



## Inclusive education: The panacea for uplifting literacy rate in Jharkhand

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### Abstract

Reducing inequality is among one of the top priorities for nations globally. The fourth goal of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasises “quality education”. While developed countries have had the required educational status for the past few decades, one of the key factors for their economic proliferation, the developing and underdeveloped nations have found their education structure and goals in flux. Countries in the global south have witnessed increasing global attention to ameliorate this educational inequality. This paper analyses the educational status of the state of Jharkhand in India and its 24 districts using the Geographical Information System (GIS). We find that districts with similar levels of literacy rate appear to be close to each other, which implies spatial inequality in access to education. We also find that in general, mineral-rich districts that offer better employment opportunities tend to have a higher literacy rate than the state’s average and vice versa. Drawing on to the arguments established in our analysis, we assert that inclusive education is crucial to holistically escalating the educational status of the state. Further, we advocate the role of teachers in providing an inclusive classroom environment. Our analysis reveals the lack of informed policy making and recommends policy intervention in underserved areas for equitable educational development in Jharkhand.

**Keywords:** literacy, mainstreaming, inclusion, disabilities

### Introduction

Inclusive education means diverse learners from different backgrounds learning side by side in the same classroom. Inclusion is not an experiment to be followed; rather it is that system of education which values diversity and the unique contribution which each student brings to the classroom. The word inclusive is derived from the late 16th century: from the Medieval Latin word *inclusivus*, which means ‘to include’. Inclusion describes much more than the acceptance of children with disabilities/exceptionalities in the mainstream. Teaching all students together, mainstreaming and integration are viewed as the intermediary steps of inclusive education. It brings all students together in one classroom and community, regardless of their strength or weakness in an area, and seeks to maximize the potential of all students. Inclusion in education is an approach which means change in the system to adapt to include disabled children, not to change in children to adapt to the system. Disabled pupils may require adaptation and support to access the curriculum. It presumes that the aims of inclusive education are mainly to eliminate social exclusion that is the consequence of attitude and responses to diversity in race, social class, religion, gender and ability. UNESCO views inclusion as “a dynamic approach of responding positively to pupil diversity and of seeing individual differences not as a problem, but as opportunities for enriching learning.” (UNESCO. (2009). Teaching children with disabilities in inclusive settings) The purpose of inclusive education is not to accommodate these children into a general school setting, but to focus on reconstructing schools to accept and provide for the needs of all the students. This paper draws on the literacy condition of the state of Jharkhand, India and finds the need to necessitate equal opportunity for every individual to obtain quality education on the same axis. Further, we argue that the social exclusion in the state is one of the major barriers in achieving “education for all”. In addition, this paper argues that

enrollment and retention of children with disabilities in a common education environment. Finally, we assert that embedding diversity and building the character of fraternity among children is key to alleviating Jharkhand’s educational status.

### Background

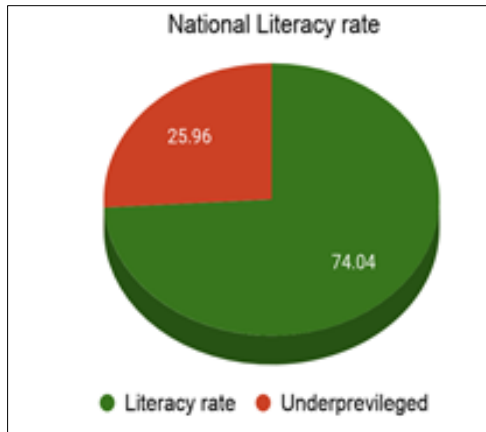
Education is a liberating force; it is also a democratizing force cutting across the barrier of caste, class, creed, religion etc. Every individual has the birth right to educate themselves. The education systems throughout the world are faced by the challenges of providing an effective and productive education system for children and the youth. Education makes a connection among Teachers, Students and Curriculum, while an enriched curriculum develops the relationship of inclusion of all exceptional children with normal. Jharkhand, which splits to “Bushland” or “The land of forest”, is a state in eastern India, with a literacy rate of 66.41%, below the national average of 74.04%, as per the 2011 Census, Jharkhand ranks 32nd amongst the 36 states and union territories in India in terms of literacy rate. The latest data of National University Education Planning and Administration (NUEPA), a central government body, has ranked Jharkhand 34th out of 36 states and union territories in elementary education. Several reports and results draw attention towards the lack of adequate educational resources, old teaching methodology and improper execution of education policies with scholastic and co-scholastic activities in school institutions.

