

Understanding Inclusive Education

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ABSTRACT

In the past few years Inclusive Education has emerged an accepted policy of educating children with special needs, it's about how schools, classrooms, programs and activities are developed and designed so that all students learn and participate together. The present paper will elaborate the Inclusive education and try to understand objectives, challenges and its level in India. There is a strong need to accept and acknowledge the fact that every child needs a learning environment in which they can actively participate and grow positively.

Inclusive education (IE) is a new approach towards educating the children with disability and learning difficulties with that of normal ones within the same roof. It seeks to address the learning needs of all children with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. It implies all learners – with or without disabilities being able to learn together through access to common pre-school provisions, schools and community educational setting with an appropriate network of support services. This is possible only in flexible education system that assimilates the needs of diverse range of learners and adapts itself to meet these needs.

Basically, Inclusive Education means educating learners with special educational needs in regular education settings. However, Inclusive Education is not limited to only placement. Rather, it means facilitating education of students with special needs with a whole suite of provisions which include curriculum adaptation, adapted teaching methods, modified assessment techniques, and accessibility arrangements. In short, inclusive education is a multi component strategy or, perhaps, a mega- strategy (Mitchell, 2008).

Inclusive Education in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was launched to achieve the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education. This adopts a zero rejection policy and uses an approach of converging various schemes and programmes. The key objective of SSA is Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE). Three important aspect of UEE are access, enrolment and retention of all children in 6-14 years of age. A zero rejection 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. It covers the following components under education for children with special needs:-Early detection and identification, functional and formal assessment, Educational Placement, Aids and appliances, Support services, Teacher training, Resource support, Individual Educational Plan (IEP), Parental training and community mobilization, Planning and management, Strengthening of special schools, Removal of Architectural barriers, Research, Monitoring and evaluation, Girls with disabilities.

Level of Inclusive Education

Inclusive Education is accepted as an integral part of general education. Training regular classroom teacher in the area of integrated education, curriculum modification, parental education, awareness to parents and developing positive attitude towards the disability are the key point of successful inclusive education. To open up the regular school system to disabled children is not an easy task. The policy on inclusion and mainstreaming can easily get failure if not implemented carefully. There is an urgent need for interventions for equipping general teachers with special skills, making general curricula, teaching methods. Evaluation procedures, learning material disability-sensitive and addressing the attitudes /needs of other children in the school to ensure such interventions benefit to all children. As a system, inclusive education should be flexible. This need for flexibility must be reflected in the methods and materials used to give these children the widest possible access to the regular curriculum. When discussing the kind of service needed, the starting point should always be what is best for the particular child. Emphasizing inclusive education does not rule out special schools or centre. They would still be required to cater to children with profound and complex difficulties in need of more specialized and extensive help, including e.g. many deaf children. This alternative should, however, not be

considered, unless classroom placement cannot meet their needs. In this context, it is important to stress the role parents have. They have a right to be involved in all decision-making concerning their child. They should be seen as partners in the education process. Where there is such co-operation, parents have been found to be very important resources for the teachers and the schools. Children with disabilities need child-centered curriculum, which takes into account the individual needs of children. The curriculum needs to set specific, observable, measurable and achievable learning outcomes. A flexible, locally relevant curriculum, teaching and learning strategies are intrinsically important for children with special needs to participate in the educational process. They require a learning environment in which they can actively participate in learning in small groups learning settings.

According to Amzad (2016) there are four assumptions underlying inclusive education:

1. All students come to school with diverse needs and abilities, so no students are fundamentally different.
2. It is the responsibility of the general education system to be responsive to all students.
3. A responsive general education system provides high expectations and standards, quality academic curriculum and instruction that are flexible and relevant, an accessible environment, and teachers who are well prepared to address the educational needs of all students.
4. Progress in general education is a process evidence by schools and communities working together to create citizens for an inclusive society who are educated to enjoy the full benefits, rights and experiences of societal life

Objectives of policies on Inclusive Education

- The governments have to give the highest policy and budgetary priority to improve their education systems to enable them to include all children regardless of individual differences or difficulties.
- The governments have to adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise.

- The training programmes for the teachers have to include the education of disabled children.
- All children have access to general education system, to expand the coverage to reach the unreached population.

Benefits of Inclusive Education

All children benefit from inclusive education. It allows them to:

- Develop individual strengths and gifts, with high and appropriate expectations for each child
- .Work on individual goals while participating in the life of the classroom with other students their own age.
- Involve their parents in their education and in the activities of their local schools.
- Foster a school culture of respect and belonging. Inclusive education provides opportunities to learn about and accept individual differences, lessening the impact of harassment and bullying.
- Develop friendships with a wide variety of other children, each with their own individual needs and abilities.
- Positively affect both their school and community to appreciate diversity and inclusion on a broader level

Challenges to Inclusive Education in India

- Large class sizes and a low student-teacher ratio are problems for all children and teachers in some countries, and can reduce enthusiasm for teaching what may be seen as even more diverse ability ranges in a class.
- Many children walk long distances to attend school, and a combination of a lack of adequate transportation, difficult terrain, poor quality roads and the associated cost to families make many schools inaccessible to girls and boys with disabilities.

- The lack of educational psychologists or even the regular use of simple assessment tools means that many teachers are unaware of the potential or needs of the young people in their classrooms. (Banga 2015)

Inclusive Classroom Practices and Design: Teachers Role

- Speak only positively about all children in the classroom and to other staff – present the positive aspects of each student
- Take clues from the child, think in terms of strengths and progress rather than deficits
- Give students a sense of control over their own learning
- Cue students who do not respond well to change in advance of daily program/subject transitions
- If the teacher sets the tone for acceptance, students will follow the example • Involved students in supporting each other
- Don't carry problems over from day to day
- Don't blame the student for a lack of proper resources
- Express student's positive accomplishments to parents • Make an effort to listen to and understand the knowledge of parents
- Collaborate with other teachers involved with the same students (Amzad,2016)

Inclusion is not an experiment to be tested but a value to be followed. All the children whether they are disabled or not have the right to education as they are the future citizens of the country. In the prevailing Indian situation resources are insufficient even to provide quality mainstream schools for common children, it is unethical and impracticable to put children with special needs to test or to prove anything in a research study to live and learn in the mainstream of school and community. Inclusive education: We consider inclusive education as the bedrock for sustainable development: an investment to reduce poverty, generate sustainable livelihood, improve long-term health benefits, ensure gender equality and promote democratic governance. Children with special educational needs must have access to regular schools, which should accommodate them within a child-centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs. (India country strategy 2015—2019)

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