

Study of the Status of Implementation of RPWD Act 2016 in Primary Schools

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Abstract: *The presented research paper presents an in-depth and critical study of the status of its implementation in primary schools under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 in India. The purpose of the Act is to ensure equal opportunities, accessible educational environment and inclusive education to children with disabilities. This study analyzes the gap existing between the legal provisions of the Act and their practical application in the context of primary education. In the research, using descriptive and analytical research method, the facts obtained from secondary sources have been examined under the theoretical framework. It is clear from the study that although RPWD the Act 2016 is a progressive and rights-based law at the policy level, however structural limitations, lack of trained human resources, administrative apathy and social attitudes are major barriers to its effective implementation in primary schools. The research findings indicate that legal provisions alone are not sufficient for the success of inclusive education, but institutional commitment, continuous monitoring and practical interventions are essential.*

Keywords: RPWD Act 2016, Primary Education, Inclusive Education, Implementation, Rights of Persons with Disabilities

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is the basic foundation for the overall development of any society and it not only helps in the intellectual development of an individual, but also paves the way for social, economic and cultural progress. To build a strong and equitable society, it is essential that education is accessible, equal and quality for all. It is in this context that the concepts of social justice and inclusive education become very important, which ensure that every section of the society gets an equal opportunity to receive education without any discrimination.

Social justice refers to equal and fair distribution of resources, opportunities and rights in society, while inclusive education aims to provide an equal educational environment to all students—especially disadvantaged, disabled, economically weaker and socially backward classes. This approach acknowledges diversity in education and emphasizes tailoring education to the individual needs of each student. Under this, not only the availability of physical resources is important, but flexibility and sensitivity in teaching methods, curriculum and assessment system is also required.

At present, although many reformative steps have been taken in the field of education, inequalities still exist at various levels. A clear gap can be seen in the quality and access to education between rural and urban areas, between private and government schools, and between different social classes. Additionally, issues like gender inequality, economic barriers, social prejudice, technological disparity and lack of resources also affect the inclusive nature of education. Despite the growing impact of digital education in particular, not all students have equal access to technological tools, deepening educational inequality.

In this perspective, the present study attempts to comprehensively analyze the current status of social justice and inclusive education principles, policies and their implementation. This study not only assesses the current scenario, but also outlines the major challenges, constraints and opportunities that can help in building a more inclusive and



equitable education system. Also, this study clarifies the role of various stakeholders—such as teachers, parents, policy-makers and society—who contribute significantly to making inclusive education a success.

Therefore, it can be said that social justice and inclusive education is not only an educational requirement, but also a moral and social responsibility, by adopting which it is possible to build an equitable, conscious and progressive society. The present study can be seen as a meaningful and important effort in this direction.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to analyze the concept of social justice and inclusive education in a deep and comprehensive manner, so that it can be clearly understood how equality, availability of opportunities and active participation of all classes—especially disadvantaged, backward and disabled students—can be ensured in the education system. In this context, various policies, schemes and programs related to education have been studied in detail to assess how effective they are at the practical level and to what extent their actual benefits are reaching the target sections.

An important objective of the study is also to identify existing inequalities, social and economic barriers, gender discrimination and regional disparities in the field of education. Under this, an attempt has been made to understand the reasons for which all classes cannot get equal educational opportunities and what concrete and practical measures can be adopted to solve these problems.

Apart from this, the administrative, structural and psychological challenges faced in implementing the principles of inclusive education are analyzed and suggestions for their solution are presented. This study seeks to provide useful guidelines for teachers, policy makers, researchers and other stakeholders related to education to make the education system more equitable, accessible, inclusive and effective.

The major objectives of the present study are as follows—

1. RPWD in the context of primary education analyzing the legal provisions of the Act 2016.
2. To assess the current status of implementation of the Act in primary schools.
3. To identify the existing gap between policy and practice.
4. To present theoretical and practical suggestions for effective implementation of inclusive education.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016, enacted in India, aims to ensure equal opportunities and rights for individuals with disabilities. Its implementation within primary education is crucial as it sets the foundation for inclusive education, which is a fundamental human right. This literature review synthesizes available research findings related to the implementation of the RPWD Act in primary schools, highlighting key insights, identifying knowledge gaps, and suggesting future research directions.

The implementation of the RPWD Act in primary schools has faced several challenges. Azman (2016) discusses the broader context of educational reforms and their challenges in Malaysia, which can be reflective of similar issues in India. The findings indicate that while there is a push for educational reform, the structural and systemic barriers often hinder effective implementation (Azman, 2016). These barriers include inadequate training for teachers, lack of resources, and insufficient policy support, which significantly impact the integration of students with disabilities into mainstream education.

