired students. To teach in a class with all sorts of students, teacher should be aware about different styles and approaches to teaching a concept and use a mix of those approaches in a way that it does not get overwhelming for the differently abled students and also takes care of the feelings of 'under stimulation' that a gifted student may face. According to Bernstein (1971) children coming from 'working-class' have Restricted Speech Codes—RSC which hinders them from fully exploring the topics taught in the class and restricts their understanding of the same since they do not have speech codes that of the working class students who use Elaborate Speech Codes—ESC which is complex vocabulary used to express complex ideas, subtle in terms of range of meaning they convey, abstract in terms of ability to grasp and express their meanings whereas, RSC are simple, predictable, concrete in their expression and not that nuanced and subtle than the ESC which makes a rift between students who can and cannot grasp with ESC. A teacher well versed with fairly the knowledge of both and using it appropriately from time to time can be very effective in creating an inclusive classroom and can be a simple yet very elegant and useful at ground level and brings about a lot of effectiveness when comes to 'Inclusive Pedagogy'. Having self-awareness of the concept of 'Hidden Curriculum' (Philip W. Jackson, 1968) and how it manifests for them personally and in their classroom can be a real game changer in the sense that it can keep teachers' personal beliefs and opinions and perspectives in check and make sure to have a neutral outlook towards things whilst teaching can truly make all the students feel included with no specific 'for and against' any student and their background can create a decently inclusive classroom.

Having inclusive and balanced lectures, facilitating inclusive conversations amongst students, varying course content in such a way that it includes almost all the possible perspectives are some very hands on pedagogies to have inclusivity in one's classroom. These pedagogies are very practical and quite effective too.

**CONCLUSION :** This paper reviews the concept of 'Inclusive Education' to its very core and attempts to show the interrelationship of three of its pillars that make education 'inclusive' or 'segregated' as discussed in detail above. It is very apparent as shown by statistics too, that India chronically lags in being truly inclusive and it is also true that if we try, we can make strides in this direction. If India takes a rigorous approach in terms of allocating majority of its allotted monetary and other educational resources into training educators inclusive teaching pedagogies, making schools in physical and ideological sense 'inclusive ready' for instance having every school have a wheelchair glider or stair lift to help children with disabilities commute within school premises, have teachers and students work together towards accepting inclusivity in every sense which will bring inclusivity ideologically. These are practical in approach and enormously helpful when applied in real life thus making truly inclusive education in a vast majority of facets possible.

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## A STUDY OF PRESENT STATUS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIA

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### **Abstract**

*Inclusive education is a new and modern approach towards educating all children irrespective of their strengths and weaknesses. It aims at educating children with disabilities and learning difficulties. The democratic set up of governance around the world has promoted need for the philosophy of inclusion. It evolves changing culture of traditional education system. It emphasizes on increased attention to diverse needs of the students. It is directed towards applied curriculum, active learning, appropriate methods of assessment and multi-level instructional approach as it advocates special children have to be educated along with normal children. It had been believed that the children with special needs must be given education separately. After the acceptance of democracy at the international level the policy of inclusive education became a need of an hour. Under the policy of inclusive education, regardless of strengths and weaknesses all students are taken together in one classroom. The idea is to maximize their potential. The researcher has attempted to explain background of inclusive education and to review its present status in India. An attempt is made to evaluate policies introduced by govt. regarding inclusive education. Researcher has studied the issue with documentary analysis method of qualitative research. The issues like need for special educator, assistive devices, special administrative set up, co-peration of classmates, understanding from the side of family members are taken into account. Research has also taken into account historical evidences and documents. According to the statistics provided by MHRD there are an estimated 30 million children are out of school in India. They are deprived of education due to caste differences, gender issues, disability, property matters, differences in religion, ethnicity and lack of ability. Many government programmes have attempted to reach out to these children. However, disabled children are often forgotten. Inclusion education stands for improvement of schools according to educational needs of all children. The basic support and strengths was received by inclusive education since 1994 when World Conference on special needs was organized at Spain. The outcome of the conference was there has to be accommodative policy for all children irrespective of their social, emotional, linguistic, physical, intellectual conditions. Govt. of India has accepted and implemented plans, programmes, schemes, policies and legal enactments to implement the idea of inclusive education. The present paper attempts to analyse issues, constraints, challenges and prospects of inclusive education.*

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**Keywords:** *Inclusive Education, Philosophy of Inclusion, Special Education, Challenges and Opportunities.*

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**Introduction:** Education is the most effective instrument of social change. India is a democratic country where equality of opportunity is assured to the citizens. Though constitutional rights are provided to the

citizens in India, discrimination in cultural, economic, social, intellectual and behavioural areas is informal and common.

**Meaning of Inclusive Education:** Inclusive education denotes access to quality education to all students irrespective of varied factors and differences associated with them. It meets diverse needs of the students associated with education. Students take part in educational programmes in a common learning environment. It is to remove barriers leading exclusion. Inclusive education aims at educational set up in which students from different background with different abilities learn together. A common learning environment is a place where students with disabilities learn together with their peers without any isolation.

**Background of Inclusive Education:** In 1974 Govt. of India established 'Integrated Education' for disabled children. In 1966 Kothari Commission highlighted need for education to special students. In 1980 the Ministry of Welfare understood the need for their rehabilitation. Till 1990 about 40 million children with mental and physical disabilities were not the part of mainstream education. The NEP 1986 emphasised the need for integration of students with special needs. In 1994-95 Govt. of India introduced District Primary Education (DPEP) and the idea of inclusive education came into existence in real sense.

**Review of Literature:** Dr. Aruna, Kuldeep Singh, Mangi Lal (2016) states that, near about 10% of the world's population is affected with a disability and a large amount of these people live in developing countries. Three basic models considered by researcher i.e. segregated, integrated and inclusive special education have been differentiated between by international and local agencies included Government and NGOs and an overwhelming support is being shown by human rights activists, non-profit organisations, government organisations and different agencies which are all in favour of inclusive special education as the most beneficial type of education for people of all ability levels.

Teena Sarao (2016) mentions that, children with special need can be included in general school system without any demarcation and differentiation. Many problems such as, lack of well educated teachers, curriculum, resources, good infrastructure facilities, awareness, positive attitude, plans, policies are creating hurdles for extending the concept of inclusive education in India.

V. Mrunalini, Dr. Premavarthy Vijayan (2014) states that, inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners. It involves restructuring the culture, policies and practices in schools so that they can respond to the diversity of students in their locality.

Ankur Madan and Dr. Neeraja Sharma (2013) mention that, guidelines are provided in a generalized mode that, schools can follow to initiate such programmes. The guidelines were derived from an empirical study which entitled examining prevalent practices and introducing inclusion in a regular school setting. Schools can implement inclusive education programmes if they are adequately prepared are able to garner support of all stakeholders involved in the process and have basic resources to run the programme.

Hazel Bines, Philippa Lei (2011) states that, some of the key issues and challenges in relation to disability, education and development. Children with disabilities are one of the many groups of children still not enrolled in primary education in developing countries.

Saiful Malak (2013) mentions that, inclusive education has been recognized as a key strategy to ensure education for all in the developing world for the last two decades.

**Research Gap:** By taking into account the review of literature the present research work focuses on the primary education. It has left a research gap at the higher education level. It is expected to make significant contribution in the research knowledge regarding inclusive education. It must become a reference to such future studies. Researcher concluded that majority of the pre service teachers have unfavourable attitudes to include students with special educational needs in regular classrooms. Misconceptions and lack of knowledge about disabilities are revealed from most of the pre service teachers' responses.

**Objectives of the Study:** The following are the objectives of research study:

1. To study the background of inclusive education in India.
2. To study the present status of inclusive education in India.
3. To study various policies, programmes and acts established in India to promote inclusive education.
4. To understand the element of inferiority complex in the minds of students who are disabled.
5. Reduction in social distance between normal and special students.
6. To review mutual understanding amongst disabled students and the society.
7. To develop collaborative attitude amongst classmates.
8. Introduction of inclusive education with minimal disabilities.
9. To study the concept and need for inclusive education in Indian perspective.
10. To understand the problem in implementing inclusive education.

**Research Methodology:** The methodology is of qualitative in nature. The researcher has adopted the method of documentary analysis method. It is a systematic procedure for reviewing the documents. The researcher has also referred journals and reports published by Govt. authorities and by educational institutions.

**Need for Inclusive Education:** At the International level efforts are taken to bring special children to mainstream. In order to achieve inclusive education there is a need to admit children with special needs to regular schools. The special students always have barriers and hurdles in learning and active participation in classroom activities. Each student is unique in nature. Teachers are expected to become adaptive to include all students in the educational activities. Researcher is of the opinion that, inclusive education is the only way to assist all the students in performing better. In inclusive education system all types of children do better academically and develop social relationships effectively. The following factors explain the need for inclusive education:

1. It is the way to inclusion in society.
2. It helps in mutually sustaining relation between schools and society at large.
3. It restructures policies, practices and culture to bring unity in diversity.
4. It is the process of increasing possibility of students by reducing their exclusion.

**Challenges in Inclusive Education:** Inclusive education has following challenges:

1. To meet needs of all types of children in all schools.
2. Negative attitude of society towards disabled children.
3. Limited understanding of disability by the citizens.

4. Negative attitude of people towards disabled persons.
5. Parental approach.
6. Resistance of change on the part of school administration and society.
7. Rigid school environment.
8. Absence of clear educational policies.
9. Insufficient learning study material.
10. Inadequate budgetary provisions for disabled students.

**Opportunities provided by Inclusive Education:** The following opportunities are provided by inclusive education:

1. It is a way to introduce ideas of parents and children in schools.
2. A common policy can be established to include all students.
3. Children with special educational needs can be easily included in main stream education.
4. A special support is given to provide facilities to avail higher education to special children.
5. Interests of special children are safeguarded by providing them opportunities.
6. No dehumanizing of special children.
7. Provision of equal education with equal opportunities, social justice and human rights.
8. Handicapped and special children get an opportunity to learn according to their potential and needs.

**Measures to Implement Inclusive Education:** Providing education to disabled students along with normal students is the best way to nurture the principle of 'Education to All'. Following are the measures required to implement inclusive education:

1. RTE (Right to Education) must be made applicable to all Indian citizens.
2. An inclusive school must develop education structure to cater to the needs of all children.
3. From transport, ramp to wheelchairs and study material all the requirements must be fulfilled by the schools to help special children.
4. Study material in Braille Script, audio-video learning must be provided to special children.
5. Exam. system to be designed especially for special children.
6. Schools need to become rehabilitation centers for the special children.
7. Inclusive education must be flexible in the form of methods and materials.
8. Inclusive schools are expected to develop methodologies suitable to special children.
9. Special curriculum and teachers' training is to be made mandatory.

**Measure to raise funds for the Inclusive Education:** All the suggestions made for the implementation education will remain on paper in the absence of funds. If Govt. does not have sufficient funds, the NGOs must come forward and through CSR funds can be raised. The following are some of the suggestions:

1. Provision is to be made in Union and State Budget for the inclusive education.
2. Yearly audit to be done for control on misutilisation of funds.
3. Disabled cess may be imposed (may be at a lower rate) on income tax to raise funds for inclusive education.
4. Stringent norms to be imposed with strict audit of NGOs that take grant from assistance to disabled person for the purchase.

5. Co-ordination for the higher education of employment of disabled students must be done with UGC, NCTE, RCI, AICTE.
6. A committee of retired judges of Supreme Court to be formed to keep watch on grants given by Govt. to agencies of schools of disabled students.

**Suggestions:** The following are a few suggestions to implement the policy of inclusive education in India:

1. It is necessary to establish conducive environment and barrier free infrastructure.
2. Teachers are expected to give training to the students in abacus and trailer frame as a brain exercise.
3. Management of schools must take interest to develop required skills amongst special children.
4. Efforts must be taken through advertisements and propaganda to eliminate discrimination amongst the disabled and normal students.
5. Resource rooms related to infrastructure need to be developed.
6. Appointment of special educators must be done.
7. Recording of lectures (preferably audio-visual) to be done and provided to students for revision at home.
8. Notices must be sent to parents in addition to students through electronic media.
9. Assistive devices must be provided to the students to cope up with the difficulties.

**Conclusion:** It is necessary to establish an inclusive society through inclusive approach. The Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009 has promised education to all children irrespective of their caste, creed and religion. Inclusive education emphasizes that inspite of intensity of his / her disabilities as an important member of the society a child must be allowed to participate in all aspects of society. A model and all pervasive inclusive education allows students to participate in all classroom activities. To overcome the challenges whole hearted co-operation of parents, educationists and community leaders is necessary to create inclusive schools. Govt. of India has also tried to improve education with inclusive approach. Its success certainly depends upon co-education of normal students and disabled students. In the present era it is expected that the normal students will definitely accept and support disabled students in their studies and general school activities. In developed countries like U.K., U.S.A., Germany normal students are trained to help disabled students as a part of social commitment. Training of teachers with necessary knowledge for inclusive education needs the commitment of all the factors. It is certain that without proper adequate preparation of schools required results cannot be expected. The mandatory requirements has to be the modification of curriculum, educational material and infrastructural facilities. The preparatory work has to be done at community level. Inclusive education is a challenging task. It needs community mobilization according to learning needs of special children. It must be done in formal and informal way. The dawn of equal right in education to all has shown a way of hope.

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## ROLE OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT, CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGIES IN PROMOTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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### **Abstract**

*This paper explores the crucial elements of an inclusive educational framework, emphasizing the interconnectedness of the school environment, curriculum design, and pedagogical approaches. Within the school environment, a physically accessible and emotionally supportive space serves as the foundation for inclusivity, fostering a sense of belonging among students of varied backgrounds, abilities, and learning styles. Inclusive education goes beyond mere accommodation; it strives to create an environment where diversity is not just acknowledged but celebrated. The curriculum is the backbone of education, and an inclusive curriculum must reflect diverse perspectives, cultures, and abilities. This abstract delves into strategies for designing curricula that address the needs of all learners, ensuring equitable access to knowledge and promoting a more comprehensive understanding of the world. Moreover, it explores the importance of adapting pedagogical approaches to cater to diverse learning styles and individual needs. Differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, and the integration of technology emerge as key components in creating an inclusive learning experience. By examining these three interconnected aspects—school environment, curriculum, and pedagogies—this abstract aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on inclusive education, providing insights for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders striving to create learning environments that empower every student, fostering a sense of unity and equality within the educational landscape.*

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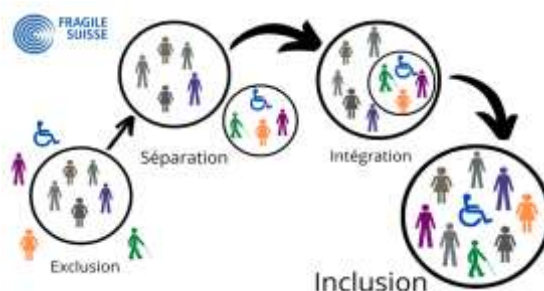
**Keywords:** School Environment, Curriculum and Pedagogy, Inclusion.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Inclusion refers to an environment where everyone feels respected and valued, and has equal opportunities, regardless of their background or identity. It is important because it is necessary for functioning equitably in an increasingly diverse global community, and it provides benefits for companies, workplaces, and schools.





“There is nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequal people”(Dari,2023).

### **Inclusion in Education**

Inclusion is about increasing the participation of all children and adults while removing exclusion, discrimination, and barriers to learning and participation. Inclusion views differences between children, and between adults as resources for learning. It is about supporting schools to become more responsive to the diversity of children’s backgrounds, interests, experiences, knowledge and skills. Most of the children encounter several barriers when they join the school. Learning and participation are hampered when children encounter barriers. They find themselves disadvantaged because of such barriers. They do not know how to cope with this situation. Many times, the dropout of children from school is due to these barriers. Barriers may be found outside of the school also for example within families and communities. There is a need to create an inclusive environment by identifying the educational needs and bringing systemic reforms in and beyond the classrooms for all children who are oppressed, marginalized, discriminated against and excluded from educational opportunities and school accessibility. In education, inclusion involves developing mutually sustaining relationships between schools and their surrounding communities. It leads to an understanding of how progress can be achieved when people join their actions together (NCERT).

### **Inclusive Society**

An inclusive society is a society that overrides differences of race, gender, class, generation, and geography and ensures inclusion, equality of opportunity as well as the capability of all members of the society to determine an agreed set of social institutions that govern social interaction. (Expert Group Meeting on Promoting Social Integration, Helsinki, July 2008).

### **Inclusive Teaching**

Inclusive teaching, often referred to as equitable or equality-focused teaching, is a method in which educators create a learning environment where all students - regardless of ethnicity, disabilities, gender, sexual orientation, and background - have equal opportunities to succeed. All students must receive equal treatment and respect. Students must also be afforded every opportunity to reach their full potential. Educators must identify blockers, barriers, or boundaries preventing students from partaking, completing assignments, and learning. Moreover, educators may self-assess to remove bias from their teaching method and appraise the source materials to ensure diversity. Educators must consider how they interact with their students and grade assessments, and whether the material students read and consume comes from authors and sources with differing opinions, backgrounds, ethnicities, and so on (Deignan, 2022).



**School Environment**

In fostering inclusivity in education, the school environment plays a pivotal role. A welcoming atmosphere that embraces diversity cultivates a sense of belonging among students. Physical spaces designed with accessibility in mind ensure that all learners, regardless of abilities, feel accommodated. Moreover, promoting a culture of respect and understanding within the school community encourages open dialogue about various backgrounds and perspectives. This inclusive ethos extends beyond mere physicality, encompassing attitudes and behaviours that counteract discrimination. By fostering a supportive school environment, educators lay the foundation for an inclusive education system where students can thrive irrespective of their differences. It becomes the cornerstone for implementing inclusive curricula and pedagogies that address the diverse needs and learning styles of every individual (Dari, 2023).

**Curriculum and Pedagogy**

In fostering inclusivity in education, curriculum and pedagogy play pivotal roles. Inclusive education not only applies to pedagogy in groups or schools, but nations may have varying laws on inclusive education, but not inclusive practices in schools, or may have inclusive educational practices, but not inclusive policies (Haug, 2010 & Vislie, 2003). A diverse and culturally responsive curriculum ensures students encounter a broad spectrum of perspectives, fostering understanding and appreciation for different backgrounds. Integrating diverse voices in textbooks and coursework contributes to a more inclusive learning environment. Pedagogy, on the other hand, involves the methods and strategies used for teaching. Implementing inclusive pedagogies, such as differentiated instruction and universal learning design, accommodates diverse learning styles and abilities. Educators adopting inclusive pedagogical approaches create an environment where every student feels valued and supported in their academic journey. By intertwining inclusive curriculum and pedagogy, schools can actively promote equity, ensuring that education is a transformative and empowering experience for all students, regardless of their backgrounds and capabilities.

**STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES AIMED AT FOSTERING INCLUSIVITY IN EDUCATION**

Governments play a pivotal role in advancing inclusive education through policy frameworks and legal mandates. Legislation such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the United States, the Inclusive Education Policy in India, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) underscore the commitment of nations to providing equal educational opportunities for all (Pandey, 2023). Promoting inclusivity in education is imperative for fostering a diverse and equitable learning environment. Various strategies and initiatives have been developed to ensure that educational institutions cater to the diverse needs of students, irrespective of their backgrounds, abilities, or identities. These efforts aim to create an atmosphere where every learner feels welcomed, valued, and provided with equal opportunities for academic success.

Key Strategies and Initiatives:

- **Diverse Curriculum:** Implementing a curriculum that reflects diverse perspectives, cultures, and histories ensures students see themselves represented and promotes a more inclusive educational experience.

- **Inclusive Teaching Practices:** Educators adopting inclusive teaching methods, such as differentiated instruction and Universal Design for Learning, can accommodate varied learning styles and abilities.

- **Accessible Facilities:** Ensuring physical infrastructure is accessible to students with disabilities promotes inclusivity, making education equally available to everyone.

- **Cultural Competence Training:** Providing training for educators on cultural competence enhances their ability to understand and address the unique needs of students from different backgrounds.

- **Support Services:** Establishing support services, like counselling and academic assistance, helps address individual challenges, ensuring that no student is left behind.

- **Affirmative Action Policies:** Implementing policies that promote diversity in admissions and hiring fosters inclusivity by increasing the representation of underrepresented groups.

- **Community Engagement:** Collaborating with parents, community leaders, and organizations fosters a holistic approach to inclusivity, incorporating broader perspectives into the educational system.

By implementing these strategies and initiatives, educational institutions can contribute significantly to creating an inclusive learning environment that benefits all students, preparing them for a more diverse and interconnected world.

### **DESIGNING SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT, CURRICULA AND PEDAGOGIES FOR DIVERSE LEARNING NEEDS AND ABILITIES**

Creating an inclusive educational environment is paramount to addressing the diverse learning needs and abilities of students. To foster an atmosphere where every learner can thrive, careful consideration must be given to the school environment, curricula, and pedagogies. New pedagogies are supporting individual learning strategies for knowledge development and self-directed learning (Grimus,2020). This holistic approach ensures that education caters to individual differences, providing an equitable and enriching experience for all.

Designing for Diverse Learning Needs and Abilities:

- **Flexible Spaces:** Schools should embrace flexible physical spaces to accommodate various learning styles and mobility needs, creating an inclusive atmosphere for students with diverse abilities.

- **Customizable Curricula:** A tailored curriculum that allows for personalization based on student interests, strengths, and pace ensures that every learner is engaged and challenged appropriately.

- **Multimodal Teaching:** Employing diverse teaching methods, such as visual aids, auditory resources, and hands-on activities, caters to different learning preferences and enhances understanding for all students.

- **Collaborative Learning:** Encouraging collaboration among students fosters a supportive community where individuals can learn from each other, promoting social inclusivity and varied perspectives.

- Differentiated Instruction: Teachers should adopt a flexible teaching approach that adapts to students' diverse learning speeds and abilities, providing additional support or challenges as needed.

In conclusion, harmonious integration of adaptable spaces, personalized curricula, and diverse pedagogies is pivotal in creating an educational environment that embraces and accommodates the unique learning needs and abilities of every student.

### **CHALLENGES IN FOSTERING INCLUSIVITY IN EDUCATION**

Fostering inclusivity in education is a paramount challenge, essential for creating a fair and enriching learning environment. As societies become more diverse, acknowledging and addressing the issues hindering inclusivity is crucial for educational institutions. Research indicates that the attitudes of the teachers, peers, groups and parents themselves are the barriers to an effective inclusive education (Biswas, 2003). Key challenges associated with fostering inclusivity in education have been given as under :

- Cultural Bias in Curriculum: Educational content often reflects a dominant cultural perspective, marginalizing diverse perspectives and hindering inclusivity.
- Socio-economic Disparities: Economic differences among students can result in unequal access to educational resources, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage.
- Language Barriers: For non-native speakers, language can be a significant barrier, impeding effective communication and hindering the learning process.
- Lack of Representation: The absence of diverse role models in teaching staff and learning materials can contribute to a sense of exclusion among underrepresented groups.
- Inadequate Special Education Support: Students with diverse learning needs may face challenges due to insufficient resources and support, limiting their full participation in mainstream education.

Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach, involving curriculum redesign, resource allocation, and fostering a supportive educational culture that celebrates diversity. Inclusive education not only benefits individuals but contributes to a more equitable and harmonious society.

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, fostering inclusivity in education requires a comprehensive commitment to equitable teaching, diverse curricula, and adaptable learning environments. Strategies like cultural competence training, affirmative action policies, and community engagement are vital in creating a supportive educational ecosystem. Designing flexible spaces, customizable curricula, and employing varied pedagogies addresses diverse learning needs. However, challenges like cultural bias, socioeconomic disparities, language barriers, and inadequate support for special education must be addressed collaboratively. Overcoming these hurdles not only benefits individual students but contributes to a more equitable and harmonious society, preparing learners for a diverse and interconnected world.

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**SPECIAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES: THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER****Dr. Kotra Balayogi**

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**Abstract**

*The need for teachers that are equipped to meet the needs of all learners becomes apparent to provide not only equal opportunities for all, but also education for an inclusive society. Knowledge, beliefs Approaches and values of the teacher are brought to bear in creating an effective learning environment for pupils, making the teacher a critical influence in education for inclusion and the development of the inclusive school, and the present study is highlight to the context of the role of teachers in special needs of children with disabilities in an inclusive school setting and the role of the special educator varies depending on the needs of the children with disabilities in an inclusive school. Many studies show that teachers play a role as a parent and leaders in the classroom from time to time. In spite of this, teacher face many challenges while meeting the needs of disabled children in schools and from the present study, solutions have been presented in relation to some important problems by researcher which can give better results in the future. The study can help the 21<sup>st</sup> century policy makers, a researcher, article writers, parents, and children with disabilities in the future.*

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**Keywords:** Disabilities, Education, Inclusive School, Special Needs Children, Teacher Role

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**Introduction**

Teachers are at the core of any education system and he/she empower students to access the latest development introduce them to new and emerging knowledge, trends, and methodologies and assist in encouraging pedagogical reforms and with the majority of present special education students, we are not dealing with students with physical or mental incompetence, we are dealing with children who do not learn what we teach/do not like the way we teach it and to improve what we teach and make it usable for students, and we have to improve how we teach it. A lot is expected from the teacher in the periphery of the school his/her work is not limited to the classroom only, but on the shoulders, there are also complex tasks like establishing a high level of an cordial relationship between the school and the community, but the first and foremost task is to make your teaching effective and a successful teacher is one who accepts new facts and conveys them easily to other students, and an inclusive teacher is one who creates a small inclusive class/society among the students and removes individual differences, feelings of discrimination, and untouchability and provides equal opportunities to all. The teacher guides, inspires and shows the light in the darkness to the children, that is why it is said that just as the existence of the waves of the ocean cannot be erase easily, similarly the effect of the teacher work and his/her personality on the students remains till the last moment of a life and an inclusive teacher should always keeping in mind the qualities, abilities, skills, mental level, experience, the social behavior of all children in the class but especially disabled children need more attention. Disability is such a part of “human life” that can be

found in every person either permanently or temporarily. Dreams, aspirations, hopes of modern India and to give flight to disabled children, depending on the quality of her/his teachers and an inclusive teacher can easily do by his/her qualities. The objective of inclusion is in any field, to respect and promote the inherent dignity of human beings. Under this, the active participation of everyone in society is encouraged and it is a fundamental right to provide equal opportunities to children with disabilities. Especially in this class children with disabilities come from different background and the teachers try to develop the different qualities inherent in and IE is a step towards making that dream a reality and inclusive classrooms are a wonderful concept but require a lot of patience and training from teachers to create a balanced classroom and, 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers have to face many challenges in conducting any type of class.

### **Objectives**

- ❖ To know the concept of inclusive education and its significance
- ❖ To assess the teachers challenges towards classroom inclusivity
- ❖ To discuss the solution for teacher role in the inclusive classroom for special needs

### **Methodology**

The study has been conducted based on the method of document review in accordance with the qualitative approach of research and has been done on the basis of the secondary sources of data for the present study titled "Special Needs of Children with Disabilities: The Role of the Teacher"

### **Concept of Inclusive Education**

IE means all children in the same classrooms, in the same educational institutions and means that real learning opportunities for groups who have traditionally been excluded not only children with disabilities. Teachers currently operate in a changing environment that is undergoing fast transformation and the role of teachers has significantly evolved over the past few decades, along with the adoption of fresh approaches to the curriculum and evaluation. Additionally, the legislation has changed how learning challenges are conceived, moving away from special educational needs and toward extra learning help. New insights into the interactive attitude of student requirements have been developed as a result of these changes, and the emphasis has shifted from "what is wrong with the child?" to "what does the child need to assist their learning?" and changes have had a significant impact on many teachers' professional identities as well as their jobs and responsibilities. Additionally, it affects how educators are prepared for their careers and given assistance. As a result, this concentrates more on how to train instructors to work with special needs students. In order to create inclusive classrooms where children with disabilities can learn and thrive, teachers are a crucial part of the process and therefore, if we want to continue to guarantee that the underserved group has access to high-quality education today, we must pay careful attention to teacher preparation.

### **Challenges: Inclusive Instruction Places**

**Teacher Training:** The biggest "challenge" for an inclusive school is the lack of training of teachers.

**Experience in an Inclusive Setting:** A teacher's experience is very important in running an inclusive classroom; certainly, the experience gained during training can prove useful in the teaching and development of children in the classroom.

**Strengths of Teachers:** He/she strengths are main focus of instruction process. Actually, when we consider inclusion that becomes more a critical in this regard and teachers do will have not the proper competencies and skills, they will not be able to manage or lead inclusive classrooms properly.

**Appropriate Concrete Learning Materials:** The biggest challenge before the teachers for teaching children with special needs in an institution of inclusiveness is also the lack of appropriate and concrete materials and for example, visually impaired learners need concrete materials that they can touch and can feel, similarly an inclusive classroom has necessary learning facilities like computers, tape recorders, braille, hearing aids, an overhead projector, and magnifying glasses (to make letters large) should be necessary for the class.

**Large Classroom:** Enrolment in the class beyond a limit is also a challenge for inclusive teachers; it prevents the development of close relationships between teachers, and students, hindering the progress of the students and teachers therefore, the teachers are unable to help the learner so, it is necessary to consider the student-teacher ratio in the classroom. Apart from that teachers are not able to pay full attention to each child just like when a teacher is busy with a slow learner child, so other children start getting bored and start making noise which spoils the atmosphere of the class.

**Time Allocation:** The literature reflects that schools pay no attention to time allocation, due to which the teacher fails to give attention to their subjects and extracurricular activities. The uncertainty about the class and activities makes students and teachers directionless.

**Experiences with Severe and Profound Disabilities:** Teachers need more attention in the classroom than normal students to students with serious and deep abilities. Teachers do not use skills for removing important challenges by making lesson plans based on individual abilities.

**Assistance and Teaching Learning Materials:** Usually, an inclusive school has a regular and a special needs teacher in inclusive classes these are due to the nature and size of the classroom. But sometimes it to be seen the number of assistance teachers are unavailable and apart from this teacher do have not the resources of teaching they need most, including teaching-learning aids.