Right to education is the right of every citizen to be privileged by the Constitution of India. Segregation is against the law of nature. We all are different in looks, interest, abilities, aptitude, language etc and that’s the beauty of the world. Our differences should not be looked at negatively although we should celebrate this diversity in us. So to bring every child into mainstream inclusion is one of the effective methods. Inclusive education is a new approach towards educating the children with disabilities and

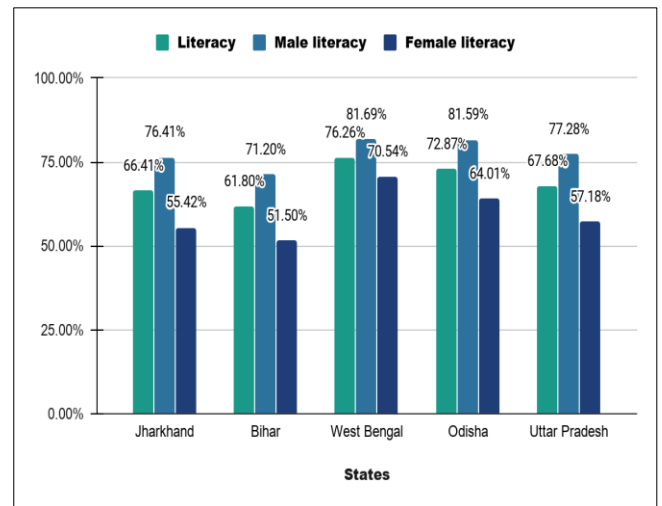
learning difficulties, with that of normal ones within the same roof. It seeks to have a grip on the learning needs of all the children with a precise focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization as well as exclusion. It alludes to that all learners – with or without disabilities should be able to learn together through access to common support service.

**Discussion**

Jharkhand has made primary education so accessible that 95% of children of ages 6–11 are enrolled in school, as opposed to 56% in 1993–94; this will likely improve literacy a great deal. Although wastage and stagnation are major hurdles in the literacy graph, the biggest reason for wastage and stagnation is still poverty.



