

Inclusive Education in Assam: A Study of the Provisions and Implementation of SSA with Particular Reference to children with Special Needs

Abstract

The basic premise of inclusion is acceptance of learners' diversity. Inclusive styles respond to the learning styles of each and every student, to teach values of respect for diversity, foster collaborative approaches and build social capital. Inclusive education refers to an educational setting wherein all children receive the same educational experiences and are part of the common teaching learning process. At the elementary level, SSA is the nodal agency entrusted with the responsibility of implementing Inclusive Educational setup, resources and practices in Assam. This paper attempts to reviews the provisions of SSA with reference to Assam at the elementary level.

Keywords: Inclusion, Inclusive Education, Elementary Education, SSA, CWSN.

Introduction

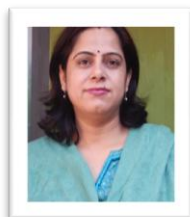
Inclusive education broadly refers to the education of CWSN or learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in the regular schools and not in segregation or in a parallel educational setup. It is based on the principle that schools should provide for all children regardless of any perceived difference, disability or other social, cultural and linguistic difference.

The social model of approach focuses on an enabling environment. Disabled people are disabled not because of their physical and mental impairments but because of what society decides for them. A non-caring society disables people. The argument put forth today is that it is society that needs to adapt to a disabled person, rather than the disabled person having to be normalized into society.

Inclusive education refers to an educational setting wherein **all** children receive the same educational experiences and are part of the common teaching learning process. It provides learning environment where individual needs of every student are adequately met and every student has an equal opportunity to succeed. It is based on ethical, social, educational principles and on equality and inherent dignity and respect for all. It is a means to realize the right to high quality education without discrimination.

Government of India's policy document, 'Draft Action Plan for Inclusive Education of children and youth with disabilities' (MHRD, 2005) defines Inclusive Education as 'An approach, that seeks to address the learning needs of all children, youth and adults with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion'. It aims at all stakeholders in the system, (learners, parents, community, teachers, administrators, policy makers) to be comfortable with diversity and see it as a challenge rather than a problem. (MHRD, 2005)

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005, formulated by NCERT, has recommended inclusive schools for learners with special educational needs by making appropriate modifications in the content, presentation and transaction strategies, preparing teachers and developing learning friendly evaluation procedures. It implies that all learners, young people with or without disabilities being able to learn together, through access to common school provisions, schools and community educational settings with an appropriate network of support services. This is possible only in a flexible educational system that assimilates the needs of a diverse range of learners and adapts itself to meet these needs.



Manisha Khetrupal

Headmistress.
HM KV IIT,
Guwahati

An educationally inclusive school is one in which the teaching and learning, achievements, attitudes and the well being of every young person matter.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are

1. To review the policies and programmes of implementation of inclusive education in the context of Assam.
2. To evaluate the schemes implemented under SSA with special reference to Assam
3. To review the status of inclusive education and role of SSA

Methodology of the Study

The study is qualitative in nature. The tools used were structured interview for Teachers, Parents and administrators and observation schedule.

Significance of the Study

In spite of all the efforts taken up by the Government and voluntary organizations, the percentage of CWSN to total enrolment in elementary classes is a mere 0.74 % (2010-11) at primary level and 0.70 % (2010-11) at upper primary level (NUEPA, 2012).

Under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), the focus during the 11th Plan was to mainstream CWSN in regular schools, and support their participation in the schooling process.

The number of CWSN identified under SSA stands at 30.42 lakh; out of which 25.96 lakh CWSN are enrolled in schools; 0.52 lakh are enrolled in EGS/AIE centers and another 1.38 lakh are provided support through home-based education. The current total coverage of CWSN (Children With Special Needs) under SSA, thus, stands at 27.80 lakh. (Progress of Inclusive Education in SSA in 2009-10, MHRD Report).

