

## **Inclusive Education: An Analysis of Pedagogy, Curriculum, and Support System for Differently- Abled Students**

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### **Abstract**

*Inclusive education is a vital pathway to ensuring education for all, free from discrimination, and promoting equal learning opportunities as well. Governments at both national and international levels have taken and continue to take significant steps to make this initiative successful. In light of this, the present paper explores inclusive pedagogy, curriculum design, and support systems crucial for the inclusion of differently-abled students in education. This study examines many pedagogical approaches teachers use to help students with various needs so that they can participate in inclusive environments without any restrictions. Meanwhile, the study also presents learning strategies adopted by differently-abled students by ensuring a comprehensive analysis of their educational needs and experiences.*

**Keywords:** Inclusive education, Inclusive pedagogy, curriculum and support system

### **Introduction**

The Right to Education Act (2009) guarantees that all children have the right to receive education without any restriction, which reinforces the global commitment to making primary education accessible and inclusive for all. In this context, various efforts are being undertaken worldwide. The foundation of inclusion in special needs education was laid in 1994 with the UNESCO Salamanca Statement, which emphasized the importance of providing education in regular schools using child-centred pedagogies. As a signatory to the Salamanca Statement, India developed a comprehensive action plan for inclusive education and committed to integrating children with all types of disabilities into mainstream schools as well as ensuring full accessibility for differently-abled children by 2020 (Hossain & Mokammel, 2016). In line with this agreement, the Indian government has initiated many policies to promote inclusive education for differently-abled students. One such initiative is the Sarv Siksha Abhiyan which was launched in 2001 to promote

free and compulsory elementary education. Further strengthening the commitment to inclusivity, the Right of the Person with Disability Act (2016) was enacted. Under the Act, the categories of disability have been expanded from 7 to 21, so that students can avail facilities after certification of their disabilities. The Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (2018) was also introduced in which three major education programs were merged such as Sarv Siksha Abhiyan, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan and Teacher Education. This program was initiated by the government of India to ensure holistic and equitable education from pre-primary to senior secondary levels. Whereas, **New Education Policy (NEP) 2020** has worked like a charm in advancing inclusive and equitable education. NEP 2020 aims to create an education system that caters to diverse learning needs of students by ensuring that every child receives equal opportunities of education.

### **Methodology**

The data presented in this paper have been collected from secondary sources, including government reports, policy documents. The data are also gathered from articles from various refereed journals and books. This comprehensive review of existing literature forms the basis of the findings, discussed in this paper.

### **Inclusive pedagogy and Curriculum**

Inclusive pedagogy is a teaching approach that considers diversity in courses, activities, curriculum, and assessments to involve all students in meaningful, relevant, and approachable learning. It is a term with a long history in the Western world, originating in Ancient Greece where slaves, known as pedagogues, who were responsible for a child's upbringing. It is associated with the Greek tradition of philosophical dialogue, particularly the Socratic method of inquiry. It connects the self-contained act of teaching with culture, structure, and mechanisms of social control, reflecting broader social and cultural values within the learning relationship. It draws from traditional notions of learning as a biological, cognitive acquisition of uncontested knowledge or as a cultural and social construction within communities of practice (Shah, R.K. & Campus, S. 2021). Pedagogy is not just a teaching method or political agenda but an ethical practice aimed at benefitting students (Friesen, Norm & Su, & Hanno 2022). It also challenges traditional practices by addressing differences that intensify the isolation and

marginalization of children, especially in relation to the social construction of disability (Grenier, M. 2010). Through pedagogical knowledge, teachers can differentiate among students, create a curriculum for all, and develop responsive professionals who understand child developmental needs (Gudjonsdottir, Hafdis & Oskarsdottir, Edda. 2016).

### **Inclusive Curriculum**

A curriculum is a systematic plan for educational activities, combining subject matter and teaching strategies. It includes teaching, learning, testing, administration, and hidden curricula. The success of curriculum implementation lies in curriculum adaptation. Curriculum adaptation means to adjust or modifies the standard of curriculum to meet the needs and learning abilities and styles of students (Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992). To understand curriculum adaptation, it is necessary to understand the essence of curriculum for planning, implementation, and evaluation (Shao-Wen Su, 2012).

