CHAPTER 19

MAPPING CHANGES IN LEGISLATION AND IMPLEMENTATION FOR SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The legislative progress in India to make education inclusive has shown promise over the past few years. However, the process of implementation does not match up to it. The objective of education is to include students with special needs in regular schools where required preparation and support is not enough. Inclusive practices are seen in physical infrastructure as well as in the curriculum and educational activities. Support means not only financial assistance but also preparing schools, heads of schools, teachers, students, and communities to be inclusive in their minds and actions. In addition, it should be reflected in student outcomes in terms of academic and social participation. To begin with, several positive sparks could be seen in schools in having a special educator, resource rooms, and adaptations in curriculum, teaching methods, evaluations, and an alternative education. Visibility and attendance of students with special needs in schools has increased which is a huge change. However, the question remains about their sustainability and outcomes. This chapter presents insights and practical aspects of inclusive practices, their implementation, and challenges for students with special needs in India.

Keywords: Inclusive practices; inclusive education; implementation; students with special needs (disabilities); India; Legislation, challenges, case studies, good practices
Education for students with special educational needs (SEN) has undergone considerable changes in the last two decades across the globe. A shift has been observed from special to inclusive education. The concept of inclusive education, which was coined in the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) prompted countries around the world to make changes in their education systems. This resulted in the formulation of new legislation or reformulating existing policies by including students with SEN. Stemming from a broad term “inclusion” and Education For All as a Millennium Development Goal (UNESCO, 2000), the right to receive education in the regular schools for students with special needs became explicit in the UN convention for persons with disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006).

Several authors have interpreted inclusive education not as a destination but as a process of increasing participation in culture, curriculum, and community of mainstream schools (Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Peters, 2003). This view is supported by Florian (2007, p. 8) who suggests that inclusive education must be understood “both as a human right and a means of achieving human rights.”

However, inclusive education is seen as having different meanings for different parts of the world. According to Peters (2003), inclusive education may have different goals, based on different motives, reflecting different classifications of disabilities and providing services within different contexts. Miles and Singal (2010) note that in most Western countries, inclusive education means including students with SEN in regular schools. For developing countries, inclusive education means schooling for all students, including students with special needs. The changes in the educational policies of developing countries aligned with the international trends are an encouraging sign (Srivastava, De Boer, & Pijl, 2013). In the context of inclusive education, it is interesting to explore whether legislative changes have increased the opportunities of inclusive education for students with SEN. This chapter gives a brief outline of the implementation of disability and special needs education in developing countries; it then focuses on inclusion of students with SEN in India, legislative progress, and its implementation in India. The chapter also presents components of inclusive practices with case studies to showcase real-life realities of policy implementation in Jaipur, India.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION THROUGH THE LENS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Developing countries have different interpretations for inclusive education. According to UNESCO (2011), approximately 57 million primary-aged children do not attend school in these countries. This means that it is a struggle to bring children to school, especially in the places where there is no mass education, low literacy rates, and widespread exclusionary pressures on educating certain groups, like girls (Booth, 1999). In such a scenario, it is easy to ignore the education of students with SEN.

Assumptions associated with special needs make it even harder to increase the participation of children with SEN in schools. It is important to note that terms like “special needs,” “learning disabilities,” “handicap,” and “disability”
are used interchangeably in developing countries. Groce and Bakhshi (2011) have elaborated on the prevailing social assumptions linked to disabilities in developing countries:

- a child born with a disability would not survive for long and therefore education is not needed;
- when the child survives the early years, it is then assumed that this child would not learn or would learn with difficulty;
- a child with a disability results in a lifelong responsibility for the family rather than a contributing individual;
- persons with disabilities would undertake manual labor anyway and therefore their education is underestimated; and
- compounded by the affordability of education and other support services, poor parents often choose to invest in the education of the non-disabled sibling.

