

# THE BARRIERS TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS:

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## **Abstract**

*A review of research studies on the topic of obstacles to inclusive education in elementary schools is presented in this article. 27 expert publications chosen from the Web of Science and Scopus databases based on certain criteria made up the fundamental data set for our investigation. The analysis's findings were presented, and they may be found in all the texts. The purpose of this review study is to determine what the obstacles are to inclusion in primary schools, what is known about them, and whether there are any solutions. We concentrated more intently on the issues of gaps between law and practice, obstacles to effective classroom instruction, transdisciplinary and interprofessionalism, and methodological details. The analysis and debate highlight the key aspects of by looking for textual similarities and variances across the distinct articles.*

## **Keywords**

*Barriers to inclusion, educational opportunity, inclusive education (IE), primary school, special educational needs, overview study.*

## **Introduction.**

The education being provided to persons with disabilities is of three types of special education. The one is 'segregated education' which occurs when students with disabilities learn completely separated from their peers. The another one is 'integrated education' which is a step towards inclusion. Students, in this model, usually arc integrated but are expected to t in the school culture already existing. In 'inclusive education' the school, classrooms and programmers and activities are designed and developed in such a way that all students learn and participate together. Inclusive education means that: "Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups." (The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, 1994). Inclusive education means that all children regardless of their ability level, are included in the main stream classroom, or in the most appropriate or least restrictive environment (LRE) , that students of all ability levels arc taught as equals, and that teachers must

adjust their curriculum and teaching methodologies so that all students benefit (UNESCO,2012).

Thus, inclusiveness is about creating an environment where each and every member of any type of community is an integral part of the society notwithstanding physical or mental capabilities, disabilities, economic status and man-made constructs like religion or caste (Bhama, 2009). Origin of inclusive education relates to the 'Salamanca Statement' adopted at the 'World Conference on Special Educational Needs: Access and Quality' which called upon all governments and urged them to adopt as a matter of law or policy the principles of inclusive education enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise (UNESCO, 1994, Statement, p. ix). The principle of basic education as a human right has been accepted internationally. Overwhelming support is being shown by human rights activists, nonporous, governmental organizations, governments and international agencies, all in favor of inclusive special education as the most biennial type of education for people of all ability levels.[1:2]

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fact remains that a majority of children with disabilities do not have access to education (Ashima Das). Kalyanpur (2008), drawing from the National Census data, found that up to 94% of children with disabilities "did not receive any educational services.[2;55]

Although the Government has attempted to create policies that are inclusive for people with disabilities, their implementation efforts have not resulted in an inclusive system of education, nor have they reached their goal of "education for all" across the country. It is because of various barriers which are both external and internal as well. These barriers, being faced by children with disabilities are summarized below.

### **Methods**

**Challenges and Barriers** Although the Government of India has attempted to create policies that are inclusive for people with disabilities, their implementation efforts have not resulted in an inclusive system of education, nor have they reached their goal of "education for all" across the country (Kohma, 2012). It is because of various barriers which according to Johan (2002) and Jha (2007) are both external and internal as well. These barriers, being faced by children with disabilities are summarized below.

1. **Special Educational Needs' As 'Barriers' to Inclusion** Mitller (2000) sees the identification of children with special educational needs as labeling and discriminatory. Ainscow sees the very concept of 'special educational needs' as 'barriers' to inclusion. He says, "I think the concept of special educational needs, particularly as it is seen in this country, becomes another barrier. I don't think it has a productive contribution to make to the inclusive education agenda. If anything, it is one of the barriers to moving forward" (Clough and Corbett, 2000). Jha (2002) also expresses that the Salamanca Framework of Action did refer to a move from the term 'special educational needs' to inclusive education. [3;64]

2. **Attitudinal Barriers** Negative and non-cooperating attitudes of the stake-holders like members of society, peers and teachers etc. that hinder inclusion are : a. **Social exclusion and Discrimination** Disabled persons are socially ostracized by non-disabled people in the less developed societies may be due to their attitudes of fear, ignorance, lack of awareness and traditional prejudices. Regarding disabled children some regions still maintain established beliefs that educating the disabled is senseless and futile. [4;12] Many are marginalized by dimensions such as poverty, gender and caste.[5;12] While many educational programmers have attempted to reach out to these previously excluded children, those with disabilities are often forgotten, emphasizing their invisible status in a rigidly categorized society. The social exclusion and negative attitudes result in social discrimination and thus leads to isolation, which produces barriers to inclusion.

