

The Educator

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Advancing Inclusive Education: Perspectives from India and Malaysia

Special Monograph Issue, Volume 39 – Issue 2 – May 2025



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ICEVI
INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR EDUCATION
OF PEOPLE WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

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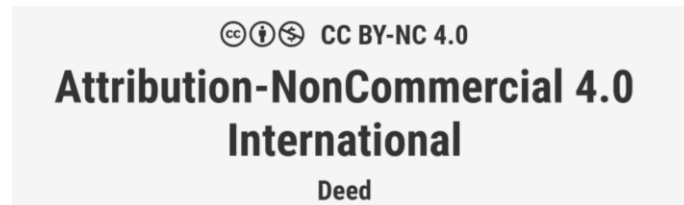
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Image on the front cover: Child with multiple disabilities exploring leaves of plants with the support of her specialist teacher. Sense International India (with permission).

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About ICEVI and The Educator

The International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) is a global non-profit membership network committed to promoting inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education for individuals with visual impairment, including those with low vision, blindness, deafblindness, and multiple or additional disabilities.

Since 1952, ICEVI has been a leader in convening stakeholders worldwide, fostering collaboration, and driving meaningful change in the field of visual impairment.

ICEVI's flagship publication, *The Educator*, is a key platform for sharing insights, research, and advancements in the education of individuals with visual impairment. Published at least twice a year, *The Educator* is available for download from the ICEVI website: <https://icevi.org/>.

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This publication features contributions from individuals worldwide, sharing their ideas, experiences, and practices. The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect ICEVI's stance. References to products, services, organisations, or individuals are for information only and not endorsements. Readers should use their own judgment when applying the information.

President's Message

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this special monograph issue of *The Educator*, which explores the theme of *Advancing Inclusive Education: Perspectives from India and Malaysia*. The topic is both timely and vital, as it speaks to the heart of ICEVI's mission—to promote inclusive, equitable, and quality education for children and young people with visual impairment across the globe.



Since the publication of our January 2025 issue, ICEVI has continued to work towards expansion of its international engagement and partnerships. In March 2025, ICEVI was participated in two significant global events: the General Assembly of the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) and the UN Global Disability Summit, both held in Berlin. These high-level gatherings reinforced the international community's shared commitment to disability-inclusive development and highlighted the importance of collaborative advocacy for the rights of persons with disabilities, including access to quality education.

ICEVI is also actively widening its profile and membership base. We welcome the participation of new individuals and organisations who share our vision and who are working to improve educational opportunities for learners with visual impairment. Our growing network of global, regional, and national partners enables us to amplify good practice, promote professional learning, and drive systemic change in education.

The papers presented in this monograph offer thoughtful analysis and practical insight from Malaysia and India, two countries making significant strides in inclusive and specialised education. We commend the authors for their contributions and invite readers to reflect on the broader implications for policy, teacher preparation, and cross-sector collaboration.

Sincerely,

Mrs Gertrude Oforiwa Fefoame

President.

Editor's Message

This special monograph issue of *The Educator* explores inclusive education in Malaysia and India. The three papers offer insights into national developments, school realities, and curriculum adaptations shaping the experiences of children with blindness, low vision, and deafblindness.



In the opening article, *The Future of Education for Students with Visual Impairments in Malaysia: UKM the Research Leader*, Dr Mohd Norazmi Nordin outlines the evolution of education for students with visual impairments and highlights the leadership of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) in inclusive education, research, and teacher training. The paper explores policy, assistive technology, and strategies improving learning outcomes.

In *Are Our Schools Ready for Inclusive Education?*, Dr Sujata Bhan presents findings from Tripura, India, examining infrastructure, headteacher attitudes, and teacher preparedness. Using mixed methods research, she explores challenges and opportunities in rural contexts and the need to move from policy to practice.

The final paper, *Curriculum Adaptation for Children with Deafblindness in Inclusive Education*, by Akhil Paul of Sense International India, calls for flexible curricula aligned with individual education plans. He shares strategies to support teachers and advocates for recognition of deafblindness in legislation, training, and classroom practice.

Together, these papers highlight the complexity of implementing inclusive education, while showcasing innovation and commitment. They call on us to expand our understanding of quality beyond access and ensure that all learners are supported to thrive. We thank the authors and hope this issue inspires continued dialogue and action.

Warm regards,
Dr Frances Gentle

The Future of Education for Students with Visual Impairments in Malaysia: UKM the Research Leader

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Introduction

Education for students with visual impairments in Malaysia has seen significant progress alongside the advancement of the national education system. Over the past few decades, various efforts have been undertaken by the government, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations to ensure more inclusive access to education. Education for blind or visually impaired students in Malaysia emphasizes accessibility, inclusivity, and the use of technology suited to their needs. The history of education for students with visual impairments in Malaysia dates back to the early 20th century. The first special school for blind students, Princess Elizabeth School, was established in 1953 in Johor Bahru. Since then, various special schools and inclusive programs have been introduced to enhance education for students with visual impairments. These developments have been reinforced by government policies that integrate special education into the national education system. Several policies and laws have been enacted to support education for students with visual impairments. The Education Act 1996 (Act 550) states that education is a right for every child with special needs. Additionally, the Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013-2025 emphasizes inclusive education, allowing students with special needs, including those with visual impairments, to learn in mainstream schools with appropriate support.

Educational Models for Students with Visual Impairments

In Malaysia, there are three main models of education for students with visual impairments: inclusive education, integration programs, and special schools. The inclusive model allows students to learn alongside their peers in mainstream schools with necessary adaptations. Integration programs provide special classes within mainstream schools, while special schools offer a more specialized education with dedicated facilities and trained teachers in the field of visual impairment education.

Students with visual impairments require an adapted curriculum to meet their learning needs. The Ministry of Education Malaysia has introduced the Standard Primary School Curriculum (KSSR) and the Standard Secondary School Curriculum (KSSM) with adjustments for special needs students. Additionally, they are taught Braille literacy, orientation and mobility skills, and the use of assistive technology such as screen readers and specialized software.

Special education teachers play a crucial role in guiding students with visual impairments. They not only teach academic subjects but also help students develop self-reliance and social skills. Special training is provided to these teachers to ensure they understand the unique needs of their students and can adapt teaching methods accordingly.

Technological advancements have brought significant changes to education for blind or visually impaired students. The use of devices such as Braille embossers, screen magnifiers, screen readers like JAWS and NVDA, and voice recognition software has improved accessibility in education. These technologies enable students to read, write, and access information more easily.

Challenges in Education for Students with Visual Impairments

Despite many advancements, there are still challenges in providing quality education to students with visual impairments. These include a shortage of trained teachers, limited learning resources, and low societal awareness about special education needs.

Additionally, there is a lack of reading materials in Braille and suitable digital formats. Inclusive education for students with visual impairments benefits not only the students but also society as a whole. Through inclusive education, special needs students can interact with their peers, build self-confidence, and enhance social skills. This prepares them for life after school, including employment and community participation.

