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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# ROLE OF OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to find out role of open and distance education in Inclusive education. Population of study was learners enrolled in B.Ed.(spl) programme in all semesters. Sample of study were 51 learners enrolled in fifth semester selected randomly. This is Quantitative study based on survey method. The tool of data collection was developed by investigator as google form. Data collection was done through sharing a link of google form in WhatsApp groups to learners.. Inductive deductive method was applied for interpretation of findings. Uttarakhand Open University is playing a significant role in developing inclusive education in India. Open Universities working on philosophy of 3A(any time, any place &anybody)can play significant role in promoting equity and inclusion in higher education effectively. The aim of this study is to determine the role and place of inclusive education in open and distance learning.

## INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is need of hour over the year Government of India came with various policies on education focusing on Inclusive Education such as RPWD act 2016. All the policies emphasized the right of child from diverse background and abilities to access formal education but still the disparities continued. National Education Policy 2020 is comprehensive plan it includes all those aspects that lead to the full inclusion of children with disability in the education system. In recent years, the tolerance of our society has been growing. Inclusion is the process of development of general education, which implies accessibility of education for all categories of children, in terms of adapting to the various needs of these children by finding the optimal way of their education. The restriction of the access of children with disabilities to higher education does not meet certain minimum public perceptions and expectations (Essary, Szecsi, 2018; Korepanova, 2011). SDG4 seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities to all by 2030. Indeed, with the quickly changing employment landscape and global ecosystem, it is becoming increasingly critical that children not only learn, but more importantly learn how to learn. Education is moving towards less content, and more towards learning about how to think critically and solve problems, how to be creative and multidisciplinary, and how to innovate, adapt, and absorb new material in novel and changing fields. Evolving pedagogy to make education more experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centred, discussion-based, flexible, and, of course, enjoyable are need of hour. Education helps to build character, enable learners to be ethical, rational, compassionate, and caring, while at the same time

prepare them for gainful, fulfilling employment. The gap between the current state of learning outcomes and what is required must be bridged through undertaking major reforms that bring the highest quality, equity, and integrity into the system, from early childhood care education through higher education. Education is the single greatest tool for achieving social justice and equality. Inclusive and equitable education - while indeed an essential goal in its own right - is also critical to achieving an inclusive and equitable society in which every citizen has the opportunity to dream, thrive, and contribute to the nation. The education system is determined so that no child loses any opportunity to learn and excel because of circumstances of birth or background. NEP 2020 reaffirms bridging the social category gaps in access, participation, and learning outcomes in school education will continue to be one of the major goals of all education sector development programmes. Uttarakhand Open University is a state University, playing a leading role in dissemination of quality higher education in Uttarakhand following the philosophy of ODL. Uttarakhand Open University was established in the year 2005 (vide Act No.23 of Uttarakhand Government) with an objective to take education at the doorsteps of various sections of society. UOU is progressing leaps and bounds due to its new, innovative and useful educational programmes all this has been made possible through the use of Information and Communication Technology and contact session with learners. According to U-DISE 2016-17 data, about 19.6% of students belong to Scheduled Castes at the primary level, but this fraction falls to 17.3% at the higher secondary level. These enrolment dropoffs are more severe for Scheduled Tribes students (10.6% to 6.8%), and differently-abled children (1.1% to 0.25%), with even greater declines for female students within each of these categories. The decline in enrolment in higher education is even steeper (NEP2020, para6.2.2).

