

BREAKING BARRIERS - THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the role of teachers in creation of an inclusive educational environment. Education is the foundation of a prosperous and empowered society. It plays an imperative role in the development of a nation. Teachers can create an inclusive learning environment by recognising the diverse needs of the learners and making learning experience friendlier and accommodating. They can foster a sense of social inclusion and cultural coordination by application of innovative strategies including cooperative learning, adapting diverse lesson plan models and timely collaboration with parents and other community stake holders. The changing scenario of education and literacy has caused a rapid rise in the number of students. Teachers are responsible for fostering a supportive classroom environment where all students can feel protected and respected regardless of their learning ability challenges. The government has been endeavouring increase the standards of school education system through several inclusive education schemes. The need for quality education is imperative for improving the performances of school system. Inclusive education can become an innovative approach towards educating the children with disabilities and learning difficulties along with normal learners. Inclusive education can address the learning needs of all children with specific focus on vulnerable and marginalized learners if it is clearly designed and planned. There is a need to generate awareness among the community stake holders about the positive impact of inclusive education on enrolment and academic performances.

Key words: Inclusive learning, role of teachers, measures, challenges,

INTRODUCTION-

India has the world's largest student population with over 250 million school going children and a vast network of universities and colleges. There are 14.72 lakh schools and 9.8 million teachers in primary and secondary schools in 2024-2025. Government schools make up a significant portion with the 2023-24 data showing 69% of total schools and 50% students and 51% teachers. Percentage of schools having computers increased from 38.5% in 2019-2020 to 57.2% in 2023-24. Percentage of schools having internet facility increased 22.3 % in 2019-2020 to 53.9% in 2023-24.

1. **Article 21(A) of the India constitution** has made right to free and compulsory education
2. **Right To Education** - the RTE Act makes education a fundamental right for children between ages 6-14 years. It mandates free and compulsory education for all children and provides for infrastructure development teacher training and other initiatives to improve the quality of education.
3. **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan** - This program launched in 2001 to provide universal access to primary education focuses in improving schools access enrolment and retention by providing infrastructure teacher training and other support.

4. **Rastriya Madhaymik Shiksha Abhiyaan – This** program aims to provide universal access to school secondary education and focuses on improving infrastructure teacher training and quality education in secondary schools mid day meals scheme this program provides free meals to children in government schools to improve enrolment retention and attendance.

Despite government initiatives and private sector support millions of children are still denied access to their right to education and learning opportunities. Even globally one in five children is excluded from education. Poverty, geographical limitations, language barriers, disability, ethnicity, religion, migration or displacements are among factors which limit children's access to basic education. The crisis has made some inequalities more visible it has widened the existing socio economic disparities and led to development of new inequalities and exclusion from educational access. This has become too common with marginalised and disadvantaged groups who not only remain vulnerable but also continue to be socially excluded.

School Dropout rates in India

The UDISE, 2021-2022 data shows that the dropout rate is highest at the secondary level with 12.6 percent, followed by upper Primary with 3 % and primary with 1.% percent.

year	Secondary school level	Upper primary level	Primary school level
2021-22	12.6 %	3 %	1 %
2023-24	14.1%	5.2%	1.9%

Source: Report of UDISE +, 2021-2022

The data revealed that the dropout rate was higher for boys than girls at all levels of education.

Gender	Secondary school level	Upper primary level	Primary school level
boys	13 %	3.3 %	1.6 %
girls	12.3 %	2.7 %	1.4 %

Source: Report of Unified District Information for School Education Plus (UDISE +), 2021-2022

Inclusive education-

An inclusive education approach to education approaches each student's needs which are taken into account and supports that all learners participate, perform and present together. Inclusive education acknowledges that all children can achieve academic success with unique characteristics, interests, abilities not hindering them from getting access to education. Teachers are responsible for nurturing a sympathetic classroom surroundings where all students can feel protected and respected in spite of their learning ability challenges.

Emphasis on inclusive education-

The 2015 **Annual Status of Education Report ASER** reflects on the deteriorating quality of education and opines that deficits in foundational reading and arithmetic skills are cumulative which also curtail their higher educational prospects. India has fared poorly in **Programme for International Student Assessment** test in 2008-2009. NITI Ayog its report **Quality Education Index** published in 2019-2020 brought several insights in the present school education. . Data from

assessments such as National Achievement Survey and **Annual Status Of Education Report** reinforces the need for system level interventions across school education system with a focus on improving grade level competency and ensuring that India's schooling system delivers on learning outcomes. The need for quality education is imperative for improving the performances of school system. Initiatives of the **NITI Ayog** such as **Sustainable Action for Transforming Human Capital Education SATH-E** emphasises the need for innovative policy design customised to the unique needs of each learner. Collaboration between **Rehabilitation Council Of India RCI** and **National Council For Teacher Education NCTE** has led to the development of curricula for special education and its inclusion in general teacher training program. The **National Education Policy NEP 2020** has emphasised the importance of equity and inclusion. Ministry of Education in its report on school education proposes learning for all, equitable and Inclusive Education. **UNESCO** also emphasises on inclusion in education.

Role of teachers in a classroom – teacher plays a pivotal role in transforming the classroom environment.

1. **Avoiding social discrimination**- A teacher can create an inclusive environment inside classroom by avoiding all types of unfairness and prejudice which may grow inside a classroom. A teacher can provide opportunities for every student to share their answers perspectives and experiences without any favouritism.
2. **Identifying unique needs of students** - A teacher can create an inclusive environment by identifying unique needs of each student. There will be advanced learners, slow learners, and medium learners, in a classroom. There may be disabled and physically challenged students also. There may be students who feel bored by the lesson being taught or by the teacher sway of teaching.
3. **Understanding the diversity of learning pace of students**- Students come from different family background different cultural background and different language backgrounds. All students are not alike in academic performances or in co curricular activities. Each student has his own strengths and weaknesses. A teacher needs to understand the diversity of learning pace of each student.
4. **Using Differential teaching methods**- teachers can adapt differential teaching methods to address diverse learning needs of children. They can include innovative teaching; activity based teaching, coordinated teaching and learner centric teaching methods. Teacher can augment learning resources through preparation of charts , flash cards , placards, billboards and such other learning materials innovatively.
5. **Modifying curriculum**-Modifying curriculum based activities like tests , seminars, assignments etc to ensure equal opportunity for all students to demonstrate their learning capabilities. A teacher can encourage mutual respect and empathy among students by facilitating cooperative group activities and ensuring all students feel valued and include in classroom activities.
6. **Professional collaborations** - A teacher can collaborate with academia professionals, special education teachers, and psychologists to include student supportive learner activities so that each student feels included. These academic collaborations will support in creation of an inclusive environment.

7. **Personal Assistance** -A teacher can provide personal assistance to students and ensure the availability of specialised guidance. If a teacher can make his student learn thoroughly he has to make himself available to his students during class hours and after class hours as well. A student may need his teacher's suggestions in solving his personal problems.

CONCLUSION: -

Thus, a teacher plays a pivotal role in bringing equity and creating a affirmative inclusive learning environment inside a classroom. Teachers are responsible for nurturing a sympathetic classroom surroundings where all students can feel protected and respected in spite of their learning ability challenges. Teachers Provide personal assistance to students and ensure the availability of specialised guidance and make student feel protected and safe guarded. Inclusive education can become successful if there is a determined policy frame work involving preparation for teachers , parents and school management. A significant challenge in redesigning the curriculum and providing adequate resources to support all learners in the same classroom environment needs to be prioritised.

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