#### **Teacher Role in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Inclusive Class for Special Needs**

❖ Teachers, keeping in mind the physical, mental ability and intellectual level of the children should help do full social development so that they can also become valuable members of society.

❖ Teachers should keep a positive attitude toward every child to provide equal opportunity and basic education.

❖ The teacher should create this class so that students can enjoy here, and individual learning willpower can develop in them.

❖ Teachers can develop cooperative learning skills, social development, better friendship qualities, community building, academic success, etc. qualities in the students.

❖ Keep the class size small to provide individual attention to the students so that the knowledge given to them is easily understood.

❖ Prepare a lesson plan before going to class, and take teaching material or any other needed material if you are necessary so that it can be used in the classroom as needed.

❖ Be sure to unique aid and tools to teach children as well as also follow the trial-and-error method.



- ❖ Patience and tolerance of the teacher are meant to be the most important key in the classroom.
- ❖ A flexible, positive attitude is essential in the classroom.
- ❖ Teachers should respect their profession.
- ❖ Self-evaluate and observe themselves from time to time.
- ❖ Develop community spirit in children because inclusive education is beneficial not only for the children but also for the family and society.
- ❖ Teachers should encourage interaction and friendship among these students so that positivity has generated and developed better friendship among them.
- ❖ Use games designed to build community.
- ❖ Involve students in solving problems.
- ❖ Share songs and books that teach community living.
- ❖ Open discussion to deal with individual difference.
- ❖ Assign classroom jobs that build community.
- ❖ Teach students different ways to help each other.
- ❖ Always try to work out a practical work schedule.

### **Conclusion, Discussion and Summary**

Inclusive teacher, is a wonderful personality that can help children to be awarded, empower, and successful in the fulfilment of the real purpose of life therefore, the positive attitude and cooperation of the teachers move forward of the children. Whether, the child suffers from any kind of disability and teachers can help children to conquer the world with their knowledge and support. Inclusive teaching and learning are designed in such a way as to provide fair access to knowledge to students with disabilities. Therefore, Inclusion teachers consider different needs and adopt different instructional systems to attract different learners and the present study will help to learn more about the role of teachers in inclusive classroom challenges and solutions. In present times the role of the teacher has changed from the dissemination of knowledge to playing the role of catalyst for the creation of knowledge, for children by providing various learning situations to the students and ensuring that every child is involved in the process of learning. Educating a person is the greatest service by man. That is why just the teacher is called the builder of a good society and nation and the success and failure of a nation depend on both the teachers and the students. A teacher plays a central role in the education system and 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers play an essential role by empowering students, being creative, interacting with each other, and learning.

### **Educational Implications and Suggestions**

- ❖ For inclusive education to be successful, teachers, principals, and other education stakeholders must adopt a positive attitude toward inclusion.
- ❖ They must be fully convinced of the benefits inclusive practises provide for all children.
- ❖ Plan training workshops on inclusive education practises for educators and community leaders, focusing in particular on how these strategies can improve the quality of instruction for all children.
- ❖ Make publicity efforts and resources that stress the value of inclusive education.
- ❖ A peer without a disability helps a young person with a disability.



❖ Teachers feel more confident in their capacity to instruct children who have a variety of learning issues when they have a better understanding of inclusive education.

❖ It has been found that more communication promotes interpersonal regard and understanding. In addition, it's critical to encourage and support 21<sup>st</sup> century disabled individuals who desire to pursue.

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## LIBRARIES' CONTRIBUTION TO DIGITAL INCLUSION: STRENGTHENING SOCIALLY MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

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### *Abstract*

*Libraries play a crucial role in enhancing the digital inclusion of socially excluded groups in society by providing access to technology and offering resources, educational programs, and digital literacy programs. They are creating a friendly atmosphere that enables people to bridge the digital divide, and utilizing technology for their socio-economic well-being. Libraries are promoting digital inclusion among marginalized communities, providing not only access to digital tools but also serving as educational resources, promoting skill development, and reducing the distance in access to technology and knowledge. Libraries need to address several challenges, such as collaboration, digital literacy, outreach initiatives, and technological access, to support digital inclusion in socially excluded groups. For people who might have difficulty accessing traditional schooling, libraries are facilitating lifelong learning opportunities by giving them access to e-learning materials and online learning environments. Many libraries are embracing online resources and virtual activities as part of their commitment to digital inclusion, that extends beyond physical spaces. Online workshops, digital collections, and virtual library services make it possible for anyone to use library resources without geographical constraints. Libraries emerge as key agents in strengthening socially marginalized communities, contributing significantly to digital inclusion, and empowering individuals to thrive in the digital age.*

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**Keywords:** *digital inclusion, digital literacy, outreach programs, library services.*

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### **Introduction:**

Libraries are essential as the main centers of learning and information sharing in local communities. They act as archives for knowledge created both locally and collectively, encouraging innovation and sharing. Libraries are key players in closing the digital gap, as evidenced by several studies. Libraries are providing information resources for social and digital inclusion in a connected society. They give those who might be socially excluded the chance to connect across generations, engage in social interactions, and communicate effectively. As a major contributor to improving digital and social inclusion, their responsibility also includes offering inclusion services to all excluded groups. The general well-being of society is enhanced by these institutions since they function as service providers that impact social inclusion.

### **What is digital inclusion?**

Accessibility of digital technologies, skills, and communication to individuals and communities. Digital inclusion is about ensuring people have the digital access they need (suitable device, sufficient

data connectivity) and the digital skills, confidence, understanding, and motivation to use the internet safely. Digital inclusion ensures that all individuals,

1 regardless of socio-economic status, have access to and use of information and communication technologies. Digital inclusion is important to reduce social disparities by fostering equal opportunities in education, employment, and community involvement.

The role of libraries:

Libraries serve as repositories of knowledge in various communities to provide the right information to the right person at the right time. Libraries have been providing physical resources, but now they are electronic resources through various online databases. The Government of India has taken initiatives to disseminate information through databases such as the National Digital Library, National Information Open Educational Resources, etc. Today, libraries are community-centric hubs, offering not only books but also serving as information and technology centers. Libraries actively start and lead digital inclusion projects, promoting laws and initiatives that support fair access to information and technology.

#### 1. Digital Literacy Programs:

Libraries promote digital literacy by giving users access to digital content and by helping them find and use online resources efficiently. Digital literacy refers to the ability to find, evaluate, use, and create digital information effectively and ethically. Libraries have traditionally been centers for learning and information, and in the digital age, they have an important role to play in promoting digital literacy. Technology use can create new opportunities through digital literacy skills learned in libraries. These abilities can be used as tools for economic growth. Libraries are taking the lead in organizing digital literacy programs and empowering individuals with essential digital skills. Libraries provide digital literacy programs, such as coding workshops, online safety sessions, cyber security, online educational resources, MOOCs, e-portfolios, etc. Libraries conduct digital literacy programs to help individuals, especially those from socially excluded groups, acquire essential digital skills. These programs may cover basic computer skills, online safety, and using digital tools for daily life.

Digital rights education linking the teaching of digital skills, numerous libraries have expanded their programming beyond the foundations of digital skills to include topics like media and information literacy, advanced ICT abilities, and online safety principles.

#### 2. Providing Access to Technology:

Socially marginalized communities face challenges in accessing technology, leading to a digital divide. There are various groups that are marginalized, such as women, people with disabilities, senior citizens, the visually impaired, scheduled castes, and scheduled tribes. Libraries act as technology access points, providing computers, internet access, and other resources. Libraries initiate programs to provide devices and improve internet connectivity in underserved communities. Some libraries extend their services beyond their physical locations by incorporating mobile libraries and outreach programs. Libraries often serve as community hubs that offer free access to computers, the internet, and other digital devices. This is particularly crucial for individuals who may not have personal access to these resources.

### 3. Inclusive learning spaces:

Libraries are transforming into inclusive spaces, accommodating diverse learning needs. Special reading space, book bank service for reserve category students, special IT section, 2 software for visually impaired students, learning resources for special students, help desk corner for their reference queries, AI technology, etc. Collaborations with educational institutions enhance learning opportunities for individuals. Networking with universities, corporate sectors, and government sectors libraries implement features to ensure accessibility for everyone, especially those with disabilities.

### 4. Collaboration with Community Organizations:

Libraries collaborate with local community organizations to better understand the needs of socially excluded groups. By working together, they can create targeted digital inclusion initiatives that address specific challenges faced by these communities. Libraries build trust within communities through consistent and tailored initiatives. Strategic partnerships with local organizations amplify the impact of library programs. Tailored programs based on specific community needs. Providing services that are customized to meet the needs of the community fosters relevance and confidence. Libraries interact with communities to learn about their particular needs and difficulties. Libraries enable people to access educational resources, participate in online communities, and take advantage of the digital economy by giving them access to digital tools and knowledge.

### 5. Overcoming Challenges:

Libraries face challenges in securing funding and resources for digital inclusion initiatives. Continuous training and capacity building are essential for library staff to effectively support communities. Discuss strategies for overcoming these challenges, such as seeking grants, forming partnerships, and leveraging volunteers.

Libraries are a crucial institution for promoting digital literacy in the 21st century. They provide access to resources, technology, and training, and they can help to bridge the digital divide and promote digital inclusion for all. Promoting digital inclusion in socially excluded groups through libraries involves addressing various aspects such as access to technology, digital literacy, and tailored programs. Here is some related information on how libraries contribute to increasing digital inclusion:-

#### a. Tailored Training for Specific Groups:

Libraries may design specific digital inclusion programs targeting particular demographics, such as seniors, people with disabilities, senior citizens, the visually impaired, scheduled castes, and scheduled tribes or low-income families.

#### b. E-Government Services:

Libraries often assist socially excluded individuals in accessing government services online. This includes helping them navigate government websites, complete online forms, and understand the digital processes of e-government services.

#### c. Mobile Libraries and Outreach Programs:

Some libraries extend their services beyond their physical locations by incorporating mobile libraries and outreach programs. Provide visually challenged users' mobile devices with adaptive technologies,

like screen readers and tools for magnification. These initiatives bring 3 digital resources and services directly to communities that may face barriers to accessing the main library.

d. Opportunities for Ongoing Learning:

Libraries provide chances for lifelong learning, upgradation with technology developments, and offering staff and community members continual training. Libraries act as a voice for digital inclusion, promoting the value of equitable access to technology and pursuing legislative changes.

e. Digital Inclusion Surveys and Assessments:

Libraries conduct surveys and assessments to identify the digital inclusion needs of their communities. This data-driven approach helps in developing effective and targeted strategies for promoting digital inclusion.

f. Cultural Competency Training:

Library staff may undergo cultural competency training to better understand and serve the needs of diverse and socially excluded groups. This ensures that digital inclusion programs are culturally sensitive and relevant.

g. Virtual programming and online resources:

Libraries are taking initiatives to develop a user-friendly library website with online resources, e-books, and virtual programming, hosting webinars, online book clubs, and virtual events to engage those who may not be able to visit the physical library. Utilization of social media to promote digital resources and engage with the community. Developing all-encompassing digital literacy initiatives for all age groups. They provide workshops on online research techniques, internet safety, and fundamental computer skills and help those who require individualized support with digital literacy one-on-one.

h. Language Access:

Libraries recognize the importance of providing resources and support in multiple languages. This is especially relevant for immigrant communities, ensuring that language is not a barrier to digital inclusion.

i. Public-Private Partnerships:

Libraries collaborate with private companies, NGOs, and other stakeholders to leverage resources and expertise in promoting digital inclusion. Public-private partnerships can enhance the impact of digital literacy initiatives.

j. Evaluation and continuous improvement:

Libraries regularly assess the effectiveness of their digital inclusion programs and make necessary adjustments based on feedback and evolving community needs. This approach ensures ongoing relevance and impact.

The framework outlines the libraries that systems and services are doing on digital inclusion in various areas. It attempts to assist libraries in exploring and advocating for the role that they 4 play in bridging the digital divide with other institutions. A practice note covering each of the sections delves deeper into the responsibilities.

Support offered for Digital Inclusion: e.g., training, digital assistance, and access to devices both within and outside of libraries: -

<b>Digital skills &amp; Empowerment</b>	<b>Networking of Data, connectivity, and security</b>	<b>Tools &amp; Technology</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The library offers various learning opportunities such as independent study • supported learning in groups and classes</li> <li>• training volunteers to be experts in digital access • employability support • financial inclusion, health and wellbeing</li> <li>• online safety and privacy • training library staff in core digital skills</li> <li>• support for small businesses</li> </ul>	<p>Using the free WiFi in the library</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information, assistance, or supply for home broadband and mobile data</li> <li>• The newest browser is installed on computers in libraries</li> <li>• Hardware and software that ensures security, privacy, and protection</li> </ul>	<p>Using laptops or tablets in the library</p> <p>Devices that are checked out for usage at home</p> <p>Gadgets for the home that are gifted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• outlets allowing users to charge their personal electronics</li> <li>• Security, privacy, and safeguarding procedures to ensure the safety of borrowed and gifted gadgets</li> </ul>

According to the lifelong learning system, libraries have always been learning environments, and this also applies to digital inclusion.

How to Make Libraries More Embracing and Inclusive Environments for All:

- Being inclusive and accessible: Make certain areas that are wheelchair accessible and that resources are available for people with different levels of ability. Provide a varied assortment of resources that showcase many languages, cultures, and viewpoints. Organize activities that promote inclusivity and diversity.
- Partnerships & Collaborations: To increase the audience for library programs, work together with neighborhood associations, community centers, and schools. Enhance digital inclusion programs by collaborating with tech businesses, organizations, and government agencies. Establish a support network by learning resources and knowledge with other local organizations.
- Provide time-to-time training and education for library staff on various points such as cultural competency, unconscious bias, and inclusive language
- Increase the number of books in the library to better represent the variety of the community it serves. This can involve obtaining books in several languages, showcasing authors from a variety of backgrounds, and endorsing items that showcase a range of viewpoints and experiences.
- Provide the library with physical areas that are inclusive and friendly to all patrons. • Providing conveniently accessible workstations and chairs, and ensuring that every visitor feels safe and comfortable in the library

- Create outreach plans aimed at connecting the community's underprivileged and marginalized groups. One possible way to promote library services and programming is to collaborate with local organizations or arrange outreach events.

- Ensure that all communications from the library use inclusive language that is free from gender, reserve category users, and other marginalized groups. This can include using gender-neutral pronouns, avoiding stereotypes, and using language that is respectful and inclusive.

By addressing these aspects, libraries can play a pivotal role in breaking down digital barriers and fostering digital inclusion for excluded groups in society. Libraries may become more welcoming and inclusive in the digital sphere by putting these methods into practice. They can then function as community centers that give people of all backgrounds opportunity and empowerment. These programs must be regularly evaluated and modified in response to the community's changing requirements. In the quickly changing digital landscape, libraries are forefront of digital inclusion, making sure that no one is left behind. In the era of digitalization, they serve as cornerstones for information, accessibility, and community empowerment.

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## IDENTIFYING THE NEED FOR AN INCLUSIVE SYSTEM AMONG MAINSTREAM STUDENTS

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### Abstract

*Inclusive education strives to provide learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their abilities. However, integrating students with mental disorders into mainstream classrooms poses unique challenges in identifying their needs and ensuring their well-being. This research paper focuses on the critical steps in identifying mental disorders in students within inclusive education settings. The paper acknowledges the increasing prevalence of mental disorders in children and adolescents, highlighting the need for effective identification and support within inclusive classrooms. It recognizes the difficulties faced by teachers and educators in discerning the often subtle manifestations of mental disorders, which can be easily misattributed to behavioral issues or learning difficulties. The research proposes a multifaceted approach to identifying mental disorders in inclusive education. This includes- Standardised Screening Tools: Utilising validated screening tools, alongside observational assessments and teacher-student interactions, to provide standardized and objective indicators of potential mental health concerns. Collaborative Evaluation: Fostering communication and collaboration between teachers, parents, school counselors, and mental health professionals to conduct comprehensive evaluations and confirm diagnoses. Addressing Stigma and Discrimination: The paper emphasizes the importance of addressing the stigma and discrimination associated with mental disorders within the school community. This can be achieved through awareness campaigns, promoting empathy and understanding among students and staff. The research paper concludes by highlighting the significance of early identification and effective support for students with mental disorders in inclusive education settings. By employing a comprehensive approach that combines awareness, assessment, collaboration, and tailored interventions, educators can create an inclusive environment that fosters the success and well-being of all students, regardless of their mental health challenges.*

**Keywords:** *Inclusive education, mental disorder, mainstream classrooms, stigma, empathy, training program*

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### Introduction

Mental health in adolescents is a growing concern, with studies indicating a rise in conditions like anxiety and depression. While early identification and intervention are crucial, secondary school teachers play a vital role in recognizing students who may be struggling. However, their ability to do so can be hampered by a lack of awareness or misconceptions about mental health issues.

This research aims to address this gap by investigating several key aspects in :



- Characteristics of students with potential mental health problems: Identifying common traits or behaviors exhibited by students who might be experiencing mental health issues can equip teachers for better observation.
  - Teacher awareness of mental health: Understanding the current level of awareness among secondary school teachers regarding mental health problems in adolescents is essential.
  - Teacher identification ability: Evaluating teachers' ability to identify students with potential mental health issues in a classroom setting is crucial for informing appropriate training and support.
  - Teacher misconceptions about mental health: Addressing any misconceptions held by teachers about mental health problems can significantly improve their capacity to recognize and support students.
- By exploring these objectives, this research seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of mental health issues in adolescents, particularly within the school environment. This knowledge can be used to develop targeted interventions and training programs for teachers, ultimately fostering a more supportive and inclusive learning environment for students.

**Aims and Objectives of the Study**

- To identify the need for an inclusive system among mainstream students.
- To find the level of awareness of mental health problems in adolescents in secondary school teachers.
- To study the ability of the teachers to identify children with mental health problems in the mainstream classroom
- To find misconceptions of secondary school teachers about mental health problems.

**Methodology:**

This is a descriptive research carried out through a survey method using a questionnaire. Sample Secondary school teachers of Mumbai region viz. Government-aided schools and private schools.

Sample Size : 47

Government-aided schools - 20

Private schools. - 27

**Tool:****Need analysis questionnaire:**

A need analysis questionnaire was prepared by the researcher. The tool included close-ended as well as open-ended questions. The tool is sent separately.

**Results:**

Multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions were analysed for recurring themes. The findings are summarised as under:

**Key Points:**

- ❖ Teachers' understanding of "Mental Health Problems" is unclear. They listed anxiety, hyperactivity, and social isolation as examples, but also held some misconceptions.
- ❖ While all teachers agree supporting students' mental health is their job, 71% find it stressful and confusing.
- ❖ All teachers worry about the impact of mental health on student performance.
- ❖ While confident in identifying issues, all teachers want training on mental health to reduce stress.

❖ Most believe teachers share responsibility with counsellors, psychiatrists, and parents, but score teachers' responsibility highest.

❖ Many teachers mistakenly link intellectual struggles with mental health problems. ❖ Despite agreeing mental health support is their duty, some teachers see it as burdensome.

❖ Teachers struggle to determine whether good mental health is easily achievable. ❖ All teachers perceive difficulties like depression and self-harm as signs of weakness in youth.

Major categories of findings:

❖ The gap in understanding: Teachers lack clarity on the definition of "mental health problems," often associating it with specific behaviors like anxiety, hyperactivity, or social isolation. Misconceptions exist, such as equating learning difficulties with mental disorders.

❖ Conflicting pressures: While teachers acknowledge their role in supporting students' mental health (88.9% agreement), they also find it stressful to manage these additional responsibilities alongside regular duties.

5. Supporting students' mental health is a part of my job  
23 responses

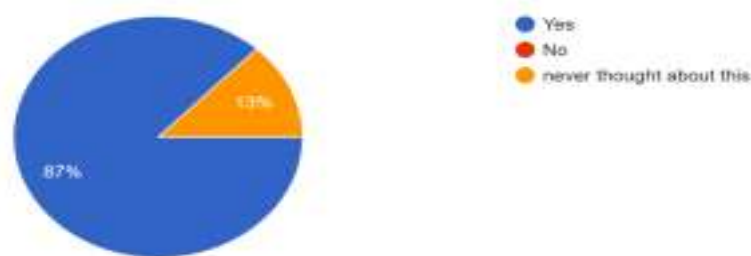


Fig. 1.1 : Conflicting pressure faced by teacher

Q. It is stressful for me to cater to students' mental health issues in addition to my other school duties.

13. Please tick the mental health problems which you have observed in your students in the list given below:

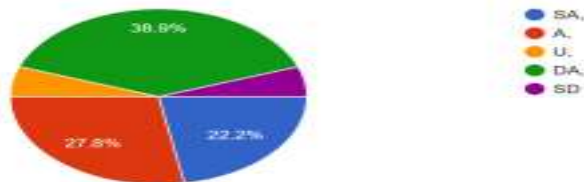
20 responses



9. It is stressful for me to cater to students mental health issues in addition to my other school duties.

18 responses

SA, A, U, DA, SD



SA, A, U, DA, SD Fig. 1.2 : Response of Conflicting pressure faced by teacher

50% of the teachers find it stressful to manage these additional responsibilities alongside regular duties.

❖ Concern: Uncertainty surrounds the ease of achieving good mental health (40% undecided), but all teachers express worry about its impact on student performance.

According to most of the teachers (11.1 % strongly agree, 38.9% agree), students with mental health issues should be sent to special schools. Few of the teachers are not able to decide (11.1% undecided) when asked about the best option for students with mental health problems.

12. Best option for students with mental health problems is to go to a special school.

18 responses

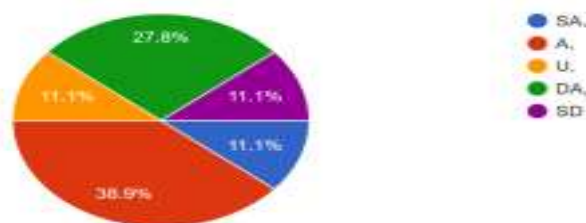


Fig. 1.3 : Response by teachers on concern towards mental health problems of students

❖ Perceived weakness: Teachers unanimously view hyperactivities, depression, mood swings, aggressiveness, anxiety, and substance abuse as signs of weakness in adolescents

11. Training in identification and support of mental health problems in students would help me in my teaching.

20 responses

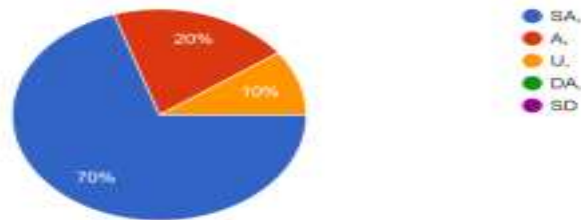


Fig. 1.4 : Response by teachers on perceived weakness of students

❖ Training needs: Despite most of the teachers feeling confident in identifying mental health issues (50% strongly agree, 30% agree), a few teachers are undecided related to the symptoms and identification (15% undecided)

10. I am confident that I can identify a student with mental health disorder in my class.

20 responses

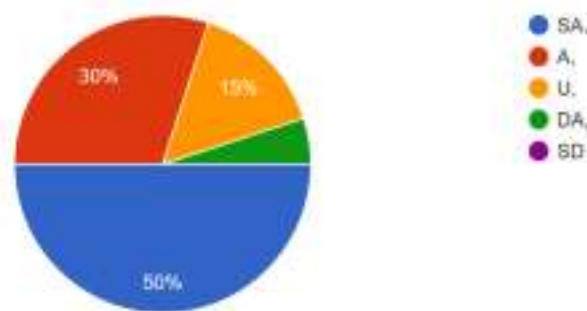


Fig. 1.5 : Response by teachers having confidence in identifying mental issues

❖ Mostly all teachers desire training in this area (70% strongly agree, 20% agree), believing it would reduce their stress and help them to achieve an effective teaching-learning process.

Fig. 1.6 : Response by teachers who desire training

All teachers are eager for training on early identification of adolescent mental health issues. They prefer training with a focus on identification, intervention procedures, supportive counseling, non-harmful approaches, school regulations, and understanding the causes, effects, and concepts of adolescent mental health problems.

❖ Shared responsibility: A strong majority (85.7%) believe teachers share responsibility for students' mental health with counselors, psychiatrists, and parents.

Overall:

❖ The research highlights a need for comprehensive mental health training for teachers. They face diverse student needs and struggle with unclear expectations and potential biases. Training can equip them to better support students while reducing their stress and anxiety.

Key takeaways:

- ❖ Knowledge Gap: Teachers need a deeper understanding of mental health's diverse presentations.
- ❖ Workload vs. Support: While recognizing the importance of student mental health, managing it alongside existing workloads poses a challenge for teachers.
- ❖ Stigma Reduction: Addressing the stigma surrounding mental health in youth is crucial.
- ❖ Shared Responsibility: Ensuring student mental well-being requires a collaborative effort from teachers, counselors, psychiatrists, and parents.
- ❖ Teacher Support Systems: Support systems are essential for teachers navigating student mental health needs.
- ❖ Training in Identification and Support: Training on identifying and supporting students with mental health concerns is a universal desire.
- ❖ Collaboration is Key: Effective collaboration among teachers, counselors, psychiatrists, and parents is vital for providing holistic support.

Actions for Improvement.

- Early identification of mental health disorders in adolescents
- Strategies for identifying and supporting students (combines identification strategies and appropriate support procedures)
- Counseling skills and non-harmful interventions (combines counseling skills and non-harmful interventions)
- Board regulations related to student mental health (focuses on Board regulations aspect)
- Understanding the underlying causes and effects of mental health problems in adolescents (focuses on underlying causes and effects)

Discussion:

The report highlights a gap between teachers' awareness of mental health issues and their ability to identify and support students experiencing them. Training, awareness building, and stigma reduction are crucial for creating a school environment that acknowledges and addresses the diverse mental health needs of its students.

- ❖ There's a gap between teacher perception and student reality regarding mental health symptoms and prevalence.
- ❖ Stigma and lack of knowledge hinder effective support for students.
- ❖ Teachers are eager to learn and improve their skills in identifying and addressing mental health concerns.
- ❖ The data highlights a discrepancy between teacher observations and student self-reports, suggesting the need for improved identification methods.
- ❖ Addressing stigma and providing effective training is crucial for creating a supportive environment for students with mental health issues.

Study findings indicate that teachers are aware of students with mental health problems, but lack clarity about conceptual understanding and identification. It is also a source of stress for teachers to be unable to

identify and support these students due to misconceptions. Though teachers accept responsibility for the mental health of their students and have expressed a desire to receive training. Despite this, they have indicated that catering to these students on top of their normal duties would be stressful. Due to a lack of knowledge and skills on the part of their school teachers, students suffering from mental health disorders may not be identified. The attitudes about mental health problems in adolescence as indicated in the survey ("it's a weakness", "students from 'good families' don't have mental health problems", etc.) could potentially be the barriers in this early identification. A teacher is a highly trained professional who is sensible, sensitive, and selfless by the nature of their profession. They have more opportunities to observe and understand these youngsters than many (at times even more than parents). Due to limited training opportunities in mental health issues, even highly skilled and well-meaning professionals may miss early opportunities to intervene and nip mental health problems in the bud. This underlines the need for teacher training to address these issues.

**Conclusion:** The results of this study indicate that though teachers are aware of the crucial role that they play in the identification of mental health problems, they presently lack the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to identify and support these students. Identifying and supporting individuals with mental disorders within inclusive systems requires a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced. By employing a multi-pronged approach that fosters mental health literacy, utilises culturally competent practices, promotes early intervention, and personalised care, and engages communities, inclusive systems can create welcoming environments where individuals with mental disorders can thrive. Building collaborative support structures that prioritize inclusivity and address the diverse needs of individuals is crucial for achieving true mental health equity within all systems.

**Future Research:** Further research exploring the effectiveness of various support strategies in different contexts, the development of culturally tailored assessment tools, and the impact of stigma reduction interventions could provide valuable insights for building more inclusive and supportive environments for individuals with mental disorders in mainstream schools.

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## FOSTERING INCLUSIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS: A COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION OF CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGIES

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### Abstract

*This paper delves into the critical nexus of inclusive school environments, curriculum design, and pedagogical approaches, aiming to unravel the multifaceted dynamics that contribute to the cultivation of a truly inclusive educational landscape. This study addresses interplay between curriculum content and design, shedding light on how inclusive practices can be embedded in educational materials to address the unique learning needs of diverse student populations. The analysis of curriculum design revealed varying degrees of inclusivity. While various curriculum aspects actively incorporated diverse perspectives and learning styles, others exhibited a need for improvement. The study highlighted the efficacy of certain pedagogical approaches such as cooperative learning and differentiated instruction in fostering engagement and collaboration among students of diverse abilities. The results indicated a generally positive perception of inclusive practices among stakeholders. However, some identified barriers, such as limited resources and insufficient training that hinder the implementation of inclusive education. As societies strive for greater equity and social justice, this study provides a timely and comprehensive examination of the pathways towards realizing inclusive education on a global scale.*

**Keywords:** Inclusive education, School environment, Curriculum design, Pedagogical approaches, Educational strategies.

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### Introduction:

In contemporary educational discourse, the pursuit of inclusive practices has emerged as a cornerstone in fostering equitable and enriching learning environments. The concept of inclusivity transcends traditional educational paradigms, encapsulating a holistic approach that ensures every student, regardless of background, abilities, or characteristics, has the opportunity to thrive within the educational system. This research delves into the critical nexus of inclusive school environments, curriculum design, and pedagogical approaches, seeking to unravel the multifaceted dynamics that contribute to the cultivation of a truly inclusive educational landscape.

Inclusive school environments strive to go beyond mere integration, aiming to create spaces where diversity is not only acknowledged but celebrated. This involves recognizing and addressing the diverse needs of students, including those with varying abilities, cultural backgrounds, and learning styles. The overarching goal is to create an educational setting that fosters a sense of belonging for all, where every student can access quality education tailored to their individual requirements.



