

Inclusive Educational Practices in India: Policies and Challenges

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Abstract: The present research article is aimed at providing an analysis of challenges India is experiencing in developing an Inclusive-education system. This study has assessed the effectiveness of existing inclusive-educational policies of India such as IEDC, Sarva - Shiksha Abhiyan, and so on in addressing different challenges including non-acceptance, lack of proper awareness, and so on. The literature review section of this study has included different concepts regarding challenges and policies of inclusive education that have helped in gaining a proper understanding of ways different barriers are hindering the implementation of inclusive-educational practices in Indian schools. This research contains a methodology section that has illustrated different ways data has been collected and analyzed for ensuring effective results. The next section has summarized the findings of this research and has analyzed these results properly to come to a proper conclusion.

Keywords: Children with Special Needs (CWSN), Disability, Educational Challenges, Inclusion, Inclusive practices, Inclusive-Educational policies, Government Initiatives.

1. Introduction

A. Background

Inclusive education is an approach for educating children with learning difficulties and any developmental or physical disabilities. The Indian Government has always been committed to building an educational system, which focuses on ensuring that every child has the right to gain access to basic education. Different policies have been enacted for facilitating inclusive educational practices in schools. However, to achieve inclusivity in the entire educational system in this country, there still exist numerous barriers (Sharma et al. 2019). The present study will focus on identifying these obstacles and assess the effectiveness of policies to overcome these barriers.

B. Aim and objectives

1) Aim

To assess the effectiveness of various inclusive educational policies in India in addressing numerous challenges to establish an inclusive educational system.

2) Objectives

- To identify different barriers that are hindering the establishment of inclusivity in educational practice in India

- To examine ways existing inclusive educational policies of India are effective in addressing these barriers
- To provide recommendations on strategies that can remove the obstacles.

2. Literature Review

1) Concept of Inclusive education

Inclusive education aims at transforming the culture of schools in ways that encourage children with mental or physical imparities to attend regular classrooms that were designed for those without disabilities (Priyadarshini & Thangarajathi, 2017). Through embracing inclusivity in the educational system, the Indian government wanted to strengthen its capacity to satisfy the learning needs of every individual for achieving educational excellence. In simple words, this educational system includes both non-disabled and disabled students for removing all barriers to gaining access to education.

2) Indian Government's initiatives for establishing an inclusive educational system

As discussed earlier, the Indian Government has always focused on coming up with inclusive policies for ensuring the removal of barriers in accessing quality education. In 1974, the Indian Government first introduced the "Integrated Education for Disabled Children" scheme intending to facilitate the inclusion and retention of disabled children in regular schools. In 1992, there was a revision in this scheme and as per the new scheme, the government took the responsibility of providing 100% financial support to parents of disabled students to encourage them to send their children to schools and satisfy their learning needs (Rani, 2017). This financial assistance scheme covered expenses of transport, uniform, assistive equipment, instructional materials, and books, and so on.

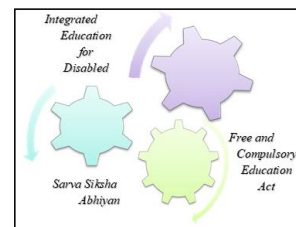


Fig. 1. Different inclusive-educational policies

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As per this act, the Indian government enacted “Sarva Siksha Abhiyan” which translates to the “Education for All” scheme, which was not introduced as a disability-specific scheme; however, was introduced as a disability-inclusive scheme for ensuring access to education by all including people with disabilities. In 2020, New Education Policy was introduced by replacing NEP, 1986. The fundamental objectives of this policy are to avoid the isolation of people with disabilities, learning difficulties, and language barriers in the educational system and to develop an inclusive curriculum by raising funds to 12th class covering socio-economically disadvantaged groups (Times of India, 2020).

3) *The attitude of teachers in mainstream schools affects inclusive educational practices*

Indian Government has taken plenty of initiatives for promoting inclusion in the educational system by designing different inclusion schemes and policies. However, this country is still far away from experiencing significant growth in inclusive-educational practices due to the presence of some unrecognized factors that are impeding the process of establishing an inclusive educational system. One of these factors is the negative attitudes of teachers of regular or mainstream schools towards accepting inclusivity in classrooms. In most cases, teachers at mainstream schools do not feel comfortable enough when it comes to teaching students with some special needs, and due to this; they hold neutral or negative behavioral intentions and attitudes towards them (Srivastava et al. 2017).

Indian Government has come up with different policies such as “Sarva-Siksha Abhiyan”, IEDC and many more for the inclusion of disadvantaged groups in the regular educational system. However, it became stressful for teachers at mainstream schools, and it required proper training post-execution of policies for enhancing acceptance of inclusivity. Lack of adequate training for teachers has been a problem in embracing inclusivity as teachers lack the proper skill to understand ways of identifying special needs of disabled children and provide education accordingly. Policy execution plan lacked identification of teacher training need, which further enhanced difficulties.

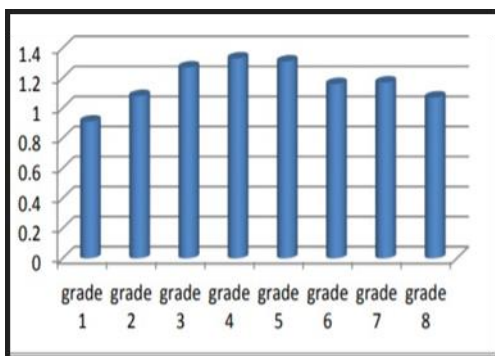


Fig. 2. Declining percentage of Disabled student enrolment in India (Source: Ijracs.org, 2018)

According to some scholars, experienced teachers generally hold positive attitudes and inexperienced teachers hold negative attitudes towards inclusive education, as they perceive it to be

highly stressful when it comes to teaching students with visual or hearing impairment (Sharma et al. 2017). Hence, it requires some motivational strategies and special training for teachers in mainstream schools to achieve inclusion successfully.

