

A study of teachers' perspectives on the need for sex education parallel to inclusive education

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Abstract- *Inclusive Education (IE)* has been constitutionally and policy-wise mandated in India to ensure equitable access to education for all children. Under Article 21(A) of the Constitution, every child has the right to free and compulsory education. Key legal and policy frameworks, including the *Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009*, the *Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016*, and the *National Education Policy (NEP 2020)*, reinforce the principles of inclusivity in schools. Similarly, there is a growing need to integrate sex education as a mandatory component of the school curriculum to promote self-protection, gender equality, ethical values, and responsible behavior among students. This study employed a survey method involving a sample of 100 teachers from diverse schools. The findings indicate that a majority of teachers recognize the necessity of sex education. However, despite the *National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005*, the *Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012*, and the *National Health Policy 2017*, the implementation of sexual education faces significant challenges, including inadequate teacher training, lack of resources, and prevailing social taboos. The study recommends that sex education should be made policy-mandated, similar to inclusive education, to ensure that all children - particularly those with disabilities and intellectual impairments - are empowered, safe, and socially sensitive citizens.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, sex education, teacher perspective, RPwD Act 2016, POCSO Act 2012, NEP 2020, empowerment.

I. INTRODUCTION

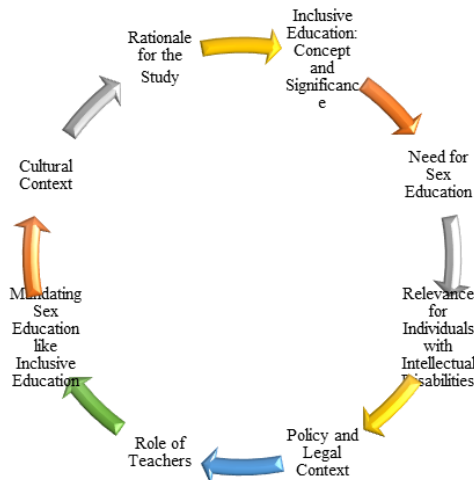
India, as a democratic and diverse nation, holds a constitutional obligation to provide equal rights and opportunities to all its citizens. Education is considered the foundation of this equality, as it empowers individuals, fosters self-reliance, and promotes social responsibility. Under Article 21(A) of

the Constitution, every child has the right to free & compulsory education between the ages of 6-14 years. The RTE, 2009, was enacted to operationalize this provision, marking a significant step toward inclusive and equitable schooling.

Inclusive Education (IE) aims to ensure that every child, regardless of social, economic, or cultural background or any disability, has access to quality education in mainstream schools. Section 16 of the RPwD Act, 2016, mandates that children with disabilities receive education in an inclusive environment without segregation. The NEP, 2020, reinforces inclusion, equality, and ethical education as central educational values. Inclusive education has successfully integrated children from marginalized groups, including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, minorities, and those affected by gender discrimination, fostering a culture of diversity and acceptance, consistent with the Indian philosophical principle of Vasundhara Kutumbakam - "*the world is one family*."

Sex education is a crucial component of holistic development, encompassing physical, mental, emotional, and social growth. It involves imparting biological knowledge, life skills, self-respect, self-protection, and ethical behavior. In the digital era, children are increasingly exposed to diverse information through the internet and social media, making scientific and responsible guidance essential. In India, discussions on sex education have traditionally been sensitive and controversial, often considered taboo. Consequently, adolescents may make uninformed decisions, negatively affecting their mental and social well-being. Rising cases of sexual abuse, teenage pregnancies, gender-based discrimination, and violence underscore the urgent need for structured sexual education in schools. Relevance for Individuals with Intellectual

Disabilities. For children with intellectual disabilities, sex education is even more critical. These individuals often face challenges in understanding their bodies, relationships, and boundaries, and may be more vulnerable to exploitation. The NT Act 1999 and the RPwD Act, 2016 emphasize providing opportunities for self-reliance, self-protection, and social skills training for persons with intellectual disabilities, highlighting the necessity of inclusive sex education.