Families play a critical role in supporting the education of children with visual impairments. Parents need to understand their child's needs and provide moral and academic support. Family education is also crucial to help them assist their children in using assistive technology and developing independent living skills. Various non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as the Malaysian Foundation for the Blind (MFB) and the Special Children's Association, contribute to supporting education for visual impairments. They provide training programs, Braille reading materials, and support activities to help blind or visually impaired students lead better lives.

Higher Education and Career Opportunities

Students with visual impairments also have opportunities to pursue higher education. Universities such as Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and Universiti Malaya (UM) offer inclusive programs with special support for visually impaired students. In the job market, efforts are being made to ensure broader employment opportunities for them through various training and job-matching programs. Many studies have been conducted in the field of education for visual impairments, including research on the effectiveness of assistive technology, innovative teaching strategies, and the impact of inclusive education on students. These research findings help in developing more effective policies and approaches to enhance the quality of education in Malaysia. The future of education for blind or visually impaired students in Malaysia depends on continuous efforts to improve the education system. This includes enhancing teacher training, providing more comprehensive learning resources, and strengthening inclusive education policies. With technological advancements and increasing awareness, it is hoped that education for students with visual impairments will continue to grow and benefit more individuals.

UKM's Commitment to Education for Students with Visual Impairments

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) has played a significant role in advancing education for students with visual impairments. As a leading research university in Malaysia, UKM has been actively involved in developing inclusive education policies, conducting research, and offering programs tailored for students with visual impairments. The university's commitment aligns with the national agenda of promoting equal education opportunities for all, including individuals with disabilities.

UKM offers various support services and programs to ensure visually impaired students receive an inclusive and accessible education. These include assistive technology labs, Braille translation services, and digital accessibility tools such as screen readers and magnification software. The university also provides academic accommodations, such as extra time for exams, accessible course materials, and dedicated support staff to assist students with visual impairments.

UKM is actively involved in research and innovation related to education and assistive technology. The university has collaborated with various agencies and organizations to develop new learning tools for students with visual impairments, such as improved Braille devices, AI-based screen readers, and smart navigation systems for independent mobility. Research conducted by UKM scholars has contributed to policy

recommendations and practical solutions that enhance the educational experience for visually impaired students in Malaysia.

UKM also plays a crucial role in training future special education teachers, particularly in the area of visual impairment. The university offers specialized courses and training programs to equip teachers with the necessary skills to support visually impaired students. These programs focus on Braille literacy, orientation and mobility training, and inclusive teaching strategies. Through its Faculty of Education, UKM continues to produce qualified educators who can contribute to improving special education nationwide.

To further strengthen its impact, UKM collaborates with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government agencies, and international institutions to promote inclusive education. These partnerships focus on capacity building, policy development, and resource sharing for visually impaired students. UKM has worked with organizations such as the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) and the Ministry of Education to implement initiatives that enhance educational opportunities and accessibility for students with visual impairments. By leveraging its expertise, research capabilities, and commitment to inclusivity, UKM continues to be a key player in shaping the future of education for visually impaired students in Malaysia.

Conclusion

Education for students with visual impairments in Malaysia has undergone significant transformation. Despite challenges, efforts by various parties have led to improvements in accessibility, learning quality, and future opportunities for students with special needs. With the support of the government, educational institutions, families, and society, education for students with visual impairments can continue to be strengthened to ensure a brighter future for this group.

Are Our Schools Ready for Inclusive Education

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Introduction

About eighty percent of the Indian population lives in rural areas without provision for special schools. There are an estimated eight million children out of school in India (MHRD 2009 statistics), many of whom are marginalised by dimensions such as poverty, gender, disability, and caste. There has been an approximately 16% increase in the numbers of children with disabilities enrolled in mainstream primary schools over the last five years, but the children with disabilities are most likely to be excluded. “Even amongst those who are enrolled, many children with disabilities are most likely to drop out before completing five years of primary schooling and are least likely to transition to secondary school or higher education,” (Singal, 2017). There is a need to do more to ensure that children with disabilities not only access education but also benefit from quality education.

According to the 2019 State of the Education Report for India: Children with Disabilities (CwD) report by the United Nations (UN), 75 per cent of CwD in India do not attend any educational institute in their lifetime. This is despite the existence of a seemingly comprehensive policy on education with provisions to make the Indian education system inclusive. The Rights for Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016, defines inclusive education as a “system of education wherein students with and without disabilities learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities”. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 reaffirms the provisions in the RPWD Act regarding inclusive education. The policy takes on a broader inclusion perspective and aims to achieve learning for all, particularly addressing the exclusion of socio-economically disadvantaged groups. The policy emphasizes the importance of inclusion of children

with disabilities from early childhood education to higher education, with the provision of assistive devices and teaching and learning materials.

Samagra Shiksha is India's flagship education programme implemented throughout the country through a single State Implementation Society at the state/union territory level. It subsumes three previous schemes: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA); Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan and Teacher Education. These schemes are the primary strategies of the country to move towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) targets. The Ministry of Education envisions universal access, equity, and quality, as well as vocationalizing education and strengthening teacher education institutes. Inclusive education is among the major interventions identified under Samagra Shiksha.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development further built on these principles and the SDG 4 on Education and the Education 2030 Framework for Action emphasize Education for All as a way to conceptualize inclusive education and make a pledge to "leave no one behind". SDG 4.5 specifically reaffirms the need to "ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous people and children in vulnerable situations."

Are our schools ready for inclusion? What are the needs and challenges for achieving the goal of inclusive education? How will an inclusive environment meet the needs of children with disabilities? How quality education can be effectively and efficiently delivered for all children? Inclusive schools have to address the needs of all children in every community and the central and state governments have to manage inclusive classrooms. How does one build a common understanding and a renewed commitment towards reinforcing inclusion in education among education policy makers, education practitioners, civil society organizations, NGOs, a mechanism to remind states of their obligation to ALL people?

Keeping in view these questions, a study was undertaken to analyze the current status of inclusive education system in the state of Tripura by converging data from three sources viz. physical infrastructure of the school, the views of headmasters of the schools towards inclusive education, and the school teachers' readiness for inclusive education.

Specifically, three research questions were attempted to be answered – (1) In what ways is the school accessible for children with disabilities? (2) According to the headmasters / headteachers, in what ways is their school ready for inclusive education?

(3) What are the perspectives of the regular teachers towards inclusive education for CwD?

Methodology

The study used a mixed methods approach that involved collecting quantitative and qualitative data and analysing both to help interpret the findings.

Locale of the study and sample

The study particularly focused on 400 government schools in the state of Tripura, North East India where the Saksham Tripura Project is being implemented. Of the 400 schools, 60 schools from eight districts of Tripura were selected as representative schools for data collection. The systematic random sampling technique was employed to identify 15% of the 400 schools for inclusion in the study. The Headmasters (HMs) of the selected 60 schools were included in the study. In some schools, teachers in-charge were working as HMs thus were part of the sample. Eighty school teachers who had students with disability in their class comprised the sample.

