



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY

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Abstract

Inclusive education is pairing of philosophy and pedagogical practices that allow each student to feel respected, confident and safe so he or she can learn and develop to his or her potential. It is based on system of values and beliefs centered on the best interests of the student, which promotes social cohesion, belonging, and active participation in learning, a complete school experience, and positive interactions with peers and others in the school community. The number of difficulties came forward on the account of spreading education among the children. There are lots of students who suffers due to different reason and are not able to continue their education or even not able to start their education. If the reasons are categorized, it finds as working children, children in tribal areas, street children, children of migrant labors, children with HIV/AIDS and under chronic illness, girls living in difficult circumstances, and children with disabilities. In view of the above, the present paper emphasized on "accessing inclusive education for the children with disabilities (CWDs) in General Schools" and the policies and the framework designed to access education to CWDs with dignity and self respect.

Keywords: - Inclusive Education, CWDs, Policies, RTE, Schools.



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Introduction.

Education is an important investment that a country can make and enhancing accessibility to educational services is significant in the development of a nation (World Bank, 1993). This is because education positively affects socio-economic behaviour such as productivity, living standards, health and demographic characteristics of any population. Likewise, it opens infinity of possibilities for society that would otherwise be denied namely; a better chance to lead healthy and productive lives, building strong and nurturing families, participating fully in civic affairs of their communities, molding morals and value creating culture and shaping history. It is a solid foundation for progress and sustainable development, an inherent human rights and critical step towards dismantling the gender discrimination that threatens all other rights catalyzing freedom and democracy within borders and extending its reach as an agent of international peace and security

(UNICEF, 2000). It's therefore, societal obligations to make the provision of education to all people according to the nature of their individual's needs and capacity (Okech, 1993).

The principle of basic education as a human right has been accepted internationally. Education is therefore a fundamental right, and every child must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning. Educational opportunities are related in complex way to people's formative and future relations with peers, family and community as well as work prospects. This was supported by the United Nations Declaration proclaiming the right to education in 1948. But the question rose whether the education access is possible for all the students including CWDs. The concept of special schools for the students with special needs came forward to facilitate the process of imparting education among the students having disabilities. Despite this, the change has been slow, with segregation in special schools dominating the scene until recently.

A well thought came out in the year 2004 as scope of Inclusive Education. It has the potential to meet the diverse educational needs of all children. The Government is thinking to bring every child under the shade of education. Therefore many policies had been introduced in educational field. The general child can take education without any difficulties but what about the child who suffers from many problems. And in effect an evolving and systemic model of inclusive education, where all children reach their full learning, had introduced.

What is Inclusive Education?

It is the implementation of the „policy and process“ that allows all children to participate in all programmes. „Policy“ means that disabled children should be accepted without any restrictions in all the educational programmes meant for the children. It denotes equality, and accepts every child with his own unique capabilities. This principle must be accepted by all the international, national and local programmes. The „process“ of inclusion denotes the ways in which the system makes itself welcoming to all. In terms of inclusion of disabled children, it means the shift in services from „care of the disabled child“ to his education and personal development.“ Inclusive education goes one step further by defining these children as „children with special needs“ who needs special attention, rather than the children who are „impaired“ or „handicapped“. Inclusive education is nothing but „making the programme for disabled children as an integral part of the general educational system rather than a system within general education.

Inclusive Education policy.

Recommendations to send children with disabilities to mainstream schools were first made in the Sargent Report in 1944, and again in 1964 by the Kothari Commission (Julk, 2005). Despite this, the change has been slow, with segregation in special schools dominating the scene until recently.

The 1995 Persons with Disabilities Act (PDA) states that disabled children should be educated in integrated settings where possible, although it seems that the lack of implementation may be due to there being no enforcement agency for this legislation.

Despite the promotion of the inclusive education, govt. documents focus on inclusive education as being about including children with disabilities in the education system, but not specifically the mainstream (Singal, 2005a). However, inclusion in the education is in fact regarded as superior in India due to its preferred status (Mukhopadhyay and Mani, 2002) and that is inclusion in the mainstream that is currently seen as the resource – constrained inferior alternative. However limited coverage of mainly urban-based, impairment specific special schools in India may result in the exclusion of children in disabilities who do not fit the categories of their institutions or who live in rural areas. Inclusive education may be the only way of facilitating educational access for these children.