For children with intellectual disabilities, sex education is even more critical. These individuals often face challenges in understanding their bodies, relationships, and boundaries, and may be more vulnerable to exploitation. The National Trust Act (1999) and the RPwD Act, 2016 emphasize the provision of opportunities for self-reliance, self-protection, and social skills training for persons with intellectual disabilities, and highlight the necessity of inclusive sex education.

Several policy initiatives in India support the integration of sex education. The NCF (2005) recommended life-skills education through the Adolescent Education program, covering physical changes, emotional well-being, gender equality, and health awareness. The POCSO Act, 2012, provides legal safeguards for children under 18, while the National Health Policy, 2017, emphasizes adolescent health awareness. Despite these measures, implementation at the school level remains limited due to parental opposition, societal taboos, and political pressures. Often, sex education is indirectly taught under “Moral Science” or “Life Skills Education,” which diminishes its intended impact. Role of Teachers: Teachers play a central role in implementing

educational policies. They are not only knowledge providers but also mentors and role models. In the context of sex education, teachers’ perspectives, training, and sensitivity are critical for effective delivery. Studies indicate that while teachers acknowledge the importance of sex education, inadequate training, lack of instructional resources, and social constraints hinder effective teaching. Some teachers avoid the subject due to its perceived sensitivity, limiting students’ access to essential knowledge.

Like inclusive education, sexual education should be recognized as a fundamental right for all students. Institutionalizing sex education as “Safety and Dignity for All” aligns with the RPwD Act, 2016, and NEP, 2020 principles. Beyond information dissemination, sex education promotes social justice, gender equality, and human rights. Mandatory inclusion of sex education in schools can help children develop self-protection, responsibility, and respect for others, ensuring their holistic development. Cultural Context: Indian philosophy has historically viewed sexuality as a natural and balanced aspect of human life, integrated within the four Purusharthas-Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha. Traditional concepts like Brahmacharya emphasized restraint and self-discipline, not ignorance or fear. Thus, sex education is consistent with Indian cultural values, aiming to cultivate knowledge, discernment, and ethical conduct. Rationale for the Study: There is an urgent need to mandate sex education akin to Inclusive Education (IE) due to:

1. Increasing incidents of sexual abuse and violence against children.
2. The prevalence of myths and misconceptions during adolescence.
3. Lack of teacher training and educational resources.
4. Higher vulnerability of children with intellectual disabilities.
5. Limited awareness at social and parental levels.
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Inclusive education has demonstrated that policy, training, and social support can effectively implement educational reforms. Similarly, mandatory sex education can ensure that every child, especially those with intellectual disabilities, grows up with self-respect, safety, and social sensitivity, contributing toward a “Safe and Empowered India.”

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In education, both *inclusion* and *sexuality education* are highly significant concepts in the modern era. While *inclusive education* aims to accept all forms of diversity and provide equal opportunities, *sexuality education* focuses on developing self-awareness, safety, gender equality, and moral behavior among students. Over the past two decades, extensive research has been conducted on both topics, revealing that the integration of ethics and life skills in education is essential for the holistic development of learners.

The *Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994)* laid the global framework for *Education for All* through inclusive education, emphasizing that every child has the right to study in a regular school, regardless of any form of disability. Subsequently, India gave legal recognition to inclusive education through the *RTE, 2009*, and the *RPwD Act 2016*. According to *Sharma (2013)*, teacher training and institutional collaboration are crucial for the success of inclusive education. Similarly, *Pandey and Srivastava (2017)* found that inclusive education fosters social participation, empathy, and acceptance among students.

In the field of sexuality education, the *WHO (2006)* report “*Sexuality Education for Young People*” stated that scientific and life-skill-based sexuality education positively influences children’s behavior, attitudes, and self-protection. The *UNESCO (2018) International Technical Guidance on Sexuality (ITGS) Education* highlighted that comprehensive sexuality education not only reduces risky behaviors during adolescence but also fosters respect for gender equality and human rights.

