



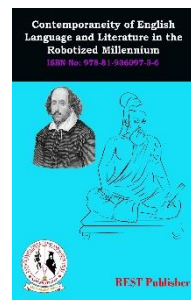
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## Education Of Children with Special Needs- A Systematic Review of Literature

Richa Mehta

Lady Irwin College, University of Delhi, India.

Corresponding Author Email: [richamehta1970@gmail.com](mailto:richamehta1970@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** The education of the Special need children has always been a significant area of study. Children with special abilities are often seen out of school which in turn lowers their chances of progressing in the employment area which further in turn constitutes long term income poverty. For a developing nation like India, it is needed that such marginalization is catered in the right way to progress holistically. Inclusive education has been in talks for long but its implementation at a wider & more comprehensive level is under process. Objectives- Based on this, the present study aims to review secondary sources of data to (a) find concerns of teachers regarding inclusion of the Special need children into mainstream education, (b) understand awareness of Special need regarding their education and its legal provisions, and, (c) explore the gaps in legislation in awareness and implementation of equitable services for the Special need. Method- Data was collected from secondary sources such as review papers and analysis through systematic review of literature was done and conclusion was derived from it. Conclusion- Regular monitoring of implementation of inclusive education should be adhered to along with both in-service and pre-service teacher and professional personnel training. Further research is required to understand and uplift community awareness and knowledge, attitude and beliefs of the Special need regarding their education and upliftment.

**Keywords:** *Disability in India, inclusive education, teacher concerns, awareness, legal provisions.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The demand to educate students with special needs in inclusive education continues to grow worldwide. It has become a major policy focus in the last three decades in India as well. The passage of the PwD Act 1995 was a significant milestone by the Government of India in this regard. The law emphasized that schools should ensure that whenever possible the education of People with special needs should take place with their peers without special needs. A natural corollary of this Act was the expectation that regular classroom teachers would be required to possess the appropriate attitudes, knowledge and skills in order to fulfill their new roles and responsibilities. Also, the New National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) has clearly stated, "*Barrier-free access to education for all children with disability*". Along with this, modifications are also made for those children with special needs belonging to disadvantaged socio-economic background and for its proper implementation it is also focused that appropriate teaching learning material in the form of assistive devices, technology based tools, etc, will also be made available. Furthermore, several points are taken into consideration regarding rehabilitation facilities, funds to states and alignment with the RPwD act.

#### Objectives

1. To find concerns of teachers regarding inclusion of the Special need children into mainstream education,
2. To understand awareness of Special need regarding their education and its legal provisions, and,

3. To explore the gaps in legislation in awareness and implementation of equitable services of the Special need.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Data was collected from various secondary sources such as online research publications, journals, and articles pertaining to India's education system with respect to children with special needs. The second phase consisted of systematic review of the collected data with respect to the objectives laid out. Based on this data, analysis and discussion was done and a conclusion was drawn from it.

**Concerns Of Indian Teachers To Implement Inclusive Education:** A number of researchers assert that a teacher's willingness to include specific students is strongly influenced by factors such as their attributes (Sachs, 2004), the nature and severity of the disabling conditions of the learners (Elkins & Porter, 2005), availability of physical and human resources (Bradshaw & Mundia, 2006), and their pre service and in-service training (Chong, Forlin & Au, 2007). The available research on teacher attitudes indicates that while many general education teachers philosophically support inclusion, most have strong concerns about their ability to implement these programs successfully (Das, Gichuru & Singh, 2013). For instance, studies have shown most general education teachers do not agree that they have or will be provided with sufficient planning and instructional time necessary to support inclusion (Barton, 1996). Other studies have shown that even after receiving professional development training, many teachers still question their ability to teach students with special needs, and some doubt they will be provided with the necessary support and resources (Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, Slusher & Saumell, 1996). In addition, a few studies found that secondary school teachers are often less positive than their elementary counterparts, and in some cases, more resistant to additional responsibilities that inclusion brings with it (Bender, Vail & Scott, 1995). Welch (1989) expressed the need for addressing teacher concerns in inclusive education in very strong words by stating that: teachers concerns about implementation of innovative change seem to be the threshold that must be crossed before change can occur; otherwise agents and advocates of change are likely to shoot themselves in the foot (p. 539). The common concerns that are recurrently expressed by school teachers regarding the inclusion of People with special needs into their regular classrooms include: negative attitudes, safety issues, physical accessibility, behavioral problems, large class size, meeting the educational needs of People with special needs, social needs, designing and implementing curriculum and instructional adaptations, evaluation grades and diplomas, additional work and responsibility, teacher stress, collaborative problem-solving relationships, lack of financial support, inadequate teaching materials and equipment, lack or specialized personnel, lack of support from school administrator, time and scheduling issues and lack of training in special education (Avramidis et al., 2000; Das, 2001; Das et al., 2013; Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Hemmings & Woodcock, 2011; Rose, 2001; Sharma, Moore & Sonawane, 2009). A moderate level of teacher concerns for inclusive education, should be a matter of 'real concern' for policy makers in India (Bhatnagar & Das, 2013). Previous research conducted in India in this area has consistently conveyed this message (Bhatnagar & Das, 2013; Das, Sharma & Singh, 2012; Das et al., 2013; David & Kuyini, 2012). Policy initiatives coupled with fiscal support from the government and outside agencies such as UNESCO and the World Bank have been directed towards inclusive education to a greater degree since the passage of the PwD Act, 1995 and later the RPwD Act of 2016. While these initiatives have brought the notion of inclusive education to the forefront of society, much work however is needed to be done to appropriately address the needs of about 30 million children with special needs in India. Successful participation of regular school teachers is instrumental for this reform in India.

