

# CHAPTER – 1

## INTRODUCTION

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In its broadest and all-encompassing meaning, inclusive education as an approach seeks to address the learning needs of all children with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. It implies all learners with and without disabilities being able to learn together through access to common pre-school provision, schools, and community educational settings with an appropriate network of support services. This is possible only in a flexible education system that assimilates the needs of a diverse range of learners and adapts itself to meet these needs. It aims at all stakeholders in the system (children, parents, teachers, administrators, and policymakers i.e. academic leaders) to be comfortable with diversity and see it as a challenge rather than a problem. Research has shown that inclusive education results in improved social development and academic outcomes for all learners. It leads to the development of social skills and better social interactions because learners are exposed to a real environment in which they have to interact with other learners each one having unique characteristics, interests, and abilities. Non-disabled peers adopt positive attitudes and actions towards children with special needs because of studying together in an inclusive classroom. Thus, inclusive education lays the foundation for an inclusive society accepting, respecting, and celebrating diversity. Inclusion of Children with Special Needs can only be successful if the stakeholders work collaboratively as part of the team driving this process.

In literature, parental perception towards the inclusion of Children with Special needs has been both positive and negative. A positive approach of parents concerning understanding the Child with Special Needs, helping and adjusting with them, emotional support reflected by sympathy, pity, and providing them equal rights are indispensable to make inclusion successful.

Teacher's perception of inclusion depends upon the type of impairment, severity, and needs of the child. Bringing about emotional and behavioral changes towards children with special needs is achievable only when information about disability and special needs is provided and there are linkages to practical experience.

Implementation of inclusive education in schools requires significant shifts in the way Academic Leaders act and take up challenges that schools face in meeting the needs of Children with Special Needs. The Principal's role is critical in making a school fully inclusive for all children. The quality of inclusion depends on the empowerment of the Principal, clearly stated and negotiated responsibilities, effective communication of responsibilities, and leadership that ensures compliance.

### **1.1 Concept of Inclusion**

Education is not only a fundamental right but has been declared as one of the human rights. The key aim of inclusive education is to benefit all learners including those with special needs. This aim is shared across the globe and is also reflected in the **Salamanca Statement (1994 UNESCO)** which states;

- Every child has a basic right to education;
- Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities, and learning needs;
- Educational services should take into account these diverse characteristics and needs;
- Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools;
- Regular schools with an inclusive ethos are the most effective way to combat discriminatory attitudes, create welcoming inclusive communities and achieve for all;
- Such schools provide effective education to the majority of children and improve efficiency and are cost-effective.

Inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners. At the **Jomtien World Conference (1990)** in Thailand, the goals for 'Education for All' were set and it was proclaimed that every person (child, youth, and adult) should be able to benefit from educational opportunities, which would meet their basic learning needs. Inclusion is an educational approach and philosophy that provides all students greater opportunities for academic and social achievement. This includes opportunities to participate in the full range of social, recreational, arts, sports, music, daycare, and after-school care, extra-curricular, faith-based, and all other activities.

In India, the **National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)** joined hands with **UNICEF** and launched **Project Integrated Education for Disabled Children (PIED)** in the year 1987, to strengthen the integration of learners with disabilities into regular schools. In recent years, the concept of inclusive education has been broadened to encompass not only students with disabilities but also all students who may be disadvantaged. This broader understanding of curriculum has paved the way for developing the National Curriculum Framework (NCF-2005) that reiterates the importance of including and retaining all children in school through a program that reaffirms the value of each child and enables all children to experience dignity and the confidence to learn.

### **1.1.1 School for all**

School for all welcomes all students who choose to study and ensure they do not face prejudice owing to their marginalized status. They are welcome in the school and get equal opportunities to actively participate in learning and play without any discrimination. Equity is the hallmark of a school for all. Students also participate in community life in the school. It implies that it is not only the school but all stakeholders as well who are willing to promote inclusive education in classrooms by providing learning experiences with due consideration to the diverse learning needs of all students. All stakeholders work together to achieve the essential goals. Every student is valued and educators have high expectations of success from all students. Naturally, everyone respects each other, and at the same time building and learning

resources are accessible to all students. The teachers believe that all students can learn and plan lessons if their diverse learning needs are taken into account. The educator's support ensures that all students are involved, and take responsibility for their learning and achievement.

