

# Inclusive Education: An Agenda for Inclusive Growth in India

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## **Abstract**

*Growth that is not inclusive affects the society, the economy, and the polity. A lack of inclusive growth can result in real or perceived inequities, which has its own social implications.*

*Inclusive growth is a process which entails responsible and sustainable creation as well as just distribution of both wealth and welfare. Inclusive education is an approach that ensures the presence, participation and achievement of all students in any education system.*

*The competitiveness and quality concepts are closely related. Perhaps it is no exaggeration to say that the two concepts are synonymous with each other. It is therefore important for a country, the existence of a quality education. In addition, the competition and dynamic knowledge-based economy are linked to each other: none of them can exist without the other one. Those countries can face competition, which continuously produce, maintain, develop and disseminate knowledge.*

*This paper elaborates the need to build Inclusive India and emphasizes why it is imperative to focus on inclusive growth now. This paper also explores the concept inclusive education and how it is can be an agenda for inclusive growth.*

**Keywords: Competitiveness, Inclusiveness, Globalization, 12 Five-Year Plan**

## **1. Introduction**

Despite growth in India of last decade, many region in the country experience widening disparities in their income and non-income outcomes, between the rich and the poor, and the disadvantaged sections of the population. Growing and continued disparities can pose a threat to a high, efficient, and sustained growth. Therefore, inclusive growth is increasingly becoming a development agenda nationally and internationally.

Not all sectors of the economy have grown at the same pace as is reflected in the relatively low agricultural growth rate, low-quality employment, poor education, inadequate healthcare services, rural-urban divide, social inequalities, and regional disparities.

Growth that is not inclusive affects the society, the economy, and the polity. A lack of inclusive growth can result in real or perceived inequities, which has its own social ramifications. Inclusive growth promotes economic growth partly by broadening the base for domestic demand and partly by increasing the number of people with a stake in reforms and in a stable government.

As Gandhiji wrote, "The economics that disregard moral and sentimental considerations are like waxworks that, being lifelike, still lack the life of the living flesh". The government and private sector can play complementary roles in driving inclusive growth. There is a need for the public and the private sector in India to have a unified approach towards how they can extend, innovate, and collaborate in new ways to drive inclusive growth.

## 2. The concept: Inclusive Growth

Inclusive growth is a process which entails responsible and sustainable creation as well as just distribution of both wealth and welfare. Social cohesion and human dignity lie at its core. Inclusive growth requires extending access to opportunities more widely and is a key response to the rising inequalities undermining the sustainability of the global market economy, growth and development. Inclusive growth seeks to redirect and broaden the flows of globalization in order to bring benefits to its intended beneficiaries, the excluded.

It has two mutually reinforcing strategic pillars:

- a. Sustainable growth to unleash economic opportunities for those excluded from current growth models, through creative enterprise and responsible leadership.
- b. Inclusion to ensure the diffusion of opportunities, by way of investment in education, health and infrastructure, through partnership between the public and private sectors, and civil society

## 3. Requirements for Inclusive Growth

In addressing this challenge, inclusive growth with its focus on creating economic opportunities and ensuring equal access to them will play a pivotal role. There are four requirements which are not separate but mutually reinforcing:

- I. **Access:** There needs to be a match between supply and demand of labour, goods, and services. Such access requires adequate infrastructure, information and financial services
- II. **Chance:** Private sector investment, small and medium entrepreneurship

and employment create opportunities to participate in wealth creation.

- III. **Capabilities:** In order to access the opportunities available, literacy and specific skills are needed. More fundamentally, access to basic health amenities and services are prerequisites, as are food and nutrition.
- IV. **Safety:** Provision also needs to be included for those who temporarily or permanently are unable to participate in the economy, either due to the occurrence of natural disasters, illness or disability.

## 4. Roles of Different Players

Inclusive growth requires unprecedented levels of partnership between government, private, academia & civil society. Partnership will not only serve to increase coordination among efforts and better utilize the expertise of each player, they will also serve to leveraging the innovative capability of these partnerships.

- a. **Government:** National, regional and local government is motivated by its desire to serve its citizens:
  - Good governance is needed i.e. improve information and service delivery, encouraging citizen participation in the decision making process and increasing government accountability, transparency and effectiveness.
  - It has responsibility to provide adequate public infrastructure and essential services, and to ensure their effective and comprehensive delivery.
  - Government is responsible for creating a political and regulatory environment which promotes economic growth i.e. by

attracting investment from MNCs. Liberalizing of product and labour markets to allow greater flexibility is an additional business incentive.

- It is also essential in building capabilities, through the provision of education, as well as skill development and vocational training.
- Government needs to take measures to address emerging challenges such as environmental problems.

**b. Private Sector:** Business includes a diversity of players, from multi-nationals to small businesses to single entrepreneurs. Most successful business have market understanding knowledge of marketing, effective leadership, efficient process, extensive networks and a capacity for innovation. Business has an important role to play in inclusive growth, in the following ways:

- Private sector companies possess specific sectoral, technical and industrial expertise.
- Leadership: Business need to lead by example, and ensure that their practices are ethical, with strict norms of corporate governance, and responsible social and environmental practices
- Business contributes to economic growth, by generating wealth and creating employment, as well as transferring know-how and expertise.
- In resource constrained environments, many businesses use their innovative capacity to develop new business models to include poor both as consumers (Bottom of the Pyramid) as well as producers and suppliers.

