CHALLENGES, PROBLEMS & CONSTRAINTS IN IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSION: INDIA CONCERN

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Introduction:

"Inclusive education: - according to UNESCO, means that the school can provide a good education to all pupil irrespective of their varying abilities. All children will be treated with respect and ensured equal opportunities to learn together. Inclusive education is an ongoing process. Teachers must work actively and deliberately to reach its goals".

Inclusive education refers to an education system that accommodates all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. However ninety percent of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school, says UNESCO. In India, there is no formal or official definition of inclusion; The Draft Scheme on Inclusive Education prepared by the MHRD (2003) uses the following definition. "Inclusive Education means all learners, young people with or without disabilities being able to learn together in ordinary preschool provisions, schools, and community educational settings with appropriate network of support services".

UNICEF's Report on the status of Disability in India 2000 states that there are around 30 million children in India suffering from some form of disability. The Sixth All-India Educational Survey (NCERT, 1998) reports that of India are 200 million school aged children (6-14 years), 20 million required special needs education. While the national average for gross enrollment in school is over 90 percent, less than five percent of children with disabilities are in school. The majority of these children remain outside mainstream education. Thus it is necessary to explore current status of inclusive education in India as well as problems, prospects, challenges related to its expansion in the country.

Inclusive Education in India

In India, National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) joined hands with UNICEF and launched Project Integrated Education for Disabled Children (PIED) in the year 1987, to strengthen the integration of learners with disabilities into regular schools. In 1997, IEDC was amalgamated with other major basic education projects like the DPEP and the *SarvaShikshaAbhiyan*(SSA) (Department of Elementary Education, 2000. The SSA launched by the Govt. of India, in 2001, underlines the prerogative of a child with disability to be included in the mainstream of education. MHRD (2006) in its *SarvaShikshaAbhiyan*(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." Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) was approved in India in September, 2008 to replace IEDC Scheme from 2009-10. The Scheme is 100% centrally funded.

NGO Programmes

There are many international, national, and local NGOs involved with disability issues in India. Many local NGOs, while diverse and widespread, tend to be based on a charity/welfare approach (Thomas, 2004) and informed by the medical model. Although the exact number is unknown, there are at least 1,000 NGOs and voluntary organisations actively engaged in education (GOI, 2000), of which the government funded 701 with grants in aid in 2004-5 (GOI, 2005). NGOs are perceived by the government as widening the implementation network and bringing flexibility and innovation into education programmes.

Challenges of implementing Inclusive Education

When the government in country has initiated the policies related to inclusion into practice, many challenges come out. Challenges are from almost all the spheres of education –from the educators, from the curriculum, from infrastructure, from the learners newly included in the normal group, from the previous learners of the general educational system.

Challenges can be pointed down as follows:

- Teachers lack knowledge of types of learners
- Indiscipline case heavy workload
- No facilities for teachers
- Low esteem of the child with disability

- Time consuming
- Absenteeism of learners
- Make class control difficult
- Opposition of parents on classification as SNE
- Lack of communication –teacher & learners
- Financial problems
- Lack Infrastructure
- Syllabus coverage impossible
- Discrimination of SNE children

The challenges furnished above may appear in almost all parts of the world but country like India which has 17 percent of the global population and 20 percent of the world's out-of-school children, is facing many more challenges in addition to the above.

- **The challenges of modifying attitudes towards Inclusion and Disabilities**

Attitudes of non-disabled are proving to be major barrier in the social integration of person with disabilities. "The more severe and visible the deformity is, the greater is the fear of contagion, hence the attitudes of aversion and segregation towards the crippled" (Desai 1990 p.19). Such attitude reinforced by religious institution ishelping againstthe attempts to include students with disabilities in to regular schools.

- **The challenge of Poverty**

Despite impressive gains in the last few decades(11th largest industrial power, 4th largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity) India still has more than 260 million people living in poverty(Canadian International Development Agency[CIDA].2003). A large number of children with disabilities live in families with income significantly below the poverty level. According to Rao (1990), while disability causes poverty It is also possible that in a country like India, poverty causes disability.

- **Public Education:**

People including parents and school personnel are largely unaware of the full intent of the recent legislation passed by Indian Parliament. A large number of school personnel are also not aware of funding available to include students with disabilities in regular school. There is some evidence that those educators who are knowledgeable about government polices and laws concerning integrated education tend have positive attitude toward implementing such programs .Thus unless people especially parents of children with disabilities and school

personnel are made knowledgeable about various provisions enshrined in the act the central and state government commitment to providing integrated education will be in vain.

- **The challenges of providing adequate level of training:**

The majority of school personnel in India are not trained to design and implement educational programs for students with disability in regular school. Most teacher trained programs in India do not have a unit on disability studies (Myredddi&Narayan 2000) The Universities which cover some aspects of special education in their Teacher training programs fail to train teachers adequately to work in integrating setting.

- **Inadequate resources**:

The majority of school in India are poorly designed and few are equipped to meet the unique needs of students with disability .The lack of disability friendly transportation service and accessible building are considered by some to be far greater problem than social prejudice and negative attitude .Both the central and state governments will have to provide increased resources to this aspect of Education to ensure successful implementation of integrated practices in school.

