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Inclusive Education: Concept, Barriers and Suggestions

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Abstract

Inclusion involves preparing pupils for placement in regular schools. It implies readiness on the part of the society or a school to change from special to regular schools. Students are expected to acclimatize to the school ethos and the other facilities. Inclusion is all about making the regular schools, suitable for children with disabilities by transplanting the best special school practices, teachers or equipment into regular settings even without analyzing the needs of the children with special needs including disabilities to ensure if these are necessary or not. Inclusion implies a radical reform of the school in terms of conviction and philosophy followed with curriculum, assessment, pedagogy, grouping of pupils and the school environment and ethos. It is based on a system which welcomes, respects and celebrates diversity arising from gender, nationality, race, language of origin, social background, religion, class and caste, level of educational achievement, disability etc. Inclusion cannot be truncated from exclusion. Inclusion can be defined in terms of two linked processes. 'It is the process of increasing participation of learners in and reducing their exclusion from the

curricula, cultures and communities of neighborhood mainstream centres of learning' (Booth, 1999). This paper reviews some of the barriers in inclusive education and suggests the measures to overcome the barriers.

Key words: inclusive education, barriers, suggestions

All children are different and unique they have different competence to learn in unique ways and at different paces. learning-friendly, and hurdle –free environment should therefore be created in every school and society and above all throughout the world so that all children will be able to develop themselves academically, socially, emotionally and physically to their fullest potential. It is important to remember that a child's academic potential cannot be developed separately from his social, emotional and physical potential, as they are reciprocal aspects of a child's development. Without access to an extensive support system, many children with disabilities would never enroll in school, will be drop out, or will stay in school, yet be interrupted from reaching their full potential. Individual reinforcement should primarily be given by the school authorities and the class teacher.



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The majority of children with disabilities are out of school, while many of them are enrolled in special schools away from their families, friends, and peers. Traditionally education was divided into two types, namely, general education and special education. It was believed that children with divergent needs must be given education separately. Owing to lack of knowledge, educational access and technology, children with special needs

were segregated from other children. This led to the rise of general schools on one hand and the 'special schools' for the children with special needs. Over the last three decades the segregation in the field of education has come under criticism and now instead of continuing with isolated education, inclusive education is provided, efforts are made in this direction, particularly during last two decades. Thus in recent years there has been a paradigm shift for the children with special needs attend the same schools with normal children. A dire need was felt by the educationists that the children should be allowed to learn in his own way along with his other children. Hence Inclusive Education came to be provided to the students with special needs within the regular education system with some extra support i.e. resource room and resource teacher. Thus the concept of inclusion was to bring changes in the educational system for all students. It

means changes in the curriculum, methodology of teaching and interaction of all the students. Inclusive education therefore involves changing culture of contemporary schools with emphasis on active learning, applied curriculum, appropriate assessment methods, multi-level instructional approaches, and increased attention to diverse student needs and individualization. The aim of education is to create schools as centers of learning and educational institutions as caring, nurturing, and supportive educational communities where the needs of all students are fulfilled in a true sense. In inclusive schools all students are able to learn together. In other words, it is for all students, and all students can learn at a common platform with a common goal.

Concept of Inclusive Education

The term 'inclusion' has deeper meaning and it does not only refer to children with special needs

, but also includes all children who face any kind of difficulty in learning. Children with disabilities are still cherished in the ideologies of segregation; classified and categorized environments in the light of medical definition of disability while the society is moving towards inclusion approach. The need of the hour is 'inclusion should be a right, not a privilege for the selected ones.' The philosophy behind the inclusion is to deal with the children with special needs in the



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regular schools and teaching all children to understand and accept the differences. It is basically providing all students within the mainstream appropriate educational programmes that are challenging yet geared to their capabilities and needs as well as any support and assistance they and their teachers may need to be successful in the mainstream.

