

## **INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN KASHMIR-CHALLENGES AND SUGGESTIONS**

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of the present study is to examine the challenges faced by children with disabilities in inclusive schools of Kashmir valley. The paper analyzes the case of children with disabilities studying in the inclusive schools of Kashmir. In this study various challenges faced by the children with disabilities in inclusive schools are discussed. At last some practical suggestions were given for the enhancement of inclusive education in Kashmir valley.*

**Keywords:** *Inclusive Education, Challenges and suggestions.*



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### **Introduction**

Inclusive education is a difficult concept to explain it is indeed a debatable term contested in educational terms. Lack of understanding about its meaning is barrier to inclusion to itself. Inclusive education is that type of Education in which regular (normal) and special needs learners are brought together in the same academic environment and classroom for the purpose of learning. The adoption of this system of education could be in realization of the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Right (United Nations, 1948) which stipulated that education is a fundamental human right. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) also declared that children with or without disabilities have the same right to educational opportunities. This new approach to education (inclusion) comes with several challenges which behoove the school authorities and teachers to ensure that meaningful and intentional engagement of regular and students with special needs is done in a way that provides learning opportunities/activities and ensures that the environment is conducive to all students.

The concept of inclusive education was introduced in India by Jangira in 1997 when he referred to the UK Warnock Committee Report. However, Mani (2000) noted that he had pioneered inclusive education in India, in the 1980s while referring to the concepts of 'dual teaching model' and the 'multi-skilled teacher plan' (Singal 2005). In practice though, inclusive education gained momentum in India during the 1990s in response to international developments which advocate inclusive education (e.g. Convention on the Rights of the Child

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1989, UN Standard Minimum Rules 1993) and was largely influenced by the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994). This declaration marked the incorporation of inclusive education in the official documents of many signatory countries (Holdsworth, 2002 cited in Singal 2006), including India.

In Kashmir the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (SSA) has set time-bound targets for the achievement of Universal Elementary Education (UEE) by 2010. With “zero rejection” as its cornerstone, the program provides support for the inclusion of children with disabilities in general schools at the elementary level. SSA has a provision for the inclusive education component @ Rs.1200 per child with special needs per annum. Under the programme, over 20 lakh children with disabilities have been identified and over 15 lakh children with disabilities in the age group 6-14 years have been enrolled in general schools. The increase in enrolment at the elementary level is expected in the coming years to lead to a surge in the demand for secondary education. This will include children with disabilities. The National Action Plan for Inclusion in Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities (IECYD) developed by the MHRD (November -2005) emphasizes the inclusion of children and young persons with disability in all general educational settings from Early Childhood to Higher Education. The goal of the Action Plan is –“To ensure the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in all available general educational settings, by providing them with a learning environment that is available, accessible, affordable and appropriate.”

### **CHALLENGES FACED IN IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

In Kashmir inclusive education is at early stage. There are various challenges related to its implementation process are:-

#### **1. Lack of Skilled teachers**

For the implementation of inclusive education skilled teachers are needed but in Kashmir the skill levels of primary school teachers are not up to mark. There are teacher who have received training for teaching the students in special schools and the ratio of these teachers are very less as compared to the regular school teachers who had neither received training in special school nor had any experience of teaching students with disabilities. Further, 94% of the teachers did not have access to support services in their classrooms.

#### **2. Attitudes of teachers, administrators, parents, peers towards inclusion:**

Attitudes of teachers, administrators, parents and peers towards inclusive education are also one of the important requirements. Still there exists negative attitude in many cases towards

inclusion. General education teacher's attitude is one of the contributing factors to make inclusion successful practice. Usually teachers show positive attitude about the principle of inclusion while at the same time viewing its practical implementation as problematic. However it has been argued that neutral, even negative, attitudes toward inclusion may better characterize teacher viewpoints (De Boer et al., 2010; Soodak, Podell & Lehman, 1998). Indeed teachers in mainstream schools were less positive about the potential of children with learning disabilities than special school teachers. 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). These are children whose learning in the classroom is compromised by complex and long-term difficulties in managing their behaviour, emotions and relationships (Simpson, Bloom, Cohen, Blumberg, & Bourdon, 2005). School principals too have a central role in promoting an inclusive ethos within their schools. This implied that school principals have a crucial role within their school to communicate their expectations regarding inclusive practices clearly to their teaching staff (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013).

### **3. Lack of awareness among general school teachers and students**

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

### **4. Lack of proper curriculum**

For implementing inclusive education in Kashmir curriculum should be such that which will suit to special and unique needs of every child, including the children with disabilities and without disabilities. However there is lack of proper curriculum.

### **5. Poor school environment and infrastructure:**

School environment needs accommodations 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.

## **6. Lack of proper support services**

For implementing inclusive education in all educational institutions, a strong support services is need. Support service should be both quantitative and qualitative. But, existing support services are scarce and inadequate.

## **7. Family cooperation**

Keeping in mind the nature of society and culture that Kashmir have. It can be said 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.

## **8. Negative self-perceptions of children with disabilities**

There are negative self-perceptions of children with disabilities that pose a great challenge. These negative perceptions are often strengthened by neighbours, peers, and teachers. Without removing out these negative self perceptions, true inclusion of such children is not possible.

## **9. Expenditure**

Implementation of inclusive education 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.

## **SUGGESTION TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES**

The following suggestions have been pooled to overcome the challenges faced in implementation of inclusive education in Kashmir:

1. Development of teacher is the heart of inclusion practice. So necessary steps should be taken up by school authorities to build the competencies of all regular teachers to deal with the diverse population of students in inclusive class like workshop should be conducted to train teacher and enhance their skills to deal with the students with disabilities in regular classes.
2. School principal and administrators should appoint skilled and trained teachers. The staff appointed should be adaptable but consistent, strong but compasionate and always understanding the needs of students in inclusive classrooms.
3. Effective strategies should be made by the administrators and government to make inclusive education success.

4. Parents are experts on their own child. School administration and teachers should recognise this and should make efforts to work in partnership so that they can build a more complete picture of individual and ensure consistent support and approaches towards behaviour between home and school.
5. Support and training should be provided to parents seeking inclusive education for their children.
6. For changing the negative attitude of teachers, parents and students towards inclusion a strong inclusive practice team should be created to encourage inclusion throughout the school.
7. Curriculum in inclusive schools should have Universal Instructional Design that should provide multiple modes of access and representation.
8. Infrastructure in inclusive school should be upgraded. Schools should have facilities like ramps, lifts, wheelchairs etc.
9. Counselling should be done to the students with disabilities to remove the negative self perception among them.

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