

A STUDY OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS IN INCLUSIVE PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN CONTEXT OF DIVYANG STUDENTS

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Abstract :

A school is actually a home away from home for any student. During student life most of the waking hours of any student are spent at school, learning anything and everything in various dimensions from books, teachers, peers and even school environment. There are studies suggesting students in schools with poor infrastructure can have lower scores than those with access to better infrastructure facilities. This makes school infrastructure a key element in a child's academic as well as holistic growth. Besides, an overcrowded classroom and stressful environment also affect students' learning capabilities. That's why school-teacher ratio is also a key parameter for parents before they admit their wards to any specific school. There is average learning environment in inclusive primary schools which is healthy, clean, secure, learner protecting, child-friendly and barrier free. The above average government regulations are followed which promotes inclusive access, equal rights, the increase in enrolment, participation and completion of schooling. So most of the inclusive primary schools are following regulations and standards of the provision but not all. The upgrading of equipment and materials to meet the prevailing standards of teaching and learning is poor. The monitoring and evaluation process is also very poor and essentially needed some improvements in context of divyang students.

Key words - Learning, Environment, Government, Regulation

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental human right and it is essential to ensure that all are able to realise their potential. A key aim of education is to give all citizens the necessary skills and values to improve their quality of life. Inclusion is about seeing the positive aspects of all individuals and valuing those aspects, of giving equal opportunity to all and eliminating discrimination to facilitate involvement and belonging.

Inclusive education is the most practicable plan to provide education to each student. When a country talks about education, it is the education for all individuals as normal and divyang both kind of students and inclusive schools are opened to provide such inclusive education. At present, mainstream education leaves out a large number of students. Not only divyang students but also many normal students are unable to reach inclusive primary schools and this is almost similar problem all over the states of country. Inclusive primary schools were opened to fill up this gap but unfortunately such schools just followed the old path of sustaining the gap between divyang students and others because of lack of basic infrastructure.

The term inclusion refers to an approach wherein students with special need spend most or all of their time with non-disabled students¹.

Inclusive classrooms might contain several students with special needs who are mainstreamed full time into the general classroom, or one or two students who spend time each day in both a special education classroom and a general classroom².

As Yell (2010) clarified that the terms least restrictive environment, inclusion, and mainstreaming are often used interchangeably. They are not, however, synonymous concepts. Least restrictive environment refers to the IDEA's (1990, 2004) mandate that students with disabilities should be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with peers without disabilities. The LRE mandate ensures that schools educate students with disabilities in integrated settings, alongside students with and without disabilities, to the maximum extent appropriate. Least restrictive environment is not a particular setting (Yell, 2010).

According to Deepa (2006) —inclusion may be the key word in India's current education policy, but there is a world of difference between the law and its implementation.

The reform of the curriculum should be made in parallel with a proper training for teachers regarding their knowledge of inclusion and its principles. The curriculum for each of the above programs should be carefully developed by an expert group which include practicing special teachers. (Singh, 2016)

The education system throughout the world are faced by the challenge of providing effective education system for children and youth. Facing these challenges, there is an increased interest in the idea of 'inclusive education'. There are still some countries in the world where inclusion is thought of as an approach to serving children with disabilities within general education settings.

"Every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning. Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs. Education systems should be designed and educational programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs. Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs. Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes. Creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system". **Salamanca statement (1994)**³

For the government "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. 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. Develop demonstration projects and encourage exchanges with countries having experience with inclusive schools. Establish decentralized and participatory mechanisms for planning, monitoring and evaluating educational provision for children and adults with special education needs. Encourage and facilitate the participation of parents, communities and organization of persons with disabilities in the planning and decision-making processes concerning provision for special educational needs. Invest greater effort in early identification and intervention strategies, as well as in vocational aspects of inclusive education. Ensure that, in the context of a systemic change, teacher education programmes, both pre-service and in-service, address the provision of special needs education in inclusive schools".

The right to education is reflected in international law in **Article 26**⁴ of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children."

The Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act, 2002 inserted Article 21-A in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right in such a manner as the State may, by law, determine. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which represents the consequential legislation envisaged under Article 21-A, means that every child has a right to full time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards. Article 21-A and the RTE Act came into effect on 1 April 2010. The title of the RTE Act incorporates the words 'free and compulsory'. 'Free education' means that no child, other than a child who has been admitted by his or her parents to a school which is not supported by the appropriate Government, shall be liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing elementary education. 'Compulsory education' casts an obligation on the appropriate Government and local authorities to provide and ensure admission, attendance and completion of elementary education by all children in the 6-14 age group. With this, India has moved forward to a rights based framework that casts a legal obligation on the Central and State Governments to implement this fundamental child right as enshrined in the Article 21A of the Constitution, in accordance with the provisions of the **RTE Act**. The RTE Act provides for the : Right of children to free and compulsory education till completion of elementary education in a neighbourhood school. It clarifies that 'compulsory education' means obligation of the appropriate government to provide free elementary education and ensure compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education to every child in the six to fourteen age group. 'Free' means that no child shall be liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing elementary education. It makes provisions for a non-admitted child to be admitted to an age appropriate class. It specifies the duties and responsibilities of appropriate Governments, local authority and parents in providing free and compulsory education, and sharing of financial and other responsibilities between the Central and State Governments. It lays down the norms and standards relating inter alia to Pupil Teacher Ratios (PTRs), buildings and infrastructure, school-working days, teacher-working hours. It provides for rational deployment of teachers by ensuring that the specified pupil teacher ratio is maintained for each school, rather than just as an average for the State or District or Block, thus ensuring that there is no urban-rural imbalance in teacher postings. It also provides for prohibition of deployment of teachers for non-educational work, other than decennial census, elections to local authority, state legislatures and parliament, and disaster relief. It provides for appointment of appropriately trained teachers, i.e. teachers with the requisite entry and academic qualifications. It prohibits (a) physical punishment and mental harassment; (b) screening procedures for admission of children; (c) capitation fee; (d) private tuition by teachers and (e) running of schools without recognition. It provides for development of curriculum in consonance with the values enshrined in the Constitution, and which would ensure the all-round development of the child, building on the child's knowledge, potentially and talent and making the child free of fear, trauma and anxiety through a system of child friendly and child centred learning. **Right to Education**⁵

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY :

To study the learning environment and government regulations in inclusive primary schools with reference to the healthy, clean, secure and learner protecting, the child-friendly, barrier free environment which promotes inclusive access and equal rights, the increased enrolment, participation and completion of schooling, the regulations and standards in the provision,

the upgrading of equipment and materials to meet the prevailing standards of teaching and learning, the monitoring and evaluation in context of divyang students.

III. ASSUMPTION OF THE STUDY :

There is no learning environment and government regulations in inclusive primary schools with reference to the healthy, clean, secure and learner protecting, the child-friendly, barrier free environment which promotes inclusive access and equal rights, the increased enrolment, participation and completion of schooling, the regulations and standards in the provision, the upgrading of equipment and materials to meet the prevailing standards of teaching and learning, the monitoring and evaluation in context of divyang students.

IV. METHODOLOGY :

Methodology is a systematic and organized treatment of the techniques of the scientific research. The present study was carried out on the population of inclusive primary schools of bareilly city only. Random sampling technique was used to select the sample. A list of primary schools situated in bareilly city was obtained from BSA office, 10% or 50 schools out of those schools list were randomly chosen for the sample. Statistical Survey method was used in present research.

Inclusion infrastructure questionnaire was the tool prepared by the researcher under the able guidance of professor for the study. The main aim of this questionnaire was to find out whether the learning environment is present and government regulations are being followed in inclusive primary schools in context of divyang students or not. The researcher personally met the principal of randomly selected schools and provided the questionnaire to collect the appropriate data.

The researcher finalised 11 questions with 4 options each for questionnaire. More than 1 options could be correct. Every option was given 1 mark, so 44 was the maximum mark for whole questionnaire. After the data collection, information collected through the questionnaire revealed the availability of learning environment and government regulations in inclusive primary schools for divyang students. The overall coefficient of schools was calculated by adding all the data of inclusive primary schools together.

$$\text{Coefficient of school} = \frac{\text{Total obtained marks}}{\text{Maximum marks}}$$

