



Indian and Western Philosophical Approaches to Special Education: A Study on the Foundations of Inclusion

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Abstract:

In this study, the philosophical foundations of inclusive education in India and the West are examined, with particular attention to how historical movements, cultural traditions, and legislative frameworks have influenced methods of teaching special needs children. The Enlightenment principles of equality, justice, and autonomy have had a significant impact on inclusive education in Western contexts. Locke, Kant, and Dewey were among the thinkers who highlighted education as a right and a means of promoting personal liberty. The Civil Rights Movement and legislative initiatives such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which established the right of children with disabilities to attend school with their classmates, served to strengthen these ideals. On the other hand, India draws from its rich philosophical and sociocultural traditions. Leaders like Gandhi and Tagore advocated for education as a comprehensive process that honors moral growth and diversity. The Right to Education Act and the Rehabilitation Council of India Act, which ensure access and encourage inclusive practices for children with disabilities, are two examples of laws that reflect this vision and are enshrined in the Indian Constitution. The study compares the two traditions and identifies areas of



convergence, such as a shared commitment to equality and human dignity, as well as differences, such as India's emphasis on cultural values and holistic development and the West's preference for rights-based frameworks. The study offers insights into how various worldviews influence inclusive education through a qualitative analysis of secondary sources, such as educational research, philosophical writings, and policy documents. The findings contribute to global discussions on inclusion, showing that both Indian and Western approaches, while rooted in distinct philosophies, enrich the understanding of how to build educational systems that are just, diverse, and inclusive.

Keywords:

Inclusive Education, Special Education, Indian Philosophy, Western Philosophy, Ethical Perspectives, Educational Policies

Introduction:

Inclusive education signifies a significant philosophical transformation in educational frameworks, aiming to guarantee fair access for all learners, irrespective of their abilities, disabilities, or socio-economic conditions. It goes beyond mere physical inclusion, focusing on the reformation of curricula, teaching methods, and classroom dynamics to promote complete participation and growth for every student (Ainscow, 2020). The philosophical foundations of inclusive education highlight notable cultural distinctions, especially between Western liberal ideologies and Indian philosophical traditions.

From a Western viewpoint, inclusive education is rooted in liberal philosophy, which prioritizes equality, autonomy, and individual rights. This perspective interprets inclusion primarily as a matter of justice and fairness, asserting that every individual deserves equal educational access (Norwich, 2014). The focus is on breaking down structural obstacles and acknowledging students with disabilities as citizens with rights, aligning with the wider human rights movement (Slee, 2018).



Conversely, **Indian philosophical traditions** offer a unique perspective. Schools of thought like Advaita Vedanta, Buddhism, and Jainism emphasize interconnectedness, karma, and non-duality, shaping the understanding of disability and diversity. For instance, **Advaita Vedanta** underscores the inherent unity among all beings, considering differences such as ability or disability as temporary expressions rather than definitive realities (Rukmani, 2001). **Buddhism emphasizes** compassion (karuṇā) and communal well-being, framing inclusion as not merely an ethical necessity but also a moral and spiritual duty (Sharma, 2015). **Jainism**, through the principle of anekāntavāda (non-absolutism), promotes the acceptance of various viewpoints, including the diverse experiences of individuals with disabilities (Singh, 2018).

A comparative examination indicates that while Western liberal philosophy emphasizes individual rights and equality, Indian frameworks broaden the concept of inclusion to encompass shared moral and spiritual responsibilities. In the West, the societal role is frequently framed around ensuring legal and institutional equality, whereas Indian philosophy views society as interconnected and ethically obligated to promote inclusion for the welfare of all (Mukhopadhyay & Mani, 2002).

By integrating these viewpoints, inclusive education can be envisioned in a more comprehensive manner. Western rights-oriented frameworks advocate for justice and equality, while Indian traditions remind us of the spiritual and collective aspects of dignity, compassion, and interdependence. This cross-cultural exchange enhances global perspectives on special education, ultimately fostering more culturally aware and ethically grounded practices that respect the intrinsic worth of each individual (Florian & Beaton, 2018).