**Attitude of regular teachers** Another strong barrier which the children perceive is the attitude of regular teachers. Several studies using both quantitative and qualitative data have examined teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about students with disabilities and inclusive education. These studies (Agbenyega , 2007; Wall, 2002; Opdal &

Wormnaes, 2001; Balboni and Pedrabissi, 2000; Chiang,1999; Cornoldi et al., 1998; Brantlinger, 1996; Minke et al., 1996; Villa et al., 1996; Fulk & Hirth, 1994; Giangreco et al., 1993; Gerber, 1992 cited in Das and Kattumuri) conclude that attitudes and concerns of teachers affect their acceptance and commitment to implementing inclusion. Das and Kattumuri (2013) found that there were two general attitudes which surfaced from subjects' interviews as being challenges for children with disabilities in inclusive schools. Firstly, regular teachers considered children with disabilities as the responsibility of the resource teachers. Secondly, they felt children with disabilities to be a 'disturbance' to the class and as causing distractions which delayed course completion. Therefore, they choose to ignore their presence and concentrate on execution of their lesson plans.

3. Schools as Barriers The challenges faced by children with disabilities who have secured admission in inclusive schools are: I. Admission All the schools in neighborhood locality do not grant admission to the students with special needs (Dutta and Banerjee). Das and Kattumuri find that Children with disabilities aspiring to study in inclusive school have the greater challenge in their attempt to secure admission. The eligibility criteria of these schools are stringent; the nature and severity of disability is the foremost concern of the school authorities. It was observed that most inclusive schools enroll children with only mild disabilities. They also find that schools also assess the parental support during the time of admission. They give preference when parents are willing to take on the extra responsibility for their child. Parents' inability to pay high fees, particularly in case of private schools, also is another barrier to get admission. ii. Commutation Problem Physical location of schools is another problem. Sometimes no availability of school or its location in area that cannot be accessed becomes the major barrier for children to get education. Inclusive Schools are far away. Students undergo difficulty in reaching the schools by themselves or with the help of their parents. Lack of proper local transport facilities add to the problem. iii. Buildings and Infrastructure Children with disabilities face barriers if the building has not been constructed with their mobility needs in mind. Most school buildings don't respond to the requirement of these learners properly. Students with special needs cannot access all the places[9;23]

## Results and Discussion

### 1. 'Special Educational Needs' As 'Barriers' to Inclusion

Clough and Corbett (2000) are of the view that the very concept of 'special educational needs' act as 'barriers' to inclusion. The identification of children with special educational needs requires labeling and special treatment which is in no means a productive contribution to make to the inclusive education agenda. This discrimination is against the very concept of inclusion. To avoid this, the Salamanca Framework of Action has also referred to a move from the term 'special educational needs' to inclusive education.

### 2. Attitudinal Barriers

Negative and non-cooperating attitudes of the stake-holders like members of society, peers and teachers etc. that hinder inclusion are:

**a. Social exclusion and Discrimination**

Disabled persons are socially ostracized by non-disabled people in the less developed societies due to established beliefs that educating the disabled is senseless and futile. Many are marginalized by other dimensions such as poverty, gender and caste. The social exclusion and negative attitudes result in social discrimination and thus leads to isolation, which produces barriers to inclusion.[6;8]

**b. Peer Pressure**

The peers in school, being the closest on par, play an important role in the lives of the children with disabilities. Children with disabilities are often an easy target for being teased and bullied by their non-disabled peers. This vulnerability to bullying is found across all types of disabilities. Hence, a negative peer attitude proves to be a major barrier to full social inclusion at school for students with disabilities.[7;9]

**b. Attitude of Regular Teachers**

There are two general attitudes of regular teachers which affect their acceptance and commitment to implementing inclusion. Firstly, regular teachers considered children with disabilities as the responsibility of the resource teachers. Secondly, they felt children with disabilities to be a ‘disturbance’ to the class and as causing distractions which delayed course completion. Therefore, they choose to ignore their presence and concentrate on execution of their lesson plans.