Data Collection

Tools

The study included the use of three different tools for data collection from three sources viz. physical infrastructure, headmasters/headmistresses (HMs), and regular teachers.

- Rating Scale to assess physical accessibility of schools: A three-point rating scale was constructed to evaluate the school readiness vis-à-vis its physical accessibility. The constructed tool was based on 'Indicators for Physical Accessibility' developed as part of Index for inclusive schools by National Council of Educational Research and Training. The physical accessibility and infrastructure of the school was rated as having exemplary level of work, partial work, or needs improvement.
- Questions for Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Interview schedule for HMs: The tool for FGD (and the interview schedule) comprised of questions eliciting data in four areas – inclusive culture, building competencies, inclusive practice, and financial planning. In addition, there were introductory and concluding questions.

- Rating Scale for Regular teachers: To know the perceptions of readiness for inclusive education experienced by the regular teachers of the students with disability, four-point Likert-type rating scales were employed.

Procedure

The process of data collection started with development of tools, and content validating them. The tools that were developed in English language were further translated into Bengali to facilitate data collection. The Bengali tools were back translated to confirm that they did not lose their meaning.

The field workers comprising of six mentors and 60 special educators of the Saksham Tripura Project were introduced to their roles in data collection, familiarized with the tools, and trained in the administration of the same. Further, a three-hour online training in data collection was also conducted for the field workers using the Google Meet platform. The field workers visited the schools that were identified for data collection and gathered data by recording the observations (for physical accessibility) and responses of the regular teachers, in Google Forms. The FGDs and interviews of the HMs were conducted by the researchers initially; later, the mentors interviewed the HMs. The qualitative data from the FGDs and interviews was transcribed and later subject to qualitative analysis.

Analysis

The study aimed at understanding whether the schools in Tripura were ready for inclusive education. The data obtained from the observation of school infrastructure, the perceptions of the HMs and the regular teachers was analysed. The results of the data analysis are presented:

1. Physical accessibility

The accessibility of school infrastructure is the first and foremost parameter under consideration for evaluating the success of inclusive education. For the study, the infrastructure of the identified 54 out of the 60 schools was observed and the observations were noted under three categories - infrastructure needing improvement, having partial work, and exemplar work. For drawing inferences about the infrastructural accessibility, data obtained from the rating scales and observations done was considered.

Table 1

Percentage of responses about physical infrastructure and accessibility of schools in Tripura

Sr. No.	Item	Needs improvement (%)	Partial work (%)	Exemplary level of work (%)
The school...				
1.	Is safe and fully accessible to all children including CWSN and has appropriate electrical and water supply	29.63	33.33	37.04
2.	Has doors with handles fixed at adequate levels and not too high	12.96	22.22	64.81
3.	Has toilets with proper doors, taking care of privacy, especially for girls and children who need help in toileting	25.93	33.33	40.74
4.	Has separate toilets for boys and girls, built at a distance from each other and an adapted toilet for CWSN	31.48	18.52	50.00
5.	Has toilets with constant running water and sanitation facilities	29.63	27.78	42.59
6.	Has ramps and railings for children who may have difficulty in moving	29.63	40.74	29.63
7.	Has a library equipped with good storage space and books in accessible formats and ICT	61.11	25.93	12.96
8.	Has a resource room or separate room for additional teaching if required	59.26	22.22	18.52
9.	Has a playground with adequate equipment for outdoor games and physical activities for all including CWSN	18.52	33.33	48.19

10.	Has a provision for indoor games such as carrom, chess etc	27.78	35.18	37.04
The classroom				
11.	Setting allows children to move freely or sit with a friend when required	7.41	44.44	48.15
12.	Is of adequate size for proper seating arrangements and group work	14.81	50.00	31.48
13.	Blackboards are fixed at a proper height to be accessible to all children including those who want to come near to read it	9.26	29.63	61.11
14.	Has adequate light and extra light when necessary, and proper colour contrast	31.48	35.19	33.33
15.	Has minimum noise levels for avoiding distraction	29.63	31.48	38.89
16.	Is equipped with adequate space for keeping books in Braille/ Large Print/Print and assistive devices that help CWSN to perform various tasks	79.63	14.81	5.56
17.	Has provision for ground floor classrooms for children with mobility needs and flexible and adjustable furniture	38.89	40.74	20.37

Table 1 shows that 37.04% of the schools were fully accessible with appropriate electrical and water supply. The other 62.96% lacked one or the other aspect. A large percentage (64.81%) of schools had door handles at the height of around two to two and half feet that could be accessed by children. The toilets that were constructed offered complete privacy to girl students and students with disability in 40.74% of the schools. Separate toilets were available for boys, girls, and CWDs in 50% of the schools. Nonetheless, the toilets were found to be incompatible with the specifications for accessible toilets as required for CWDs. Ramps for access to toilets were

unavailable in many cases. Western commodes, handrails, hand water faucets, large space to manoeuvre the wheelchair were missing in the toilets for children with disabilities. The toilets required continuous water supply in 57.41% schools. There was a need for more and better ramps and railings in 40.74% schools with just 29.63% having exemplary work in this respect. Though ample of physical space was available for outdoor activities and games in nearly half the schools (48.19%), the provision for indoor games was seen in only 37.04% of schools. The physical infrastructure for library with accessible material needed improvement in 61.11% schools and separate resource rooms for special educators to work with CWDs were required in 59.26% schools.

The classroom infrastructure was observed, and the classroom spaces were found to be large for movement of students within the class. In 48.15% of cases, the rooms were spacious enough to permit CwDs who were wheelchair users to navigate within the class. In 61.11% of the classrooms, the blackboards were observed to be at an appropriate height for all children to write on it. Many school buildings were single ground floor buildings, yet only 20.37% of the schools had a provision for arranging classrooms on the ground floor for children with mobility needs. Additionally, the furniture in the classrooms was not flexible and adjustable, reducing the movement of CwD having locomotor disability. Barely 20.37% of schools were able to provide for this flexibility in classroom arrangement. Close to 80% (79.63%) of the classrooms lacked the space to store assistive technology and resource material required by CWDs to access educational opportunities and engage in productive learning.

2. Headmasters

Initially three FGDs were carried out with 23 HMs. However, it was rather difficult to coordinate with all the HMs to meet at a mutually convenient time. Moreover, it was observed that some HMs were hesitant in sharing their views about practices and challenges in implementing inclusive education during the group discussions. Hence, the remaining 36 HMs were interviewed on one-to-one basis.

The questions addressed criteria viz. planning for inclusion, building capacities, inclusive culture, inclusive practices, and inclusion feasibility and advice to determine how ready the HMs were to bring in a change in the education system at their level to make schools ready for inclusive education as envisaged by NEP 2020.