While the national average for Gross Enrolment in school is over 90%, less than 5 % of children with disabilities are in school. For Assam the figure stands as - 99003 CWSN have been identified (2.16%) and 71318 enrolled in schools. 7102 CWSN have been enrolled in EGS and 19597 are being covered through home-based education. (National Workshop Report SSA, 2010)

According to the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010: Reaching the Marginalized, children with disabilities remain one of the main groups being widely excluded from quality education despite many progressive legislations and schemes. It is in this context that the present study becomes significant.

Inclusion – The International Context

In the Global perspective this sector got a new thrust when the UN General Assembly declared 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons, with equalisation of opportunities and full participation of the disabled being the main goals. 1983-1992 was proclaimed as the Decade of the Disabled and there was special emphasis on the education of children with special needs in regular schools along with the provision of appropriate services to CWSN.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) sets out children's rights in respect of

freedom from discrimination and in respect of the representation of their views and wishes.

The Convention Against Discrimination in Education of UNESCO prohibits any discrimination, exclusion or segregation in education.

But it was in 1994 at the UNESCO World Conference on Special Needs Education held in Salamanca, Spain, and the consequent adoption of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, that the movement for inclusion got a major impetus. It is the cornerstone for understanding the practice of inclusion of CWSN.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD), 2008 is a new agreement about protecting and promoting the human rights of disabled people throughout the world. It makes it a binding that countries ratifying it will ensure an Inclusive Education system at all levels and lifelong learning.

Inclusion – National Context

Soon after independence in 1947, the Ministry of Education set up a special unit for the education of special children. During 1970's the success of international experiments of placing children with disabilities in regular schools began to be seen. The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 focused on the issue of equality in education and outlined as one of its objectives - the integration of children with special needs (Sec 4.9). The policy also laid down measures to be taken for achieving this objective.

The NPE was followed by Plan of Action (POA) - 1992, which suggested a pragmatic principle for children with special needs. Major enabling legislations in this context are -

1. Rehabilitation Council of India Act (RCI), 1992
2. Persons With Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights & Full Participation) Act, 1995
3. National Trust Act – 1999
4. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, (RTE) 2009

Besides the aforementioned legal and constitutional framework, there are also a number of schemes in place for education of CWSN. The educational scheme includes the Integrated Education of Disabled Children (IEDC), a centrally sponsored scheme launched in 1974 by the Union Ministry of Welfare which was then transferred over to the Department of Education under the Ministry of Human Resource Development in 1982.

The early attempts to include CWSN in regular schools were through Project Integrated Education for the Disabled (PIED) and District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)

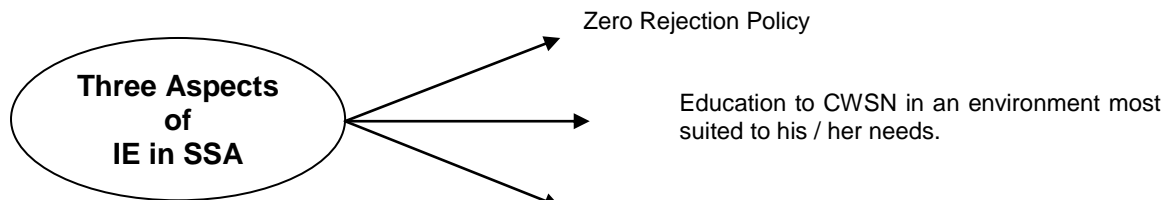
SSA and implementation of Inclusive Education in Assam

Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a recent initiative of the Government of India to universalize elementary education by community based ownership of the school system. SSA was launched as the shared responsibility of the Central and State Governments in partnership with the local authorities and the community. It was launched in 2001 as a

national flagship programme and is being implemented in all districts.

The SSA focuses on elementary education by providing quality schooling facilities and

strengthening existing school infrastructure. Universalisation of Elementary Education is the main objective of SSA. Education of CWSN is an important component of the SSA framework.