The University mainly caters to the development of women, tribals and marginalized section of society which have been left out from main stream .In short span of 17 years the University has evolved considerably and has been successful in reaching out to the unreached. University is playing a leading role in development of state through quality education, research, training and extension. At present University running various programmes through 14 schools of study. Besides 14 schools of studies various research centres have been established under different schools in order to augment research and focused studies. Credit systems of programmes are applying successfully by this University and learner support centres are establishing by University in Government P.G. Colleges as per UGC regulation. Inclusive education is need of hour over the year Government of India came with various policies on education focusing on Inclusive Education such as RPWD act 2016.All the policies emphasized the right of child from diverse background and abilities to access formal education but still the disparities continued. National Education Policy 2020 is comprehensive plan it includes all those aspects that lead to the full inclusion of children with disability in the education system.SDG4 seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities to all by 2030. Indeed, with the quickly changing employment landscape and global ecosystem, it is becoming increasingly critical that children not only learn, but more importantly learn how to learn. Education system is moving towards less content, and how to think critically and solve problems, how to be creative and multidisciplinary, and how to innovate, adapt, and absorb new material in novel and changing fields. Pedagogy must evolve to make education more experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centred, discussion-based, flexible, and, of course, enjoyable. The curriculum must include basic arts, crafts, humanities, games, sports and fitness, languages, literature, culture, and values, in addition to science and mathematics, to develop all aspects and capabilities of learners; and make education more well-rounded, useful, and fulfilling to the learner. Education must build character, enable learners to be ethical, rational, compassionate, and caring, while at the same time prepare them for gainful, fulfilling employment. The gap between the current state of learning outcomes and what is required must be bridged through undertaking major reforms that bring the highest quality, equity, and integrity into the system, from early childhood care education through higher education.

Education is the single greatest tool for achieving social justice and equality. Inclusive and equitable education - while indeed an essential goal in its own right - is also critical to achieving an inclusive and equitable society in which every citizen has the opportunity to dream, thrive, and contribute to the nation. The education system must aim to benefit India 's children so that no child loses any opportunity to learn and excel because of circumstances of birth or background. This Policy reaffirms that bridging the social category gaps in access, participation, and learning outcomes in school education will continue to be one of the major goals of all education sector development programmes.

**Need of study:** Inclusive education is based on the principle that local school should provide opportunities for all children, regardless of any perceived difference, disability or other social ,emotional ,cultural and linguistic difference. Inclusion should be focused in practice. In the present context when there is constitutional provision of right to education . National Education Policy 2020, focuses on Equity and inclusion .From preprimary up to higher education inclusive education plays deciding role in development of personality of children with special needs and their inclusion in society. Inclusion is important for normal as well as children having disabilities. For healthy society potential of every individual must be utilized in every education Centrethere should be attained graduate teacher B.Ed.(spl) because this program focuses on early identification, intervention and individualized education plan according to the needs of every individual. For attaining sustainable development goals inclusive education plays a deciding role .The curriculum and pedagogy included in special education strengthens the concept of inclusive education.

### Objective of study

- To know learner's preference towards inclusive education,
- To examinelearner'sopinion on inclusive education ,
- To find out need to strengthen inclusive education through ODL.
- To explore measures to improve teacher education program in ODL

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Development of inclusive special education aims to provide vision and guidelines for policies, procedures and teaching strategies that will facilitate the provision of effective education for all children with special educational needs and disabilities. Golub T.P.(2015);stated in his study, the role of education in sustainable development,that education is both a consequence and cause in society adaptation processes.Education is main factor for adaptation of society in modern conditions and contributes to the formation of a new ideological horizon of an individual ,which is reflected in the preservation of national values and culture, makes it possible to adopt new social practices and use them in practice. Inna Fedulova (2019);revealed in his study on Inclusive education as a basis for sustainable development in society, the extremely low degree of readiness of state and educational institutions for the practice of inclusive education of students with disabilities which is indicative of problems in the development of society. Gahtori Kamal,Kalpana P.Lakhera(2021) revealed in their study that Education plays significant role in developing humanistic outlook, democratic values, respect of every living being with scientific way of thinking, understanding events scientifically with empathetic attitude. Promote use of technology to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of learning process. Honest introspection in erms of strength, weaknesses, opportunities, challenges analysis and accordingly putting up an action plan for further addition on strength, reducing weaknesses, making use of opportunities and addressing challenges analysis and accordingly putting up an action plan for further addition on strength, reducing weaknesses, making use of opportunities and addressing challenges and constrains.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a quantitative type of study. Population of study are learners enrolled in B.Ed.(spl) program. Sample of study was selected randomly from Fifth semester. Data was collected through google form