When asked whether they thought that their school was ready for inclusion, 80 percent of the HMs responded in the affirmative. Although the in-depth interviews had a different

story to tell. After reviewing the interview responses, what emerged was clubbed under their perception, the reality and the challenges faced.

Planning for inclusion

Twenty five out of 35 HMs were not doing any specific planning for making their schools inclusive in line with NEP 2020. One major perception held by the HMs that emerged from the FGDs and interviews was that children with locomotor disabilities did not require much planning for their inclusion. Talking about the challenges in planning for inclusion, the lack of parental involvement at the planning stage of their child's education came across dominantly. They also expressed that financial resources were needed to plan for inclusion so that inclusive education could become a reality. Lack of funds was one of the major challenges that most school headmasters were facing. The government provided transport allowance, escort allowance and money to purchase teaching learning material (TLM). The reality was that this allowance was provided on a rotational basis so, every CwD did not get the allowance every year. The schools did not have enough finance to construct a resource room for CwDs. Thus, many HMs regretted that the state government funding was inadequate.

Building capacities

All HMs and teachers should understand why inclusive education needs to be practiced and how all children including those with disabilities must be taught without pulling them out of their classroom. When asked if they would want to undergo any professional development training with a focus on learning about inclusive education, the response from most HMs was not very encouraging. Most of the headmasters were not interested in any training to understand the need of inclusive education and how it could be implemented. Having enquired whether the teachers have received adequate training in inclusive pedagogies, 20 HMs responded in the negative; those who said that the teachers had received training clarified that the training was organised and conducted by the government, and it was of short duration.

Inclusive Culture

The perception of the headmasters was that every child had a right to quality education, but the reality was far from it. There was no policy document on inclusive education created by any headmaster in all the schools covered under the project. They were not aware of the milestone laws and policies of the Indian government which focuses on rights of CwDs pertaining to their education and rehabilitation. FDGs revealed that there was little empathy towards children with special needs. There were no guidelines

for the headmasters in implementing inclusive education. The headmasters were aware that as per the RTE Act they could not deny admission to any child with disability but there was little planning done to make it equal and equitable education for all, as prescribed in NEP 2020. The common perception of the headmasters was that children who have mild disabilities and no cognitive deficits were capable of studying in mainstream schools. Those with milder disabilities were accommodated but no adaptations were made in curriculum or in sports etc. that would allow all CwDs develop a sense of belonging in the mainstream school.

Despite the lack of positive attitude of the headmasters, special teachers were appointed in the schools, and they were trying hard to make a difference in the education of CWDs. The onus was put on the special teachers most of the time and thus a holistic approach in educating CWDs was missing.

Inclusive Practices

Clear, open, honest, and timely communication among school leaders and staff, staff and students, staff, and families, and between students is vital to an inclusive and positive school climate. Twenty out of 35 HMs believed that there should be adaptations made in curriculum and curriculum transaction for CWDs and as indicated by them, the adaptation was done in the process of teaching, the time allocated to the CWDs, the content, and the teaching-learning material. In reality, these adaptations in the curriculum were done by the special teachers when they taught the CWDS in resource rooms; but the same teaching practices were not followed by classroom teachers.

Inclusion feasibility

A disabled child is like any other child. When this becomes a common perception, inclusive education will become a reality. Hundred percent HMs agreed that inclusive education could be feasible but only if there was an awareness and involvement of all stakeholders, and adequate funds were available.

3. Regular Teachers' Perceptions

A class that is taught by school subject pedagogy experts with planned effort to reach out to all students in class irrespective of the class diversity can be termed as an inclusive class. In the Indian context, the teachers who teach in schools where maximum number of students are enrolled, and avail education are called as regular teachers. Such teachers are also termed as inclusive education teachers because their classrooms have students with and without disability studying together. The implementation of NEP 2020 requires that these regular teachers work as inclusive

education teachers. Data collected from the 79 regular teachers on a four-point rating scale and anecdotal recording of the oral-verbal interaction with them provided some insights about their perceptions about inclusive education. Table 2 presents the percentage of responses obtained on the four-point rating scale ranging from strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

The percentage of regular teachers indicating that they had no training in teaching CwD is 64.55 as compared to 35.44% indicating that they had the necessary knowledge and skills. A majority of teachers (87.34%) felt that they needed more training to teach CwD appropriately.

More than half (53.16%) the teachers responded in the affirmative about awareness of inclusive pedagogies. However, on asking them to name such methods, the teachers could neither list inclusive pedagogies like differentiated instruction or universal design for learning nor describe any pedagogies that reach to all students in class.

Table 2

Percentage of responses by regular teachers

Sr. No.	Item	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1	My educational background has prepared me to effectively teach CwD	2.53	32.91	35.44	29.11
2	I am aware of different pedagogical approaches to be followed in regular classroom / inclusive classroom	7.59	45.57	32.91	13.92
3	Implementation of inclusive education is possible when general education teachers and special education teachers work together	46.84	43.04	6.33	3.80
4	Methods and materials used to teach CwD will also benefit all other students in the regular classroom	45.57	45.57	5.06	3.80
5	Both regular education teachers and special education teachers should teach CwD	49.37	45.57	2.53	2.53
6	I think I will need much more time to teach CwD in my class	30.38	55.70	12.66	1.27

7	I need more training in order to teach CwD appropriately	41.77	45.57	8.86	3.80
8	I will not be able to complete the syllabus if I am expected to spend time giving individual attention to CwD	31.65	45.57	20.25	2.53
9	Isolation in a special class has a negative effect on the social and emotional development of CwD	32.91	45.57	17.72	3.80
10	I adapt the curriculum for CwD in my class	11.39	39.24	39.24	10.13
11	I discuss my concerns with the special teacher about the CwD in my class	24.05	50.63	20.25	5.06
12	When teaching CwD, I use different teaching methods (e.g., use of concrete aids, multisensory teaching)	8.86	51.90	25.32	13.92
13	It is challenging to manage the behavioural issues of CwD in class (e.g., aggression, temper tantrum etc.)	12.66	50.63	25.32	11.39
14	All CwD in my class are adequately engaged in class	20.25	59.49	18.99	1.27
15	Inclusion of CwD requires significant change in regular classroom procedures (e.g., changing seating arrangement, changing timetable)	35.44	51.90	8.86	3.80
16	I design such classroom activities that all children including CwD can participate in them	21.52	55.70	20.25	2.53
17	I help CwD to use assistive technology in my class	3.80	41.77	41.77	12.66
18	I prefer to appoint the first ranking student as the class monitor always	6.33	18.99	36.71	37.97
19	Most CwD do not make an adequate attempt to complete their class work and homework	6.33	35.44	45.57	12.66
20	My school head ensures that CwD can avail of the provisions available to them	41.77	46.84	7.59	3.80

