

**IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE****Prem Lata**

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Abstract

After independence, education has remained a deep concern for the government and society in our country. A large number of programmes have been undertaken in the past six decades to tackle this gigantic question. India has remained the major pivot of education in medieval and ancient periods but the present scene appears to be unpleasant as referred by UNESCO data, the largest number of the illiterate are found in India. It is also known that India has multi aspects diversity which sometimes hinders the path of educational as well as economic progress. A unique initiative taken by government of India is Right to Education (2009). It provides a fundamental right of free and compulsory education to each and every child in India. To provide cultural and social equality, government of India has suggested implementing inclusive education in schools. In this paper, a humble attempt has been made to highlight the difficulties, challenges, roadblocks, as well as the steps taken to overcome these problems.

Key words- *Inclusive Education, Indian Perspective*

We know that India is a country with wide cultural diversity. This diversity is often seen in our school system also where students from all sections of our society and from various places of the country come together in the classroom to obtain instructional training. Wide diversity is found among the learners depending upon their physical, social, emotional and mental state. One can see so many situations under such diversity, there may be exceptional learners, slow learners, learners with some form of learning disability and the most importantly mentally retarded as well as physically impaired like hearing-impaired, visually impaired learners etc.

The main concern in India being the largest democracy of the world is equal care and attention of this segment of the learners who remain otherwise at disadvantage as compared to the main stream students. Therefore, Right to Education with equal opportunity in the classroom to obtain learning have led to the emergence of the concept of inclusive education. The RTE provides to go for innovative approaches to universalize basic education, to legislate further to implement it

whenever require, to provide for effective local governance system for implementation of RTE, Act.

CONCEPT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The idea of inclusive education means to provide education to students with special educational needs along with non-disabled students under the same roof. R.P. Hastings has referred that under the inclusion-model, students with special needs spend most or all of their time with non-disabled students. Implementation of these practices varies schools most frequently use them for selected students with mild to severe special needs. One of the major considerations that will characterize the classrooms of the new century is learner diversity. This will be a major advance from the past practices and conventions and shall speak of significant role that inclusive education shall have to play in future. Tapasak and coauthors has stated(1999)“Students learn the importance of individual and group contributions and develop valuable life skills that are often unexplored in less inclusive settings.” Sometimes Inclusive education is used as integrated education. Inclusive education differs from previously held notions of integration and mainstreaming, which tended to be concerned principally with disability and ‘special educational needs’ and implied learners changing or becoming ‘ready for’ or deserving of accommodation by the mainstream. By contrast, inclusion is about the child’s right to participate and the school’s duty to accept the child. Inclusion rejects the use of special schools or classrooms to separate students with disabilities from students without disabilities. A premium is placed upon full participation by students with disabilities and upon respect for their social, civil, and educational rights. Inclusion gives students with disabilities skills they can use in and out of the classroom.

Fully inclusive schools, which are rare, no longer distinguish between "general education" and "special education" programs; instead, the school is restructured so that all students learn together.

As used by UNESCO, inclusion refers to far more than students with special educational needs. It is centered on the inclusion of marginalized groups, such as religious, racial, ethnic, and linguistic minorities, immigrants, girls, the poor students with disabilities, HIV/AIDS patients, remote populations, and more. In some places, these people are not actively included in education and learning processes. In the U.S. this broader definition is also known as "culturally responsive" education.

With a view to give all learner access to quality education, a dramatic shift from exclusivity to inclusivity is required. The concept of inclusive education has global reach and first of all it introduced in Salamanca Statement and its framework for ‘Action on Special Needs Education’ has been laid down in world conference in 1994 organized by UNESCO and Ministry of Education, Spain.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIAN CONTEXT

In Indian context, the major initiatives were taken in 1968 and 1986 in Education Policy respectively. Before 1986 efforts were made by ‘Ministry of Human Resource Development’ in