Central to the realization of inclusive education is the careful consideration of curriculum design. Curriculum serves as the backbone of the educational experience, shaping the content and structure of learning materials. This study addresses the interplay between curriculum content and design, shedding light on the ways in which inclusive practices can be embedded in educational materials to address the unique learning needs of diverse student populations. By scrutinizing the inclusivity of curriculum elements, educators and policymakers can identify areas for improvement and refine materials to ensure a comprehensive and representative learning experience.

Complementary to curriculum design, pedagogical approaches play a pivotal role in shaping the daily interactions within the classroom. The choice of instructional methods can significantly impact the engagement, participation, and collaborative learning experiences of students. This research explores the efficacy of various pedagogical approaches, such as cooperative learning and differentiated instruction, in fostering inclusivity. Understanding how these approaches can be leveraged to accommodate diverse learning styles and abilities is crucial for creating a supportive and empowering learning environment.

As societies worldwide strive for greater equity and social justice, the importance of inclusive education cannot be overstated. By unraveling the complexities of inclusive school environments, curriculum design, and pedagogical approaches, this research aims to offer actionable insights that can guide educators, policymakers, and stakeholders in fostering educational landscapes that truly embrace diversity and provide equal opportunities for all learners.

The interplay between curriculum content and design constitutes a pivotal aspect of creating an inclusive educational environment, as it directly influences the learning experiences of students with diverse needs and backgrounds. In this context, the term "inclusive practices" refers to intentional strategies and considerations embedded in curriculum development to ensure that educational materials which cater to the unique learning needs of all students.

### **Inclusive Aspects of Curriculum Content:**

#### **1. Diverse Perspectives in Curriculum Content:**

Inclusive curriculum content involves the integration of diverse perspectives, cultures, and experiences. Recognizing the richness of human diversity, educational materials should reflect a variety of voices, backgrounds, and contributions. This not only enhances the cultural relevance of the curriculum but also allows students to see themselves represented, fostering a sense of belonging and engagement.

#### **2. Addressing Multiple Learning Styles:**

Students learn in different ways, and an inclusive curriculum takes this into account by incorporating varied teaching and learning styles. Designing materials that cater to visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and other learning modalities ensures that every student can access and process information effectively. This approach promotes a more comprehensive understanding of content and encourages active participation.

#### **3. Flexible and Adaptable Learning Resources:**

Recognizing the diverse needs of students, an inclusive curriculum provides flexibility and adaptability in learning resources. This includes offering materials at different proficiency levels, providing supplementary resources for additional support, and utilizing technology to accommodate various

learning preferences. Such flexibility allows educators to tailor their approach to individual students, ensuring that each learner receives the necessary support.

#### **4. Integration of Universal Design for Learning (UDL):**

The principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) guide the development of inclusive curriculum. UDL emphasizes providing multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression. By incorporating these principles, curriculum designers ensure that students with diverse abilities and learning styles have equal opportunities to access, participate in, and demonstrate their understanding of the content.

#### **5. Incorporating Real-World Relevance:**

Making the curriculum relevant to students' real-world experiences enhances engagement and inclusivity. Educational materials should connect classroom learning to practical applications, community contexts, and contemporary issues. This approach not only makes learning more meaningful but also allows students to see the applicability of their education to their own lives and the world around them.

#### **6. Continuous Assessment and Feedback Mechanisms:**

An inclusive curriculum involves ongoing assessment and feedback mechanisms that consider the diverse ways in which students demonstrate their understanding. This may include varied assessment formats, alternative methods of evaluation, and regular feedback to support continuous improvement. Such practices ensure that assessment aligns with diverse learning styles and abilities.

In conclusion, embedding inclusive practices in educational materials requires a thoughtful and intentional approach to the interplay between curriculum content and design. By recognizing and addressing the unique learning needs of diverse student populations, educators can create a learning environment that celebrates diversity, fosters inclusion, and empowers all students to succeed.

#### **Varying Degrees of Inclusivity in Curriculum Design: A Critical Analysis**

Curriculum design stands as a cornerstone in the development of an inclusive educational environment. This analysis delves into the nuanced landscape of curriculum inclusivity, unveiling diverse facets where intentional efforts to incorporate varied perspectives and learning styles reveal varying degrees of success.

#### **Inclusive Aspects of Curriculum Design:**

##### **1. Diversity of Perspectives:**

Some curriculum components demonstrated a commendable commitment to inclusivity by actively integrating diverse perspectives. These materials embraced a wide array of cultural, historical, and social viewpoints, enriching the learning experience for students from various backgrounds.

##### **2. Accommodation of Learning Styles:**

Certain segments of the curriculum were designed with a keen awareness of diverse learning styles. Visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners found tailored content that facilitated comprehension and engagement. This adaptive approach recognized the individualized nature of learning preferences.

##### **3. Multimodal Learning Resources:**

Inclusive curriculum design incorporated multimodal learning resources, recognizing that students engage with content through different modalities. This involved the use of multimedia, interactive materials, and real-world applications, providing a dynamic and accessible learning experience.

**Areas for Improvement:****1. Under representation of Perspectives:**

The analysis revealed areas where certain perspectives remained under represented or omitted. Efforts are needed to identify and rectify these gaps, ensuring that the curriculum reflects the full spectrum of human experience, fostering a more inclusive educational environment.

**2. Limited Accessibility Features:**

Some curriculum elements lacked sufficient accessibility features, potentially marginalizing students with specific learning needs. Improvements in the incorporation of universal design principles are essential to guarantee equitable access for all learners.

**3. Homogeneity in Assessment Methods:**

Assessment methods in certain curriculum segments exhibited a degree of homogeneity, potentially disadvantaging students with diverse learning styles. A more comprehensive approach to assessment, accommodating various modes of expression and understanding, is imperative for a truly inclusive educational experience.

**Implications for Future Development:**

The identification of varying degrees of inclusivity in curriculum design underscores the need for ongoing reflection and refinement. It is imperative to build upon successful inclusive practices while addressing the identified shortcomings. Collaborative efforts among educators, curriculum developers, and stakeholders are crucial to ensure that inclusivity becomes a guiding principle in the continuous evolution of educational materials.

The analysis of curriculum design reveals a landscape marked by both commendable inclusive efforts and areas requiring improvement. As we navigate the complex terrain of inclusive education, this critical examination serves as a catalyst for informed enhancements. By recognizing the diverse needs of students and refining curriculum design accordingly, we pave the way for a more inclusive educational landscape that celebrates diversity and empowers every learner.

**Pedagogical Approaches: Fostering Engagement and Collaboration**

This study explores the dynamic interplay between pedagogical approaches, stakeholder perceptions, and the challenges impeding the full realization of inclusive education. Specifically, it sheds light on the efficacy of cooperative learning and differentiated instruction in fostering engagement and collaboration among students with diverse abilities, while also addressing identified barriers to implementation.

**1. Cooperative Learning:**

The study affirms the efficacy of cooperative learning in creating an inclusive classroom environment. By encouraging collaboration and shared learning experiences, this pedagogical approach enhances engagement among students with diverse abilities. The cooperative structure not only supports academic achievement but also nurtures social interactions and mutual support.

**2. Differentiated Instruction:**

Differentiated instruction emerges as a key driver in addressing the unique learning needs of diverse students. The study showcases its effectiveness in adapting teaching methods, content, and assessment to

accommodate varied abilities, ensuring that each student can access and participate meaningfully in the learning process.

### **Stakeholder Perceptions: Embracing Inclusive Practices**

#### **1. Positive Stakeholder Perception:**

Overall, stakeholders exhibited a positive perception of inclusive practices within the educational landscape. Educators, students, and parents acknowledged the value of fostering an inclusive environment, recognizing its positive impact on student learning outcomes and the overall school community.

#### **2. Recognition of Inclusive Benefits:**

Stakeholders recognized the benefits of inclusive education, emphasizing its role in promoting diversity, equity, and social cohesion. The study findings suggest that a collective understanding of the positive outcomes of inclusive practices contributes to their acceptance and advocacy among various stakeholders.

### **Challenges and Opportunities:**

#### **1. Limited Resources:**

The study identifies limited resources as a significant barrier to the effective implementation of inclusive education. Insufficient funding, inadequate materials, and a lack of specialized support services create challenges in providing the necessary accommodations for students with diverse needs.

#### **2. Insufficient Training:**

Stakeholders highlighted a critical need for more comprehensive and ongoing training in inclusive education. Insufficient preparation and professional development opportunities hinder educators' ability to effectively implement inclusive practices, potentially limiting the impact of pedagogical approaches.

**3. Barriers to Implementation:** The study identified significant barriers, such as limited resources and insufficient training that hinder the full implementation of inclusive education. Addressing these challenges requires a systemic approach, involving increased investment in resources, targeted professional development, and policy frameworks that prioritize inclusivity.

**4. Opportunities for Collaboration:** Collaboration emerges as a key theme throughout the study. Effective collaboration among educators, administrators, parents, and policymakers is essential in navigating the complexities of inclusive education. By fostering a collective commitment to inclusivity, schools can create environments that nurture the holistic development of every student.

### **Implications for Inclusive Education Advocacy:**

The positive outcomes associated with cooperative learning and differentiated instruction underscore the importance of prioritizing these pedagogical approaches in educational policies and practices. Additionally, addressing barriers such as limited resources and insufficient training requires a concerted effort from policymakers, educators, and the broader community.

As inclusive education emerges as a cornerstone for equitable learning environments, understanding the efficacy of pedagogical approaches and acknowledging implementation challenges becomes paramount. This study contributes valuable insights to the ongoing dialogue, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts to overcome barriers and champion inclusive practices that benefit students of diverse abilities.

**Findings:****1. Curriculum Integration:**

- The analysis of curriculum materials revealed varying degrees of inclusivity. While some materials actively incorporated diverse perspectives and learning styles, others exhibited a need for improvement.
- Recommendations include the development of guidelines for curriculum designers to enhance the integration of inclusive practices.

**2. Pedagogical Models:**

- Findings from observational studies highlighted the efficacy of certain pedagogical models, such as cooperative learning and differentiated instruction, in fostering engagement and collaboration among students of diverse abilities.
- Suggestions for teacher training programs were proposed to equip educators with the skills necessary for implementing inclusive pedagogies.

**3. Perceptions of Stakeholders:**

- Survey results indicated a generally positive perception of inclusive practices among stakeholders. However, some identified barriers, such as limited resources and insufficient training that hinder the implementation of inclusive education.
- The study recommends targeted interventions to address these barriers and enhance the overall inclusivity of school environments.

**4. Recommendations:**

- Evidence-based recommendations were formulated for policymakers, educators, and curriculum developers to improve the inclusivity of school environments. These include curriculum revisions, professional development opportunities, and the establishment of support mechanisms for educators.

**Implications for Future Action:****1. Curricular Refinement:**

The study calls for ongoing refinement of curricula to ensure that diverse perspectives are authentically represented. Incorporating universal design principles, emphasizing cultural relevance, and providing flexibility in learning resources are crucial steps toward creating a curriculum that genuinely meets the needs of all learners.

**2. Pedagogical Embrace:**

Encouraging the widespread adoption of pedagogical approaches like cooperative learning and differentiated instruction is essential. Educators should be supported with professional development opportunities that enhance their ability to implement these strategies effectively, fostering an inclusive and dynamic learning environment.

**3. Advocacy and Resource Allocation:**

To overcome challenges related to limited resources, there is a need for advocacy and strategic resource allocation. Policymakers must prioritize inclusive education in budgetary decisions, ensuring that schools have the necessary resources to implement and sustain inclusive practices.

**Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the journey towards fostering inclusive school environments is multifaceted, requiring a commitment to continuous improvement and collaboration. By acknowledging the interplay between curriculum design, pedagogical approaches, and stakeholder perceptions, we pave the way for educational landscapes that embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion. The insights from this study serve as a foundation for future endeavors, inviting all stakeholders to actively contribute to the ongoing evolution of inclusive education and the creation of schools where every learner is empowered to thrive.

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## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND THE NEED OF EMOTIONAL MATURITY AMONG ADOLESCENTS: REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE

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### Abstract

According to Plato, all learning has an emotional foundation. But up until about 50 years ago, people believed that emotions hampered learning. Research on the connection between emotions and intelligence started in the 1970s and 1980s. Emotional intelligence became a major topic in educational study in the 1990s and is still relevant today. emotional maturity (EM) operates beyond emotional intelligence (EI). Although it is a vital element of EM, emotional intelligence is not sufficient on its own. Knowledge and understanding are the foundation of EI, and EM is the application of these two basis components. The primary goal of the present investigative study is to examine the existing literature on the variable 'emotional maturity' of Adolescent students and its relation with various factors for the purpose of determining the need of developing 'Emotional Intelligence' (EI) and 'Emotional Maturity' (EM). The primary sources sourced through Shodhganga and other reliable journal available either online or in various libraries were examined for the purpose of review. Major areas of existing literature reviewed are: (a) impact of gender, demography and family on EM (b) impact of parental involvement on EM, (c), impact of EM Attitude, Self-concept, personality development and Achievement Motivation, and (d) EM and behavioural, social and mental health problem. Findings and interpretations of major studies in the mentioned areas are included with a proposed research recommendation in the final section of the paper. The focus of the agenda is to argue that the importance of EM in inclusive education should be established through investigation and steps should be taken to develop EI and EM.

**Keywords:** Emotions, Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Maturity, Adolescents, Inclusive Education

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### 1. Introduction

Emotions are affective experiences that are linked to an individual's mental, social, and psychological states and are manifested in their behaviour. A person's needs, interests, and sentiments are closely linked to their emotions. According to Daniel Goleman, "Emotional intelligence is a different way of being smart: how you manage yourself and your relationships. To find out whether someone has intellectual brilliance, you test their IQ." The way someone handles emotional tasks shows how he or she is emotionally intelligent. In other words, emotional intelligence helps integrate our cognitive judgment and emotion in decision making process. Since EI is all about understanding of emotions, it is the theoretical part of emotions. The application of EI theory lies in the display of Emotional Maturity. How well someone responds to circumstances, manages their emotions, and interacts with others in a sophisticated way is known as emotional maturity. Most people grow to become adults but they are emotionally



‘immature’ because they fail to handle situation that evokes unpleasant emotions. Emotional Maturity is not only a reliable indicator of personality attributes, but it also plays a pivotal role in regulating the advancement of personal growth.

In short, emotionally mature person acquires the essential life skills needed for survival and fulfilment in 21st century.

Adolescence is the phase of life when many changes in biology, cognition, social and emotional development, morality, and other domains take place during this time. The most vital consideration in the formation of a fully developed matured personality is the emotional dimension of maturity. It prepares the person to have an autonomous life as an adult.

According to UNICEF, inclusive education is “an education system that includes all students, and welcomes and supports them to learn, whoever they are and whatever their abilities or requirements. This means making sure that teaching and the curriculum, school buildings, classrooms, play areas, transport and toilets are appropriate for all children at all levels. Inclusive education means all children learn together in the same schools.”

This research paper highlights studies conducted by various academics on a variety of topics related to emotional maturity and adolescence, including delinquency, emotional intelligence, behavioural issues, family structure, parental support and gender and demography.

## **2. Objectives of the Review**

The objective of the review of existing literature in the area of Emotional Maturity of adolescents is to investigate the existing literature on emotional maturity of Adolescent students and its relation with various factors for the purpose of determining the need of developing ‘Emotional Intelligence’ (EI) and ‘Emotional Maturity’ (EM).

## **3. The Sources of Literature**

According to Cronin et al. (2008), establishing the type of source is a crucial question to ask when conducting a literature search to decide whether a published paper should be incorporated in the review. There are four main categories of sources: (a) Primary source, (b) Secondary source, (c) Conceptual source, and (d) Anecdotal source. Primary sources were relied upon for the review of related literature for the variable ‘emotional maturity’.

## **3. Review of Literature**

The areas of the reviewed literature fall into the following broad categories:

1. Emotional maturity and gender, locality and family type of adolescents
2. Impact of Parental Involvement on ‘emotional maturity’ of adolescents
3. Emotional maturity and Various Personality Traits
4. Emotional maturity and behavioural, social and mental health issues among adolescents

## **4. Studies on Emotional Maturity with respect to Gender, Locality and Family Types**

### **4.1. “A Study on Emotional Maturity in an Adolescent Group Studying at a Higher Secondary School in Western India”**

By Upadhyay H.M, Pandya C., Chaudhary J., Patel J., Singh U.S. and Kapadia J. (2020)

#### **Objective**

To measure the EM of adolescents (14 to 17 years)



Statistical Method	Mean	SD	t-value
Boys	117.99	8.55	1.26
Girls	115.95	14.24	
Results and Findings	122 (70.5%) out of 173 adolescents had an average degree of ‘emotional maturity’, 37 (21.3%) adolescents had a higher than average level, 9 adolescents (5.2%) had a below average level, and the remaining 5 adolescents (2.9%) had been at the extreme levels of emotional maturity. The findings did not indicate any significant variance in the ‘emotional maturity’ between girls and boys.		

#### 4.2. "Emotional Maturity Among Adolescents and Its Importance"

By Mridula C. Jobson (2020)

<b>Main Objectives</b>	To assess EM level and compare the areas of EM To measure EM of adolescents based on family types To assess EM of adolescents based on their age To assess EM of adolescents based on the gender		
<b>Statistical Method</b>	Family Type (nuclear//joint)	p value –	p=0.55
	Siblings (yes/no)	p-value –	p=0.723
	Age (17/18)	p-value –	p=0.24
	Gender (male/female)	p-value –	p=0.425
<b>Results</b>	74% of adolescents had been found to be having extremely immature level and 16% had been moderately immature and only 10% were moderately mature when it came to EM. No significant association was found between EM and factors such as age, gender, type of family and sibling.		

**Note:** Similar results were found by Shanet Ann Jose, Inchara Chamaiah Swamy (2022) which was in contrast with the study carried by Dr. Marami Goswami, Piyali Roy in 2018 showing a significant difference in EM in terms of gender. The other variables (Locality and Levels of EM) indicated the similar results.

### 5. Studies on Emotional Maturity with respect to Parental Involvement and Academic Achievement

#### 5.1. "Emotional Maturity among Adolescents in Relation to Parental Involvement"

By Dr. Bhupinder Singh Bagh

<b>Main Objectives</b>	To investigate the relationship concerning the parental involvement of adolescents and their EM
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**Statistical Method**

	Mean	Value of 'r'
Emotional Maturity	132.8	-0.036
Parental Involvement	85.8	

**Results**

Based on the t-value, it had been found that significant relationship did not exist between the EM of adolescents and the parental involvement in their lives.

## 5.2. “Academic Achievement and Emotional Maturity among Secondary School Students of Working and Nonworking Mothers in Burdwan District”

By Mriganka Narayan Das and Debabrata Debnath

**Main Objectives**

To discover and compare the EM in the adolescents of ‘non-working’ and ‘working’ mothers

To discover relationship between EM and academic achievement among adolescents of ‘working’ mothers

To discover the relationship between EM and academic achievement among adolescents of ‘non-working’ mothers

**Statistical Method**

Percentage Level of EM	Extremely Emotionally Mature	Moderately Emotionally Mature	Emotionally Immature	Extremely Emotionally Immature
Emotional Maturity of Adolescents of Working Mothers	58	12	4	26
Emotional Maturity of Adolescents of Non-working Mothers	18	2	8	72

**Results and Findings**

The results showed that the adolescents of ‘working’ mothers were extremely emotionally mature than those of ‘non-working’ mothers.

The impact of a mother's employment on her children has long been a topic of discussion. The outcomes of past research using various variables have been inconsistent. An examination of these

investigations made clear that the findings were frequently contradictory and equivocal. However, considering the differences in the norms, traditions, and lifestyles that exist throughout various locations, this was not surprising.

## **6. Studies on Emotional Maturity with respect to Attitude, Self-concept and Achievement Motivation**

### **6.1. “Emotional Maturity and Attitude Among Higher Secondary Students”**

By Dr. M. Karuppasamy

<b>Main Objective</b>	To discover the relationship between EM and their attitude towards schooling among adolescents
<b>Statistical Method</b>	Mean, SD, ‘t’ test, Pearson’s Correlation
<b>Results</b>	<p>The following lists the main findings from the current investigation:</p> <p>It is discovered that there is a lack of emotional maturity among higher secondary students.</p> <p>A positive attitude on education is observed. It has also been shown that there is no correlation between EM of adolescents and their attitude towards education.</p> <p>Urban school students exhibit a higher degree of emotional maturity.</p> <p>Pupils attending coeducational institutions exhibit a greater degree of emotional development.</p> <p>Generally speaking, the 10 personal possessions examined in this investigation do not significantly alter the attitude that higher secondary students have towards education.</p>

### **6.2. “Effect of Emotional Maturity on Self- Concept of Adolescents – A Study”**

By Dr. Smriti Kiran Saimons, Mr. Atindra Nath Dutta and Mr. Suwendu Dey

<b>Main Objective</b>	To examine the effect of EM on low and high Self-concept among adolescents
<b>Statistical Method</b>	Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), correlation, t- test, ANOVA

Variable	Mean	$\Sigma x^2$ and $\Sigma y^2$	$\Sigma xy$	Coefficient of Correlation (r) value
Emotional Maturity	93.81	144191.395	-3119.38	-0.0192
Self-concept	98.58	182358.72		

Source	Sum Squares (SS)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean Squares (MS)	F	F-Ratio
Rows (r) Emotional Maturity	14824.26	1	14824.26	19.07	F (1,396)= 0.05 $\Rightarrow$ 3.86 0.01 $\Rightarrow$ 6.69
Columns(c) Self- Concept (High & Low)	2280.06	1	2280.06	2.93	F (1,396)= 0.05 $\Rightarrow$ 3.86 0.01 $\Rightarrow$ 6.69
r x c	3867.31	1	3867.31	4.97	F (1,396)= 0.05 $\Rightarrow$ 3.86 0.01 $\Rightarrow$ 6.69
Error	307858.55	396	777.42		
Total	328830.18	399			

Emotional Maturity (Boys/Girls)      t- value –  
7.53

Self-concept (Boys/Girls)              t-value –  
0.606

## Results

The results indicated that EM had no significant effect on the Self-concept of adolescents, however, significance was found between main and interactional effect of EM and high and low Self-concept among adolescents.

In order to use emotions appropriately, it is imperative that adolescents have a healthy emotional development. The mind, however, must comprehend, educate, train, and regulate our emotions! Beyond intellect, emotional maturity is a higher condition of consciousness that is directed by the feelings, senses, intuition, and the heart. Adolescents' emotional

well-being and personality can be enhanced by cultivating their EM and self-concept.

### 6.3. “Emotional Maturity and Achievement Motivation Among Adolescents of Working Mothers in Selected Secondary Schools, Tirupati”

By B. E. Sukanya, Dr. M. Bhagya Lakshmi, Dr. S. Hema Latha

#### Main Objective

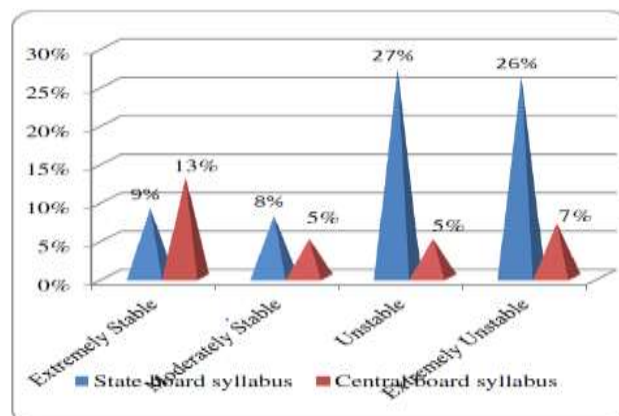
To examine the correlation between achievement motivation and EM amongst adolescents of ‘working’ mothers

#### Statistical Method

Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), Chi square, Pearson correlation

Variable	Mean	SD	Coefficient of Correlation (r) value
Emotional Maturity	99.33	26.4583	-0.525
Achievement Motivation	139.89	20.9202	

The graph below indicates the level of Emotional Maturity based on the school types:



#### Results

The investigation's findings demonstrated that the adolescents' achievement motivation was mediocre and their emotional maturity was low. This study highlights the need for strong personality development, the capability to regulate one's own emotions, and an inclination to aim for academic accomplishment in order to establish stable emotional maturity and high achievement motivation.

In addition to helping adolescents foster academic success, extracurricular activity participation, mental health, and the capacity to forge healthy peer relationships, health professionals play a critical role in reducing psycho-somatic troubles like anxiety, frustrations, pressures, and emotional let-downs in day-to-day living. They also help adolescents develop lasting emotional maturity (EM) and high-level of achievement motivation.

#### 6.4. “Relationship between Emotional Maturity and Personality traits among Adolescents”

By Swati Patrani, Pranjali Bhakre

**Main Objective** To correlate personality traits and emotional maturity of adolescents

**Statistical Method** Mean, Correlation

The table below shows the statistical analysis of data:

Personality Traits	Co-relation Value Emotional Maturity
A (warmth)	0.05
B (Reasoning)	-0.11*
C (Emotional stability)	-0.16**
E (Dominance)	0.11*
F (Liveliness)	0.001
G (rule-consciousness)	-0.03
H (social boldness)	-0.19
I (Sensitivity)	0.002
L (Vigilance)	-0.05
M (Abstractedness)	0.04
N (Privateness)	0.16**
O (Apprehension)	0.08
Q1 (Openness to change)	-0.07
Q2 (Self-reliance)	-0.11*
Q3 (Perfectionism)	-0.14*
Q4 (Tension)	-0.03

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level \* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

#### Results

Though they scored higher on warmth, dominance, and openness to change than other personality qualities, adolescents had average scores on a variety of personality traits. In contrast, they did poorly on the attributes of liveliness and thinking. Extreme emotional instability was observed in the majority of the respondents. Emotional maturity was accompanied by a growth in reasoning, emotional stability, self-reliance, and perfectionism.

Developing their Emotional management can be helpful in the better personality development of adolescents.

## 7. Studies on Emotional maturity and behavioural, social and mental health issues among adolescents

### 7.1 “Delinquency Proneness among Adolescents in Relation to Emotional Maturity and Demographic Variables”

By Kamini Sehgal, Dr. Sandeep Sawhney

#### Main Objectives

To examine the correlation between the EM level and ‘delinquency proneness’ among adolescents

To study significance of gender-based difference in ‘delinquency proneness’ of adolescents

To examine the difference in ‘delinquency proneness’ of adolescents based on school types

To examine if the school location indicates a significant difference in the delinquency proneness of adolescents

#### Statistical Method

Correlation, SD, t- test

Variable	Mean	SD	Coefficient of Correlation (r) value
<b>Delinquency Proneness</b>	92.70	30.6	-0.53
<b>Emotional Maturity</b>	91.01	32.62	

Delinquency Proneness (Boys/Girls)	t- value – 2.07
Delinquency Proneness (Government/Private)	t-value – 5.82
Delinquency Proneness (Rural/Urban)	t-value – 0.64

#### Results

There is no doubt that juvenile delinquency is a social issue. Using a sample of 150 children from the Ferozepur area, the current study looked at the relationship between emotional maturity and delinquency proneness in adolescents. Data was gathered using Singh & Bhargava's

Emotional Maturity and the investigator's scale of delinquent proneness. The findings showed that adolescents' emotional maturity and delinquency proneness were negatively correlated. There is a notable distinction between the delinquency proneness among boys and girls. Students from Private and Government schools showed a significant difference in their delinquency proneness. However, no discernible difference was discovered between students from urban and rural locations.

## 7.2 “Emotional Maturity and Social Adjustment among Adolescent Students in East Coast Region of Tamil Nadu”

By N. Sasikumar, P. Nagooran

**Main Objective** To correlate the EM and social adjustment of adolescents  
**Statistical Method** t- test, Correlation

Scale		Emotional Maturity	Social adjustment
Emotional Maturity	Pearson Correlation	1.000	0.367
	Sig. ( 2-tailed)	-	.000
	N	200	200
Social adjustment	Pearson Correlation	0.367	1.000
	Sig. ( 2-tailed)	.000	-
	N	200	200

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Results** The findings of this analysis show that emotional development and social adjustment are correlated positively. With regard to teenage students' emotional maturity, the mean totals across the variables included in this research are evidently not significant, with the exception of gender and management style.

## 7.3. “Relationship Between Emotional Maturity and Mental Health of Higher Secondary Students”

By L. Yogaraj, Dr. G. Pazhanivelu

**Main Objective** To discover significance of correlation between EM and mental health of adolescents  
**Statistical Method** Analysis of Percentage, Mean, SD, 't'-test and Correlation coefficient



Emotional Maturity (Boys/Girls)	t- value – 2.573 (s)	
Mental Health (Boys/Girls)	t-value – 0.910	
Emotional Maturity (Rural/Urban)	t- value – 0.252	
Mental Health (Rural/Urban)	t- value – 0.767	
Relationship between emotional maturity and mental health of higher secondary students	Calculated r- value - 0.167	Table value - 0.087

## Findings

According to the study's findings, 10.0% of higher secondary students had excellent mental health, while only 8.5% of them had great emotional maturity. Girls were more emotionally mature than boys. Also, the results showed a strong correlation between the mental health and emotional development of upper secondary pupils. In order to improve their mental health, pupils should be taught how to maintain emotional stability in order to lead healthy lives. Since they spend more time in the classroom, students require the support and supervision of their teachers to get through all of their issues. In order to foster a friendly and encouraging learning environment where children may grow emotionally and mentally and be prepared to handle stress and take on difficulties in all areas of life, counsellors and educators must employ astute tactics.

