

Inclusive Education: Practices and Challenges

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Abstract – Inclusive education means that all students attend and are welcomed by their neighbourhood schools in age-appropriate, regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the life of the school. Inclusive education is about how we develop and design our schools, classrooms, programs and activities so that all students learn and participate together. Inclusive education is carried out in a common learning environment that is, an educational setting where students from different backgrounds and with different abilities learn together in an inclusive environment. Inclusive education is about ensuring access to quality education for all students by effectively meeting their diverse needs in a way that is responsive, accepting, respectful and supportive. This paper identifies key concepts associated with inclusive education and discusses them in relation to issues such as lack of well-educated teachers, improper curriculum adaptation, learning environment in inclusive setting, resources, good infrastructural facilities, awareness, positive attitude, plans, socioeconomic factors, funding, policies which are creating hurdles for extending the concept of inclusive education in India. The objective of this paper is to point out the practices and challenges in the field of inclusive education in India.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Children with Special Needs, Inclusion, Education

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INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: MEANING

Inclusive at its simplest is the state of being included, but it is a bit more complicated than that. It is used by disability rights activities to promote the idea that all people should be freely and openly accommodated without restriction or limitations of any kind. Inclusive describes much more than the acceptance of children with disabilities/exceptionalities in the mainstream. Inclusive education programmes do not focus on the accommodation of these children in a general education setting but are focused on the restructuring of schools to accept and provide for the needs of all students. In inclusive education, mainstreaming and integration is viewed as intermediary steps to the ultimate goal of teaching all students together. In the inclusive program, specialized instruction and support are provided to any students who are in need of support without labelling him as disabled or exceptional. In other words, no discrimination is made among the exceptional or non-exceptional children.

The National Policy on Education, 1986 (NPE, 1986), and the Programme of Action (MHRD, 1992) focused on integrating children with special needs with normal children groups. The main objective to be achieved as defined in the NPE (1986) is "to integrate the physically and mentally handicapped with general community as equal partners, to prepare them for

normal growth and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence". The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCERT, 2006) has recommended inclusive schools for learners with special educational needs by making appropriate modifications in the content, presentation and transaction, strategies, preparing teachers and developing learning friendly evaluation procedures.

The UNICEF (2003) report on the status of Disability in India defines that there are approximately 30 million children in India who are suffering from some form of disability. Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004 (IDEA, 2005) supports inclusive practices by requiring that "to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled; and that special classes, separate schooling, or another removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes, with the use of supplementary aids and services, cannot be achieved satisfactorily."

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needs by making appropriate modifications in the content, presentation and transaction strategies, preparing teachers and developing learning friendly evaluation procedures. The World Bank Report (2007) said that educational attainment and attendance of the Children with a disability were very poor and far below than the national averages. Data suggests that people with disabilities have much lower educational attainment rates, with 52 per cent illiteracy against a 35 per cent average for the general population. According to UNESCO (2009), Inclusive education is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion from education and from within education. According to NCFSE, segregation or isolation is good neither for a learner with disabilities nor for general learners without disabilities. The societal requirement is that learners with special needs should be the educated along with other learners in inclusive schools, which are cost effective and have sound pedagogical practices. The UNESCO (2009) report education is not simply about making schools available for those who are already able to access them. It is about proactive in identifying the barriers and obstacles learners encounter in attempting to access opportunities for quality education as well as removing that barrier and obstacles that lead to exclusion.

Inclusive Education programmes in India

Since the very beginning, the Constitution of India ensures the right of every child to basic education. Numerous policies have been created by The Government of India for special education since the country's independence in 1947. The earliest formal initiatives undertaken by the GOI was the Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) scheme of 1974 (NCERT, 2006). The Kothari Commission (1964-66) states the importance of educating children with disabilities during the post-independence period (Kothari, & Ministry of Education, 1966). In the 1980s the then ministry of Welfare, Govt. of India, focus on the need for an institution to monitor and regulate the HRD programmes in the field of disability rehabilitation. Till the 1990s, in India's approximately 40 million children in the age group- four-sixteen years with physical and mental disabilities are being excluded from mainstream education. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was launched to achieve the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education in 2001. The National Policy on Education, 1986 (NPE, 1986), and the Programme of Action, 1992(MHRD, 1992) stress the need for integrating children with special needs with other groups. In India, National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) joined hands with UNICEF launched Project Integrated Education for Disabled Children (PIED) in 1987, to strengthen the integration of learners with disabilities into regular schools.

The National Policy on Education, 1986 " In future emphasis will be on distance and open learning systems to provide opportunities and access to all the important target groups, especially the disadvantaged like scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, the adult working class, and people serving in the remote areas." The Constitution of India (26 November 1949), clearly defines in the Preamble that everyone has the right to equality of status and opportunity. The Article 45 & (86th Amendment) Act 2002 make a Provision for free and compulsory education for children. It is stated that "The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years." The rights of the persons with disabilities bill 2014- the bill replace the person with disabilities (equal opportunities, protection of rights, full participation) Act 1995. The Article 29 of the Indian constitution, "no citizen shall be denied admission to any educational institute maintained by the states or receive aid from state funds on the ground of any religion, race, caste, language and any of them. The Article 45 of the Indian constitution states that the state shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of Indian constitution for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.

The challenges and barriers to implementing Inclusive Education in India

In India in a normal classroom setting the learning disabled children are segregated from the normal children. So inclusive education stresses the decreasing these practices and learning disabled should not be segregated from the other children. Perhaps most importantly, inclusive classrooms encourage open conversation about differences as well as a respect for those having different abilities, cultural backgrounds and needs.