1984 for bringing children with disabilities under the regular system of education. NPE 1986 took measures for “integrating the physically and mentally handicapped with the general community as equal partners, to prepare them for growth and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence.” The Government of India has passed the three major legislations related to disability and The RCI Act(1992), PWD Act(1995), National Trust Act(1999) which are implemented at the centre and state level. In the 86th Amendment of the constitution of India (2002) has made Education a fundamental right for children in the age group of 6-14 years and in further progress, the Right to Education Act (2009) has been enacted and its implementation at the national level in all the states of India is underway vigorously. That means all children with disabilities have to be brought within the domain of education. Sarv Shiksha Abhiyaan(SSA)- a scheme sponsored by the centre has the cherished goal of universalization of elementary education(UEE). National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (2006) aims at inclusive and accessible education and life skill training to children with disabilities to enable them to develop their abilities to their fullest potentials.

RTE (2009) provides that :

- Free and compulsory education to all children of India in the 6-14 age group.
- No child shall held back, expelled, or require to pass a board examination until completion of elementary education.
- A child above six years has not been admitted in any school or though admitted, could not complete his or her elementary education, then he or she shall be admitted in a class appropriate to his or her age; as may be prescribed: provided further that a child so admitted to elementary education shall be entitled to free education till completion of elementary education even after fourteen years.
- A child who completes elementary education shall be awarded a certificate.
- There will be 25% reservation for economically disadvantaged communities in admission to Class One in all private schools.
- Financial burden will be shared between state and centre governments.

Thus, we find that many a steps at the level of Legislature have been taken and their implementation is in progress by the government agencies, social groups and NGOs in a big way to realize the dream of free and equal education to all students including the students with special needs. To fulfill this objective, the inclusive education shall be based on some principles.

PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Principles of inclusive education may be summed up as under:

- Every child has an inherent right to education on basis of equality of opportunity.
- No student is discriminated or excluded from obtaining education on grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, disability, birth poverty or other status.
- School adapts to the needs of students, rather than students adapting to the needs of the school.
- The student’s views are listened to and taken seriously.
- Individual differences between students are a source of richness and diversity, and not a problem.

The principles given above emphasize the need for redesigning our educational environment so that it welcomes inclusion of each student. While implementing the inclusive education successfully, many challenges emerge which have to be overcome.

CHALLENGES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

There are so many hurdles in the implementation of inclusive education in Indian context. Challenges of inclusive education are given here-under:

Negative Attitude

Most of the people in India despite showing outwardly compassion have negative attitude towards inclusive education. This leads to discrimination and results in major road-blocks to equal learning opportunities. Most parents are concerned about academic performance of their children and they have misplaced fear that acceptance of children with special needs shall affect the achievement of their children. The attitudes of all concerned in implementing an inclusive programme have been identified as major factor affecting its success or failure (Hoad, 1998; Rose & Smith, 1993). Parents of both children with and without disabilities have tended to express support for inclusive. But parents are also concerned that their children will learn inappropriate behaviour from children who are disabled. Sometimes teachers also express that children with disabilities need more time to learn and this will reduce the quality of instruction for the other children.

Lack of Educational Environment

The main problem to inclusive education is the lack of proper infrastructure. There are some schools which have cultural barriers. Despite various regional's cultures in respect of social costumes, religious traditions and ethnic approaches, the secular and democratic fabric of various institutions must be preserved with professional ethics and noble missionary spirit. Government is trying to overcome these barriers but long term planning and community-cooperation are required. For this Panchayati Raj institutions at the rural level and local self government agencies should be actively involved to ensure people participation in successful implementation. Classrooms are small and narrowly structured as a result little movement is possible between activity area. Some of the schools are in congested and over populated residential areas pose another problem which requires immediate corrective steps.

Rigid Curriculum

Curriculum is not designed on the basis of flexibility and it is content-heavy. With such rigid curriculum, students with special education needs are marginalized from the mainstream education. General education teachers have to adapt some strategies to develop social and academic skills in interaction with individuals who are differently –able. A curriculum with skill based education is required. So, designing suitable curriculum as per inclusive setting is a challenge for implementing inclusive education.