## 8. Conclusion

After careful examination of the existing literature on the variable 'Emotional Maturity' and its association with other variables, following conclusions are arrived at:

- i. Emotional Maturity (EM) plays a crucial part in an adolescent's self-concept, social and familial adjustment, personality development, maintaining mental health for adequate achievement motivation and academic achievement.
- ii. Adolescents who are emotionally mature tend to overlook a lot of stimuli that would have made them more upset when they were younger. They no longer oscillate between different emotions or moods as they once did; instead, their emotional reactions are steady. For the best possible personality development, this age group needs extra care and direction.

iii. Most studies highlighted the low or extreme low-level of emotional maturity (EM) among adolescents irrespective of their locale and gender and recommended the urgent need of providing them support in building emotional skills. The type of school played significant part in their EM. Adolescents from the marginalised sections go through different types of emotional issues due to discrimination faced owing to societal bias. Discrimination creates a hostile atmosphere leading to emotional break down and drop out from schools. Therefore, there is an urgent need to develop emotional skills for adolescents hailing from varied social and cultural background.

iv. Inclusive Education system demands 'education for all' under one roof and proliferates when the individuals involved in the system—teachers, school management and students—display extremely high level of emotional maturity to support growth and development of all students irrespective of their social, economic and cultural background.

One of the hardest things for instructors to deal with in inclusive education is when there is problematic behaviour. Teachers who have strong support networks are more likely to embrace inclusivity and feel more confident in their own abilities. This kind of help might come in the form of discussions, courses, internal or external direction, emotional support, or more education.

#### **9. Recommendation to Adopt Emotional Intelligence for Inclusive Education**

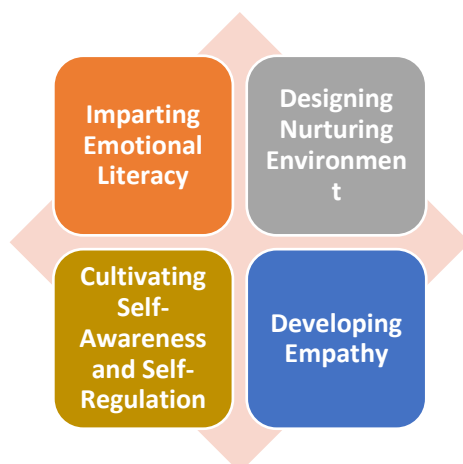
Following steps can be taken by the teachers and administrators to address the need of emotional intelligence and emotional maturity in the inclusive education:

**A. Imparting Emotional Literacy:** The teachers can include specific teaching on identifying and using language related to emotions. Learners can be assisted in correctly recognising and labelling their feelings and can be provided with the vocabulary they need to express themselves.

**B. Designing Nurturing Environment:** The teachers and administrators need to ensure that the learning space is secure and welcoming so that the learners feel valued. To encourage inclusive education, we need to promote active listening and amenable communication.

**C. Cultivating Self-Awareness and Self-Regulation:** Teachers can support the learners identify the triggers that arouse negative emotions and assist them in developing techniques and strategies to regulate them. To help them cope with stress and anxiety management, the learners should be trained breathing exercises and meditation, mindfulness and other handling strategies.

**D. Developing Empathy:** Learners should be encouraged to respect and take into account the thoughts and emotions of others in order to foster empathy. The teachers can create opportunities for developing empathy and social skills through collaborative projects, role-playing, and problem-solving exercises and fostering healthy relationships.



**Figure: Addressing EI and Emotional Maturity for Inclusive Education**

By placing a high priority on emotional intelligence in inclusive education, we need to provide the adolescents the skills they need to overcome emotional obstacles and achieve both academic and social success. Let us cultivate an educational system that is inclusive and values each student's emotional health while making sure they have the chance to realise their full potential.

Based on the present review of literature, it is recommended that a number of studies are carried out to study the impact of EM on various variables and correlation of EM with different variables is also established. However, not a single study is carried out to study the development of Emotional Maturity (EM) and Emotional Intelligence (EI).

It is highly recommended that an instructional module should be prepared to develop Emotional Maturity (EM) and Emotional Intelligence (EI) in adolescents.

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## A STUDY OF VIRTUAL INTERVENTION PROGRAMME ON IN-SERVICE TEACHERS OF INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

**Padmaja Dandekar**

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### *Abstract*

*The Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009 mandates the same, along with inclusive education for all children. Earlier, children with challenges were segregated in resource rooms but the NEP 2020 has made inclusive education compulsory. This makes it imperative for a robust teacher education plan (either pre-service or in-service) to ensure that educators are equipped to handle a broad spectrum of diversities that they encounter in their classrooms. Currently, most school teachers are unable to handle these challenges as they are not adequately trained for them. Teachers must have the right attitude and the lens to see and understand the unique needs of each child and be equipped and trained to teach in a manner that includes all children. Identifying the teacher's training needs and training them to develop a mind frame for inclusive education is the need of the hour. The success of the inclusion of children with diversities (including disabilities) in mainstream classrooms, depends on the teachers' attitudes, knowledge and skills and their drive or initiative to practice inclusive education. The understanding of the gap between this drive or initiative of every teacher and the efficacy of an inclusive education in-service training (virtual course) that is accessible to all teachers has been the focus of the researcher's study. The research will help reach in-service teachers to enroll in such courses, making the schools and communities inclusive.*

**Key Words:** *Inclusive Education, Virtual Training Program, in-service teacher education, NEP 2020, CHILD Course*

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### 1. CONTEXT OF STUDY

Education is the fundamental right of every child. However according to UNESCO 258 million children and youth are unable to go to school due to social, economic and cultural reasons. The right to quality education is firmly rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which is guided by UNESCO. In India, The Constitution (Eighty-Sixth Amendment) Act, 2002 article 21-A provides free and compulsory education for all children, including children with special needs (CWSN) from age six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right. Disability as a challenge is socially constructed and only as much as the environment creates a barrier to the challenges. If these social stigmas are dissolved and infrastructure made more inclusive, society could hope to move towards an inclusive community. Earlier, children with challenges were segregated into separate resource rooms, creating a scar in their minds. With the concept of 'inclusion' in the mainstream school, integration has been slowly paving the way for 'Inclusive Education. Lipsky and Gartner (1996,1990) have defined 'inclusive education' as all children irrespective of their special needs children enrolled together and being given support services, supplementary aids and assistive devices as and when needed. Anita, Stinson and Gaustaad (2002) acknowledge inclusion as children belonging unreservedly to a regular classroom, school and

community. The World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca (1994) initiated inclusive education and endorsed the Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (SNE) (UNESCO, 1994:8). According to Sreeja S, (2017) since 1998 in India IEDC (Integrated Education for Disabled Children) program has been receiving paramount prominence under the DPEP (District Primary Education Programme) primarily focusing on access, enrolment and retention of all children under the age group 6-14 years and given a thrust to Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA) 2002. Inclusive Education for CWSN (Children With Special Needs) has been a major intervention of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan to ensure equal opportunities and respect; Implementation includes cooperative learning, adaptive lessons, diverse assessment methods, and teacher training to ensure educators are well-equipped for inclusive classrooms. The primary decisive factor of success of the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms largely depends on the teacher's attitude. Loreman T.(2013) conducted a study to measure teaching self-efficacy for inclusive education and key demographic variation in Canada, Australia, and Indonesia. This study confirmed the existence of strong international differences. Other parameters that differed were knowledge about law and policy, types of disabilities and lack of preparatory programs. There has been very slow growth in the awareness and implementation of inclusive programs for educators. Even after several years, there seems to be very little progress. Crispel O, (2021). states that not only special education teachers but regular education teachers should also be trained in facilitating inclusive education. RTE (Right To Education) and NEP 2020 (National Education Policy 2020) mandate schools to handle diversities, posing challenges for untrained teachers in inclusion. Teacher education programs must take the lead in bridging the gap between self-efficacy and the need for inclusion training. With a shortage of trained teachers, these programs are crucial in facilitating knowledge exchange and positively impacting education. Hence efficacy of a training programme to build inclusive education practitioners has been the focus of the researchers' study.

## **2. NEED OF THE STUDY**

The study aims to assess a virtual intervention programme's impact on in-service teachers' attitudes, skills, and knowledge in inclusive education to encourage broader enrollment in the course, build inclusive classrooms and eventually build inclusive communities. The specific aims of the intervention program are:

1. To develop Inclusive attitudes as well as share knowledge and skills.
2. To upgrade the skills of existing teachers to fulfil the demands of Inclusive Education.
3. To shift the paradigm from conventional IEPs or Individualized Education Program to a new definition of IEP as Inclusive Education Practitioners, from disability to diversity.

Investigating the lived experiences of graduate in-service teachers in an inclusive education course and its influence on classroom inclusivity is the focus of the study. The population comprises all graduate in-service teachers from inclusive education schools, with the sampling consisting of those enrolled for the course. Exclusion due to lack of digital access yielded 28 non quantifiable entries, using non-probability purposive sampling.

## **3. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS**

- i. Lived experiences: Course participants' experiences and the knowledge gained by them.
- ii. Inclusive

education: Equal and Equity-based educational opportunities for all iii. Knowledge: Fluid mix of framed experiences, values, contextual information, and expert insight providing a framework for new experiences and information.

iv. Attitude: In-service teacher's readiness.

v. Skill: Teaching competencies required to cater to the needs of an inclusive classroom. vi. Diverse

Learner: Diverse learner as per the RPWD Act 2016

#### **4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

A review of literature is a collation of critical data gathered from different sources that are relevant to the researcher's field and serves as a crucial guide, offering insights into past and current studies, informing methodology decisions, and identifying gaps.

Watson's (2006) study in the Journal of Technology and Teacher Education suggests that continuous professional development, especially through intense summer workshops, enhances teacher self-efficacy long-term.

Martin and Vallance's (2008) paper explores shifts in pre-service teachers' beliefs during a 12-week ICT collaboration program, indicating improvement.

Woodcock's (2009) study asserts that teachers' inclusive education beliefs impact practices and student outcomes, requiring systemic support for change.

Ashima Das (Das, A. (2010) advocates for in-service teachers' inclusive skills and negating the necessity of resource rooms.

Sokal and Sharma (2013) examined the concerns and attitudes of 131 Canadian in-service teachers and the effect of a training programme on the same. Improved confidence in teaching students with difficulty reduces concerns about inclusion.

Loreman, Sharma, and Forlin's (2013) study examines teaching efficacy scale relationships with key demographic variables. The study finds international differences in inclusion readiness, influenced by various factors like preparatory programs and training.

Chao, C.N.G. (2016) employed a mixed research design with 417 in-service teachers in Hong Kong, revealing positive post-training changes in attitudes.

In studying 739 teachers from Delhi government schools, Kumari (2016) found age as a crucial factor in developing attitudes. Further 45-day training was ineffective; recommends quality programs for CWSN with qualified trainers.

Examining pre-service teachers at Savitribai University Pune, Valvi (2016) compared curriculum modes, finding enhanced efficacy in inclusive practices with isolated syllabus delivery and teaching support.

Sreeja S. (2017) examined teacher training's impact on primary educators and proved that post-training, attitudes toward inclusion differed significantly.

Mamgain (2017) research recommends intensive training and practicum, emphasizing communication to enhance teacher attitudes and self-efficacy in inclusivity. Shatri (2017) explored teacher training effects on inclusion, examining experiences, and perceptions of trained versus untrained teachers, emphasizing recognition of diverse needs and contemporary teaching strategies.



K, S. (2018) assessed inclusive education perceptions among teachers, peers, and parents, revealing training impact.

In Kenya, Carew (2019) researched teacher training, providing enhanced self-efficacy and positive attitudes toward inclusion, yet the long-term impact is unclear.

Devi (2019) found experienced in-service teachers, with training in inclusive practices had improved efficacy, emphasizing intensive inclusion curricula for pre-service training. A study by Deepshikha Mathur (2020) concludes prioritizing influencing beliefs and reflective thinking in teacher training, emphasizing their impact on cognitive processing and teaching.

Pinku Kundu (2020) findings indicate a need for targeted professional development, particularly in behaviour management and inclusive instructional practices. The study's limitation is its geographical specificity.

A 10-week training programme on inclusion assessed by Martin's study (E. Martin, 2021) Results showed a significant altering of pre-service teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and confidence. Crispel (2021) in the International Journal of Inclusive Education discusses 10 Israeli teachers' frustrations and the attitude changes after training.

Chua and Bong (2022) research on inclusive education through virtual classrooms in Malaysia during the pandemic revealed insufficient attitudes, behaviour, cognition, competence, and awareness. It investigates whether teachers have lacked familiarity and support with virtual teaching.

India's Department of School Education & Literacy prioritizes capacity building through Digital education.

While existing research predominantly involves pre-service teachers, there's a crucial gap in understanding in-service teachers' experiences. Scarce research on digital training for inclusive classrooms necessitates investigating its effectiveness in altering attitudes, beliefs, and skills. Geographical limitations in existing studies underscore the need for comprehensive research assessing the impact of a synchronous virtual training course on inclusive education, aiming to reshape attitudes, beliefs, and skills.

## **5. THE VIRTUAL INTERVENTION PROGRAMME – CHILD**

The nine-month intervention programme - CHILD course [ Certificate in Holistic Inclusion of Learners with Diversity] focused on inclusive education, mindset shifts and upgrading in-service teacher's skills to foster inclusive practices in classrooms

The course consisted of three modules alongside practicum. The first module guided participants to explore the concepts of inclusion, exclusion and acceptance through self-reflection of personal experiences. In the second module, expert Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Heads of Educational Institutes (Schools/ Universities) Counsellors provided insights into various aspects of educating CWSN. Occupational therapists and Speech Therapists threw light upon the allied therapies essential. Participants also experienced alternate therapies of Arts-Based, Dance Movement and Animal-Assisted Therapies that could be beneficially used in classrooms

The final module focused on equipping educators with skills for inclusive teaching using Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Participants designed and conducted two UDL lesson plans during



practicums, along with counselling sessions with CWSN as case studies.

The course's challenging assignments prompted participants to consider the importance of other aspects of community inclusion – designing inclusive physical spaces and assistive devices. Group discussions on education policies and advocacy for inclusive practices provided valuable insights. Participants maintained session-wise journal entries to document their lived experiences and reflections. Post-course interviews via Zoom, supplemented by the journal readings, assessed changes in attitude, knowledge and classroom inclusivity.

## **6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The researcher employed qualitative phenomenology as the method of research. The research questions to explore participants' lived experiences were:

- (i) What did inclusion mean to you before you took up the course on inclusion and after you took the course on inclusion?
- (ii) What were your experiences of using Universal Design for Learning in the classroom?
- (iii) How have your experiences of therapies, 21 disabilities, and brain functions changed your perception of diverse learners?

The researcher integrated participants' post-session journal entries, alongside data from 25- minute semi-structured interviews capturing lived experiences.

The researcher systematically analyzed transcripts by (a) Repeatedly listening to grasp participants' feelings and experiences, (b) Identifying key statements on the studied phenomenon, (c) Deriving interpretative meaning without distortion, (d) Grouping meanings into clusters and deducing themes, (e) Integrating themes for exhaustive descriptions, (f) Crafting a concise statement summarizing individual experiences, and (g) Validating with participants, addressing discrepancies through revisiting statements, meanings, and themes. This process ensured a comprehensive understanding and validation of the essence statement derived from participants' experiences. The clustering, coding and memoing process were employed. The result was the emergence of three themes: Attitude, Knowledge and Skills in Inclusive Education.

## **7. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This research investigated how 28 participants perceive and apply inclusive education course experiences to enhance classroom inclusivity.

The phenomenology research was based on two primary research questions: a. What are the experiences of the students in the course on inclusive education developed by the researcher?  
b. How do these experiences bring about a change in their attitudes, knowledge and skills to make their classrooms more inclusive?

Following the method outlined by Smith, Larkin, and Flower (2009), the analysis of the research questions aimed at uncovering the essence and interpretation of participants' experiences while ensuring bias elimination through bracketing.

Before being a part of the course, the researcher observed, that participants had perceived incidences of learning challenges in their classrooms as “low” or “reduced”. They considered only “social mingling” or “equal opportunities” as inclusion. Participants thought inclusion was about

teaching everyone in class and that all CWSN children would need shadow teachers and counsellors.

Many participants had a fair knowledge of the functions of the brain. However, they did not know how neuro-diverse brains function. They were ignorant of the importance of Applied and Alternative therapies as well as how physical spaces when modified, made it easy for people with challenges.

Participants mentioned that earlier they unconsciously prioritised the majority's needs in lesson planning, merely accommodating struggling learners with a “typical” “one-size-fits-all” delivery method. As facilitators, they considered only academic challenges and ignored the behavioural challenges of children.

After the course, the incidence of learning challenges in their classroom was observed to be “high”. Inclusion encompassed being aware and understanding the reason for challenges, not attaching labels; equity rather than equality – accepting the children as they are.

Information about the brain and its executive function, various psychometric tests and even policies widened the participant’s knowledge about neurodiversity and inclusive education.

Emphasis on hands-on training, allowing participants to apply the theoretical concepts, practically, was the course’s uniqueness. Participants mentioned that the school internship to deliver lesson plans based on Universal Design for Learning, the case study and counselling sessions with a child and his/her parents helped. It boosted their confidence and enhanced flexibility in lesson planning. Participants could integrate alternative therapies with counselling strategies.

## **8. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH**

Through careful analysis of journal writings and interviews, the research showed that participant’s understanding of inclusive classrooms had changed. After completing the course, they recognized that inclusion surpassed the mere collaboration of children with and without disabilities. Participants stated that they were more accepting of children, as they are. They emphasized creating a safe, comfortable environment, highlighting the teacher's proactive role in engaging all children based on their preferred learning styles. The course transformed participants' attitudes and perspectives.

Participants credited the attitudinal shift to the knowledge gained on diverse learners, including history, advocacy, therapies, brain functions and psychometric tests for children with special needs. Application of this knowledge in the classroom positively impacted children's learning and engagement. An increase in the participants’ self-efficacy for inclusive classrooms was observed

Practical experience in designing and implementing lesson plans based on Universal Design for Learning, case studies and practising counselling strategies boosted their confidence in behaviour management as well, making them adept inclusive educators. Participants confirmed that their lessons were now more enriched and engaging. A feedback loop, communicated during the course served as a constructive communication tool, extending beyond the classroom into personal life.

The course empowered participants to become confident, inclusive educators, fostering cognitive and spiritual transformation.

**9. IMPLICATION OF THE RESEARCH :** Teacher attitude is crucial for inclusive classrooms. Combined with knowledge of diverse learners and learning theories, it builds skills, fostering self-efficacy, emphasizing that an actively involved child contributes positively to the broader community. The researcher's training module effectively cultivates these attributes. A noteworthy limitation of this research would be the smaller sample size. Combining numerical and qualitative data would improve reliability. The focus on in-service teachers excludes potential benefits for pre-service teachers.

**10.SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH :** The research offers expansion opportunities. The research can be replicated with a broader sample size and include pre-service teachers. The research design can be quantitative or a mixed design. Comparative studies can be conducted with experimental and control groups as well as special needs teachers and mainstream teachers.

**11.CONCLUSION :** The Intervention Programme has been successful in developing the right attitudes, knowledge base and skill sets needed for Inclusive Classrooms. The comprehensive research urges authorities in inclusive education to acknowledge and utilize its findings, promoting training modules for in-service teachers' self-efficacy for inclusive education.

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## EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF BASIC LITERACY AND ARITHMETIC SKILLS AMONG THE STUDENTS OF MADRASSA

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**“Inclusion is not just about changing the education system but about changing attitudes and perceptions towards diversity”.**

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### *Abstract*

*Madrassa generally provides religious education to its learners. It involves teaching Arabic to enable students to read religious books and perform religious duties and responsibilities. Their students are well versed with Arabic language but lack access to basic literacy and arithmetic skills. To study the same an experimental research was conducted in the form of a community programme. A pre-test was conducted on the sample of 30 under privileged students of Madrassa which included questions in English related to self and basic arithmetical operations. An intervention programme in the form of community work of 22 sessions of two hours each was conducted by B.Ed. students for these students to develop basic concepts of conversational English and Maths which can be applied in day to day life. The interventions included teaching of English language, mathematical concepts and art and craft related activities to develop artistic skills and give opportunities of expression to the students. After interventions, a post test was conducted. Comparative results of pre-test and post- test reflected significant improvement in the basic literacy and arithmetic skills of under privileged students of Madrassa. This whole activity proved fruitful not only for these students by improving their skills but also for the B.Ed. students by making them understand that the weapon of knowledge that they have been bestowed with can be widely used to serve the greatest purpose of bringing about a change in the lives of unfortunate ones.*

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**Key words:** *Under-privileged, access, basic literacy, arithmetic skills, community work*

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### **Introduction**

With the advancement and expansion of the education system in the current scenario, Inclusion has not remained a mere utopian concept. It has rather become a dire necessity of the moment. Inclusive education is a paramount step towards creating a society where diversity is celebrated, uniqueness is appreciated and everyone is valued. It is the best approach to ensure that every child has an equal opportunity to attend school, learn, and acquire the skills necessary for success. Diverse groups are able to flourish alongside one another in inclusive systems because they recognise and value the distinct contributions that students from different backgrounds make to the classroom. UNESCO believes that every learner matters equally. However, millions of individuals around the world are still denied access to education due to a variety of factors, such as gender, sexual orientation, language, nationality, ethnicity, or social origin, as well as aptitude or economic status. From curricula to pedagogy and

instruction, inclusive education aims to recognise and eliminate all obstacles to education.

### **Madrassa and Its Education system**

A madrassa is a Muslim educational institution that is frequently housed within a mosque. The Arabic name for any kind of educational institution, whether secular or religious (of any faith), whether for primary education or higher learning, is madrasa, also spelt madrasah or madrassa. Outside of the Arab East, the term is typically used to describe a certain kind of religious institution or college where students study Islam, though not exclusively.

In its early years, a madrassa was a higher education establishment that offered solely the "religious sciences" as part of its curriculum; philosophy and other secular studies were sometimes left out. The curriculum gradually started to broaden, and in the later years, a large number of madrasas taught both "secular sciences" and religious subjects like philosophy, logic, and mathematics. A few madrasas also included courses in chemistry, astronomy, medicine, metaphysics, music, politics, history, and ethics. However, gradually the focus on other secular and academic subjects reduced considerably limiting it to mainly Islamic religious knowledge. This creates lopsided education system leading to insufficient knowledge of other subjects. Consequently, the students suffer from lack of basic proficiency of literacy and arithmetic skills needed for practical day to day life.

With a view to explore this issue, an experimental research was conducted in the form of community programme by the B.Ed. students consisting of 22 sessions of 2 hours each which focused mainly on developing basic literacy and arithmetic skills among the students of Madrassa, Munshi compound, Mira Road in the Thane district of Maharashtra.

Basic Literacy is the ability to read, write, and comprehend. Although, these students were well versed with Arabic text, they lacked ability to read, write and comprehend in English Language which is a universal language, the literacy of which improves the chances of making them access education beyond madrassa.

Similarly they are well versed with numbers in Arabic but lacked arithmetic skills in English, the application of which is of utmost importance in our day to day life.

The importance of above two ignited the need to assess the level of students in English and arithmetic skills through pre-test and post-test and accordingly plan interventions for their development.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The research was conducted with the following Objectives:

- To introduce the under-privileged students the basic concepts of conversational English to develop basic literacy in the language
- To make students aware and equipped with basic arithmetic skills helpful in day to day life.
- To give them opportunities to express themselves through art and craft related activities.
- To develop a sense of compassion and service towards society among the students of B.Ed.

### **Research Methodology**

It is an experimental research conducted on the sample of 30 Madrassa students of Munshi compound. The tools used for the research are self-made pre-test and post-test having questions in English related to self, literacy skills and basic arithmetical operations.



**Sample and Sampling Technique**

The sample consisted of 30 students of Madrassa of Munshi compound in Thane which was selected through convenience sampling.

**Tools used**

Self-constructed pre-test was administered having questions related to self and arithmetic concepts. The same test was conducted as post test after making interventions for 22 sessions of 2 hour each.

**Interventions**

Pre-test results showed lack of basic literacy skills and low understanding of arithmetic concepts among the students of Madrassa. After analyzing the results, the detailed plan for interventions was framed. The interventions were conducted by the B.Ed. students as per their internship groups on rotation basis. Every internship group planned their interventions on the basis of interventions conducted by previous internship group so that there is connectivity in all the activities and plan can be executed smoothly.

Every Saturday interventions were conducted during the community programme slot in the campus itself which consisted of 2 hours. The activities included the following topics:-

Basic literacy: Introduction of Self, Poems and Rhymes, forming three-letter words, action words, vowels and consonant, opposite words, noun, small and capital letters, days of the week, preposition, parts of body, missing letters, Composition writing, Extempore, daily vocabulary, Sense organ and their functions, Rhyming words, Hobbies, Describing yourself, Physical exercises related to parts of the body, articles

Arithmetic Skills: Addition and subtraction, addition using dice and ludo, counting, greater than- less than, equal to, tables of 2, 3, 4, Numbers 1-100, number names, before and after, ascending- descending order, Shapes- identifying shapes and adding it, Whole numbers and natural numbers, measurement of shapes using ruler, concept of time, origami using pencil

shavings, concept of clock, odd and even numbers, Identifying shapes in real life objects, Housy, matching and counting numbers.

Art and Craft activities: Art and Craft using ice-cream sticks, animal face mask, Origami, Paper-tearing activity, using shapes to make a figure, Lantern making, paper shirt making, Christmas tree decoration, Snowman, Kite-making on Makar sankranti, Indian flag making using millets, flower vase making using pencil waste, Coloring on the occasion of Gudi Padwa, Santa Clause face making, Mask making from paper plate, designs using Geometric patterns.

**Qualitative Analysis:**

Qualitative analysis was conducted for both pre-test and post-test. After making the interventions, a post test was conducted to check improvement in the basic literacy and arithmetic skills which were found lacking in pretest and following inferences can be drawn on the basis of objectives of the research:

· To introduce the under-privileged students the basic concepts of conversational English to develop basic literacy in the language

Variety of basic concepts were introduced to students during 22 sessions of interventions. In the post test,

it was observed that vocabulary of students has improved which they are able to use in their day to day life and also now they are aware of concepts of English. They are able to read English with help. Students were able to comprehend the questions asked in English and were able to answer correctly. Improvement was also seen in the handwriting of the students.

- To make students aware and equipped with basic arithmetic skills helpful in day to day life.

Number of mathematical concepts were introduced to the students during interventions ranging from familiarizing them with English numerals to concepts of addition, subtraction and multiplication. After post-test it was analyzed that students were able to understand the mathematical concepts and are able to use basic mathematical operations in their day to day life.

- To give them opportunities to express themselves through art and craft related activities.

Number of art and craft activities were organized by all groups as per the occasion every week. These activities helped students to showcase their creativity in unique ways and express themselves freely through art and craft. The students of Madrasa enjoyed all the activities with great zeal and showed enthusiasm for participation.

- To develop a sense of compassion and service towards society among the students of B.Ed.

As B.Ed. students participated in the community work in groups on rotation basis, it helped in developing among them a sense of responsibility towards providing access of education to the underprivileged students of Madrasa. Their compassion and service towards the students could be seen through the planning of various activities meticulously done by all groups that were supervised by mentors of the schools as well as principal of the college. The B.Ed. students felt happy and fulfilled to conduct each activity. They were actively involved in the entire process. Besides teaching, they were also paying attention to the overall needs of the students. The whole experience of conducting the community service was a humbling experience which made B.Ed. students realize how fortunate they are to have the access to the educational facilities and the opportunities to develop themselves. The whole experience instilled in them the sense of gratitude and humility. It also made them understand that the weapon of knowledge that they have been bestowed with can be wisely used to serve the greater purpose of bringing about a change in the lives of the unfortunate ones. It made them conscious of their responsibility serve the society by uplifting the marginalized section through education and to contribute towards building a better India for future generations.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Education is the fundamental right of every child whether they are privileged or under privileged. If the nation is to progress towards development collectively, no section however small they may be should be left out of the education system. Efforts must be taken by all, along with the government bodies and educational institutions to make significant contribution in providing access to education to those who are in need. Educational institutions can play an important role in achieving the target of universalization of education by making efforts on their parts. These efforts, however small may be will definitely bring positive change in providing education to the underprivileged students. Ideally the education system of Madrassas should incorporate basic literacy in English and arithmetic skills to help their students in day to day living along with religious education that they generally provide. It will help their students in



adjusting well in the society and be a part of general education system. It will lead to more acceptance of these students of Madrassas by society. The programs like community service serve the dual purpose of sensitizing the future teachers towards their social responsibilities and providing education to the deprived groups.

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## FOSTERING INCLUSION IN MATHEMATICS EDUCATION : A THOROUGH EXPLORATION OF DESIGN THINKING APPROACHES

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### **Abstract**

*This study provides a comprehensive analysis of studies related to how implementing Design Thinking approaches in Mathematics fosters inclusion. The study looks into how different teaching strategies impact students' abilities to think critically, solve issues, and learn in general in a range of educational environments. Through the combination of these findings, this study aims to offer insights into useful strategies for promoting a more inclusive and diverse learning environment where focus is more on critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving. Understanding how Design Thinking influences kids' personality, enthusiasm in mathematics, and job choices is the major objective. This review includes studies that look at how professionals without design training adopt Design Thinking, how design activities are used in integrated education across disciplines, and how critically global perspectives on Design Thinking education are seen. The role of design thinking in education is also covered in this study, with an emphasis on how it might foster students' capacity for critical thought, creativity, and innovation. Research on the use of Design Thinking in teacher preparation programs is also included, offering insights into how it influences teachers' methods to make education more practical and application based and not mere transmission of facts and theories,*

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### **Introduction**

The need for pupils to develop critical thinking and problem-solving abilities has led to a reassessment of pedagogical approaches in the ever-changing field of education. This study sets out to investigate novel approaches, specifically concentrating on how they affect the teaching of mathematics. Our investigation centers around the themes of "Access, Diversity &

Inclusion in Education," highlighting the significance of developing classrooms that are inclusive of students from a variety of backgrounds and are intellectually engaging.

The way that Design Thinking can cater to the differential learning needs of students in a variety of educational environments is particularly intriguing. We look at the viewpoints of both teachers and students in order to try and figure out the many ways in which these creative methods affect the process of learning. We go beyond the boundaries of conventional educational paradigms as we go on this academic trip to investigate how Design Thinking affects students' interests, personalities, and career decisions. Moreover, we broaden our focus to include the critical function of Design Thinking in teacher preparation programs, acknowledging the possibility of revolutionary changes in educators' methods of

thinking and addressing problems.