Policy and Legislative Frameworks

The policy and legislative framework which witnessed how it tries to accomplish the main aim of imparting education on the basis of equality and without discrimination to all the children including CWDs.

Constitutional Safeguards: The Constitution of India (26 November, 1949) clearly states in the Preamble that everyone has the right to equality of status and opportunity. It ensures for all its citizens equality before the law, nondiscrimination and the right to life and liberty (Article 14, 15, 19 and 21 respectively of the Constitution). These Articles do not specifically refer to persons with disabilities but are general in nature. The article 41 of the Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution supports the right to work, to education and to public assistance in certain cases including disablement. Further, article 45 commits to the provision of free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years. Based on this, the Constitution (86th Amendment) Act 2002, has been enacted by the parliament making education a fundamental right of all children in the age group of 6–14 years.

Kothari Commission (1964–66): The Kothari Commission officially first addressed issues of access and participation by all. It stressed a common school system open to all children irrespective of caste, creed, community, religion, economic condition and social status. In 1968, the National Education Policy followed the commission's recommendations and suggested the expansion of educational facilities for physically and mentally handicapped children, and the development of an „integrated programme“ enabling handicapped children to study in regular schools.

National Policy on Education (NPE) – 1986: The NPE brought the fundamental issue of equality centre stage. Section 4.9 of the policy clearly focuses on the needs of the children with disabilities. “The objective should be to integrate the physically and mentally handicapped with the general community as equal partners, to prepare them for normal growth and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence. The following measures will be taken in this regard:

- Wherever it is feasible, the education of children with motor handicaps and other mild handicaps will be common with that of others;
- Special schools with hostels will be provided, as far as possible at district headquarters, for the severely handicapped children;
- Adequate arrangements will be made to give vocational training to the disabled;
 - Teachers' training programmes will be reoriented, in particular for teachers of primary classes, to deal with the special difficulties of the handicapped children and
- Voluntary effort for the education of the disabled will be encouraged in every possible manner”.

Integrated Education of Disabled Children (IEDC): The Government of India's appreciation of the need to integrate children with disabilities came in 1974, when the Union Ministry of Welfare launched the centrally sponsored scheme of Integrated Education of Disabled Children (IEDC). In 1982, this scheme was transferred over to the then Department of Education of the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

The centrally sponsored scheme of Integrated Education of the Disabled Children provides educational opportunities for the disabled children in common schools, to facilitate their retention in the school system, and also to place in common schools, such children already placed in special schools after they acquire the communication and the daily living skills at the functional level.

Plan of Action (POA) – 1992: The NPE was followed by POA (1992). The POA suggested a pragmatic principle for children with special needs. It postulated that a child

with disability who can be educated in a general school should be educated in a general school only and not in a special school. Even those children who are initially admitted to special schools for training in plus curriculum skills should be transferred to general schools once they acquire daily living skills, communication skills and basic academic skills.

Rehabilitation Council of India Act (RCI-1992): The POA was strengthened by the enactment of the RCI Act, 1992. Experience showed that there was no mechanism in the country to standardize and monitor the training of special educators and other rehabilitation professionals in the country. Therefore, in 1992, Parliament of India enacted the RCI Act, subsequently amended in 2000, to establish a statutory mechanism for monitoring and standardizing courses for the training of 16 categories of professionals required in the field of special education and rehabilitation of persons with disability. Training of special educators and resource teachers that can offer support services to children with disabilities in regular schools is the responsibility of RCI.

Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights & Full Participation) Act, 1995: The most landmark legislation in the history of special education in India is the Persons with Disabilities (Equal opportunities, protection of rights & full participation) Act, 1995. This comprehensive Act covers seven disabilities namely blindness, low vision, hearing impaired, loco motor impaired, mental retardation, leprosy cured and mental illness. Chapter V (Section 26) of the Act, which deals with education, mentions that the appropriate Governments and the local authorities shall:

- Ensure that every child with a disability has access to free education in an appropriate environment till he attains the age of eighteen years;
- Endeavour to promote the integration of students with disabilities in the normal schools;
 - Promote setting up of special schools in governments and private sector for those in need of special education, in such manner that children with disabilities living in any part of the country have success to such schools;
 - Endeavour to equip the special schools for children with disabilities with vocational training facilities.

