Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Inclusive Education - its benefits and Inclusivity in Nagaland.

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Abstract:

The broad term "inclusive education," which may impact an individual's ability to reach their full potential, refers to ideas and practices that minimize obstacles to learning to promote the variety of learners in a particular setting. An egalitarian and non-discriminatory setting where every student is recognized, welcomed, and appreciated is referred to as an inclusive educational setup. Inclusive education has better social and developmental effects. Therefore, the researcher examines importance of Information and Communication Technology in Inclusive education, its benefits, and how inclusivity is supported in Nagaland. Educators, parents, and other school officials are critical in promoting inclusion in the educational system. To break down barriers in attitudes and surroundings, there should be frequent orientation programs for all parties involved, including peers, parents, teachers, and the community.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Benefits.

INTRODUCTION

Education, defined as the process of assisting in learning or developing values, morals, skills, and habits, is not reserved for any one set of individuals but for all groups, including those from socio-economically challenged backgrounds.

To make education fun for all kids, we must develop inclusive learning designs that are welcoming, learner-friendly, and beneficial—making them feel like they belong in the classroom rather than outside it. The issue of how to teach these kids more effectively turned out to be one that could be solved with inclusion. All children may engage in all aspects of the classroom equally, or almost equally, with the support of an effective inclusive education. Teachers, parents, and community leaders must collaborate to find solutions to build more resilient and inclusive schools. The Indian government prioritizes inclusivity in its efforts to improve its educational system. Inclusion is not a novel idea in India. The emphasis in today's society remains on creating an inclusive environment for all children. Inclusive education is becoming more popular in today's educational system. Results from inclusion without "sufficient" general school preparation will not be up to par.

OBJECTIVE

1. To understand the concept of Inclusive education.
2. To learn how ICT contributes to Inclusive education
3. To know the benefits of Inclusive education.
4. To understand Inclusive education in Nagaland.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The foundation of the inclusion concept is that, as fundamental human rights, all individuals are equal and should be treated with respect and worth. When education is approached inclusive, the needs of each student are considered, and everyone works together to attain goals. It recognizes that every kid has different qualities, interests, skills, and learning requirements and that all children can learn.

Under the general phrase "inclusive education," which may affect a person's capacity to realize her/his full potential, inclusive education refers to ideas and practices that minimize obstacles to learning to promote the variety of learners in a particular setting. An egalitarian and non-discriminatory setting where every kid is recognized, welcomed, and appreciated is referred to as an inclusive educational setup. Every kid has an equal chance to participate in any activity that best fits her abilities. Schools provide

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extracurricular and curriculum-based activities that meet each student's developmental requirements and are tailored to their interests. An inclusive setting aids in creating a caring, supportive and community where every kid may develop social and intellectual abilities while maintaining a positive outlook and moral principles.

The term "inclusive education" describes the instruction of all students in traditional classrooms, regardless of their disabilities. It is an approach that considers every kid's unique traits, passions, skills, and educational requirements.

The "Equitable and Inclusive education" component of the New Education Policy 2020 focuses on providing education to socio-economically disadvantaged and competent individuals and those who fall under the Children with Special Needs (CWSN) category. This approach promotes equity, access, and the right to education and care. Thus, the NEP 2020 considers the issues facing socially disadvantaged groups, such as women, transgender people, people from Scheduled Castes and Tribes, people from Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and other minorities, pupils from small towns and villages, underprivileged areas, and children with disabilities (NEP, 2020).

ICT IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

ICTs offer a great potential to support lifelong learning for all groups of students, including those who have special needs. The application of ICTs enhances independence, integration, and equal opportunities for such people and in this way they facilitate their inclusion in society as valued, respected, and contributing members. Inclusive classroom or school is a very important component of inclusive society.

Suitable educational software and appropriate assistive technologies plays vital role avoiding discriminations among the roles of students and the teachers. Several software, gadgets and web based tools are now available which make teaching learning process easier in inclusive classroom through ICT.

Accessible ICTs in Inclusive Education

1. **Mainstream technologies:**

   Computers that contain in-built accessibility features. ICT tools like screen readers, speech recognition software, and alternative keyboards help students with disabilities access and engage with learning materials. ICT provides a wide range of resources and tools to support students with different learning needs, including those with visual, auditory, motor, or cognitive impairments.

2. **Accessible formats**

   Accessible HTML (HyperText Markup Language), DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System) books but also include 'low-tech' formats such as Braille. ICT enables the delivery of content in various formats (text, audio, and video) to accommodate different learning preferences and sensory needs.

3. **Assistive technologies (AT)**

   As hearing aids, screen readers, adaptive keyboards etc. Assistive Technology is a "piece of equipment, product, system, hardware, software or a service that is used to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. ICT allows for the creation of personalized learning paths and materials, catering to individual learning styles and abilities

Benefits of ICT for students:

- Computers can improve students' independent access to education.
- Students with special educational needs are able to accomplish tasks working at their own pace.
- Visually impaired students, using the Internet, can access information alongside their sighted peers.
- Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties can communicate more easily.
- Students using voice communication aids gain confidence and social credibility at school and in their communities.
- Increased ICT confidence amongst students motivates them to use the Internet at home for schoolwork and leisure interests.

BENEFITS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

- It gives all kids a chance to be a part of their community, foster a sense of belonging, and improve their readiness for life as kids and adults in the community.

