



MAINTAINING EQUITY AND QUALITY IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: AN ANALYSIS

Saswati Dash

**Assistant Professor, Teacher Education Programme
Rajendra University, Balangir, Odisha, India**

ABSTRACT: India is amongst the few countries where Inclusive education has been adopted towards educating the children with disabilities and learning difficulties. The term, 'Inclusive Education' refers to the inclusion of all children in the education system irrespective of their differences and difficulties. The aim of introducing inclusive education is to include disabled children along with the normal children in the same classroom having the same environment. In fact, more than 14% of the total population in India lives in rural areas without any school. As per the data of Ministry of Rural Development, it was revealed that around 13,511 villages across all states do not have schools. Therefore, the idea of inclusive education will bring all students together in one classroom regardless of their physical, social, emotional, linguistic, intellectual or other conditions and will help to maximize the potential of all students. This article deals with the right of inclusive children.

Index Terms: - Inclusion, inclusive education, quality education etc

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the world, children with special needs (CWSN) were neglected until the 18th century, when the ideas of fraternity, equality sweeping France and America inspired political reformers and leaders in medicine and education to turn their attention towards the educational needs of such individuals. France played a pioneering role in the area of special education, it was in Paris that valentine Hay started a school for the blinded in 1785 and father De L'apee developed an early version of finger spelling for the deaf Joan Mare Gaspard Itard's case study of The wild Boy of Veyron is a pioneering work in the fill of education for the mental Retarded.

In order to achieve success in educating measures, various steps have been taken. One of them is inclusion. Inclusion is perhaps the most widely accepted topic in the teaching and learning process in the field of education. Inclusive education is a new approach towards educating the children with disabilities and learning difficulties with that of normal ones within the same roof. A lot of research has been done on its significance, its impact and the ways to apply it. The Chinese proverb says, "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn." The classroom is built on interaction, cooperation, group work, and participation. These can only be possible through inclusion. In case there is exclusion, the teaching process

would not be effective or we can say that the motive behind the right to education as a fundamental right would not be fruitful. Inclusion is one of the major components which, whenever applied properly, school makes progress.

Alongside different regions of the world, India as well, witnesses the rise of extraordinary schools for individuals with disabilities. The principal school for the hard of hearing was set up in Bombay in 1083 and first schools for the visually impaired at Amritsar in 1887. There was a quick extension in the quantity of such foundations after that. Today, there are 3200 exceptional schools in India which provide inclusive education to the children with disabilities.

In 2016, the Right of Person with Disabilities Act, 2016 was enacted by the central government by repealing the earlier act i.e., Person with Disability Act, 1995. The primary objective from bringing out the new act is to address the social construct of society including attitudinal and physical barriers that prevent a person with disability from leading a meaningful life. The Act makes specific reference to the term “inclusive education”. So, in order to ensure the right to education based on individual needs and abilities, the concept of inclusive education has been given more emphasis. The primary objectives of Inclusive education are as follows:-

- To ensure education for all
- To provide the right to education to all the students without discrimination
- To improve quality of education
- To fulfill the constitutional responsibilities
- To provide education for children with disabilities

MEANING OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The word education has been derived from the Latin word “*Educatum*”, which means the act of teaching and training. In simple words, Education is the process of facilitating learning whereas, the term inclusion implies, being a part of something or being embraced into the whole. In other words, inclusion means the act of including or the state of being included. Hence, Inclusive Education can be defined as a learning environment that promotes the full personal, academic and professional development of all learners irrespective of race, caste, creed, colour, sex etc. This is based on the principle of “No one is deprived of Education” which suggests that everyone is having equal opportunity to study in school. According to *Puri and Abraham*, “Inclusive education means including the children in common schools and teaching them together irrespective of diversities”.