These assumptions, in addition to a general societal ignorance toward the education of students with special needs, posit a hindrance to the visibility of such students in schools and society. Other challenges include inadequate implementation of inclusive education such as external factors (e.g., legislation/policy and regulations); school factors (e.g., structure for providing special services in schools and the role of special education); teacher factors (e.g., teacher attitude, knowledge, and skills of the teacher); and parent factors (e.g., awareness about the services and educational choices for children with special needs; see Srivastava et al., 2013). Thus, in the context of developing countries, sociocultural aspects may exacerbate already existing limitations to providing educational opportunities for students with SEN. This stands true for India as well.

**EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH SEN IN INDIA**

The constitution of India includes the right to education as an enforceable principle which was recently amended for students with disabilities in line with the international documents of inclusive education. India has been a signatory of the Salamanca Statement (1994), and later, the World Education Forum at Dakar (2000), where the principle of inclusive education was established. India also signed the UNCRPD (2006), and committed to making education inclusive for students with disabilities. Post UNCRPD, countrywide movements, as well as huge efforts led by the disability sector culminated in the amendment of Right to Education (RTE, 2016). It meant that students with disabilities who were thus far rightfully not included in regular education became a part of inclusive education. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education [RTE] Act of 2010 makes the education of children aged between 6 and 14 years an obligation for the government (Ministry of Human Resource Development [MHRD], 2009). In general, students can receive elementary education in regular government schools, in regular private schools, or in regular schools run by various religious groups.
In India, school education is provided by different schools which could be largely categorized according to their objectives and management as shown in Fig. 1. The government schools refer to the schools which are controlled, funded, managed, and run by the Department of Education under the MHRD. Such schools are geographically widespread, covering the entire country. As India has rich diversity in languages, these schools generally use the regional language as medium of instruction. The national open schools also provide education and are managed and monitored by an autonomous government body under the same ministry with the objective to bridge the gap between dropped out students from regular education to complete their basic education.

The next category of private schools is managed by private management and funding. Such schools have their own resources and mainly do not receive any funds for providing education from the government. Religious group schools are also private schools which are managed and funded by religious groups. Such schools provide basic education from the elementary to the secondary level. These schools were generally not for students with any kind of disabilities; they were only providing education to students without disabilities. Special schools are only for students with disabilities, mainly sensory disabilities, physical disabilities and intellectual disability. Special schools could be the initiatives of the Ministry, that is, government-funded special school as well as privately owned schools. In the case of government-run special schools, they are monitored, managed, and funded by the Ministry while others are privately managed and funded. Various school options for students in India are presented in Fig. 1; it also shows that students with disabilities could attend either special schools or one of these schools. However, according to the new legislation (Rights of Persons with Disabilities [RPWD], 2016), students with disabilities should receive education in regular schools.

Fig. 1. Schools Providing Education to Students in India.
The education of students with SEN was mainly conceptualized and operationalized within a separate and segregated system until the 1970s. It was a commonly held belief that students with sensory, intellectual, and physical disabilities were not capable of being educated within the range of activities regularly provided in mainstream schools (National Council of Educational Research and Training [NCERT], 2000). At the end of the twentieth century, national educational policies began to be revised. These were based on international trends toward inclusive education. The revision in policies resulted in an increase in the numbers of students with SEN who attempted to access the new system (Hodkinson & Devarakonda, 2009).

NEW LEGISLATION AND POLICIES TOWARD INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIA

The Indian Government started revising educational policies to include students with SEN in the 1970s. Subsequently, policies and schemes have moved toward providing educational opportunities to students with SEN in regular schools (e.g., Integrated Education for the Disabled Children [IEDC]; Project for Integrated Education for the Disabled [PIED], 1987). According to Singal (2005), PIED was regarded as a successful model for the integration of students with SEN and continued for several years. As a next step toward the goal of universal primary education, a nationwide District Primary Education Programme [DPEP] was started in 1994. From 2000 onward, a program to enroll all children in the regular school, also those with SEN, was stated under the flagship of Education for All (EFA). The EFA program, more commonly known, as Sarva Shikhsa Abhiyan [SSA], is a country-wide program supported by the World Bank and the Ministry of Education. The program is an initiative of the Department of Education, together with other departments, such as the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment and the Department of Human Resources Development. With regard to students with SEN, the SSA focuses on the following aspects: early identification, assessment of disability, providing assistive devices, barrier free access, training teachers on inclusive education, adaptation of curriculum, and books (Singal, 2009). The framework of inclusive education specifically for students with SEN stated that “SSA will ensure that every child with special needs, irrespective of the kind and category and degree of disability, is provided education in an appropriate environment” (SSA, 2007, p.1).