In the process, we hope to add to the current conversation on inclusion, diversity, and accessibility in education. Our goal is to shed light on how Design Thinking can be used to create learning environments that are inclusive of students with a range of abilities and backgrounds, while also being intellectually stimulating. We will achieve this by combining the results and insights from numerous studies.

### **Review of various studies**

#### **Studies related to implementation of Design Thinking in Education D-Think Toolkit (2014)<sup>[2]</sup>**

The D-THINK toolkit is intended for use by instructors at higher education institutions, acting as a proactive manual to facilitate the application of design thinking. The goals of the toolkit include modernizing and revamping learning experiences, revitalizing educational techniques and methodologies, and encouraging the development of highly sought-after skills for employers. Sense-making, social intelligence, creative and adaptive thinking, cross-cultural competencies, a design mindset, and virtual collaboration are all included in this list of abilities. It sets itself apart from standard textbooks by giving educators useful advice in a variety of educational circumstances, shedding light on Design Thinking and its significance in the classroom, and outlining particular tools that may be used in a range of situations.

The D-THINK toolkit is designed to make it easier for educators to apply Design Thinking principles in a variety of educational contexts since it is a practical guide rather than a typical textbook. The toolkit contains particular tools that can be used in a variety of circumstances in addition to giving an overview of Design Thinking and its applicability in education.

It presents three contexts, for example, "Setting the Learning," each with two instructional scenarios. This supports the practical approach of the toolkit by guaranteeing that instructors have a sophisticated grasp of the tools and how to use them. The D-THINK toolbox intends to enable instructors to modernize their approaches and produce memorable learning experiences by emphasizing practical application.

#### **Innovation in the Classroom: Design Thinking for 21st Century Learning (2011)<sup>[3]</sup>**

In light of the expanding significance of design thinking in higher education, this study investigates how it may be incorporated into K–12 education. It centers on helping educators and learners alike grasp the opportunities and limitations that come with applying Design Thinking techniques. The study recommends more research be done on how best to incorporate design thinking methods with academic material and standards for education. With a focus on the relationship between design thinking and academic content, the study attempts to identify important aspects that educators take into account when implementing design thinking in the classroom.

The goal of this K12 education-focused research is to close the knowledge gap between the relatively recent adoption of Design Thinking in K12 settings and its growing significance in higher education. The study highlights the need for more research into integration with academic material and educational standards since it acknowledges the potential impact of Design Thinking methods on both teachers and students.

The research influences instructional processes by addressing important concerns that educators have

while implementing Design Thinking in the classroom. With the goal of shedding light on the complex relationships that exist between academic material and Design Thinking, the study is especially interested in developing strategies for future instructional design.

**Reclaim Your Creative Confidence – Harvard Business Review - How to get over the fears that block your best ideas by Tom Kelley and David Kelley (2012)<sup>[4]</sup>**

This article from the Harvard Business Review highlights the value of creativity in people and how crucial it is for success in a variety of fields and sectors. The writers make the case that creativity is a desirable quality in leaders and emphasize the need of getting over fears that go in the way of original thought.

The article lists four common anxieties and offers solutions to help people regain their creative confidence: the fear of the messy unknown, the fear of being judged, the fear of taking the initial step, and the fear of losing control. The emphasis is on developing the innate capacity to create and carry out new ideas.

The psychological component of creativity is the main topic of this article by Tom and David Kelley published in the Harvard Business Review. It explores people's innate creativity from an early age, emphasizing how formal schooling and society conventions frequently stifle these creative impulses.

The writers contend that creativity is a necessary quality for success in a variety of disciplines and is not limited to any one person. The essay emphasizes the significance of rediscovering and fostering one's creative confidence while offering a framework for overcoming typical anxieties that impede creative thought. The writers help people embrace their creative instincts and use them in both personal and professional contexts by overcoming worries like the fear of judgment and the fear of the unknown.

**Design Thinking in Education: Perspectives Opportunities and Challenges - Stefanie Panke (2019)<sup>[5]</sup>**

This extensive research explores design thinking as a method for solving problems that may be used to projects involving several stakeholders and organizational innovation. It discusses the idea's disciplinary origins as well as its emphasis on "wicked problems" that are socially ambiguous. The study describes the phases involved in design thinking, with a focus on encouraging participants to see limitations as opportunities for creativity. Fostering civic literacy, empathy, cultural understanding, and risk-taking is at the heart of design thinking. The study observes the broad application of design thinking in education across disciplines, underscoring its applicability in higher education and K–16+ curricula despite the conceptual ambiguity in scholarly discourse. The study on Design Thinking in Education by Stefanie Panke delves into the various uses and difficulties of this method to problem solving. The paper describes design thinking as a method for addressing socially ambiguous "wicked problems" that defy conventional scientific methods, acknowledging its roots in a variety of fields. The study highlights how critical it is to look beyond the obvious bounds of a problem and provides instructions on how to use creative techniques like prototyping and drawing to help participants analyze, synthesize, and produce ideas. Although there is conceptual ambiguity in academic writing, the study acknowledges that design thinking has been widely used in education. Despite continuous discussions over its characteristics, applicability, and results, it emphasizes its importance in promoting 21st-century skills across disciplines.

**Implications of various research carried out on Design Thinking in Education**

With its useful approach to Design Thinking in education, the D-THINK toolbox has important implications for advancing inclusion, diversity, and accessibility. Rather than being a standard textbook, the toolkit offers instructors of different backgrounds a hands-on guide that makes Design Thinking more approachable. Because of its emphasis on a variety of educational settings, it promotes inclusivity and enables teachers to modify Design Thinking concepts to meet the specific requirements of each student. This strategy helps create a more inclusive learning environment where a variety of learning opportunities may be tailored to the needs of students with various backgrounds and skill levels. Understanding the considerations instructors have while integrating Design Thinking has implications for creating diversity, according to research on the subject in K–12 education. By taking these factors into account, solutions that take into account different learning styles and talents can be developed. The study helps to create an inclusive learning environment where the application of Design Thinking is useful not just for certain groups but also customized to match the demands of a diverse student population by revealing the intersection of Design Thinking with academic material. By addressing the concerns that impede creativity, the HBR essay on recovering creative confidence has implications for diversity and inclusion. It acknowledges that regardless of origin or identity, everyone has the capacity for creativity. Through providing methods for overcoming common worries like fear of being judged and fear of the unknown, the essay enables people from different backgrounds to share their own viewpoints. This strategy supports the objective of creating an inclusive learning environment where people are free to express their original ideas without worrying about being rejected or judged. According to Stefanie Panke's research, Design Thinking has become widely used in education and has consequences for diversity and accessibility. The study acknowledges its applicability in a variety of educational contexts, including more than 60 US institutions and colleges, despite continuous discussions regarding its qualities. A more inclusive educational environment is facilitated by the use of Design Thinking in a variety of educational settings. But the study also emphasizes how important it is to have clear concepts in order to guarantee that Design Thinking is implemented fairly and inclusively across a range of academic disciplines and student populations. By preventing potential inequalities in its use, clear definitions and rules can support a more inclusive educational experience for all. According to Kwon's (2002) research on Realistic Mathematics Education (RME), students' comprehension of slope fields and solution function graphs is improved by creative teaching strategies such as reimagining well-known mathematical concepts. Likewise, the project-based curriculum developed by Kim et al. (2013)<sup>[7]</sup> that integrates design thinking leads to the long term retention of mathematical and design thinking ideas, improving students' problem-solving abilities. Penuel, Roschelle & Shechtman's (2007)<sup>[8]</sup> study on co-design underscores collaborative efforts improving teaching practices, curriculum, and technology.

**Conclusions** This thorough analysis of research on cutting-edge methods in mathematics education, such as Design Thinking, highlights the significant influence these methods have on students' problem solving abilities, critical thinking capacities, and overall learning experiences in a variety of educational contexts. The integration of research results from the viewpoints of teachers and students highlights how Design Thinking may support a more diverse and inclusive learning environment. Based on the papers analyzed,

design thinking appears to be a driving force behind promoting critical thinking in mathematics education. This study explores how students' personalities, interests, and job choices are influenced by Design Thinking, providing insight into the complex aspects of learning. Design Thinking is incorporated into integrated STEM education to foster inventive skills that are necessary for survival in a world that is changing rapidly, in addition to fostering creativity and critical thinking. Furthermore, the investigation goes beyond the effect on students to take into account the use of Design Thinking in teacher preparation courses. The results show that teachers who implement Design Thinking techniques experience profound changes in their approaches to thinking and solving problems, which has a favorable impact on the learning environment. This dynamic interaction between teachers and students creates the conditions for a learning ecosystem that is more inclusive, diverse, and accessible.

The paper makes a substantial contribution to the advancement of our knowledge of how Design Thinking influences innovative and successful teaching strategies by combining insights from studies looking at design activities in integrated STEM education, professionals adopting Design Thinking without design training, and global perspectives on Design Thinking education. But it's important to recognize the difficulties caused by the conceptual ambiguity in the academic discourse surrounding Design Thinking, highlighting the necessity of ongoing improvement and modification to guarantee fair and inclusive application across a range of academic disciplines and student demographics.

The integration of these research findings highlights the revolutionary potential of design thinking in mathematics education, which promotes diversity, creativity, and critical thinking. By adopting Design Thinking, educators may foster inclusive educational practices, celebrate diversity, and make learning more accessible while also enabling students to overcome difficult obstacles.

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## NURTURING INCLUSIVE LEARNING COMMUNITIES THROUGH AI BASED LEARNING PLATFORMS

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### Abstract

*The term 'Inclusive Education' is often restricted to education of persons identified with specific challenges in learning. Here too, the focus is on cognitive aspects and other forms like considering socio cultural diversity may be neglected. In reality, inclusive education must include everyone because all learners come from diverse backgrounds and learn in their own unique way. This paper is inspired by the Universal Design for Learning which is based on brain science on how humans learn and is based on the author's own experience of using Artificial Intelligence platforms to nurture an inclusive learning community. The outcomes of these efforts have been quite encouraging and students reported increased involvement in the learning experience. The AI platforms encouraged constructivist and collaborative learning and offered space to express creativity. The inbuilt evaluation in a safe and encouraging environment helped to support learning.*

**Key Words:** Artificial Intelligence, Inclusive Education, Universal Design Learning, Learner Diversity

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### Introduction

The curriculum followed in Higher Education is generally guided on a pre-decided curriculum prescribed by the University. This should not restrict a Higher Education Institution (HEI); rather each HEI must contextualise the curriculum and align it to the needs of the students and emerging trends in the educational landscape. Artificial Intelligence offers a variety of tools and platforms for educators to explore ways to make the teaching -learning and evaluation process interesting and inclusive. This paper is based on the use of AI tools for teaching-learning and evaluation and is guided by the Universal Design Learning Framework described below.

#### Universal Design Learning (UDL)<sup>1</sup>

The term 'Universal Design' was used originally in architecture to design accessible buildings. The term then was extrapolated to education by David Rose and Ann Meyer to expand learning opportunities for all students especially those learners with disabilities. The Universal Design Learning Framework integrates three principles<sup>2</sup>.

- (i) **Engagement:** The learning environment must offer a variety of ways to stimulate learning. UDL guidelines state that "recruiting interest, sustaining efforts and persistence, harnessing the power of emotions in learning are the guiding aspects of engagement".<sup>3</sup>
- (ii) **Representation:** Information presented to learners will be processed as per their unique set of abilities. Offering multiple ways of offering content will help to make better connections. There is no one optimal way of representation. Hence it is necessary to provide multiple ways aligned to learner's needs and abilities.



(iii) **Action and expression:** It is necessary for the learner to express what has been comprehended as it indicates whether the learning goals are being met. UDL advocates providing multiple ways to express and share their learning.

Thus, UDL recognises the uniqueness of all learners and promotes the creation of an equitable learning space where all learners can learn in an ethos that suits their own skill set.

This paper looks at how principles of UDL can be interwoven into a learning situation that uses Artificial Intelligence platforms. The research setting is a Teacher Education Institution where the researcher teaches. The institution conducted a need analysis of newly admitted students. During this exercise, some students revealed that they lacked confidence to speak in a group. Some expressed that they needed more processing time for assimilation when some content was presented. Few students said they were quick at grasping new content and felt the need to go beyond what was taught in class. Almost all learners had no idea of self-regulation and self-monitoring of their own learning. Given this background, the following research questions emerged.

(i) How can Artificial Intelligence (AI) platforms be used to promote learner engagement suited to learner's abilities and needs?

(ii) How can AI platforms support ways of representing content that are aligned to learner's needs?

(iii) How can AI platforms be optimally utilised to allow learners express their learning in their unique way?

Against this background, the study entitled '**Nurturing Inclusive Learning Communities through AI based learning platforms**' was conceptualised.

### **Objective of the study**

The objectives of the study are

(i) To investigate the experiences of learners using AI based platforms for learning.

(ii) To measure the influence of AI driven interventions on student achievement.

**Operational definitions of specific terms:** The terms used in the title have been operationally defined for clarity

Inclusive Learning Community in this study refers to a group of learners who learn together in an ethos that respects their diverse learning paths and where they can learn in a non-threatening environment.

AI based learning platforms in this study refer to the use of curipod.com and magicschool.ai

**Review of related literature:** A review of few studies in the use of AI in inclusive education are summarised below. Salas Pilco, Xiao and Oshima<sup>4</sup>(2022) identified the types of AI and new technologies used for inclusive education, and their major advantages such as improving student performance and encouraging student interest in STEM/STEAM. They concluded that "these solutions reveal the potential of AI and new technologies and the importance of quality education as the basis for promoting an inclusive education, an inclusive society, and an inclusive world." In the paper Multimodal Interfaces for Inclusive Learning, Marcelo Worsley<sup>5</sup> (2018) proposes "that the artificial intelligence in education (AIED) community lead the charge in leveraging multimodal interfaces, in conjunction with artificial intelligence, to advance learning interfaces and experiences that are more inclusive." Muneeba Anis<sup>6</sup>(2023) in her study entitled 'Leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Inclusive English Language Teaching (ELT):

Strategies and Implications for Learner Diversity' states that "incorporating AI into ELT has demonstrated to have a major impact on motivation and learner engagement. Learner engagement has been shown to be positively impacted by adaptive instruction, intelligent tutoring systems, gamification, virtual reality, and personalized learning applications. This results in improved motivation and active participation in language learning activities." These findings resonate with the principles of Universal Design Learning.

#### **Research settings:**

(1) **Sample:** The sample of this study is a convenience sample comprising of 20 students of F.Y.B.Ed.

(2) **Tools:** The tools included a rating scale (prepared by the researcher) on utility of AI platforms as perceived by the user, an achievement test on the topic learned by students and anecdotal records maintained by the researcher. The tool was validated by two experts. The achievement test was generated by an AI based platform. However the test was validated by two experts.

(3) **Methodology:** The topics chosen to carry out the study were part of the syllabus for the Interdisciplinary Course Gender, School and Society included in the First Year B.Ed curriculum.

The researcher used the AI platform [magicschool.ai](https://magicschool.ai) which offers variety of options that can help a teacher to create individualised learning plans, generate academic content, summarise or rephrase content like case studies, generate questions based on a video etc. Though the platform has many tools to choose from, the researcher used the tools (a) Academic Content Generator to write a story on the topic. (b) the section Depth of Knowledge (DoK) questions was used to generate questions on the four DoK levels. (c) The section on 'Informational Texts' was used to promote constructivist learning as per the needs of the learner.

The second AI platform used was [curipod.com](https://curipod.com) which was used to prepare interactive slides for presentation. Curipod.com has scope for inbuilt evaluation and an exit ticket where students get personalised AI generated feedback. Students can draw and express their learning. Group discussions can be had in real time and the platform summarises the views in form of word clouds which can be perused for further synchronous and offline discussion. Once the learning material was prepared on the AI platform Curipod, the researcher launched the lesson and students were invited to log in through their devices. The lesson was spread over three lectures of one hour each where the students participated in online as well as offline activities. Curipod offered students the option of expressing their thoughts through text, drawing and poll questions. The AI platform summarised the students' responses in form of word clouds. Students could view peer responses and rate the same.

Formative evaluation was done through the AI platform Curipod through quizzes and an 'Exit Ticket' option. Short assignments given were evaluated using the tool 'Student Work Feedback' on [magicschool.ai](https://magicschool.ai). Thereafter the students' feedback on the use of AI platforms was solicited through a rating scale.

#### **Findings of the Study**

Quantitative data was collected through a five-point rating scale prepared by the researcher to find the utility of AI platforms as perceived by the users. These findings are summarised below.

- (i) 100% participants found that use of AI for learning was interesting.
- (ii) 80% strongly agreed and 20% agreed that they could share their views and thoughts in a stress-free atmosphere on the AI platform.
- (iii) 80% strongly agreed and 20% agreed that critical thinking was promoted due to the AI platform.
- (iv) 100% participants said that participation in the AI generated quizzes was a good learning experience.

(v) 80% strongly agreed and 20% agreed that the prompts supplied by the AI platform helped to go beyond the syllabus.

(vi) 80% strongly agreed and 20% agreed that AI based learning was easy for them.

An achievement test consisting of 10 AI generated MCQs was administered to the students and 100% students scored more than 80% marks.

The researcher monitored the student participation on the various tools of the AI platforms. The researcher's observations are noted below:

- (i) There was **enthusiastic participation** in the learning process. Summaries of views expressed by students were presented by an AI generated word cloud and this fostered face to face discussion.
- (ii) Students could **pursue their own learning paths** through the section on 'Information Texts' on the AI platform magicschool.ai. Through this, student chose to learn as per their own needs and interest and were responsible for their own learning based on the prompts provided by the platform.
- (iii) The AI platforms used could generate stories and case studies for learning. This brought an **element of creativity** in the learning process. The Depth of Knowledge (DoK) questions generated by the AI platform were aligned to different levels of Bloom's taxonomy making the evaluation process very comprehensive.
- (iv) **Course Learning Outcomes** associated with the topic could be mapped to student learning through inbuilt evaluation in form of polls and exit ticket option. Student responses in form of short answer questions were fed into the AI platform which gave feedback based on a rubric created by the researcher.
- (v) AI tools offer **multiple ways to express one's learning**. This makes the learning process personalised and inclusive. The researcher found that integration of art to depict thoughts was useful to express one's feelings and aspirations.
- (vi) The AI platforms allow students to respond to what their peers have expressed and this helps to **nurture an inclusive learning community** respectful of each other's views.
- (vii) The researcher found that using AI to design learning experiences was **time saving**. However, the 80:20 approach can be followed which means the draft produced by the AI platform constitutes 80% of the designing and the remaining 20% is the final touch given by the teacher using his/her own experience and acumen. The researcher found that the AI generated learning activities need to be customised to Indian situation. Also, generative AI depends on how the AI model has been trained, hence one also needs to watch out for bias and accuracy.

### Discussion of the findings of the study

The findings of the study are examined in the light of the research questions framed.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) platforms can be used to promote learner engagement suited to learner's abilities and needs. AI tools like 'Informational Texts' were followed by two AI generated questions or prompts. The learner had the freedom to choose one of the questions and pursue further learning. There is also an arrangement to ask specific questions as per the learner's needs and interest and AI platforms provide further learning content or resources based on the questions.

AI platforms support ways of representing content that are aligned to learner's needs by offering variety of ways for the learner to learn. Students can then choose from these learning experiences to learn in a way that suits their learner profile. Eg A learner with high linguistic intelligence may choose to learn through a story and someone with high logical intelligence may prefer statistical data or case studies for analysis.

AI platforms can be optimally utilised to allow learners express their learning in their unique way as learner inputs are accepted in form of text, drawings and polls. Feedback is instantaneous. Some AI platforms can offer feedback on subjective types responses as well which are evaluated according to a pre-decided rubric.

Some concerns regarding the use of AI in education are whether it will kill natural creativity and make learners passive as generative AI can give ready answers and assignments. The solution to this is that the teacher uses AI thoughtfully to plan learning activities which are customised to the learners. AI can be dovetailed into face-to-face classroom experiences so that the human interaction is not neglected. Students can be trained regarding ethical use of AI so that they use it for promoting self-directed learning. Niti Aayog's Approach Document for AI<sup>7</sup> can be accessed by teachers to see how ethical principles need to be considered when using AI.

In conclusion, it may be said that AI is helpful to design customised learning experiences, promote constructivist learning and nurture learning communities that respect learner diversity. AI is time saving and augments the contribution of teachers. When used judiciously as part of Blended Learning, AI can help to enhance the quality of learning.

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## EXPLORING THE PERSPECTIVES OF STUDENT-TEACHERS ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

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### **Abstract**

*In the ever-evolving landscape of education, the paradigm of inclusive education has emerged as a critical component in fostering diverse and enriching learning environments. This qualitative inquiry delves into the perspectives of student-teachers, offering a nuanced exploration of their perceptions and experiences regarding inclusive education. The study investigates a number of aspects of inclusive education, such as perceived benefits, obstacles faced, and effects on children with unique needs and their classmates who are usually developing. The study also explores the role that student-teacher support systems and training play in creating an inclusive learning environment. Through acquiring understanding of the viewpoints and encounters of student-teachers, the study seeks to add significant insights to the current conversation around inclusive education. The study employs qualitative research method to capture the diverse voices and insights of student-teachers engaged in the discourse of inclusive education. Through an inductive approach, themes and patterns emerge, shedding light on the complexities and nuances inherent in their understanding and practice. The findings contribute valuable insights to the broader field of teacher education and inclusive practices. Understanding the perspectives of the student-teachers not only enriches our comprehension of the challenges and opportunities they encounter but also informs future strategies for preparing educators to embrace and champion inclusive education.*

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### **Introduction**

“An education system that includes all students, and welcomes and supports them to learn, 1 whoever they are and whatever their abilities or requirements. This means making sure that teaching and the curriculum, school buildings, classrooms, play areas, transport and toilets are appropriate for all children at all levels. Inclusive education means all children learn together in the same schools.” - September 2017- UNICEF

Inclusive education aims to remove obstacles that can prevent some students from having the best possible learning experiences and questions the idea of dividing students into ability based groups. This method fosters empathy, understanding, and a more engaging educational experience for all parties involved, making it useful not only for students with disabilities but also for the entire school community. The responsibility to implement inclusive education rests on the shoulders of the teachers to a great extent. Teachers are the pioneers of inclusive education and its implication as the ground level. They need to have the optimum knowledge, optimistic attitude and open mindedness for the acceptance of the

diversity. When we think about diversity in class we also have to think about the students' diverse needs and the need of inclusion at the same time. The teacher should be well-equipped with the knowledge of different approaches, strategies and techniques of inclusion. They should also be able to communicate a positive attitude for inclusion to the parents of neurotypical children, so that they accept the process and also make their children emotionally ready for acceptance and cooperation for inclusion. Hence it calls for the need to assess the opinions, attitudes and readiness of the teachers for inclusive education.

NEP 2020 extends this concept of inclusive education to the diversity regarding cultures, religions, languages, gender identities, etc. It has also acknowledged the need of improvements in the areas like training teachers in special education for specific disabilities, infrastructural improvements regarding assistive and adaptive measures,

**Need of the study:**

Many studies have been done to find out the perspectives of teachers on inclusive education, challenges and benefits of inclusive education, preparing teachers for inclusive education but there are very few studies done to find out the perspectives of student teachers. The researcher feels that it is more important to know the perspective at an earlier stage so that remedial measures can be taken well in time.

**Title of the study:**

“Exploring the perspectives of student-teachers on inclusive education: A qualitative inquiry”

**Research questions:**

Do the student teachers understand the concept of inclusive education? Are they ready to implement inclusive education in their school?

**Aim of the study:**

To study the perspectives of student-teachers on inclusive education.

**Objectives of the study:**

1. To find out the awareness of the student teachers about inclusive education.
2. To find out their willingness towards inclusive education.
3. To find out about the challenges they anticipate in inclusive education.
4. To suggest measures to improve the perspective of student teachers.

**Review of related literature:**

1. Student teachers' beliefs about the teacher's role in inclusive education: Vlatka Domović, et.al (2016)  
Examining the fundamentals of student teachers' professional views of their role in teaching both students with developmental disabilities and mainstream students is the primary goal of this study. An analysis was conducted to determine how different people's perceptions of the general teacher job and the role of teachers in the education of students with developmental disabilities differed. The findings about the dominant belief about the role of the teacher in teaching students with developmental difficulties seemed to be self-centered orientation, whereas the results about the dominant belief about the role of the teacher in teaching mainstream students show that the teacher is a transmitter of knowledge. At all study levels, there were no disparities between the student instructors.

2. Inclusive Education Through the Eyes of Teachers: Simsek U and Bahadır Kılcan, 2019



This research was conducted in order to determine the present situation, as experienced by teachers from different branches, serving in secondary schools of the Ministry of National Education in Aksaray, regarding inclusive education. In the analysis of the data, content analysis methodology was utilized. In the research, it was found that teachers have a general idea about what inclusive education is, and that they think inclusive education is necessary and has advantages and disadvantages according to the way it is applied, that teachers and students should have in-service training to improve of inclusive education, and that improving schools' physical opportunities was a factor in improving inclusive education.

3. Measuring teacher efficacy to implement inclusive practices: Umesh Sharma, et.al (2011)

The purpose of this study was to develop an instrument to measure perceived teacher efficacy to teach in inclusive classrooms. An 18-item scale was developed on a sample of 607 pre service teachers selected from four countries (Canada, Australia, Hong Kong and India). Factor analysis of responses from the sample revealed three factors: efficacy in using inclusive instruction, efficacy in collaboration and efficacy in dealing with disruptive behaviours. The alpha coefficient for the total scale was 0.89. Alpha coefficients for the three factors ranged from 0.85 to 0.93. Reliability analysis for the total scale as well as factors for each country suggested that the scale provides a reliable measure of pre-service teacher perceptions of self efficacy for inclusion across different countries.

4. Inclusive practices in an independent private school: Insight into teachers' perspectives, beliefs and practices: Ashwini Tiwari (2023)

The study explores the perspectives of independent private schoolteachers in India on the inclusion of students with special educational needs in general education classrooms. It reveals teachers' limited knowledge, challenges in implementing full inclusion due to inconsistent guidelines, knowledge gaps, and lack of collaboration between teachers and parents. The study emphasizes the importance of professional development sessions for achieving full inclusion.

5. Overcoming barriers to inclusion in education in India: A scoping review: Lindsey Gale, et.al.

A scoping review by Indian and Australian researchers aimed to identify successful interventions supporting inclusive education in India. The review included evidence from grey literature sources and analyzed interventions for engaging, training, resourcing, and monitoring. The findings highlighted the importance of an appreciative, asset-based, and collaborative approach to work with teachers and school leaders. These findings have implications for capacity-building with school leadership and teaching staff.

**Methodology of the study:**

The current study explores student instructors' perceptions on inclusive education. A qualitative method is used to ascertain the various facets of the student teachers' viewpoints. A descriptive survey of 38 student teachers is used to collect the data. The focus of data was the perceptions of student teachers about inclusive education, their perspectives about inclusive education, their opinions regarding the various ways to promote acceptance and implement inclusive education. Keywords were deduced from the responses to frame common responses. The researcher has been able to analyze the results and draw conclusions thanks to a qualitative analysis.



**Sample of the study:**

The sample consisted of 38 student teachers out of which 10 student teachers are pursuing D.El.Ed. course, whereas 28 are pursuing B.Ed. Course.

**Technique:**

The simple random sampling technique was used for the selection of sample.

**Limitation of the study:**

The study is limited to 38 student- teachers only.

**Tools used for data collection:**

A descriptive questionnaire was used for data collection.

**Data Collection:**

The tool was administered on 38 student- teachers.

**Analysis of data:**

A Qualitative analysis of data was done.

**Findings and interpretations:**

What does inclusive education mean?

Sr.No.	Responses	Percentage of respondents
1.	All the children in same school	74%
2.	Equal opportunities	26%

**Table 1.1**

When the student teachers were asked the meaning of inclusive education, 74% of the respondents said that imparting education to all children in the same school regardless of any different abilities the children may have. While 26% said that inclusive education means providing equal educational opportunities to all the children regardless of their different abilities. There were some responses which included both the keywords.

So it can be said that the student- teachers have fair knowledge about inclusive education.

How is inclusive education different from a normal one?

Sr.No	Responses	Percentage of respondents
1.	Equal opportunities	63%
2.	Actively embracing diversity and ensuring the participation and success of all students	37%

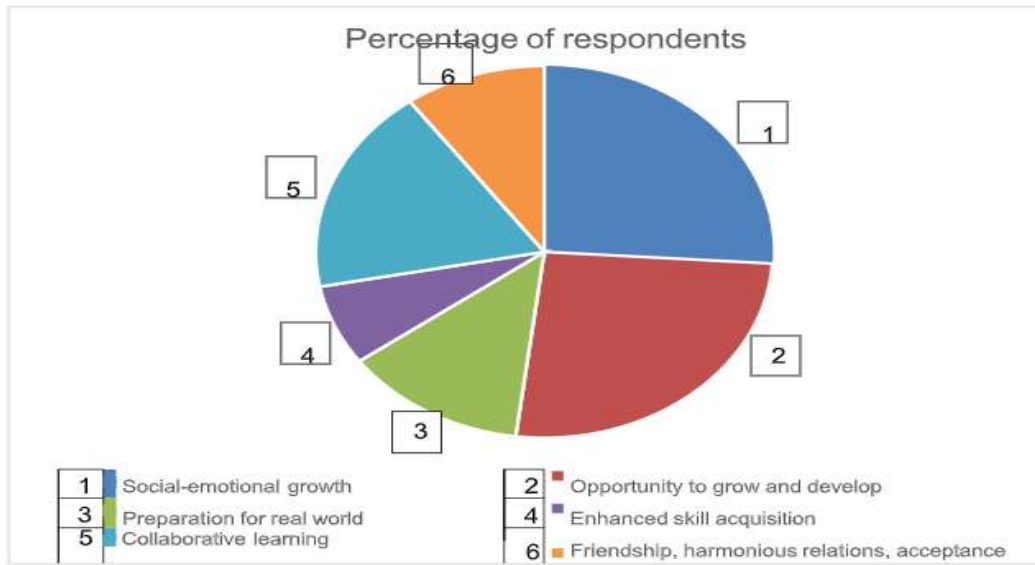
**Table 1.2**

When asked how the inclusive class is different from the normal one, 63% respondents said that in inclusive education equal opportunities are given to all children regardless of their different abilities, whereas 37% respondents said that inclusive class embraces the diversity in the students unlike a normal class and the classroom environment is supportive. The responses show that the student teachers can differentiate between inclusive education and a normal one.

