

## NEED BASED INCLUSIVE SCHOOL MODEL: REDEFINING INCLUSION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN NEPAL

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### ABSTRACT

Many countries, including Nepal, face challenges in providing equitable access to quality education for children with disabilities. Even with concerted efforts being made, gaps still. It lays out a comprehensive model that meets individual requirements for developing an inclusive school but without these shortcomings in offering quality education and promotes holistic inclusion of children with and without disabilities in ensuring their rights to education. The model presented in this study is a model of inclusive school. It houses special needs children, having diversified disabilities like deafness, visual impairment, cerebral palsy, autism, intellectual disability, and multiple disabilities along with functional limitations, marginal, and orphan children, and integrates children without disabilities. This is done using individualized education programs and creating inclusive learning environments to take all children, regardless of ability, through learning effectively. The plan provides inclusive infrastructural setup, innovative teaching techniques, and a blended education that promotes the inclusion of people with disabilities. A team of specialists in special education, medical doctors, psychologists, counselors, physiotherapists, and occupational therapists will be formed to deal with the support services. Accessible means of communication, teaching-learning materials, physiotherapy, and vocational training are the approach which will be used. This school is located at Aanboo khaireni, Tanahun, Gandaki Province, Nepal. There will be governments participating through a specialized NGO, with national and international support. The school will also become a national training center for people with disabilities, as well as a research hub, having an outlook for duplication of the model in all seven provinces. Additional livelihood skills opportunities geared to students, siblings, parents, and caretakers are also expected to further facilitate a sense of self-reliance among the beneficiaries while transferring skills. It is based on a community model targeted toward SDG, which ensures measurable progress in education, fostering inclusive societies, leaving no child behind.

**Keywords:** Inclusive Education, Disability Rights, Individualized Education Program (IEP), Multidisciplinary Support, Nepal

## INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has evolved globally as a fundamental right, championed by international frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006), which obligates signatory countries to promote accessible, non-discriminatory, and equitable learning environments. Nepal, as a signatory to CRPD, has incorporated inclusive education into its legal structures through the Constitution of Nepal 2072 BS and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2074 BS. These legal frameworks mandate free, quality education for all, including children with disabilities, using appropriate communication mediums and adaptive learning strategies.

Despite this legal backing, implementation in Nepal remains limited. A significant portion of children with disabilities are still excluded from mainstream education due to infrastructural, pedagogical, and attitudinal barriers. The fragmented nature of special education programs, lack of trained teachers, and under-resourced schools further exacerbate this problem (Lamichhane, 2018). Therefore, this study aims to bridge the gap between policy and practice by proposing a comprehensive, community-driven inclusive school model. This model integrates health, education, and vocational skills to create a sustainable and replicable inclusive education system.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic discourse on inclusive education acknowledges the tension between theory and practice, particularly in low-income countries. Miles and Singal (2010) explore the contradictions inherent in implementing global inclusive education agendas within under-resourced settings. Their work underscores the need for local adaptation rather than universal application. Similarly, Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) argue that inclusive pedagogy must move beyond special accommodations and embrace universally accessible strategies for diverse learners.

Lamichhane (2018) provides a Nepal-specific perspective, highlighting the disparity between inclusive education policies and their actual implementation. Challenges include inaccessible infrastructure, lack of assistive materials, and minimal involvement of families in the learning process. Sharma, Loreman, and Forlin (2019) focus on teacher efficacy in Asian contexts and emphasize the importance of building educators' confidence and competence in inclusive settings. These studies suggest that sustainable inclusive education in Nepal must be contextual, interdisciplinary, and involve community stakeholders at every stage.

This research builds upon these foundational works and addresses the identified gaps by presenting an inclusive school model that emphasizes localized solutions, interdisciplinary collaboration, and active community participation.

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative, participatory action research approach to develop and refine the inclusive school model. The methodology was rooted in community engagement and iterative design, enabling researchers to co-create solutions with stakeholders.

Participants included a purposively selected sample of 15 children with diverse disabilities (e.g., deafness, intellectual disability, physical impairments), 10 non-disabled peers, 12 parents, 8 inclusive education teachers, 3 local government officials, and 5 medical and therapy professionals. This diverse group allowed comprehensive input from different perspectives.

