

Inclusive education is a new approach towards educating children with disabilities (RPWD act 2016)

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Abstract

The constitution of India guarantees equality and justice to all its citizen. Education is one of the fundamental rights of every citizen including children with disabilities. Article 29 (2) of Indian constitution says that no citizen shall be denied admission to any educational institution maintained by State. Article 45 directs the States to provide free and compulsory education to all children from age group 6 to 14, including disability. Under the constitutional frame work Right to Education Act 2009 was constituted in order to provide free and compulsory education to the children with disabilities and to those belonging to economically backward section of the society. Further in this context Right of free and compulsory education (Amendment Act), 2019 has received the assent of the president of India. Under the umbrella of free education, the term Inclusive education carries is a lethal instrument to fight against illiteracy in our country. It is a new slant to educate and develop children with disabilities. The children with disability are discriminated of both grounds, fist is their disability and second is the poverty. Because of their disability these disabled children lacks the ability to learn with the normal students. Inclusive education provides equal right to education to all regardless of their strengths or weaknesses or disabilities under one roof. Under the broad concept of inclusive education, the school can provide general education and special education at same time and same place. Such schools are structured so that all students learn and grow together. Inclusive education allows children with disabilities to develop friendship with other normal children so that they can feel less isolated. Inclusive education not only educated but it develops self-esteem and confidence of the children with disabilities. It makes them feel that they are also part of society and bring sense of belongingness. Although much progress has been made in education sector but the challenges faced by the disabled children has not been seriously addressed. There is urgent requirement for inclusion of inclusive education with much more border vision in the Right to Education Act and Right of person with disability act 2016. Implementation of laws and acts especially in rural is required on urgent basis. The teachers for education programs should be based with perspective of Inclusive education, as the aim of these programs would be to integrate disabled persons in their own environment and community. Inclusive education is a new approach for empowering education for all. Parents lacks awareness about inclusive education. They have no information regarding Inclusive education. Inclusion of parents in decision making and imparting awareness about inclusive education is required on war front in order to do justice with children with disabilities.

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

Introduction

Children with disabilities constitute one of the largest groups that are still outside the fold of the general education system. The earlier scheme of 'Integrated Education for the Disabled Children (IEDC)' introduced in the 1970's,

covered children with disabilities at all levels of school education. This scheme was revised in 2009 as 'Inclusive Education of the Disabled at the Secondary Stage' (IEDSS) because of two reasons. Firstly, there was a paradigm shift from charity approach to rights approach for persons with disabilities and schools needed to be organized accordingly and secondly, the special needs of children with disabilities at the elementary stage were being addressed under the umbrella programme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). The IEDSS scheme provides an opportunity to all students with disabilities to complete eight years of elementary schooling and to complete four years of secondary schooling (classes IX to XII) in an inclusive and enabling environment. The scheme is being implemented by different organizations/divisions under the Education Departments of State Governments/UT Administrations on the basis of 100% Central Assistance. The scheme covers all children of age 14+ passing out of elementary schools and studying in Secondary Stage in Government, Local Body and Government aided schools, with one or more disabilities. The Persons with Disabilities Act (1995) and the National Trust Act (1999) defines the definition of disabilities and common type disability in the age group 14+ to 18+, namely

Blindness

- Low vision
- Leprosy cured
- Hearing impairment
- Locomotor disabilities
- Mental retardation
- Mental illness
- Autism
- Cerebral palsy

Girls with disabilities receive special focus under this scheme, efforts are to be made to help them gain access to secondary schools, as also they are provided with valuable information and guidance for developing their potential. under this scheme. Since 2009, this Scheme is being implemented in different of States. However, the funds under the scheme go underutilized and the proposals submitted for funding are generally structured loosely without any evidence of demands matching with the special needs of children with disabilities. Also, the data from the Seventh All India School Education Survey (7th AISES), Schools for Physically Challenged Children (2008) shows a sharp decline from upper primary stage to secondary stage of education. Specifically, at the senior secondary level, very few children with disabilities were enrolled. Realizing this dismal scenario, the Department of Education of Groups with Special Needs (DEGSN) & NCERT, undertook a study entitled "Evaluation of the Implementation of the Scheme IEDSS in India" sponsored by Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). The major objectives of the study Were:

1. To assess the current impact of the scheme on enrolment, access, retention of Students with disabilities at the secondary and higher secondary stage.
2. To find out whether the students covered under this scheme are getting the required resource support in terms of trained general and special teachers, do the assistive devices, appropriate teaching materials and learning environment are available or not etc.
3. To identify good practices of inclusive education in the States at the secondary Stage.