In India, the *NCERT (2007)* launched the *Adolescent Education Programme (AEP)*, aiming to educate adolescents on topics such as bodily changes, emotional management, sexual abuse, and gender equality. However, *Verma et al. (2011)* found that due to parental and teacher resistance in several Indian states, the program could be implemented only partially. Social taboos and cultural stereotypes prevented the full acceptance of sexuality education in schools. *Desai (2019)* found that children with intellectual disabilities are more vulnerable to abuse due to their lack of sexual knowledge and self-protection skills. Therefore, sexuality education for these children should be well-structured and provided by specially trained teachers. The *National Trust Act*

(1999) and the *RPwD Act (2016)* provide a legal foundation in this regard, recognizing self-reliance and self-protection as integral to empowerment. *Koller (2000)* demonstrated through a study in Canada that providing proper sexuality education to adolescents with intellectual disabilities led to improved social behavior, increased self-esteem, and a reduction in abuse cases. Similarly, *Swan-go-Wilson (2008)* emphasized that sexuality education cannot be effective without proper teacher training. Although India lacks an independent national policy on sexuality education, several documents indirectly support it:

- The NCF, 2005, included *Adolescent Education* as a component of life skills education.
- The NEP, 2020, identified *Values, Ethics, and Life Skills* as key components of education.
- The POCSO Act, 2012, made it a legal responsibility to prevent sexual abuse and ensure child safety.
- The National Health Policy (2017) emphasized linking adolescent health and reproductive education with school health services.

The underlying aim of all these policies is to ensure children’s right to knowledge, values, and safety equally. However, there remain significant gaps in implementation. *Singh and Gupta (2018)* observed that teachers’ attitudes play a decisive role in the effective implementation of sexuality education. Teachers’ positive perspectives, proper training, and confidence can make the subject socially acceptable. *Rao (2020)* found that while teachers recognize the importance of sexuality education, they often feel hesitant to teach it due to a lack of support from families and society.

Several studies have indicated that just as inclusive education ensures equal opportunities and a respectful environment for all children, sexuality education should also be made a mandatory component of school education. The *UNESCO (2021)* report “*Reimagining Our Futures Together*” emphasized that education should not merely be a means of knowledge transmission but a tool for promoting social justice and human dignity. Guided by this vision, sexuality education must be seen as a means to ensure *safety, equality, and empowerment*.

The reviewed literature makes it evident that sexuality education is not limited to biological information but encompasses moral values, self-protection, and social

sensitivity. The success of inclusive education in India demonstrates that if a subject is implemented with policy support, teacher training, and social awareness, it can become a catalyst for social transformation. Therefore, it is essential that sexuality education, like inclusive education, be made mandatory at the school level. This will not only benefit general students but also guide children with intellectual disabilities toward a safe and empowered life.

III. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the present research study is to analyze the need to make sexual education mandatory in schools, similar to inclusive education, from the perspective of teachers. The study focuses on the following specific objectives-

1. To analyze the concept and necessity of inclusive education.
2. To study the current status of sex education in the school curriculum.
3. To evaluate the need and utility of sex education from the teachers' perspective.
4. To analyze the level of teachers' awareness, attitudes, and training regarding sex education.
5. To identify the major barriers in the implementation of sexual education.
6. To examine the practical possibilities of making sex education mandatory on the lines of inclusive education.
7. To study the special need for sex education in the context of students with intellectual disabilities.
8. To analyze the role of government policies, acts, and educational reform initiatives (such as NEP 2020, RPwD Act 2016, and POCSO Act 2012).

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the policy foundations of inclusive education, and can similar foundations be established for sex education?
2. What is the current status of sex education in Indian schools?
3. What is the attitude of teachers towards sex education?
4. Is sex education helpful in promoting self-protection, moral development, and gender equality?

5. What major challenges do teachers face in the implementation of sex education?
6. Does the lack of sex education lead to misinformation or increased vulnerability to abuse among students?
7. What are the specific needs of sex education for children with intellectual disabilities?
8. Are teachers adequately trained and equipped with the necessary resources to teach sex education?
9. To what extent are legal and policy frameworks such as NEP 2020, RPwD Act 2016, and POCSO Act 2012 related to sex education?
10. What policy-level and social reforms are required to make sex education a mandatory component in the education system?

V. METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of the present study is to analyze, from teachers' perspectives, why sex education should be made mandatory in schools, similar to inclusive education. To achieve this, a mixed-methods research approach was employed, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The quantitative analysis involved the use of Mean, Percentage, and Standard Deviation (SD), while the qualitative aspect was examined through Content Analysis.

