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**SPECIAL AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIA:
AN INTERPRETATION AND IMPLEMENTATION**

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Special and Inclusive Education in India: An Interpretation and Implementation

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Abstract – Education is the right of every child because it equips him to meet the challenges of life. The children with disabilities (CWD) need this all the more, to supplement their differential talents so that they can prepare themselves for a happy productive and useful life. Efforts to educate children with disabilities began soon after independence in India. An attempt has been made to examine the policies and legislations for educating the children with disabilities in India after post- constitution era. In the final section, challenges for providing education to CWD and in that light some recommendations were made.

Keywords: Education, Inclusive, Learning

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INTRODUCTION

The Government of India has launched Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan for Universalization of Elementary Education. The programme aims at providing useful and relevant elementary education in the age group of 6-14 years by 2010. The 86th Constitutional Amendment, which has made free and compulsory education a right of all children from 6-14 years of age, has given further thrust to the goal of UEE. The objective of UEE cannot be achieved without including children with special needs under the ambit of elementary education. Experiences of programmes like DPEP and various research findings have shown that the number of children with special needs in every district is by no means small. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, which is a nodal Ministry for disability issues estimates the number of children having special needs as 5%. The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights & Full Participation) Act, 1995 provides that every child with a disability shall have access to free education up to 18 years of age. This is a statutory responsibility cast on all appropriate governments. One of the focus areas of SSA is to increase access, enrolment, retention of all children and to reduce school drop outs. The emphasis of SSA is also on providing quality education to all children. Rarely has it been considered that the special educational needs of these children could be met by providing adequate resource support to them in regular schools and giving them an opportunity to receive education in the most appropriate environment. Hence, education of children with special needs is considered an important area in SSA.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

A significant goal of special education is to ensure that children with disability are given an appropriate education. The basic principal of special education is a) right to education b) right to equality of opportunity and c) right to participate in society.

(Winzer & Mazurek, 2002, p.vii) contends that contemporary special education encompasses an extremely complex social and conceptual system that is designed to assist all children and youth with special needs to reach their full potential. According to Gearheart and Weishaln (1984), the history of special education can be divided into four broad eras:

- The early history (before 1800).
- The era of institutions (1800 –1900).
- The era of public school special classes and,
- The era of accelerated growth.

A certain pattern in the historical development of special education can be noted across different countries. In the beginning, emphasis was given on provision for children with distinct disabilities, gradually broader terms of special education have been introduced. Education for these children began with individual or charitable enterprises. Later, Government took initiative in this endeavor. Many of the current practices of special education have developed since 1960s. Considerable changes can be seen in 1960s in 1970s. There was a substantial growth in various forms of remedial education including the establishment of special classes within or attached to mainstream schools. 1970s saw further

changes in many countries. New ideas emerged and challenged the existing ones. Many more categories of disability were brought within the fold of special education. Study shows that handicapping conditions are much more widespread, more varied and complex than the categories mentioned by the medical criteria.

Many historians trace the modern special education movement to World War II, for it was during this conflict that many soldiers with no congenital or childhood diseases or disabilities became severely and profoundly disabled. These newly disabled veterans returning in large numbers challenged the American medical community, leading to breakthroughs in understanding and treatment. Meeting the challenge was aided by rapid technological advancement.

Today we are faced with large diversity of organizational models, expertise and experiences in the attempt to reduce segregation in education. There are differences in history of education, student population, goals, and culture and teacher motivation. In last few decades there are considerable changes in special education all over the world. Although special education is the result of more than hundred years of development, it is the legislation and litigation in the last fifty years that contributed to present status of special education in the world. Winzer & Mazurek (2002) pointed out that changes in special education are influenced by many external forces- social, legislative and economic that influences the progress and practice of the enterprise. It is important to describe the diversity and evaluate the outcome to enhance our field of knowledge and profit from each other's experiences.

These are the common example of prevailing Indian Education System now a days, which is usually experienced by most of the stakeholders related to the field either in direct or indirect way. Even after the enactment of the different laws, like the 17 years of PWD Act 1995, 12 years of SSA and 3 years of RtE Act, the situation of education for Children with Special Needs are on margin. All the Govt., the organization like Disabled People Organizations and the organization working under CSR in this field are just fulfilling the quorum. Still about 80 per cent of rural as well as about 50 per cent of urban part of Children with Special Needs are unreached of the education to be provided to them.