4. To assess the role of State Governments in planning, implementation and monitoring of the scheme. In addition, the study tried to assess the special needs of students with disabilities especially the girls' students and student with disabilities belonging to scheduled castes, scheduled Tribes and other disadvantaged groups.

Concept of Inclusive Education

The principle of inclusive education was adopted at the "World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality" (Salamanca Statement, Spain 1994) and was restated at the World Education Forum (Dakar, Senegal 2000). The Statement solicits governments to give the highest priority to making education systems inclusive and adopt the principle of inclusive Education as a matter of policy. The idea of inclusion is further supported by the United Nation's Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Person with Disability, proclaiming participation and equality for all. Inclusive Education is defined as a process of addressing the diverse needs of all learners by reducing barriers to, and within the learning environment. It means attending the age appropriate class of the child's local school, with individually tailored support. Inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners. At the Jometin World Conference (1990) in Thailand, the goals for 'Education for All' were set and it was proclaimed that every person let it be child, youth and adult shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities which would meet their basic learning needs. Inclusion is an educational approach and philosophy that provides all students greater opportunities for academic and social achievement. This includes opportunities to participate in the full range of social, recreational, arts, sports, music, day care and afterschool care, extra-curricular, faith based, and all other activities. In India, National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) joined hands with UNICEF and launched Project Integrated Education for Disabled Children (PIED) in the year 1987, to strengthen the integration of learners with disabilities into regular Schools. In recent years, the concept of inclusive education has been broadened to encompass not only students with disabilities, but also all students who may be disadvantaged. This broader understanding of curriculum has paved the way for developing the National Curriculum Framework (NCF-2005) that reiterates the importance of including and retaining all children in school through a programme that reaffirms the value of each child and enables all children to Experience dignity and the confidence to learn.

Background of the Inclusive Education programme

The Government of India is constitutionally committed to ensure the education right of every child. The Government of India has created numerous policies around special education since the country's independence in 1947. One of the earliest formal initiatives undertaken by the GOI was the Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) scheme of 1974 (NCERT, 2011). The Kothari Commission (1966) which highlighted the importance of educating children with disabilities during the post-independence period. In 1980s the then ministry of Welfare, Govt. of India, realized the crucial need of an institution to monitor and regulate the HRD programmes in the field of disability rehabilitation. Till 1990s, ninety percent of India's estimated 40 million children in the age group- four-sixteen years with physical and mental disabilities are being excluded from mainstream education. The National Policy on Education, 1986 (NPE, 1986), and the Programme of Action (1992) stresses the need for integrating children with special needs with other groups. The Government of India implemented the District Primary Education Project (DPEP) in 1994-95. In late in 1997 the philosophy of

inclusive education is added in District Primary Education Programme (DPEP). This programme laid special emphasis on the integration of children with mild to moderate disabilities, in line with world trends, and became one of the GO's largest flagship programmes of the time in terms of funding with 40,000 million rupees. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was launched to achieve the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education in 2001, is one such initiative. 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. National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 has laid down a clear context of inclusive education. In 2005, the Ministry of Human Resource Development implemented a National Action Plan for the inclusion in education of children and youth with disabilities. Furthermore, IEDC was revised and named, "Inclusive Education of the Disabled at the Secondary Stage" (IEDSS) in 2009-10 to provide assistance for the inclusive education of the disabled children at 9th and 10th classes. This scheme now subsumed under Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) 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

There have been efforts internationally to include children with disabilities in the educational mainstream. In order to achieve truly inclusive education, we need to think about and incorporate children with special needs into regular schools. Especially, because these kids face some sort of barriers to learning and participation in the classroom. As general education classrooms include more and more diverse students, teachers realize the value of accepting each student as unique. In effective inclusive programs, teachers adapt activities to include all students, even though their individual goals may be different. We have learned that inclusive education is a better way to help all students succeed. Researches show that most students learn and perform better when exposed to the richness of the general education curriculum. The growing body of research has shown that children do better academically when in inclusive settings and Inclusion provides opportunities to develop relationships. Some of the benefits include: friendships, social skills, personal principles, comfort level with people who have special needs, and caring classroom environments. The most important function of friendships is to make people feel cared for, loved, and safe. In an inclusive educational setting, low-achieving students are able to get extra help even though they did not qualify for special education. Classmates of students with disabilities also experience growth in social cognition, often can become more aware of the needs of others in inclusive classrooms. An interesting side effect is that these parents report that they also feel more comfortable with people with special needs because of their children's experiences. Students with disabilities can create long-lasting friendships that would not be otherwise possible, and these friendships can give them the skills to navigate social relationships later on in life.