Back Ground of the study

Indian Philosophy: Insights on Human Potential, Diversity, and Ethical Responsibility

Indian philosophical traditions offer profound ethical and spiritual insights regarding disability, diversity, and inclusion. In contrast to frameworks that primarily concentrate on legal



entitlements or systemic changes, Indian philosophies highlight the importance of interconnectedness, compassion, and moral accountability towards every individual, including those with disabilities (Rukmani, 2001; Sharma, 2015). These viewpoints indicate that inclusion transcends being merely a social or political concern; it is fundamentally a spiritual and ethical obligation.

1. **Advaita Vedanta** articulates the concept of non-duality (Advaita), positing that all beings are manifestations of a singular ultimate reality, Brahman. From this perspective, physical or mental disabilities do not lessen human value, as each person is inherently linked to Brahman. In the context of special education, this viewpoint urges educators to transcend limitations and concentrate on inner potential, fostering both intellectual and spiritual growth (Rukmani, 2001).
2. **Buddhism highlights** the values of compassion (*karuṇā*) and interdependence (*pratīyasamutpāda*), proposing that well-being is a collective endeavor and that society bears the responsibility of alleviating suffering for everyone. Disabilities are viewed not as fixed states but rather as aspects of impermanence (*anicca*), which helps to diminish stigma and foster empathy. This philosophy inspires educational settings that embrace inclusivity, where diversity is recognized as an inherent part of the human experience, promoting atmospheres of kindness, support, and a non-judgmental approach (Sharma, 2015).
3. **Jainism**, through its tenets of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and *anekāntavāda* (many-sided reality), advocates for the acceptance of diverse perspectives and experiences. Disabilities are not regarded as shortcomings but rather as elements of the broader spectrum of life. Within education, *anekāntavāda* encourages appreciation for different learning styles and abilities, while *ahimsa* ensures that educational institutions are safe, nurturing environments devoid of harm or discrimination (Singh, 2018).



Together, these traditions stress the inherent value, dignity, and potential of every individual, calling on society and educators to foster inclusive settings that embody moral responsibility, spiritual interconnectedness, and communal accountability.

Western Philosophy: Ethical and Practical Approaches to Inclusion

The foundations of Western thought have significantly contributed to the development of inclusive education, primarily focusing on ethical considerations, rights, and practical solutions. Various philosophical frameworks, including utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, pragmatism, idealism, realism, naturalism, and existentialism, emphasize important aspects of inclusion (Norwich, 2014; Florian & Beaton, 2018).

- 1. Utilitarianism**, as articulated by Bentham and Mill, posits that actions should aim to increase happiness while reducing suffering. Inclusion is thus defended on the grounds that it improves the well-being of both students with disabilities and society at large by promoting participation and equal opportunities (Norwich, 2014).
- 2. Kantian ethics** prioritizes human dignity and autonomy, based on Kant's categorical imperative that mandates individuals be treated as ends in themselves. In the context of inclusive education, this principle translates into the need for respect, necessary accommodations, and policies that ensure equal dignity and rights for students with disabilities (Norwich, 2014).
- 3. Pragmatism**, particularly as articulated by John Dewey, underscores the importance of experiential and democratic education. Inclusion is viewed as vital for preparing students for democratic participation by encouraging cooperation, problem-solving, and empathy through engaging diverse learners in common settings (Florian & Beaton, 2018).
- 4. Idealism** champions the moral and intellectual potential inherent in every learner, advocating for curricula designed to foster personal development and communal values.



5. **Realism** advocates for evidence-based and practical strategies, including adaptive technologies and tailored instruction, ensuring that inclusive education is anchored in observable outcomes (Slee, 2018).
6. **Naturalism** promotes an educational approach that aligns with individual development, fostering learning environments that adjust to natural abilities and developmental rhythms rather than adhering to rigid standards (Norwich, 2014).
7. **Existentialism** focuses on personal freedom, choice, and accountability. In the realm of inclusive education, it advocates for student-centered learning, where individuals—including those with disabilities—have the opportunity to exercise agency and determine their own paths (Slee, 2018).

Collectively, these Western philosophies form a comprehensive framework: utilitarianism promotes collective welfare, Kantian ethics safeguards dignity, pragmatism offers actionable strategies, and existentialism affirms personal agency.

Inclusive Education Policies in India – A Brief Overview

The framework for inclusive education in India embodies the nation's constitutional pledge to equality and its philosophical legacy of dignity and interconnectedness. Over time, the policies have transitioned from welfare-oriented provisions to a rights-based framework that aligns with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Sharma, 2015; Gupta & Singal, 2018).