Poverty Stricken Segment

Poverty is a major cause for educational marginalization. In rural India students are not getting proper access to education because of poverty and high fee-structure. Dieltiens and Gilbert (2008) stated that poverty is generally given as important reason for why learners drop-out of school. In economically weaker sections, they do not have high hopes for their future. Capacity to organise for collective goals may be diminished and young people can be alienated from schooling. And in communities, even economically poor normal students are segregated on the basis of poverty. To some extent, it is true that disability leads to poverty and poverty leads to disability. Resource crunch, inadequacy of funds, and social taboos are the main reasons for poor progress in providing quality bases inclusive education to all children under the same roof. We know that 75% population of India is living under extreme poverty conditions as per World Development Report (2009). This forces people to send their children at tender age in search of jobs instead of for elementary schools. Therefore, national efforts at reduction/removal of poverty and educational reforms must go together.

Lack of Teacher-Training

The main difficulty in inclusive education is near absence of inclusive education in teacher-training. Inclusive education is new and specific instructional programmes to prepare them for the same. So, specific training programmes and workshops must be launched at national level and state level to equip and reorient the existing teaching staff to meet the challenge of inclusive education. Seminars, conferences and workshops could be of great help to make his programme a success. Principals and Managements should take initiative to send their teachers for such training programmes, innovative seminars and conferences.

lack of Community Awareness

In country like India, communities are not aware about the programme of inclusive education and help given by the government to children with special needs. Because of illiteracy and ignorance of the parental generation, particularly in rural settings, they remain unaware of various government schemes to help them and their children for their rights to have access to better health facilities, educational provisions and various other subsidized economic schemes for which they are otherwise entitled. It is also very important for the whole society to be prepared to accept the inclusive policies.

Insufficient funding

A serious constraint is shortage of resources—lack of schools, inadequate facilities, shortage of teachers and qualified staff, lack of learning materials and absence of support. Around 1% of funds under SSA are spent on inclusive education. Most of the state governments are facing regular crisis of resource crunch and at times, they are not in a position to pay the salary, pension and other retirement benefits to their employees. Hence, inadequacy of funds is the biggest hurdle in the implementation of inclusive programme.

Though, there are so many hurdles in the way of implementation of inclusive education even than it is a need of the day for providing social, cultural and educational security to each and every child in India. There are some suggestions which could ensure the success of inclusive education in Indian context.

Suggestions for Effective implementation of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is the need of present scenario. We can implement inclusive education by following these points:

Changing Attitude of People

Old belief and lack of awareness about disabled and their education is the most serious road-block in the path of inclusive education. The awareness of parents and other social groups is need of the hour to create more sensitivity in society about issues of disability and about the right and potentials of the disabled children. In addition to government and society, mass-media can play a great role in this direction.

Providing Conductive Educational Environment

To meet the demands of inclusive education, restructuring of our schools' building is paramount need to improve educational environment. Infrastructure should be provided according to the needs of special children after taking the opinion from the special education experts. There is urgent need for additional staff for effective implementation of inclusive education.

Flexible Curriculum

The construction of ideal curriculum is one of the most stupendous task in any educational reform. The suitability of the curriculum needs to be defined in terms of inclusive setting. The curriculum should be so flexible that the child may grow according to his/her learning characteristics. The curricular goals should also not be formed so rigidly, it should be student friendly and context-oriented.

Increase Employment Opportunities

If we increase employment opportunities in rural regions, the scale of poverty may come to a decline and students will be able to get better access to education. Most of the reasons for ill-health and disability among children is poverty and inadequate sources in their family specially in backward area and rural setup. Employment opportunities in economically backward area could help to solve this problem at root level. Further, there is need to rationalize the fee structure for poor students in which will adopt more figures in enrollment ratio among students in India.

Adequate Government Policy

Government should come forward boldly to implement inclusive education at the state and central level. Ministry of Social justice and empowerment must prepare a time-line for inclusive education with appropriate teachers and resources. Government should motivate educational institutions to create conducive educational environment as well as

to aware people for inclusive education in general by using mass-media and different advertising agencies.