#### Analysis & Interpretation of data

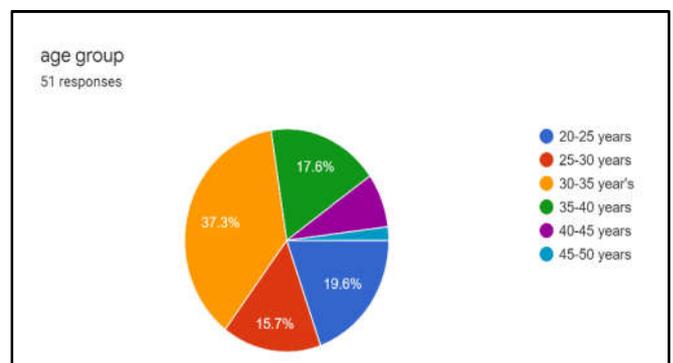


Fig .1

Fig.1 Demographic study shows that 37.3% respondents were of 30-35 years,19.6% were of20-25 years,17.6% belong to35-40 years,15.7% were25-30 years.The diversity in age group shows that in open and distance learning learners came from working group,those who had left opportunity of higher education due to unavailability of opportunity in conventional mode of higher education ,limited seats in conventional Higher education institutes.Open and Distance education is more accepted mode of education in present context.

19.6%respondents were of 20-25 years shows that learners in early stage also accepting mode of open and distance education to get degree in teacher education program. Fig.2 exhibits that51%respondents were of rural background,49% were urban .reveals that Open and distance learning is reaching to unreached more effectively. Respondents belong to different states of India,they are working in elementary education in Rajasthan,Delhi etc.they are serving in rural areas of country.In schools of state Government and centre government in different organization. Fig.3 shows 60.8 % respondents were male while 39.2%respondents were female reveals that percentage of male respondents was higher than female respondents.

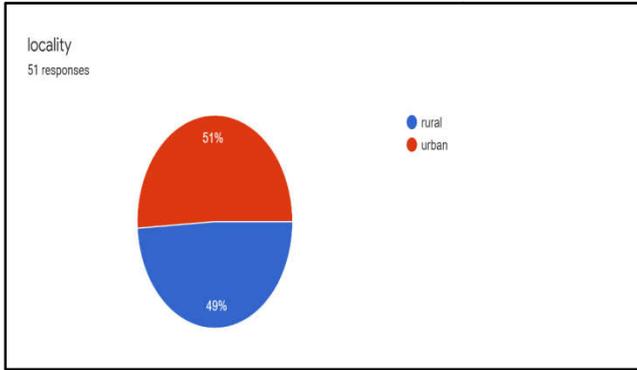


Fig. 2.

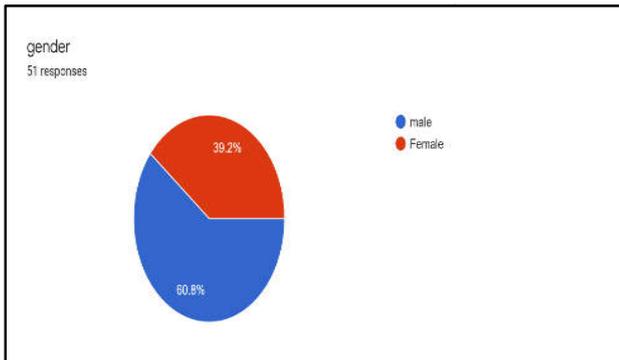


Fig. 3.

## ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Analysis of results give inference that inclusive education is important aspect of education process in present context

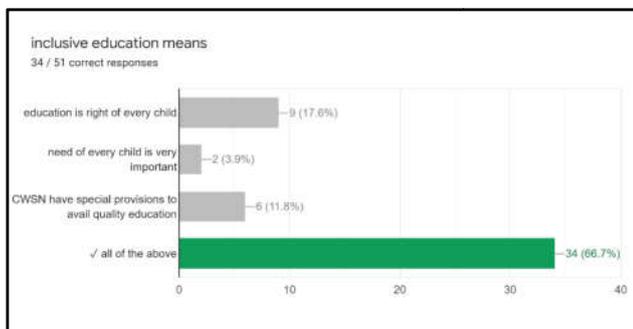


Fig.4

Fig. 4 shows that 66.7%respondents were shown that education is right of every child, need of every child is very important, CWSN have special provisions to avail quality education. shows that respondents have awareness about aspects of inclusive education.

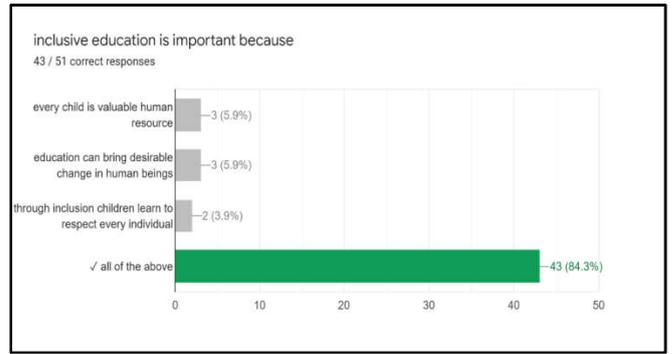


Fig. 5.

Fig.5 Shows that 84.3% of respondents exhibited that every child is valuable human resource, education can bring desirable change in human beings. Through inclusion children learn to respect every individual. Exhibits that respondents are familiar with concept of inclusive education

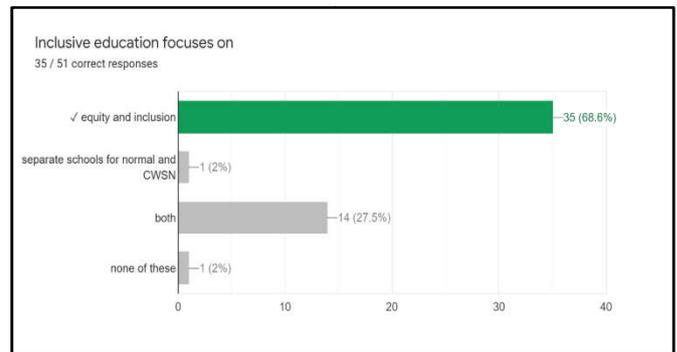


Fig.6

Fig.6 shows that68.6%respondents shows that equity and inclusion is important aspect of Inclusive education.27.5% respondents favor equity and Inclusion along with separate schools for normal &CWSN. only 2% respondents prefer that there should be separate schools for normal and children with special need.

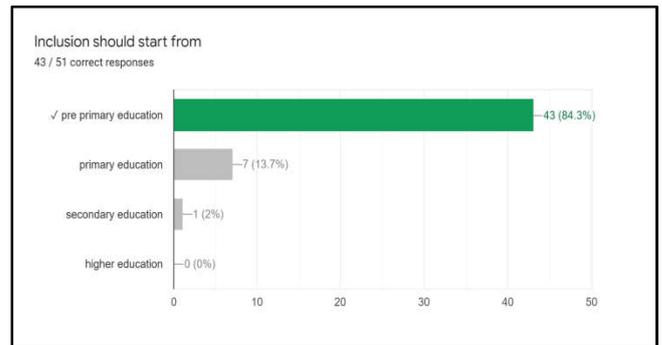


Fig.7

Fig.6 shows that 84.3 %respondents responded that inclusion should start from preprimary education. states that early identification and intervention were very important aspect for inclusive society.