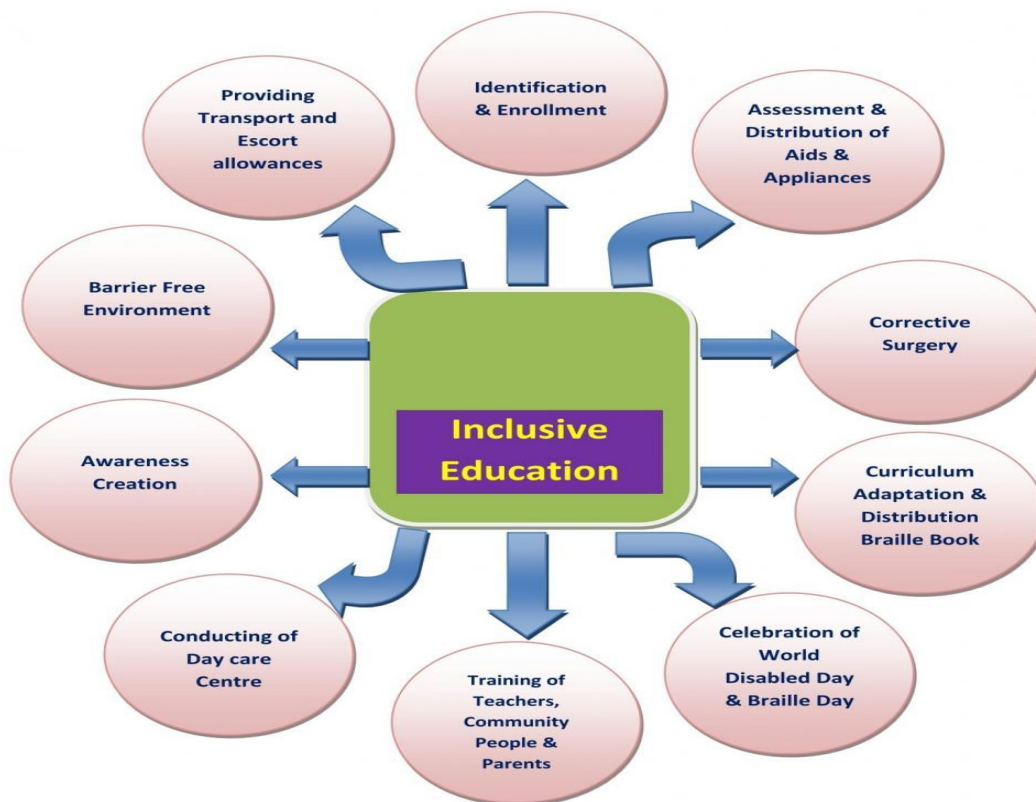


SSA focuses on increasing access to education, enrollment and retention of all children between 6-14 years of age, in school as well as improving the quality of education.

Under IE component of SSA, different activities have been conducted where all the field

level functionaries played a vital role, to create public awareness, to provide physical and academic support in school and home base situation and provide remedial teaching programme etc.

Major Interventions for Inclusive Education (IE)



Staffing Pattern of IE functionaries

Level	Designation	In Position
At State	State Programme Officer , IE	1
	State Programme Associate, IE	1
At District Level	District Programme Officer, IE	27
At Block Level	Resource Person	290
	Additional Resource Person	179
At Gaon Panchayat Level	Assistant Additional Resource Person	234

Year Wise coverage of Children With Special Needs (CWSN) (source ssa.assam.gov.in)

Year	CWSN	Enrolled	Home based Education (HBE)	Out of School Children (OSC)
2010-11	99003	78420	19597	986
2011-12	99476	73220	26256	0
2012-13	99061	97085	1976	0
2013-14	103590	83348	20242	0
2014-15	107168	94737	12431	0
2015-16	98884	88316	10568	0
2016-17	84521	75060	9461	0
2017-18	81782	74100	7682	0

Status of Class wise, Disability Wise CWSN Enrolment, Assam (2014-15), Source- U-DISE 'Elementary Education in India: Where do we stand? – Elementary Education State Report Card 2014-15'