**c. Civil Society:** Civil society comprises NGOs, community group, women's organizations,

professional associations, trade unions and many others. The role of civil societies are as follows:

- **Local Knowledge:** Such group tend to be grass-roots oriented, working closely with local communities. As such they have deep knowledge of the needs of such communities, as well as extensive social networks.
- **Regulator:** Such groups keep a check on both government and the private sector, monitoring behavior and revealing any unethical behavior.

**d. Academia:** Academia is made up of universities, think tanks and other educational institutes. Academia can play an major role in inclusive growth as follows:

- Academia needs to provide serious inquiry, analysis and assessment of inclusive growth initiatives
- It can also contribute to knowledge-sharing, by cataloguing and sharing case studies.

## 5. Vision of 12 Five-Year Plan

The focus of the government in recent years has shifted from promoting Incredible India to building Inclusive India. Inclusive growth needs to be achieved in order to reduce poverty and other social and economic disparities, and also to sustain economic growth. In recognition of this, the Planning Commission had made inclusive growth an explicit goal in the Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-2017). The vision of the 12th FYP for Indian higher education is to achieve further access to higher education through a mission mode national programme to eliminate gender disparities and to significantly reduce urban-rural, inter-regional and inter-social group disparities.

Thus the major emphasis of the 12th FYP has given on promoting inclusiveness so as to accommodate more students from the marginalized sections into the ambit of higher education in respect of the following goals:

**(a) Elimination of Gender Inequalities:** The gap between men and women in access to higher education has been eliminated in a few states and is lower in urban areas. The 12th FYP aims at complete elimination of this gap, at least at the overall level.

**(b) Promotion of Inclusion:** This has call for much greater effort and greater number of programmes which can help in reducing the barriers to access to higher education by socially deprived groups which spring from different sources.

**(c) Improving Access for Differently-able Students:** This will require improvement in basic infrastructure facilities to enable access by the differently-able students in all institutions of higher education; extension of support facilities to such students; and increased support to teacher preparation to handle their educational needs.

**(d) Promoting Equity in all Disciplines of General and Technical/Professional Education:** The 12th FYP aims at correcting the skewed growth of higher education towards technical and professional education in recent years due to large scale private sector participation. The Plan also focuses on improving the accessibility of marginalized group to courses in the emerging/employment oriented areas, including technical and professional education.

**(e) Reducing Regional/Disciplinary Imbalances:** The growth of the higher education institutions is not uniform across the country. The 12th FYP also aims at correcting the imbalances

in the distribution of institutions and also the courses.

## 6. Inclusive Education

All people have a right to education. There is no single model for ensuring that education is inclusive and approaches continue to evolve. Inclusive education is an approach that ensures the presence, participation and achievement of all students in any education system.

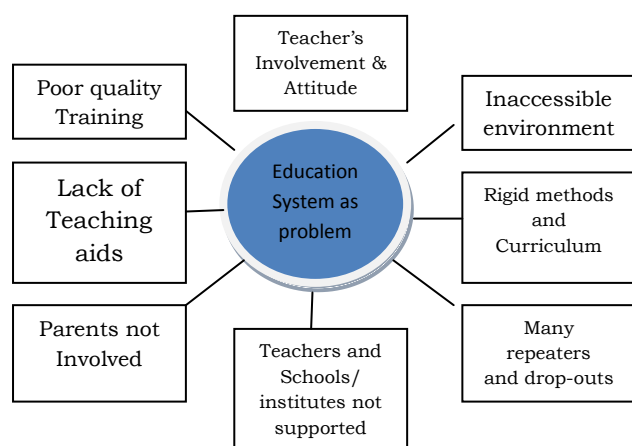
This may be in formal schools & institutions, or in non-formal places of learning, such as extra-curricular clubs and humanitarian camps. It often involves working to change the structures, systems, policies, practices and cultures in schools and other institutions responsible for education, so that they can respond to the diversity of students in their locality. Inclusion emphasizes opportunities for equal participation, but with options for special assistance and facilities as needed, and for differentiation, within a common learning framework.

### Inclusion involves:

- Providing appropriate responses to the broad spectrum of learning needs in formal and other education settings.
- A particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalisation, exclusion or under-achievement.
- Identification and removal of attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers to participation and learning.
- Modifications and changes in strategies and plans and in content and approaches to learning.
- Enabling teachers and learners to see diversity as an asset rather than a problem.

(Adapted from UNESCO's Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All (2005))

Taking these points into account, a basic explanation of the conceptual understanding of inclusive education may be found in the following diagrams.



## Conclusion

It is important to remember that Inclusive education is at a very early stage of conceptualization and implementation in India. The empowerment of communities and the opening of space for direct democracy constitute the key to development (Friedmann, 1992). However, it is possible to build a national development strategy by simply aggregating development initiatives in the field of education. "India needs to widen its education base radically," said Prof. Amartya Sen after receiving an honorary degree of Doctor of Literature from the National University of Educational Planning and Administration at New Delhi in July 2011. The competitiveness and quality concepts are closely related. Perhaps it is no exaggeration to say that the two concepts are synonymous with each other. It is therefore important for a country, the existence of a quality education. In addition, the competition and dynamic knowledge-based economy are linked to each other: none of them

can exist without the other one. Those countries can face competition, which continuously produce, maintain, develop and disseminate knowledge.

Thus, meeting the challenges of universal education in pursuit of inclusive growth will require a concerted effort from both, government and industry. India has a huge potential to be a role model for this century if the efforts at the inclusive growth by the government and private sector succeed. The opportunity to act is now.

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