21	Regular education teachers should not be responsible for teaching CwD	7.59	15.19	43.04	34.18
22	The students in my class help CwD in some learning tasks when instructed by me	30.38	62.03	7.59	0.00
23	The inclusion of CwD can be beneficial for students without disability	30.38	53.16	13.92	2.53
24	My school head is supportive of my efforts while working with CwD	41.77	51.90	5.06	1.27
25	I prepare different teaching learning material depending on the learning needs of CwD	10.13	36.71	40.51	12.66
26	CwD should be given every opportunity to function in the regular classroom setting wherever possible	45.57	49.37	3.80	1.27
27	Large class size prevents me from giving individual attention to CwD	20.25	43.04	27.85	8.86
28	CwD and those without disability should learn together cooperatively	35.44	59.49	1.27	3.80
29	The needs of CwD can best be met by special educator in separate classes	30.38	49.37	16.46	3.80
30	CwD should be allowed to participate in social events held in school	53.16	46.84	0.00	0.00

In principle, shared responsibility, and collaboration (item 3 – 89.88% and item 5 - 94.94%) between regular teachers and special educators for education of CwD was acknowledged by regular teachers. However, in practice there was little collaboration between the regular teachers and the special educators as communicated by the teachers. A quarter of the teachers (25.31%) did not even discuss with the special educators about the CwD, their learning needs, and how to teach them. As seen from the table 2, 77.22% disagreed that teachers were not responsible for teaching CwD. Yet, 79.75% of them felt that CwD could learn the best with special educators in separate classes.

The regular teachers shared their concerns and challenges they faced in the process of teaching CwD in the inclusive classrooms. Implementation of inclusive education had its

set of perceived challenges like requiring more time to teach CwD (86.08%), syllabus completion concerns if CwD are attended to (77.22%), management of behaviours of CwD (63.29%), and difficulty paying attention to CwD due to large class size (63.29%). Logistical challenges like needing to change the timetables / infrastructure to accommodate the CwD, as responded by the teachers (87.34%), was noted.

The recognition that CwD should be included in the classroom though was present amongst the regular teachers, inclusion in its true spirit was probably not. When asked whether a CwD would be appointed as a monitor of the class, a resistance was observed on part of the regular teachers. With respect to what the regular teachers do in their classrooms to teach CwD, 50% said that they adapted the curriculum, 60.76% showed agreement to the fact that they used different teaching methods to teach CwD, nearly 72% indicated that they design classroom activities so that CwD could be engaged in their classrooms.

Inclusive education was found to be beneficial for children without disabilities according to 83.54% of the teachers. Nearly 91.14% responded that the material that is used to teach CwD would also benefit other children in the classroom.

Discussion

The study attempted to explore whether the schools in the state of Tripura were ready for inclusive education. To determine this, a study of the physical infrastructure of the schools was undertaken. Additionally, the views of the headmasters/ headmistresses and the regular teachers were studied.

The study identified that the schools' physical infrastructure was far from ideal. Though the schools and classrooms were spacious, the built environment posed barriers to physical access and movement for children with locomotor disabilities. The schools that were surveyed showed that they lacked accessibility; many school buildings did not have well-constructed roads as approach roads. The want of ramps, ramps with appropriate gradient, lifts, tactile paths and signages was reducing the school accessibility for children with physical and locomotor disabilities. The schools needed adapted and accessible toilet facilities along with drinking water facility. The physical infrastructure of a school impacts the student learning (Barrett, Treves, Shmis, Ambasz, & Ustinova, 2019). Barrett et al. (2019) found that when the school premises are perceived as safe, clean, and accessible, teachers and students are more likely to attend the school. In the context of the current study, improvement in infrastructure by incorporating tactile flooring, adequate lighting, and paint schemes to help children with

visual impairment, lifts, and ramps to help children with physical impairment, carpeting of classrooms to help children with hearing impairment, and good roads to access school, accessible rest rooms with adequate water supply would facilitate access to education for all. Resource rooms should be an integral part of any inclusive school. It may not be possible to meet all the needs of a special child in his mainstream class (Establishment of resource rooms for children with special needs, n.d.). It is alright if the CwD is pulled out of the class to be in the resource room where the special teacher provides him/her the additional support through adapted curriculum, variety of teaching learning materials, assistive devices, and individual attention for some part of the day. As the child receives more services in the resource room, he/she may gradually be able to self-regulate his/her learning and the time spent in the resource room may reduce.

The attitudes towards CwDs have a crucial role in the effective implementation of the school inclusion process (Ginevra et al., 2021). The efforts that will be put in the direction of making education accessible to all students is seen to be an extension of the attitudes of the two key stakeholders in this study – the headmasters and the regular teachers. The attitude of apathy towards CwDs is making the inclusive education efforts in Tripura an uphill task. Empathy is possible only if one cares. Therefore, workshops, seminars, and media should be used to create more and more awareness about disabling conditions, their implications, and sharing of success stories.

HMs and teachers appeared to lack the required knowledge and skills that would make inclusive education possible. There is a need for continuous professional development of the HMs and the teachers to achieve momentum to the inclusive education efforts. The HMs lacked knowledge about the various Acts for empowering CwDs and the legal provisions pertaining to education of CwDs. They not only need to know the rules, regulations, provisions for CwDs, but also how to help the CwDs avail the benefits. Besides the answer of 'why' inclusive education to answer 'how' is very important. The existing teacher training programmes do not prepare the regular teachers in addressing educational challenges of a class with diverse learners including those with disabilities. While regular teachers were only subject pedagogues, they needed training in inclusive pedagogies like curriculum adaptation, universal design for learning, cooperative learning, peer tutoring, differentiated instruction etc. which would equip them to be effective teacher in mixed ability classrooms. Similarly, the ignorance about inclusive education pedagogy was negatively affecting the implementation of inclusive educational practices. It is widely acknowledged today that teachers need to inculcate the right attitudes, knowledge, and skills to teach all students in inclusive setups (Global

Education Monitoring Report Team and International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, 2020).

Teachers are the most important human resources required for developing the young children with and without disability to their full potential. In many of the schools that data was collected, it came to light that a large number of teacher posts were laying vacant for a long period of time. In effect, the existing teachers were taking on additional responsibilities in the school. The teacher-student ratio was thus skewed. This in turn was adversely affecting the teaching-learning process (Limaye, 2016). The regular teachers indicated that the average student strength in class was 30 students. With a large student-teacher ratio, it was highly challenging for the regular teachers to pay attention to the needs of CwDs studying in their class. The huge class size is a deterrent to teacher efforts towards inclusive education (Froese-Germain & Riel, 2012).

Conclusion

A large number of CwDs are just as capable, but we are putting barriers in front of them by not thinking about inclusive practices. Equitable learning opportunities have to be provided to all CwDs without underestimating their potential.

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Curriculum Adaptation for Children with Deafblindness in Inclusive Education

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Introduction

Teaching is probably one of the very few professions which bring teachers in contact with the varied and diverse range of children except those children who have different learning characteristics due to their cognitive, sensory, physical or psychological challenges. With the increased focus on 'inclusive education', all these children with 'specific learning needs' are now being enrolled in their neighbourhood schools, and as a result, the teachers in these schools are being exposed to much wider range of children. In any education system, the curriculum is one of the major tools to facilitate the growth of a more inclusive system.

