

A Descriptive study of the Status and Sustainability of Digital Inclusive Education

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Abstract: Albert Einstein once said, “Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its entire life believing that it is stupid”. Every human being has the right and will to be and become whoever they want to be by every means possible despite their physiology, mental capacity or social background. Each individual from birth until death must be aware of their given choice and their right to choose their living. Of all the needs and wants of human beings’ education is one of the most primary needs that every individual is entitled to. Children are the most precious form of human beings and it is the duty of every human being to make the child understand the value of life through basic education. Every child must be given the choice of education and be allowed to learn without any hassle. In today’s world there are many sections and categories of people who are denied basic education especially the children with special needs and disabilities. The main aim of education is to create a better society and promote universal brotherhood. This cannot leave anyone behind. Inclusive education is one such technique which helps to bring all categories of children under one roof, within the same classroom as every other child and provide equal treatment and education. Technology has helped in better reach and educating the people deprived of equal opportunity. There are several advancements today, that make learning faster and more efficient. India is a vast country with diverse population spread over a wide geographical area. About 3% of the total population are registered to be disabled with several disabilities and this is just the registered population. The government of India is striving hard to take several initiatives in reaching out to every disabled person and provide them with good services and welfare measures. This research paper highlights the opportunities and measures with the help of technology, given to the children with special needs so as to promote inclusive education.

Keywords: Education; Inclusive Education; Learning disability; Sustainability; Equality; Opportunity; Technology; Digital; Special Needs; CWSN; Universal Brotherhood

INTRODUCTION

The world is now moving fast and subject to continuous improvisations, be it any field, where people grow and make their environment grow bigger as well. Children with special needs however have their own pace and speed in learning and growth. In this fast-moving scenario, when able children are finding it competitive and fast, disabled children need to be given the

extra push and be provided with more facilities, in order to join the race and fulfil their dreams in their respective fields. To have an ambition, they must be provided with the right choice of education and not be home-tutored. There are several measures and innovations that are out there in the world that help the children with disabilities, yet the goal has been shifted from basic education to advancements in technology and bringing learning and development to each individual rather than the individual going in search of opportunities.

This research paper is qualitative in nature and descriptive. The researcher has used secondary sources of information from books and updated websites.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The ministry of Human Resources Development defines Inclusive education as “..all learners, youth with disabilities and youth without disabilities, can learn together in pre-school provisions, schools and community educational places with appropriate systems and supportive facilities”. Inclusive education is a wider term used to bring about several initiatives that help children with disabilities to study together with the children without disabilities and feel belonged and one. This technique of promoting education for all has literally enabled many special children to excel in every possible way with the help of special curriculum, trained teachers and supportive parents.

Children with special needs often feel left out from the general race and hence tend to become more introverts and not being able to tap their maximum potential. These disabilities may vary with every individual, be it hearing impairment, visual impairment or autistic behaviour and so on. Inclusive education identifies the disabilities of children and helps them to learn together under the same roof as other children thereby promoting social justice and universal brotherhood. This kind of inclusive education influences all children and the society in several ways:

- a. Children are able to understand learning disabilities and develop compassion and friendship with one another, thereby developing a hate-free society.
- b. Every child despite their disability is given the choice of education and not denied their basic right to be educated well in an equal world.

- c. Children are taught values of treating their peer equally and show care for all despite their differences and social structure.
- d. Empowering parents who have children with disabilities to come forward and encourage them to fulfil their dreams.
- e. Development of the deprived community of people and helping them break barriers for a better quality of life.

Although inclusive education has been a term that is used for a very long time now, technology and innovation has made it reach a larger population and made life easier for many. With the development of apps and website modules, learning for Children with special needs has become accessible and attainable.

SCENARIO IN INDIA

The Government of India has initiated several schemes and welfare measures to ensure equal access towards quality education and equality in treatment of children with any disability. It has been time and again reaffirmed that education for all must be followed in its literal sense and not just be provided for the able children. The government has taken steps to identify different disabilities in children and acknowledged every learning disability with proper definition so as to address the same in future scenarios. There are many acts and measures taken to provide for the betterment of the society by including all children under the same umbrella term 'Inclusive Education'. Every education policy strives to accommodate the children with special needs as well. Not only does the policies talk about the children but also the tutors involved and the support for the parents in contributing to the child's development. Some of the measures are as follows:

- a. RPwD – Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 – This act respects, protects and empowers the rights of people with special needs and provides them with appropriate duties and rights be it from any background, physiology or mental capacity.
- b. NIOS-ISL – The National Institute for Open Schooling has made provisions for every hearing-impaired child to learn Indian Sign language for better communication.