Challenges to implement Inclusive Education in India

In India the number of the disabled people is so large, their problems are complex and available resources are scarce and social attitudes of people is damaging. India is a multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-religious country, and its people are stratified along sharp socio-economic and caste lines. India is the world's second most

populated country after China. It has 17 percent of the global population and 20 percent of the world's out-of-school children. The aim of inclusion is to bring support to the students. 10% of the world's population lives with a disability, and 80% of these people with disabilities live in developing countries. UNICEF's report on the Status of Disability in India (2000) states that there are around 30 million children in India suffering from some form of disability and 75% of people with disabilities live in rural areas in India. The Government has created numerous policies around special education since the country's independence. There could be many challenges for educating children with disabilities in regular classrooms. These challenges could be emanate from scarcity of adequate human and material resources, negative attitudes of teachers and community, non-disabled peers and their parents. Although the Government of India has attempted to create policies on education that are inclusive for children with disabilities, but their implementation efforts have not resulted in an inclusive system of education. Moreover, the number of students dropping out of school is getting higher, especially in poverty-stricken areas. Students are forced to leave school due to their parents' poor economic condition, and to work to help their parents make ends meets. This leads to the growing number of child labour, beggary syndicates which in turn leads to trauma and shock to the children with disabilities. Another serious challenge is the fact that most disabled children are still excluded from equal access to mainstream education. Large class sizes present another challenge for the implementation of inclusive education in the Indian context. Das, Kuyini and Desai examined the current skill levels of regular primary and secondary school teachers in Delhi, India in order to teach students with disabilities in inclusive education settings. They reported that nearly 70% of the regular school teachers had neither received training in special education nor had any experience teaching students with disabilities. Further, 87% of the teachers did not have access to support services in their classrooms. According to Sixth all India Educational Survey by NCERT about 20 million out of India's 200 million school-aged children between 6–14 years require special needs of education. While the national average for gross enrolment in school is over 90 per cent, less than five per cent of children with disabilities are in schools. Acceptance by peers provides a much greater challenge for children with disabilities. Most of school personnel in India are not trained to design and implement educational programs for students with disabilities in regular schools. Most teacher training programs in India do not have a unit on disability studies. The majority of schools in India are poorly designed and few are equipped to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities. It is also worth noting that there are challenges around procuring and resourcing for assistive devices. Despite various efforts for inclusive education in India, about 94% of children with disabilities didn't receive any educational services. Over and above some of these challenges that India shares with other developing countries are some distinctive features that will make the implementation of educational reform particularly difficult. The commitment of the Government of India to Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) cannot be fully achieved without taking care of special educational needs of the physically and mentally challenged children. Inclusion is becoming a cant and doing the rounds in education circles but there are still a lot of cobwebs surrounding it.

Few measures for implementing Inclusive Education

Inclusive education helps the disabled child to develop a sense of pride in their work because they actually feel like they accomplished something. We know that Albert Einstein was learning disabled but still managed to