As a signatory of the Salamanca declaration (UNESCO, 1994) and the UNCRPD (2006), India committed itself to the development of an “inclusive system of education.” Since then, the term “inclusive education” has gained rapid ground in the government documents, at the school level and in the popular media (Singal, 2005). Following it, two landmark legislations were formulated which gave impetus to the education and status of students with SEN, namely, the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 (PWD Act, 1995), and The National Trust Act, 1999. Post UNCRPD (2006), a significant progress in the education of students with SEN could be seen as an effect of the RTE Act (2009). Although
the RTE Act provides the right to education for students with SEN in regular schools, it interestingly sees them as a “disadvantaged group.” More recently, a much-awaited legislative progress has culminated in the formulation of Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD, 2016). This law not only increases its gamut of disabilities from 7 to 21 but also gives clear directives for inclusive education. It has captured all invisible disabilities in a regular classroom which are not addressed due to inadequate awareness about them, and support in schools for them. However, it is the lack of political will and ignorant governmental attitudes, which are likely to move the implementation of the new law at a slow pace. The progression of legislation and policies toward the education of students with SEN has been extremely slow as chronicled in Fig. 2.

**POLICIES IN PRACTICE**

The legislative growth seems to be impressive but in reality education options and opportunities for inclusive education remain elusive. According to Singal (2005), inclusive education seems to be a “buzz word” and has gained a lot of attention in the last decade. Singal reviewed the literature about inclusive education in India and found that the understanding of inclusive education is seen as a “merely linguistic shift.” The shift in official documents from “integration” to “inclusion” and the conceptual understating shows “terminological ambiguity” in defining special needs. She also concludes that special needs continue to be addressed based on the medical model and seen through the eyes of a medical professional or an expert (Singal, 2005). This psycho–medical model limits the educational opportunities for students with special needs.
The definitions of disability are vague and leave room for subjective interpretation. For example, the PWD Act (1995) defines a person with disability as “suffering from not less than forty percent of any disability as certified by a medical authority” (PWD, 1995). The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), under the Ministry of Statistics, defines disability as “any restriction or lack of abilities to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for human beings” (NSSO, 2002). The NSSO definition is used for the purposes of gathering data about populations with special needs. However, the definition is vague and could lead to a subjective understanding. Furthermore, understanding about disability is generally colored by the cultural stigma attached to it. It is due to this sociocultural stigma that families do not report about them in government surveys; hence, students with special needs are largely excluded from the educational system.

The prevalent cultural understanding of special needs continues to be evident in implementing the educational policies as “fragmented efforts” (Alur, 2002; Kalyanpur, 2008; Singal, 2005). The population with some form of disability has increased somewhat in the last decade (Census, 2011, Ministry of Statistics), but the presence of students with special needs in regular schools has not been “visible” at the same pace (Alur, 2002). It is, indeed, alarming that despite an increasing population with special needs, special needs education has not yet received the required attention in the mindset of policy and decision makers (Abidi & Sharma, 2013). They also suggest that while the policy formulation is an easy step forward, their implementation is a problem because special needs population is an “invisible minority.”

An uninformed attitude of the government toward special needs education can be attributed to the ambiguity in the roles and responsibilities of the government departments for policy implementation. According to Alur (2002) and Singal (2006) the special needs section is facilitated by the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment while the education of people with special needs is a shared responsibility between the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment and the Department of Human Resources Development. The fact that the responsibilities are not clearly defined adds to the problem. In such a situation, Alur (2010) highlights an important role of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs). NGOs have actively been lobbying to act as a pressure group in the policy formation and revision. It would be fair to say that it is because of the efforts of NGOs that: (1) the legislations have been revised, (2) new policies have been formulated, and (3) a paradigm shift from a medical- and charity-based approach to a human-rights-based approach is emerging.

