



Solutions to Inclusive Physical Education: A Comprehensive Outline for Implementation in Indian Schools

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive Physical Education (IPE) represents a critical paradigm shift in educational practice, ensuring equitable access to physical activity and fitness education for all students, regardless of ability or disability. Despite progressive policy frameworks in India, including the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016) and the National Education Policy (2020), implementation remains constrained by infrastructural deficits, inadequate teacher preparation, curricular limitations, and societal attitudes. This paper synthesizes evidence from recent research to propose a comprehensive solutions framework addressing these barriers. Drawing from studies examining teacher attitudes, assistive technology implementation, administrative barriers, and international best practices, this paper presents strategic interventions across five key domains: teacher capacity building, infrastructure development, curriculum adaptation, assistive technology integration, and community engagement. The proposed solutions framework emphasizes professional development programs, adaptive equipment provision, modified assessment strategies, and policy implementation mechanisms. Evidence indicates that comprehensive teacher training, combined with adequate resources and institutional support, significantly improves inclusive practices and student participation outcomes. This paper contributes to the inclusive education discourse by providing evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to transform inclusive physical education from policy aspiration to classroom reality.

Keywords: Adapted Physical Activity, Teacher Training, Assistive Technology, Curriculum Adaptation, Disability Inclusion

1. Introduction:

This Inclusive physical education (IPE) is intended to ensure *meaningful* participation for all learners by combining appropriate modifications, adaptations and support. However, evidence consistently showed that implementation of IPE remains uneven due to teacher-related, infrastructural, administrative, curricular and socio-cultural barriers (Hutzler, 2003; P.K, 2025; Shanker & Kant, 2023). Although prior studies have identified influential determinants—such as teachers' attitudes and the nature and extent of their training and professional experience (including gender-related differences) they have primarily yielded valid instruments for assessing inclusion-related self-efficacy. However, these findings remain predominantly descriptive and are infrequently translated into empirically tested, context-sensitive implementation models for school-based physical education (Block et al., 2013; Phukon & Dhar, 2026; Sharma et al., 2008). Further, Indian evidence highlighted persistent deficits in accessible facilities and adaptive equipment, inadequate assistive technology availability and teacher competence, and leadership-level failures (e.g., weak support for technology use and IEP processes). However, research rarely integrates these system-level constraints with pedagogy-level solutions in a single operational framework (P.K, 2025; Shanker & Kant, 2023). A related gap is the limited attention to how stigma and cultural beliefs shape acceptance and day-to-day use of assistive supports in PE settings, which can undermine participation even when devices are available (Shanker & Kant, 2023).

Prior research has indicated that students with disabilities commonly encounter substantial challenges in participating in sports and games, arising from multiple, intersecting barriers (Engelbrecht et al., 2025). They reported that students with

disabilities are only partially included in physical activities conducted in schools. Due to lack of awareness among physical education teachers about adaptation, inadequate infrastructure, and unsupportive school environments. Teachers generally demonstrate moderately positive attitudes toward inclusion. However, professional training, teaching experience, and availability of resources significantly affect their readiness to implement inclusive practices (Kumar, 2025).

Despite the presence of formal policies encouraging Inclusive Physical Education (IPE) in India, effective implementation within school settings remains inconsistent and fragmented. While national education reforms and inclusive mandates emphasize equitable participation, practical challenges such as inadequate teacher preparation, infrastructural limitations, attitudinal barriers and lack of context-specific guidelines continue to hinder successful integration. Therefore, the present study moves beyond acknowledging the implementations gaps and proposed a comprehensive framework for implementing Inclusive Physical Education in Indian schools. This study discussed the probable solution for implementing IPE withing the four Domains.

2. Comprehensive Teacher Capacity Building

Pre-Service Teacher Education Reform: Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) programs must incorporate mandatory coursework on inclusive physical education, disability studies and adapted physical education methodologies. The curriculum should include foundational knowledge of inclusive education and disability rights frameworks, as well as disability-specific characteristics and their implications for physical education. It should cover adaptive teaching strategies, differentiated instruction, assessment, and Individual Educational Plan (IEP) development. It should also include assistive technology awareness and applications. Finally, the curriculum should provide practicum experiences in inclusive settings with mentorship support.