The curriculum is often unable to meet the needs of a wide range of different students, especially children with deafblindness. In many contexts, the curriculum is centrally designed, leaving little flexibility for local adaptations or for teachers to experiment and try out new approaches. The content might be distant to the reality in which the students live, and therefore it becomes inaccessible and demotivating.

With implementation of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act. (2009) and the provisions of Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for All Scheme), inclusion in India of students who are deafblind in a typical classroom presents a wide variety of needs and abilities and poses major questions regarding the development of appropriate curricula and instructional strategies. Teachers and parents have raised concerns about successful adaptation of both content and teaching methodologies in general education for students with deafblindness who do not gather and access ongoing information in a traditional manner, that is, by seeing or listening. However, when we are planning for inclusive education, the student with deafblindness or Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI) must be provided with an opportunity to be an active participant in the class in ways that are individualized to reflect his or her particular learning needs and Individual Education Planning (IEP) goals.



For inclusive education, it should be ensured that the same curriculum be followed for children with and without disabilities, but with adaptations like small changes in learning content, learning inducing environment, appropriate learning approach, adaptation in learning aids/ Teaching Learning Materials, flexibility in evaluation, etc. It would be important to provide textbooks and curriculum materials in accessible formats like Braille books, Tactile sign language, Braille display units, embossed diagrams and real objects etc for children with deafblindness.

Adapting a curriculum which is inclusive of all learners may involve the broadening of current definitions of learning. Inclusion in a typical classroom of students who are deafblind and who themselves represent a wide variety of abilities and needs, presents major questions regarding the development of appropriate curricula and instructional strategies. Concerns arise about successful adaptation of both content and teaching methodologies in general education for people with deafblindness who do not gather and access ongoing information in a traditional manner.

Deafblindness is a low incidence disability and is hidden in community. It is a unique disability as it is a combination of visual and hearing impairment. Though the degree of deafness or blindness varies, the combination of dual sensory loss leads to unique problems in an individual's communication, mobility and their ability to access information.

As defined in the Indian Right of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, 'Deafblindness is a condition in which a person may have a combination of hearing and visual impairments causing severe communication, developmental, and educational needs. The term deafblind refers to vision as well as hearing loss and is also known as dual sensory impairment. It may seem that the term deafblindness refers to a total inability to see or hear, but very few children identified as deafblind are totally deaf and totally blind, although some are. Most of the children diagnosed as deafblind have some useful vision and/or hearing, which can be used for providing education. Because deafblindness is a combination of vision and hearing loss, there are as many possible combinations as there are individuals such as total blindness and total deafness; total blindness and partial deafness; partial blindness and total deafness and so on. For this reason, no two children with deafblindness are alike.

The condition of deafblindness impacts overall development of the child. Children with a combination of visual and hearing impairment have limited opportunity to learn and acquire concepts through seeing and moving around in the environment. Their learning is also affected due to lack of or limited interaction with family members. Since 94% of

what we learn comes from vision and hearing, children with deafblindness face major difficulties in communication, social skills, movement, access to information, and independent living, to mention a few. There are no data available regarding the size of the deafblind population in India due to the lack of a comprehensive study or research to determine the true incidence. Estimates, based on information gathered from community-based projects, indicate that there could be more than 500,000 deafblind/ Multi-Sensory Impaired persons in the country.

Sense International India (also known as Sense India) was established in 1997 as the first national NGO in India to support the development of comprehensive services for deafblind people. Sense India supports local organisations to develop sustainable services for deafblind people. Today, Sense India works with 60 partners in 24 Indian states, providing services to more than 85,000 deafblind people. Our key achievements include: deafblindness now officially recognised by the National Trust, Government of India; a dedicated Deafblind Teacher Training Programme; a national resource and information centre on deafblindness; and effective networks of families, teachers and deafblind people.

The Sense International India Approach of Curriculum Adaptation for Students with Deafblindness

There are almost 60,000 children with deafblindness enrolled into the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan programme of Government of India (2023). However, majority of these children are not able to access classroom education and are confined to home-based education due to various systemic factors associated with the education system. Among all factors that hinders their access to classroom education, lack of capacity of teachers to teach children with deafblindness/MSI (using the same curriculum used by sighted- hearing children) is a major barrier.

Understanding this challenge, Sense India has developed a two-pronged approach - first, training of teachers in the mainstream education system to build their capacity to teach a child with deafblindness/MSI in the same classroom with sighted and hearing peers; and second, working on curriculum adaptations, that is, adapting the regular classroom textbooks for students with deafblindness. Sense International India has strongly advocated for equal rights for education for children with deafblindness/MSI and, to date, has trained more than 3500 teachers in the mainstream education system through its interventions. In addition, Sense India is providing consultancy training to Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for All Scheme) and trained their Master trainers on 'deafblind education' to further train their teachers. As of now Sense India have been

successful in providing training to Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (New name for Education for All Scheme) Master Trainers in the State of Assam (70 participants), and the State of Haryana (105 participants).

The Sense India's strategy of curriculum adaptation is complementing the strategy of providing training to the teachers to attain the goals of inclusive education for children with deafblindness/MSI.

The curriculum adaptation approach laid its foundations on the following lines of enquiry:

- Is 'learning' happening for the children with deafblindness/MSI in the schools?
- Does the School understand 'deafblindness'?
- No two children are same and has wide variety of abilities and needs.
- Children must be active participants in the classroom.
- Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) need to be implemented and accommodated.
- Same curriculum to be followed for children with and without special needs.

The founding principles of the curriculum adaption approach were adapted from the **"Tools for Teachers on Curriculum Modifications and Adaptations"** compiled by the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD, USA, 2014) and National Council for Education Research and Training (NCERT) National Curriculum Framework (2005, India). The "Tools for Teachers" was selected as it provided basic information and guidance in demonstrated best practice strategies for including students with disabilities in general education settings.

For Curriculum adaptation specifically, the following principles of nine types of adaptations by Ebeling and colleagues (1994) were used:

- Input: Adapting the way the instruction is delivered to the learner (such as using different visual/ tactual aids).
- Output: Adapting how the learner might respond to instruction (such as allowing a verbal/ tactual, instead of written response).
- Time: Adapting the time allotted for learning, task completion, or testing (such as increasing or decreasing time given for tasks).
- Difficulty: Adapting the skill level, problem type, or rules on how the learner might do the work (such as simplifying directions).

- Level of Support: Increasing the amount of personal assistance for a specific learner (such as assigning peer tutors/ classroom assistants).
- Size: Adapting the number of items that the student will complete (such as reducing the number of answers on a multiple choice test).
- Degree of Participation: Adapting how much the student will be involved in an activity (such as having the student write answers on the board/ use objects).
- Alternate Goals: Adapting the goals or outcomes expectations while using the same materials (such as asking the student to be able to recall book titles instead of recalling both book and author names).
- Substitute Curriculum: Providing different instruction and materials to meet a learner's individual goals (such as asking a student to read the graphic version of a text instead of the entire novel).

