



❖ What is Inclusion?

An Inclusive Model of education would imply educational provision for individuals with special needs within the educational system where these children study side by side with their mainstream peers, so as to enable them to develop to their full potential.

Inclusion means not to include only the children who have intellectual disabilities, but also any other children who are having any physical disability and who have been segregated from the society for various reasons. There is also a huge population of children from various social backgrounds who are also not granted the rights of education.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has been operational in India since 2001 to provide education for universal access. The main aim to provide elementary education to every child in the country bridging the gaps in gender and in socio economic background. The Government has charted out a lot of interventions for implementing SSA like construction of new schools, additional classrooms, recruiting more teachers, providing training to the existing teachers. They also provide help in academic resource support and in textbooks or any other teaching materials.

Inclusion involves an attempt to provide more of these special services by providing additional aids and support inside the regular classroom, rather than by pulling students out for isolated instruction. Inclusion involves the extension of general education curriculum and goals to students receiving special services. It involves shared responsibility, problem solving, and mutual support among all the staff members who provide services to students.



❖ Inclusive Education in the Indian Context:

India is a signatory to or participated in the United Nations Rights of the Child, United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities, on Education for All and the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action.

"... Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions." (Article 3, Salamanca Framework for Action)

"Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system." (Article 2, Salamanca Statement)

Rule 6 of the UN Standard Rules for Persons with Disabilities states:

'States should recognize the principle of equal primary, secondary and tertiary educational opportunities for children, youth and adults with disabilities in integrated settings. They should ensure that the education of persons with disabilities is an integral part of the educational system. General education authorities are responsible for the education of persons with disabilities in integrated settings. Education for persons with disabilities should form an integral part of national educational planning, curriculum development and school organization.'

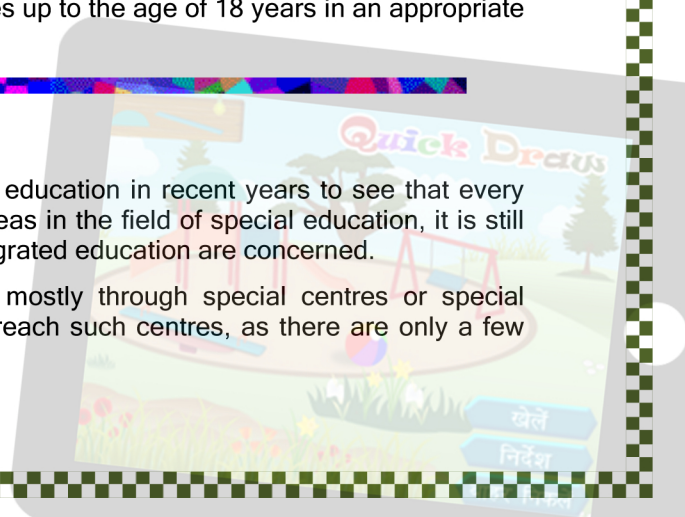
The Indian 'Equal Opportunities and Rights of Persons with Disabilities ACT' 1995, rule 26, speak about the 'education of children with disabilities up to the age of 18 years in an appropriate environment'.

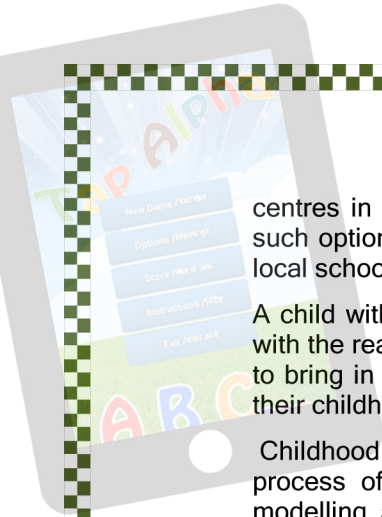


❖ Why Inclusion is necessary?

Great level of pressure has been put in the field of education in recent years to see that every individual gets some form of basic education. Whereas in the field of special education, it is still in its infancy stage as far as mainstreaming and integrated education are concerned.

The children with disabilities often get education mostly through special centres or special schools. They have to commute long distances to reach such centres, as there are only a few





centres in any city which offers specialised services. In small towns and villages there are no such options, since there are no specialised schools in these areas. Hence it is the duty of the local school in that area to take the moral responsibility of educating these children also.

A child with a disability has to cope with their condition and at the same time learn to manage with the reality of the society's attitude towards them. Inclusive education is the only best practice to bring in the change in the minds of the people towards disability which is imbibed right from their childhood.

Childhood is the most formative years of our life, where every child is actively involved in the process of learning new things by watching others perform the same task. Imitation and modelling are the two main techniques that children follow to learn new concepts from the environment. When a child goes to a special school, they often interact only with other such children who are also struggling to cope with their disabilities. They miss out on learning behaviours and skills that could have occurred had they been in the company of normal children.

When we integrate, mainstream and offer services to children irrespective of their individual differences we are equally promoting the rights of every individual.