As research validates the effectiveness of coursework combined with practical experience, it also improves pre-service teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy toward inclusion (Block et al., 2013; Sharma et al., 2008). PETE programs should ensure graduates possess both theoretical knowledge and practical competencies necessary for inclusive practice. This validation of self-efficacy instruments will provide better tools for assessing these competencies systematically (Block et al., 2013).

Structured workshop-based experiences should be systematically incorporated to enhance communication competencies with students with disabilities within authentic physical education settings. Empirical evidence suggests that meaningful prior contact with individuals with disabilities contributes to the development of more positive professional attitudes (Hutzler, 2003). Accordingly, field placements should be deliberately designed to facilitate constructive interactions, effective instructional engagement and critical reflection on inclusive pedagogical practices. Furthermore, mentorship from experienced inclusive educators during these practical experiences significantly reinforces learning outcomes and strengthens preservice teachers' self-efficacy and professional confidence (Das et al., 2013).

In-Service Professional Development Programs: Intensive and sustained professional development is crucial to bridging gaps in teacher preparedness for Inclusive Physical Education. Evidence-informed training programs should incorporate structured workshops focusing on inclusive pedagogical approaches and adaptive instructional strategies. Professional development initiatives must also integrate disability-specific modules addressing visual, hearing, physical, intellectual, and multiple disabilities, complemented by experiential training involving assistive devices and adapted equipment.

Furthermore, mentorship mechanisms should be established to connect experienced inclusive practitioners with novice teachers, fostering professional guidance, collaborative lesson planning, and co-teaching practices. To ensure contextual responsiveness, educational authorities should encourage school-based action research addressing specific inclusion challenges. Continuous follow-up support, including in-school coaching and reflective feedback mechanisms, is equally necessary to sustain implementation and translate training into effective classroom practice.

Professional development should emphasize active learning strategies rather than passive information transmission (Das et al., 2013). Studies advocating intensive in-service orientation and training programmes for school administrators, particularly in alignment with Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) guidelines, highlight the critical importance of leadership development alongside teacher training (Berwal et al., 2020). Strengthening administrative capacity ensures that inclusive policies are not only understood at the managerial level but are also systematically operationalized within school structures. In the absence of

informed leadership and institutional support, teacher-focused professional development initiatives are unlikely to translate into sustained and meaningful classroom practice.

Some of study reported that teachers with master's degrees in special education were more proficient at employing assistive technology suggests that advanced qualifications matter (Shanker & Kant, 2023). Educational systems should create incentives and pathways for physical education teachers to pursue advanced credentials in adapted physical education. These incentives and pathways may include scholarship support, course delivery through distance education, and career advancement linked to specialized qualifications.

3. Infrastructure Development and Resource Provision

Physical Accessibility Enhancements: Schools must undertake systematic accessibility audits to identify and address infrastructure barriers. Priority modifications should address building access through ramps with appropriate gradients, elevators in multi-story buildings, and widened doorways. Higher authorities should also address sports facilities through accessible pathways to fields and courts, level surfaces, and adequate lighting. In addition, changing facilities should be improved through accessible restrooms, private changing spaces, and adaptive fixtures. Gymnasium equipment should be modified through height-adjustable equipment, transfer platforms, and specialized storage. Moreover, playground areas should be enhanced through accessible play surfaces, inclusive play equipment and sensory-friendly zones. Lastly, government funding mechanisms established under schemes such as Samagra Shiksha should systematically prioritize investments in accessibility-related infrastructure through earmarked budgetary allocations and clearly defined implementation timelines (P.K, 2025). Accessibility audits ought to be conducted by certified professionals employing standardized assessment instruments, with audit findings used to develop evidence-based, prioritized improvement plans and to guide rational, needs-based resource allocation.

Adaptive Equipment Provision: Shanker and Kant (2023) reported that most of schools in rural area often operate with inadequate or inappropriate assistive materials, coupled with low levels of inclusive implementation. This underscores the necessity for a systematic and structured approach to equipment provision (Shanker & Kant, 2023). To ensure effective practice, schools should maintain comprehensive inventories of adaptive equipment, systematically categorized according to technology level and functional application. Such organized provisioning would enhance accessibility, optimize resource utilization, and support consistent implementation of Inclusive Physical Education across diverse school context.