- c. NEP 2020 – The National Education Policy, 2020, has dealt in detail about Inclusive Education and introduced several short-term courses for teachers and educators to become more proficient in teaching the children with special needs.
- d. Some of the other initiatives by the government for the children with special needs in order to bring about inclusive education are PRASHAST, a checklist screening application to identify disabilities; Samagra Shiksha- A scheme for bridging the gaps in education be it between gender or disabilities; Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS

Technology is always promising and gives new avenues of learning and development for every category of people in the society. Although technology has its own limitations, there are breakthrough innovations that are created for the children with special needs. There are several applications and advancements for children with learning disability. Some of them are as follows :

- a. Divyang Sarathi- this is an application launched by the Ministry of Social justice and Empowerment for the welfare of the disabled persons. This app aims at providing and educating disabled persons their welfare measures, schemes and guidelines. Employment opportunities for disabled people are also shared through this application so as to empower them to participate in workfoce.
- b. Avaz – This Augmentative and Alternative Communication tool is used by Children with disabilities such as Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Downs Syndrome etc. it encourages the speech-impaired children to be able to express. It helps and empowers autistic children to be participative and take part in sessions. The app provides the users a sense of confidence and self-trust so as to not feeling inferior to other children without disability.
- c. Hear2Read- This application is created to help the visually impaired children through the text to speech software. This app ensures that visually impaired children can communicate better with the help of this app. It provides for people from several linguistic backgrounds, especially south Indian languages and Hindi. It does not require internet access and hence can be used with just an android phone.

- d. MITA- It stands for Mental Imagery Therapy for Autism. It is one of the best apps for autistic children based on Pivotal response treatment, one of the major therapies for Autistic Spectrum Syndrome. It consists of several exercises and activities which help autistic children to focus and concentrate on one thing at a time. There are several levels of difficulty as well which is user-friendly and keeps the user engaged for a longer period of time,
- e. DEF- The Deaf Enabled Foundation has come up with an application for hearing impaired children and online classes for normal people who want to learn Indian sign language. The application has visual display of all the signs for the sign language. The online classes are conducted by hearing impaired adults who can teach the language to the willing candidates. This application is available on all devices for free and has helped children overcome language barriers and made communication easier for them.
- f. DAISY – It stands for Digital Accessible Information System, which serves as an audiobook for visually impaired children and Dyslexic children. The device literally serves as a book for them and helps in the reading of even complex encyclopedias. This device was founded a while back yet serves the person of reaching out to the visually disabled children for better understanding of things.
- g. Google Lens App – This application is available on the Google website without any need to download. The application provides for a pictorial representation of any object or wordings which is translated or given a description about. Hence this app helps in the gathering of information for any individual with disability such as visual disability or low vision. It helps the children with special needs to know more knowledge about anything and everything they want to know about.
- h. Ghotit- It is an application that was developed for the benefit of people with dyslexia or dysgraphia. It helps children who require assistance in reading or writing any sort of information. It gives them a sense of independence and allows them to do such reading tasks on their own. It helps the users to validate themselves of spellings, grammar and language before using it for any purpose.
- i. Some of the other applications that are useful for the differently abled children and adults are Google Go, Be my Eyes, Swayam Prabha etc.

SUGGESTIONS

Although the government of India and other private organizations are taking measures and initiatives to help make the scenario of the disabled better, there are still many basic areas of improvement that needs to be discussed for betterment of the children with special needs. Some of the suggestions are enlisted below:

1. Creating a better sense of awareness amongst people about children with disabilities are reaching out to every family in the rural areas. This will ensure that parents and care givers are able to identify the disabilities better and thereby come forward to enroll the child for inclusive education.
2. Sensitizing students about the children with special needs so as to enable and encourage them to co-tutor their classmates rather than to simply bully or harass their classmates.
3. Development of better technology to implement classes online for students who are shy to step out and the ones who aren't able to access education. There needs to be offline methods of learning because even today there are many people who donot have basic electricity facilities.
4. Active participation of NGOs and selfhelp group to sensitize people about the several applications and websites that they can use for the betterment of their children.
5. Better technology based curriculum to be created for the students so that they aren't worried about discontinuity in case of an event.
6. Continuous training and development of the teachers, administrators and care givers to take care of their wards and to motivate them to be a part of the journey.

CONCLUSION

India supports the idea that every child must be given equal opportunity to education be it from any background pr physiology or any cultural identity. The government of India has taken several measures in the past to support this idea yet all the efforts are a waste if it is not used properly. Every citizen and human being has the duty and responsibility to make this happen. Children are the future of the nation and hence their childhood, upbringing and education is in the hands of todays adults. From the above descriptive analysis it is for sure that there are many

applications and advancements done to help the disabled, yet there needs to be more awareness and training on these lines, so as to make children be engaged more and participate better for making their lives better. To be born with a disability is no fault of human beings, yet to die feeling the disability is ours to blame. Hence every life must matter and be given the choice of life and a good quality of life must be provided than a bare minimum. If such measures are taken, children with special needs will grow up to help more children in the future and make the world a better place to live in.

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