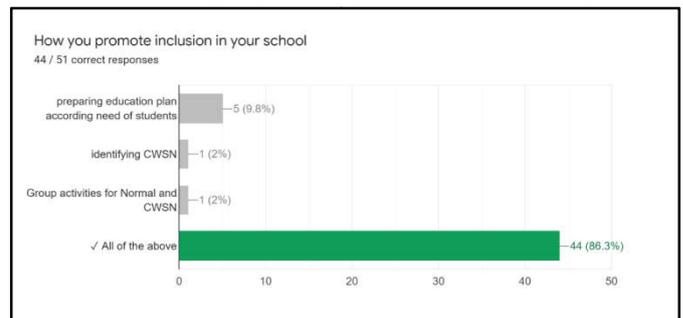


Fig. 8

Fig.8 shows that 86.3% respondents were familiar with importance of preparing education plan according needs of student, identification of children with special needs and group activities with normal & CWSN. Fig.9 shows that 84.3% respondents were familiar with provisions of NEP2020, for equity and inclusion, inclusion of technology in education and concept learning in education system. Fig.10 exhibits that 92.2% respondents were known that RPWD act safeguards rights of persons with disability. For effective implementation of Inclusive education familiarity about different provisions for person with disabilities are very important to make

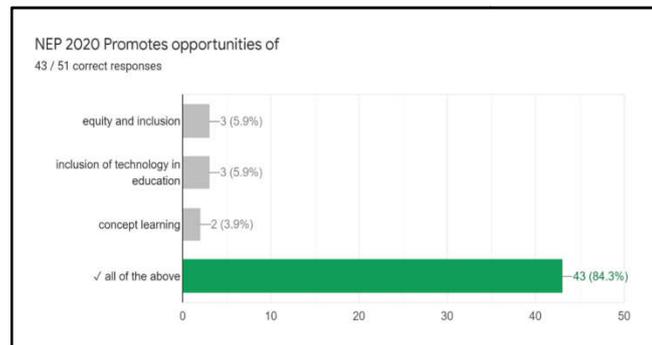


Fig. 9.

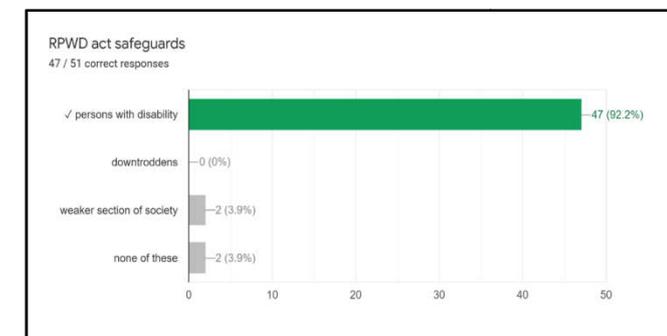


Fig.10

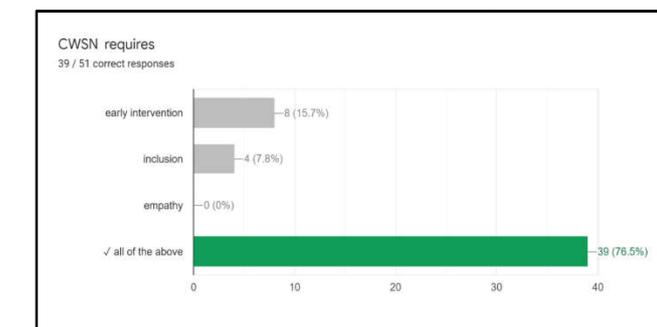


Fig.11

society sensitive towards issues of disabilities. Fig.11 shows that early intervention, inclusion and empathy are key factors influencing inclusive education.