CWSN Enrolment								
Nature of Disability	Class →							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
Blind	345	216	194	168	176	103	100	124
Low Vision	1755	2080	2333	2388	2655	1803	1874	1984
Hearing	1711	2309	2604	2433	2366	1255	1286	1226
Speech	2306	2350	2446	2104	1981	910	847	783
Loco motor	2136	2289	2400	2189	2221	1033	1107	1204
Mentally Retarded	1815	1754	1690	1552	1352	634	518	478
Learning Disability	887	1181	1448	142	1383	669	645	519
Cerebral Palsy	1358	876	626	534	453	215	167	146
Autism	88	76	58	43	40	23	25	15
Multiple Disability	809	717	638	521	485	202	185	188

Activities carried out by SSA in facilitating inclusive education setup and practices in Assam.

1. Organization of Medical Assessment camp
2. Distribution of Aids and appliances
3. Corrective Surgery
4. Distribution of Braille Books
5. Barrier free school Environment
6. Construction of Ramp & Railings and modification of toilets:
7. Foundation Course for Volunteers.
8. Engagement of Resource teachers and volunteers
9. Providing Home-based education:
10. Maintenance of child profile and Individualized Education Plan:
11. Organized Peer group sensitization programme on disability.
12. Provided Transport and Escort allowances to CWSN
13. Parents counseling cum training for parents association:
14. Foundation Course for volunteers:
15. 21-Day Special Remedial Teaching for Children with Special Needs:
16. Convergence with other organization / Agencies
17. Distribution of disability certificate

Provisions for CWSN under SSA

1. SSA provides upto Rs.3000/- per child for the inclusion of disabled children, as per specific

proposal, per year. District plan for children with special needs is formulated within the Rs.3000/- per child norm, with Rs. 1000/- earmarked exclusively for engagement of resource teachers.

2. The interventions under SSA for inclusive education are identification, functional and formal assessment, appropriate educational placement, preparation of Individualized Educational Plan, provision of aids and appliances, teacher training, resource support, removal of architectural barriers, research, monitoring and evaluation and a special focus on girls with special needs.

Conclusion

SSA is the nodal agency for implementing Inclusive Education in Assam. The SSA has a strong infrastructure base in place for the education of Children With Special Needs. Significant progress is being made in planning and implementation of ensuring equal educational access and conducive learning environment for children with special needs. There are resource persons and additional resource persons at the cluster and block level who provide the necessary learning support to the children with special needs. Positive relation is seen with the stakeholders i.e parents of CWSN.

However one major area which needs more effort is addressing the need for adequate number of resource persons, commensurate with the number of CWSN enrolled at the elementary level. Provision of quality Teaching learning material and learning aids to

address the need of diverse learning needs of CWSN is also a challenge.

