



## **INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: A STEP TOWARDS SOCIAL JUSTICE**

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### **INCLUSION**

Inclusion is the latest trend in the field of special education. It means to include and educate all children in their neighborhood schools within the general educational program so that they can participate as the fullest and become the equal contributing members of the society.

From traditional approach to inclusion – A change of Practices

### **INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

The concept of inclusion emerged as a reform in the education of children with disabilities. It gained momentum since 1994 UNESCO World Conference on Special Educational Needs (Salamanca). It is based on the recognition that we live in a society of increasing diversity where success will approach to those who learn how to work and live co-operatively with others. It is associated with the awareness:

"Schools are for everyone and every child has the right to free and quality education."

Inclusion provides as the basis of services to children with special needs in their neighborhood schools with necessary support services and supplementary aids for both children and teachers. It is the provision of meeting needs of children with special needs in the least restrictive and the most effective environment.

Inclusion does not mean 'dumping'. It is a basic value that includes all children. It is based on the philosophy that everyone belongs to school and everyone is welcome to school. It is based on four fundamental principles which govern inclusive education:

- No child should be denied inclusion in mainstream education provision.
- Mainstream provision should be offered the full range of support and special services necessary to give all children for their full and entitlement to a broad and balance education.
- Parents of children with special needs should be able to choose a mainstream school for their child on same basis as parents of children without special educational needs.

- There should be a provision of council for the disabled reorganizing the rights of all children to educate to be achieved progressively and on the basis of equal opportunities and to facilitate the child active participation in the community. (Dash;1999)

### **Inclusion: Why it matters?**

Education is a fundamental right of every individual. Though, children with special needs are also the equal part of our society. Therefore, they should also be the part of schools. Education should modify its operation for including all children. The PWD act (1995) of government of India clearly states:

"The appropriate government and the local authorities shall

- (a) Ensure that every child with a disability has access to free education in an appropriate environment till the age of 18 years;
  - (b) Endeavour to promote the integration of students with disabilities in the normal schools.
- (Article-26)

The rationale for inclusive education can be discussed in terms of profits to students, teachers and society:

1. In inclusive classrooms all children have the opportunity to learn from one another, grow to care for one another, gain the attitudes, skills and, values necessary for our communities (vander cook, et al, 1 988) When proper arrangements are present, inclusion works for all Students with and without disabilities in terms of mutually held positive attitudes, gains in academic and social skills and preparation for community living..
2. When these positive effects are contrasted with the negative effects of exclusion, the benefits of inclusive schools become even more prominent, academically, socially and occupationally segregated placements are damaging to students. Segregated classes don't lead to independence and competence but instead foster an unrealistic sense of insulation (wehman, .1998). Separate education can generate a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds. This sense of inferiority affects the motivation of the child to learn)
3. Teachers develop their professional skills through collaborative consultation and team teaching in inclusive system (Elliot and Sheridan, 1992). Peer collaboration and consultation not only provides psychological support to teachers but it also leads to better student learning)

4. Inclusive schooling empowers teachers. Teachers keep themselves informed of changes occurring in their fields, participate in decision making process and receive in-service education program from time to time. The initial negative reactions of teachers about inclusive education strikingly change after active exposure to the practice of inclusion. (Giangreco, 1993)

5. The most important reason for inclusive schooling is the social value of equality. We have equal rights despite of diversity. But separate is not equal. In contrast to the past experiences of segregation, inclusion reinforces the practice of the idea that differences are accepted and respect important that we avoid the mistakes of the past. We need schools that promote wider social acceptance, peace and co-operation. When schools include all students then equality is respected and promoted as a value in society. When schools exclude some students, prejudice is entrenched in the consciousness of many students when they become adults, with the results of increased social conflict and dehumanizing competition

### **1.5 Policies concerning education of children with special needs:-**

The constitution of India and the educational policies envisaged in post-independent India reflect perseverance and commitment to the fulfillment of U.E.E. the constitution states that 'free and compulsory education should be provided for all children until they complete the age of 14 years.

Kothari commission 1964-1966, the first education commission in India addressed issues of access and participation by all. It emphasis on a common school system open to all children irrespective of caste, feed, community, religion, economic condition and social statues. in 1968, the national education policy followed the commission recommendations and suggested the expansion of educational facilities for physically and mentally handicapped children and the development of an " integrated program." This enables handicapped children to study in regular schools.

Two decades later, The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 and the Program of Action (1992) gives the basic policy framework for education. It emphasizes on eradicating of existing inequalities. It stresses on reducing dropout rates, improving learning achievements and expanding access to students who have not had an easy opportunity to be a part of the mainstream system. The NPE, 1986 envisaged measures for integrating 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. In 1987, the government launched the Project for Integrated Education Development (PIED) to fulfill the

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provisions for disabled children in the NPE. It states that wherever feasible, the education with motor handicaps and other mild handicaps will be in common with that of other. According to NPE, the term integration indicates that handicapped people enjoy the same rights as the rest. They have the same opportunities for growth and development in environmental conditions available to the rest. They have access to the quality of life like any other citizen and they are treated as equal partners in community. Thus, In search of the goal of providing basic education for all, the National Policy on Education (1986) and its follow-up actions have been major landmarks. The World Declaration on Education for All adopted in 1990 gave further boost to the various processes already set in motion in the country. The Rehabilitation Council of India Act 1992 initiated a training program for the development of professionals to respond to the needs of students with disabilities. The 93rd Amendment of the Constitution of India has made education a fundamental human right for all children of 6-14 years age group by making it compulsory for all children to be brought under the field of education. This includes children with disability.