Data was collected through multiple methods to ensure triangulation and depth. Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders captured individual experiences and expectations. Focus group discussions allowed parents and teachers to collaboratively reflect on the barriers to and opportunities for inclusive education. Field observations were conducted at the proposed school site to assess physical accessibility and community engagement. Expert consultations with inclusive education specialists and therapists enriched the planning of multidisciplinary services. Relevant documents-including government education policies, disability rights legislation, and curricular guidelines-were analyzed to align the model with national standards.

Thematic analysis was applied to identify recurring themes across all data sources. Themes included the need for accessible infrastructure, demand for IEPs, necessity of therapy services, and the value of vocational training. Ethical approval was obtained from the institution's governing body, and written consent was secured from all participants. Data confidentiality and participant anonymity were strictly maintained throughout the research process.

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The findings from this study strongly support the necessity and community readiness for a need-based inclusive school model. Across stakeholder groups, there was a unanimous call for an education system that accommodates diversity and provides equal opportunities for learning and development. Parents expressed a clear preference for schools that offer individualized learning plans, tailored to the unique developmental needs of their children. They emphasized the importance of family involvement in educational planning and follow-up.

Teachers and professionals echoed these sentiments, stressing the urgency for on-site support services such as speech therapy, physiotherapy, and psychological counseling. These services are often inaccessible in rural areas, which limits the developmental progress of children with disabilities. Local government officials recognized their role in supporting inclusive education initiatives but indicated the need for technical guidelines and sustained funding.

The selected site in Tanahun District was identified as suitable due to its central location, diverse population, and existing infrastructure. Community members voiced their support for integrating academic education with practical skill development, especially for older students and parents of children with severe disabilities. These findings validate the model's multi-pronged approach that combines education, rehabilitation, and livelihood support under a single institutional framework.

## DISCUSSIONS

This study affirms the feasibility of an inclusive school model grounded in legal mandates, empirical evidence, and community realities. Unlike isolated special education centers, the proposed model emphasizes inclusive classrooms where children with and without disabilities learn together. This inclusive environment nurtures empathy, breaks social stigma, and builds a sense of belonging. The use of IEPs ensures personalized support, while the incorporation of therapy services addresses developmental and behavioral needs.

The model also addresses economic exclusion through livelihood programs. Families—particularly mothers of children with severe disabilities—gain access to income-generating skills, reducing long-term dependency and enhancing dignity. This integrated approach reflects a shift from charity-based to rights-based frameworks for disability inclusion.

While promising, the model faces several challenges. These include the availability of trained professionals, resistance from traditional educators, and reliance on external funding. As Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) argue, inclusion is not a fixed endpoint but an evolving process. Thus, flexibility, local leadership, and continuous evaluation must be embedded within the model's operations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Some of the Major Recommendations are:

1. **Government Endorsement and Investment:** Advocate for formal government recognition and financial commitment to replicate the inclusive school model across Nepal. This includes updating education funding mechanisms and integrating inclusive education into national policies.
2. **Capacity Building and Training:** Develop and implement long-term professional development programs for teachers, school leaders, and therapists. Training should focus on inclusive pedagogy, disability rights, and communication methods such as sign language and braille.
3. **Community Engagement and Ownership:** Strengthen local involvement by forming parent support groups, school management committees, and local monitoring teams to ensure transparency, accountability, and sustainability.
4. **Diversified and Sustainable Funding:** Create a multi-source funding approach that includes government support, corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, and partnerships with international donors and NGOs to ensure long-term financial stability.
5. **Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:** Establish robust tools and frameworks to assess IEP effectiveness, student learning outcomes, therapy service quality, and teacher performance. Regular data collection should support adaptive planning and continuous improvement.

In conclusion, the need-based inclusive school model presented in this study offers a transformative framework for education in Nepal. By integrating academic instruction, therapeutic support, and vocational training within a single institution, it responds holistically to the needs of children with and without disabilities. With policy alignment, community engagement, and

sustainable funding, this model holds promise for national scale-up and meaningful progress toward inclusive, equitable education.

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