Problems of Inclusive Education in India

Inclusive education is a binding and priority for government of India. However, a wide gap in policy and practice exists in the country with respect to inclusive education. There are a number of barriers that hinder proper practice of inclusive education in our country.

a. Skills of teachers

Skills of teachers which are responsible for implementing inclusive education are also not up to as desired and necessary for inclusion. It has been reported that nearly 70% of the regular school teachers had neither received training in special education nor had any experience teaching students with disabilities (Das, Kuyini and Desai [2013]). Further, 87% of the teachers did not have access to support services in their classrooms. The inefficiency of teachers to develop and use instructional materials for inclusion students (Coskun, Tosun, &Macaroglu, 2009) is also a problem issue.

b. Lack of awareness about children with disabilities among general teachers

The general teachers, at all levels, lack basic awareness about children with disabilities. They have their own socially and culturally constructed notions about certain obvious disabilities but lack scientific and educational knowledge about the disabilities such as classification, labeling, special needs and adaptations etc.

c. Attitudes towards inclusion among teachers, parents, peers

In addition to many other requirements, implementation of inclusive education also requires positive attitudes towards inclusion and disability among teachers, parents, peers and policy planners. However, negative attitudes are still persisting among these in many cases. This is adversely affecting inclusive education scenario in India. Mainstream teacher attitudes may be a contributory barrier to successful inclusive practices. Teachers tend to be broadly positive about the principle of inclusion while at the same time viewing its practical implementation as problematic. The inclusion of children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties has consistently been reported as a particularly problematic for teachers, and is accompanied by negative teaching attitudes (Cook, 2001; Cook, Cameron &Tankersley, 2007; Hastings & Oakford, 2003; Shapiro, Miller, Sawka, Gardill, & Handler, 1999). School principals also have a crucial role within their school to communicate their expectations regarding inclusive practices clearly to their teaching staff (MacFarlane &Woolfson, 2013). Although no research could be located in Indian settings by the authors, but they believe that negative attitudes are quite prevalent among teachers, parents, peers, towards disability as well as inclusive education.

d. Improper curriculum adaptation

For practicing inclusive education, curricular adaptations suited to special and unique needs of every learner, including children with disabilities, are necessary. Concepts like 'Universal Instructional Design' are to be properly developed and incorporated into the curriculum. However, needed curriculum adaptations are either missing or are improper.

e. School environment including Infrastructure

School environment needs infrastructural facilities for truly practicing inclusive education. However, such accommodations are not there in majority of the schools. Facilities like ramps, lifts, and directional cues etc. are mostly absent in schools.

f. Family collaboration

Keeping in mind the nature of Indian society and culture, it can be stated that family has a very important role in implementing inclusive education in India. Family is considered having sole responsibility for their children in India. Hence, inclusion can only be realised by motivating and involving family in the process. But due to the westernization, nowadays structure of Indian society and family is getting changed.

g. Negative self-perceptions of special child

For practicing inclusive education, negative self-perceptions of children with disabilities pose a great challenge. These negative perceptions are often strengthened by peers, and teachers and sometimes by family members too. Without wiping out these negative self perceptions, true inclusion of such children is not possible.

h. Improper pre-service teacher education

The pre-service teacher education programmes being run in India are failing to sensitize and equip prospective teachers in inclusive education practices. Modifications are needed to make these teacher education programmes more effective. Currently, teacher education programmes producing special teachers are controlled by Rehabilitation Council of India whereas these producing general teachers are controlled by National Council for Teacher Education. These two apex bodies need to collaborate and devise measures for producing skilled teachers capable of implementing inclusive education.

i.Availability of ICT and related competencies in ICT teacher

Present age is the age of information and communication technology (ICT). ICT is providing great help in almost all endeavors of human life including education and training. There are a number of ICT-enabled pedagogical and assistive devices are available particularly useful for children with disabilities. Their use can ease and expedite inclusive education. These should be made available and competencies for their use should be developed among all stakeholders.

j. Improper policy Planning &Making

Government of India claims that it has implemented inclusive education everywhere and at all levels. However, the policy planning is improper and measures to assess the degree of implementation have not been developed. Furthermore, implementation of inclusive education in private sector has not been enforced and ensured.

k. Lack of Funding

For a huge and diverse country like India, implementation of inclusive education at all levels requires a lot of money to be spent. The government does not seem willing to incur this huge expenditure. Being a developing country, the apprehensions of the government can be very well understood.

Suggestions for Challenging the Challenges

Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education can be formed and developed in the context of an educational system which can provide some specific conditions in order to have a good practice in this field. And these conditions refer to

1) Restructuring of the curriculum

2) Providing more help from support teachers

3) Giving more time for preparing the educational activities

4) Decreasing the number of students in one class

5) Developing opportunities for interactive partnerships between teachers, students, support teachers and parents.

6) New paradigm for the preparation of teachers by integrating special & general education program.

7) Collaboration and support between teachers trained in regular and special education.

Conclusion:

Life is challenge a "struggle for existence". Inclusive Education too was introduced for the overall development of those children who need specialassistance & care.Inclusion stands strongly against an age old tradition that believes in exclusion by sending special child in special schools. And hence the challenges are nothing but product of this radical change.

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