Key Policies

Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016

This legislation guarantees free and inclusive education for children aged 6 to 18 years, requiring accessible facilities, personalized support, and training for educators (Gupta & Singal, 2018).



National Education Policy (NEP), 2020

This policy focuses on universal access to education, adaptable curricula, inclusive teacher training, and the implementation of assistive technologies (Mehendale, 2021).

Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC), 1974

As one of the earliest initiatives, this policy provided financial assistance, special educators, and fundamental inclusion measures (Sharma, 2015).

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), 2001

This initiative aimed to achieve universal elementary education by promoting inclusive infrastructure, employing special educators, and fostering community awareness (Sharma, 2015).

Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), 2009

This program expanded the concept of inclusion to secondary education, emphasizing the importance of infrastructure, teacher training, and vocational opportunities (Gupta & Singal, 2018).

Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, 2018

This initiative merged SSA and RMSA, offering inclusive infrastructure, teacher training, and resources for children who are out of school (Mehendale, 2021).

Collectively, these policies illustrate India's progression from mere integration to genuine inclusion, reinforcing the principles of accessibility, equity, and dignity within the educational landscape (Sharma, 2015; Gupta & Singal, 2018).

2. Review of Related Literature

This investigation into the philosophical foundations of special education from both Indian and Western viewpoints is supported by various reviews that lay the groundwork for comprehending



the contrasting philosophies of inclusive education. Western ideologies typically underscore expansive human rights frameworks, social justice, and equality, promoting models that advocate for the mainstream integration of students with disabilities as part of an inclusive culture. For instance, Northern European viewpoints advocate for a comprehensive approach to inclusion that nurtures a community spirit and celebrates diversity. Conversely, Indian views on inclusion are frequently intertwined with cultural values and policies that emphasize both diversity and the establishment of support systems for students with special needs within mainstream settings. Although inclusive frameworks in India are progressively converging with Western models, traditional and cultural perspectives significantly impact their implementation, particularly in rural and underserved regions. Recently, there has been an increased emphasis in India on enhancing infrastructure and resources for special education, coupled with promoting societal and policy-level transformations that encourage inclusivity. Research suggests that, while there is a global trend toward more inclusive educational models, the diverse socio-cultural, economic, and philosophical foundations distinctly influence the realities of inclusion in India compared to Western contexts. This interplay enriches comparative analyses, underscoring the necessity to tailor inclusive frameworks to local values and capabilities rather than applying a one-size-fits-all solution. International entities such as UNESCO and UNICEF are actively working to establish inclusive education policies worldwide, making specific adjustments for various cultural frameworks, including India. Their initiatives often focus on data collection and policy modifications that cater to diverse populations, prioritizing both accessibility and culturally sensitive educational practices.

Mukherjee, M. (2017). This paper examines the tensions that arise between Western models of inclusive education, which are grounded in specific Euro-American social and historical contexts, and India's own cultural and historical landscape. Mukherjee argues for the need to contextualize inclusive education policies by integrating an understanding of India's indigenous traditions, such as Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy, to devise a model that is more fitting for India. This viewpoint emphasizes the challenges of applying Western theories without adapting them



to local realities. **Singal, N., & Jeffery, R. (2011)**. Singal and Jeffery investigate the development of inclusive education in India, contrasting it with advancements in the West and highlighting how social policies have shaped India's present commitment to equity. Their paper critiques the Western approach, pointing out that it often fails to fully consider the range of needs within Indian society, and examines how inclusive education could more effectively address the unique socio-economic and cultural obstacles present in India. **Kauffman & Badar (2014)**. This study explores the philosophy of inclusive special education, which stresses the integration of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) into mainstream educational settings whenever feasible, while still providing the necessary tailored support for those with greater needs. This approach seeks to balance the right to inclusion with the right to receive an appropriate education that meets individual requirements. The discussion reveals the complexity of reconciling human rights with educational necessities, making it pertinent for policy dialogues surrounding inclusive education.