Adaptive equipment for Inclusive Physical Education may be systematically categorized into low-, mid-, and high-technology resources based on functional complexity and instructional application.

Low-technology adaptations include modified balls that are larger, lighter, textured, or equipped with auditory features; adapted implements with enlarged grip handles, reduced length, or lighter weight; visual markers and tactile boundaries created through cones, floor lines, and textured surfaces; adjustable nets and goals accommodating variable heights and distances; and supportive seating or positioning devices for students with limited postural control. These resources are cost-effective and immediately applicable within most school contexts.

Mid-technology equipment encompasses FM amplification systems that enhance auditory access in noisy physical education environments; video recording devices for movement analysis and reflective feedback; adapted fitness tools such as resistance bands, modified weights, and specialized exercise machines; mobility aids including sports wheelchairs and wheeled walkers; and communication boards or visual schedules supporting students with communication or cognitive differences. Such tools enhance participation through moderate technological integration.

High-technology adaptations involve tablet-based instructional applications offering visual modelling, personalized feedback, and progress tracking; interactive projection systems generating adaptable game environments; specialized movement-analysis software providing biomechanical breakdown and corrective feedback; advanced prosthetics and orthotic supports designed for sport participation; and biofeedback devices that promote body awareness and motor control. These innovations enable individualized and data-informed instructional approaches.

However, equipment provision alone does not ensure effective implementation. As emphasized by Shanker and Kant (2023), systematic training must accompany resource allocation. Teachers require structured orientation on appropriate usage, routine maintenance, safety protocols, and pedagogical integration. Professional development should include hands-on

practice, troubleshooting procedures, and guided lesson planning to ensure adaptive equipment is meaningfully embedded within instructional design. Without teacher competence and confidence in application, even well-resourced schools risk underutilization of available tools.

4. Curriculum Adaptation and Pedagogical Innovation

Adaptive Curriculum Development: Curriculum reform must replace “fit for all” approaches with flexible, adaptable frameworks. The adaptive curriculum should incorporate Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles providing multiple means of representation (presenting information in various formats), engagement (motivating and sustaining student interest through choice and relevance), and expression (allowing students to demonstrate learning in varied ways).

Additional curriculum components should include tiered activity designs offering varying complexity levels within single lessons, allowing all students to work on similar skills at appropriate challenge levels. For example; modified game and sport formats emphasizing participation and skill development over competition, where success depends on group achievement rather than individual superiority.

State and national curriculum frameworks should provide explicit guidance on adaptations for diverse disabilities, including specific suggestions for modifying activities for students with visual, hearing, physical, intellectual, and multiple disabilities. The development and dissemination of model lesson plans demonstrating inclusive practices across diverse activity domains and grade levels are essential to provide teachers with practical, adaptable instructional exemplars. Such structured samples enable educators to translate theoretical principles of inclusion into concrete classroom strategies. Additionally, schools should be provided with curriculum customization resources, including standardized template formats, adaptation checklists, and access to consultation support services (P.K, 2025). These tools facilitate systematic modification of content, instructional processes, and assessment strategies, thereby ensuring responsiveness to diverse learner needs while maintaining curricular coherence.

Differentiated Instruction Strategies: Required specific strategies for differentiating instruction in inclusive physical education settings should be provided to the Physical Education Teachers. Content modification plan, involving varying skill complexity and providing alternative activities targeting similar objectives should be available to the PE Teachers. Process modification involves adjusting teaching methods, using multi-sensory instruction that incorporates visual demonstrations, verbal descriptions, and kinesthetic guidance and varying pacing to accommodate different learning speeds must be accessible for the instructors. A better learning environment modification including adapting space to reduce distances or create clear boundaries, reducing distractions through strategic positioning or visual screens, and creating flexible groupings that change based on activity and learning objectives might be established by the school’s authorities. Strategies that use varied assessment methods (observation, video analysis, self-assessment, portfolio review) should also give a better learning environment for the students in inclusive curriculum.

Specific pedagogical approaches effective in inclusive physical education include peer tutoring and reciprocal teaching structures where students take turns as teacher and learner, building both skill and empathy. Educational Body might also include station-based learning with differentiated activities at each station, allowing students to rotate through varied experiences at appropriate challenge levels. Task cards that provide individualized instructions that students can follow independently can promote self-direction and reduce learning duration. Verbal, visual, and kinesthetic cueing systems must be feasible to the learners with different processing strengths.