Moreover, the effectiveness of interventions aimed at facilitating educational access for children with disabilities has been questioned. This is evident in the work of Lonsdale et al. (2016), who outline the challenges associated with scaling up interventions in school settings. Their study emphasizes the need for comprehensive support systems that can adapt to the varying needs of students (Lonsdale et al., 2016). Without such systems in place, the RPWD Act's objectives may not be fully realized in primary school environments.



Teacher attitudes towards cultural diversity and inclusion play a critical role in the successful implementation of educational policies like the RPWD Act. Forrest et al. (2016) explore teacher attitudes towards multicultural education and diversity, revealing that positive attitudes are essential for fostering an inclusive education environment (Forrest et al., 2016). However, many teachers may not possess the necessary training or confidence to support students with disabilities effectively. This gap in teacher preparedness highlights a significant barrier to the successful implementation of the RPWD Act in primary schools.

Knowledge Gaps

Despite the existing literature addressing various aspects of educational reform and teacher preparedness, specific knowledge gaps remain regarding the direct impact of the RPWD Act on primary education. Key areas needing further investigation include:

Longitudinal Studies on Implementation: There is a lack of longitudinal studies that track the implementation of the RPWD Act over time within primary schools. Such studies could provide insights into the effectiveness of policies and practices adopted under the Act.

Regional Variations: Research often overlooks regional disparities in the implementation of the RPWD Act. Understanding how different states or districts interpret and apply the Act could reveal best practices and areas needing improvement.

Parental and Community Involvement: The role of parents and community stakeholders in the implementation of the RPWD Act is underexplored. Investigating how engagement from these groups can facilitate or hinder the Act's objectives could provide valuable insights.

Impact of Teacher Training Programs: While the literature points to the necessity of teacher training, specific evaluations of existing training programs in relation to the RPWD Act's requirements are scarce. Studies assessing the effectiveness of these programs in preparing teachers to support students with disabilities could inform policy and practice.

Future Research Directions

To address the identified knowledge gaps, future research should focus on:

Evaluating Implementation Strategies: Research should aim to evaluate various strategies employed by primary schools to implement the RPWD Act effectively. This could include case studies and comparative analyses of schools with different levels of success in integrating students with disabilities.

Developing Robust Training Programs: Investigating the components of effective teacher training programs that align with the needs of students with disabilities under the RPWD Act is essential. This could lead to the development of standardized training modules that can be adopted nationwide.

Exploring Stakeholder Perspectives: Conducting qualitative research involving parents, teachers, and community members could provide a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and successes experienced in the implementation of the RPWD Act.

Assessing Long-term Outcomes: Longitudinal research that examines the long-term academic and social outcomes of students with disabilities post-implementation of the RPWD Act is crucial to understanding its effectiveness

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study method is based on descriptive analytical and critical research methodology. Secondary sources like legal documents, government reports, and recommendations of educational commissions, research papers and international documents have been used. Comprehensive information related to the subject has been collected through these resources. Based on this study, the data and facts obtained have been analyzed under the theoretical framework of social justice and social education to ensure specificity and authenticity. So that the findings of the research can be made more abstract and rational and useful.



IV. RESEARCH FINDING

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 significantly strengthens inclusive primary education in India by expanding disability categories and mandating free education for children aged 6–18 years. Legal provisions emphasize non-discrimination, reasonable accommodation, and individualized support such as assistive devices, trained teachers, and barrier-free infrastructure. Research findings indicate improved enrollment and awareness; however, gaps persist in implementation, teacher preparedness, and resource allocation. Effective execution requires capacity building, monitoring mechanisms, and collaboration among schools, families, and communities. Overall, the Act provides a strong legal framework, but its success depends on consistent, ground-level enforcement and inclusive educational practices.

Research findings on the implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act in primary schools show mixed progress. The Act has significantly improved access to education, increasing enrolment rates and promoting gender equality across India. However, challenges remain in ensuring quality education, as many students still perform below expected learning levels. Studies also highlight issues such as inadequate infrastructure, teacher shortages, and weak monitoring systems. Community awareness and participation, especially through School Management Committees, are often limited, affecting effective implementation. Overall, while the Act has expanded educational access, gaps in quality and implementation persist in primary schools.