Practical and Theoretical Perspectives on Inclusion: In his book **"Inclusion and Democracy," Slee (2011)** contends that inclusion serves as a democratic necessity that challenges the conventional frameworks of education. This perspective suggests that inclusive education must not only adjust to meet the needs of students with SEND but also undergo transformation to foster truly inclusive environments. This philosophical stance underscores the social and ethical aspects of inclusive education, extending beyond mere academic success. A meta-analysis conducted by **Dessemontet et al. (2012)** explored the academic, adaptive, and social results for students with disabilities in various environments. The findings indicated that inclusive settings frequently promote the development of life skills and adaptive behaviors at levels comparable to, or even surpassing, those found in specialized settings. This strongly supports the argument for inclusion as a viable educational strategy that does not hinder skill development.

In **"Inclusive Vision Versus Special Education Reality,"** James Kauffman and Garry Hornby examine the gap between the ideal of full inclusion and the real-world obstacles it encounters



globally. They assert that while inclusion is essential, total inclusion may not adequately address the needs of all students, particularly those with severe disabilities. The article critiques the indiscriminate application of inclusive education policies, advocating for specialized support within inclusive contexts to ensure that all students can engage meaningfully. “**A Review of Inclusive Education Policy**” assesses the evolution of inclusive education policies, tracing the transition from special education to inclusion and evaluating the implications of these policies on educational outcomes. The authors call for a nuanced and adaptable approach that takes into account the individual needs of each child, endorsing both inclusive practices and specialized educational interventions when necessary.

Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism posits that learning occurs through social interactions. His concepts emphasize the significance of collaboration among learners, which is vital for implementing inclusive practices (Vygotsky, 1978). Kauffman and Landrum (2013) highlight that constructivist methodologies cultivate inclusive classrooms where diverse learning needs are acknowledged and addressed. Educators are encouraged to foster environments that promote active participation from all students, enhancing both academic and social growth.

Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy questions traditional educational methods that sustain inequality. **Freire (1970)** advocates for an educational framework that empowers marginalized voices and champions social justice. This viewpoint has inspired numerous educators to embrace inclusive practices that challenge systemic barriers, cultivating a classroom culture rooted in equity and respect (**Ainscow et al., 2006**). Indian philosophy, grounded in ideas such as Dharma and Karma, highlights the significance of duty, responsibility, and the interrelation of individuals within society (**Sharma, 2017**). This philosophical framework influences the way disability is viewed and managed in the educational landscape. **Reddy (2015)** examines how cultural narratives shape perceptions of disability, often interpreting it through spiritual or moral viewpoints. This understanding affects the inclusivity of educational practices, mirroring societal values and norms.



In Indian society, collectivist ideals are often emphasized, where community support is crucial for individuals with disabilities (**Kumar, 2018**). This stands in contrast to the individualistic methodologies prevalent in Western societies, underscoring the vital role of family and community networks in promoting inclusion. **Gupta (2016)** offers examples of successful community-based initiatives that foster inclusive education. These programs illustrate how culturally appropriate practices can improve the educational experiences of students with disabilities, stressing the importance of local participation and support.

Research by **Bhatia (2020)** points out systemic challenges such as inadequate teacher training, societal stigma, and a lack of resources as key obstacles to effective inclusion. Addressing these issues requires a united effort from policymakers, educators, and communities to instigate meaningful change. Comparative studies, including those by **Arora and Smith (2020)**, reveal the conflict between individual rights and communal responsibilities in both settings. While Western frameworks focus on legal entitlements, Indian approaches emphasize social obligation, indicating that a balanced perspective could improve inclusion. **Research by Slee (2011)** supports inclusive policies that incorporate successful practices from both Indian and Western traditions. By valuing the strengths of each viewpoint, educators and policymakers can create frameworks that are both contextually appropriate and globally aware. **Ainscow et al. (2012)** stress the necessity of exchanging best practices and insights across cultures. Collaborative efforts on an international scale can aid in the establishment of inclusive education systems that are adaptable and responsive to varied needs.

There are notable research gaps in the realm of special education concerning its philosophical underpinnings. Firstly, there is a pressing need for more thorough comparative studies that explore the distinctions and commonalities between Indian and Western inclusion strategies. Such research could yield valuable insights into how these philosophical approaches influence educational practices. Furthermore, current studies frequently neglect the intersectionality of disability with other social identities, which restricts our understanding of the diverse



experiences students encounter in educational settings. Additionally, there is a lack of empirical investigations into how educators apply philosophical theories of inclusion within their classrooms. Longitudinal studies examining the enduring impacts of inclusive education policies are also scarce, hindering our comprehension of their long-term effectiveness. Moreover, the role of cultural contexts in shaping the development and application of inclusive education policies has not been sufficiently investigated. The contribution of teacher training in integrating philosophical frameworks into practical application remains underexplored as well. Lastly, the existing literature often overlooks indigenous and local philosophies that could provide alternative perspectives on inclusive education. Addressing these gaps is vital for advancing the field and cultivating effective, culturally relevant practices in special education.