CONCEPT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The concept of inclusive education was adopted at the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality and was restated at the World Education Forum. 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 Nations Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Person with a Disability Proclaiming Participation and equality for all Inclusive Education (IE) 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 (UNICEF 2007). Inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners At the Joelton World Conference

(1900) in Thailand, the goals for Education for All were set and it was proclaimed that every person (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.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

In order to implement equity and quality education, many hurdles in the form of challenges may be foreseen. However apart from all the challenges the concept needs to be implemented in its true spirit. But as we know India is a developing country so we cannot detour the major challenges that are faced in order to implement inclusive education. Some of the major challenges are as follows:-

- **Lack of Trained Teachers**

Lack of training of teachers to deal with inclusive education is one of the major challenges faced by the disabled students. Teachers who are not adequately trained in dealing with students with disabilities in the classroom can cause more problems for such students. Inadequate training results in teachers unable to appropriately identify the needs of these diverse learners. If the teachers are not able to identify the difficulties faced by these students then they can't provide proper learning experiences to cater to the needs along with the regular classmates. This affects the performance of the students with disabilities negatively as their needs are not satisfied. Thus, the problems of these differently able students keep on increasing until the child has to drop out from the school. This is totally against the objective of inclusive education.

- **Rigid curriculum**

The rigid education system is a big challenge for society. It has also a very limited scope of modification according to the requirements of the differently-able students. Most of the subjects depend upon memory and less emphasis is given to skill development. This type of curriculum may not be useful for the differently able students. Let us take an example, the uneducable mentally retarded students need to be taught skills that will make them economically independent, such courses are really included in the curriculum. The rigid evaluation system is based on memory focusing on language and mathematics, summative evaluation consists of a common final examination where students are given one question paper and are expected to respond in one particular way. This becomes difficult for differently able students as they have abilities that they may not be evaluated by such a rigid system. The absence of an alternative flexible evaluation system is a big challenge to inclusive education.

- **Limited resources**

One of the main features of inclusive education is to bring into the classroom. Therefore, necessary physical and human resources for the disabled children in schools, especially those situated in rural areas, have poor basic infrastructure like no ramps or western style toilets and lack of many more appropriate human resources. Thus, having sophisticated resources for students with disabilities is a big challenge for such schools.

STRATEGIES FOR MAINTAINING EQUITY AND QUALITY IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

- **Accessibility:** Inclusive system is the strategic position to provide education to the target groups, in the classroom environment of every school and allowing them to learn at their own pace to attain educational goals.
- **Training programmes:** to be organised for all teachers to equip them with awareness (inclusion) and competencies related to affective domain so that they will be more sensitive, have a positive attitude and a strong will to be committed to their calling • Teaching learning Approaches: Teachers to be encouraged as they are the greatest innovators in the classroom using a number of interactive approaches like- discussion, participatory, role play, dramatization, group activity, brainstorming, mind map, encouraging collaboration among children, use of multimedia etc, to make learning a pleasant experience for all the children.
- **Building Relationships:** Inclusion is about building relationships between teacher & students, students & students, teachers & parents based on mutual respect and acceptance.
- **Flexible curriculum:** a flexible and relevant curriculum with measurable and achievable learning outcomes without affecting the quality. Preparation of child centred learning material.
- **Awareness programmes for parents:** can be organized so that they will know the problem of their children and be supportive to them.

CONCLUSION

Inclusion of children with special education needs has become a matter of priority in many countries around the world. It is not the reforms towards inclusion of children with diverse needs that continue across the globe. The implementation of inclusive education requires dedication and willingness on part of all stakeholders, especially educators. Every educator must be aware of the concept of inclusion; Sensitization towards inclusion is the need of the hour. Yet special education professionals with special needs as well as parents of non-disabled peer groups, students without disabilities and the community as a whole have to be empowered for inclusive education to be successful. Further, there is a need for a barrier free environment and suitable communication to reach to school. Above all sensitization of administrators, adaptation in curriculum, valuation procedures and teacher preparation to enhance their competencies in teaching children with special needs.

SUGGESTIONS

After having so much of discussion and deliberation on equity and quality inclusive education, the researcher had come out with the following suggestions:-

- Our government has taken a number of initiatives to improve the enrolment, retention and achievement of children with disabilities. There is needs to established inter-linked and collaborations along various organization to prevent overlapping, duplation and contradictions in programmed implementation,

- Most services for children with special needs are concentrated in urban areas and big cities or close to district headquarters. The majority of children with disabilities who live in rural areas don't benefit from these services. There is needs to established inclusive in rural areas
- Due to absence of consistent data on the magnitude and educational status of disabled children's, it is very difficult to understand the nature of the problem, and to make realistic intervention
- Community involvement and partnerships between government agencies and NGOs had been instrumental in promoting inclusive education
- Many regular schools have a larger number of children in each classroom and few teachers. As a consequence of this, many teachers are reluctant to work with children with