### **Curriculum Adaptation**

Indian government has been focusing on inclusive education to improve the educational status of disadvantage groups, particularly for differently-abled. The government has introduced an inclusive classroom to accommodate all students, focusing on creating a dynamic space for sharing ideas, values, information, and knowledge. In this regard, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 also emphasizes creating a meaningful curriculum by modifying content, teaching processes, assessment, evaluation, and physical environment to meet the needs of all students. Simultaneously, the Right to Education Act, of 2009 has led to a shift in classroom composition, emphasizing the need for curriculum adaptations and modifications to accommodate students with varying abilities. Curriculum adaptations involve effective teaching that considers students educational needs, student-teacher relationship, partnerships between parents and teachers for the evaluation and performance of students, infrastructural facilities, trained teachers, flexible content, active learning, sufficient teaching time, and continuous learning (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, 2016). Here are some instances of curricular adaptation for differently-abled students described by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (Government of India) 2016.

**Visual disability-**

Children with visual impairments learn through non-visual modes like touch, listening, smell, and taste. They have specific needs across all elementary subjects, including visual stimulation, experiential learning, incidental learning, and understanding concepts like laterality, time, position, size, shape, association, discrimination, sequence, quantity, sensations, emotions, actions, colors, matching and classifying, visual perception, and slower cognitive processing until coordination of senses develops.

Curriculum adaptation for these children involves adjusting language, material, and instructional strategies to meet their interests and requirements. Teachers use cutting-edge techniques and equipment to teach various courses, including science, social science, maths, and languages. Science teaching involves building scientific attitudes, creating people-centered tactics, and utilizing constructivist, direct experience, and computer-assisted learning techniques. Mathematics teaching requires understanding various learning methodologies, cultivating scientific mindsets, and creating evaluation procedures. Language teaching uses task-based, eclectic, and constructivist approaches to enhance reading and writing skills. Providing career education to students with visual disabilities offers hands-on experiences and work-related skills, including access to the core curriculum, concept development, communication, organization, study skills, and use of Braille, tactile graphics, and audio materials (Arya, Rajnish Kumar, 2014).

**Hearing Impairment**

Hearing impairments pose a significant communication challenge for students, but technological advancements like hearing aids and cochlear implants can help. The benefits of hearing aids depend on factors like hearing loss type, age, and therapy frequency. Students with hearing impairment have also varying learning needs, including developing speech vocabulary, understanding abstract concepts, reading and spelling, communication skills, mathematics, and organizing ideas. Teachers can support students with hearing impairments through various teaching methods, including recorded lectures, visual aids, multimodal teaching techniques, and sign language interpreters.

**Intellectual Disability**

Students with intellectual disabilities typically have lower IQs, which hinders their academic performance. They struggle to comprehend cause-and-effect linkages, have poor recall, and need repeated teaching. They could also suffer from speech and language impairments, poor motor and eye-hand coordination, and other problems such as cerebral palsy, autism, or epilepsy. Educational institutes should implement initiatives to help these students, such as offering suitable courses, developing work prospects, and providing alternative credentials. Workshop participation for these students is also very much important which can enhance their academic performance.

### **Autism Spectrum Disorder**

Autism Spectrum Disorder significantly impacts communication, understanding, and relationship skills. Teaching these students offers focus issues, communication difficulties, and academic challenges due to poor hand-eye and motor coordination. In the case of teaching methods, teachers should concentrate on streamlining lessons, framing courses in accordance with students' needs and interests, offering various subject combinations, and being open to learning through various modes, including traditional, distance, online, and virtual learning.

### **Multiple Disabilities**

Multiple disabilities refer to a child suffers from more than one disabilities, including learning, motor coordination, hearing, and vision issues. These disabilities significantly impact a child's overall well-being and require early intervention to help them reach their full potential. Students with multiple disabilities require wheelchairs, specially designed classroom seats, tactile or low vision aids, hearing aids, and assistive technology for speech and communication. Along with these instructional elements should be organized as well as lectures condensed, detailed directions provided, audio-visual and tactile experiences provided, and periodic memory assessments ensured for these students.