**Primary School Teachers Awareness on PWD Act 1995 and Inclusion of Children with Special Needs:** Batra (1981) tried to study awareness in the general public in a study entitled, "Social integration of the Blind". The main areas selected for the study were: opinion of causative factors of blindness, views on limitations imposed by blindness, education, vocational training, mobility, marriage and employment. The sample from the general public comprised 54% male and 64% female. Madhavan et al., (1990) conducted a study entitled, "Mental retardation awareness in the Community." In all such studies, the participants expressed early awareness of sensory and physical special needs but virtually very little or no awareness of intellectual special needs. A study by Bhargav & Astha, (2011), investigated the attitude of the Government and private schools' primary teachers about PwD act, 1995. This study has its implications for Government administration, teachers, health organizations, rehabilitation centers and voluntary organizations that are already doing a very good and noble job but there is a need of doing much work in this area because of its less awareness. The challenges of having severe physical special needs are serious enough. Ironically, the community hardly plays a constructive role to support the Special need. That's why the awareness towards the new legislative provisions for them is very necessary.

**Awareness among the Special need Children:** Roeher (1969) observes, an examination of postures towards people with special needs across culture suggests that perceptions and treatment of them is neither homogeneous nor static. The cross-cultural research conducted by Whiting and Charles (1953), provides indication that child-nurture practices influence postures towards illness and helplessness (Gellman, 1959). The understanding of one's own incapacitated figure to a person with incapability and to others who interrelate with him or her will depend in general upon the values of the cultural group to which they belong (Barker et al., 1953). As Wright further observed: " Postures and deportment towards physical deviations are tenaciously held and transmitted to the adolescent as much because they are felt to fit with sound and comprehensive notions and because of less clear emotional prejudice" (Wright, 1960; pg. 256). A study conducted in district Doda of Jammu and Kashmir (Malik et al., 2018) found that Persons with Disability Act 1995 is not much successful there. People with special needs are still unaware about its provisions and benefits. Special needs are still unrecognized in the said region. People who are facing challenges of disability are mostly from lower income groups. Maximum people with special needs are children and adults. Educational institutes and community-based programmes are not very effective to reap the benefits for the needy people who need early identification and prevention as well as full participation in public domain. Therefore, the need of the hour is to empower institutions and public offices. So that they could reach Special need people right from childhood.