**STUDENTS WITH SEN IN REGULAR PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF INDIA**

Judging the legislative developments at face value, it might appear that the Government of India (GoI) is seriously geared to fulfill its commitment of providing education to students with SEN. However, Singal (2005) has stated that
the term inclusive education “has permeated the rhetoric at different levels in the Indian system … it continues to remain an elusive concept” (Singal, 2005, p. 332). In a recent report, Alkazi (2015) mentions that India has 6.57 million students with SEN in the school-going age group (5–19 years). Of these, 20% are students with hearing disabilities, 17% vision disabilities, 14% movement disabilities, 10% with speech disabilities, 9% with multiple disabilities, and 8% with intellectual disability. Interestingly, the report mentions that 20% of students have disabilities, which are unidentified (Alkazi, 2015). Moreover, questions about whether these unidentified students are in regular schools remains unanswered. The available data tell only the percentage of enrollment in regular school (1.26%; Table 1). These data do not inform whether the students complete their education or drop out half-way. They only suggest that the students are placed in the schools. There is a reasonable possibility that students drop out of school. This confirms the observations of Kalyanpur (2008) and Singal (2005) that half-hearted efforts in gathering data and poor implementation of the policies make inclusive education an “elusive concept.”

Lack of knowledge about special needs among teachers could also be a reason for the lack of reliable data regarding special needs in the school. The data inform us about the number of children with a formal diagnosis. The diagnosis is most likely to be based on the local and regional understanding of special needs or disability. For example, the definition of mental retardation differs in the rural and urban areas. It is possible that due to the lack of information and awareness about special needs, the number of such students in regular schools is reported so low. A close look at Table 1 indicates that the number of students with physical or other “visible” special needs is higher than those with “invisible” special needs like autism. It is important to note that the available data are ambiguous. For example, it is possible that the data on mental retardation come from the urban areas where there is more awareness about it and, thus, more identification of such cases. It provides an insight that in the absence of a standard understanding about SEN or disabilities, the 20% students with unidentified disabilities mentioned by

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**Table 1.** Enrollment Percentage of Students with SEN According to the Types of SEN in Regular Schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Needs Types</th>
<th>(6–12 years) Class I–VIII</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blindness</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low vision</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing impairment</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech impairment</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical impairment</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental retardation</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning disability</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cerebral palsy</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autism</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple disability</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% to total enrollment</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Data compiled from DISE (2013–2014).*
Alkazi (2015) could be excluded in the data. Consequently, a large number of such students are likely to remain unidentified, unreached, and unserved.

The implementation of inclusive education is a complex process. Several factors have been pointed out as crucial in the successful implementation of this process. These are external factors referring to legislation/policy and regulations, school factors referring to infrastructural provisions to accommodate the special needs, and teacher factors referring to teachers’ attitude, their knowledge, and skills (Pijl & Meijer, 1997). In the context of India, the external factors pertaining to the appropriate legislation and policies that facilitate inclusive education are well in order; also, school factors pertaining to the infrastructural changes seem to gain momentum under the SSA. However, teacher factors entailing their attitudes toward inclusive education, their knowledge about special needs, and teaching methods are not yet evident. It is possible that the lack of teacher preparation could on one hand explain the reasons teachers overlook students with SEN in the class and, on the other hand, answer a question whether such students complete their education or drop-out.

**COMPONENTS OF INCLUSIVE PRACTICES IN INDIA**

The endeavor of making education inclusive for special needs involves several components. Along with legislations and policies, an inclusive school must respond to the diverse needs of students not only by providing physical infrastructure in school but also in accommodating different learning styles and pace of learning, appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, and resource use and their integration in communities (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997). The physical infrastructure or accessibility in inclusion refers to the changes in the building so that students with special needs can use the educational institutions. According to Degenhardt and Schroeder (2016), the principles of universal design of building help to remove physical, sensory, and cognitive barriers in the school system and to ensure accessibility, orientation, usability, and safety of schools for all children. Next to accessibility, curriculum and instructional adaptations create inclusion.