Assessments record the achievement of all students without emphasizing competition among them. In brief, nurturing and valuing diversity are at the center stage. The curriculum is for all and responds to their educational needs through collaboration. Working together and learning together are intertwined. Monitoring the impact of learning activities during curriculum transaction is built into the system as a feedback mechanism. This provides feedback for improving future learning. The effectiveness of the school for all depends on the initial capability of the teacher to undertake organized learning activities suitable for all students, including marginalized ones. Collaboration among schools is bound to enrich school practices and innovations in inclusive schooling. Collaboration between regular and special schools, wherever possible, needs to be encouraged. Learning can also be outside of school. It can be through distance learning mode as well. It can also be credit-based leading to certification, which will sharpen teacher responsiveness towards the diverse learning needs of students. Teachers need to be well conversant with assistive aids as well as with a variety of learning resources such as ICT and assistive technologies. This should be an essential part of teachers' professional development programs.

### **1.1.2 Background of the Inclusive Education program in India**

The government of India is constitutionally committed to ensuring the right of every child to basic education. The Government of India has created numerous policies around special education since the country's independence in 1947. One of the earliest formal initiatives undertaken by the Government of India was the **Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC)** scheme of 1974 (NCERT, 2011).

The **Kothari Commission (1966)** which highlighted the importance of educating children with disabilities during the post-independence period. In the 1980s the then

ministry of Welfare, Government of India, realized the crucial need for an institution to monitor and regulate the HRD programs in the field of disability rehabilitation. Till the 1990s, ninety percent of India's estimated 40 million children in the age group-four-sixteen years with physical and mental disabilities are being excluded from mainstream education.

The **National Policy on Education, 1986** (NPE, 1986), and the **Programme of Action (1992)** stress the need for integrating children with special needs with other groups. The Government of India implemented the District Primary Education Project (DPEP) in 1994–95. In the late 90s (i.e. in 1997) the philosophy of inclusive education is added in **District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)**. This program laid special emphasis on the integration of children with mild to moderate disabilities, in line with world trends, and became one of the Government of India's largest flagship programs of the time in terms of funding with 40,000 million rupees (approximately 740 million US dollars). **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)** was launched to achieve the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education in 2001, is one such initiative. Three important aspects of UEE is access, enrolment, and retention of all children in 6-14 years of age. A zero-rejection policy has been adopted under SSA, which ensures that every child with special needs (CWSN), irrespective of the kind, category, and degree of disability, is provided a meaningful and quality education.

**National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005** has laid down a clear context of inclusive education. In 2005, the Ministry of Human Resource Development implemented a National Action Plan for the inclusion in education of children and youth with disabilities. Furthermore, IEDC was revised and, named '**Inclusive Education of the Disabled at the Secondary Stage**' (IEDSS) in 2009-10 to assist with the inclusive education of the disabled children at 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> classes later subsumed under Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) from 2013. It is important to integrate these children into regular schools to help them socialize and build their confidence.

From the year 2018-19, **Samagra Shiksha** emphasizes improving the quality of education for all students, including Children with Special Needs (CWSN). The

intervention essential component under Samagra Shiksha provides support for various student-oriented activities which include:

- Identification and assessment of Children with Special Needs (CWSN),
- Provision of aids, appliances, and corrective surgeries,
- Braille books, large print books, and uniforms,
- Therapeutic services,
- Development of teaching-learning material (TLM),
- Assistive devices & equipment,
- Environment building and orientation program to create positive attitude and awareness about the nature and needs of Children with Special Needs (CWSN),
- Purchase/development of instructional materials,
- In-service training of special educators and general teachers on curriculum adaptation,
- A stipend for girls with special needs, etc.
- The component also emphasizes the implementation of the Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 for children with special needs (within the age group of 6-14 years). Besides, separate resource support (financial assistance towards the salary of special educators) is also made available to appropriately address the needs of CWSN within the school.

The **National Education Policy 2020** recognizes the importance of creating enabling mechanisms for providing Children with Special Needs (CWSN) or Divyang, the same opportunities for obtaining quality education as any other child. The policy emphasizes the inclusion of children with special needs in regular schools and mainstreaming them in neighborhood schools and supporting their participation in the schooling process from the Foundational stage through Grade 12. The policy recommends:

- Financial support for initiatives for educating children with special needs,
- Physical access to schools for children with special needs,
- Provisions for home-based education,
- Availability of open schooling for hearing-impaired students,
- Availability of special educators and therapists with cross-disability training in schools to assist teachers in catering to the needs of all learners more fully and,
- Scholarships for differently-abled students.