What advantages do you see in implementing inclusive education?

<b>Sr.No.</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents</b>
1.	Social-emotional growth	26%
2.	Opportunity to grow and develop	26%
3.	Preparation for real world	13%
4.	Enhanced skill acquisition	7%
5.	Collaborative learning	18%
6.	Friendship, harmonious relations, acceptance	10%

**Table 1.3**



26% of student teachers felt inclusive education will be beneficial for the children's Social and emotional growth, 26% thought that it would give them opportunity to grow and develop, 13% also thought that inclusive education would prepare all the children for the real world and 7% thought it would help in enhanced skill acquisition. The student teachers have a very optimistic perspective on inclusive education and they look forward to a better overall development and mainstreaming of the special children and social and emotional development of the normal children.

What challenges do you anticipate when implementing inclusive education?

Sr.No.	Responses	Percentage of respondents
1.	Lack of proper education for teachers	16%
2.	Lack of resources	29%
3.	Involvement of the community	12%
4.	Social stigma	29%
5.	Infrastructural facilities	14%

**Table 1.4**

16% student-teachers thought that lack of proper education for teachers is the biggest challenge for the implementation of inclusive education. 29% thought lack of resources as the challenge and 29% thought social stigma as a challenge in the implementation of inclusive education. It was also realized by 12% of the respondents that unless acceptance is developed in the community and the community gets involved

in the process of inclusion, inclusive education will not be smooth and easy for children, parents as well as teachers. At the same time a lack of infrastructural facilities was the matter of concern for 14% of the respondents.

So the researcher found out that there are many things to be dealt with before implementing inclusive education, like first of all the attitudes of the parents of special children should be made positive and ready to get involved in the inclusive education process of their child. Secondly the parents of normal children should be sensitized towards the inclusion of children with special needs. The most important factor in the education system – the teacher- should be well-equipped with the right attitude, knowledge and skills required for the implementation of inclusive education. One more matter of concern is the large class size which makes it difficult for the teacher to pay personal

attention to each and every student. So some curricular changes in teacher education and changes in education policies can address these challenges.

How can you promote acceptance and understanding in inclusive education?

Sr.No.	Responses	Percentage of respondents
1.	By providing opportunities for the creation of awareness about the diversity.	42.10%
2.	By fostering sense of community	10.52%
3.	By inculcating sensitivity	13.13%
4.	By providing equal opportunities to everyone	12.08%
5.	By promoting acceptance	14.28%
6.	By providing training to teachers	7.89%

**Table 1.5**

42.10% of the student teachers felt that they can promote acceptance and understanding in inclusive education by providing opportunities for creating awareness about diversity, 10.52% felt, by fostering a sense of community, 13.13% - by inculcating sensitivity, 12.08% - by providing opportunities for students to learn about different cultures, customs, and traditions, and celebrating them. , 14.28% - by promoting acceptance, while 7.89% felt that acceptance and understanding of inclusive education can be promoted by providing training to teachers.

What additional resources or training do you feel would enhance your ability to implement inclusive education successfully?

Sr.No.	Responses	Percentage of respondents
1.	Training for teachers	66%
2.	Better infrastructure	32%

**Table 1.6**

66% of student teachers thought education and training of teachers would enhance the teachers' ability and 32% of the student teachers thought that the provision of assistive and adaptive facilities for the

children with special needs would enhance the teacher's ability to implement inclusive education successfully.

Majority of the student teachers felt that teachers' training will enhance their abilities to implement inclusive education successfully while a supportive infrastructure is also an important contributory factor.

**Conclusion:**

1. The researcher draws the conclusion that student instructors have a positive attitude toward inclusive education based on the aforementioned data.
2. They demonstrate a solid understanding of the inclusive education idea, but they also acknowledge their lack of proficiency in putting it into practice in the classroom.
3. They emphasize the urgent need for curriculum upgrades in addition to legislative adjustments to increase teacher competency and make schools more inclusive and well-equipped for teaching a diverse student body.

**Suggestions:**

1. Parents, students, and instructors should be made aware of the importance of creating a welcoming atmosphere for children with special needs by inclusive schools.
2. Pre-service and in-service training ought to be provided to teachers to improve their proficiency in implementing inclusive education.
3. The facilities in inclusive schools should be able to accommodate students with special needs and offer them assistance and adaptation.

**Recommendations :**

- 'The researchers recommend that further study can be done on the perspectives of teacher educators, as the responsibility to prepare future teachers for inclusive education partially rests on their shoulders
- 'Further research can be done on the policy changes that have been done in NEP2020.
- 'The curricular changes required is also another field of research that can be done in future.
- 'The present study is limited to 38 student teachers limited in the western Mumbai region. The same can be extended to other areas.

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## EXPLORING THE LANDSCAPE: HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS' ATTITUDE AND CONFIDENCE LEVEL TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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### Abstract

*In inclusive settings, a teacher's attitude and confidence are paramount. A teacher's positive attitude towards inclusive education cultivates an environment of acceptance and understanding, promoting inclusivity. On the other hand, confidence enables teachers to adapt strategies effectively, catering to diverse learning needs. The synergy of a positive attitude and confidence in a teacher contributes significantly to the success of inclusive education, ensuring that students with diverse backgrounds and abilities have holistic development and meaningful learning experiences. The present study focused on exploring the attitudes of high school teachers towards inclusive education in relation to their level of confidence to teach in inclusive settings. A sample of 150 teachers was selected through the random sampling technique using tools, namely the Attitudes towards Inclusion Scale (AIS) and a self-prepared questionnaire, to measure the confidence of high school teachers to teach in inclusive settings. The results indicate that: a) 84.7% of high school teachers had a highly positive attitude towards inclusive education b) there was no significant difference in the attitude of high school teachers towards inclusive education in relation to their gender, residential background, and type of educational institution; c) however, a significant difference was found in the confidence level of high school teachers to teach in an inclusive classroom in relation to their gender, residential background, and type of educational institution; and d) also, a positive correlation was found between the teachers attitude towards inclusive education and their confidence level to teach in inclusive classrooms. Suggestions and recommendations are provided to effectively implement inclusive education at the high school level, which would help in the empowerment process.*

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**Keywords:** Inclusive Settings, Teachers, High School, Attitude, Confidence Level

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### INTRODUCTION

The term 'inclusive education' refers to educating students with or without special educational needs in regular curriculum classrooms (Rafferty et al., 2001). Farrell's (2000) concept incorporates a viewpoint that is more focused on the learner. It claims that 'students with SEN should take a full and active part in school life, are a contributing member of the school & institution and is seen as an integral member'. The Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (United Nations, 2006) most recently ensures that people with disabilities have the right to an inclusive education system at all levels. By endorsing the Convention, countries try to provide "effective individualized support measures in environments that promote academic and social development, consistent with the target of full inclusion" (United Nations, 2012).

Inclusive Education, a paradigm aimed at fostering equal opportunities for all learners, stands as a pivotal advancement in contemporary pedagogical landscapes. As catalysts for transformative educational experiences, the inclusion of learning settings is significantly shaped by teachers. Understanding their attitudes towards inclusive education and the confidence they possess in its application is paramount for

enhancing the effectiveness of inclusive practices. By delving into this relationship, research aspires to contribute valuable insights that inform educational policies, teacher training programs, and ultimately, the realization of an inclusive educational ethos that accommodates the diverse needs of every learner. The paradigm of inclusive education is a cornerstone for creating diverse and equitable learning environments in the ever-evolving landscape of education. Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education and their confidence in modifying instructional methods are important factors that impact the effectiveness of inclusive classrooms. Teachers must navigate a spectrum of learning styles, abilities, and backgrounds as classrooms become more diverse. Studies also show that a large number of educators oppose inclusion because they feel they are unprepared to meet the needs and responsibilities of children with disabilities (Blecker & Boakes, 2010; Brackenreed, 2011; Fuchs, 2010). As general education teachers take on the responsibility of fulfilling the educational requirements of all of their pupils, inclusive school classrooms are diversifying. They must therefore possess the knowledge, abilities, and confidence necessary to assist students with a range of learning requirements. This research aims to study the interplay between teachers' attitudes and their levels of confidence in implementing inclusive education practices.

### **REVIEWS OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Numerous investigations have been carried out regarding the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education in various contexts at the global level. Some of the pertinent studies are mentioned here. Gandhi, Rani, and Rani (2020) studied examined elementary school teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education in government and private schools according to the schools' locations and gender. The results of the study demonstrated that private teachers had a more positive attitude toward inclusive education than their government primary school counterparts. On gender and school location, there was no discernible difference in the opinions of primary school teachers on inclusive education for both schools. Hazarika (2020) investigated high school teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. According to the survey, the high school instructors in Sivasagar have a very positive outlook on inclusive education. Kaur (2020) researched educators' perspectives on inclusive education. The findings indicate a significant distinction in the attitudes toward inclusive education between government and private educators. A significant difference in the attitudes of male and female educators on inclusive education. Regarding inclusive education, a significant difference has been observed between teachers in urban and rural areas.

Narang (2019) conducted research on high school teachers' perspectives on inclusive education. The survey found that high school teachers' attitudes on inclusive education are the same regardless of their location or gender. Sharma (2019) evaluated teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education based on their disability, age, gender, training, experience, and teaching experience. Overall, it was found that teachers had positive sentiments regarding inclusive education. Gender differences in attitudes toward inclusive education reveal that men teachers had much more positive opinions than female teachers. In the same way, younger teachers are perceived as more positive than older ones. Additionally, students view experienced and qualified teachers more favorably than unskilled and inexperienced ones. Furthermore, compared to other groups of instructors, teachers with certain disabilities are reported to have more positive and favorable attitudes. Kalita (2018) investigated educators' perspectives on inclusive education. The majority of teachers had an above-average attitude toward inclusive education, according to the study's findings. The attitudes of male and female secondary teachers about inclusive education differ significantly. In the Purulia area of West Bengal, Paramanik and Barman (2018) investigated the attitudes of secondary school teachers regarding inclusive education. The results of the study show that secondary school teachers' attitudes regarding inclusive education are neither positive nor negative. The results of this survey also show that teachers in urban and rural areas have quite different attitudes toward inclusive



education. Additionally, this study shows that secondary school teachers' attitudes about inclusive education are similar for both male and female teachers.

Sharma (2012) investigated the attitudes and confidence of pre-service teachers to teach in inclusive classrooms after completing an inclusive education course. It was discovered that after the training, participants' attitudes and degree of confidence in their ability to teach in inclusive classrooms had considerably improved. By the end of the program, most participants felt they were ready to teach in inclusive classrooms, but many weren't sure if they would get the necessary support. Investigating pre-service teachers' confidence levels in teaching students with special needs. A research investigation conducted in 2011 by Jung, Cho, and Ambrosetti examined 287 respondents. The results demonstrated that students pursuing a special education teaching credential had greater confidence than those pursuing a secondary or elementary education degree. Furthermore, compared to elementary teacher candidates, secondary teacher candidates expressed higher levels of confidence. Sadler (2005) additionally examined at teachers' degrees of confidence. According to the study, none of the teachers (N=89) claimed to have much expertise in working with children who struggle with speech and language disorders. Sixty-three percent of teachers reported feeling "not at all confident" or "not very confident." Teachers' trust in their abilities and the caliber of support resources available for integrated education was found to be lacking, according to Kamath and Johalat (1992). The majority of educators indicated a readiness and aptitude for learning, indicating a critical requirement for improved teacher training inputs as a precondition for the effective execution of integrated education.

#### **NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY**

Since, the last few decades, it has been observed that schools and classrooms are evolving to be more inclusive in nature, and that has even changed living in societies and communities. According to inclusive education philosophy, students with special needs should be included in mainstream classrooms in accordance with their needs, instead of segregating children with special needs in special classes and special schools. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the educational system to incorporate students with special needs for effective educational experiences. Many barriers, such as those related to infrastructure, instructional methodologies, transportation, money, attitude, etc., make it difficult to implement inclusive education effectively. The choices that students make about their education are influenced by their teachers' attitudes in addition to what occurs in the classroom. Regrettably, a lot of educators oppose allowing students with a range of diverse needs to attend their classes. Their attitudes differ based on the kinds of disabilities, how teachers see disabilities, and the labels that are given to students with disabilities. A teacher's attitude influences the nature of the interaction between students and teachers, as well as the students' success and achievements. So it is important that teachers have a welcoming attitude and are sensitive towards children with disabilities in regular classrooms. While teachers' attitudes are significant as potential indicators of the success or failure of inclusion, their knowledge, skills, teaching efficacy, and confidence level to teach in inclusive settings and expertise are as crucial. Understanding how crucial it is to include children with some need (CWSN) in regular curriculum schools, the NPE 2020 framework comprises comprehensive provisions for CWSN education in their local schools and for providing them with an appropriate learning environment. The current study focuses on finding out high school teachers' attitudes on inclusive education, and their efficacy and level of confidence.

#### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The research objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To study the overall attitude of high school teachers towards inclusive education.
2. To find out the difference in the attitude of high school teachers towards inclusive education in relation to their gender, residential background, and type of educational institution.

3. To find out the difference in teachers' confidence level to teach in an inclusive classroom in relation to their gender, residential background, and type of educational institution
4. To analyze the relationship between the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education and their level of confidence to teach in inclusive classrooms.

### **HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY**

The hypotheses of the study are as follows:

1. There will be no significant difference in the attitude of male and female high school teachers towards inclusive education.
2. There will be no significant difference in the attitude of urban and rural high school teachers towards inclusive education.
3. There will be no significant difference in the attitude of private and government high school teachers towards inclusive education.
4. There will be no significant difference in the confidence level of male and female high school teachers to teach in an inclusive classroom.
5. There will be no significant difference in the confidence level of urban and rural high school teachers to teach in an inclusive classroom.
6. There will be no significant difference in the confidence level of private and government high school teachers to teach in inclusive education.
7. There will be no significant relationship between teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education and their level of confidence to teach in inclusive classrooms.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This was a descriptive study with participants drawn using simple random sampling. Government and private high schools from Jammu City were selected for the study. An online survey was conducted to collect quantitative data. A questionnaire prepared as a Google form was mailed to a total of 150 high school teachers. The participants were teachers who were teaching classes 9th and 10th in Jammu city.

### **SAMPLE OF THE STUDY**

The population of the present study was high school teachers who were teaching 9th and 10th class students in government and private high schools in Jammu City of J&K State affiliated to J&K Board of School Education. A Sample of 150 high school teachers was selected for the conduct of the present study.

### **TOOLS USED**

For the proposed investigation, the researcher used the following tools:

Attitudes towards Inclusion Scale (AIS):

An attitude towards Inclusion Scale (AIS) developed by Sharma & Jacobs (2016) is designed to measure participants' attitudes towards Inclusive Education. The attitude scale contains 10 statements regarding Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. The internal validity and reliability of the scale is 0.74.

Tool for measuring 'Teachers Confidence Level in Inclusive Setting'

No specific tool was available to quantify the confidence level of high school teachers to teach in inclusive settings for the present investigation; therefore a self-prepared questionnaire which consist of 25 items and had four dimensions namely (i) Teacher's perception about children with special needs. (ii) Teacher's confidence towards themselves in dealing with Children with some needs. (iii) Teacher's confidence towards evaluating students with special needs. (iv) Teacher's confidence towards teaching methodologies. The internal validity and reliability of the tool is 0.80.

**RESULTS OF THE STUDY****Table 1 Levels of attitude among high school teachers towards inclusive education (N=150)**

Raw Scores Range	Attitude Level	Frequency	Percentage
50-70	High	127	84.7%
30-50	Moderate	22	14.7%
0-30	Low	1	0.7%

Table 1 depicts the raw scores range, level of attitude, frequency, and percentage of teachers who had high, moderate, and low positive attitudes toward inclusive education. So, it can be observed from Table 4.1, that about 84.7% of high school teachers had a highly positive attitude towards inclusive education, 14.7% of high school teachers had a moderately positive attitude and the rest of high school teachers i.e. about 0.7% exhibited low positive attitude towards inclusive education.

**Table 2 Mean, Standard Deviation, and t value for scores obtained on the attitude of high school teachers towards inclusive education in relation to their gender**

Gender	N	Mean	S.D	SE <sub>M</sub>	df	t	Level of Significance
Male	44	57.02	6.79	1.02	148	1.50	Not Significant
Female	106	55.20	6.77	0.66			

Table 2 shows that there is no significant difference between male and female high school teachers in their attitude towards inclusive education. So it is clear from the results that both male and female high school teachers have a similar attitude towards inclusive education. Since no gender difference exists in the attitude of high school teachers towards inclusive education, the first hypothesis stating "There will be no significant difference in the attitude of male and female high school teachers towards inclusive education" is accepted.

**Table 3 Mean, Standard Deviation, and t value for scores obtained on the attitude of high school teachers towards inclusive education in relation to their residential background**

Residential Background	N	Mean	S.D	SE <sub>M</sub>	df	t	Level of Significance
Urban	89	55.17	6.68	0.71	148	1.23	Not Significant
Rural	61	56.56	56.56	0.89			

Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference between high school teachers belonging to urban and rural areas in their attitude towards inclusive education. So it is clear from the results that both high school teachers belonging to urban and rural areas have a similar attitude towards inclusive education. Since no difference exists in the attitude of high school teachers belonging to urban and rural areas towards

inclusive education, the second hypothesis stating “There will be no significant difference in the attitude of urban and rural high school teachers towards inclusive education” is accepted.

**Table 4 Mean, Standard Deviation, and t value for scores obtained on the attitude of high school teachers towards inclusive education in relation to their type of educational institution**

Type of Educational Institution	N	Mean	S.D	SE <sub>M</sub>	df	t	Level of Significance
Government	87	55.17	6.68	0.71	148	1.96	Not Significant
Private	63	56.56	6.94	6.94			

Table 4 shows that there is no significant difference between government and private high school teachers in their attitude towards inclusive education. So it is clear from the results that both government and private high school teachers have a similar attitude towards inclusive education. Since no difference exists in the attitude of high school teachers towards inclusive education in relation to their type of educational institution, the third hypothesis stating “There will be no significant difference in the attitude of private and government high school teachers towards inclusive education” is accepted.

**Table 5 Mean, Standard Deviation, and t value for scores obtained on the level of confidence of high school teachers to teach in an inclusive classroom in relation to their gender**

Dimensions of TCLIS	Gender	N	Mean	S.D	SE <sub>M</sub>	df	t	Level of Significance
D1:- Teachers' Perception about Children with Special Need	Male	44	26.45	2.45	0.37	148	2.56	0.05 Level
	Female	106	25.16	2.96	0.29			
D2:- Teachers' Confidence towards themselves in Dealing with Children with special need	Male	44	19.95	3.05	0.46	148	0.64	Not Significant
	Female	106	19.61	2.97	0.29			
D3:- Teachers' Confidence towards Evaluating Student with Special Needs	Male	44	24.25	3.88	0.58	148	0.32	Not Significant
	Female	106	24.46	3.74	0.36			
D4:- Teachers' Confidence towards Teaching Methodologies	Male	44	24.05	3.82	0.58	148	0.45	Not Significant
	Female	106	24.35	3.80	0.37			
Overall Confidence	Male	44	94.70	9.09	1.37	148	0.59	Not Significant
	Female	106	93.58	10.05	1.06			

Table 5 shows that there is no significant difference between male and female high school teachers in their confidence level to teach in an inclusive classroom on three dimensions namely Teachers' Confidence towards themselves in Dealing with children with special needs, Teachers' Confidence towards Evaluating Student with Special Needs and Teachers' Confidence towards Teaching Methodologies. However, there is a significant difference in one dimension i.e.; Teachers' Perception of Children with Special Needs in which male high school teachers have a more positive perception of children with disabilities than female high school teachers. Moreover, the table also indicates that there is no significant difference between male and female high school teachers in the overall confidence level to teach in an inclusive classroom. Thus the fourth hypothesis stating "There will be no significant difference in the confidence level of male and female high school teachers to teach in an inclusive classroom" is partially rejected.

**Table 6 Mean, Standard Deviation, and t value for scores obtained on the level of confidence of high school teachers to teach in an inclusive classroom in relation to their residential background**

Dimensions of TCLIS	Residential Background	N	Mean	S.D	SE <sub>M</sub>	df	t	Level of Significance
D1:- Teachers' Perception about Children with Special Needs	Urban	89	25.12	3.14	0.33	148	2.17	0.05 Level
	Rural	61	26.15	2.32	0.30			
D2:- Teachers' Confidence towards themselves in Dealing with children with special need	Urban	89	19.35	3.19	0.34	148	1.82	Not Significant
	Rural	61	20.26	2.58	0.33			
D3:- Teachers' Confidence towards Evaluating Student with Special Needs	Urban	89	24.24	4.01	0.43	148	0.64	Not Significant
	Rural	61	24.64	3.41	0.44			
D4:- Teachers' Confidence towards Teaching Methodologies	Urban	89	24.28	3.78	0.40	148	0.08	Not Significant
	Rural	61	24.23	3.84	0.49			
Overall Confidence	Urban	89	92.99	11.29	1.20	148	1.36	Not Significant
	Rural	61	95.26	8.94	1.14			

Table 6 shows that there is no significant difference between high school teachers belonging to urban and rural areas in their confidence level to teach in an inclusive classroom on three dimensions namely Teachers' Confidence towards themselves in Dealing with children with special needs, Teachers' Confidence towards Evaluating Student with Special Needs and Teachers' Confidence towards Teaching

Methodologies. However, there is a significant difference in one dimension i.e.; Teachers' Perception of Children with Special Needs in which high school teachers belonging to rural areas have a more positive perception of children with disabilities than high school teachers belonging to urban areas. Moreover, the table indicates that there is no significant difference between high school teachers belonging to urban and rural areas on the overall confidence level to teach in an inclusive classroom. Thus the fifth hypothesis stating "There will be no significant difference in the confidence level of urban and rural high school teachers to teach in an inclusive classroom" is partially rejected.

**Table 7 Mean, Standard Deviation, and t value for scores obtained on the level of confidence of high school teachers to teach in an inclusive classroom in relation to their type of educational institution**

Table 7 Mean, Standard Deviation, and t value for scores obtained on the level of confidence of high school teachers to teach in an inclusive classroom in relation to their type of educational institutionDimensions of TCLIS	Type of Educational Institution	N	Mean	S.D	SE <sub>M</sub>	df	t	Level of Significance
D1:- Teachers' Perception about Children with Special Needs	Government	87	25.82	3.23	0.35	148	1.39	Not Significant
	Private	63	25.16	2.27	0.29			
D2:- Teachers' Confidence towards themselves in Dealing with children with special need	Government	87	19.86	3.33	0.36	148	0.72	Not Significant
	Private	63	19.51	2.44	0.31			
D3:- Teachers' Confidence towards Evaluating Student with Special Needs	Government	87	25.24	4.15	0.45	148	3.32	0.01 level
	Private	63	23.24	2.82	0.35			
D4:- Teachers' Confidence towards Teaching Methodologies	Government	87	25.43	4.13	0.44	148	4.73	0.01 level
	Private	63	22.65	2.52	0.32			
Overall Confidence	Government	87	96.34	11.63	1.25	148	3.48	0.01 Level
	Private	63	90.56	7.33	0.92			

Table 7 shows that there is no significant difference between government and private high school teachers in their confidence level to teach in an inclusive classroom on two dimensions namely Teachers' Perceptions about Children with Special Needs and Teachers' Confidence towards themselves in Dealing with children with special needs. However, there is a significant difference in two dimensions i.e;

Teachers' Confidence towards Evaluating Students with Special Needs and Teachers' Confidence towards Teaching Methodologies in which government high school teachers are more confident than private high school teachers in using different teaching methodologies and evaluation techniques to teach a student with special needs in an inclusive classroom. Moreover, the table indicates that there is a significant difference between government and private high school teachers in the overall confidence level in teaching in an inclusive classroom. Thus the sixth hypothesis stating "There will be no significant difference in the confidence level of private and government high school teachers to teach in an inclusive classroom" is partially rejected.

**Table 8 Relationship between teachers' attitude towards inclusive education and their level of confidence to teach in inclusive classrooms.**

Pearson's coefficient correlations (r) N=150		
Variables	Attitude	Level of Confidence
Attitude	1	0.16
Level of Confidence	-	1

Table 8 depicts the obtained 'r' value (0.16) between scores obtained on teacher attitude towards inclusive education and their level of confidence to teach in inclusive classrooms of high school teachers that are not significant at both levels of significance. Therefore, it is inferred that there is no significant correlation between teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education and their level of confidence to teach in inclusive classrooms. Hence hypothesis 7, stating that "There will be no significant relationship between teachers' attitude towards inclusive education and their level of confidence to teach in inclusive classrooms" is accepted. Hence, the magnitude of 'r' indicates a negligible but positive correlation between teachers' positive attitude towards inclusive education and their level of confidence to teach in inclusive classrooms of high school teachers.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Attitude towards inclusive education is an active process in which teachers can reduce barriers to mainstream schooling, academic and social achievement of students with or without disabilities. Findings indicated that 0.7% of high school teachers have a low-level attitude towards inclusive education, 14.7% of high school teachers have a moderate attitude towards inclusive education and most of the high school teachers i.e. 84.7% have a highly positive attitude towards inclusive education, and which is similar as reported by Kalita (2018) and Hazarika (2020) that most of the high school teachers have a highly positive level attitude towards inclusive education. However, contrary results were found in studies like Paramanik & Barman (2018) and Singh, Kumar & Singh (2020) where most high school teachers have a moderate level of attitude towards inclusive education.

2. The finding of the study revealed that there was no significant difference between the attitudes of male and female high school teachers towards inclusive education. Similar results were found in the studies such as Kern (2006), Bhakta, Shit (2016), Paramanik, Barman (2018), Jana, Halder (2018), Khan, Basak (2018), Kartikeswar (2019), Narang (2019), Singh, Kumar, Singh (2020), Hazarika (2020). However, contrary results were also found in the studies like Bhatnagar, Das (2013), Kumari (2016), and



Sharma (2019) where male high school teachers were found to be more positive and had favorable attitude towards inclusive education whereas studies by Mahajan (2015), Prasad, Rao (2017), Kalita (2018), Tripathi, Kapri (2019), Kaur (2020) female high teachers found to have a more positive and favorable attitude towards inclusive education.

3. Results indicate that high school teachers belonging to urban and rural areas do not differ in their attitude towards inclusive education. Similar results were found in the studies such as Mahajan (2015), Khan, Basak (2018), Narang (2019), Hazarika (2020). Contrary results were found in studies like Prasad, Rao (2017), Kartikeswar (2019), Tripathi, Kapri (2019), Kaur (2020), Singh, Kumar, Singh (2020) where urban high school teachers were found to be more positive and had favorable attitude towards inclusive education whereas in the study by Paramanik, Barman (2018) rural high school teachers found to have a more positive and favorable attitude towards inclusive education.

4. The study indicates that no significant difference was found between the government and private high school teachers in their attitude towards inclusive education. Similar results were found in the studies such as Bhakta, Shit (2016), Hazarika (2020). Contrary results were found in the studies such as Tripathi, Kapri (2019), Kaur (2020) where private high school teachers were found to be more positive and had favorable attitude towards inclusive education whereas in the study by Mahajan (2015) government high school teachers found to have a more positive and favorable attitude towards inclusive education.

5. A significant difference was found between the confidence level of male and female high school teachers only in one dimension i.e.; Teachers' Perception about Children with Special Needs in which male high school teachers have a more positive perception of children with disabilities than female high school teachers teach in an inclusive classroom. Similar results were found in the study by Kumari (2016) where male school teachers had a higher level of confidence to teach in inclusive settings.

6. The finding of the study also shows that there was a significant difference in the confidence level of high school teachers belonging to urban and rural areas only on one dimension i.e.; Teachers' Perception of Children with Special Needs in which high school teachers belonging to rural areas have a more positive perception about children with disabilities than high school teachers belonging to urban areas to teach in an inclusive classroom. It can be said that high school teachers belonging to rural areas have more confidence levels to teach in an inclusive classroom than in urban areas.

7. The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant difference between the confidence level of government and private high school teachers only on two dimensions i.e.; Teachers' Confidence towards Evaluating Students with Special Needs and Teachers' Confidence towards Teaching Methodologies in which government high school teachers are more confidence than private high school teachers in using different teaching methodologies and evaluation techniques to teach a student with special needs in an inclusive classroom. Moreover, a significant difference was found between the overall confidence level of government and private high school teachers to teach in an inclusive classroom in which government high school teachers are more confident to teach in an inclusive setting than private high school teachers. Thus it can be said that government high school teachers have a higher level of confidence to teach in an inclusive classroom than in a private one.

8. In the present study, a positive but negligible correlation was found between the teacher's attitude toward inclusive education and their confidence level to teach in an inclusive classroom. The result of the present study is contrary to the result found by Kumari (2016) in which a positive and significant correlation between teachers' attitude towards inclusive education with the perceived level of confidence to teach in inclusive classrooms.

## SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Even though a majority of the teachers (84%) in high schools had a highly positive attitude towards inclusive education, awareness, and training programs can be organized for teachers at different levels in schools to teach in inclusive settings.

2. The result of the study shows that high school teachers belonging to rural areas had higher confidence levels to teach in inclusive education. So, the Department of School Education and schools should organize in-service training programs for teachers belonging to urban areas about inclusive education, inclusive teaching strategies, classroom management, etc. which could help to create awareness about inclusive education in high school teachers enhancing their confidence level to teach in inclusive classrooms. The training needs and expertise of high school teachers belonging to urban areas should also be taken into consideration while framing these awareness programs.