The adaptations in curriculum and instructional strategies are extremely important in practicing inclusion in the classroom. According to Sawyer (2000), curriculum adaptation “involves both content and its enactment of curriculum ideally creating a process of dynamic interaction among teachers, learners, subject matter and multiple settings.” There is limited information on curriculum and instructional adaptations in classroom. Otukile-Mongwaketse, Mangope, and Kuyini (2016) suggest that adaptation could involve adjustments or modifications to teaching and learning environment, teaching and learning techniques, and teaching and learning support materials that enhance learners’ performance or allow at least partial participation in a learning activity, learning program, and assessment. Adapting the curriculum is not sufficient when teachers do not know what to adapt, how to adapt, and when to adapt.
In India, classrooms are comparatively large, with as many as 40–50 students with uniform curriculum, teaching method, teaching material, and instructions for all students of the class. Students with special needs require adaption in curriculum, teaching learning material according to their specific learning needs. In this situation, teachers are not able to manage due to their inadequate knowledge and resources to support the learning of students with SEN. Teachers find it difficult to understand special needs, plan an appropriate curriculum, and then assess the student on that curriculum. It is so because so far, the educational system gives teachers a fixed curriculum to follow for all students in the class and the fixed format of its assessment as one test paper for all students. A similar conclusion was made in a study by Mukhopadhyay, Molosiwa, and Moswela (2009); they noted that teachers are under-resourced and ill-equipped for including students with special needs. Along with teacher preparation, their attitudes toward special needs education is an important component that plays a significant role. Studies have long pointed out that the attitudes or belief system for special needs education or inclusive education of teachers (Hegarthy, 1994) and head teachers (Abbott, 2006) contributes significantly to inclusive education. When head teachers in general have inclusive beliefs and promote a culture of inclusion at the whole-school level, this has been shown to support developing inclusive practices at the school level. However, inadequate teacher preparation would be a barrier in inclusion (Abbott, 2006; Khochen & Radford, 2012). With regard to the teachers’ attitudes, studies have reported that teachers hold neutral or negative attitudes for inclusion of students with special needs, mainly because of their own inadequate knowledge and skills to support or address special needs (De Boer, Pijl & Minnaert, 2011; Florian, 2007; Kavale, 2000; Srivastava, De Boer, & Pijl, 2017). Teachers have consistently voiced their inadequate “knowledge” about SEN and knowledge about teaching methods (Alghazo & Naggar Gaad, 2004; Carvalhais & da Silva, 2010; Croft, 2010).

The next task after policy formulation is to ensure inclusive classrooms. It seems a mammoth task for the government because the country already faces a huge shortfall of not only special educators, but teachers, in general. An available government document (Shortage of Teachers, 2016) indicates there is currently a 17.51% vacancy rate of government teachers at the elementary level and 14.78% at the secondary level. The document further states the special educator vacancy of 5,935 special educators out of 9,180 posts (MHRD, 2016). This is hardly a progress over the years where the shortfall of special educators was approximately 140,000 (IAMR, 2009, cited in Singh, 2012). Furthermore, there is paucity of literature about teacher preparation programs for inclusive education in India. In case of available training programs, there is no empirical evidence of their effectiveness (Singal, 2009). Few studies have been performed to examine the attitudes of regular teachers toward inclusive education. Some found that teachers were positive about inclusive education (Bhatnagar & Das, 2013; Parasuram, 2006). In addition, the authors recommended that those teachers’ require knowledge about special needs and knowledge about teaching methods. The studies of Srivastava, De Boer, and Pijl (2015, 2017) revealed that the teachers held neutral attitudes while aspiring to undertake training about knowledge in special needs.
and teaching methods. There studies had participant teachers from Jaipur coming from regular schools. Although they had no knowledge about special needs, but as they were aware that they would have students with SEN in their classes which they were not aware of or would soon have them due to new regulations, the teachers were ready to prepare themselves. Their study conducted an in-service training program for the participant. Their study also concluded the effectiveness of in-service training program in the particular context. In India there is hardly any literature which shows the effectiveness of available teacher training program for special needs education.