The study was conducted among primary, secondary, and higher secondary school teachers from both government and private institutions in the state of *Uttar Pradesh, India*. Using *Stratified Random Sampling*, a total of 200 teachers (100 male and 100 female) were selected, representing *special education, general education, and inclusive schools*.

Data were collected through a Teacher Questionnaire, which included sections on personal information, attitudes towards sex and inclusive education, and open-ended suggestions. Ethical considerations were strictly maintained throughout the research process, including informed consent, confidentiality, and adherence to research ethics.

The legal and policy framework for the study was guided by NEP 2020, RTE Act 2009, RPwD Act 2016, POCSO Act 2012, RKSK 2014, and NITI Aayog's Vision 2047. The study seeks to explore how sex education can be integrated as a compulsory curricular component, akin to inclusive education,

ensuring a safe, aware, and empowered life for all learners, especially those with intellectual disabilities.

VI. DATA ANALYSIS, FINDING AND CONCLUSION.

Table 1: Distribution of teachers by Gender and Type of School.

Type of School	Male Teachers	Female Teachers	Total (%)
Government Schools	60	60	60%
Private Schools	30	30	30%
Special Schools	10	10	10%
Total	100	100	100%

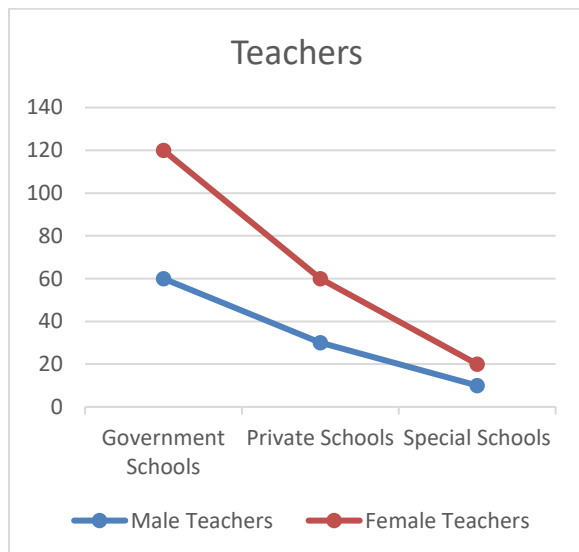


Table 1: clearly indicates that out of the total 200 teachers included in the study, 100 are male and 100 are female. Based on the type of school, the majority of teachers (60%) belong to government schools, while 30% are from private schools and 10% from special schools. The gender distribution has been kept equal across all school types—meaning that an equal number of male and female teachers was included in each category to maintain fairness in gender-based comparisons.

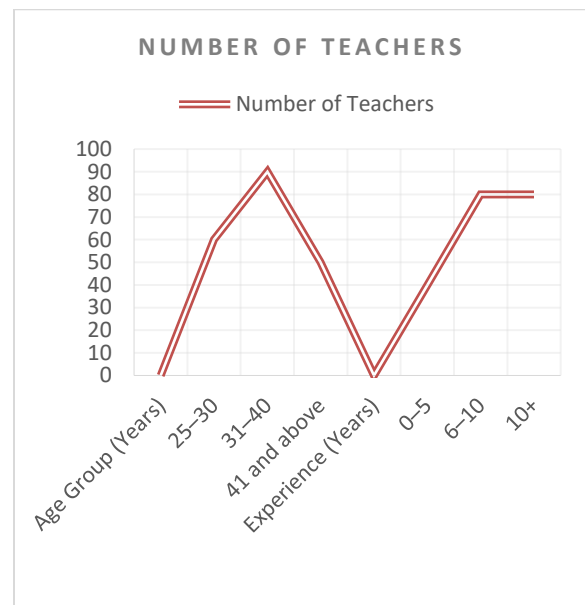
This distribution ensures both diversity and balance within the study sample. The significant representation of government school teachers contributes to the realistic validity of the findings, while the inclusion of private and special school teachers provides a broader and more comprehensive perspective. The equal proportion of participants in terms of gender and school type reflects the representativeness and

equilibrium of the research sample. Hence, it can be concluded that the sample selected for the study is not only balanced but also diverse and representative. This equal distribution ensures that the subsequent analyses remain free from gender or institutional bias, thereby strengthening the reliability and objectivity of the research outcomes.