**Fig 1:** Educational Achievement of Jharkhand with respect to its neighboring states



**Fig 2:** Comparison of literacy rates of selected Indian states with Jharkhand.

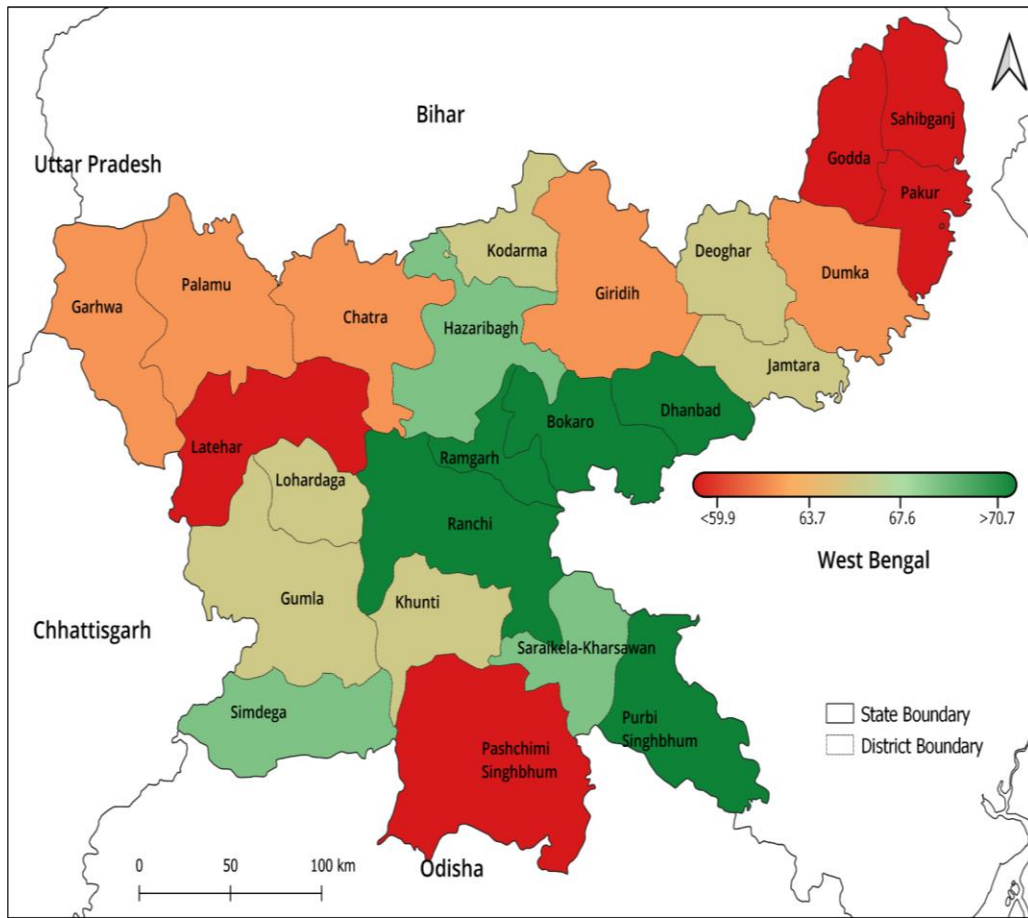
With the above comparison, it indicates that Jharkhand lags behind West Bengal, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh in terms of education. In all the States, there is a huge gap of literacy rate of male and females which is approximately 20% with exception 10% in West Bengal which indicates even in 21<sup>st</sup> century females are debarred from their basic right which is “Right to Education”. As per the 2011 census conducted by Government of India the official literacy rate for the state was 66.41% (male: 76.84%; female: 55.42%) districts wise literacy rate:

**Table 1:** Presents districts wise literacy rate in percents

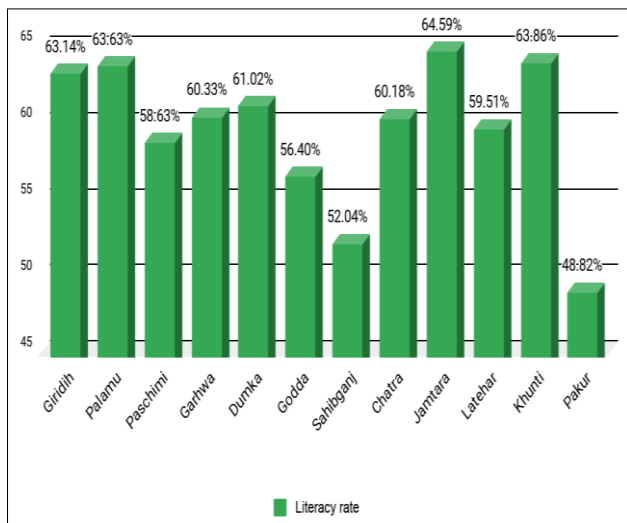
Name of District	Total literacy rate	Male literacy rate	Female literacy rate
Ranchi	76.06	84.26	67.44
Dhanbad	74.52	82.81	64.29
Giridih	63.14	76.76	48.72
Purbi Singhbhum	75.49	83.75	66.81
Bokaro	72.01	82.51	60.63
Palamu	63.63	74.30	52.09
Hazaribagh	69.75	80.01	58.95
Paschimi Singhbhum	58.63	71.13	46.25
Deoghar	64.85	76.85	51.80
Garhwa	60.33	72.19	47.58
Dumka	61.02	72.96	48.82
Godda	56.40	67.84	44.14
Sahibganj	52.04	60.34	43.31
Saraikela Kharsawan	67.70	79.03	55.88
Chatra	60.18	69.92	49.92
Gumla	65.73	75.55	55.90
Ramgarh	73.17	82.44	63.09
Pakur	48.82	57.06	40.52
Jamtara	64.59	76.46	52.15
Latehar	59.51	69.97	48.68
Koderma	66.84	79.78	53.23
Simdega	67.99	76.08	59.92
Khunti	63.86	74.08	53.64
Lohardaga	67.61	77.41	57.69