### **Mental Illness**

Mental disorders means disturbances in an individual's cognition, emotional regulation, or behavior, often causing distress or impairment in important functioning areas. They can also be referred to as mental health conditions, covering psychosocial disabilities and other mental states with distress, impairment, or self-harm risk (World Health

Organization 2011). Teachers should monitor students' moods and behavioral changes, referring them for appropriate support when necessary. They can assist students by collaborating with outside experts, selecting suitable software and hardware, and implementing strategies that enhance their overall well-being.

### **Physical Disabilities**

For students with physical impairments or disabilities, accessibility in the educational setting is essential. According to the MHRD guidelines classrooms should be located on the ground floor or near a lift to ensure easy access. Support tools such as scribes, electronic writing, and sitting aid should be available for students in all educational institutes. To accommodate their needs during exam times, an additional 20 minutes per hour may be granted for them. It is also recommended to assign accessible exam sites to students.

### **Specific Learning Disabilities**

Students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) frequently experience difficulties in their academics and mental health, which increases the dropout rate. Educational institutions must provide support services and inform students about available services. This includes curriculum customization, lighter course loads, and a variety of information sources, remedial classes, lecture audio recording, and effective system management.

### **Understanding the Learning Style**

Learning styles refer to a person's preferred method of understanding, obtaining, processing, storing, and recalling information in various learning situations. It is the process of transforming experience into knowledge, which is formed by combining the understanding of the experience with its transformation (Kolb, D.A. 1984). The concept of learning styles has gained significant influence in recent years (Dunn, R. and Dunn, K. 1992). To know about the learning styles of students is essential for students' academic success and are frequently linked to teachers' teaching methods. Students' learning styles are being identified by teachers and course designers, who also encourage them to participate in learning activities. There are various learning models that help to establish a proper understanding of students' learning styles and educational needs which enable

teachers to adapt and modified their teaching methods for more effective learning outcomes.

### **Herrmann Brain Dominance Model (1972)**

The Herrmann Brain Dominance Model (1972) is a split-brain theory and triune model-based split-brain research that separates thinking into cerebral and limbic parts in the right and left hemispheres of the brain. It points out those distinctions in learning styles are brought about by brain dominance which improves self-awareness and creative thinking. According to the Herrmann Brain paradigm, the brain is divided into four quadrants: A, B, C, and D.

**Quadrants A-** Individuals excel in analytical thinking, emphasizing logical problem-solving, critical analysis, quantitative data assessment, and comprehension of standards and procedures.

**Quadrants B:** Practical and structured thinking is defined as real organizational skills that operate in a regulated, conservative, and planned manner

**Quadrants C:** Relations-based reasoning involves strong communication, argumentation, and persuasion skills. Individuals with this reasoning style also value social interaction, possess a kinesthetic awareness of the world, demonstrate empathy and consider different perspectives.

**Quadrants D:** This identifies the individuals who are imaginative, artistic and highly creative.

So, the upper quadrants are responsible for cognitive and intellectual functions, while the bottom quadrants are responsible for instinctual and emotional functions. The technique seeks to stimulate activity in all areas of the brain when learning, with people favoring one or a few quadrants or even utilizing their entire brain.

### **Grasha and Reichmann Learning Style (1974)**

Anthony Grasha and Reichmann (1974) psychology professors at the University of Cincinnati, categorize learning styles into six categories

**Avoidant-** Avoidant students frequently perform poorly due to their lack of interest, engagement, passion, and attendance.

**Collaborative-** Collaborative students thrive in appreciating group projects, lectures, and co-design in order to succeed.

**Competitive-** Competitive students prioritize learning to outperform peers, but teachers should focus on other benefits. Business games and other structured activities can support their ability to lead and learn.

**Dependent-** Dependent students struggle with intellectual curiosity and prefer a pedagogical approach; in order to pique their interest and eliminate uncertainty. They need concise summaries, notes, and instructions.

**Independent-** Independent learners are confident, motivated, and capable of exploring subjects on their own or in groups. To reach their greatest potential, teachers should strike a balance between autonomous study and student-centered course design.

**Participant-** Students who participate interact well with teachers and their peers and take ownership of their work. They respond enthusiastically to class discussions and enjoy working in teams and having engaging discussions.

Students can better understand their learning preferences and create teaching techniques by using this classification. These categories of learning styles support students in creating engaging learning environments and empower efficient teaching methods.