**Need for Inclusive Education: Factors influencing Employment and Employability for Persons with Disability:** There are estimated 70 million people with special needs in India, of whom only about 0.1% are employed currently in industries (Abidi, 1999). The International Labour Organization's 2011 report on Persons with Special needs states that 73.6% of Special need in India are still outside the labour force. Currently available evidence shows that lack of employment opportunities is a significant problem, which causes concern among working age adults with disability (Laszlo et al., 2012). The current literature on disability and employment from India shows that People with special needs have lower employment rates compared to the general population. In 2002, among all the working age People with special needs (15-64 years) in India, 37.6% were employed with significant variations among sub groups (Mitra & Sambamoorthi, 2006). The 2001 Census of India showed that more than a third of women with disability aged 15 to 59 years were found to be non- workers as against 19% males and 60% females among the general population. Similar results were also observed by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) Survey (2002), which estimated that only 25% of the Special need population was employed. Gender comparison showed that 36% of males compared to 10% of females with disability were employed and these differences were statistically significant. The employment prospects for women with disability are even more of a challenge compared to men with disability. The World Health Organization (WHO) observed that employment rates were lower for men with disability (53%) compared to men without a disability (65%) and similarly rates for women with disability (20%) compared to women without a disability (30%). Persons with intellectual impairment report lowest employment rates. The National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Special need People (NCPEDP) reported that the average percentage of employment of persons with special needs in India was 0.54% in the public sector, 0.28% in the private sector and 0.05% in multinational companies. In a study conducted at IT sector organizations in Hyderabad India (Ramachandra et al., 2017), it was found that some of the barriers faced by the employees at the current workplace include lack of physical access to and within the worksite, communication and information barriers, and lack of training opportunities. Attitude of people at the workplace was perceived to be a major barrier, as they felt that if people did not have a positive attitude towards special needs person, it may result in discrimination and low self-esteem at the workplace. In the same study, some of the benefits stated by the employers of hiring People with special needs were that they are highly motivated individuals and by employing persons with special needs, they as employers, have a wider range of applicants for job vacancies with diverse skills and perspectives. It also benefits the organization and adds to organizational learning.

### 3. DISABILITY AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON

The social concept of disability introduced the notion that society has erected barriers, physical or attitudinal, which affect a person with special needs. Consequently, government programs and policies have evolved to include fixing the environment (e.g., making buildings barrier-free) and providing income assistance or work related supports to help persons with special needs participate more effectively in the community and the workplace. Even the WHO goes beyond a medical approach to take a much broader view of Disability. It also recognizes the role the environment plays in either facilitating functioning or raising barriers. It is a well known fact that mental illnesses are also associated with a significant disability. Nearly 31% of the world's disability is accounted for by mental disorders. It was found that five of the ten leading causes of disability worldwide are in

the category of mental illnesses, majorly depression, alcohol dependence, schizophrenia, bipolar affective disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder. World Health report 2001 by the WHO assessed the leading causes of disability using Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALY). Mental illnesses accounted for 25% of total disability and 16% of total burden. It is important to note that social and work-related functioning are more important in those with mental illnesses. We also need to remember that mental disability in the form of apathy, amotivation, poor self-care, communication difficulties and poor interpersonal skills are not visible unlike other special needs. There are instances when disability benefits like bus passes were denied because they look physically strong.

**Socio demographic factors and Quality of life in association with Disability:** Worldwide, rates of disability are increasing due to population aging and increases in chronic health conditions, among other causes (Hosseinpoor et al., 2013). Health is defined as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO). Though this broad definition of health was framed half a century ago, health is still measured narrowly in terms of morbidity and mortality. To overcome this, the World Health Organization (WHO) developed a framework for measuring health and disability at both individual and population levels called International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF). ICF defines disability as an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions, referring to the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and that individual's contextual factors (environmental and personal factors). Quality of life is a broad multidimensional concept that usually includes subjective evaluations of both positive and negative aspects of life. WHO defines quality of life as an individual's perception of their position in life in context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns. The concept of health-related quality of life and its determinants has evolved since the 1980s to encompass those aspects of overall quality of life that can be clearly shown to affect health. These wide-ranging concepts are influenced by physical health, psychological state, levels of independence, social relationships and environmental factors. Disability per se will not decrease the Special need individual's quality of life (Ramdass et al., 2018).

#### 4. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Critiquing the current scenario of the education system in India, though several legal provisions have been enacted by the government, their optimal usage is still a major shortcoming. There is a lack of sensitivity towards inclusion of the Special need children in the mainstream education system not just in the members of the society but also among the Special need people themselves. There is a need for training of teachers and resource personnel both in-service and pre-service, in the area of disability so that they are better able to accommodate them to form an equitable and just society where everybody benefits. It is also equally important to review the current legislation so as to ensure the continuity and proper distribution of resources to promote quality inclusive education. Thorough revision of data collected needs to be ensured to enable factors that support mainstreaming of the Special need children and standards should be set that are in line with quality inclusive education in the schools. Furthermore, excessive research needs to be conducted to assess the gaps in teacher education, community awareness and attitudes, beliefs and knowledge of the Special need on disability and inclusion.

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