

An Overview on Inclusive Education

Name :Joshi Atinbhai D.

Designations : Research scholar Phd.(Education)

Name of Institute: Madhav university Pindwara (Sirohi) Rajsthan

Supervisor :- Dr. Pawan Kumar,Dean, Research Department Madhav university
Pindwara (Sirohi) Rajsthan

Abstract

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 brings all students together in one classroom and community, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area, and seeks to maximize the potential of all students. It is one of the most effective ways in which to promote an inclusive and tolerant society. In this paper, we clarify the term of Inclusive Education as well as get in-depth knowledge of it.

Key words: Inclusive Education, Children with special needs, Disabilities, Inclusion.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all the learners. It involves restructuring the culture, policies and practices in schools so that they can respond to the diversity of students in their locality. For a school to be inclusive, the attitudes of everyone in the school, including administrators, teachers, and other students, are positive towards students with disabilities. Inclusive education means that all children, regardless of their ability level, are included in a mainstream classroom, or in the most appropriate or least restrictive environment (LRE), that students of all ability levels are taught as equals, and that teachers must adjust their curriculum and teaching methodologies so that all students benefit. This also avoids wasting resources, and “shattered hopes,” which often occurs in classrooms that are “one size fits all. Studies have shown that systems that are truly inclusive reduce drop-out rates and repetition of grades, and have higher average levels of achievement; compared to systems that are not inclusive. People who believe in inclusive education believe that the education system is the impediment to learning for a child, and that every child is capable of learning.

Meaning of Inclusive Education : Various Perspectives

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 goals.

In the 1990, inclusion captured that field after the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca in 1994, with the adoption of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education.

Through, in India, there is no formal or official definition of inclusion; it does not only mean the placement of the students with SEN in regular classrooms. The Draft Scheme on Inclusive Education prepared by the MHRD (2003) stated that Inclusive Education means all learners, young people with or without disabilities being able to learn together in ordinary preschool provisions, schools, and community educational settings with appropriate network of support services.

Inclusive Education means including the children with disabilities in the regular classroom that have been designed for children without disabilities (Kugelmass 2004) Inclusive education refers to an education system that accommodates all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. For the development of social skills and better social interaction of the student's inclusive education is the need of education system.

The issues of inclusive education and its implication for education have been under scrutiny during the past thirty years. Today, societies have become concerned with ensuring the educational rights for all children in disregarding severity of disabilities into the regular educational setting as regular class students has become the concern of educators, governments and the society at large.(Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2005).

Inclusive Education : Principles

In inclusive education each child should have the opportunity to experience meaningful challenges, exercise choice and responsibility, interact collaboratively with others, and be actively engaged in developmental, academic, non-academic, inter and intra personal activities as part of the educational process. Implementation of the plans, programmes and actions depend upon continuous community support, broad planning, training and evaluation. An adapted school environment is needed to suit the need of every child with disabilities. The important principles of inclusion are:

- Sharing of responsibilities of functionaries working at different levels;
- Providing additional support to children;
- Development of a collaborative framework to meet the additional needs and interests of children;
- Implications for various types of disabilities;
- Knowledge about family and social environment of children;
- Modifications in Teaching-Learning strategies/modalities;
- Improving professional competencies of teachers;
- Ensuring community support and support of other functionaries working at different levels

Inclusive Education : Challenges

Adequate academic as well as administrative support is the key for the success of inclusion of children with disabilities in general schools. Simply enrolment of these children will not serve the purpose of inclusion. Respecting need of each child is a real challenge for the teachers and administrators. The basic challenges confronted by the stakeholders associated with inclusive education are:

1. School reforms.
2. Attitude of teachers, parents and community.
3. Curricular adaptations for effective classroom processes.
4. Capacity building of teachers and other functionaries
5. Adapting need based instructional strategies
6. Provision of adequate human resources and material resources
7. Facilitating collaborative learning.
8. Developing partnership with professionals and organizations.

Conclusion

The Government of India is trying to improve its education system focusing on the inclusive approach. It is the system (with all its components) which should be changed, modified & made flexible enough to accommodate the diverse needs of all learners, including children with disabilities. Inclusion of children with special needs is essentially the responsibility of the regular education system. Disabled children have equal right to get education as per their needs and capability. Differently able children should be treated equally as the normal children and instead of looking them in sympathy their talents and abilities should be recognized for their self-respect and welfare of the society. It is important to remember that Inclusive education is at a very early stage of conceptualization and implementation in India. It focuses on the environment, as the “disabling” cause because it fails to provide appropriate access to equal opportunities for all persons to participate fully in social life. 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. The fact that it is being discussed, debated and in some places implemented although falteringly, demonstrates a willingness to engage with elements with elements of a new concept that has the potential to be developed in the future in a positive manner.

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