3. The finding of the study shows a positive correlation between teachers' attitude towards inclusive education and their confidence level to teach in inclusive classrooms. Therefore, schools need to focus on the awareness of inclusive education among high school teachers. The research indicates that teachers with high levels of confidence in using inclusive teaching strategies are more likely to make positive changes in the way they teach in the classroom.

4. Results indicate that male high school teachers had a higher confidence level in teaching in an inclusive classroom. Schools should provide an opportunity for female high school teachers to attend seminars, orientation programs, and hands-on practical sessions regarding inclusive education and also conduct visits to special and inclusive schools so that the female high school teachers get oriented about inclusive pedagogies and different resources available and could be used in teaching children with special need which could enhance their efficacy as well as confidence level to teach in an inclusive classroom.

5. Results highlight that government high school teachers are more confident to teach in an inclusive setting, so it is suggested that schools should organize in-service professional development programs for private high school teachers so that they become more confident to teach students with or without disabilities.

6. There is a need for promoting action research projects not only to further the improvement in the curriculum and use of teaching strategies in inclusive classrooms but also to enhance the efficacy and confidence level of teachers to teach in inclusive classrooms.

7. It is imperative to have a nationwide inclusion plan for schools that considers the specific needs of students with disabilities and the readiness of teachers to teach in inclusive classrooms. The plan also requires a multilayered and multidisciplinary steering body that can centrally regulate, coordinate (with various agencies and stakeholders), and monitor the program.

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## **EFFECT OF VISUAL STRATEGIES ON INDEPENDENT FUNCTIONING SKILLS IN CHILDREN WITH AUTISM**

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### **Introduction**

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a lifelong complex neurological disorder. People with ASD have impairments in language and communication, social skills and repetitive/restricted behaviours. Though there are difficulties across these domains, with appropriate intervention, individuals with ASD may acquire a wide range of skills.

Children with autism are visual learners. Temple Grandin, a well known author who has autism, describes what it is like to be a visual learner "I think in pictures. Words are like a second language to me. When somebody speaks to me, his words are instantly translated to pictures". Visual strategies are a collection of tools that add visual information to verbal information. They can be used for various purposes, like helping a student understand a situation or providing a visual prompt for them to do a task independently. The size, format, quantity, and complexity of the information should be based on the individual's needs and skills.

Teaching strategies such as visual schedules and work systems which provide structure support, may be helpful to students on the autism spectrum to complete tasks and deal with transitions with ease.. Though these strategies may be suitable for students with ASD, a lot more research focusing on the usage of these strategies by teachers in mainstream classrooms is required.

Visual strategies should be tailor-made to every individual child's specific needs and preferences. Some individuals may respond better to photographs, while others may prefer symbols or written words. It's essential to observe and assess the individual's level of understanding and responses, and then adjust these visual strategies to ensure their effectiveness.

Visual activity schedules (VAS) are highly effective tools for individuals with autism as they provide a visual representation of the sequence of activities or tasks they are expected to perform. These schedules offer a structured and organized framework that supports an understanding of expected tasks and independence. The Visual Activity Schedule book is usually a small book, which is spiral bound with pictures or words on each page that give cues children to perform given tasks, engage in activities, or enjoy rewards. Activity schedules can be very detailed- breaking the task into parts, or they can be general, using one picture/symbol to cue the child to perform an entire task. Independent functioning skills are the key ability that will help children with autism immensely in mainstream inclusive schools. The VAS book therefore gives a head start to the child in functioning independently based on his/her ability.

The child will function independently by following the visual cues and checking off or removing each step as it is completed, individuals can track their progress and gain a sense of accomplishment. This

promotes independence and confidence in completing the activity. Activity schedule enables students with autism

- to achieve independence
- to understand and participate in decisions/ choices about their activities

This paper reports the results obtained from the use of the visual strategy named “Visual Activity Schedule” (VAS) which has a few tasks that a child with autism can be trained to use and perform all the tasks independently after sufficient training. Individual books were created for each child according to the level and functioning capability of the child.

The independent variable is the Visual Strategy (VAS book) and the dependent variable is Independent Functioning skills.

### **Research Question**

Are Visual Activity schedules (VAS) useful in achieving independent functioning skills in children with autism?

### **Objectives**

Objectives of research are as follows:

1. To determine the effectiveness of visual learning strategies namely “Visual Activity Schedule (VAS)” on pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group on the independent Functioning skills of children with autism.
2. To determine the effectiveness of visual learning strategies namely “Visual Activity Schedule (VAS)” on the gain scores of the experimental and control groups on the independent Functioning skills of children with autism.

### **Hypothesis**

The following null hypothesis was formulated for the research

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores on the effectiveness of visual learning strategies namely “Visual Activity Schedule (VAS)” on the independent Functioning skills of children with autism.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test gain scores on the effectiveness of visual learning strategies namely “Visual Activity Schedule (VAS)” on the independent Functioning skills of children with autism.

### **Methodology**

#### **Study Design**

The design used in the study was the Pretest-Posttest Experimental Control group design. The effect of the intervention was seen in the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group. The control group was not given the intervention. Both group cores were taken in the same period before and after the intervention. The data analysis looks at two sets of scores

- (i) The pretest-posttest scores of the experimental group to show the change brought about by the intervention
- (ii) The change in the gain scores of the experimental and control group



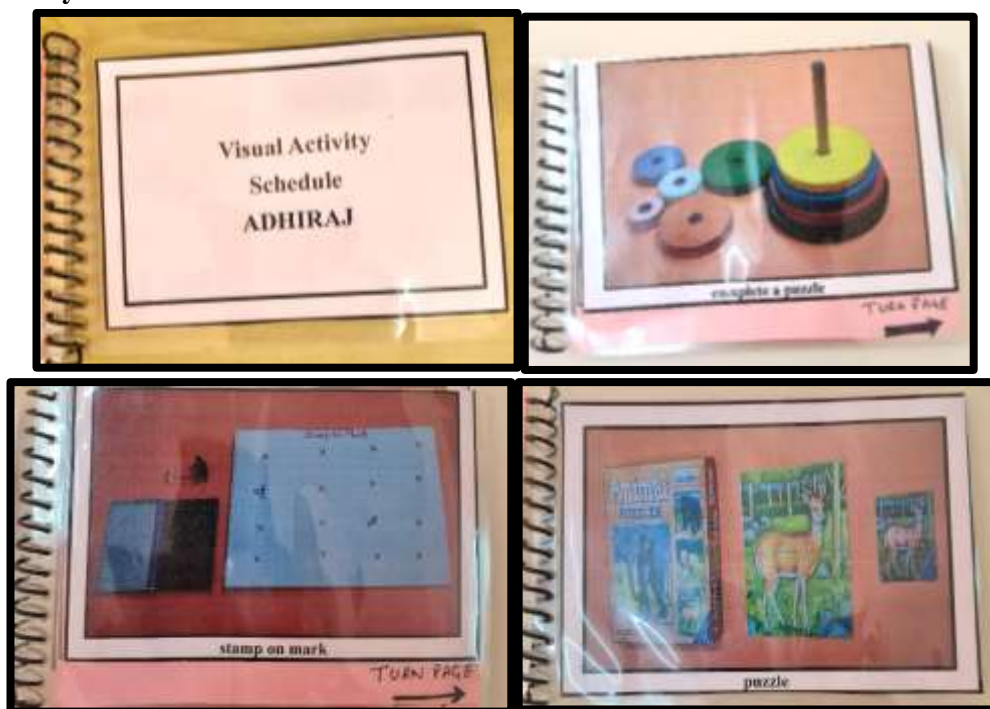
**Sampling**

The intervention was done on 15 children with autism aged between 3 to 8 years of age. The sampling was purposive. All children are attending a special school. To ensure accuracy in scores, students from the control group and experimental group were taken from 2 separate schools in the suburbs that fulfilled the age and diagnostic criteria. 12 sessions of intervention were done.

**Intervention**

There are certain readiness skills required before the children are trained on the Visual Activity Schedule tool. The readiness skills required was to identify picture against the background, match identical objects, picture to object correspondence skills, accept manual guidance, and use materials independently.

The Visual Activity Schedule books were created. Books were created for every child and the children were trained to use the book by a teacher. During the training, the Visual Activity Schedule book was placed in front of the child, and the materials to be used were arranged on a table to the left of the child. During training, the teacher used to stand behind the student and help the child work through the book. The teacher guides the child

**Visual Activity Schedule book**

manually to open the book, point to the pictures, pick up the corresponding activity kept on the table to the left, complete the activity, and repeat the same actions till the entire book of activities is completed.

**Procedure used for data collection**

The procedure of data collection for research study was done as follows (1) A Baseline assessment of the control group (sample: 15) and experimental group (sample: 15). assessment was done on the Visual

Activity Schedule tool. (2) Intervention given to the experimental group with the VAS book prepared for each child (12 sessions for each child). (3) Post-intervention assessment of the control group (sample: 15) and the experimental group (sample: 15). (4) Collation and coding of scores in Excel sheet.

### Scoring

The instruction starts with a Physical prompt (P) where the teacher physically guides the child through the actions. The Physical prompt gradually fades and moves to a correct prompt where the child can perform the actions independently with a correct prompt (C). Four prompt levels were recorded depending on the independence level of the child which is (a) Physical prompt (P) where the child performs with complete manual guidance from the teacher and the score given was 1, (b) Light Touch (LT) where the child performs with a light touch on the elbows of the hands of the child by the teacher where the score given was 2, (c) Shadowing (S) where the teacher stands behind when the child performs and completes the activities independently and the score given was 3, (d) Independent scores (I) where the child performs independently and the score given was 4.

### Data Analysis

The data was analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. Descriptive statistics provided a summary of the main features of the dataset created. Inferential statistics were used to make inferences about the population based on the sample of data. As the sample size was small, the sampling was purposive, and data was not distributed normally, non-parametric testing of the hypothesis was done. The statistic used was the “Wilcoxon Signed Rank” test for comparison of pre-test and post-test scores. For comparison of experimental and control group gain scores, the “Mann-Whitney U” test was performed. Once the statistical analyses were performed, the results were interpreted in the context of the hypotheses. For qualitative data analysis, the reflections of the intervention sessions were noted in a reflective journal. The summary of the reflections has been written as a qualitative data analysis of the study.

### Quantitative analysis of data

#### Testing of Hypothesis 1

Null hypothesis H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group on the effectiveness of “Visual Strategies” namely Visual Activity Schedule (VAS) on the “Independent Functioning skills” of children with autism.

#### Descriptive Analysis of Data

	Sample size	df	Mean	Median	p-value
Pre-test	15	14	1	1	0.001
Post-test	15	14	2	2	

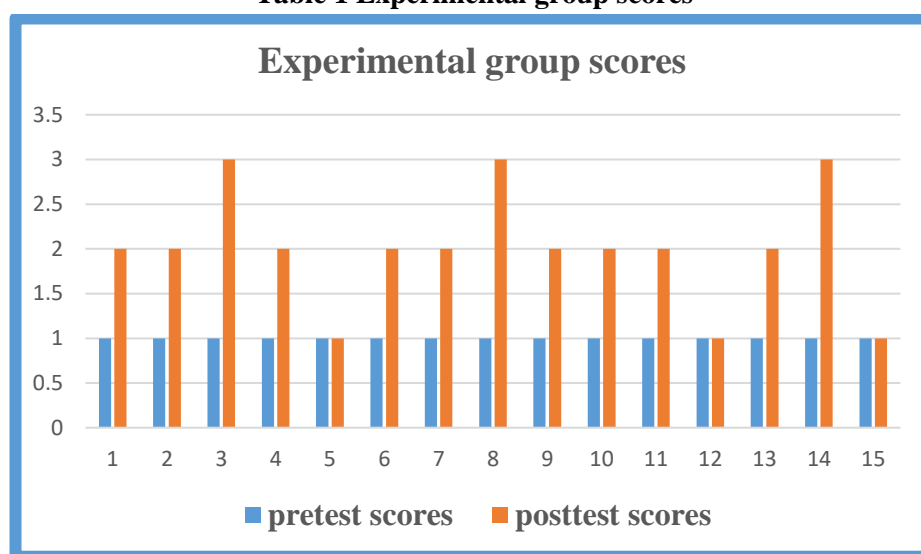
The difference between the mean and median of the pre-test and post-test scores is a significant value of 1. This indicates a notable improvement in the independent functioning skills of the children. The standard deviation of the score difference is 0.6547. The “p-value” is 0.001, which is lower than the significance level of 0.05. This confirms the success of the intervention, as the change in scores between the pre-test and post-test evaluations was significant.

## Inferential Statistics

**Relevant Statistics for the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group receptive language using “Visual Strategy (VAS)” with the “Wilcoxon signed rank” test**

Parameter	“p-value”	Effect size	Z value	Significance	Hypothesis
Value	0.001496	0.92	3.174	Significant	Rejected

**Table 1 Experimental group scores**



## Interpretation

The graph shows that 3 children did not show any progress due to the intervention. This may be because the tasks selected were not suitable, or they required more prolonged training. It could also be that this particular strategy was not suitable for their individual needs.

The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used to measure the magnitude and direction of the difference between pre and post-test scores. The absolute values of the differences were ranked, and the sum of positive and negative differences was calculated. The lower value obtained is known as 'W', the Wilcoxon value. The value of 'W' obtained should be equal to or less than the critical value of 'W' for rejecting the null hypothesis. Results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test showed that there is a significantly large difference between the Before (Mdn = 1, n = 15) and After (Mdn = 2, n = 15) scores, with  $Z = 3.2$ ,  $p = .001$ , and  $r = 0.9$ .

Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that the change in the population is not equal to the expected change in the hypothesis. In other words, the difference between the sample change and the expected change is big enough to be statistically significant. The p-value equals 0.001496, where  $P(x \leq 3.1754) = 0.9993$ . This means that the chance of a type I error (rejecting a correct  $H_0$ ) is small, only 0.001496 (0.15%). The Z test statistic is 3.1754, which is not in the 95% region of acceptance (between -1.96 and 1.96). The observed effect size  $r$  is large, 0.92, indicating that the

magnitude of the difference between the mean ranks is large. The Null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

HA: There is a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group on the effectiveness of visual learning strategies namely Visual Activity Schedule (VAS) on the independent Functioning skills of children with autism.

### Testing of Hypothesis 2

Null hypothesis H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test gain scores of experimental and control groups on the effectiveness of “Visual Strategy” namely Visual Activity Schedule (VAS) on the “Independent Functioning skills” of children with autism.

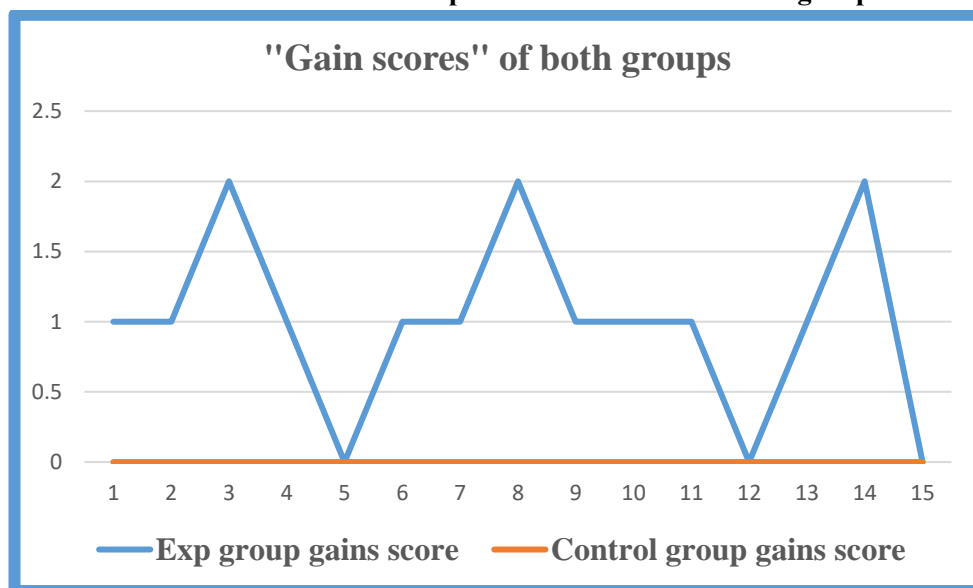
### Descriptive analysis of data

Variable	Group	N	df	Mean	Median	p-value
VAS	Exp. Gain scores	15	14	1	1	<0.001
	Control gain scores	15	14	0	0	

The mean gain and the median gain scores are 1 for the experimental group. The mean and median gain scores for the control group is 0 which means that there has been no achievement in the children in the control group as intervention was not provided to them. The p-value is less than 0.001 which makes the difference  $< 0.05$  which confirms that the null hypothesis is rejected. The intervention scores have been significant.

### Relevant statistics of gain scores of visual learning strategy (VAS) on the independent functioning skills of the experimental group and control group using the Mann-Whitney U test

	Sample N	Mann-Whitney U value	Critical Value of U	z score	p-value	Significance	Hypothesis
Exp. Grp. gain Scores	15	21	59	3.64424	.00028	Significant	Rejected
Cntrl. Grp. gain Scores	15						

**Table 2 Gain scores of “Experimental” and “Control” groups**

The value of U is 21. The U-value is 21. The critical value of U ( $U=59$ ,  $z=3.64424$ ,  $p < .05$ ) which shows the independent functioning skills of the “Experimental group” who received the intervention is far higher than the “Control group” who did not receive the intervention. Therefore, the p-value result is 0.00028 and it is significant as  $p < .05$ . The z-score is 3.64424. The result is significant at  $p < .05$ .

The Null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Alternative hypothesis  $H_A$ : There is a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test gain scores of the “Experimental group” and “Control group” on the effectiveness of “Visual Strategy” namely Visual Activity Schedule (VAS) on the “Independent Functioning skills” of children with autism.

#### **Qualitative analysis of data**

The intervention started with training the students on various tasks. Once they acquired the necessary skills, they were given instructions on using the Visual Activity Schedule book. This involved completing a series of tasks independently. Initially, some students struggled to complete all the tasks, but with continued sessions, they began to improve. Eventually, many students started to enjoy the tasks, and the primary reward of chocolates was replaced with a sense of internal satisfaction from achieving independence.

#### **Conclusions**

The intervention using a visual strategy was successful. All the children did not achieve complete independence in using the strategy. This could be because a greater number of sessions were needed to achieve complete independence. The outcome of this intervention is that children can achieve independence in doing tasks using visual strategies. This is important for them to function in inclusive education schools. More research is required in this area which could strengthen this outcome.

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## SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AS A FACTOR IMPACTING SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND ADVERSITY QUOTIENT OF PRE-TEEN STUDENTS

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### **Abstract**

*A school serves as a foundational institution for students, offering them the opportunity to acquire knowledge and critical thinking skills. In its structured learning environment, students develop essential academic skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic. The school environment, often referred to as school climate, goes beyond the curriculum—it encompasses the design and atmosphere of the institution, significantly influencing students' confidence and success. The school's setting is intricately linked to its values, rules, safety measures, and disciplinary policies, shaping the overall experience for students. It encompasses not only the physical facilities and “classrooms” but also extends to school-based health supports and disciplinary practices. It includes physical facilities, classrooms, school-based health supports, and disciplinary practices. Additionally, the school environment is shaped by relationships among members of the school community, influenced by various factors unique to each educational institution. Investigating factors such as peer interactions, teacher-student relationships, and the overall educational atmosphere. The study seeks to pinpoint key elements that influence the development of essential bits of quotient during this critical developmental stage. This research explores the impact of the school environment on pre-teen students' social, emotional, and adversity quotients. The predictive effects of adversity quotient (AQ) and different psychological factors, such as students' attributions, sense of belonging to the school community, teachers' confidence in their abilities, the type of school, gender, location, and age, were examined to understand their impact on academic achievement. (No Title, 2015)(Marie et al., n.d.). Contrary to expectations, students' attribution and school connectedness do not emerge as significant predictors, while students' adversity quotient and teacher's self-efficacy positively predict academic achievements. The school environment plays a pivotal role in shaping the social, emotional, and adversity quotient of pre-teen students. The study informs strategies for fostering the holistic well-being and resilience of pre-teens, paving the way for more effective educational practices.*

**Key words:** *Pre-teen, School environment, social quotient, emotional quotient and adversity quotient*

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### **INTRODUCTION:**

The pre-teen years are crucial for shaping students' socio-emotional skills, and the school environment plays a pivotal role in this development. Schools provide a vital space for social interaction, teamwork, and empathy building, laying the foundation for lifelong interactions. Research indicates that positive peer relationships, supported by the school atmosphere, contribute significantly to social and emotional well-being (Gest, 2006; Wentzel, 2009). Teacher-student relationships are equally impactful, influencing emotional intelligence and emphasizing the role of educators in creating a nurturing learning environment (Brackett et al., 2011)(Villagonzalo, 2016) Developing the ability to navigate challenges is essential for long-term resilience in pre-teen students. Exposure to a challenging yet supportive learning environment and a culture promoting problem-solving positively shape their adversity quotient (Duckworth et al.,



2007; Benson et al., 2003). Despite existing research, understanding specific elements within the school environment influencing pre-teen students' social, emotional, and adversity quotient remains a need. The study seeks to investigate and analyze the diverse impact of the school environment on these pivotal aspects of pre-teen students' development.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

The pre-teen times are vital for developing social, emotional, and adversity quotient in scholars, with the academy terrain playing a pivotal part. This literature review explores these aspects Social Quotient(SQ), Emotional Quotient( EQ), Adversity Quotient( AQ), and Holistic Approach. Peer relations Positive peer connections in the academy significantly contribute to pre-teens' social chops and overall well-being. The quality of these relations impacts their capability to navigate social complications and form positive connections. Conditioning promoting collaboration, empathy, and conflict resolution is vital for social development ( Bochaver et al., 2022). Bronfenbrenner ( 1979) highlights the impact of proximal surroundings( microsystem) in people's development; thus, scholars ' engagement in the academy will be a function of the commerce between the pupil and his surroundings ( peer group, classroom, family). The impact of peer groups on scholars' stations and actions has been honored, particularly during nonage( Rubin, Bukowski, Parker, & Bowker, 2008). According to some authors( Lynch, Lerner, & Leventhal, 2013), the utmost of the exploration done on the relationship between the variables of peer groups and academic actions understands and highlights immediate peer groups that relate to their academic issues. (Correlation, 2023) schoolteacher- Student connections Good schoolteacher-pupil connections appreciatively impact pre-teens' emotional intelligence and well-being. Emotional support from preceptors is crucial to cultivating emotional well-being. Fostering better schoolteacher-pupil connections is pivotal for positive issues, especially for scholars with lower emotional intelligence(ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ ПРОБЛЕМ МОЛОДІ ТА ОСБИТИ OF ADOLESCENTS ' parlous geste( ACCORDING TO THE check OF LVIV, 2020).

**Challenging Learning Environment:** Navigating challenges is pivotal for long-term adaptability. A probative literacy terrain that balances difficulty, encourages a growth mindset and provides probative guidance fosters the development of the adversity quotient. Problem-working chops, celebrating successes, and connecting literacy to real life enhance the capability to attack challenges( Marie et al.,n.d.). The stations and behaviors developed during the foundational times of introductory education lay the root for unborn-asked behaviors. It's pivotal to identify and understand unique characteristics similar to stations, behaviors, and mindfulness during this period.( Bonell et al., 2011)

**Inclusive Educational Environment:** Holistic development involves physical, intellectual, cognitive, emotional, and social aspects. Wentzel( 2009) emphasizes the interconnectedness of social and emotional factors in pre-teen development. A probative academy setting that integrates social and emotional development enterprise is pivotal for cultivating a well-rounded socio-emotional foundation. The literature constantly underscores the vital part of the academy terrain in shaping the social, emotional, and adversity quotient of pre-teen scholars.

### **NEED OF THE STUDY:**

This study addresses a crucial need in education by examining how the school environment impacts the social, emotional, and adversity quotient of pre-teen students (ages 10-13). This developmental phase is pivotal for establishing foundational socio-emotional skills. Recognizing socio-emotional intelligence as key to academic success and lifelong well-being, the study aims to enhance educational practices for holistic student development. Insights from this research have practical implications for policymakers, enabling the implementation of evidence-based strategies that foster socio-emotional growth. By identifying specific elements within the school environment that influence development, targeted interventions can be established to help students navigate challenges and regulate emotions. This knowledge empowers educators to create supportive learning environments, and the study also emphasizes the potential for increased collaboration between schools and parents, reinforcing socio-emotional skills (Cheng, 2022)].

**AIM OF THE STUDY :**

This study aims to examine the impact of the school environment on pre-teen students, specifically focusing on three key dimensions: social quotient, emotional quotient, and adversity quotient. Students' learning performance and overall development are greatly influenced by their school environment. "School climate" encompasses the collective perceptions of instructors and students regarding the overall atmosphere of the school, shaped by their sustained interactions within it. It directly influences both staff and student morale, as well as their satisfaction levels within the school environment. The primary objective is to identify the specific elements within the school setting that contribute to the development of pre-teen students in these areas. (Marie et al., n.d.)]By exploring how pre-teen interact with others, manage their emotions, and navigate challenging situations within the school context, the study seeks to provide insights that can inform strategies for enhancing the social, emotional, and adaptive skills of pre-teen students. The overarching aim is to provide schools and parents with valuable insights, empowering them to establish a nurturing and supportive environment conducive to the holistic development of pre-teen students.

**OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:**

1. The research aims to explore the role of peer interactions within the school setting in fostering the emotional and social development of pre-teen students.
2. The focus is on highlighting and analyzing the impact of teacher and teacher-student relationships on the development of social quotient, emotional quotient, and adversity quotient among students.
3. To explore the relationship between the overall school atmosphere, exposure to challenges, and the development of an adversity quotient in pre-teen students.
4. To examine the interconnectedness within the school environment and its impact on Social, Emotional, and Adversity Quotients.
5. To examine academic success by establishing the educational relevance of fostering social, emotional, and adversity quotient of pre-teen students.

**VARIABLES:**

**Dependent variables:** Social Quotient, Emotional Quotient, And Adversity Quotient.

**Independent static variables:** Gender, Age, School climate, Peer interaction, Teacher-Student relationship.

**CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION:**

**Pre-teen:** Being a child, especially between the ages of 10 and 12

**Social Quotient:** It refers to a person's ability to understand & and manage interpersonal relationships

**Emotional Quotient:** The ability to understand, use, and manage own emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate, overcome challenges & defuse conflict

**Adversity Quotient:** A person's ability to manage difficulties and transform obstacles into opportunities.

**Gender:** It refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls, and boys that are socially constructed

**School Climate:** School climate refers to the quality and character of school life.

**Peer-Interaction:** Peer interaction means the relationships children have with one another.

**Teacher-Student Relationships:** The interactions between a student and teacher in a classroom with the content that is before them.

**OPERATIONAL DEFINITION:**

**Social Quotient:** Alludes to the estimation and appraisal of an individual's capacity to explore and connect successfully inside social settings. It includes assessing one's social abilities, passionate insights, sympathy, communication capacities, and capacity to construct and keep up connections with others.

**Emotional Quotient:** It could be a capacity wherein a human can reach their objectives after an emotion-eliciting encounter.

**Adversity Quotient:** The capability of a person to confront troublesome circumstances in life.

**Gender:** Refers to the socially developed characteristics related to ladies, men, young ladies, young men, girls, and boys.

**School Climate:** School climate envelops the general quality and climate of school life. Peer-interaction:

**Peer interaction:** Peer interaction implies the connections children have with one another.

**Teacher-Student Connections:** Teacher-student connections are a critical portion of students' interpersonal setting at school that impacts their scholarly development.

**DESIGNS OF THE STUDY**

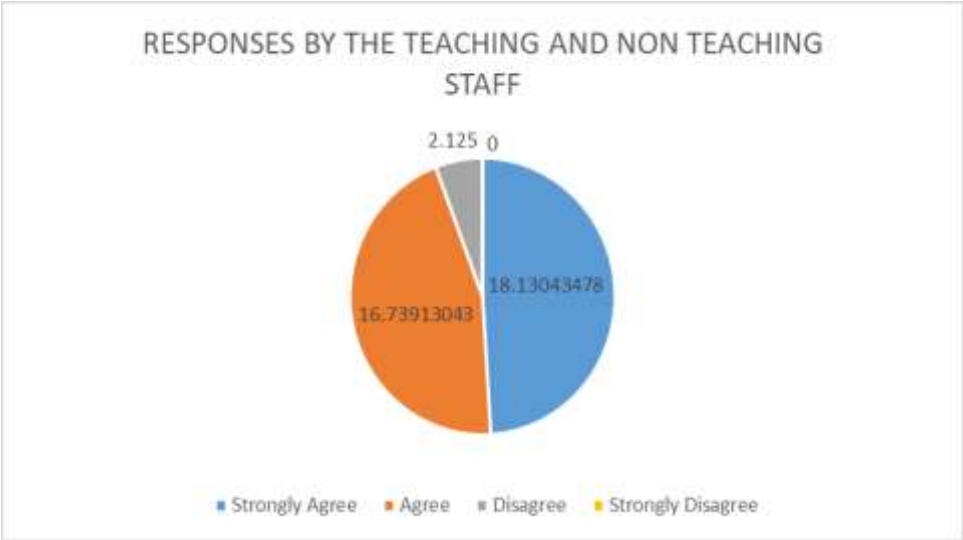
Age: 10-12 years, gender – Male and Female

The sample size for present study will be approximately 200 pre-teen students.

35 Teachers and 5 Non-teaching Staff.

**Tools for the study:**

Self-made questionnaire for students, Google form for Teaching and Non-Teaching staff .



The staff helps in supporting social and emotional quotient, actively communicates achievements, and encourages student leadership to apply school rules.