Inclusion is not a set of strategies or a placement issue. It is about affinity with the community, a group of friends, a school or a neighbourhood. Ehlers (1993) describes three ways to view inclusion: through beliefs and values, through experiences and through outcomes. The question for the children with special needs in inclusive settings is related to the right to equality, protection of life and personal liberty enshrined in the Indian Constitution (Article 14, 21) with Directive Principles under the Article 38 47 (social order with justice and elimination of inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities), Article 39 (tender age children not be abused) and Article 46 (promotion of educational interests of the weaker section) [Mohapatra: 2004] shows the constitutional validity of Inclusive Education as a part of Indian Constitution and policy making. The core for promoting inclusive education is because of its exclusive results in

regular schools with inclusive orientation to combat the discriminatory attitudes built around disability. It is also considered that inclusive education can create inclusive society which in turn would help to achieve education for all. The government intervention through Inclusive Education Policy [IEP] has chiseled the action of inclusion at other levels like family and community, because the family has the potential of turning a child into happy child or unhappy child [Sethi: 2005].

The school and classroom operates in the same premises where the normal and the students with disabilities. Therefore, all students can be full participants in their classrooms and in the local school community. The national curriculum framework for school education (NCERT, 2000) has recommended special inclusive schools for the students who are really needy and deprived of schooling for one reason or the other. According to UNESCO, “inclusive education means that the school can provide a good education to all pupils irrespective of their varying abilities. All children will be treated with respect and ensured equal opportunities to learn together. Inclusive education is an ongoing process. Teachers must work actively and deliberately to reach its goal”. The concept of inclusive education has different interpretations in different countries in the world (UNESCO, 2009) . Loreman and Doppler (2001) states that inclusion means full inclusion of children



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with diverse abilities in all aspects of schooling that other children are able to access and enjoy.

Historical Aspects of Inclusive Education

The process of Inclusive Education in India has gone through a long history however; the impact has not been encouraging. The process has been expanding in its scope to the contemporary needs and understanding. In this journey, the first school for the deaf and dumb was set up in the year 1888. Later, the services for physically disabled were initiated in the middle of the twentieth century but individuals with mental disability were given the least attention, the first school for the mentally challenged children was established in 1934 (Mishra: 2000). In 1947, the number of blind schools increased to 32, deaf to 30 and for children with mental disability to 3. The number of special schools rose from 2000 to 3000 by the year (Department of Education, 2000). The Government of India designed a scheme of preparing teachers to teach children with visual impairment and other disabilities. In 1980s the then ministry of Welfare, Govt. of India, realized the dire need of institutions to monitor and regulate the HRD programmes in the field of disability rehabilitation.

Special education programmes in those days were dependent on voluntary

initiatives. The Government of India's initiatives, started after independence. A few units were established primarily for blind adults (Luthra: 1974). These units later on included the people with hearing disabilities, physical impairment, and mental retardation (Rohindekar and Usha, 1988)

India also witnessed the emergence of special schools for individuals with special needs. The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF2000), brought out by the NCERT, recommended inclusive schools for all children without specific reference to pupils with special

education needs. The aim of inclusive school was to provide quality education to all learners irrespective of their disabilities. According to NCF segregation or isolation is good neither for learners with disabilities nor for general learners without disabilities. The requirement of the society is that the learners with special needs should be provided education along with other learners in inclusive schools, which are cost effective and have sound pedagogical practices (NCERT, 2000). Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was hurred to achieve the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education in 2001 and is one such initiative. Three important aspect of UEE are access, enrolment and retention of all



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children in age group of 6-14 years. A zero refutation policy has been adopted under SSA, which ensures that every Child with Special Needs (CWSN), irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability, is provided meaningful and quality education. National curriculum framework 2005 has laid clear instructions for inclusive education. The ministry of MHRD initiated an action plan for inclusive education of children with disabilities. IEDC was revised and named as Inclusive Education of the Disabled at the Secondary S(IEDSS) in 2009-10 to provide assistance for the inclusive education of the disabled children at 9 and 10th classes. This scheme now subsumed under Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RM SA) from 2013. It is important to integrate these children into regular schools to help them socialise and build their confidence.

