

Teachers Role in Inclusive Education

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1.0.0 Introduction

The directive principle to guide state policy Article 45 states that "free and compulsory education should be provided for all children until they complete the age of 14". The 93rd amendment to the Indian Constitution passed in December 2001, confirms the Government's commitment to (EFA) or Education for All or Sarv Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA). SSA framework clearly states that "SSA will ensure that every child with special needs, irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability, is provided education in an appropriate environment. SSA will adopt zero rejection policy so that no child is left out of the education system. It will also support a wide range of approaches, options and strategies for education of children with special needs."

National Curriculum Framework (2005) policy of inclusion needs to be implemented in all schools and throughout in our education system. Schools need to become centre that prepare children for life and ensure that all children, especially the differently able children from marginalized sections, and children in difficult circumstances get the maximum benefit of this critical area of education (NCF 2005, P85)

Kugelmass, (2004) Inclusive education means including differently able children in regular classrooms that have been designed for normal children. It refers to an education system that accommodates all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions.

In overall terms, Inclusive Education implies four key elements: UNESCO 2006

It is essentially a process of looking for the most appropriate ways of responding to diversity as well as trying to learn how to learn from the differences;

It is linked to stimulating, through multiple strategies, the creativity and the capacity of addressing and resolving problems by students;

It comprises the right of the child to attend school, express his/her opinion, have quality learning experiences and attain valuable learning outcomes; and

It implies the moral responsibility of prioritizing those students who are at risk of being marginalized and excluded from the school, and of obtaining low learning outcomes.

1.1.0 Teachers Role in Inclusive education

Mastropieri & Scruggs, (2010), teachers play a pivotal role in mainstreaming inclusive education. The literature on inclusive education is undisputed about no matter how excellent the educational infrastructure might be, how well articulated educational policy might be, how well resourced a program might be, effective inclusion does not take place until regular classroom teachers deliver relevant and meaningful instruction to students with disabilities.

The key responsibilities of a teacher for inclusive education are as follows:

Overseeing the day to day operation of the scheme IEDSS in particular and inclusive education in general.

Coordinating the provision of support services for children with special needs

Regular listening and seeking advice from fellow special educators in regard to the education of child with special needs

Liasioning with other special educators' of other schools for updating the information and knowledge.

Keep constant liasioning with different Non-Government organization working in this field for aiding support services for child with special needs

Maintain the database of child with special needs

Develop the assessment portfolio of child with special needs

Prepare a list of required materials and equipment before the beginning of the session Organize continuous, periodic and regular parent meeting

Ensuring that a child with special needs joins in the activities of the school together with other pupils.

1.1.1 Teachers Role in the changing scenario

Hyam, (2004) the role of educators in changing environment is also required to change, if there is to be a smooth transition from mainstream education to inclusive education. Change will not yield the desired results, if those who implement it are resistant or are not committed. Educators must see the value of the change and be prepared to embrace this change.

1.2.0 Concept of Teachers Competencies and Training Needs

Competency is a term used widely by different people in different contexts. So it is defined in different ways. Teacher education and job performance of a teacher are the contexts in which this term is used. Houston (1987) competencies are the requirements of a competency based teacher education, which includes knowledge, skills and values the teacher trainee must demonstrate for successful completion of the teacher education programme. A few characteristics of a competency are as follows.

1. A competency consists of one or more skills whose mastery would affect the achievement of the competency
2. A competency has its linkage with all the three domains on which performance can be assessed. It includes the domains of knowledge, skill and attitude.
3. As competencies, have a performance dimension of them, they are observable and demonstrable.
4. As the competencies are observable, they are also measurable. It is possible to assess a competency from the performance of a teacher. It is not essential that all competencies of a teacher have the same extent of knowledge, skill and attitude. There may be some competencies of a teacher which have the same extent of knowledge, skill and attitude. There may be some competencies involving more of knowledge than skill and attitude, whereas, some competencies may be skill /performance loaded.

1.2.1 Teachers' competencies for inclusive education

The current reforms put in effort towards school restructuring aimed at implementing effective inclusion programs present significant challenges for regular school teachers. The success of these efforts depends largely on the responsiveness and willingness of these teachers to meet the educational and social needs of students with varying abilities. The teachers are now required to have a number of additional skills and competencies, not generally practiced in regular education classrooms. The Open File on Inclusive Education (UNESCO, 2001) suggests a number of requirements from teachers, from the perspective of inclusive curricula such as, teachers participation in curriculum development at local level, their skill development for curriculum adaptation, management of a composite range of classroom activities, providing support to students' learning, working outside the traditional subject limitations and in culturally sensitive ways. Few researchers argue that teachers are now expected to do almost all of the role functions as that of a special education teacher. The difference, however, is that they have not received an intensive training in the skills that are possessed by special educators.

