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INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: A MISSION TO BE ACHIEVED UNDER RPWD ACT, 2016?

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INTRODUCTION

Right to education is a fundamental right which has been enshrined under Part III of the Indian Constitution. This right has been extended to all the children across the country. India being a nation comprising of 39% of total population with the child population, the report of 2011 census states that 1 in 4 children who are of school going age is out of the school in India¹. If this being the case of general children, then it is very pathetic to think about the access to school of children with disabilities. Reports of the UN states that among a total of 12 million children with disabilities, only 1% of children with disabilities are having access to go to school for education². Inclusive education for children with disabilities might act as one factor which would increase the rate of children with disabilities being admitted to school and successfully completing their schooling.

NEED FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The word 'inclusive education' might seem difficult to explain. But it has the simple meaning assigned to it. The word literally means a technique of imparting education wherein both the children with special needs and the other general children learn together in a common system. The same definition can be reiterated in S. 2 (m) of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. Inclusive education is very vital in shaping the future of children with special needs due to varied reasons such as:

- Embracing the children with special needs

¹Statistics Of Children In India, Retrieved from <https://www.cry.org/>

²Only 1% of children with disabilities in India have access to school, Retrieved from <http://ictpost.com/>

It is pertinent to note that children with special needs are often neglected from the mainstream society and are leading an isolated life. In most of the instances, children with special needs are admitted in special needs which make them feel further secluded from the rest of the world. But on the flip side, if the children with special needs are admitted in the general school along with mainstream students, they might feel that the society is ready to accept them. This will encourage them to study well and their participation rate in jobs and contribution for the nation would rise. Further, the friendship of the general children would also motivate them in all ways.

- Curriculum of study becomes inclusive

When students with special needs are admitted in special schools, the curriculum of their studies are entirely different³. But when they are admitted in mainstream school, they would get chances to get the inclusive curriculum which will enable them to improve their studies. In future, this will pave way for getting more job opportunities for students with special needs.

- Lessening social inequalities against children with special needs

One peculiar feature that would happen when inclusive education has been granted to the children with special needs is that the normal children will be educated about them. Being associated with children with special needs, they can easily understand the hurdles and pains faced by them. Being the future citizens of the nation, the chances of exploiting and discriminating the children with special needs are very minimal. This would promote the inclusive of children with special needs in the mainstream society and will reduce the gaps between them.

LEGISLATIVE PERSPECTIVE ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

- The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

This Act is the existing comprehensive legislation for the persons with disabilities. The Act has discussed about promoting inclusive education. S. 16 of the Act provides that both the appropriate government and the local authorities has to ensure that the educational instructions funded or recognized by them are

³Disability inclusive education and learning, Retrieved from <https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/>

providing inclusive education to the children with disabilities. More particularly in S. 17, there is a clear depiction on measures which have to be taken for promoting inclusive education. In this regard, survey has to be taken for every five years to find out the school-going children in the children with special needs community.

- The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009

This Act was mainly enacted with a view to provide free and compulsory education for all the children within the age group of 6 to 14 years and to build an inclusive educational approach⁴. In this regard, S. 31 of the RPWD Act, 2016 has been enacted which provides that all the children with benchmark disabilities between the age group of 6 to 18 years have the right to free education in the neighbouring school or in the special school, depending upon the choice of the child.

CIRCUMSTANCES HAMPERING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

- Though RPWD Act provides for inclusive education to the children with disabilities, in reality, inclusive education system has not been achieved in full extent. At the initial stage, parents sent their children with disabilities to the Government school, but these schools do not meet adequate standards for these children. Reluctantly, parents have to shift them to special schools. In this regard, all the government and private schools have to meet the standards to incorporate children with disabilities in inclusive education model
- Schools fail to identify children with disabilities and their kinds of disability in proper manner. The main reason for this could be lack of standard methodology to identify them. This would create chaos for the special educators, because they are the ones who are dealing with the children with disability. Without proper understanding and training about the children with disability, it is difficult for the educators to train them
- The prevailing curriculum and the infrastructure in the general schools are not adaptable for the children with disabilities. Ramps are not disabled friendly and the inaccessible toilets were some of the main issues faced by them, and all these issues have to be sorted to provide an accessible school infrastructure for children with disability so that they can cope up with non-disabled children

⁴Right to education and inclusive education: Some theoretical perspectives, Retrieved from 1-1-25-109.pdf.

MODES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIA

- IEDC

IEDC (Integrated Education for Disabled Children Scheme) was launched in the year of 1974. This centrally sponsored scheme is to provide educational opportunities for children with disabilities in common schools so as to facilitate their retention in the school system and to integrate them with the general community at all levels as equal partners⁵. This scheme provides facilities for children with disabilities such as books, stationary, uniforms, allowances for transport, reader, etc.⁶

- PIED

Project Integrated Education for the Disabled (PIED) has been launched by Ministry of Human Resources Development along with UNICEF in the year 1987⁷. Mainly this scheme was launched and successful in one administrative block each in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Nagaland, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Mizoram, Delhi Municipal Corporation and Baroda Municipal Corporation. This scheme was a step towards universalizing education for the children with disabilities.

- IEDSS

Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) has been launched in the year 2009-10. Under this scheme assistance is granted for the inclusive education of children with disabilities for classes IX to XII. The main aim of this scheme is to enable the children with disabilities a further 4 years of secondary schooling after completing 8 years of elementary schooling in an inclusive and enabling schooling environment⁸. The scheme provides for granting books and stationary, uniforms, transport allowances, reader allowances, and stipend for girls, support services, assistive devices, boarding the lodging facility, therapeutic services, teaching learning materials, etc. along with establishment of resource room, providing barrier free environment,

⁵Implementation of IEDC Scheme in NCT of Delhi – An Overview – Nodal Officer, IEDC, Retrieved from <http://www.edudel.nic.in/>

⁶Integrated Education in India: Challenges and Prospects, Retrieved from <https://dsq-sds.org/>

⁷Integrated Education in India: Challenges and Prospects, Retrieved from <https://dsq-sds.org/>

⁸Inclusive Education of the Disabled at Secondary Stage, Retrieved from <https://www.education.gov.in/>

special education teachers, allowances for general teachers for teaching of children with disabilities, teacher training orientation provisions were also provided under the scheme⁹.

CONCLUSION

It is rightly to say without inclusive education integration of children with special needs in the mainstream society cannot be achieved. From this words, one can understand the importance of inclusive education. Though inclusive education has certain loopholes but those drawbacks are very minimal when compared to the benefits that arise out of inclusive education. Granting inclusive education for the children with special needs lies in the combined hands of the appropriate Governments and the educational institutions. At the earliest, the implementation of inclusive education and promotion of the same has to be made.



⁹Inclusive Education of the Disabled at Secondary Stage, Retrieved from <https://www.education.gov.in/>