Sense India incepted and implemented a phase-wise action plan to adapt the curriculum for children with deafblindness/MSI in regular classroom. The action plan is as follows:

Phase Action Timeline

- Phase 1: Formation of a Core group to develop a strategic plan of action on curriculum adaptation for children with deafblindness/MSI.
- Phase 2: Adaptation of NCERT books (primary level) on four different subjects following curriculum adaptation approach.
- Phase 3: Organizing a Consultative workshop for review of adapted chapters of four different subjects.
- Phase 4: Development of Handbook on “Curriculum adaptation for children with deafblindness/MSI under Inclusive education”.

Re Phase 1. A Core group of 14 senior professionals was set up to develop the action plan and monitor its implementation. Members included the government department, education specialists/senior professionals in the field of deafblindness, lead social worker, and programme team staff from Sense India.

The specific objectives of the Core group were:

- To develop adaptation in regular curriculum - learning content, learning approach, learning aids and evaluation process;
- To develop and design an inclusive classroom with an adaptive environment;

- To develop teaching approaches and use of teaching learning materials (TLMs) required in a classroom; and
- To develop a tool to understand the level of a child and provide appropriate need-based adaptations and educational intervention.

The members of the Core group focussed on developing methods to adapt curriculum for children with deafblindness/MSI in inclusive education set up (up to primary level), ensuring its implementation, and reviewing its progress against the overall aim and specific objectives as detailed within the Curriculum adaptation approach.

Re Phase 2. The Core group members were divided into four groups to adapt NCERT books (up to primary level) on four different subjects – English, Hindi, Mathematics, and Environmental Studies (EVS) – following the curriculum adaptation approach. The principles of curriculum adaptation by NJCDD (2014) and National Curriculum Framework 2005 were the guiding frameworks in the development of the adapted chapters in the four subjects. The following steps were taken by the group members while adapting the curriculum:

1. Selection of the subject area (and grade level) to be taught;
2. Selection of the lesson topic to be taught (on one day);
3. Identification of the curricular goal for most learners;
4. Identification of the instructional plan for most learners;
5. Identification of the learner(s) with deafblindness/MSI who will need adaptations in the curriculum plan; and
6. Use of “Nine Types of Adaptations” as a means of thinking about some of the ways one could adapt what or how one teaches to accommodate the learner with deafblindness/MSI in the classroom for this lesson.

Members of each group worked on their respective subjects and came up with four to five adapted chapters out of books of each class I to V. These adapted chapters were later reviewed by senior professionals in the field of deafblind education for their suggestions.

Re Phase 3. Sense India organized a consultative three days’ workshop in 2015 on ‘Curriculum adaptation for children with deafblindness/MSI under Inclusive education’. The main purpose of this workshop was to present the adapted curriculum and consult special educators/teachers working with the children with deafblindness/MSI in special

and mainstream schools and seek their inputs and suggestions. Participants of the three days' workshop were thirty special educators having knowledge on deafblindness along with practicing teachers from mainstream school and government school and sectors. The major methods used in training were theoretical inputs, audio-visual, success stories, practical, and group discussions.

- The expected outcomes of the workshop were as follows:
- An appropriate curriculum to ensure inclusive education for children with deafblindness/ MSI, which will enable them to learn effectively and participate equally in the class.
- Build the capacity of mainstream teachers and schools as well to enhance their level of understanding and skills. Mainstream school teachers will be able to follow the curriculum in an inclusive environment for children with deafblindness/ MSI
- Design and adapt teaching strategies and Teaching Learning Material as per the need of an individual child with deafblindness/ MSI enrolled under Inclusive education.

The suggestions/inputs of the participants in consultation helped to develop an appropriate module for children with deafblindness/MSI in inclusive education.

Re Phase 4. The Core group worked on the suggestions obtained and finally developed a Handbook on "Curriculum adaptation for students with deafblindness/MSI under Inclusive education (2016)".

<https://www.senseintindia.org/publicationAndResources.php>

The content of the book is as follows:

- Chapter 1 Deafblindness and its impact on learning
- Chapter 2 Specific approaches, specific considerations, and suggestion for including children with deafblindness/MSI
- Chapter 3 Principles of curriculum adaptation in inclusive classroom and education
- Chapter 4 Creating an inclusive classroom for all including children with deafblindness/MSI
- Chapter 5 Addressing accessibility issues and providing reasonable accommodation to children with deafblindness/MSI

The Handbook is the culmination of the efforts on the content development of curriculum adaptation for children with deafblindness/MSI in regular classroom. The Handbook has the potential to be used as a capacity building tool for teachers in mainstream schools. The book uses a bottom-up approach and elicits simple tips/techniques which can be used without altering the learning outcomes of each chapter in the regular classroom curriculum. It provides a guiding tool in decision making for curriculum adaptation by the teachers while working with children with deafblindness/MSI in an inclusive classroom.

Key challenges in implementation and suggestions for practice

The implementation of curriculum adaptation of regular classroom books for the learning needs of children with deafblindness/MSI has its own inherent challenges. Some of the key challenges and possible suggestions to overcome them are described below:

Educational Policies – Albeit the deprivations faced by children with disabilities represent violations of their right to education and the principle of equity, educational policies at macro (national/state legislations) or micro (school) level are still not practicing inclusion when it comes to catering to the needs of children with complex disability such as deafblindness/MSI. Children with disabilities encounter different forms of exclusion depending on such factors as the type of disability they have, where they live, and the culture or class to which they belong. Hence, institutional policies related to curriculum adaptation must be open and flexible to embrace the idea of curriculum adaptation suiting the learning abilities and needs of diverse populations, including children with deafblindness/MSI, in the same classroom.

Heterogeneous Nature of Disability – Individuals with deafblindness/MSI present a range of varying abilities and needs in terms of their learning. This variation is based on the type, level and onset of impairment, time of language acquisition, and degree of vision/hearing loss (Ask Larsen & Damen, 2014; Dammeyer, 2014; Hersh, 2013). This heterogeneous nature of disability will pose challenges for the teachers in educating the child. To overcome this challenge, it is suggested that teachers use the handbook to learn tips and techniques and be creative while teaching children with deafblindness/MSI in the classrooms with sighted and hearing students.

Communication modes – Individuals with deafblindness/MSI have diverse communication needs based on the type, level, and onset of impairment; their skills, and the contextual factors (Hersh, 2013). The most common communication approaches used by these individuals include Braille, speech, sign/tactile sign language, Tadoma, and tactile alphabets. Each of these communication approaches, or

modes, requires specific training. Hence, it is suggested for teachers and school staff undergo training on the communication modes in order to communicate with the child with deafblindness/MSI. Communication itself is instrumental in facilitating the learning of the child with deafblindness/MSI in the classroom. Classroom Assistants can be trained to work on a one-on-one individual basis with children with deafblindness/MSI in regular classrooms.

