



## RECASTING SCHOOL EDUCATION TOWARDS INCLUSION - "A STUDY OF SYMBIOSIS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL- PASTORAL CARE"

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### **Abstract**

*Inclusion is the need of the hour. Schools providing opportunities for inclusion will probably serves towards quality education. It involves regular schools with specific adoption to deal needs of all children together. For successful & effective inclusion, there is need of special environment creation & skills to adopt that culture with the help of assistive technologies in support to fulfill requirements of all children under one roof. In India, though it took time to accept inclusion by all means, some of the schools trying their level best to accommodate all children with diverse needs in better ways. Symbiosis International School is leading all the way to be the best to facilitate education with different ways. It aims at imparting education with befitting practices. It also promotes a Sanskrit Phrase "VasudhaivaKutumbakam", which means "the world is one family". With this view, researcher studied about "Symbiosis International School- Pastoral Care" Vimannagar, Pune, [Maharashtra (India)] to find out scenario of Inclusive Education Practices in their way.*



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### **Introduction**

Word Inclusion, though easy to spell & read, difficult to implement in action. Such practices need motivation, compassion, patience, constant trainings and skill development with respect to facilitate children with diverse needs. For this reason many schools avoid special need children to accept & accommodate. Parents are suggested & counseled to put their child in special schools only. Some schools admit such children in school but they don't provide necessary opportunities & facilities to include naturally with other children. As a result, schools are said to be inclusive, but they are of integrated type, where partial inclusion & treatment of such children as special/ normal is decided without studying their needs in totality. In Symbiosis International School, efforts are being made to develop necessary attitude, Skills & abilities to foster inclusion with some exception. This example is surely inspiring to encouragetowards leading inclusion by recasting school education.

### **Objectives of the study**

Study of “Symbiosis International School- Pastoral care”

- To investigate different opportunities provided by school with respect to inclusion.
- To understand school culture & policies of inclusion
- To scrutinize different assistive technologies for practicing inclusion effectively.
- To inquire about strategies & management of facilitating diverse need children.

### **Methodology**

To study “Symbiosis International School- Pastoral care” investigator along with their teacher trainees, visited school. A semi-structured interview was conducted along with direct interaction & supervision of school resources. Investigator used descriptive survey method to carry out present investigation.

### **Sample**

A purposive sampling consisted of “Symbiosis International School- Pastoral care” Vimannagar, Pune, [Maharashtra (India)] wherein Mrs. Deepa Prasad along with her team of teachers & assistants, provided necessary information and support for this study.

### **Tools**

A semi-structured interview continued in an open discussion & interactions with teacher trainees. Direct observation of (experiences) evidences of inclusive practices in school. Interactions with trained staff, assistants and school teachers.

### **Analysis & Findings**

#### **Symbiosis International School - Culture & Policy**

Good Culture of any school results in quality education. For inclusion school provides conducive environment, pleasant atmosphere and healthy practices. As stated by co-coordinator, Children from all types of background are welcomed to take education in this school. School follows RTE guidelines where they try to occupy their admissions with multicultural invitees. There are some limitations with respect to the number of admissions to be taken per Standard/ division and ratio of student-teacher to be maintained. For Pastoral Care Unit- which is meant to facilitate special needs of special children, ratio of student-teacher is 1:1. At most 20 children with special needs can be accommodated every year. Total teachers working in Pastoral care are seven which works in shifts and special children are having different time schedule as per shifts. Different assistants are available to give hands on support to teachers & children. Good infrastructural facilities are designed in such way to make special as well as common arrangements for learning better.

### **Creation of School Environment with diverse opportunities**

At present school provides diverse opportunities by treating special students initially as separate, slowly accommodating them with their pace & need in general classroom. This takes time as per child's condition & progress level. An identification of child's need is done at the initial stage of admission of child. Later as per necessity, accommodation as partial and at most basis is done step wisely. Schedule of each special child is different & is maintained with special care & supervision by the team of Pastoral Care unit. Thus treatment as special & normal eventually works in cycles as per diverse needs of child to create Personal Learning Environment.

