

Benefits of Inclusive education to students with disabilities:

A sense of belonging, being loved, having relationships and friendships with others enriches our lives.

Peer tutoring/ child to child learning

Higher academic achievement: Mainstreaming has shown that these children have done academically well than in exclusion practices

Higher self esteem: By being included in a regular school the children with disabilities have shown to be more confident and display qualities of self efficacy.

Better social skills and communication: Social skills are learnt just through observation and imitation. They get a better understanding of the world around them and feel happy about being part of the regular community.

It has been observed through lot of individual case studies that children with autism especially benefit a lot in their social behaviour and in improving their communication just by being with the other children in a regular school. Even the non verbal children express their feelings and thoughts through some form of gestural communication and they also feel happy when their peers are able to understand what they are trying to communicate.

Benefits to non-disabled students:

Educating the children with disabilities with the non-disabled children creates an atmosphere of understanding and tolerance that prepares the students of all abilities to function in a world beyond school. The non disabled children also showed increased awareness of self concept, tolerance, self worth and better understanding of other people.

Children develop a positive understanding of other people with disabilities. The children of the regular school learn to appreciate diversity, when they attend the classes with the other children.

In fact the peers of the CWD can assist in various ways in the classroom as a scribe, as a helper, reader, and also to move the wheel chair around the school

Barriers to Inclusive Education:

The education system in India has been compromised on many levels. We no longer see the child as priority. We have become very conscious of the need to educate our children but it is hardly academic motivation, which generates this interest but rather an economic motivation. Education is largely seen from the job market's perspective which has moulded people's thinking in terms of money that the individual will earn after their studies.

This is one of the reasons for parents to transfer the pressure on to the children about pursuing higher education only in selected streams of education. And it is more of a mad race, with instigated competition in getting higher marks and comparing with the peer's performance in the school. Hence Inclusion can bring in a massive change in the education model and make it more child centred and bring flexibility in the curriculum and teaching materials.

Inclusive education in India, needs must contend with the present system of education, there are lot of issues that have to be faced in the inclusion programs and the problems are mainly associated with the implementation of the plans.

A major deterrent has been the lack of statistics on the prevalence of intellectual disability. Surveys conducted by the NSSO (National Sample Survey) in 2002 and the Census in 2001 show varying figures with the NSSO quoting 1.8% (1.85 crore of the country's population) and the census quoting 2.19% of the population. (2.19 crore).

Another main issue is that there is already a huge number of children populations who are in educable category. The regular schools are as it is struggling with the teacher student ratio falls 40 to 60. The disparity in the quality of education between elite educational Institutions and the poorer counterparts are too glaring even to be mentioned.

Children with disabilities and special needs also have the right to education just as normal children do.

The philosophy behind inclusive education is to promote opportunities for all children to participate, learn and have equal treatment, irrespective of their mental or physical abilities. While the awareness on inclusive education in schools throughout the country is still at an infancy stage, educational institutions are somewhat unconvinced about having both normal and special children studying in the same classroom.

The reasons for this are lack of flexibility in curriculum, inability to fend for themselves, because of the low teacher and student ratio and lack of proper training for the teachers.. All these may result in the child not getting a fair inclusive education. As a result, the number of children with special needs receiving higher education is on the decline.

In India, a majority of children with special needs do not receive any formal education, in spite of the practice of inclusive education in some schools. This is because children with disabilities and learning deficiencies are segregated from mainstream schools and other regular routines and social activities of normal children.

Other contributing factors to this situation are lack of affordability and awareness on the kind of education choices available to children with special needs.