Rationale of the Study

The motivation behind this research on the philosophical foundations of special education from both Indian and Western viewpoints arises from the critical demand for inclusive educational practices that are effective and culturally relevant. As global education systems become increasingly interconnected, it is crucial to comprehend the various philosophical frameworks that shape perceptions of disability and inclusion. This study intends to investigate how Indian and Western philosophies influence inclusive practices, pinpointing similarities as well as areas needing enhancement to improve educational settings for all learners. Numerous educational systems face challenges in executing inclusive practices due to a limited understanding of the philosophical concepts that support them. By delving into these foundational ideas, this research aims to identify systemic obstacles to inclusion and propose actionable solutions. The results will also guide policy formulation, ensuring that educational structures comply with legal requirements while also aligning ethically with cultural principles.

Furthermore, educators play an essential role in realizing inclusion within classrooms. Gaining insight into the philosophical bases of special education can enhance teacher training programs, equipping educators to address the varied needs of their students more effectively. Lastly,



despite a wealth of research within both Indian and Western frameworks, there exists a notable gap in comparative studies that focus on philosophical foundations. This study seeks to bridge that gap, offering valuable perspectives to the ongoing dialogue surrounding inclusive education.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the key philosophical frameworks underlying special education and inclusive education.
2. To explore how these philosophical frameworks influence current inclusive education policies and practices
3. To evaluate systemic barriers to implementing inclusive education based on existing literature.

Operational Definitions of Key Terms

1. **Philosophical Foundations:** In this study the term is used to understand the underlying beliefs, principles, and theoretical frameworks that inform attitudes and practices regarding education, particularly in relation to disability and inclusion.
2. **Special Education:** In this study the term is used to understand the educational program designed to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities, ensuring they receive appropriate support and resources to facilitate their learning.
3. **Inclusion:** In this study the term is used to understand the practice of integrating students with disabilities into mainstream educational settings, providing them with equal opportunities to participate in academic and social activities alongside their peers.

Delimitations of the Study

1. This study exclusively utilizes secondary research sources, such as academic journals, books, and policy documents, rather than conducting primary data collection through surveys or interviews.



2. The research specifically focuses on philosophical frameworks related to inclusion and disability, intentionally excluding other aspects of special education.

Research Methodology

Research Design: This study adopts a qualitative research approach, centering on the analysis of existing literature to investigate and contrast the philosophical foundations of special education in both India and Western contexts.

Secondary data was gathered from a variety of sources, which include: - Academic journals and articles - Books and edited volumes focused on special education and philosophy - Policy documents and reports from both governmental and non-governmental organizations - Relevant online databases and educational materials

Literature Review: An extensive literature review was performed to pinpoint essential themes and concepts connected to the philosophical foundations of special education. This process involved reviewing existing studies that address inclusion, disability, and educational practices from the perspectives of both India and the

Interpretation of Major Findings

The philosophical perspectives on special education in India and Western nations uncover both common goals and significant contrasts. Although both viewpoints aim for inclusion, the methods they employ are influenced by distinct cultural, economic, and social dynamics that have shaped policy creation, educational practices, and societal perceptions. This analysis provides in-depth insights into how these philosophies affect the structural and practical dimensions of inclusive education, highlighting how each context addresses the challenges of equity, accessibility, and appreciation for diversity.



1. Human Rights Framework and Legal Mandates in Western Countries

In many Western nations, particularly in Europe and North America, special education is often integrated into a broader human rights narrative, framing inclusion as both a legal and moral obligation. Educational policies and models advocate for equitable access to mainstream education for every student, fostering a vision where students with disabilities are recognized as vital members of the community. Key legislations such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the U.S. and the Equality Act in the U.K. uphold these rights, setting legally enforceable standards for public institutions (Mukherjee, 2017).

Since the enactment of IDEA, U.S. public schools have been legally required to provide “free appropriate public education” to all students, resulting in a steady rise in the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms. For example, data from the U.S. Department of Education indicates a 64% increase in the enrollment of students with disabilities in mainstream settings since the introduction of IDEA.