CHANGING SCENES ON THE GROUND:
SPARKS OF LIGHT

Inclusive education will become a reality only when the campus of educational institutions becomes accessible for all students in terms of physical and resources availability. Most of the educational institutions have been instructed to follow the national building code (Shymala, 2018). The National Building Code is a guideline which provides standards in universal access, safety, and energy-saving aspects of a building during its construction. One of the standards includes a requirement for a visible new ramp. Almost all schools in urban and rural areas have ramps, which may have visibility; however, usability is still a question. It is clear in several states of the country.

Next to physical access for disabilities is the reasonable accommodation in education such as adapted curriculum, teaching material, and teaching method, assessments for sensory, as well as invisible disabilities. Invisible disabilities are listed as dyslexia, autistic spectrum of syndrome, and attention deficit syndrome in the new legislation RPWD, 2016. These invisible disabilities are common in regular schools but remain unattended. Regardless of whether they are visible or invisible, all disabilities require attention and understanding. The education system, or boards, requires a systematic change in this aspect. In India, school education is monitored and controlled by education boards. There are four boards of education, namely, Central Boards of Secondary Education (CBSE), Indian Affiliation for Secondary Education (ICSE), State Secondary Boards (SSB), and the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). A school education completion certification is provided after secondary or senior secondary and is acceptable in higher education by either of the education boards. Therefore, every school is affiliated with either of the education boards and is required to follow their regulations. Every school providing education beyond the elementary level is bound to affiliate itself with either of the boards. The private schools (see Fig. 1) have an option to affiliate with either of the education board, while government schools are affiliated with SSB by default. In general, most affiliate themselves with CBSE. The CBSE regulates the curriculum of school subjects and its transaction and evaluation system through a country-wide examination. It is highly competitive and hardly has any scope of flexibility for SEN in terms of curriculum, subject content, teaching method, and examination. Recently, it has made certain
provisions in the secondary and senior secondary examination system. However, how the subjects and its curriculum will be taught in school to students with SEN until secondary and senior secondary and in those two years also is still unclear.

In Jaipur city, certain private schools that are affiliated with CBSE have made efforts toward special needs education. Such schools have admitted students with special needs partly due to legislation and partly on good will for inclusion. These schools have opened their doors for special needs and are making changes in their regular way of working. Their starting steps include appointing a special educator, making a resource room, and understanding the special needs. To understand special needs, regular sensitization activities for the staff as well as all students have been conducted. The students with SEN have been a part of regular classrooms. Their curriculum has been modified (not adapted) according to their abilities; they have received simplified topics and supplementary notes or worksheets; at the time of evaluations, that is, examinations, they are tested on the modified curriculum and simplified topics; plus, they have been especially involved in all school co-curricular activities. Class teachers have specially collaborated with the special educator in addressing special needs in their classes and turned to the resource room for support in teaching. However, all this is visible only until Grade Eight, as the secondary-level curriculum is fixed. In these schools, special educators have played an important role in supporting teachers in planning and preparing supplementary notes for the class teachers. This has become possible with the belief of the head teacher in inclusion. Therefore, even though teachers do not feel equipped, they collaborate with the special educators. This chapter presents two case studies of such private schools that are associated with CBSE. The author has been involved with them as a consulting expert in supporting the head teacher, teachers, and special educator in conceptualizing the resource room, understanding special needs education, planning for special needs, and supporting special needs in the classroom as in learning material.

**CASE STUDIES**

School A has a total of 1,900 students. The head teacher believes in inclusion and hence, has taken the initiative to consciously admit students with special needs, in particular, invisible disabilities as a first step. The school is affiliated with CBSE. It has a resource room with one special educator and one counselor. It has 15 students having some form of SEN, of which 10 have a diagnosis. The diagnoses include autism spectrum of disorder (ASD), dyslexia, attention deficit and hyperactive disorder (AD/HD), intellectual disability (mild), and challenging behaviors. The affiliation with CBSE makes the curriculum fixed and uniform for all students; however, the school has brought curriculum adaptation up to Grade Eight as per the special needs of the student. A special educator plans and implements the adaptations according to the special needs and modifies the assessments. Graded assessments are conducted for the students who are receiving support from the resource room. Several activities are conducted to sensitize teachers and students about special needs from time to time. These efforts are possible due to the beliefs
and proactive actions of the head teacher for inclusive education. As a result, five students from the resource room have shown consistent progress in their academic outcomes. Among the remaining, four have shown a positive change in behavior and social participation in their school activities and events. Academic outcome is also progressive according to individual abilities. The special educator and teachers give credit to the strategies such as peer tutoring and peer sensitization that they mindfully applied for those positive outcomes.