Above table states the literacy rate of the state was 66.41% with Ranchi district

Being most educated at 76.06% compared to rural Pakur district being least at 48.82%



**Fig 3:** District level literacy rate of Jharkhand for the year 2011 (5 quantile classes). Data obtained from Census of India, 2011. Average literacy rate of Jharkhand: 64.74 %



**Fig 4:** Graphical representation of districts having below average literacy rate.

Above graph shows that half of the total districts of Jharkhand are listed in the category of below average literacy rate even after a decade passed from the formation of independent states in eastern

India. The condition of these districts compel us to think of their growth but this can be majorly uplifted by adopting an inclusive education approach. Since the formation of the new state, the Jharkhand Education Project Council (JEPC) has been implementing four projects to spread elementary education: District Primary Education Policy (DPEP), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL), and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV). The state has been moving towards the goal of universal elementary education but the target of 100% enrolment and retention of children in schools has not yet been attained.

**Disabilities and Exclusion in Jharkhand:** According to the report of the World health organisation approximately 15% of the world's population live with disabilities out of which nearly 5% experience significant functional disabilities. As per report of census of India 2011 total disabled in Jharkhand is 7,69,980 and out of which 3,24,120 are age group 5-29 years which is 42.09% of the total disabled persons of state. Generally 5-29 years of age is considered as the high time of formal education and at this age group there is a high ratio of disabled population in the state, their

challenges, hurdles, the feeling of inferiorities and being isolated push back their desire of getting education. While the study says in many villages disabled are considered as a burden in family and community and also they are excluded socially. They are also treated as cursed people and bound to live their life in an isolated manner from even basic human rights. Total number of disabled persons with age group (5-29 years) as per the report of census conducted by Government of India are as follow:

**Table 2:** Number of the disabled persons under age group 30 years.

Age Group	Disabled	Male	Female
5-9	67,427	36,416	31,011
10-19	1,44,770	79,989	67,781
20-29	1,11,923	63,708	48,215

### Needs of inclusive education in elementary classroom of the state

Inclusion is an attempt at making learning more meaningful and relevant for all, especially for those who are most likely to feel excluded from being taught in the regular or general school of Jharkhand. Inclusion in education is a clarion call to question, to rethink and restructure all such policies, curricula, cultures and practices in schools which seek to discriminate among the students based on their abilities or disabilities. The important considerations of inclusive education required in schools of state are:

- All children are able to be part of their community and develop their belonging and become better prepared for life in the community as children and adults.
- The expectations of all the children are higher, successful inclusion attempts to develop an individual strength and illuminate their sound interpersonal skill.
- It provides all children with the opportunity to develop friendship with one another. Schools are an important place to develop friendships and learn social skills.
- Inclusion models increase parent participation, parents feel happy that their children were provided with an avenue through which they could receive equal educational opportunities together with their counterparts in the same learning environment.
- It provides better opportunities for learning. Children with varying abilities are often better motivated when they learn in classes surrounded by other children.