Inputs of Inclusive Education in Teacher Training

Existing teachers need some training for dealing with disabled children. Principals must be willing to allow teachers to get training in special education. Persons qualified in special education are qualified only in certain impairments. They also need time off to get training. Orientation programmes must be organized for general teachers and special education teaches. There is an urgent need of teacher-training programmes for reorienting and equipping them with competencies for inclusive education in their regular classrooms. The national teacher training course need to be extended in content and time in order to teach inclusively.

Approach to Inclusive Schools

Schools should be setup in the approachable areas of students. Inclusive education needs sufficient transformation from the society. RTE Act (2009) involves the different section of society for implementation of literacy programmes. In rural area Panchayat Raj institutions must be involved to ensure that schools should be in approachable area so that students should reach the school without any problem and in time. More than 90% of disable children are related to rural area and inclusive education is needed to provide equal educational opportunities to such children in their own location. This shall improve attendance-ratio also and reduced drop-outs ratio.

Adequate funds

Government should provide adequate funds for proper implementation of inclusive education. Inclusive education needs lots of funds in its implementation. To find the path of achievement in inclusion does not mean to save money but needs to improve academic outcomes. Basically such education is not only an effort to moves the special education professionals out of their classrooms to a general classrooms but it has some social concerns and obligations towards students with special needs. So, it is important to provide adequate funding for its implementation. Funds provided by the central government for the noble cause of education for all including the inclusive education must be utilised scrupulously for the specified purpose and for that there has to be a strong mechanism so that the Act is implemented in full spirit and poorest of the poor is brought under the fold of education. Any attempt at diversion of funds must be resisted.

Adequate supports and services for the student

- Well-designed individualized education programs
- Professional development for all teachers involved, general and special educators alike
- Time for teachers to plan, meet, create, and evaluate the students together
- Reduced class size based on the severity of the student needs

- Professional skill development in the areas of cooperative learning, peer tutoring, adaptive curriculum
- Collaboration between parents or guardians, teachers or para educators, specialists, administration, and outside agencies.
- Sufficient funding so that schools will be able to develop programs for students based on student need instead of the availability of funding.

According to Michael Patton, “all students can learn and benefit from education, and that schools should adapt to the physical, social, and cultural needs of students, rather than students adapting to the needs of the school. Proponents believe that individual differences between students are a source of richness and diversity, which should be supported through a wide and flexible range of responses. The challenge of rethinking and restructuring schools to become more culturally responsive calls for a complex systems view of the educational system.” This shows that in the overall development of the child in inclusive education many factors are responsible to ensure its success. In principle these are:

- Family-school partnerships
- Collaboration between general and special educators
- Well-constructed plans that identify specific accommodations, modifications, and goals for each student
- Coordinated planning and communication between "general" and "special needs" staff
- Integrated service delivery
- Ongoing training and staff development

Full inclusion may in fact be a way for schools to placate parents and the general public, using the word as a phrase to garner attention for what are in fact illusive efforts to education students with special needs in the general education environment.

Conclusion:

Though notable efforts have been made and important legislative actions taken at the level of Government and significant efforts made by the Non-government organisations over the past three decades for the implementation of the Inclusive education for all children irrespective of their physical ability or disability and social status yet it is a colossal task in a country like India, catering to the basic needs of proper and quality-based inclusive education, health and food for all with an ever-increasing population of more than 1250 million people.

Hence, a lot of more determined resolve and sustained struggle by the Govt. and Society are need of the fast-changing challenging times. Substantial number of unserved persons with disabilities remain to be accepted and brought into the fold of Inclusive education, many tasks are yet to be expedited to address various issues—namely creating awareness about the inclusive education is the paramount need of the hour and humane approach of society towards this concept, teachers and administrators for designing and implementing effective and viable programme of action and

proper follow-up\monitoring of inclusive education, the question of developing appropriate pedagogies for inclusive class-room is no less important, also developing suited curricular skills, building of congenial friendly environment, acceptance of children with special needs by their peer groups, restructuring of teacher-training programme for reorienting and equipping them with competencies for inclusive education in their regular class-rooms are a few imperative tasks to be undertaken with widest possible support from society coupled with strong political will of the Government and the Legislator.

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