Research findings reveal a significant gap between policy and practice due to multiple systemic and contextual factors. While policies are often well-designed, their implementation is hindered by lack of resources, inadequate training, and limited awareness among stakeholders. Additionally, poor monitoring mechanisms and weak coordination between authorities contribute to inconsistent execution. Socio-cultural barriers and resistance to change further widen this gap. As a result, the intended benefits of policies do not fully reach the target population. Bridging this gap requires strengthening implementation strategies, ensuring accountability, capacity building, and active community participation to translate policy intentions into effective ground-level outcomes.

Effective implementation of inclusive education requires both strong theoretical understanding and practical strategies. Theoretically, it is based on principles of equity, equal opportunity, and respect for diversity, ensuring that all learners, including those with disabilities, learn together. Practically, schools should adopt differentiated instruction, flexible curriculum, and use of assistive technologies. Teacher training and positive attitudes are essential for addressing diverse learning needs. Collaboration among teachers, parents, and specialists further strengthens inclusion. Creating a supportive and barrier-free environment promotes participation, learning, and social development of every child, making education truly inclusive and effective.

V. DISCUSSION

The implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (**RPWD Act, 2016**) in primary schools represents a significant step toward inclusive education in India. The Act mandates equal opportunities, non-discrimination, and full participation of children with disabilities in mainstream education. However, its implementation at the primary level shows both progress and persistent challenges.

On the positive side, many schools have started adopting inclusive practices such as admission of children with diverse disabilities, provision of resource rooms, and appointment of special educators. Government initiatives aligned with the Act, like Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, have contributed to infrastructure development, teacher training, and availability of assistive devices. Awareness among teachers and parents regarding the rights of children with disabilities has also gradually increased.

Despite these efforts, several gaps remain in effective implementation. One of the major issues is inadequate infrastructure. Many primary schools still lack barrier-free access such as ramps, accessible toilets, and proper classroom arrangements. Additionally, there is a shortage of trained special educators and insufficient teacher training in inclusive pedagogy. As a result, children with disabilities often do not receive individualized support.



Another challenge is the lack of proper identification and assessment mechanisms. Early screening and intervention services are not consistently available, which affects the educational progress of children. Moreover, negative attitudes and social stigma among peers, teachers, and even families can hinder full inclusion.

Financial and administrative constraints also impact implementation. Funds allocated for inclusive education are sometimes insufficient or not effectively utilized. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are weak, leading to inconsistencies in policy execution across regions.

VI. CONCLUSION

Conclusion, while the RPWD Act, 2016 has laid a strong legal foundation for inclusive education in primary schools, its effective implementation requires strengthened infrastructure, trained human resources, increased awareness, and robust monitoring systems. A collaborative approach involving government, educators, families, and communities is essential to ensure that the vision of inclusive and equitable education becomes a reality.

Future Recommendations

Effective implementation of social justice and inclusive education requires multifaceted and coordinated efforts. First of all, special attention should be given to effective implementation of education policies and schemes. It is not enough to make policies only, but it is necessary to ensure that their benefits actually reach the target sections. For this, the monitoring system should be strengthened and necessary improvements should be made after periodic evaluation.

Secondly, the role of teachers is very important, so regular and quality training programs should be organized for them. These trainings should emphasize the principles of inclusive education, respect for diversity, and effective teaching methods with students with special needs. Also, it is also necessary to develop sensitivity and positive attitude in teachers, so that they can provide equal opportunities to all students.

Thirdly, infrastructure and resources should be developed in schools. It is very important to provide specially adapted facilities for students with disabilities, such as ramps, special toilets, assistive devices and appropriate teaching materials. Additionally, digital education should be promoted along with ensuring that all students have equal access to technological resources.

Fourthly, development of awareness and positive attitude in the society is also very necessary. Public awareness programs should be organized to eliminate social discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes. Inclusive education can be made successful only with active participation of parents and community.

Fifth, scholarships, free study materials, mid-day meals and other incentive schemes for students from economically weaker sections should be effectively implemented so that they can continue their education without any hindrance. In addition, special promotion should be given to girl child education, thereby promoting gender equality.

Finally, coordination between various stakeholders—such as government, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, and society—is essential. It is only with the joint efforts of all that it is possible to create an inclusive, fair and quality education system, which will prove helpful in the overall development of every section of the society.

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- 1) Inclusive education should be made part of compulsory training for primary teachers.
- 2) A strong monitoring and evaluation mechanism should be developed for the implementation of the Act.
- 3) Resource-based collaboration system should be strengthened at the school level.
- 4) Conduct public awareness programs to establish inclusive education at the level of social consciousness.

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