2. Collectivist Values and Communal Responsibility in Indian Contexts

In India, the philosophies surrounding special education are frequently shaped by collectivist ideals, which emphasize the roles of community and family in supporting individuals with disabilities. This approach prioritizes collective welfare and moral duty, rooted in concepts like Dharma and Karma, which illustrate the interdependence within society and the roles individuals play (Sharma, 2017). Such values shape India’s inclusive policies, favoring community-based support frameworks over purely individualistic models (Gupta, 2016). Data and Example: Research indicates that 70% of Indian families actively participate in the education of children with disabilities, often working alongside local community leaders and educators to create support networks. Community-led initiatives in states such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu exemplify inclusive practices that extend beyond school boundaries to encompass family and social networks (Kumar, 2018).



3. Cultural Adaptation and Sensitivity in Policy Development

Educational policies and inclusion practices in India are increasingly influenced by traditional educational philosophies, including those articulated by thinkers like Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore's ideas, which focus on holistic education and social cohesion, have shaped India's inclusion strategy by promoting educational frameworks that align with local cultural values (Mukherjee, 2017). This approach stands in contrast to Western models that often emphasize individual autonomy and equal rights as universal principles. Data and Example: Tagore's educational model highlights the importance of art, nature, and self-reflection in learning. For instance, rural schools inspired by his philosophy frequently implement experiential and nature-based learning approaches, incorporating these elements to enrich the inclusivity of educational practices (Reddy, 2015).

4. Inclusive Education as a Democratic Imperative

In Western thought, inclusive education is seen as fundamental to democratic ideals, positioning it as a right that aids students in becoming responsible and empowered citizens. Scholars like Roger Slee contend that inclusion is critical to a democratic society and must transcend mere integration to challenge existing frameworks and foster transformative, inclusive environments. Slee (2011) argues for a restructured education system that meets diverse needs, emphasizing that inclusivity should be a foundational principle rather than an add-on. Data and Example: Research shows that European Union countries with robust democratic traditions, such as Sweden and Finland, exhibit high levels of inclusive classroom practices and report improved adaptive and social skills among students (Slee, 2011). Data from Sweden reveals that 88% of schools integrate democratic teaching methods, coinciding with high satisfaction rates among students with disabilities. ## Balancing Individual Needs and Communal Duties in Indian Education



5. Balancing Individual Needs and Communal Duties in Indian Education

While Western educational models prioritize individual rights, Indian educational frameworks focus on harmonizing personal needs with the welfare of the community. This philosophical stance, shaped by traditional Indian beliefs, posits that inclusive education transcends merely fulfilling individual requirements; it also plays a crucial role in enhancing social unity and communal values. According to Gupta (2016), this community-centric perspective often leads to reliance on extended family structures and social networks to assist students with disabilities.

Data and Example: Research conducted in rural India indicates that 60% of parents engage in school-related initiatives, including family counseling, community workshops, and support groups. This collective involvement aligns with Indian cultural values, where participation in education is regarded as advantageous for fostering inclusive practices (Bhatia, 2020).

6. Challenges in Practical Implementation: Infrastructure and Training Limitations

A noteworthy challenge in India's special education sector is the significant imbalance in infrastructure and teacher preparation, particularly in rural and disadvantaged regions. Despite recent advancements in inclusive education policies, obstacles such as inadequate funding, limited resources, and insufficient teacher training hinder the full implementation of these policies. The training provided to educators often lacks the specialized pedagogical and social skills necessary for effectively managing inclusive classrooms (Arora & Smith, 2020).

Data and Example: A study by Bhatia (2020) revealed that merely 45% of schools in rural India have facilities that are accessible and staff who are trained to accommodate students with disabilities, in contrast to 78% in urban settings. This gap highlights the critical need for focused investment in infrastructure and professional training.

7. Pedagogical Frameworks: Social Constructivism and Critical Pedagogy

Western educational frameworks frequently utilize pedagogies such as social constructivism and critical pedagogy. Vygotsky's social constructivism underscores that learning is a socially



mediated endeavor, where interactions among peers facilitate individual growth and comprehension. This approach fosters inclusive classrooms where all students can learn collaboratively, aiding the overall development of both those with and without disabilities. Similarly, Freire's critical pedagogy critiques conventional systems that perpetuate social hierarchies and advocates for inclusive practices that empower marginalized communities (Freire, 1970). Classrooms designed based on Vygotsky's principles, as noted by Kauffman and Landrum (2013), demonstrate a 25% enhancement in collaborative skills among students, emphasizing the favorable effects of socially inclusive settings.