Interference in peer's learning – It is a common understanding that teaching a child with disability in the regular classroom will be time consuming for teachers and may interfere with the learning of non-disabled peers. However, evidence suggests that inclusive education practices not only facilitate the learning of a child with disability but also maximize the learning of children without disability (UNICEF, 2013). Disability inclusion may lead to greater acceptance, more awareness of diversity, and an inclusive and accessible society for all (Rohwerder, 2015). Working to teach a child with deafblindness/MSI in the regular classroom may require more preparation on the part of the instructor/teacher to ensure that the education of children without disability is not affected by the inclusion of child with complex disability (such as deafblindness/MSI) in the same classroom. The Handbook on curriculum adaptations provides some guiding tools on the types of adaptation and supports needed in place to teach a range of children with diverse learning abilities and needs.

Decision on which curriculum portion to be trimmed – Keeping in mind the learning objectives of the chapter, various adaptations are possible by following the principles/types of curriculum adaptation, suiting to the abilities and needs of each child with deafblindness/MSI and the other students in the classroom. The content of the curriculum may be trimmed depending on the time for preparation and class execution and support resources available from the school, without compromising the learning objectives of the class.

Conclusion

The UN Flagship Report on Disability and Development (2024) suggest that inclusive education is effective and beneficial for all learners. To attain the goals of inclusive education as prescribed in the United Nation Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), all stakeholders of the education system have to come together to bridge the gaps in the system to ensure every child, irrespective of their abilities and needs, is able to attain an education in the same classroom along with their non-disabled peers with dignity and equitable access. Inclusive education requires flexibility in educational approaches, in terms of school organization, curriculum development and

student assessment. Such flexibility allows for the development of a more inclusive pedagogy which embraces diverse learning styles.

Curriculum adaptations can be a powerful tool to complement the capacity building initiatives for the teachers to educate students with diverse learning needs. It is important to correlate curriculum adaptations with the IEPs, meeting each student's needs as identified in their IEP. Sense International India has developed the Handbook on curriculum adaptation for students with deafblindness/MSI, keeping in mind the learning abilities and needs of the children with deafblindness/MSI. The Handbook has the potential to be used as a capacity building tool for teachers in mainstream schools. This Handbook is timely in consideration of the fact that deafblindness is now recognized in the disability legislation of India, as enacted in "The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016". The curriculum adaptation approach developed by Sense International India will pave the way for future research in the field of deafblind education and development of educational strategies for inclusion of these children with this unique condition.

Deafblindness creates challenges in the life of children by limiting their movement and ability to learn, explore and express themselves in their immediate environment. These limitations affect the child's educational needs and, as a result, they are mostly deprived of getting education in the mainstream education in the region.

Curriculum adaptation for children with deafblindness/ MSI involves making necessary changes in learning content such as modification, substitution/ replacement, omission as a last resort, compensation, etc., without changing the learning purpose. Keeping the children with deafblindness/ MSI in mind while adapting the curriculum, small changes in learning content, learning friendly environment, appropriate learning approach, adaptation in learning aid and evaluation should be adapted.

The content of this Handbook aims to enable teachers to adapt and modify classroom curriculum as per the needs and abilities of children with deafblindness. It would also increase the number of regular teachers in mainstream schools to work effectively with children with deafblindness. Through this 'adapted curriculum' we aim to provide quality education to children with deafblindness/ MSI, which will enable them to learn effectively and participate equally in the class. It will also maintain the dignity and build their confidence to learn. Further it will build the capacity of mainstream teachers and schools as well to enhance their level of understanding and skills.

We, at Sense India, are pleased to offer this publication to teachers in the schools which have opened the doors of knowledge for children with deafblindness/MSI and hope that

the sample adaptations in this publication will motivate them to make needs-based adaptations for students in the classroom. To obtain a copy, please follow this link- <https://www.senseintindia.org/publicationAndResources.php>.

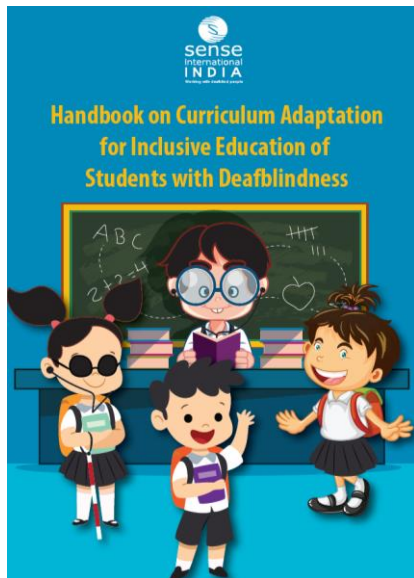


Image: Cover page of Handbook on Curriculum Adaptation for Inclusive Education of Students with Deafblindness, published by Sense International India. The cover includes a drawing of a classroom teacher and three happy students. One student is holding a cane and wearing dark glasses.

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Contributed by Resource & Information Unit of Sense International (India)

The author is working for Sense International (India), an organisation that was set up in 1997 to support the development of sustainable services for deafblind children throughout the country. Sense International (India) is the only national NGO that is currently working for persons with deafblindness and also includes persons with multiple

disabilities within its activities. As on today, Sense International (India) has been successful in starting services in 24 states of India and reaching out to about 85,000 children and young adults with deafblindness and multiple disabilities. In a country, where till 1997, there was only one service, it is commendable that there are now 60 services. Sense International (India) has a vision of “establishing at least one quality service in each state of India by the year 2030”.

Sense International (India) Ahmedabad

www.senseintindia.org

Invitation to Contribute to Future Issues

The Educator is published biannually to foster “connection” within the global disability community—facilitating knowledge exchange, resource sharing, and emotional connections through case studies and personal stories. The Publications Committee welcomes submissions of articles, reports, reviews, and position papers, as well as contributions on VI education programs and models. These submissions are intended to engage ICEVI members and partners, parents and caregivers, leaders and administrators, researchers and higher education students, technology suppliers and consumers, and practitioners in the education, health, and rehabilitation sectors.

Themes and submission deadlines for upcoming issues

July 2025 issue: The Girl Child – submissions due by June 30, 2025

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Please send your submissions to Publications@icevi.org or secretarygeneral@icevi.org.

- Language: English
- Author information: Include your name, title, country location, and contact details
- Format: MS Word, Arial 12-point font, double line spacing, left-aligned paragraphs
- Style: Avoid complex jargon; define acronyms, abbreviations and technical terms.
- Length:
 - Scholarly manuscripts up to 5000 words, must comply with ethics requirements for original research and include permission to use the material.
 - Reports, reviews, program descriptions, position papers, etc.: Approximately 600 words
- Figures and tables: Must be numbered and clearly labelled

- Media: Photos and videos are welcome
 - Please obtain permission from parents/caregivers for photos of children aged under 18 years, or verbal permission for photos of adults
 - Include a brief description or caption with each photo

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