Norms of the society: In India the norms of the society are the biggest barrier to the implementation of inclusive education. There are still old attitudes exist which resist the accommodation of students with disabilities and learning issues, as well as those who belong to minority cultures. There is prejudice against those with differences which lead to discrimination.

Environmental conditions: In India, in some districts, students with physical disabilities are expected to attend schools that are far away from them. Those school which exists in rural areas, they are not properly maintained and there are not proper buildings and restrict access of the students those who come from kilometres away. Some of these facilities are not safe or healthy for any students. Many schools don't have the facilities to properly accommodate students with special needs, and local governments do not provide funds or the resolve to provide financial help. There are environmental

barriers also which include doors, passageways, stairs and ramps, and recreational areas. These problems create a barrier for some students to simply enter the school building or classroom.

Rigid curriculum and untrained Teachers: A curriculum is rigid means not flexible according to the needs of the children and a rigid curriculum does not allow for the use of different teaching methods which is a barrier to inclusive education. There are many teachers who are not trained to provide education to special children or who are not willing or unenthusiastic about working with disabled students which create hindrance in achieving success for inclusive education. A teacher who is teaching to the special children is not very much trained and they have workloads and are not able to perform their duty in a better way.

Lack of awareness: The general teachers, at all levels, lack basic awareness about children with disabilities. They have their own socially and culturally constructed notions about certain obvious disabilities but lack scientific and educational knowledge about the disabilities such as classification, labelling, and special needs.

Language, communication and socio-economic factors: sometimes it is expected from the disabled children to learn a language which is new to them and they are totally unfamiliar with the language. This is obviously a barrier to successful learning. And sometimes these students have to face discrimination and are not able to learn. There are some schools which exist in slum areas and the areas where limited facilities are available and such schools are not fulfilling the basic necessities of the students so this is a barrier to the learning process. Violence, poor health services, and other social factors create barriers for learners and this type of barrier make inclusive education impossible.

Proper Funding and Organization of the Education System: An adequate fund is a necessity for inclusive education and proper funds are not available. Schools often lack adequate facilities, qualified and properly-trained teachers and other staff members, educational materials and general support. The whole education system is run by the high-level authorities and these high-level authorities less focus on the positive change. Decisions which are taken by high-level authorities on school stress less on quality learning. These high-level authorities are not conscious of the problems faces by the students.

Learning Environment in Inclusive Settings: Another major conclusion from the findings in this study is that the learning environment and the physical surroundings in a school are not adequate enough to cater for students with learning disabilities. The classrooms do not have enough comfortable furniture for the students to sit on and therefore make learning extremely difficult especially for the students

with learning disabilities. The classrooms are overcrowded and do not have enough ventilation and light. The amount of noise coming in from the outside is also quite high because of the lack of proper acoustics. These factors make it very difficult for the students with learning disabilities to concentrate, hence hindering their performance academically.

Improper Policies planning: Many policymakers don't understand or believe in inclusive education, and these leaders can stonewall efforts to make school policies more inclusive. This can exclude whole groups of learners from the mainstream educational system, thereby preventing them from enjoying the same opportunities for education and employment afforded to traditional students.

The overcoming from these barriers to inclusive education will require additional funding, but even more importantly, it requires the change of old and out-dated attitudes. Studies support what many classroom teachers know by experience: that the benefits inclusion provides to all students easily justifies the effort.

RECOMMENDATION:

All the people of India must understand the importance of the concept of inclusive education and should make efforts for implementing the inclusion education. Teachers should play an active role in implementing the inclusive education programmes. Teachers should be given proper training in teaching in inclusive classrooms. The curriculum should be flexible which can be modified according to the needs of the special children. All the children in the inclusive education system should be given proper freedom about learning. All the teachers should be providing training about rural special education programmes. Teachers in inclusive education setting must deal with the parents of children with severe disability and discuss their problems so that they can be handled in a better way. Those teachers who are not able to handle the children in an inclusive setting, they should attend the special training programme. In an inclusive education setting, teachers must be providing training to teach the students with a severe disability. In an inclusive education setting, necessary teaching aids must be available. Parents should also play an important role in implementing the inclusive education programmes. Parents can help the teachers in implementing inclusive education properly. All the needs of the learners with special education needs should be fulfilled. All the necessary facilities like books, reading the material, and teaching-learning material should be provided to the children. Different therapies must be planned according to the needs of the children in the inclusive education classroom. In the inclusive setting, there are children of different abilities; the teacher should make the label lesson plans keeping in mind the individual needs of the students. In-service training programmes should arrange for special educators. To

implementing inclusive education is not only the responsibility of special teachers but it is the responsibility of all teachers, parents and the members of the society.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, it can be said that inclusive education stands for a type of education committed to educating every child to the maximum extent possible in the school and classroom, he or she would otherwise attend. It thus requires support to move towards the child and believes that the disabled child will benefit from such integration and mainstreaming in comparison to placing him in some segregation setting for his overall adjustment and progress. Because of universalization of education and after the implementation of the right to education act 2009 it is the right of each and every child to get the primary education but it is also the duty of the Government to provide to all, child should be left uneducated because education is very much important in the present time and should be available for all children. In order to teach special children, only those teachers should be appointed who are much trained in teaching in an inclusive education setting. Teachers should be trained on what their roles should be the ineffective implementation of inclusive education. The curriculum should be modified to accommodate learners with special needs. Learners in the inclusive educational system should be allowed to learn at their own pace as this will lead to achieving learning objectives. Resource teachers trained in handling children with special needed should be employed and motivated to embrace this system of education. Never the less the success of Inclusive Education is depending upon the attitude of the teachers, parents, peers of exceptional children. Most regular schools, therefore, need to be upgraded before they can accommodate and include learners of different abilities.

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