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- It gives them more learning opportunities. Children who study in classes with other kids who have different skill levels are more likely to be motivated.
- The children all have more significant goals in mind. Maximizing an individual's skills and abilities is the goal of effective inclusion.
- It enables kids to engage with classmates their age while working toward personal objectives.
- It motivates parents to participate in their kids' extracurricular activities and education.
- It fosters a respectable and inclusive feeling. Additionally, it enables pupils to grow in their awareness and acceptance of personal uniqueness.
- It offers chances for every youngster to make friends with other kids. Friendships offer opportunities for development and role models.
- It determines the unique needs of young people in good physical condition.
- It provides instruction to students using various cutting-edge methods while considering their learning challenges.
- It identifies the children's disabilities and seeks to make them less severe.

Inclusive education has better social and developmental effects. Students in inclusive settings reported feeling less alone than their peers in segregated settings, according to research comparing the quality of school life for special education students. Special education kids who received an inclusive education show improvements in various abilities, including social, communication, and motor skills. Special education students who received an inclusive education performed better academically than their peers in segregated settings. Exceptional students who received their education in inclusive environments are likelier to live independently and pursue postsecondary education and jobs. Students without disabilities are more likely to be receptive to social interactions with those with disabilities and to have fewer biases against them.

INCLUSIVITY IN NAGALAND

In the state of Nagaland, schools are run either by the state, central government or by private organizations. Nagaland has a high literacy rate of 80.1 per cent. As per UDISE+2022-23, the total number of schools in the state was 2717, with 1932 government owned schools and 763private owned schools. The 2011 national census states that 29,631 persons with disabilities live in Nagaland overall. It is argued that people in Nagaland are not aware of their rights and resources, and there is a big discrepancy between how laws are really applied and what policies are stated in them. Special needs children receive their education from a limited number of urban non-profits, government agencies, and private institutions.

The state has few inclusive schools and that everyone, including civil society, government agencies, and religions, should assume responsibility for achieving inclusive education in the state. Additionally raising awareness of people with disabilities in the workplace, schools, and society should be emphasized. Inclusive education is the best approach to ensure every kid has an equal opportunity to attend school, learn, and grow. The government must endeavour to increase the number of professionals with the necessary training and ensure that educational institutions welcome students with impairments since everyone should be able to attend.

Initiative of the Government

According to the 2011 Nagaland Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, private schools must admit at least 25% of students in Class I or preschool at the entry level who belong to underprivileged groups and weaker sections. Parents are not required to pay any registration fees, tuition fees, or other fees. The job of executing programs for the vulnerable and underprivileged in relation to the development and promotion of the disabled has been given to the department of social welfare.

The regional Action on Inclusive Education (RAISE) Nagaland works on initiatives to address issues including stakeholders' attitudes and people's attitudes toward children with disabilities. The state education department strives to execute centrally supported programs like SSA and RMSA and identifies children with special needs and supports them in a welcoming and barrier-free educational environment.

The state government has been training school management committees and school development committees at the block level as well as implementing community awareness and sensitization programs in various institutions through Samagra Shiksha. Every year,

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it conducts medical evaluation camps in educational block resource centres', focusing on inclusive education and providing CWSN with appliances and assistance.

The government has sensitized educators, the SCERT department, and administrative personnel. Under School Education Nagaland, the Nagaland Education Mission Society (NEMS) also organizes assessment camps for kids with special needs in several districts. It distributes appliances and other assistive technology to kids with special needs.

Barriers

- A mindset that opposes accommodations, which may be brought about by insufficient or improper funding from state governments, a strict curriculum, or inexperienced instructors.
- Lack of awareness of children with disabilities: Teachers, classmates, parents, and the community all struggle with the idea of inclusive education because they are insensitive, uninformed, and lack a supportive attitude toward these children. These kids experience prejudice as a result.
- Negative impression of CWSN: One major barrier is the prejudice held by parents of non-disabled children, who believe that disabilities are a disease that may be passed on to their children if there is a misunderstanding with CWSN.

Bridging the gap

- Removing barriers related to constructing school communities, learning, attitudes, and infrastructure; creating school clusters for improved assistance.
- Through the use of the universal design of learning and vocational education, make learning relevant, age- and level-appropriate, and meaningful.
- Universal learning outcomes employing competency-based continuous assessment, individualized instruction, and assessment based on individual capacities, needs, and learning preferences.
- Adhere to the five R's: respect, relationship, reach, right, and responsibility.
- Cooperate and tolerate one another.

CONCLUSION

With activities centred on individuals' interests and talents, an inclusive school fosters a supportive and accommodating atmosphere where all students are encouraged to develop mutual respect through collaborative learning. The goal is to meet each student's needs to help them reach their full potential, regardless of how quickly they learn. Therefore, the success of an inclusive school depends on every student feeling that they belong in the school and are respected. This may be achieved by having an open dialogue about people's unique differences, including individuals with various skills and experiences, and modifying the educational system to meet their requirements.

Building inclusion in the sphere of education should be Nagaland's goal. By pursuing inclusive education, the government, non-governmental organizations, and the general public must embrace the idea that every kid, regardless of diversity, deserves a voice and a platform, especially for the most marginalized members of society. Inclusion in the educational field might be attained via coordinated efforts. Organizing awareness campaigns to convey the value of inclusive education is necessary.

"Education for all," the millennium's catchphrase, cannot be realized until everyone has access to educational opportunities, particularly for kids with special needs. An inclusive setting in an educational system can best achieved with the incorporation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) because of the availability of its varied features which could possibly cater children with different needs and natures.

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