#### **Dunn and Dunn learning model (1978)**

Dunn and Dunn's Learning Style Model, developed by Rita and Kenneth Dunn in 1978, is a well-known paradigm that emphasizes individual variability in learning preferences. The underlying premise of the approach is that each student has distinct talents and preferences and teachers may improve the learning process for students by recognizing and addressing these differences. The model highlights the role of the learning environment, including lighting, sound, temperature, and seating arrangement, in determining a person's preferred learning style. They identified five sensory modalities such as environmental, emotional, sociological, physiological, and psychological. Each sensory modality reflects a person's unique learning preferences.

**Environmental preferences-** these are the physical aspects of learning that a learner prefers, such as temperature, sound level, and lighting.

**Emotional Preferences:** It highlights the emotional components of learning including motivation, persistence, and responsibility/ conformity.

**Sociological Preferences:** It explores an individual's preferred learning involving group size, social interaction, and collaboration preferences.

**Physiological Preferences:** Takes into account the time of day, food consumption, and preferred level of motion during learning activities.

**Psychological Processing:** It inclinations, which can be classified as global/analytic, impulsive/reflective.

Dunn and Dunn also developed instruments and questionnaires to assess individual learning style preferences, helping educators to refine their teaching methods to meet diverse student needs. This paradigm supports a flexible and productive learning environment by considering each student's unique interests and strengths. However, its simplicity makes it accessible but, it has faced criticism for the challenges of implementing customized instructional strategies in large and heterogeneous classrooms.

#### **David Kolb's learning styles (1984)**

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) was first presented in 1984 by American educational theorist David Kolb. It is a comprehensive model that identifies four different learning styles. The foundation of Kolb's paradigm is the notion that experience transformation is a process involved in learning. Kolb asserts that people have preferences for particular learning styles that are shaped by the particular cognitive capacities and psychological traits that make them unique.

#### **Kolb's Learning Cycle consists of;**

**Concrete Experience (CE)** - Which emphasizes the uniqueness and complexity of each experience, and an intuitive, creative approach as opposed to a systematic and scientific approach.

**Reflective Observation (RO)** - Orientation places a strong emphasis on carefully observing and describing concepts and circumstances in order to understand them. It puts thought ahead of action and practical application, and it prioritizes reality over falsehood.

**Abstract Conceptualization (AC)** - It is a scientific approach that prioritizes logic, ideas, and concepts that are given precedence over intuition in the scientific method, which emphasizes generic theories over in-depth knowledge of particular fields.

**Active Experimentation (AE)** - It is a method that emphasizes actively influencing others and altering circumstances, giving practical applications precedence over reflective learning, and highlighting acting as opposed to observing.

### **Kinesthetic learning style:**

Kinesthetic learning, sometimes referred to as tactile learning, is a method of education that places a strong emphasis on doing things by hand and moving physically as the main ways to absorb and retain knowledge. It is common to refer to those who favour kinesthetic learning as "doers" or "hands-on learners." Kinesthetic learning is one of the categories in the Dunn and Dunn Learning Style Model as experiential learning in education.

### **Characteristics of Kinesthetic Learners**

1. Kinesthetic learners thrive when they can engage in physical activities.
2. For the purpose of understanding information, these learners like to feel, touch, and manipulate items. Practical, real-world examples and experiments are particularly effective for them.
3. The students benefit from using bodily motions to conjure up mental images or from using their heightened spatial awareness to visualize concepts through movement.
4. They enjoy sports, dance, and other physical activities. Acting out scenarios or taking part in interactive simulations are two examples of how learning is frequently improved when it incorporates physical activity.
5. For kinesthetic learners, traditional lecture-style learning may be difficult. Active learning is generally more effective for them than passive reading or listening.

### **Strategies for Teaching Kinesthetic Learners**

1. To encourage kinesthetic learners to actively interact with the information, include practical projects, experiments, and exercises in your courses.

2. Allow short breaks for movement during longer learning sessions. These breaks can involve stretching, mini workouts, or even a fast stroll to keep them focused.
3. Promote role-playing or interactive simulation to assist kinesthetic learners in internalizing knowledge through movement.
4. To reinforce abstract concepts, provide students with manipulative, models, or physical objects to touch and explore.
5. Utilize field trips and outdoor settings to create an engaging learning environment.
6. Incorporate interactive learning games and virtual reality simulations as examples of instructional technology that require face-to-face engagement.

