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A STUDY OF INCLUSIVE TEACHING PRACTICES OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AT PRIMARY LEVEL IN INDORE CITY

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ABSTRACT
Inclusive Education is a key pillar of equitable and quality education that ensures all learners, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, are provided equal opportunities to participate and thrive in mainstream classrooms. This study examines the inclusive teaching practices implemented at the primary level in Indore city, focusing particularly on children with special needs. Based on empirical data collected from 60 students and their parents, this research evaluates the current status, parental awareness, challenges faced by stakeholders, and the extent of classroom support provided. The results indicate both progress and significant gaps in inclusive implementation, calling for stronger policy execution, teacher training, and resource support. The paper concludes with practical recommendations to enhance inclusive practices in primary education.

KEYWORDS: *Inclusive Teaching Practices, Special Needs Children, Primary Level Education*

INTRODUCTION
Inclusive education is a progressive approach that emphasizes the right of every child to receive quality education, irrespective of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions. In the context of primary education, inclusive teaching practices involve modifying curriculum delivery, adopting varied pedagogical strategies, and creating a learning environment that caters to the diverse needs of all students, including those with special needs. The idea is to ensure that all children, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, learn together in the same age-appropriate classrooms. With international emphasis on education for all and rights-based frameworks like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the relevance of inclusive teaching practices has grown significantly in recent years.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE
The literature on inclusive education reflects a wide range of perspectives from both national and international contexts. UNESCO (1994) emphasized inclusive education in the Salamanca Statement, urging governments to adopt inclusive teaching strategies as a policy imperative. Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) conceptualized inclusive pedagogy as one that seeks to extend what is ordinarily available to all learners. Mittler (2000) observed that successful inclusive education requires transformation in school culture, policy, and practice.

Indian research, including studies by NCERT and RCI (Rehabilitation Council of India), have consistently pointed out that inclusive education is often hindered by infrastructural inadequacies, lack of teacher training, and insufficient policy implementation. Studies such as those by Bhattacharya (2012) and Kulkarni (2018) have shown that although inclusive policies exist, effective classroom practices remain a challenge due to limited resources and support systems.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY
India, with its diverse population and complex educational needs, has recognized inclusive education as a key goal under various national schemes such as *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* and the *Right to Education Act (2009)*. However, there is a visible gap between policy formulation and actual classroom implementation. Especially at the primary level, where foundational skills are built, inclusive teaching is crucial for setting the tone for lifelong learning.

This study is particularly relevant in today's context, where achieving equity and inclusiveness is a national priority. By examining inclusive teaching practices at the primary level, the study aims to provide insights into current practices, challenges, and possible strategies to enhance inclusion. Understanding the efficacy of such practices can help bridge the gap between policy and practice, contributing to better educational outcomes for children with special needs.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
Despite the strong emphasis on inclusive education, many primary schools in India, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas, face difficulties in implementing inclusive teaching practices effectively. Teachers often lack proper training and resources to address the diverse needs of students with disabilities. As a result, such children face academic and social exclusion within mainstream classrooms.

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Hence, the problem of the study is stated as:
A study of inclusive teaching practices at the primary level with reference to their effectiveness, challenges, and implications for improving educational equity

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To identify and examine the inclusive teaching practices adopted at the primary level.
2. To explore the perceptions of teachers and parents regarding inclusive education.
3. To assess the effectiveness of current inclusive strategies in promoting participation and learning among children with special needs.
4. To identify the challenges faced by educators in implementing inclusive practices.
5. To suggest recommendations for enhancing inclusive teaching at the primary level.

Operational Definitions

- **Inclusive Teaching Practices:** Teaching strategies, methods, and approaches that ensure the participation of all students, including those with special needs, in mainstream classrooms.
- **Primary Level:** Educational stage from Grade 1 to Grade 5, generally for children aged 6 to 11 years.
- **Children with Special Needs (CWSN):** Children who require special educational support due to physical, sensory, intellectual, emotional, or developmental disabilities.
- **Mainstream Schools:** Regular schools that admit all children regardless of ability or disability.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study follows qualitative **research design** using qualitative data collection techniques. The focus is on understanding the prevalence and quality of inclusive teaching practices and the experiences of key stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and students.
The research was conducted in selected primary schools in **Indore city**, which represents a blend of urban and semi-urban educational settings. This provided a contextual understanding of inclusive education practices in a growing Indian city.