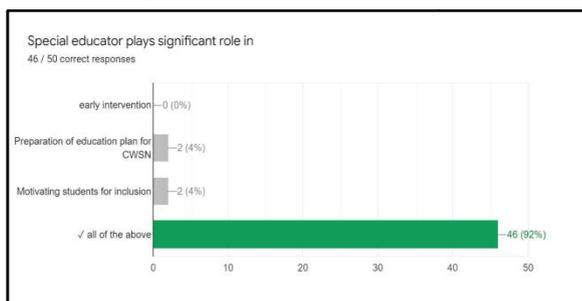


Fig.12

Fig.12 shows that 92 % respondents preferred that early intervention, preparation of education plan for CWSN, motivating students (normal as well as CWSN) for inclusion. Fig.13 shows that respondents opined that, practices to cope with disability were- providing equipment, focus on strength of child, co-operative learning these are important aspects to support inclusive education. The study shows that learners doing B.Ed. (spl) program are aware about inclusive education. Such type of teacher education programs found supportive for strengthening inclusive education.

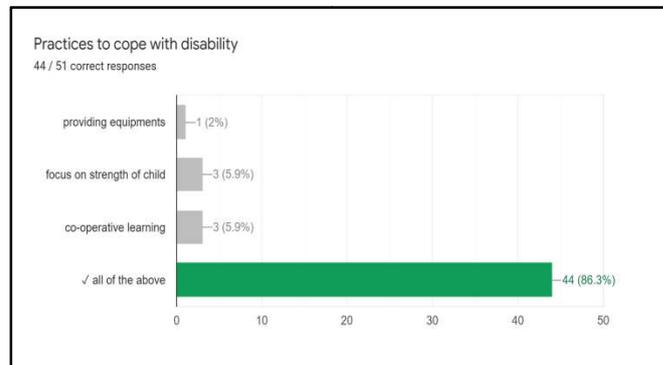


Fig.13

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

Findings of study shows B.Ed.(spl) program in fulfilling its objective to make learners sensitive and aware towards inclusive education. Learners belong to different age group and locality shows very encouraging results. Inclusion may be seen as a continuing process of increasing participation, and segregation as a recurring tendency to exclude difference. Children’s knowledge and skills are developed through their interactions with each other. Therefore, inclusive education requires ongoing engagement with removing barriers to active involvement and participation in shared learning. Inclusion values the active participation of every child as a full member of his or her family, community, and society.

## CONCLUSION

Uttarakhand Open University is running a program B.Ed.(spl). This program is very important for understanding and implementing equity and inclusion in education field. NEP2020 is focusing on equity and inclusion. Conclusion was drawn that Open and Distance Learning is successfully running by Uttarakhand Open University in Teacher education program specially in B.Ed.(spl). Inclusive education is about every child’s right to be a valued member of society and to be provided with equal opportunities to actively participate in and contribute to all areas of learning.

Inclusive education requires recognizing impairment as one of many forms of human diversity and welcoming and viewing diversity as a resource rather than a problem. Inclusive education, therefore, creates a situation where all children can be valued and experience a sense of belonging and where all children are encouraged to reach their full potential in all areas of development. Inclusion is not about disability, nor is it only about schools. Inclusion is about social justice. Children who participate in inclusive education have been found to be more independent. Additionally, children who participate in inclusive education have been found to develop qualities such as patience and trust and to become more aware of and responsive to the needs of others than children in non-inclusive settings. Inclusive education supports children in developing increased awareness and acceptance of diversity and understanding of individuality.

**Suggestions:** Teacher education is directly related to teacher attitudes. Teachers who receive education about inclusion have been found to be more likely to have positive attitudes towards the inclusion of

children who experience disability. Given the importance of attitudes for inclusive education, educating all teachers as inclusive teachers is an important goal. For strengthening understanding about inclusive education there should be special provisions for recruitment of special educators in every educational institute from foundational level to higher education. Open Universities must be given more opportunities for running such programs. Teacher education programs play significant role because teachers interact with children and society directly and influence individuals strongly.

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