### **1.1.3 Need and Importance of Inclusive Education**

There have been efforts internationally to include children with disabilities in the educational mainstream. To achieve a truly inclusive education, we need to think about and incorporate children with special needs into regular schools. Especially, because these kids face some sort of barriers to learning and participation in the classroom. As general education classrooms include more and more diverse students, teachers realize the value of accepting each student as unique. Ineffective inclusive programs, teachers adapt activities to include all students, even though their individual goals may be different. We have learned that inclusive education is a better way to help all students succeed. Researches show that most students learn and perform better when exposed to the richness of the general education curriculum. The growing body of research has shown that children do better academically when in inclusive settings and Inclusion provides opportunities to develop relationships. Some of the benefits include friendships, social skills, personal principles, comfort level with people who have special needs, and caring classroom environments.

In an inclusive educational setting, low-achieving students can get extra help even though they did not qualify for special education. Classmates of students with disabilities also experience growth in social cognition, often can become more aware of the needs of others in inclusive classrooms. An interesting side effect is that these parents report that they also feel more comfortable with people with special needs because of their children's experiences. Students with disabilities can create long-

lasting friendships that would not be otherwise possible, and these friendships can give them the skills to navigate social relationships later on in life.

### **1.1.4 Innovative Material developed by NCERT**

#### **Promoting Inclusive Education in the Foundational Years- Barkha: A Reading Series for 'All'**

The department has developed **Barkha: A Reading Series for 'All'** as an exemplary, inclusive learning material in the form of a supplementary early reading series. This reading series is available in print and digital formats. Its design is based on the principles of inclusion and the concept of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). **Barkha: A Reading Series for 'All'** is exemplary in demonstrating how the principles of UDL can guide the design of inclusive features like tactile and high-resolution visuals, text inaccessible scripts, etc. This exemplar provides a direction and initial guidelines for developing similarly accessible material in the form of textbooks and other learning resources for all school stages.

In tandem with the Digital India Campaign, the department has also developed a digital version of **Barkha: A Reading Series for 'All'**. This digital version retains all the inclusive features of the print version and is unique in its functionality because it allows for greater flexibility and has a greater scope of appealing to all. Children can access all 40 story booklets through a single device. This also gives them space to revisit any book whenever and wherever they like. The privacy that is afforded by being able to read on one's own computer or tablet allows one to read comfortably and at one's own pace, therefore, promoting reading in a non-threatening environment with meaning and pleasure. An introduction to each story is available in an audio-video format both in sign and regular language forms. It helps to introduce sign language as a regular form of communication at an early age to all children in an inclusive setting. The digital version of this reading series is available on the NCERT website and the epathshala portal.

#### **Including Children with Autism in Primary Classrooms: Teacher's Handbook**



The handbook has been developed for spreading awareness about Children with Autism (CWA) and covers the skills that will help the regular teachers to include CWA in mainstream classrooms. It focuses on the possible interventions and strategies that can be utilized in inclusive classrooms. The contents of the handbook are placed in harmony with the activities and schedule of the school so that the regular teacher may find it easy to use the handbook. The handbook is divided into three sections; Section one aims at building understanding about autism, section two provides curricular area and activity-wise suggestions for inclusion of CWA and Section three elaborates on principles for enhancing a deeper understanding about CWA.

## **1.2 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

Inclusion is an effort to make sure that children with special needs and normal children get education together under a roof in the same compound and same classroom irrespective of their strengths and weaknesses. The researches show that education policy in India has gradually increased the focus on children with special needs and that inclusive education in regular schools has become a primary policy objective. It aims at all stakeholders in the system (children, parents, teachers, and administrators, policymakers, academic leaders) to be comfortable with diversity and see it as a challenge rather than a problem. It is important to examine the perceptions of stakeholders toward the inclusion of children with special needs into regular settings as their perceptions may influence their behavior toward and acceptance of such children. Positive perception is considered to encourage the inclusion of children with special needs into regular classrooms, while the negative perception may become obstacles leading to low achievement and poor acceptance of children with special needs into mainstream settings. Hence, it would be significant to study the perception of Parents, Teachers, and Academic Leaders on the inclusion of children with special needs (CWSN) at the school level concerning various educational aspects such as Pedagogical practice, Teacher training, Infrastructure, Teaching learning resources, Curricular activities, Learner assessment, Challenges and Opportunities and to suggest measure to promote education amongst Children

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with Special Needs (CWSN). The study will also explore their knowledge and awareness about legal provisions for the education of CWSN and providing scope for improvement and change in the existing policy and to initiate the development of new policies.