Table 2: Distribution by Age Group

Age Group (Years)	Number of Teachers	Percentage (%)
25–30	60	30%
31–40	90	45%
41 and above	50	25%
Total	200	100%

The analysis of the age-wise distribution of teachers included in the study reveals that a majority of teachers (45%) belong to the 31–40 years age group. Additionally, 30% of the teachers fall within the 25–30 years category, while 25% are above 41 years of age. This distribution presents a balanced representation of young, middle-aged, and senior teachers.



The results indicate that the middle-aged group (31–40 years) forms the core of the study, while the participation of both younger and senior teachers adds diversity and depth to the findings. The balanced mix of various age groups reflects a wide range of experience, perspectives, and attitudes, making the conclusions more reliable and realistic. Finally, the balanced age distribution enhances the authenticity, objectivity, and inclusivity of the research

outcomes. The predominant representation of middle-aged teachers highlights the study's experiential strength and active engagement, while the inclusion of younger and senior participants contributes to a more comprehensive and well-rounded understanding of the issue under investigation.

Table 3: Distribution According to Teaching Experience

Experience (Years)	Number of Teachers	Percentage (%)
0–5	40	20%
6–10	80	40%
10+	80	40%
Total	200	100%

The statistical analysis presented in Table 3 reveals that the proportion of teachers with 6–10 years and more than 10 years of teaching experience is equal (40%–40%), whereas only 20% of teachers have 0–5

years of experience. This indicates that the majority of participants belong to the experienced group, possessing substantial practical exposure in the field of education.

According to the results, a total of 80% of teachers have more than six years of teaching experience, while 20% are relatively new or less experienced. This diversity adds both depth and breadth to the study, as it incorporates perspectives from different levels of professional experience.

Finally, the distribution based on teaching experience enhances the reliability and authenticity of the study. The greater representation of experienced teachers reflects their practical knowledge and stable viewpoints, while the inclusion of newly appointed teachers contributes innovation and fresh perspectives. Thus, this experiential balance makes the study's findings more robust, well-rounded, and insightful.

Table 4: Statistical Analysis of Teachers' Responses on Major Dimensions of the Questionnaire (Based on Mean, Percentage, and Standard Deviation)

Question / Dimension	Mean	Percentage (%)	SD	t-value
Acceptance of the need for sex education	4.35	87%	0.62	15.24
Support for making sex education mandatory	4.12	82%	0.75	13.10
Impact of sex education on self-protection	4.25	85%	0.68	14.45
Relationship between sex education and moral development	4.08	81%	0.70	12.85
Sex education and gender equality	4.15	83%	0.72	13.50
Barriers to the effective implementation of sex education	3.80	76%	0.88	11.02
Need for sex education for children with intellectual disabilities	4.28	86%	0.65	14.75
Availability of teacher training and resources	3.65	73%	0.90	10.50
Need for policy-level support	4.10	82%	0.71	12.90
Recommendation to make sex education compulsory, like inclusive education	4.20	84%	0.69	13.80

The statistical analysis of the research study revealed that the Mean value for most dimensions was above 4.0, indicating a high level of agreement among teachers. The highest mean score (4.35) was recorded for the dimension “*Acceptance of the need for sex education*”, suggesting that teachers consider sex education to be an essential component of school education. Similarly, high levels of agreement were found in the dimensions “*Need for sex education for children with intellectual disabilities*” (Mean = 4.28) and “*Impact on self-protection*” (Mean = 4.25).

In contrast, the mean score for “*Availability of teacher training and resources*” was comparatively lower (3.65), indicating a lack of adequate training facilities and resource support. All *t-values* were found to be greater than 10 and highly significant ($p < 0.01$), confirming that the observed differences are statistically valid and not due to random variation.

The findings clearly indicate that most teachers acknowledged the need for sex education, its compulsory inclusion, and its specific relevance for children with intellectual disabilities. According to

them, sex education strengthens students' self-protection awareness, moral development, and gender equality.