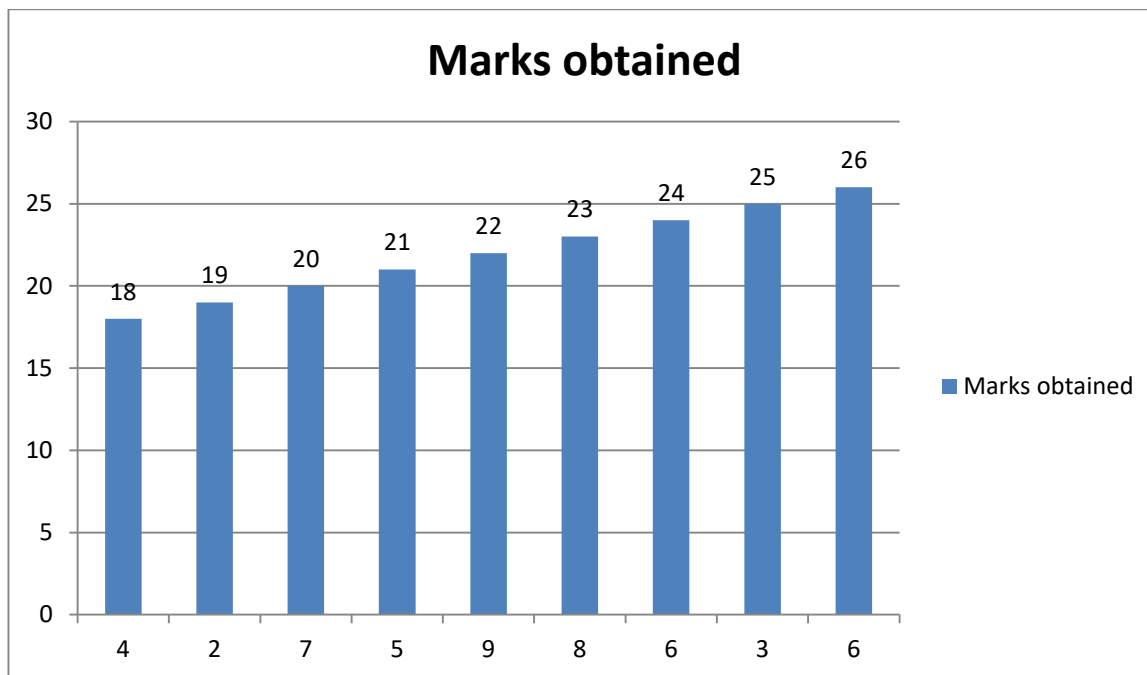
V. RESULTS ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION :

Table 5.1
Coefficients and Results

Coefficient	Result
0 to +0.25	Low
+0.26 to +0.49	Below Average
+0.50	Average
+0.51 to +0.75	Above Average
+0.76 to +1	High

Table 5.2
List of the number of inclusive primary schools and marks obtained

Sr. No.	Number of schools	Marks obtained	Coefficients
1	4	18	0.4090
2	2	19	0.4318
3	7	20	0.4545
4	5	21	0.4772
5	9	22	0.5000
6	8	23	0.5227
7	6	24	0.5454
8	3	25	0.5681
9	6	26	0.5909



The coefficient of the learning environment and government regulations of each school is calculated by inclusion infrastructure questionnaire. The total sum of coefficients of inclusive primary schools is **1112** out of **2200**, and so **coefficient** is **0.5054** and it can be said that learning environment and government regulations of primary schools is **average** in Bareilly city.

There is **average** learning environment in inclusive primary schools which is healthy, clean, secure, learner protecting, child-friendly and barrier free. The **above average** government regulations are followed which promotes inclusive access, equal rights, the increase in enrolment, participation and completion of schooling. So most of the inclusive primary schools are following regulations and standards of the provision but not all. The upgrading of equipment and materials to meet the prevailing standards of teaching and learning is **poor**. The monitoring and evaluation process is also **very poor** and essentially needed some improvements in context of divyang students.

VI. Educational implications :

6.1 Learning environment

A focus on the process of children's thinking instead of simply checking for the correct answer. Children are encouraged themselves through spontaneous interaction with the environment. It is important that the content of the instruction needs to be consistent with the development level of learner. Opportunities that allow learners of different cognitive levels to work together often help encourage less mature students to advance a higher understanding of material. Facilitate learning by using familiar examples to explain complex ideas. Give students the opportunities to classify the group information, use outlines and hierarchies to facilitate assimilation of new information with previous learners knowledge.

6.2 Government regulations

Attendance of learners has improved. Parents indicate that they feel welcomed and are engaged with the school. Students view the rules as fair and are willing to comply. Academic achievements has improved. Inclusive schools help divyang students to learn in mainstream.

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