### **Support system**

A strong support system is essential for all students in education, especially for differently-abled students because these students may struggle to progress academically and socially without adequate support. Support system for students is beneficial to achieve the goals of 'Education for All' as enshrined within the guidelines of the Right to Education Act (2009). Hence, the effective support system includes;

#### **Specialized Teachers-**

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' intellectual and emotional growth by creating a positive learning environment, developing critical thinking skills, and inspiring lifelong learning. They serve as mentors and motivators, adapting to different learning styles, and understanding their student's level and addressing challenges accordingly (Kohle & Pawar, 2011). Teachers also promote social integration by promoting positive interactions and minimizing classroom stigmas (Mastropieri M. A., Scruggs T. E. 2010). They go beyond conventional pedagogy, advocating for the rights and inclusion of differently-abled students and influencing their academic success, well-being, and sense of belonging. Their expertise is crucial in developing the curriculum to meet the diverse needs of students with varying abilities (Ainscow, M., Booth, T., & Dyson, A. 2006).

#### **Parental and Community Involvement-**

Parental involvement in a child's education is crucial for their growth and success. Children whose parents are actively engaged in their education tend to perform better than those without such support. It is recognized as a key strategy for improving the quality of education (Mudgal, M., 2023). Vanderpuye, I. (2013), in his study *'Piloting Inclusive Education in Ghana: Parental Perceptions, Expectations, and Involvement'*, emphasizes that active parental participation significantly contributes to children's educational success. Similarly, Monika (2017), in her study *'Role of Family in Inclusive Education'*, highlights that parents serve as essential educators for differently-abled children. Since they spend the most time with their child, they have a deep understanding of their educational and learning needs. They play a vital role in helping children develop life skills and adjust to real-life situations. Their active involvement is fundamental to the success of inclusive education. Thus, parental participation is widely recognized as a crucial support system in children's education, particularly in developing an inclusive learning environment.

#### **Accessible Infrastructural and educational amenities**

The above said information clearly highlights that the government's focus is not only on promoting inclusive education but also on ensuring its accessibility. To achieve this, various essential facilities are being provided in educational institutions which may enable to access education more effectively. These efforts largely follow provisions of infrastructural and educational facilities. The infrastructural facilities include accessible school buildings such as ramps, elevators, wide doorways, and barrier-free pathways for easy mobility, drinking water facilities and disabled-friendly toilets with grab bars and sufficient space for movement. Along with these, classrooms should be adaptive, involving spacious seating arrangements and adjustable desks as well as provision of assistive technology such as braille printers, screen readers, and communication boards.

On the other hand, educational facilities include Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs), so that the curriculum can be implemented properly. Meanwhile, the establishment of resource rooms is also necessary to provide special spaces with specialized teaching aids and trained educators for the educational accommodation of all types of disability in one

common classroom. Even vocational training and skill-based education are also important to enhance the employability and independent living of the differently-abled. District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) have focused on providing aids and appliances such as white canes, hearing aids, and thick pens to differently-abled students. However, the primary emphasis remains on distributing wheelchairs, crutches, and braces (Singhal, N. 2010). The ADIP scheme (Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of AIDS/Appliances) provides assistance for children with deaf blindness, with a maximum ceiling of Rs. 10,000/-. For students beyond IX class, the limit is raised to Rs. 12,000/-. The scheme also provides educational kits which include accessible mobile phones, laptops, and Braille kits once in ten years to deaf and blind students (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2022).

### **Conclusion**

Inclusive education serves as a transformative force in society that ensuring equitable learning opportunities to all. Even the Indian government has demonstrated a strong commitment to developing and promoting an inclusive educational environment through the implementation of various policies and initiatives. In line with these initiatives, effective curriculum design, inclusive pedagogical strategies, and well-structured support systems are essential in an inclusive learning environment. However, achieving true inclusion of the differently-abled in education remains a challenge because inclusive education is not just a policy-driven approach but a social movement toward equity and empowerment. It aims not only to support differently-abled individuals in educational growth but also to strengthen their social integration, only then we can create an inclusive society.

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