It is believed that access to quality education is prerequisite for the inclusive and sustainable growth of India. Quality education is necessary to build a productive society, —capable of actively driving a social, economic and political agenda through wide participation of its people. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, demands that all children have access to and complete an education of good quality.

Government of India is fully committed to the realization of the goal of Universalization of

Elementary Education (UEE), without including Children with Special Needs (CWSN) the objective of UEE may not be achieved. The obstacles to a good education faced by millions of children in south Asia are daunting enough. For the 10 per cent of the region's young people who are estimated to have some kind of disability, the barriers are compound.

According to Census of India 2001, there are 2.19 crore disabled individuals in India and they constitute 2.13 per cent of the total population. It has created a realization that without inclusion of such children in system i.e. mainstream, constitutional commitments cannot be achieved. Education is an attempt of intervention in the life of challenged children to cope up with their disabilities, training to optimize their capabilities so that they can contribute to society in a more constructive and productive way. Education is a right of every child, so children with special educational needs to have similar rights and obligations, as being enjoyed by the so called normal or able children.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Until recently, most conceptual literature on inclusive education was Northern (European and North American) in origin, taking a 'whole-school' approach to institutional change (Peters, 2004), and influenced by the social model of disability. Children in special schools were seen as geographically and socially segregated from their peers, and the initial movement to locationally integrate these students in mainstream schools ('integration') shifted to one where the whole school was encouraged to become more adaptable and inclusive in its day-to-day educational practices for all students ('inclusive education'). Pedagogy in particular was highlighted as the key to meeting all students' educational needs by making the curriculum flexible, and so more accessible. By recognizing that teaching methods which can make curriculum accessible to children with disabilities can also make learning accessible to all students (Ainscow, 2005; Farrell, P., and Ainscow, M., 2002), a teacher or school principal is well on the way to improving the overall quality of their school. In this way, inclusive education is not a disability-only issue, but an educational quality issue (ibid).

The inclusion agenda is also fuelling discussions around the roles of various specialists within the field of SEN, the purpose of those specialists, and special educational facilities that currently exist within the system. It should not be assumed, however, that there is full acceptance of the wisdom of inclusion. There is considerable debate about whether it is achievable, how it could be achieved. Debate also exists regarding the extent to which this involves the deconstruction of the field of special educational needs and construction of a regular system that will meet the needs of all students (Norwich, 2002).

SPECIAL EDUCATION VS. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The term "Special Need Education" (SNE) has come into use as a replacement for the term "Special Education", as the older one was mainly understood to refer the education of all those children and youth whose needs arise from disabilities or learning difficulties. The Statement affirms: "those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within child centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs". Moreover, the concept of "Special Need Education" extends beyond those who may be included in handicapped categories to cover those who are failing in school for a wide variety of other reasons that are known to be likely to impede a child's optimal progress. Whether or not this more broadly defined group of children are in need of additional support depends on the extent to which school needs to support their curriculum, teaching and/or to provide additional human or material resources so as to stimulate efficient and effective learning for these pupils. (International Standard Classification of Education ISCED, 1997)

But marginalization and exclusion of these pupils result in the growth of inferiority complexes among them and their parents/guardians. This leads the vision of "Inclusive Education". Inclusive Education aims at integrated development of children with special needs and normal children through mainstream schooling. To develop curriculum for special education and its inclusion in general teacher preparation programmes, Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) made a historic collaboration with National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) on January 19, 2005.

CONCLUSION:

There is no doubt that the dream for discrimination free and equal education for the children with disability may require a comprehensive change in the institutional arrangements and legal provisions but the most important change has to come in our minds, in our thinking and attitude towards the disabled. To ensure that all children have access to quality education, education policies and practices must be inclusive of all learners, encourage the full participation of all, and diversity as a resource, rather as an obstacle. Inclusive education will pave the way to prosperity for individuals and for the society.

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