become the greatest mind of the 20th century. Educating children with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers is considered one of the better ways to provide education to the population in India. The Government of India needs to bridge the gaps in their education system to build a strong system of inclusive education in the country. The Right to Education (RTE) must apply to all citizens of India. State and central Governments as well as all the other social actors should recognize the importance of a broadened concept of inclusive education that addresses the diverse needs of all learners. A policy of inclusion needs to be implemented in all schools and throughout Indian education system. Schools need to become centre that prepare children for life and ensure that all children, especially the differently abled children from marginalized sections, and children in difficult circumstances get the maximum benefit of this critical area of education. The preparation of teachers for rural special education programmes should be planned differently, as the aim of these programmes would be to integrate disabled persons in their own environment and community. As a system, inclusive education should be flexible. Its flexibility must be reflected in the methods and materials used to give these children the widest possible access to the regular curriculum. A school-based support team should develop strategies for the whole school to meet the needs of learners with special educational needs. This team should also be a resource for teachers experiencing problems in their classrooms. The school has the primary responsibility for helping children learn alongside their typically developing peers. An inclusive school must enable education structures, systems and methodologies to meet the needs of all children, particularly those who face the greatest barriers to achieving their right to education. Parents 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. Bringing special children into mainstream requires adjustments that schools need to make in advance. Transport facilities should be altered, so that these children can move around with relative ease. Architecturally, there should be ramps and wheelchair access constructed in service areas such as toilets. Student-oriented components, such as medical and educational assessment, books and stationery, uniforms, transport allowance, reader allowance and stipend for girls, support services, assistive devices, boarding the lodging facility, therapeutic services, teaching learning materials, etc. should provide according to need of the students. Differently abled children should be treated equally as the normal children and instead of looking them in sympathy their talents and abilities should be recognised for their self-respect and welfare of the society. Necessary school supplies such as audio learning or textbooks in Braille should be made available. Suitable modification to examination system may be required, so as to eliminate pure mathematical and logical assessment. Teachers attitudes towards inclusive education could be formed and developed in the context of an educational system which can provide some specific conditions in order to have a good practice in this field. Families with normal children should develop relationships with families with children with disabilities and be able to make a contribution. In-service training programmes of two to three weeks' duration for general educators and special educators in all the disabilities and in specific areas of disability should arrange to effectively teach children with disabilities. Those schools that are committed to taking in children with special needs, then teachers must attend workshops in order to be adjusted to the child's needs. Periodic evaluation of the training programmes and constant updating to meet the challenges of changing trends in special education should be part of the planning of teacher preparation. Inclusion should

not be the sole responsibility of the specific class teacher. Everybody should be involved and take responsibility. Training for teachers should be sustained and ongoing. It should most importantly focus on attitudinal change. 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 programmes should be carefully developed by an expert group which includes practising special teachers.

Conclusion

It is a fact that the number of disabled students decrease as they because they make progress through the upstairs of education. Earlier surveys have shown that till the secondary and higher secondary level reach, the students enrolled at the primary level are left only at the higher secondary level. On the other hand, there are many good centrally sponsored schemes like IEDSS, which provide 100 percent provision to facilitate the inclusion of children with disabilities at secondary and higher secondary level.. Despite this, students express lack of special attention, teachers express lack of training, administrators express their inability because they are not aware of the special needs of these children and as a result, to develop annual plans according to their special needs are not able to. . The wide gap between the policy provisions and the actual use of these provisions is needed to be addressed through important interventions. Some of the challenges mentioned by the results of the study are: Inclusion, approach, cooperation, administrative support, planning and management, understanding of training. Right to Education Act 2009 ensures all children their education, religion, capacity, and education. Despite this, it is essential to build an inclusive society through an inclusive approach. In doing so, we have challenged commonly held beliefs and developed a new set of core assumptions. 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. However, challenges still exists. Challenges can be overcome by increasing public awareness of human rights in communities and by making positive examples of inclusive education of disabled children and adults and success in life beyond school. We need to develop an inclusive design of learning to make education fun for all children so that their education is welcome, learner-friendly and beneficial, and they also feel a part of it. The children with disabilities are our vital human resource. Legislation and effective implementation are the keys to growth and development for these students.

Recommendation

1. Attitudinal barriers are a serious concern and need to be addressed seriously through sensitization programmes. Awareness and educating the communities, is very essential. It is very important that people should know and utilize the concept of inclusive education.
2. The procedure of releasing funds need to be made simpler by removing various levels. It would be simpler if funds are directly released to schools implementing the scheme.
3. It is important that admission, retention, getting support facilities, scholarships, and full participation of children in all aspects of education, should not be subject to any criteria based on assessment tests, judgment

by professionals and experts including psycho-medical certificates. No child with disabilities should be asked to produce any certificate or document in order to access their right i.e. right to free education.

4. Assistive technologies should be made available at low cost, and to be easily available.
5. Education loans to be made available for these students at 0% for higher studies.
6. Online complaint portals to be developed for children with disabilities to raise their voice against any type of discrimination.
7. Schools should be given rating based on the assessment of the provisions for inclusive education and inculcated faculties.

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