8. Role of International Organizations in Bridging Philosophical Differences

Organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF are pivotal in promoting inclusive education by establishing international standards that honor cultural contexts. These entities strive to create flexible models that cater to local requirements while underscoring the significance of data collection to support inclusivity. For instance, UNESCO's recent initiatives in India incorporate culturally pertinent teaching resources that align with Indian values while adhering to global standards of accessibility and inclusion (Ainscow et al., 2012). In areas where UNESCO and UNICEF have launched targeted inclusive education programs, data reveal a 15% rise in student attendance and participation in inclusive classrooms. This information accentuates the importance of international collaboration in tackling local issues while upholding universal educational standards.

9. Comparative Efficacy of Inclusive Versus Specialized Settings

Studies comparing the outcomes of inclusive educational environments with specialized settings indicate that students with disabilities frequently develop comparable or even superior social and adaptive skills within inclusive contexts. This challenges the presumption that specialized settings are always essential for students with disabilities, reinforcing the argument in favor of mainstream inclusion. Dessemontet et al. (2012) discovered that inclusive settings do not detract



from life skills or adaptive behaviors, supporting the notion that inclusion can yield academic and social benefits.

In a comprehensive analysis of research conducted across Europe and the U.S., Dessemontet et al. (2012) found that students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms exhibited a 30% increase in adaptive behavior compared to their counterparts in specialized.

Discussion of Findings on Philosophical Foundations of Special Education in Indian and Western Contexts

This comparative study illustrates how Western and Indian philosophies furnish both divergent and interlocking bases for inclusive education. Western discourses privilege human rights, democratic participation, and the autonomy of the individual, while Indian traditions exalt collective duty, spiritual awareness, and the radial web of human and cosmic relationships. The interplay of these vantage points affirms the diverse and layered challenges in crafting inclusive education systems that achieve an ongoing equilibrium between personal freedoms and communal wellbeing.

Western Context in the Western sphere, inclusive education finds its core direction in legal and rights-oriented norms, of which the U.S. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the U.K. Equality Act serve as exemplar anchor points. By embedding the right to education in the lexicon of statutory entitlement and democratic obligation, these statutes advance the conviction that every person, irrespective of ability, participates authoritatively in the common project of learning (Mukherjee, 2017).

Supportive: Slee (2011) reports that which is put forth is the idea that inclusive education is a element of democracy which in turn improves equity and social justice. We see from the implementation of IDEA that in the U.S. which since its enactment has reported a 64% growth in the enrollment of students with disabilities which is a result of legal mandates' power. At the same time which is the opposite: Kauffman and Badar (2014) report that sometimes a very rights



based approach may in fact fail what these individual students require. For some students with profound disabilities what may work is a very specialized setting which is to say one which is not mainstream. In Europe inclusive education is looked at as a total restructuring of the system and not just physical integration. Supportive: in the Nordics we see countries like Sweden and Finland which have adopted democratic inclusion which in turn has seen 88% of their schools implement adaptive teaching practices which in turn report very strong social results (Slee, 2011).

Indian context

Indian Context Collectivist traditions like Dharma and Karma color how disability is perceived: it is framed as a collective obligation resting on families and communities (Sharma, 2017). Supportive evidence comes from Kerala and Tamil Nadu, where community-centred projects have been shown to raise inclusion rates substantially (Gupta, 2016; Kumar, 2018). National figures reinforce this picture, revealing that about 70% of families play a hands-on role in securing education for a child with disability, a statistic that underscores the power of familial and neighborhood ties. Contradictory lenses, however, caution that this reliance on informal structures can camouflage deeper systemic gaps: inadequate school infrastructure, shortages of trained personnel, and persistent rural deprivation remain unaddressed if community goodwill is mistaken for a comprehensive solution (Arora and Smith, 2020).

Reddy (2015) reports that in Tagore inspired schools which have a large element of experiential learning they saw greater engagement and inclusion which we see in rural areas. Also in contrast is the work of Dessemontet et al. (2012) which puts forth that we must present cultural and philosophical models in balance with what is evidence based in practice in order to improve quality of educational outcomes.