References

- Ahmad, F. K., (2015) 'Challenging Exclusion: Issues and Concerns in Inclusive Education in India.' *Researchpaedia*,2(1)
- Alhassan, A.M. (2014) 'Implementation of Inclusive Education in Ghanaian Primary Schools: A look at Teachers' Attitudes.' *American Journal of Educational Research*,2(3),142-148
- Alur, M. & Timmons, V. (ed.) 'Inclusive Education Across Cultures: Crossing Boundaries, Sharing Ideas'
- Arora, A. & Sahu, P. K., (2015) 'Inclusive Education in India: how and why?' *Journal of Disability Studies*, 1(1), pp 31-34
- Borah, J.R. *An In depth Study into the problems of Education of the Mentally Retarded Children in Assam*
- Bhattacharjee, T. (2010) 'Re-examining Issue of Inclusion in Education.' *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLV (16)
- Bhatnagar, N. & Das, A (2014) 'Regular School Teachers' Concerns and Perceived Barriers to Implement Inclusive Education.' *International Journal of Instruction*, 7(2)
- Bhuyan, P.C. 'Development of Education among the physically handicapped students of Assam since Independence.'
- Das, A. Kuyini, A.B. & Desai, I.P., (2013), 'Inclusive Education in India: Are the Teachers Prepared?'
- Dimitrova- Radojichich, D. & Chichevska – Jovanova, N. (2014) 'Parents Attitude: Inclusive Education of Children with Disability.' *International Journal of Cognitive Research in Science, Engineering and Education*, 2 (1)
- Elkins, J., Van Kraayenoord, C. E. & Jobling, A. (2003) 'Parents' Attitudes to Inclusion of their children with special needs.' *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 3(2),pp 122-129
- Giffard – Lindsay, K. (2007) 'Inclusive Education in India: Interpretation, Implementation and Issues.' *Centre for International Education, University of Sussex*
- Heward, W.L. & Orlansky, D.M 'Exceptional Children.' Hussein, J. H. & Al- Qaryouti, I. (2015) 'General Education Teachers' Perceived Self Efficacy in Teaching Students with Disabilities in Oman.' *Asian Journal of Inclusive Education*, 3(1), 3-23
- Hettiarachchi, S & Das, A. 'Perceptions of 'inclusion' and perceived preparedness among school teachers in Sri Lanka.'
- Jameel, S.S. (2011) 'Disability in the Context of Higher Education: Issues and Concerns in India.' *Electronic Journal for Inclusive Education*, 2(7).
- Julka, A. (2007). 'Meeting Special Needs in Schools: A Manual.' NCERT
- Kalita, M. (2013) 'A Study of the Inclusive Education programme for Disabled Children under Sarva Shiksha Abhijan Mission in Assam.'
- Kohama, A. (2012) 'Inclusive Education in India – A Country in Transition.' (Undergraduate Thesis) Deptt. of International Studies, University of Oregon.
- Khan, T.A. (2011) 'Investigation of secondary school teachers' attitudes towards and knowledge about inclusive education in Bangladesh'
- Menon, L (2016) 'Handbook of Inclusive Education' Kanishka Publishers, Distributors
- Mangal, S.K. 'Educating Exceptional Children.'
- Pandey, Y. 'From Special Education to Inclusive Education: An Analysis of Indian Policy.'
- Pivik, J. Mc Comas, J. & Laflamme, M. (2002) 'Barriers and Facilitators to Inclusive Education' *Council for Exceptional Children*, 69(1), 97-107
- Reschly, D. J. 'Identification and Assessment of Students with Disabilities.'
- 'Responding to Children With Special Needs – A Manual for Planning and Implementation of Inclusive Education in SSA. Children that Learn Together Learn to Live Together' SSA
- Sanjeev, K. & Kumar, K (2007) 'Inclusive Education in India', *Electronic Journal for Inclusive Education*, 2(2)
- Shah, R. Das, A. Desai, I. & Tiwari, A ' Teachers' Concerns about inclusive education in Ahmedabad, India.'
- Shehla, F. (2015) 'Disabled Children in Inclusive Classrooms: Behavioural Problems and Behaviour Management Strategies.' *Journal of Indian Education*, XXXX (4)
- Singal, N. (2008) 'Working towards inclusion: reflections from the classroom.' *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(6), 1516-1529
- Singh, D. (2012) 'Challenges in Inclusive Education and Service Provisions: Policies and Practices in Indian Context.' NUEPA
- Singh, Y.P. & Agarwal, A. (2015) 'Problems and Prospects of Inclusive Education in India'
- Sinha, C. 'Behaviourally Disordered Students in Primary Schools of Greater Guwahati.' Ph D Thesis, Gauhati University.
- Subban, P. & Sharma, U. (2006) 'Primary School Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusive Education in Victoria, Australia' *International Journal of Special Education*, 21(1)
- 'Including Children with Special Needs – Primary Stage.' NCERT
- National Curriculum Framework 2005- Position Paper National Focus Group on Education of Children with Special Needs
- The Right Of Children to Free And Compulsory Education Act, 2009
- The Persons With Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights And Full Participation Act, 1995)
- Barrier Free Guidelines for CWSN in SSA (www.ssa.nic.in)
- Norms /Guidelines for Strengthening Resource Rooms for Academic Support to CWSN(www.ssa.nic.in)
- www.dise.in