3. Proposed-Methodology

1) *Research Philosophy*

Interpretivism-Philosophy has been appropriate in this research as it has enabled the researcher to analyze and interpret information from collected sources based upon his or her judgment derived from understanding the existing phenomenon. It has aided in the creation of new knowledge regarding challenges in the establishment of an inclusive educational system and ways these could be addressed by enhancing the implementation effectiveness of inclusive-education policies of India (Bleiker et al. 2019).

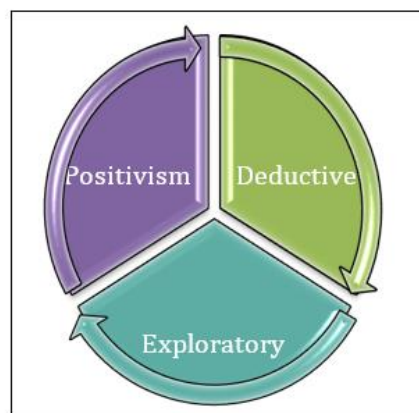


Fig. 3. Research-Paradigm

2) *Research Approach*

The researcher has chosen Deductive-approach in this research for identifying the causal impact of barriers in embracing inclusivity in the Indian-Educational system. This approach has assisted the researcher in designing relevant hypotheses based upon collected data regarding the effectiveness of policies in promoting inclusive education in this country and ways different factors are hindering the implementation of this system (Soetanto et al. 2018).

3) *Research Design*

The exploratory design has been suitable for this study as it has enabled the researcher to explore requisite information from different sources for gaining deep insights into challenges for inclusive education in this country. Previously, limited studies have been conducted on this topic and hence, this design has been appropriate for finding new concepts regarding ways the effectiveness of policies could be enhanced for addressing different barriers.

4) *Data-collection and Analysis*

A secondary data-collection methodology would be appropriate in this study for ensuring proper research results (Hossain, 2021). This will allow the researcher to collect information from different secondary sources such as newspaper articles, magazines, government websites, and journal articles that would ensure the validity and reliability of each piece of information. Secondary-thematic data analysis

technique would be proper in this study, as it will aid in developing different themes based upon different existing and new concepts for ensuring proper outcomes.

5) Sampling

Purposive sampling would be appropriate, as it will enable the researcher to select sources that are suitable for serving the purpose of this study. This will help in gaining access to the requisite information. The purposive-sampling method has allowed the researcher to select samples based upon his or her understanding regarding the research topic. It has aided in generalizing information collected from secondary sources (Sharma, 2017).

4. Results and Discussion

1) Results

Theme 1: Policies of the Indian Government are effective; however, implementation of the same is improper. Parents of disabled students often hesitate to send their children to mainstream schools as there exists a common perception that disabled children are not able to learn. Hence, awareness programs should have been emphasized during policy execution.

Theme 2: Inadequate infrastructure has been a problem. Most Indian schools do not have adequate infrastructure for satisfying the learning needs of disabled children due to the absence of special equipment and instructional materials.

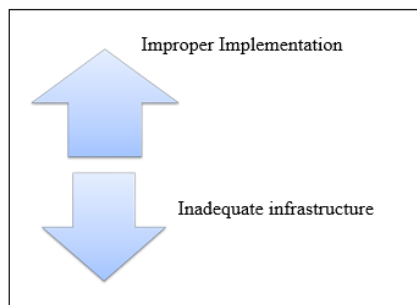


Fig. 4. Themes

B. Discussion

1) Theme 1

To implement policy successfully, Government should have taken various steps. For enhancing awareness amongst parents, NGOs should have been responsible for promoting fundamental rights of people with disabilities to gain access to education and Government agencies should have focused on working collaboratively with NGOs. Improper execution of government policies is creating major problems in establishing this kind of education system. For effective execution, government agencies should have focused on promoting the participation of the local community and families of children suffering from disabilities in the development of guidelines and policies regarding inclusive education that will further aid in spreading awareness amongst communities regarding the same (Bhat and Geelani, 2017).

2) Theme 2

Indian schools are not equipped with proper tools and technologies for providing quality education to children having

special needs. For instance, students with visual impairments need special learning resources for facilitating learning. For students having visual impairments, braille facilities are essential; however, most schools are not financially stable enough to provide every disabled child with this learning resource. Besides that, teachers require proper training for providing proper education to disabled students; however, schools especially in rural areas lack proper infrastructure and funds to facilitate this.

5. Recommendations

1) Providing adequate financial support to schools

Indian Government is required to include the provision of the school-funding facility in its policies for providing financial assistance to schools in both urban and rural areas so that they can build their infrastructure effectively (Vincent & Chiwandire, 2019).

2) Collaboration with NGOs

Indian Government agencies should collaborate with NGOs such as “Child Rights and You” and so on for fostering awareness regarding inclusive education amongst communities. NGOs should run awareness campaigns in partnership with the Indian Government to achieve inclusivity.

6. Conclusion

Finally, it can be concluded that the Indian education system is yet to achieve its objective of embracing full inclusivity. The government has implemented different policies and strategies; however, their execution has not been planned properly that causing difficulties in implementing this system in the desired manner. This study has delved into details of the effectiveness of existing educational systems of Indian schools in embracing inclusivity. It has also provided an in-depth understanding of ways Indian Government agencies and non-government institutions can work collaboratively for achieving the goal of establishing a fully inclusive educational framework. NGOs are required to work collaboratively with schools as well for promoting inclusivity and providing teachers with necessary information on the importance of this system.

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