### Challenges of teacher in inclusive program

- **Improper curriculum adaptation:** For practicing inclusive education curriculum adaptation best suited to special and unique needs of every learner, including children with disabilities, are necessary. The concept of universal instructional design is to be properly developed and implemented into the curriculum of every course. However, the required curriculum adaptation is either missing or improper mainly in Pakur, Sahibganj, Godda and Paschimi Singhbhum districts.
- **Lack of awareness about children with disabilities among general teachers:** The general teachers mainly lack basic awareness with regard to children with disabilities. They have their own social and culturally constructed ideas about certain obvious disabilities but lack remedies and

educational knowledge about disabilities. Such as classification, special need labeling.

- **Difficulties in school environment in physical access:** Whenever it comes with inclusive education a school must have proper accommodation facilities for disabled children. In majorities of school such accommodations are not there, facilities like ramps and directional cues etc are mostly absent in schools.
- **Negative self – perception of children with disabilities:** Negative self-perception of children with disabilities pose a great challenge for practicing inclusive education. In strengthening this negative perception, neighbors, peers etc are majorly responsible. Unless wiping out these negative self-perceptions, true inclusion of such children is not possible.
- **Support services:** While implementing inclusive education in all educational institutions of the districts mentioned in Figure 2. At different levels, we need strong support services. Their strength should be both qualitative and quantitative. But existing support is not adequate.
- **Family collaboration:** Family is considered to have sole responsibility for children in India. First and foremost, acceptance and positive outlook of children with disabilities are in the eyes of families, which strengthen the bunch of positivity in their entire life. Family has a very important role in implementing inclusive education. Hence, inclusive education needs motivation and involves the family in process.

### Role of teachers in accelerating educational environment

A teacher always tries to bring out the best in each child. When children stay away from their family, the teacher is the person who contributes a lot for them. Again, teachers for special children have special roles in schools.

Besides some additional qualities, they must have the primary aim of teaching and guidance. To make the children interested in the class is very important for the teacher. He/ She should remain alert always in order to meet the needs of the students. The following steps are noteworthy for effective teaching:

- Problems of children should be intimated to parents by the teacher within the minimum span of time.
- Records of every child should be maintained properly by the teacher, so that the programme of action can be executed immediately.
- A teacher must have a clear concept of special education and inclusive education.
- Remedial teaching programs should be worked out by the teachers which may be productive for children with specific educational needs.
- Teachers should prepare instructional materials to teach in integrated set-ups.
- Cooperation of other faculties must be organized by the teacher to provide the best possible education for disabled children.

### Favourable classroom environment

An inclusive classroom is one that creates a supportive environment for all learners, including those with learning differences and engages gifted as well as disabled pupils by building a more responsive learning environment. An inclusive



school or classroom can only be successful when all students feel they are truly part of the school community. This can only happen through open, honest discussion about differences and understanding as well as respecting people from all abilities and backgrounds. An inclusive environment is one where everyone feels valued. Some of the ways which pave the way for proper inclusive classroom environment are:

**Embrace student's diversity:** We all must value and embrace diversity not just diverse talents, but diversity in all forms like religion, gender, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic backgrounds and even academic readiness. Failing to do so can have a negative impact on a student's learning, on the development of their retention and persistence.

**Supportive environment:** This paper recommends schools provide academic support services to ensure all students have the opportunity to thrive. Individual attention should be given to the needy children which indeed will help them to tackle the difficulties which they are facing while studying.

**Proper infrastructure and teaching material:** Facilities and infrastructure play an important role in serving special needs students in inclusive schools because they give accessibility for them. Facilities and infrastructures provided by the school should be aligned to the needs of students.

For example:

- Students with visual impairment may need guide blocks and specific signs to indicate rooms and other facilities.
- Students with hearing impairment need some visual signs.
- Students with physical disabilities need ramps and spacious rooms in order to make them move freely.
- Students with attention deficit disorder may need less distraction and students with autism may need well organized classrooms.