Need and Importance of Inclusive Education

It is the right of every child to get education. The society needs variety of people for the progress of humanity. Inclusive education becomes important to fulfill this. The efforts are made around the globe to include children with disabilities in the educational mainstream. In order to achieve the true spirit of inclusion we need to include the children with special needs into regular schools. In general classrooms

the students are of diverse needs and the teachers accept each student as unique. Researches show that most students learn and perform better when exposed to the curriculum of the general education. Researches have proved that children perform academically better in inclusive settings and Inclusion provides opportunities to develop relationships. In inclusive setting children develop friendship, social skills and personal principles. Classmates of students with disabilities experience growth in social cognition, often can become more aware of the needs of others in inclusive classrooms.

Barriers in Inclusive Education in India

Inclusive education is a priority for government of India. There is a wide gap in policy and practice in the country with respect to inclusive education. There are many barriers that hinder the progress of inclusive education in our country.

1. Attitudinal

Barriers: the greatest barriers to inclusive education are negative attitudes of people. People are not ready to interact with people with disabilities. They think that persons with disabilities lack skills needed to live in the community or to be educated with



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other students with disabilities face emotional and physical bullying which often leads to isolation for them.

2. **Physical Barriers :** inadequate infrastructure in schools and other public places is the main difficulty identified by several students with disabilities when going to school and public places. There is also deficiency or assistive technology to aid children with a particular type of difficulty. Assistive technology (AT) are the products and the services designed to meet the particular needs of people with disabilities

3. **Inappropriate Curriculum:** The curriculum is one of the chief obstacle in the progress of inclusive education. The curriculum does not meet the needs of a broad range of diverse learners. It is centralized in design and rigid in approach and has very little flexibility for amendments based on the local setting or for teachers to try out new approaches.

4. **Untrained Teachers:** The teachers are the most important human resource for inclusive education. Their ability and outlook has intense impact on the lives of students who are different and who have learning challenges. The teachers' competency and attitudes is the most important constraints for inclusive education.

5. **Poor Organization of the Education System:** Responsibility for

decisions tends to be located at the highest level and the focus of management remains oriented toward employees, complying with rules rather than ensuring quality service delivery. Organizational barrier is due to lack of communication among administrators, teachers, specialists, staff, parents, and students. As a result, information on the number of students excluded from the school system is lacking.

6. **Policies Barriers:** Policy makers who have unsound grasp or opposing views on inclusive education are obstacles to the implementation of inclusive policies. These obstacles in inclusive education consist of a short list of factors that can affect students with disabilities in a general education classroom. Only a profound understanding of these factors and relevant issues that hinder inclusion, and the elimination of them will make true inclusion a reality for all children to learn together.

The Features of Inclusive School:

1. **Breaking the barriers :** Policies that are ideologically based on the human rights model start by identifying barriers that restrict disabled persons' participation in society. This had shifted the focus in the way environments are arranged. In education, for example, where individuals were formally labeled as not educable, the human rights model examines the accessibility of schools in



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terms of both physical access and pedagogical strategies.

2. Equality and non-discrimination Equality is based on principles of non-discrimination and reasonable differentiation. The principle of differentiation is important to differently abled individuals. Differences of treatment between individuals are not discriminatory if they are based on the reasonable and objective justification. Besides preventing discrimination equality goes far beyond in remedying discrimination.

3. Reasonable accommodation: It is a means to achieve the condition for equal participation and requires the burden of accommodation to be in proportion to the capacity of the entity. It is the introduction of necessary and appropriate measures to enable a person with a disability to enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms and to have access without prejudice to all structures, processes, public services, goods, information and other systems”.

4. Accessibility It is the measure/condition of things and services than can readily be reached or used by all individuals including differently abled.

5. Equal participation and inclusion As per human rights approach individual is at central place in all decisions affecting him/her. It respects the autonomy and freedom of choice of the

disabled and ensures to prioritize the criteria for support programme.

6. Freedom :This approach required that the state play an active role in enhancing the level of access to individual freedom, and enjoyment of rights by persons with disabilities is not hampered. Educational institutions and organizations should ensure equitable treatment to differently abled. It is believed that the fundamental rights to education will bring more differently abled children into normal schools and that provide an impetus for change.