**3. Schools as Barriers**

The challenges faced by children with disabilities who have secured admission in inclusive schools are:

**a. Admission**

Children with disabilities aspiring to study in inclusive school have the greater challenge in their attempt to secure admission. It is observed that most inclusive schools enroll children with only mild disabilities. They also give preference when parents are willing to take on the extra responsibility for their child. Parents’ inability to pay high fees, particularly in case of private schools, also is another barrier to get admission.[8;2]

**b. Accessibility Problem**

Sometimes non-availability of school or its location in area that cannot be accessed becomes the major barrier for disabled children to get inclusive education. Students undergo difficulty in reaching the schools by themselves or with the help of their parents. Lack of proper local transport facilities add to the problem.[10;5]

**c. Buildings and Infrastructure**

Children with disabilities face barriers if the building has not been constructed with their mobility needs in mind. Most school buildings don’t respond to the requirement of these learners properly. Students with special needs cannot access all the places in the compound such as playgrounds, washrooms, library, doors, passageways, stairs and steep ramps, recreational areas, etc.

**d. Materials and Technology**

For the hearing impaired students teachers hardly use any visual aids. Similarly, for the visually impaired the schools often do not provide Braille slate, Braille, Braille sheets, Braille-Text books.

#### **e. Classroom Size**

Another challenge in the inclusive schools is high teacher-student ratios. Generally in a normal classroom there are fifty to sixty students. For a teacher it is not possible to deal with so many learners with diversity. It becomes difficult for students to adjust with so many students and sometimes children with special needs feel alien in the normal classroom.

#### **4. Curriculum as a Barrier**

In any education system, the curriculum is one of the major obstacles or tools to facilitate the development of more inclusive system. In our country curriculum is unable to meet the needs of a wide range of different learners. In it, there is little flexibility for local adaptations or for teachers to experiment and try out new approaches. As a result of the knowledge based curriculum, the examinations are also too much content oriented rather than success oriented. This is also a barrier to measure the achievement of children with special needs.

#### **5. Untrained Teachers as Barrier**

Teachers' training, abilities and attitudes can be major limitations for inclusive education. The teachers are not trained adequately to teach the children with special needs. At present, training to teachers is fragmented, uncoordinated and inadequate taking place in a segregated manner i.e. one for special children and another for students with general capabilities. So, all teachers do not have proper skills and positive attitudes towards learners with special needs, it is unlikely that these children will receive satisfactory education.[11;5]

#### **6. Constraint of Resources**

Lack of adequate financial resources is a big challenge to inclusion. For inclusion every institution would be required to make financial provisions for providing facilities like lifts, ramps, barrier free classrooms, toilets etc. Technology could be used in the form of motion sensors to open doors, flush toilets and automatic door buttons for easier access through doors. There would be a need to create learning resources for persons with disability. This could be in the form of digital library, braille literature and additional visual resources for students with hearing disability etc. Financial resources would also be required to train and retrain faculty for teaching persons with disabilities in inclusive environment. For this, the Government's spending on education will have to be increased to provide inclusive set up.

#### **Conclusion**

It is important to remember that inclusive education is at a very early stage of conceptualization and implementation in India. So long as the "struggle to achieve compulsory education for a majority of children takes precedence over meeting the needs Of those with disabilities... , change for children with disabilities will continue to be sporadic and painfully slow" (Ainscow etal, 1995 cited in Yadva) It is now widely acknowledged that to achieve the goal of universal education in India and in order to fulll provisions laid out in the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education

(RTE) Act, 2009, the education of children with disabilities cannot be put on the back burner. There could be many barriers for educating children with disabilities in regular classrooms but Jha (2002) rightly opines, "Removing barriers and bringing all children together in school irrespective of their physical and mental abilities, or social and economic status, and securing their participation in learning activities leads to the initiation of the process of inclusive education. Once walls within schools are broken, schools move out of their boundaries, end isolation and reach out to the communities. The distance between formal schools, non-formal schools, special schools and open schools will be eliminated".

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