1.2.2 Competency: Categories and Types

Several lists of vital teacher competencies have been created; all of which are context and situation specific. These competencies have been classified under the seven categories. Each of them is briefly discussed regarding their relevance to inclusive education. The seven core competencies include:

1. Professional knowledge
2. Classroom management
3. Collaboration
4. Assessment and evaluation

5. Instructional techniques

6. Individualized and adaptive instruction

7. Assistive Technology

1. Professional Knowledge

Professional knowledge in the context of inclusive education includes a knowledge and understanding of: basic terminology and concepts used in special education; a rationale and history of inclusive education; various disabling conditions; policies, programs and legislations related to inclusive education; rights, roles and responsibilities of parents, students, teachers and other professionals as they relate to individuals with special learning needs.

2. Classroom Management

Classroom management for inclusive education includes the knowledge of: Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA): basic classroom management theories, methods and techniques for individuals with different learning needs; research-based best practices for effective management of teaching and learning: materials arrangement creating a positive atmosphere in the classroom and organization of aids and support services. The diversity in the classrooms presents a range of management encounters for school teachers. For example, differently able students, particularly those identified with emotional and behavior disorder (EBD) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD), may present unique behavioral challenges for these teachers. According to Wang, Haertal and Walberg (1993) effective classroom management has been found to contribute more to school learning than classroom instruction, curriculum design, student demographics, and home support and school policy.

3. Collaboration

Friend and Cook (2010) define teamwork/collaboration as an interactive process that enables people with diverse expertise to produce creative solutions to commonly defined problems. An ever increasing diversity in the classrooms has made it necessary for regular classroom teachers to work with special education teachers, school psychologists, para-professionals (such as Speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, recreational therapists etc.) parents of students with disabilities, and instructional assistants. The joint effort in dealing with the problems creating solutions would enhance the chances of the success of the programme or the course.

4. Assessment and Evaluation

McLaughlin & Lewis. (2001) state that regular school teachers are required to exhibit competency in assessment in order to identify the specific needs of differently able students. Assessment, the process of using testing and other Formal and informal means of evaluation to make educational decisions, is one of

the most vital skills for a regular classroom teacher to have in the implementation of inclusive education programs. The teacher has to employ both, basic skills such as gathering learning and background information of differently able students and also highly specialized skills such as selecting, administering, scoring and interpreting standardized measurement instruments.

5. Instructional Techniques

This skill is at the heart of all the competencies that regular teachers need to exhibit while working with diverse student population. These skills are the ones that they should use on a daily basis to provide appropriate instruction to special needs students. A number of specific instructional techniques that regular classroom teachers would require to be competent in include differentiated instruction, activity based and peer tutoring, experiential learning and collaborative learning. Each one of them has been tested in the field and validated to demonstrate their effectiveness. Other practices that have also been field tested with students with special needs include response cards, guided notes, and error correction and time trials.

Differentiated Instruction

Activity Based and Experiential Learning

Peer Tutoring

Comparative Learning

Earlier, regular classroom teachers employed the ability grouping to deal with variations in student skill levels. Gamoran (1992) studied the research on ability grouping and decided that an educational practice perpetuated low achievement and increased the gap between high and low achieving students.

6. Individualized and Adaptive Instruction

Individualized and adaptive instructions are educational approaches that recognize, anticipate and program for variation according to the student's background knowledge, learning styles, motivation and personal interest. Creating an educational program (individualized) that is tailored to the unique needs of a differently able child and this is the hallmark of special education. This is what makes special education different from regular education.

7. Assistive Technology

Recent progresses in technology for special needs students has made it possible for to accomplish a number of tasks, while being in regular education environment, that was not possible earlier. The 'new' competencies derive from the social dynamics that impact the school curriculum. The emerging competencies include maintaining ethical and professional standards (CEC, 2010) and sensitivity toward the cultural background of differently able students with disabilities. (Mitchell, 2000).

1.2.3 Need of in-service Training

Among its numerous objectives, the SSA pursues to empower teachers through extensive training. The special focus is on 'Children with Special Needs' (CWSN). CWSN includes kids with sensory impairments (hearing and vision), physical handicap, mental retardation and learning disability. Equity and integration of education for these kids does not only mean to simply enroll them into regular schools or classrooms. It means that physical and psychological barriers between these children and the others are broken.