Children have a very "adaptive behaviour" which refers to our ability to cope with the changing environment and adapt according to the situations we are placed in. They welcome changes with ease, we have to take advantage of this and facilitate normal children help and seek companionship with the special child and accept him/her as a part of the group. The children also learn to be more sensitive and understanding to people with disabilities, which they would follow throughout their life time.

When a special child interacts with a normal peer he gets exposed to a wide variety of language inputs in terms of content and vocabulary. Most importantly, age appropriate behaviours, social skills and communication skills are often learnt quickly when they are in a group of normal children. The urge to be a part of normal peers adds to the zest in improving their basic skills.

In an integrated environment, a CWD gets to participate in all the activities that are conducted in the special classes and they as well get a chance to participate in all the co-curricular activities along with their normal peers. This boosts their confidence levels and they become comfortable with their own condition. They receive the same platform to express themselves as any other student. Modelling and Imitation is also a major tool in shaping their behaviour and it happens effortlessly when they are in their peer group.. Integrated education offers the opportunity for the special children to learn socially acceptable behaviours.

The parents also feel positive and happy and the satisfaction parents derive upon watching their child with special needs being a part of a regular school.

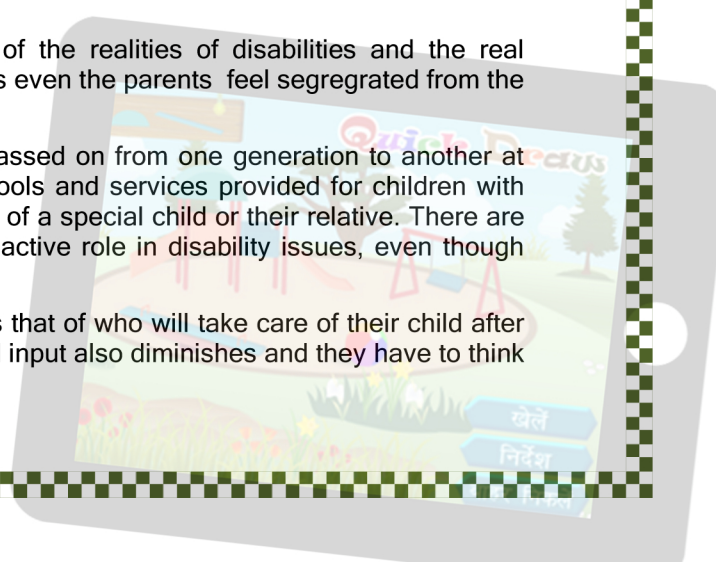
Secondly, long distance travel can be avoided by having access to the schools in the immediate neighbourhood. It is much easier to use existing facilities for schooling and getting additional professional people for helping the child with special needs, rather than pool resources to set up special schools.

If all the existing schools admitted just a few special children, and instigate the movement, the need for special schools will be eliminated. Just as we employ teachers to teach various subjects and include them in the curriculum, we need to employ special educators or people who are inclined to understand and work in the field of disability to offer services for children with disabilities.

Segregation of the disabled leaves us unaware of the realities of disabilities and the real potential. Because of their children, most of the times even the parents feel segregated from the social circles.

Attitudes, beliefs and values are often learnt and passed on from one generation to another at our places of learning. Most of the specialised schools and services provided for children with special needs, are big initiatives taken by the parent of a special child or their relative. There are very few people from the regular stream who take active role in disability issues, even though they do not have any family member with disability.

One of the main concerns and worries of a parent is that of who will take care of their child after their life time. As the parent gets older, their financial input also diminishes and they have to think



of ways to support their child, who also becomes an adult and will still require all the help for their daily needs. It becomes very difficult for the parent to physically and financially take care of their grown up child along with their age related health issues. Inclusion is the only solution to this major issue, because there will be awareness in the society and every person in the society will understand their responsibility towards the disabled population. Hence they will somehow find somebody in the peer group or support group who would come forward to help the person when there is no support from his family.

Every child has to become aware about disabilities and their issues, once they understand about it, there is a greater chance that they will grow into sensitive adults, regardless of whether their own families had special children. They are also more likely to contribute towards providing facilities for the disabled and be more considerate to another disabled person. They will also take inspiration from the efforts of the disabled, and be better prepared for possible disabilities in their own lives or families if it does occur during their adult lives.

Inclusion at the school level is only a stepping stone for all the support and compassion needed throughout their life. At every stage of their life, they need all the help, like after school for higher education and after that for their vocation and so on. The general population has to provide them with appropriate job opportunities so that they can earn for their own living.



The changes to our system are only a matter of adaptation and awareness, but once made they will go a long way to accommodate everyone in the general population. We have to take advantage of this and facilitate normal children help and seek companionship with the special child and accept him/her as a part of the group.

Greater integration in schools will reduce the fear that the normal population has of the disabled, especially the mentally disabled. And schools that have already led the way in successfully integrating special and disabled children need our support and encouragement.