School B has a total of 2,000 students. The management and head teacher of the school believe in inclusion; consequently, students with SEN are accepted as a part of school. It also has a resource room with a special educator. In addition, it has four teachers having more than seven years of experience. Students having a diagnosis partly come to the resource room for their special needs as per subjects and abilities; remaining subjects are taught in the class. They are included in all co-curricular activities. In the resource room, subject content is reduced or modified according to the ability of the students while they receive individual lessons. In total, the school has 17 students with diagnosis of learning disabilities and ASD. These students range in grade level from pre-primary through Grade Eight. Support from the resource room in special needs is similar to School A in terms of curriculum modification and methods of evaluation.

Students with SEN that receive support from the resource room have shown improvements in social adjustment in classroom and school. Those students have learnt basic reading and mathematical skills that they use in class from time to time for social adjustment. This results in an overall positive change in performance in the students. However, in both the schools this support is only provided through grade eight, after which students have to follow the standardized curriculum, a curriculum which has not been adapted to fit their specific needs. This is an issue which has not been considered so far. The students generally either drop out or are compelled to switch to other educational board, that is, NIOS.

NIOS is an option for completing secondary education for students with SEN, when they are finding difficult to cope with CBSE; however, this option is hardly known to parents. There are hardly schools which are affiliated to NIOS and offer education based on its curriculum. As a result, many students with SEN remain out of basic education.

**CONCLUSION**

Inclusive education in India has taken several steps forward in terms of improved policies. However, in implementation it still is at a slow pace. Increasing the gamut of disabilities in the law is a positive sign that students with SEN will be included in education which is the need of the hour. The law with clear provisions for inclusive education for students with SEN is a welcoming sign. While enrollment or presence of students with SEN is visible in last few years, their retention in education and completion is not yet established. There are hardly studies conducted about the retention of students with SEN in inclusive schools and their academic or social outcomes. There could be several reasons for it and based on my professional experience...
it is an inadequate understanding of their SEN and inattention toward them. There have to be systematic changes to bridge the gap and break this vicious circle of no resources-knowledge-no identification- no students with SEN in school. Next worrisome issue requiring urgent attention is curriculum makeover to fit the special needs of students. The case studies presented here from the ground show that up to grade eight schools were managing but what after that is yet oblivous. Therefore, new legislation remains insufficient when implementation is weak. Thus, preparation and implementation is required at various such as schools, teacher preparations, flexibility in curriculum, and examination system, alternate education system.

A systematic approach toward implementation of legislation could be (1) in-service teacher training program with an effective module – this would address the understanding of special needs education and break the circle of no knowledge; (2) a curriculum makeover which also embraces special needs of students or has certain flexibility – this will complete the circle of retention of students with SEN up to secondary level; (3) monitoring of resource rooms that are already set up in government schools would complete the next part of the circle in documenting outcomes of students with SEN; and (4) it seems difficult to fulfill demand of special educators when there is shortfall of teachers, which is a real country crisis; however, in-service training, evidence-based effective capsules could be a solution to attend the special needs in the classroom. When these steps receive attention while implementing policies then the education would be better available for all students and be inclusive for students with SEN in India. Issues are myriad but these could become the stepping stones in policies and in practical life.

NOTES

1. Data about the population of people with disability were included for the first time. In 2001, 2.1% of the total population had some disability, which increased in 2011 to 2.21%.
2. In India, instead of intellectual disability, the term “mental retardation” is used and better understood in common parlance.
3. Name changed.
4. Name changed.

REFERENCES