National Trust Act-1999: Another landmark legislation is the National Trust Act. In 1999, the Indian Parliament passed an Act entitled “National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disability. This Act seeks to protect and promote the rights of persons who, within the disability sector, have been even more marginalized than others. Though the National Trust Act of 1999 does not

directly deal with the education of children with special needs, one of its thrust areas is to promote programmes, which foster inclusion and independence by creating barrier free environment, developing functional skills of the disabled and promoting self- help groups.

Project for Integrated Education for the Disabled (PIED): In 1987, to fulfil the provisions for disabled children in the NPE (1986), the government launched the Project for Integrated Education for the Disabled (PIED). It was a joint venture of MHRD and UNICEF. It states „wherever feasible, the education of children with motor handicaps and other mild handicaps will be in common with that of others“.

District Primary Education Programme (DPEP): The success of PIED led to the inclusion of the component of Integrated Education of the Disabled (IED) in DPEP, a scheme launched in 1994 by the Government of India for the development of elementary education. At present, IED in DPEP is going on in 242 districts of 18 states. In these states, approximately 6.21 lakh children with special needs have been enrolled in regular schools with adequate support services.

World Commitment on Education as a Right: The right of every child to education is proclaimed in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)** and was strongly reaffirmed by the **World Declaration on Education for All (1990)**. The philosophy agreed upon at the Jomtien World Declaration included the following statements:

- Every person – child, youth and adult – shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs.
- The learning needs of the disabled demand special attention. Steps need to be taken to provide equal access to education to every category of disabled persons as an integral part of the education system.

The **UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993)** was an important resolution for improving the educational conditions of persons with disabilities. This had major implications for the Indian situation in the form of three legislative acts – the RCI Act (1992), PWD Act (1995) and National Trust Act (1999).

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Disability Education (1994) emerged as a result of deliberations held by more than 300 participants representing 92 governments including India and 25 international organizations in June 1994. For furthering the objectives of education for all, it considered the fundamental policy shifts required to promote inclusive education. It emphasizes that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. The statement affirms, „*Those with special educational needs must have access to regular*

schools which should accommodate them within child centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs”.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) : SSA has been operational since 2000-01 in partnership with state governments to achieve the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education. This adopts a ZERO rejection policy and uses an approach of converging various existing schemes and programmes. It covers the following components under education for children with disability –

- Early detection and identification.
- Functional and formal assessment.
- Education placement.
- Aids and appliances.
- Support services.
- Teacher training.
- Resource support.
- Individual Educational Plan (IEP).
- Parental training and community mobilisation.
- Planning and management.
- Strengthening of special schools.
- Removal of architectural barriers.
- Research.
- Monitoring and evaluation.
- Girls with disability.

The RTE Act, 2009: After a continual demand of making the education a fundamental right from all corners, the government made the 86th Amendment of the Constitution of India (2002). The 86th Amendment introduced new Article 21A, making the right to education of children from 6 to 14 years of age a fundamental right. Article 51A (K) was added to Part IV-A of the Constitution as a fundamental duty of parents to provide opportunities for education to their children aged between 6 and 14. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, commonly known as RTE Act, 2009 was finally passed by the parliament on the 26th August, 2009 (notified on February 16, 2010 to come into effect from April 1, 2010). This act puts the responsibility of ensuring enrolment, attendance and completion on the government. The RTE Act tries to safeguard the rights of the children belonging to the disadvantaged groups and the weaker sections, protect them from any kind of discrimination and ensure their completion of elementary education. As per

Amendment in the RTE Act (2010), children with disabilities have been included in the definition of child belonging to disadvantaged group in the Section 2(d) of the RTE Act. The landmark step mentioned in this Act that Section 12(1/C) mandates for private unaided and specified category schools to admit at least 25% of its entry level class from children belonging to weaker and disadvantaged groups.

Conclusion – This paper is an attempt to describe the efforts made by the Government of India to provide Inclusive Education to children with disabilities. Inclusive Education is the way of future to CWDs. It will create an ideal surrounding for the children with disabilities. It will offer the best opportunities to pursue the education with dignity and self respect for CWDs. This is the only guarantee for the building up of an egalitarian and human society in which the exploitation of the weak will be minimized.

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