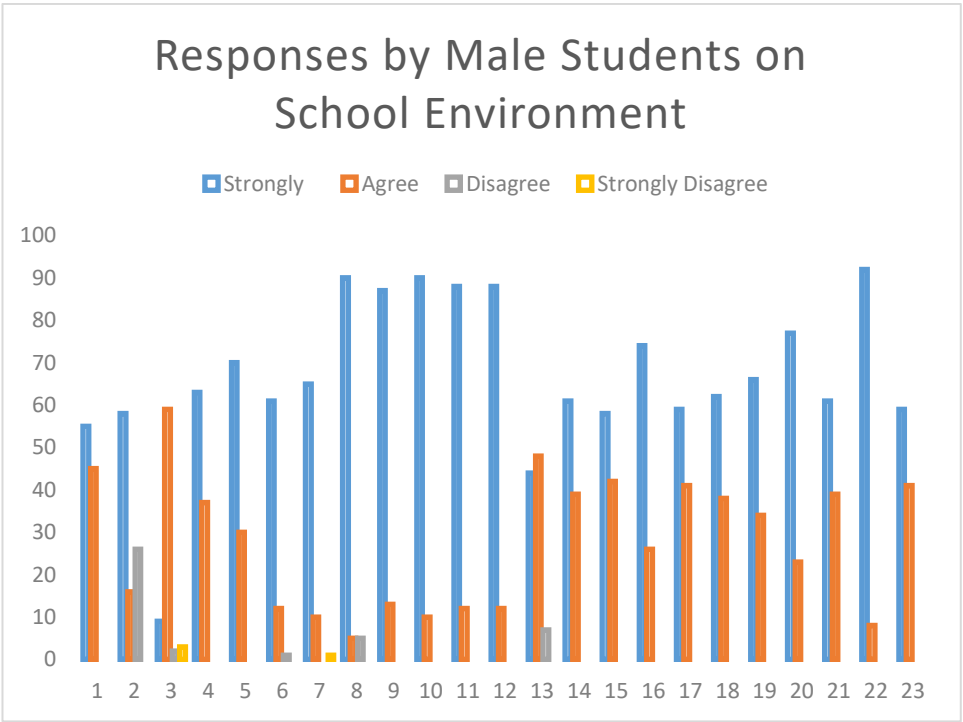
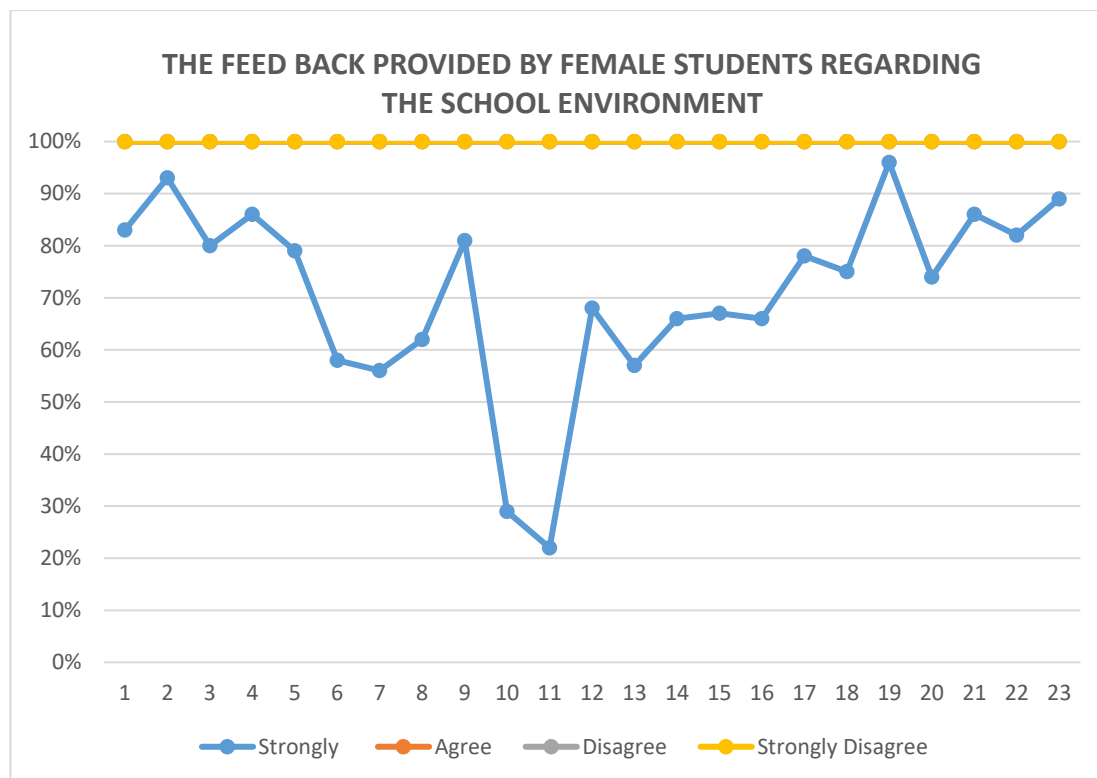


Fig.1

Many perceive teachers as individuals who offer individual attention to students and connect learning to real-life scenarios.

**Fig.2**

In general, students express satisfaction, finding teachers accessible and fair, with consistent and equitable disciplinary measures applied.

#### **INFERENCE :**

The study adopts a survey research design, utilizing questionnaires distributed via Google Forms to gather data from 40 teachers and 200 students. The analysis and evaluation of the data focus on assessing the school environment.

Out of 40 teaching and non-teaching staff, 36 of them find the school environment favorable.

Out of 200 students, 150 students have found the school environment conducive to education. Perceptions and experiences within the school environment are positive indications in areas such as teacher-student relationships, peer relationships, and school rules.

#### **DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY:**

1. The study is confined to a specific geographic region or selected schools, limiting generalization to a broader population.
2. The study focuses on certain school types, excluding potential variations.
3. The implementation of interventions may lack sufficient detail, limiting a thorough evaluation.
4. External factors beyond the school environment, like community or societal influences, are not exhaustively explored, focusing on the immediate school context.

5. The study may not extensively explore the role of technology in the school environment and its potential impact on pre-teen students' socio-emotional development.

**LIMITATION:**

1. Findings may not apply universally due to the specific school or regional focus.
2. Short study duration may not capture long-term socio-emotional development trends.
3. In-depth exploration of parental involvement may be constrained.
4. Detailed intervention assessment may be hindered by limited specifics.
5. Broader external influences beyond the school may not be fully examined.

**CONCLUSION:**

This study illuminates the significant impact of the school environment on the social, emotional, and adversity quotient of pre-teen students. Positive peer interactions, supportive teacher-student relationships, and exposure to a challenging, yet nurturing learning environment play crucial roles in shaping socio-emotional development. The findings underscore the importance of adopting a holistic approach that recognizes the interconnectedness of social and emotional factors. Policymakers can leverage these insights to enhance educational practices, fostering a supportive environment. By fostering emotional intelligence and interpersonal competencies, schools can contribute to the holistic development of pre-teens. In essence, schools have the potential to serve as transformative spaces where pre-teens not only acquire academic knowledge but also develop the social and emotional skills necessary for navigating life's complexities. As educators and policymakers continue to recognize the integral role of the school environment, fostering a positive, inclusive, and supportive atmosphere becomes paramount in ensuring the well-rounded development of pre-teen students. While acknowledging certain limitations, this study provides actionable insights for optimizing the school environment and promoting the overall well-being of pre-teen students.

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## NAVIGATING NEURODIVERSITY: A NARRATIVE ON AUTISM PARENTING

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### Abstract

*This narrative article explores the journey of a parent raising a child with autism within the framework of inclusive education. Through personal experiences and reflections, the article delves into the challenges, triumphs, and strategies employed in navigating the complexities of inclusion. Key themes include the initial discovery of the child's condition, the impact on familial dynamics, challenges faced within educational settings, and the lessons assimilated along the way. The narrative emphasizes the importance of personal narratives in understanding the nuances of inclusive education beyond theoretical frameworks, highlighting the transformative power of lived experiences. Key strategies for fostering inclusion, such as building supportive networks, advocating for systemic change, and addressing unconscious bias, are discussed to provide insights into effective approaches for promoting inclusivity. By amplifying parental perspectives and incorporating lived experiences into inclusive research endeavors, the article advocates for systemic change and promotes a more equitable and welcoming educational ecosystem. Overall, the narrative offers a compelling exploration of the intersection between personal experiences and inclusive education, contributing to the broader discourse on autism, inclusion, and the complexities of parenting a child with special needs.*

**Keywords:** Autism, Inclusive education, Parenting, Personal narrative, Challenges, Strategies

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### Introduction:

Inclusive education stands as a cornerstone of fostering diversity and accessibility within educational environments. However, understanding the intricate challenges and successes within inclusive education necessitates a deeper exploration beyond theoretical frameworks. Personal narratives offer a compelling lens through which to comprehend the lived experiences of individuals navigating the terrain of inclusion. This article embarks on a journey through the eyes of a parent raising a special needs child within the context of inclusion, unraveling the complexities, milestones, and insights garnered along the way.

The journey of special needs children and their families in society and educational settings is often fraught with challenges. From inadequate support systems to societal stigmas, the landscape of inclusion demands a nuanced understanding of the hurdles faced by individuals with diverse needs. This narrative provides a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted journey of a mother raising a child with autism. The narrative delves into personal experiences, challenges faced, and strategies employed to foster inclusion. The paper contributes to the broader discourse on autism, inclusion, and the intersection of personal and professional life.

**Narrative:**

Narrative serves as a vital human activity, acting as a framework through which individuals structure and give meaning to their experiences. It provides a cohesive structure for organizing new experiences and knowledge, allowing individuals to make sense of the complexities of their lives. In the context of exploring a parent's experience navigating the terrain of inclusion while raising a special needs child, narrative becomes an indispensable tool for weaving together the intricacies of the journey. By articulating the challenges, triumphs, and reflections inherent in this experience, narrative not only offers a coherent framework for understanding but also infuses it with deeper significance and meaning. Through the narrative lens, the parent's journey unfolds, revealing the highs and lows, the moments of despair and hope, all intricately woven into a cohesive narrative that provides insight into the lived experience. Thus, narrative emerges as a powerful means of structuring and organizing the complex realities of inclusion, offering a deeper understanding of the nuances inherent in raising a special needs child within this context. Introducing the dynamics of a family with a special needs child sets the stage for a profound exploration of the journey so far. From the initial discovery of the child's condition to navigating the complexities of therapy, medication, and societal acceptance, the narrative delves into the myriad experiences that shape the parent's perspective. Each phase of the journey, from early childhood interventions to school admissions, is meticulously portrayed, highlighting both the challenges and the triumphs that define the trajectory of inclusive education.

**Narrative of autism parent**

"Our family started with immense joy, blessed with a cheerful daughter who lit up our lives. Parenting her was delightful, every milestone a celebration. Then came our son, adding another layer of joy as our daughter embraced her role as a big sister. Life was wonderful for about a year and a half until challenges emerged. As an educator, I noticed unusual signs in my son's development. After consultations and research, we discovered he was on the autism spectrum, marking the beginning of a challenging journey. Dealing with this revelation started with tears and feelings of powerlessness. We explored treatments like therapy and medication to help our son relax and focus. Thankfully, my parents played a crucial role, supporting us during this tough period.

Acceptance from society was difficult. Balancing therapy, medication, and my career felt like a juggling act. Despite the difficulties, with the support of my parents and understanding husband, I persevered. My matured daughter was a strong support and great relief during this time, and I found strength through tears, self-talk, and relying on others.

Our son, initially nonverbal, made progress over time. He began to talk, connect with others, and showed positive signs. The school search proved to be a tumultuous journey, fraught with rejections and disappointments. Each rejection felt like a blow, a stark reminder of the uphill battle we faced in finding a suitable educational environment for our child. Amidst the search, there were instances where our child was misunderstood and misinterpreted, leading to uncomfortable situations. Incidences that should have been approached with sensitivity were met with ignorance, exacerbating our frustration. The chain of emails from schools raising concerns about our child's behavior or progress only added to our apprehension and sense of isolation. Moreover, the lack of adequate support from shadow teachers further

compounded our challenges. Our child often felt excluded from major school activities, reinforcing the feeling of being marginalized within the educational system.

After numerous setbacks, we finally found a glimmer of hope when we secured a shadow teacher who not only understood our child's unique needs but also provided invaluable support and guidance. Additionally, the intervention of a special educator dedicated to supporting his academic progress marked a significant turning point in our journey. With the right team in place, things began to shift in a positive direction. It has instilled a renewed sense of optimism in our hearts as we navigated the complexities of inclusive education. This journey, though difficult, has been a story of love, resilience, and hope.”

Once their child is diagnosed with some kind of disability, the parents experiences a rollercoaster of emotions, oscillating between moments of profound happiness and the depths of despair. Initially, the discovery of their child's condition may feel like a nightmare, shattering their expectations and plunging them into a state of denial. Confusion reigns as they grapple with the enormity of the situation, questioning their abilities and the path ahead. Yet, amidst the turmoil, there is a glimmer of hope—a spark of exploration as they embark on a journey to understand and navigate the complexities of inclusion. With time, acceptance dawns, ushering in a new chapter where the parent embraces the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. And so, the journey begins—a journey marked by resilience, perseverance, and unwavering determination to provide their child with the support and resources they need to thrive in an inclusive educational environment.

#### **Challenges faced:**

- **Routine Becomes a Challenge**

In the intricate landscape of raising a special needs child, what once seemed routine becomes a formidable challenge. The predictable rhythms of daily life are disrupted by the unique needs and demands of the child, requiring constant adaptation and flexibility from the parent. Simple tasks that were once accomplished effortlessly now pose unexpected hurdles, as the parent navigates the ever-shifting terrain of their child's needs and abilities.

- **Resources**

One of the most pressing challenges faced by parents in this journey is the scarcity of resources. From specialized therapies to educational tools, the parent finds themselves constantly seeking out resources to support their child's development. However, access to these resources is often limited, leaving the parent to innovate and advocate tirelessly to secure the support their child requires.

- **Stress**

The weight of caregiving for a special needs child takes a toll on the parent's well-being, manifesting in various forms of stress—physical, mental, and emotional. The relentless demands of caregiving, coupled with the uncertainty of the future, can leave the parent feeling overwhelmed and exhausted. Despite their resilience, the constant pressure of navigating the challenges takes a heavy toll on the parent's health and well-being.

- **Societal Attitudes**

The landscape of inclusion is further complicated by pervasive societal attitudes that often stigmatize and marginalize individuals with special needs. The parent is confronted with prejudice and misunderstanding

from others, adding an additional layer of burden to their already challenging journey. Despite their best efforts to advocate for their child and challenge misconceptions, the parent must contend with the persistent barriers created by societal attitudes towards disability.

- **Making Money Out of People's Miseries**

In discussing the exploitation of individuals with special needs for profit, a special educator aptly described the situation as "making money out of people's miseries." This phrase encapsulates the moral dilemma faced by parents of special needs children, who must navigate the delicate balance between seeking necessary services and resisting the exploitation of their child's struggles for financial gain. The commercialization of disability services and the commodification of individuals with special needs underscore the ethical complexities inherent in accessing support and resources for their child's well-being.

- **To Leave or Not to Leave?**

Amidst moments of despair and exhaustion, working mothers raising children with special needs face a daunting dilemma—whether to remain in their jobs or succumb to the temptation to leave. The relentless financial burden of providing for a child with special needs adds an extra layer of complexity to this already difficult decision. Despite their unwavering determination to fight for their child's rights and opportunities, the practical realities of balancing work and caregiving responsibilities weigh heavily on their minds.

- **Schooling: New Door Opens to Unending Challenges**

The prospect of schooling, while a beacon of hope for the parent, also opens the door to a new set of challenges. From sailing through the complexities of the educational system to advocating for their child's needs within the school environment, the parent finds themselves confronted with unending hurdles on the path to ensuring their child receives a quality education.

### **Lessons Learned**

Reflection on insights gained through the journey offers invaluable wisdom for understanding the nuances of inclusion. The impact of pivotal moments, such as the acceptance of diagnosis and collaborative efforts with educators and therapists, underlines the transformative power inherent in the journey of autism parenthood. These lessons not only inform individual perceptions and actions but also serve as catalysts for broader advocacy efforts aimed at enhancing inclusion practices.

- **Do Not Plead Guilty**

One of the crucial lessons learned through the journey with a special needs child is the importance of not succumbing to feelings of guilt. Despite the countless challenges faced, parents must recognize that they are not to blame for their child's condition or the difficulties encountered along the way. Instead of dwelling on guilt, it is essential to focus on advocating for their child's needs and ensuring they receive the support and resources necessary for their well-being and development.

- **Focus on Well-being**

Amidst the chaos and demands of caregiving for a special needs child, it becomes paramount for parents to prioritize their own well-being. This lesson highlights the importance of self-care and seeking support

when needed. By prioritizing their mental, emotional, and physical health, parents are better equipped to face the challenges of inclusion and provide the best possible care for their child.

- **Inner Strength is Crucial**

The journey of inclusion often tests the limits of a parent's endurance and resilience. Through the trials and troubles faced, parents need to learn that inner strength is a vital asset in overcoming obstacles and persevering in the face of adversity. Drawing upon their inner reserves of courage and determination, parents can find the strength to advocate for their child's needs and navigate the complexities of the societal and educational system.

- **Living Normal Life is Important**

Amidst the challenges of raising a special needs child, parents need to realize the importance of striving for a sense of normalcy in their lives. Despite the unique circumstances they face, parents should learn that embracing moments of joy, pursuing personal interests, and maintaining connections with loved ones are essential for their well-being and the overall harmony of the family.

- **Everyone Needs Support**

The journey of inclusion highlights the critical role of support networks while sailing through the complexities of raising a special needs child. Whether it be from family, friends, support groups, or professionals, parents must understand that seeking and accepting support is not a sign of weakness but rather a necessary component of caregiving. By surrounding themselves with a supportive community, parents will be better able to weather the challenges and celebrate the triumphs of their journey.

- **People DON'T Understand**

A sobering realization for parents with a special needs child is that many people outside their immediate circle do not fully comprehend the challenges they face. Despite their best efforts to advocate for their child and educate others about their experiences, parents encounter ignorance, judgment, and stigma from society at large. This lesson emphasizes the importance of raising awareness and fostering empathy towards individuals with special needs, advocating for greater understanding and inclusion in educational settings and beyond.

**Strategies for Inclusion:**

Exploring effective strategies and interventions personalised to the needs of special needs children stresses the importance of collaboration and customization. From leveraging support networks to adapting educational approaches, the narrative sheds light on practical avenues for fostering inclusion. The collaboration between parents, educators, therapists, and support groups emerges as a cornerstone of promoting holistic development and learning outcomes for special needs children.

- **Make the Family Understand**

One of the foundational strategies employed to foster inclusion in the journey of raising a special needs child is to make the family understand the unique needs and challenges faced. By providing education and information about the child's condition, parents can help family members develop empathy and understanding, fostering a supportive environment where the child feels accepted and valued.

- **Create Inner Social Circle**

Building a strong inner social circle comprised of understanding friends, supportive relatives, and empathetic peers is essential for fostering inclusion. By surrounding themselves and their child with individuals who embrace diversity and advocate for inclusivity, parents can create a nurturing community that celebrates the unique strengths and contributions of every member.

- **Normalize the Concept**

Normalizing the concept of inclusion within both familial and social spheres is key to fostering a sense of belonging for the special needs child. By integrating inclusive practices and attitudes into everyday

interactions and activities, parents can help break down barriers and promote acceptance within their communities.

- **Reassurance to Yourself and the Child**

Offering reassurance to both themselves and their child is a vital strategy to be employed by parents to foster inclusion. By affirming their child's worth and capabilities, parents instill confidence and resilience, empowering them to navigate social and educational environments with self-assurance and pride.

- **Being Persistent**

Persistence is paramount in the pursuit of inclusion for special needs children. Despite facing setbacks and challenges, parents remain steadfast in their advocacy efforts, tirelessly championing for their child's rights and opportunities within educational settings and beyond.

- **Collaborations**

Collaboration with educators, therapists, support groups, and community organizations is essential for fostering inclusion in the journey of raising a special needs child. By working together with stakeholders, parents can develop personalized strategies and interventions that address the unique needs of their child, promoting their full participation and engagement in educational and social contexts.

"If you find yourself unable to offer assistance, please refrain from making the situation more challenging. Instead of adding to the struggles faced by families of children with autism, showing understanding and empathy can go a long way in fostering a supportive and inclusive environment."

- **Addressing Unconscious Bias:**

Encountering instances of unconscious bias underscores the pervasive challenges within inclusive education. Strategies aimed at raising awareness and addressing biases play a pivotal role in dismantling barriers to inclusion, fostering a more equitable and welcoming educational environment. By fostering an inclusive mindset, educators and stakeholders can actively contribute to creating a supportive ecosystem that celebrates diversity and embraces the unique strengths of every child.

In conclusion, the narrative journey through inclusive education offers a poignant reflection on the transformative power of personal experiences. The intersection of personal experiences and inclusive research offers a rich tapestry of insights that shape policies, practices, and perceptions within educational frameworks. Incorporating parental perspectives in research on inclusive education amplifies the voices of families, enriching the discourse with nuanced understandings and lived experiences. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, inclusive research endeavors hold the potential to drive systemic change and promote inclusive education on a broader scale.

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## EMPOWERING NARRATIVES: UNVEILING THE CHALLENGES AND TRIUMPHS OF MARGINALIZED VOICES THROUGH LIFE SKILLS MASTERY IN AUTONOMY, SELF-REGULATION AND MOTIVATION

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### Abstract

*Education equips us with the competency needed to do scientific research, innovation in technology, and infrastructural development to make our lives more comfortable. We call ourselves the most developed living beings, but in the race of progress are we not left behind by treating others as insignificant or peripheral just because they do not fit in the benchmark set by others to be called “Normal”? So certainly we need to think, rethink, and respond with the right attitude. Inequalities are not always standalone, they often overlap or ‘intersect’ in ways that create and compound deprivation and disadvantage. The specific needs of the most marginalized populations need to be identified and quantified so that their voice can echo the world of policymakers and communities. But this resonance of high amplitude buzz will be only symbolic till it is not earthed from the epicenter of “one” who is at risk. Self-help is the best help one can give for self-concept development. It can be inculcated and nurtured through the practice of life skills.*

**Keywords:** *Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Motivation, Life skill, Marginalized section.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Marginalization is the outcome of dehumane behavior exhibited by the others. It has existed since the ancient era for various reasons but the sad thing is that in the 21st century where we have created so many milestones in progress in tangible things somewhere we have lacked in maintaining humanity. We are not able to accept, tolerate, and respect the diversity that exists due to various castes, creeds, languages, disabilities, genders, etc. It showcases our marginal mindset within us. Humans without humanity are like a beasts. Education is the only tool that can bring change in the mindset. It has taught us to use AI at our command, send drones in difficult terrain for surveillance, and defeat the newfound bacteria and viruses, which is incredible. It has enabled us to achieve missions like “MARS”, and “Aditya”.It also shows the capability of a human’s brain which enables a successful landing at the “ShivShakti point” on the Moon.

Education can inculcate the right attitude, skills, and behavior that is a must to create the hunger to achieve success and live with own terms to get self-reverence. It has to be laden with values and hence SDG 4 speaks volume of it.NEP2020 advocates for quality education which can be instrumental in holistic development. Integration of Life skills in education can make a person independent and self-motivated. It is also helpful in shifting the control in own hand to write their fate.



**The interrelationship between Education, Autonomy, self regulation and motivation for the marginalized section :**

Education equips even disadvantaged people to take independent decisions, and ownership of their actions, reaction, and learning. It allows them to practice autonomy in various aspects of their lives. Education promotes critical thinking, problem-solving attitude, GRIT, growth mindset, and decision-making skills. They can explore and evaluate options.

By encouraging self-directed learning, reflection, and self-awareness, education fosters autonomy and self-confidence, enabling individuals to navigate challenges, advocate for themselves, and pursue their goals with agency and initiative.

The discourse of demotivation to motivation and finally to the remotivation phase is more frequent in marginalized people as their challenges are multidirectional and multimodal. Internal support from within has to be constant so that the weaker section can get handholding to get equity with equality. Inclusive Innate inner drive from all stakeholders can also transform the landscape. Through structured learning environments, feedback mechanisms, and reflective practices, students learn to monitor their progress, regulate their attention and effort, and adapt their strategies to achieve desired outcomes. Education also promotes stress management, coping skills, and emotional regulation techniques, equipping individuals with the tools they need to deal with stressors, manage themselves, and maintain psychological well-being. Internal support from within has to be constant and robust so that the weaker section can get substantial handholding to fight for equity with equality. Inclusive Innate inner drive from all stakeholders can also transform the landscape. The competency needed to survive like a warrior is not innate rather it can be learned through perseverance and compassion and education can be instrumental in this context. Autonomy brings responsibility with human rights preservation. It develops the self-regulation skill to monitor, manage and make life meaningful.

**RESEARCH QUESTION**

“Role of autonomy, self-regulation and motivation significant for facing the challenges especially for the marginalized section”. Justify.

**NEED FOR THIS STUDY**

Good stories inspire us to be better and learn from others. It also develops hope within that I am not only the victim of the system and society, there are many. It also motivates that there is a way and I can only open the door of opportunity for my life. My voice should reach to the masses about my pain, feelings, injustice, struggle, and finally, the courage shown by me.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Brandt(2020) through the study “MEASURING STUDENT SUCCESS SKILLS: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING” established the relationship between success and self-directed skills. The author also tried to figure out whether the self-directed skill is generic or disciplined specific and ways to improve it.

Silver (2020) researched the impact of self-determination on motivation and he tried to figure out the challenges of engagement in learning for those with additional needs in the 21st century . The findings

demonstrated an increase in competence, connection, and independence, coupled with the integration of theoretical and practical learning within the educational framework.

Fung(2019) studied the direct relationship among social capital motivation factors i.e. participation and its positive outcome, involvement of parents, self-regulation skills, and indirect relationship as well. A total of 182 participants were involved. The result given the focus on different aspects of social mystery motivation on the degree of parents' engagement.

Safari(2021) studied about the role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in developing the motivation of people with intellectual disabilities in technology design activities. Through the case study was based on recurring interviews and focus group interviews with seven young adults with intellectual disabilities. The result emphasized that a sense of enjoyment, influencing the designed technology and the design activity, enhancing skills and knowledge, experiencing a sense of self-efficacy, developing social relationships, and experiencing a sense of meaningfulness can lead to the fulfillment of the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Nakkula (2012) studied about “Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation, Expectancy value theory, Engagement, and student voice” and found that a deeper, more cohesive, research-based understanding of one or more core elements of student-centered approaches to learning is beneficial.

#### **CASE STUDY-1**

**TAGLINE- “I am different but not so difficult to deal with”.**

Story of a Master's in Arts final-year student who is working in a private firm to become financially independent.

**Background:** suffering from NOONAN syndrome. Single child. Female gender, Parents are supportive but not overprotective. Giving liberty to face the challenges of day-to-day life.

**Impact:** Not willing to get sympathy, Knowing her strengths and weaknesses very well. Taken her life's responsibility in her hand. The benefit is that she is intrinsically motivated and self-regulated.

**Her Ordeal:** Ms, although I got admission in school, and colleges the reality is not so good. I was not welcomed for various activities. Teachers used to give me marks without asking questions during the viva like they just wanted to get rid of me because I was too ugly. I was not permitted to sit on the front bench even if it was helpful to me during lectures, I was an attentive child but it seemed that I would spoil my teacher's mood in the morning if they saw me.

**Role of Autonomy, and Self-regulation in changing the life status:** As per her opinion, she learned that no one else can make a better decision for her only she can. And this introspection helped her to be a fighter.

#### **CASE STUDY -2**

**TAGLINE:** “Maths is not the oxygen, where without it I can't survive”

As per the data retrieved from the research papers the prevalence of mathematical competency is not up to mark is between 3% to 14% among the children but the actual number is exponentially higher. Learners usually find it difficult to make the logical connections between the provided data in a sum, the steps needed to crack the problem with valid reason. Retaining the previous concepts and making a meaningful connection between them seems to be a big challenge.

**Background of the study:** Story of a student of std.10, ICSE board, who was struggling to understand maths and at the same time math is also not understanding his difficulty. They are simply not made for each other.

**Parents:** Engineer and wanted their child to carry the family tradition by becoming the same. They were in denial mode to accept the fact.

**Teacher Role:** Tried her best to help-remedial sessions, individual sessions, counseling, Drill work, selective study

**Outcome:** no improvement

**Parent's voice:** See Ms. we are excelling in our carrier. Our child has got the genes from us. He is naughty and not paying attention so that not able to do maths. If he can do other subjects why not maths? Sometimes blame was on the teacher, tuition teacher, and online tutorials. His parents even took him to career counseling, and astrologers to work on his kundli, punishments like long hours of practice, and sometimes hitting too were eroding his interest.

**Impact of Autonomy, Motivation:** A Lifeskill session was conducted in the school, and child developed his method of learning, reasoning, and studying in an Engineering college- His message was "Jab tak math mere peeche tha mai darta tha, ab mai maths ke peeche hun aur wo darta hai"

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

After this study, people will be able to correlate more about these types of difficulties faced by the special group of people. Challenges faced by the special students are endless and there are just a few people who empathize with them. This study will bring more sensitivity for all. Attitudinal change and acceptance towards marginalized people will increase. Parents and teachers will understand the problem and responsibly deliver their duties. A better and safer environment will develop where the voices of marginalized people will be heard and respected.

**DELIMITATION:** In this study, the researcher has delimited herself to 2 types of disability i.e. Noonan Syndrom, and Dyscalculia

**QUALITATIVE STUDY:** RESEARCH QUESTIONS and One-on-one interview in a non-formal setting and detailed observations

**SAMPLE SIZE: 2**

## **CONCLUSION**

A world that counts- having their own set of challenges besides the other sets but there is a hope in their heart to live and let live. With the mission and vision of SDGs leaving no one behind is not an easy path to achieve but it is also not impossible. This is only possible when an individual starts at their level to get their rights. Autonomy, self-regulation, and intrinsic motivation can keep the momentum alive. It is the duty of all to respect and accept the diverse strata without any hesitation. Don't encroach on their human rights and be progressive in true sense.

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