India is a signatory to the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994) that emphasizes access to quality education for all. The Statement endorses the need for fundamental policy shifts required to promote the approach to inclusive education. It enables schools to serve all children specifically those with special educational needs by implementing practical and strategic changes. The Government of India has enacted the legislation Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities and Full Participation) Act, 1995 (PWD Act) to achieve amongst other 'things. The goal of providing access to free education in an appropriate environment to all learners with disabilities till they reach the age of eighteen years. The Act endeavors to promote the integration of learners with disabilities in mainstream schools.

In 1999, government passed the national trust for welfare of persons with autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation and multiple disabilities act for economic rehabilitation of people with disabilities. These acts have been instrumental in bringing about a perceptive change/ improvement in attitude of government, NGOs (non-governmental organization) and people with disabilities.

In recent years, two major initiatives have been launched by the government for, achieving the goals of Universalisation of Elementary Education: District Primary Education Program in 1994(DPEP) and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2002- movement to educate all. It aims to achieve UEE for all. Efforts within SSA will be understood by effective

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decentralization, sustainable financing, cost effective strategies for universalisation, community- owned planning and implementation focus on girls, marginalized caste groups and ethnic minorities. Inclusive education is an integral component of SSA, and success-will, largely depend on the extent of enrolment, retention and achievement rates of children with special needs. 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 ejection' policy so that no child is left out of the education system. The thrust of SSA is a providing inclusive education to all children with special needs in regular schools. It also supports a wide range of approaches, options and strategies for education through open learning system and open schools, non formal and alternative schooling, distance education and learning special schools, wherever necessary home based education, itinerant teacher model, remedial teaching, past time classes, community based rehabilitations (CBR) and vocational education and co operative program.

The following activities are undertaken:

- To detect children with special needs at an early age should be undertaken through PHC's, ICDS, ECCE centers and other school readiness program. Identification of children with special needs should become an integral part of the micro planning and household surveys.
- To carry out the functional and formal assessment of each indentified child. A team should be constituted at every block to carry out this assessment and recommend most appropriate placement for every child with special needs.
- Placing every child with special needs in regular school with needed support services as far as possible.
- All children requiring assistive devices should be provided with aids and appliances, obtained as far as possible through convergence with the ministry of social justice and empowerment, state welfare departments, national institutions or NGOs.
- Providing support services like physical access, resource room at cluster level, special equipment reading material, special educational techniques, remedial teaching, and curricular adaptation or adapted teaching strategies.
- Intensive teacher training should be undertaken to sensitize regular teachers on effective classroom management of children with special needs. This training should be recurrent at block/ cluster levels and integrated. With the on-going in-service teacher training schedules in SSA. All training modules at SCERT, DIET and BRC

level should include a suitable component on education of children with special needs.

- Resource support could be given by teachers working in special schools. Wherever necessary specially trained resource teacher should be appointed, particularly for inculcating specific skills to children with special needs. Wherever this option is not feasible, long term training of regular teachers should be undertaken.
- Preparing an IEP by the teacher for every child with special needs in consultations with parents and experts. Its implementation should be monitored from time to time. The program should test the effectiveness of various strategies and models by measuring the learning achievement of children with special needs periodically, after developing indicators.
- Parents of children with special needs should receive counseling and training on how to bring them up and teach them basic survival skills Strong advocacy and awareness program should form a part of strategy to educate every child with special needs a component on disability should be included in all the modules for parents, VEC and community.
- Resource groups should be constituted at state, district levels to undertake effective planning and management of the program in collaboration with PRI's and NGO's. An apex level resource group at the national level to provide guidance, technical and academic support to children with special needs under SSA may be constituted.
- Strengthening of special schools wherever necessary to obtain their resource support, in convergence with departments and agencies working in the area.
- Removing architectural barriers in schools for easy access. Efforts will be taken to provide disable - friendly facilities in schools and educational institutions. Development of innovative designs for schools to provide an enabling environment for children with special needs should also be a part of the program.
- SSA will encourage research in all areas of education of children with special needs including research for designing and developing new assistive devices, teaching aids special teaching material and other items necessary to give a child with disability equal opportunities in education.

- On-going monitoring and evaluation should be carried out to refine the program from time to time. For this, appropriate monitoring mechanisms should be devised at every level and field tested at regular intervals.
- Special emphasis must be given to education of girls with disabilities.

Concludingly, it is stated that education is a fundamental right of every individual. Social justice can-not be possible until the inclusion of every child in education because we all are the equal member of society. Therefore, "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." We are not exempted from the concerns for social justice.

**Darkness can't drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate can't drive out hate; only love can do that.** —

**Dr. Martin Luther king Jr.**

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