



## TEACHERS' COMPETENCIES AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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### Abstract

*[As Education is a birth right for all, Schools for all is also important. In various Declarations it is decided that everyone should have access to education. It is well-known that teacher is the pivot of every change. It is observed that as the teachers so the education. Thus teachers play an important role in any educational system. Inclusive education is the demand of the present society. For inclusion teachers should be well equipped with various competencies. The present paper discusses the required teacher's competencies for inclusive education.]*

**Keywords:** *Inclusion, Inclusive Education, Competencies and teacher*



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The Education for All (EFA) initiative from the United Nations is an essential element of the Millennium Development Goals, in part because education is seen as being crucial to human development, and also because so many children do not have access to education UNESCO (2005). Failure to develop schools capable of educating all children not only leads to an educational underclass, but also a social and economic underclass which has serious consequences for society now and in the future. Therefore, the development of successful inclusive schools, 'schools for all' in which the learning and participation of all children is valued, is an essential task for all countries. It is hardly surprising therefore that tackling under-achievement and increasing inclusion are part of a worldwide agenda. As a result of this interest, a series of national and international initiatives intended to broaden participation for vulnerable groups of children have been enacted. These include the United Nations Education for All initiative (EFA), which was launched in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, and the Dakar Declaration (UNICEF, 2000). Thus, developing 'schools for all' is important because schooling is linked to human, economic and social development goals.

India follows United Nations World Declaration on Education for All, (EFA)(1990) which reiterated the rights of all children comprising of children with special needs to access education in regular school settings and to the Biwako Millenium Framework for Action towards an inclusive, barrier free and rights based society for persons with disability, the

Declaration on the Full Participation and equality of People with Disabilities in the Asia Pacific Region. India also contributes to the philosophy of the 1993, UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and the Salamanca Statement and Frame work For Action (1994).

This is possibly set out in brief terms for the first time the concept of inclusive education and as one needing global consensus and urged all "governments to adopt as a matter of law and policy the principle of inclusive education and emphasized that " children with special needs must have access to regular schools ". The Normalization Principle of Wolfensberger had placed focus on the person with disability and a well-known quote in this context is "change the environment to suit the child not the child to suit the environment".

The directive principle to guide state policy Article 45 states that "free and compulsory education should be provided for all children until they complete the age of 14". The 93rd amendment to the Indian Constitution passed in December 2001, confirms the Government's commitment to (EFA) or Education for All or Sarv Shiksha Abhyaan (SSA).

The preamble explicitly states that this includes children with disabilities. The SSA provides significance to early childhood care and education and apt intervention for children with special needs. The positive factor is the change combined in the Education Act by including a relevant clause which explains that "ALL" includes children with disabilities. The objective of SSA is to bring all children between 6-14 years in the net of 1-8 elementary, free and compulsory education, keep them in school till they complete the eight year cycle and see that they attain standards of a specified quality. 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.**"

Over the years, the concept of inclusive education has replaced the term integrated and Special education. Now the Prime minister of India named them as "**Divyangas**". Inclusion is not confined to the disabled. It also means non exclusion (NCF-2005). It refers to an education system that accommodates all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social emotional, linguistic or other conditions. Inclusive education is about embracing all

(NCF-2005). An inclusive class may have amongst others, differently abled children or gifted children, street or working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children belonging to ethnic, linguistic or cultural minorities or children from other disadvantaged or marginalised groups. The national curriculum framework for school education (NCFSE) (2000), carried out by the NCERT, suggested inclusive school for all without exact reference to pupil with special education needs as a way of providing quality education to all learners.

The Draft of Inclusive Education Scheme, MHRD, (2003) "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 service."

National Curriculum Framework (2005) policy of inclusion needs to be implemented in all schools and throughout in our education system. The involvement of all children needs to be made sure in all domains of their life in and outside the school. Schools need to become center that prepare children for life and ensure that all children, especially the differently able children from marginalized sections, and children in difficult circumstances get the maximum benefit of this critical area of education (NCF 2005, P85)

In overall terms, Inclusive Education implies four key elements: UNESCO 2006

- It is essentially a process of looking for the most appropriate ways of responding to diversity as well as trying to learn how to learn from the differences;
- It is linked to stimulating, through multiple strategies, the creativity and the capacity of addressing and resolving problems by students;
- It comprises the right of the child to attend school, express his/her opinion, have quality learning experiences and attain valuable learning outcomes; and
- It implies the moral responsibility of prioritizing those students who are at risk of being marginalized and excluded from the school, and of obtaining low learning outcomes.

As it is observed that inclusive education is an important part of our education system, the research report says that in most cases it is utter failure due to teachers' incapability.

The inclusion of differently abled students in regular education classrooms requires regular school teachers to upgrade their skills in-order to respond to the new challenges provided by their changing roles and responsibilities. These teachers are now expected to address

problems and provide solutions or facilitate solutions to challenges posed by special needs students who may vary in their skill levels. They are now required to undertake initial screening of students who are at risk, adapt instruction to make them responsive to special needs students, contribute in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, work collaboratively with parents and other professionals and use technology to assist students overcome their shortfalls. It is clear that our teachers should develop competencies. The Council for Exceptional Children (2010) developed and validated a common core of minimum essential knowledge and skills necessary for entry into professional practice in special education. "It includes — philosophical, historical and legal foundations of special education; characteristics of learners; assessment, diagnosis and evaluation; instructional content and practice; planning and managing the learning environment; managing student behaviour and social interaction skills; communication and collaborative partnerships and; professionalism and ethical practices." While all of these skills may not be needed for regular classroom teachers, a certain level of ability in these competencies, however, is required from these teachers when they are expected to work with special needs children. There are some competencies that are field tested and supported as probable methods for delivering effective instruction to students with diverse learning needs. Some of them, that are extensively used, include: class-wide peer tutoring, cooperative learning, self-management skills, differentiated instruction and use of assistive technology. The school teachers especially need to be skilled in skills like effective instruction delivery and appropriate management of a classroom that is characterized by diversity.

A teacher of inclusive education should develop these competencies.

**He should have knowledge about**

- Teaching strategies
- Disability and special needs
  - How children learn
  - What children need to learn
  - Classroom organisation and management
  - Where to get help when necessary
- Identifying and assessing difficulties
- Assessing and monitoring children's learning

- The legislative and policy context

**He should believe**

- That all children are worth educating
- That all children can learn
- That they have the capacity to make a difference to children's lives
- That such work is their responsibility and not only a task for specialists.

**He should try to do**

- Turning knowledge into action
- Moving beyond reflective practice
- Using evidence to improve practice
- Learning how to work with colleagues as well as children
- Becoming an 'activist' professional

**Teacher should**

- Strongly committed to the purpose of Inclusive education
- Sensitive to the needs of the students
- Able to construct a welcoming and positive school climate
- Recognize individual differences and implement learning strategies for all
- Have team spirit i.e. to promote collaborative learning
- Have aptitude and attitude for research and action research
- Multi talented balancing of educational services i.e. designing programmes for diverse needs
- Be a good mentor

Thus, a teacher should have positive attitude towards life and wellbeing. Then only inclusive education will be successful.

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