Suggestions to Remove the Barriers in Inclusive Education

There are many factors responsible for successful inclusive education some of them are discussed below:

1. Capacity Building in the General Education: For effective implementation of Inclusive Education for children with special needs, general classroom teachers need to be trained in understanding the educational needs of these children. In pre-service teacher education programme it is ideal to teach about the children with special needs. Teachers, thus trained, will be able to take care of the educational and social needs of the children in general classrooms. Special teachers may occasionally assist the work of the general classroom teachers. The teachers who have no exposure to education of children with special needs



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can be given in-service training for a period of 5-10 days in the following areas:

- Definitions – Disabilities
- Identification and intervention service.
- Psychological and sociological implications of disabilities.
- Learning behaviors of children with disabilities.
- Plus curricular activities.
- Aids for various disabilities.
- Preparation of teaching aids and learning materials.
- Adaptation of existing devices and adapted instructional materials for children with disabilities.
- Teaching methods.
- Evaluation procedures.

The in-service courses may be offered to at least one teacher to begin with from each school and even fully cover all general classroom teachers in a block. This initial investment on capacity building would be vital for making a strong base for Inclusive Education.

2. Adopting Need-Based Instructional Strategies: Inclusive Education does not mean just enrolling a

child with special needs in the regular classroom. The child should be given help to cope with the regular class work. Therefore, a child-centered approach is needed. The ideal inclusive setting would enroll disabled children of all categories and also of different levels of disability. All of them may not require the same kind of assistance. Some may require guidance rarely, whereas some others need continuous help.

Therefore, the extent of assistance should be decided on the basis of the instructional needs of the child with proper understanding of need-based instructional strategies, inclusive education will be successful.

3. Exchange of Manpower and Material Resources: The success of inclusive education depends on how effectively all departments concerned can be involved in the total development of the children with special needs. Inclusive Education is a community-involved program and its quality depends upon the extent of interaction between the different functionaries of community development. The district rehabilitation centers, the workers, local eye hospitals, Braille presses, special schools, integrated schools etc., are to be closely involved in the program implementation.

4. Parents and Community's Participation: Inclusive Education program focus on the importance of



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parental involvement in education. Parents participation is important for the augmentation of the quality Inclusive Education. The parental involvement not only enriches inclusion but also brings attitudinal changes with regard to special needs in the community.

5. Improving Quality of Learning

general classroom teachers and special teachers should be made available for providing services to children with disabilities in any locality; the influences of general children on the educational achievement of disabled children and vice-versa are noteworthy. In fact, the non-disabled children are the best teachers for enabling disabled children to develop proper concepts. The child-to-child learning strategies effectively improve the achievement of all children including the children with special needs.

6. Making the Program for Children with Special Needs as an Integral Part of the

General Education System: Inclusive education in India would be possible only when all general education teachers are capable for serving children with special needs. Till then, the presence of a specialist teacher should also be treated as a part and parcel of the general system. Often, specialist resources teachers in integrated programs are treated as additional members in the schools and therefore, the assistance given by them to

disabled children is treated as an additional component to general education. This scenario should change. The specialist teachers should be treated as a teacher first and a specialist next. Unless this happens, total inclusion may not happen. Therefore, inclusion should take place at all levels.

Conclusion

Right to Education Act 2009 ensures education to all children irrespective of their caste, religion, ability, and so on. It is necessary to build an inclusive society based on inclusive approach. A new set of core assumptions have been developed. Inclusion is more than a method of educating students with disabilities. It stresses that each child, regardless of the intensity and severity of his or her disabilities, is a valued member of society and is capable of participating in that society. A good inclusive education is one that allows all the students to participate in all aspects of classroom equally or close to equal. To meet the challenges, the involvement and cooperation of educators, parents, and community leaders is vital for the creation of better and more inclusive schools. The Government of India is trying to improve its education system focusing on the inclusive approach. The challenges can be overcome by raising awareness of human rights in communities and publicising positive examples of disabled children and adults succeeding in inclusive



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education and in life beyond school as a result. We need to develop an inclusive design of learning to make the education joyful for all children so that the education for them is welcoming, learner friendly and beneficial and they feel as a part of it not apart from it. Therefore, Inclusion arose as a good solution to the question of how to educate these children more effectively.

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