5. Systemic and Administrative Support

Policy Implementation and Accountability: The identification of nineteen unmet administrative standards as barriers to inclusive education implementation (Berwal et al., 2020) underscores the urgent need for robust accountability mechanisms within school systems. Effective solutions must include the development of clear implementation guidelines that translate the provisions of the RPWD Act and the National Education Policy (NEP) into actionable school-level directives, specifying timelines, responsible stakeholders, and measurable success indicators.

Comprehensive monitoring and evaluation frameworks are equally essential. These should incorporate systematic data collection on student access, participation, learning outcomes, and stakeholder satisfaction. Regular school inspections, conducted using standardized protocols by trained evaluators, should explicitly assess inclusive physical education practices.

Furthermore, public reporting of inclusion indicators can enhance transparency and foster community trust by making school-level data accessible to families and local stakeholders. Importantly, accountability mechanisms should balance compliance expectations with structured improvement support, ensuring that corrective measures promote institutional growth rather than punitive enforcement.

Leadership Capacity Building: School administrators require specialized preparation to lead inclusive transformation effectively. Leadership development programs should address legal and ethical foundations of inclusion, financial planning and resource allocation for adaptive services, compliance requirements under the RPWD Act and NEP, and strategies for cultivating inclusive school cultures that value diversity and uphold high expectations for all learners (Berwal et al., 2020). Such programs should incorporate case studies of successful inclusive schools, structured site visits, and guided action-planning exercises enabling administrators to contextualize implementation strategies within their own institutions. Ongoing coaching and consultative support are critical, recognizing that organizational culture change demands sustained commitment, reflective practice, and iterative problem-solving.

Institutional Support Structures: Sustainable inclusive physical education requires the establishment of formalized institutional support systems. Schools should designate inclusion coordinators at both school and district levels to oversee implementation, coordinate services, and monitor progress. Multidisciplinary teams comprising physical educators, special educators, therapists, and administrators should convene regularly to address student needs and collaboratively resolve challenges. Dedicated collaborative planning time must be embedded within school schedules, acknowledging that effective inclusion depends on structured coordination rather than ad hoc efforts. Access to disability specialists and adapted physical education experts should be institutionalized to provide guidance on complex instructional scenarios. Additionally, schools must adopt systematic problem-solving processes that include clear procedures for identifying barriers, developing interventions, implementing solutions, and evaluating outcomes.

These support structures should be formalized through written policies, allocated staff responsibilities, and scheduled meetings to ensure continuity and sustainability beyond individual leadership tenures. Institutionalization of these mechanisms strengthens consistency, accountability, and long-term implementation fidelity.

6. Conclusion

Inclusive Physical Education (IPE) is both a moral imperative rooted in equity and social justice, and an educational necessity that ensures all students benefit from physical activity. Participation in physical education enhances health, motor competence, social interaction, self-confidence, and overall quality of life for all children, including those with disabilities (Murphy et al., 2008). Exclusion from such opportunities not only limits developmental outcomes but also undermines students' fundamental rights to education and participation.

In India, implementation continues to be constrained by infrastructural limitations, gaps in teacher preparation, inadequate resources, and persistent social stigma. However, evidence indicates that coordinated and comprehensive interventions spanning teacher capacity building, infrastructure enhancement, curriculum adaptation, institutional support mechanisms, and community engagement can transform inclusive physical education from policy rhetoric into sustainable practice.

The proposed solutions framework organizes these interventions across multiple systemic domains, emphasizing shared responsibility among policymakers, educators, administrators, families, and communities. Through sustained commitment, accountability, and context-responsive action, inclusive physical education can become a practical reality in Indian schools. Such transformation will not only advance educational equity but also contribute to building a more inclusive society where all individuals can participate fully in physical activity, sport, and community life

7. References

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Cite this Article:

Dhar, K. (2026). *Solutions to Inclusive Physical Education: A Comprehensive Outline for Implementation in Indian Schools*. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Modern Science and Technology (IJSRMST)*, 5(2), 16–21.

Journal URL: <https://ijsrmst.com/>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59828/ijsrmst.v5i2.409>



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