1.2.4 In-service Training of Teachers

It is essential to train all teachers in same way to enhance their skills and update their knowledge. Teachers can be benefited by the approach of Inclusive education in various ways. Such as-

It creates a realization of the significance of direct individualized instruction.

It enhances ways of creatively addressing challenges.

It develops skills related to teamwork.

It enhances accountability skills.

It overcomes monotony.

1.3.0 DUTY AND RESPONSIBILITIES CHART RESOURCE TEACHERS UNDER INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Implemented from February 2013

Implementation of the scheme of inclusive education is done with an objective to provide Maximum benefit to the CWSN. To fulfill the objective to provide maximum resource support to the CWSN, the following duties and responsibilities are issued

1.3.1 Schedule of the Resource teacher

1. The resource teacher shall start their working by reporting to the Principal cum Block Resource Coordinator of the concerned IED School where he/she is placed.
2. All the resource teacher will take one period in the morning along with a general educator and provide Collaborative teaching to the CWSN studying in the school or attending resource room along with the educationally backward peers of that school. The CWSN Who would benefit from the additionally designed extra class are identified children with learning disability, slow learner, orthopedically impaired children who are either in the grade as per his age mates or one or two grades below educationally as per his grade.

1.3.2 Duties and responsibilities of the resource teachers are further divided under following sub heads With regard to the data of the CWSN:

1. The record of the compiled data shall stay with the resource teacher in a compiled form in the resource room and one copy of it shall be duly submitted to the principal cum block Resource coordinator of the IED school.
2. The resource teacher will contribute while filling up of the DISE format so that no discrepancy with regard to the figures is made.

1.3.3. With regard to maintaining a cumulative profile of the CWSN:

1. The resource teacher will ensure to make a cumulative profile of the CWSN allotted for Support under him/her.
2. The resource teacher will make the IEP's and case history profile of the CWSN children and update it from time to time.

1.3.4 With regard to the visits to be paid in the schools or for providing home based support to the CWSN:

1. The resource teachers shall attend not less than eighteen (18 years), children with mental retardation of severe and profound condition at their homes under Home Based Education program. The period of home based education is one year.
2. The resource teacher shall spend one hour 30 minutes to 2 hours with each child at home during their visit under close observance of the parent/guardian of the child.

1.3.5 With regard to maintenance and upkeep of resource room

1. The resource teacher shall maintain and upkeep the resource room and make a common register of the entire stock lying in the resource room.
2. The resource teacher shall return to the resource room all such material issued for use with children, at the time of quitting the job.

1.3.6 With regard providing support to the parent of the CWSN

1. The resource teacher shall organize a quarterly parent teacher meet for the parents of the CWSN of the block under the chairmanship of principal cum block resource coordinators
2. The resource teacher shall provide support to all the parents and handle the queries of all the parents and motivate them.

1.3.7 With regard to sensitizing and providing support to the general teachers

1. The resource teacher shall provide support to the general teachers with regard to handling The CWSN child in a regular classroom.

2. The resource teacher shall orient the general teacher about the teaching techniques for Teaching CWSN in an inclusive classroom and also class room management techniques

1.3.8 With regard to work ethics and submission of reports

1. The resource teacher's are dedicated towards the activities under inclusive education during working under the project and, hence, they shall not work in any two places simultaneously in case if such practice by any resource teacher, comes to the notice of the Project, stringent action will be initiated against such candidates as per law including immediate termination of contract.

1.4. Rationale of the present study

In "Article HI: Basic education should be provided to all children, youth and adults to this end, basic education services of quality should be expanded and consistent measures must be taken to reduce disparities." To achieve this, quality teachers are vital to fulfill the need of quality education and also inclusive education where special needs children will be included and obtain education with other non-disable children.

From the above discussion one can conclude that for successful mainstreaming of the inclusive education, it is imperative to improve the quality of teachers in relation to competencies required and in-service training, the emphasis should be placed on:

To innovate and devise teaching and learning methodologies/ strategies that fill the lacuna (if any) present in the system.

Identification of training needs inclusive school teacher in the context of their competencies to improve the quality of in-service training programmes.

1.5 Conclusion

The role of the special educator is critical in schools where the general educational system is not yet inclusive; either the role may lead to segregation inside the regular schools or can foster inclusive policies and practices. The reputation of a School and its influence on the life of the community invariably depends on the kind of teachers working in it. Thus, a teacher's role is pivotal in imparting quality education and bringing about qualitative change in an educational system.

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