### **Practicing Inclusion- Effective use of human resources & assistive technology**

For all normal children, student-teacher ratio is maintained as per norms. For special children, student-teacher ratio is maintained as 1:1. With this, assistants serve to take extra care for special children. Those who need special care with respect to develop necessary life skills are constantly supported by Pastoral care team. Individual records of each child is prepared & maintained to check progress of the child. Assistive technology such as computers, iPads, different specially prepared worksheets, speech therapy material, play therapy material, cards, tactile graphics, especially supportive grippers for motor development are available in school. Different separate rooms are designed to give special therapies. School teachers themselves identify the technology needed by the child or they prepare them as per their need. Constant trainings of teacher staff & assistants by the management of Institution, helps in updating them to excel & improve day by day. Various Books, reference material & audio-visual material are kept in cupboards to have ready reference whenever necessary. Different types of models, games are made available to support language & mathematical skills. In specially maintained classrooms for special children seating arrangement- they call it as work station- are designed to have one-to-one interaction between child & facilitator. Half-round & full round work stations usually found working effectively to fill gap between whatever comes good for them. Special children are free to interact & respond as per their wish, they follow their own schedule, attend common classroom with special supervision/observation by their facilitator. Even common/normal classrooms have special seating arrangements for group & individual work. All classrooms & work stations are decorated nicely as if indicates freedom to learn the child in his/her own way. Special need & as well as normal (all) children can play with each other in play area as per their schedule.

### **Strategies & management of facilitating diverse need children**

Coordinator Mrs. Deepa Prasad explained the different strategies with which their team handles their children to make necessary connection with learning. For treating special children they go through identification first, followed by need analysis, Individualized Educational Planning, application of differentiated instruction with different therapies for diverse children. By checking progress, confirming & connecting with their learning, team then decides about future inputs & accommodation as partial and progressive in common classroom. Remedial teaching and differential evaluation are applied as per child's needs. Curriculum is designed & modified to suit the child; this all process is done through continuous settings with team members along with partial interactions/ meetings with child's parents. Constructivist co-operative & collaborative techniques are followed to meet the expectations/ goals/ objectives decided. As said & emphasized by Mrs. Deepa & her team, to follow this process, lot of patience, passion & determination is required by team. She then appreciates management to provide necessary basis & support constantly given by the management. Constant trainings & expert guidance is given by management helps to foster competencies to build this team.

### **Parents, Teachers & Community interconnections**

School conducts parent-teacher meetings regularly. For special children at pastoral care, bimonthly parent meetings are held to have detailed discussion & follow up of child's progress as individual & social. Along with this meeting Individualized Educational Plans are discussed, progress level, strategies & evaluation plans are discussed & decided to foster necessary skills in child. Thorough child's Journal/ personal record, parents can track his/her progress & suggest changes if any. Community support & interactions are done with social service where training to other normal teachers is provided through the team of experts.

### **Conclusion**

In this study, it is evident that School practices Inclusion with its own design & checks for its effectiveness. It aims at inclusion of children with diverse needs. School has set up the attitude of their teachers & assistants to follow the principles of inclusion as well. Almost nine years they practiced with this view, in this process they developed & constantly going through the process of reformation. Team members thus seemed inspired to tackle challenges in inclusion. As they undergo training & provides same for others who need it, it enhanced their practices towards giving quality education. It requires constant support to adopt culture of inclusion, which is provided by their management that knows value of it. Though they states that, they follow all policies of inclusion & RTE guidelines, it is difficult

to maintain all of them together as it is a private institute which runs this school. Symbiosis International School does not include handicapped children & did not provide any reason for that. This school is good in implementing different strategies to enhance learning as well as developing/ providing necessary assistive technology for the same. School is also efficient in maintain individual records of each students & taking constant feedback/ follow up of expected outcomes in total. Infrastructural facilities, arrangements & human resources are the key factors of creating conducive environment for inclusion, for this school has done nice job. To set up Inclusive education is a challenge, lot of obstacles may be there to continue with this, still it is nice example to study , follow & start with, keeping this example as role model. Community & parental connections will lead towards developing more & more number of Inclusive Schools. With this hope, such schools should be visited & experienced again & again.

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