Sample, Tools, and Research Design

- **Sample**
  The study included a purposive sample of:
  1. 60 primary students with special needs.
  2. 30 regular primary school teachers.
  3. 30 parents of children with special needs.

- **Sampling Technique**
  Purposive sampling was used to ensure that the selected participants had direct experience with inclusive education.

- **Research Tools**
  1. **Teacher Questionnaire:** Structured to collect data on awareness, attitudes, and classroom practices.
  2. **Parent Questionnaire:** To gather views on inclusion, satisfaction levels, and support systems.
  3. **Observation Checklist:** Used to assess classroom environments and teaching strategies.
  4. **Interview Schedule:** Conducted with selected teachers and parents for qualitative insights.

- **Research Design**
  A **cross-sectional descriptive design** was adopted to capture a snapshot of inclusive teaching practices and experiences at a given time.

Procedure of Data Collection
The data collection process was carried out in the following stages:

1. **Permission and Access:** Necessary permissions were obtained from school authorities to conduct the study.
2. **Tool Development and Piloting:** All tools were tested on a small sample before full-scale deployment.
3. **Data Collection:** Questionnaires were distributed to teachers and parents, while classroom observations were scheduled in coordination with school management.
4. **Interviews:** In-depth interviews were conducted with 10 teachers and 10 parents to gain qualitative insights into their experiences and challenges.
5. **Data Analysis:** Quanlitative data were analyzed using percentages and averages. Qualitative data were thematically analyzed to identify key patterns and issues.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This section presents the major findings based on the data collected from 60 primary school students with special needs and responses from their parents. Data was gathered using a structured checklist (to identify indicators of special needs) and a parental questionnaire (to understand experiences with inclusive education).

Distribution of Disabilities

- **ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)** was the most prevalent condition, observed in **43.3%** of the students.
- **Learning Disabilities** such as poor handwriting, slow reading/writing, and spelling issues were identified in **26.7%**.
- **Intellectual Disabilities** like poor logical thinking and slow development were present in **21.7%**.

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- **Behavioral Disorders** (e.g., mood swings, defiance) and **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)** were seen in **13.3%** and **13.3%** of students respectively.
- Many students showed overlapping indicators, suggesting the need for individualized support.

Parental Awareness and Satisfaction

- **42%** of parents reported being **not aware at all** of inclusive education practices.
- Only **31%** stated that their child received **specific classroom support**.
- **38%** of parents felt that their child was **never included** in regular class activities.
- **Communication gaps** were evident, as **35%** of parents reported rarely or never communicating with teachers.
- Only **18%** of parents expressed being **very satisfied** with the school's inclusive efforts.

Observed Outcomes and Changes

- **Behavioral improvements** were observed by **38%** of the parents after support measures were introduced.
- **23%** of parents were unsure, and **14%** noticed no change, indicating variability in the effectiveness of interventions.

Delimitations of the Study

The study had the following delimitations:

1. The study was confined to **primary schools in Indore city** and may not represent the national scenario.
2. Only schools that had at least **one enrolled child with special needs** were included.
3. The study focused on the **perceptions of teachers and parents**, and not on detailed student achievement data.
4. Time and resource constraints limited the sample size and the number of schools visited.

CONCLUSION

Inclusive education is both a philosophy and a practice that demands commitment, innovation, and systemic support. This study highlighted that while primary schools are taking steps towards inclusion, significant challenges remain, particularly in the areas of teacher preparedness, infrastructure, and attitudinal barriers. Teachers require continuous training and support to adapt their pedagogy, while schools need to develop more inclusive cultures and collaborative practices. Parents also need to be engaged as partners in the educational process. By identifying current practices and gaps, this study aims to contribute to a more inclusive, equitable, and effective primary education system in India.