Key Themes across Contexts

Navigating existing models: Western frameworks prize personal liberty, whereas Indian traditions pivot toward collective responsibility. Each perspective brings strengths, yet implementation hinges on local practice, culture, and resource distribution rather than abstract principles.



Equality in resource allocation: Accessibility in Indian rural schooling lags, with just 45 percent of institutions equipped in contrast to 78 percent in urban centres, a widening gap exposed by Bhatia in 2020. Strong family involvement helps, yet only coordinated government expenditure on facilities plus sustained teacher capacity-building can offer certitude rather than temporary fixes.

Balancing general and focused support: Evidence cited by Dessemontet et al. in 2012 affirms a 30 percent adaptive-behaviour gain in inclusive settings over even well-regarded specialised institutions, yet Kauffman and Badar in 2014 caution that not all needs can be equitably served in that paradigm. They propose hybrid structures embedding clay embedding adequate safety nets for learners with demanding support profiles to assure neither general expectation erosion nor marginal advance.

Importance of Inclusive Education in Society and Its Necessity for “Education for All”

1. Inclusive education is an indispensable policy for combating discrimination based on race, gender, disability, socio-economic status or sexual orientation and is in conformity with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UNCRPD. When people go to inclusive schools, they learn empathy and respect for others. This helps reduce prejudice and creates more equal societies with fewer conflicts.

2. Strengthening Community and Social Cohesion. Learning together makes people learn to respect differences. Inclusion promotes communities that encourages cooperation and diversity 3. Empowering Individuals with Disabilities. Special needs students are the winner in an inclusive classroom being in a setting that promotes inclusion will help learners develop essential adaptive skills for living independently in society. Economic and Workforce Development. By giving all learners skills, inclusive education produces a diverse workforce. UNESCO estimates that including disabled individuals in the education system can help GDP rise by 2%.

5. Creating Holistic and Empathetic Citizens. Inclusion helps kids understand each other and develop empathy and more. Kauffman and Landrum (2013) mention that inclusive classrooms help children to see themselves as advocates.



6. Fulfilling Global Commitments to “Education for All”. Inclusive education is essential to the SDG 4 which seeks equitable, quality education for all. Importance on a Global Scale: When it comes to meeting international goals, inclusive systems can help countries achieve social and economic sustainability.

7. Addressing Systemic Barriers. Inclusion challenges narrow curricula and inaccessible systems to ensure accessibility to all. Slee (2011) argues that inclusive ‘systems’ have the potential to transform education so it serves all.

Conclusion

This comparative analysis on the philosophical underpinning of special education in India and the West indicates that while both regions and cultures may have a common goal of inclusive education there are very many differences. Western models highlight human rights, equality and democratic values. Further, they advocate for the enactment of legislation that mandates inclusion such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Equality Act. Through this method, inclusive education becomes an essential characteristic of a just society while reinforcing the individual rights of all students with disabilities to avail of the same educational opportunities the rest of society does. Indian approaches extremely collectivist in nature, where the contribution to the community and family is essential. Ideas like Dharma and Karma show society's moral responsibility towards people with disabilities. This shows how an inclusive model is always for the good of society. This philosophy is enriched further by cultural exemplars including Rabindranath Tagore, whose philosophy of education espouses holistic, experiential learning compatible with Indian social values. While these community-based practices forge support systems going beyond schools, they reflect infrastructural and training limitations, particularly at the village level, which can impinge on inclusive education at larger scales. The study finds a need to adapt inclusive education in a flexible way to its contextual settings that remains responsive to cultural values but compatible with universal norms of equity and accessibility. Both Indian and Western philosophies yield insightful values—both Western frameworks outline structural and jurisprudential protection of educating rights holders and Indian philosophies highlight the social and communal dimension of support to persons with special needs.



To policymakers, educators, and international organizations, this bipolarity presents hope that inclusive frameworks of schooling could productively integrate both approaches. Policy settings that place emphasis upon community involvement, cultural awareness, and safeguarding through legislation can provide inclusive environments which accept diversity not merely with respect but actively celebrate and affirm it. Taking this hybrid approach will be crucial to gaining international traction toward Education for all as a world where all children are able to contribute irrespective of their capabilities can learn and thrive together.

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