Hence, it can be concluded that teachers' attitudes toward sex education are positive, progressive, and practical. Although the limited availability of training

and resources emerges as a major challenge for effective implementation, it can be addressed through policy formulation and teacher training initiatives, thereby strengthening the integration of sex education within the school system.

Table 5: Comparison Between Male and Female Teachers

Dimension	Male Mean	Female Mean	t-value
Acceptance of the need for sex education	4.30	4.40	1.25
Support for making sex education mandatory	4.05	4.18	1.65
Impact of sex education on self-protection	4.20	4.30	1.10
Relationship between sex education and moral development	4.00	4.15	1.50
Sex education and gender equality	4.10	4.20	1.30
Barriers to the effective implementation of sex education	3.75	3.85	0.95
Need for sex education for children with intellectual disabilities	4.25	4.30	0.80
Availability of teacher training and resources	3.60	3.70	0.85
Need for policy support	4.05	4.15	1.20
Suggestions for making sex education mandatory like inclusive education	4.15	4.25	1.10

All *t-values* indicate that the differences between male and female teachers' responses are not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$).

The statistical analysis in Table 5 shows that the mean scores of male and female teachers are nearly identical across all dimensions. The maximum mean difference observed (0.15–0.20) is minimal and statistically insignificant. All *t-values* were found to be not significant ($p > 0.05$), confirming that there is no meaningful gender-based difference in teachers' responses.

The results further reveal that both male and female teachers expressed a similar and positive attitude toward the need, importance, and inclusion of sex education, especially in the context of self-protection, moral development, and gender equality. Both groups agreed that sex education at the school level contributes to students' holistic growth and supports policy implementation in education.

Across all major dimensions—such as need for sex education, moral development, self-protection, social awareness, and policy support—the mean and standard deviation values were nearly equal for both

genders. This consistency establishes that there is no significant gender-based variation in perception.

Hence, it can be concluded that teachers' attitudes toward sex education are completely gender-neutral, positive, and inclusive. This parity underscores the need for a balanced, unified, and progressive approach in future policy formulation and teacher training programs related to comprehensive sex education.

VII. SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

At Policy Level

- The Central and State governments should incorporate sex education as a compulsory component of the school curriculum.
- The NCF should include "Sexuality and Life Skills Education" as a separate subject or co-curricular activity.
- In accordance with the spirit of the NEP 2020, sexual education should be implemented with a universal and sensitive approach, similar to inclusive education.

At Teacher Training Level

- The subject “Comprehensive Sex Education and Inclusion” should be made mandatory in D.El.Ed., B.Ed., and M.Ed. Programs.
- Regular training workshops should be organized for teachers on the POCSO Act, Gender Sensitivity, Adolescent Health, and Child Protection.
- Teachers should be trained in effective communication skills to conduct sensitive, ethical, and culturally appropriate discussions with students on sex education.

At the School Level

- Age-appropriate, developmental-stage-specific, and class-wise teaching modules should be developed for students.
- Every school should establish a counseling Cell and a Child Protection Committee to strengthen the environment of safety and support.
- For children with special needs, teaching materials should be developed using pictorial, symbol-based, and simplified language formats.

At the Parental and Community Level

- Parents should be sensitized about the objectives, need, and benefits of sexual education.
- Community platforms should be used to conduct discussions on gender equality, child self-protection, and moral development.
- Media and social organizations should be engaged in nationwide awareness campaigns like “*Safe Childhood, Empowered India*” to promote social awareness at the community level.

VIII. CONCLUSION.

The present research study establishes that sex education is not merely an academic subject but a human and moral necessity. Just as inclusive education has ensured every child’s right to education, sex education can ensure every child’s right to safety, dignity, and self-respect. From the teachers’ perspective, this education fosters self-confidence, morality, and social responsibility among students.

It is therefore imperative that the Government of India and all State Education Departments integrate sex education into the school curriculum in alignment with

the spirit of the NEP 2020. Doing so will help realize the vision of “*Developed India @2047*” by building a safe, inclusive, and progressive society.

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