**Provide alternative means of participation:** To signal awareness of different emotional and social conditions in the classroom, teachers should arrange various alternative means through which the child can connect and participate in curricular as well as co-curricular activities.

**Encouraging atmosphere:** Children should be motivated and provided with an appropriate atmosphere which will encourage them to reach their maximum potential. Feeling of oneness should be inculcated among all the children so that the disabled people do not develop inferior feelings among themselves.

Diversity and inclusion make our world in the classroom beautiful. In the long term, creating an inclusive class requires huge changes, but it all begins with small, impactful actions. If we can do our best to take notice and try to create an inclusive learning environment, maybe we can carry on that mentality into a bigger classroom: our world.

## Results

The paper highlights the significance of inclusive education mainly in the state of Jharkhand. It also provides an overview of inclusive education as the solution of marginalization and social exclusion mainly in the field of education.

Among 24 districts of Jharkhand, 12 districts come under the category of Districts having below average literacy rate of the state and 42 percent of total disabled of state are lying under literacy age i.e. (5-30 years) which indicates that there is a huge gap in making policies and implementation of that policies of education.

Figure 2 shows that the districts falling under the red zone need immediate attention and proper implementation of crucial educational policies and framework to curb the problem of poor literacy in each district. People should be wide-awakened about the multiple productive outcome of education and encouraged to be an educated citizen through various alluring policies. This study will help in enabling constructive approach and utmost development in required spatial areas and also cut the infrastructural, functional, social and Economical barrier which lie in the way of development of deprived districts.

It will help children to develop a positive understanding of themselves and others. When children attend classes which reflect the similarities and differences of people in the real world they learn to appreciate diversity.

Our paper presents an idea of inclusion which will provide the platform for all children whether they are gifted, normal or disabled to get education in the same classroom. This entails reaching out to all the learners and removing the entire barrier which comes in their path of holistic development.

## Conclusion

This paper evaluates segregation as the main problem for children achieving the goal of a proper inclusive atmosphere in the classroom. We found several necessary coinages required in terms of curriculum, infrastructure and teaching methodology. One of the strengths of this inclusive approach is that it seeks to maximize the potential of all students whether they are gifted, disabled or normal ones. With an increase in inclusive classroom setting this will help in addressing the needs and abilities of all children coming from every sphere of society of Jharkhand. Inclusive approach will work as a path to all children regardless of their physical, social, intellectual, emotional, linguistic or other conditions to come within the same roof and attain their maximum development. This will not only boost the enrollments of the particular schools of respective districts listed under below average literacy but also accelerate the teaching - learning format in a successive manner. We propose that we should embrace diversity and respect everyone's potential. A differently abled person must have the opportunity to join a healthy educational classroom environment with the normal one. Project work, learning by doing and hands-on experiences with their peer groups will enlighten and maximize their enthusiasm for success. The districts which have below average literacy rates; need an enriched curriculum for children's overall development, proper observation and training for character building, well trained teachers to deal with the difficulties that the child faces in studying, convenient infrastructure for differently abled and so on.

Favourable classroom environment and the roles of teachers are the prime sources in schools of respective districts to gear up the literacy rate of the entire state. The concerns and challenges of educators towards inclusion are specially based on the diverse range of learning disabilities, the learning outcomes that could be

generated by applying this practice, and the lack of self-esteem of teachers to teach in an inclusive setting.

The attitude and behaviour of teachers should help the student with a congenial environment in which they can shun their fear of acceptance by peers and can incite their skills in a better form. To meet the demands, the co-operation and positive attitude of educators, parents as well as society is necessary for the establishment of better and more inclusive schools. We all need to build an inclusive design of learning to make education interesting for all children so that the education for them is friendly, supportive, and validating.

### Abbreviations

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals.

NUEPA: National University Education Planning and Administration.

UNESCO: United Nation Education Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

JEPC: Jharkhand Education Project Council.

DPEP: District Primary Education Policy.

SSA: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

NPEGEL: National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level.

KGBV: Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya.

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