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

PERCEPTION OF PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND ACADEMIC LEADERS ON  
INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (CWSN) AT SCHOOL LEVEL

### **1.4 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF THE KEY TERMS USED**

#### **PERCEPTION**

Perceptions refer to the views held by a person or a group of people depending on how they conceptualize a situation and how something is regarded, understood, or interpreted. There are many factors, which influence one's perception such as needs, interests, beliefs, attitudes, etc. Especially about the inclusion of children with special needs, the perception of parents, teachers, and academic leaders are highly influenced by various educational aspects such as pedagogical practices, teacher training, infrastructure, teaching-learning resources, curricular activities, learner assessment, challenges, and opportunities, etc.

#### **PARENTS**

This would include parents or guardians. They play a crucial role in grooming and nurturing the development of the child.

#### **TEACHERS**

Teachers are one of the important factors in facilitating the proper transfer of knowledge. The teacher uses different techniques, methods, and aids to transfer the knowledge interestingly and innovatively. Research has shown that teachers can significantly influence the attitude of the class towards their classmates with special educational needs.

## **ACADEMIC LEADER**

The academic Leader is the head of the learning institute. The institute and all the activities are undertaken in their directions. Their awareness and attitude can play a crucial role in implementing various policies and programs for the benefit of students. This can bring far-reaching effects in the education scenario.

## **CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (CWSN)**

They are children who have a disability or a combination of disabilities that makes learning or other activities difficult. Special-needs children include those who have Mental Retardation, which causes them to develop more slowly than other children. Speech and Language Impairment, such as a problem expressing themselves or understanding others. Physical Disability, such as vision problems, cerebral palsy, or other conditions. Learning Disabilities, which distort messages from their sense. Emotional Disabilities, such as antisocial or other behavioral problems.

## **INCLUSION**

It is about giving equal access and opportunities and getting rid of discrimination and intolerance (removal of barriers). Inclusion in education refers to a model wherein students with special needs spend most or all of their time with non-special (general education) needs students

## **1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To study the perception of Parents about the inclusion of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) with reference, inter alia, to

- Pedagogical practices
- Teacher training
- Infrastructure
- Teaching-learning resources
- Curricular activities
- Learner assessment

- Challenges and opportunities

2. To study the perception of Teachers about the inclusion of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) with reference, inter alia, to

- Pedagogical practices
- Teacher training
- Infrastructure
- Teaching-learning resources
- Curricular activities
- Learner assessment
- Challenges and opportunities

3. To study the perception of Academic leaders about the inclusion of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) with reference, inter alia, to

- Pedagogical practices
- Teacher training
- Infrastructure
- Teaching-learning resources
- Curricular activities
- Learner assessment
- Challenges and opportunities

4. To suggest measures to promote education amongst Children with Special Needs (CWSN).

## **1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study will investigate to answer the following question:

1. What do the Parents perceive on the Inclusion of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) concerning the following aspects of education?

- Pedagogical practices
- Teacher training
- Infrastructure
- Teaching-learning resources
- Curricular activities
- Learner assessment
- Challenges and opportunities

2. What do the Teachers perceive on the Inclusion of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) concerning the following aspects of education?

- Pedagogical practices
- Teacher training
- Infrastructure
- Teaching-learning resources
- Curricular activities
- Learner assessment
- Challenges and opportunities

3. What do the Academic leaders perceive the Inclusion of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) concerning the following aspects of education?

- Pedagogical practices
- Teacher training
- Infrastructure
- Teaching-learning resources
- Curricular activities

- Learner assessment
- Challenges and opportunities

## **1.7 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

1. The study is delimited only to study the perception of parents, teachers, and academic leaders.
2. The study is confined only to the Bhopal district of M.P.
3. The study is confined only to 30 parents, 30 teachers, and 10 academic leaders of different educational institutions/ organizations of the Bhopal district of M.P.