



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN TEACHER EDUCATION: HOPES OR DELUSION

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Abstract

The position of teacher training in relation to its contribution to the development of inclusive thinking and practice on the part of student teachers is of fundamental importance.

Examine some crucial questions including:

1. *To what extent does the curriculum of teacher education encourage the development of inclusion in schools?*
2. *What preparation and support do teachers need to implement inclusion?*
3. *How are barriers to learning and participation overcome in teacher education?*

The Institute of Education has a long and distinguished involvement in teacher education and has on several occasions been involved in critical and constructive analysis of various aspects of government policy. It is currently undertaking a further review of its provision and practice as part of a strategic review. It is crucial that the issue of inclusivity is given key prominence in our programmes. Supporting this possibility would be an involvement in what are advocating: that of the production of an 'Index for Inclusion of Teacher Education'. This would draw on existing knowledge and experience of producing the Index for Schools. It would recognize the importance of a human rights perspective to education, emphasize the political nature of education, would advocate that inclusion is concerned with challenging and reducing inequalities and exclusionary values and practices and that it is very serious about enhancing the learning and participation of all students. Involvement in the discussions, explorations and production of such an Index with its policy, theoretical and practical advantages, will provide an opportunity to seriously and collaboratively explore what that of questioning the validity and value of 'special needs' discourse. In initial teacher education the inclusive approach that is being presented in this lecture would support the necessity of providing good and not special teachers. Inclusivity in education is concerned with the pursuit of equity, social justice and non-discrimination and thus the identification and removal of ignorance, fear, prejudice and all the associated assumptions, relationships and practices. A valuable innovation in future courses which would be part of the intention to enhance inclusive thinking, values and practices, would be to include disability/equality awareness training as an essential part of course provision. This would be taught by qualified trainers.

Keywords: *Inclusive Education, Teacher Education, Hopes or Delusion, Challenges and Perspectives.*



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Introduction:

India is one of the few countries over where the education of children with special needs doesn't fall within the purview of human resource development ministry. It is generally the burden of the omnibus ministry of social justice and empowerment, the prime focus of which is rehabilitation, not education. In fact, till today it does not have education as part of its agenda and the issue of education of children with disabilities remains imperceptible, hidden from the public domain, a private problem for families and NGOs to deal with. It's time that governmental agencies as well as mainstream institutions woke up to the reality that segregation of children with challenging needs is morally unjustifiable and a violation of human rights. Indeed there is no other way to provide education to 36 million disabled children. Seventy-eight percent of Indian population lives in rural areas without provision for special schools. Therefore, inclusive schools have to address the needs of all children in every community and the central and state governments have to train their teachers to manage inclusive classrooms.

- ✓ That special educational policy, provision and practice were unquestionably good for both the pupils involved and the actual system as a whole.
- ✓ That the predominant perspectives about within-the-child factors were a sufficient explanation for understanding the significant issues involved in terms of disabled pupils and children's experiences and opportunities.
- ✓ That professional decision-making was overwhelmingly in the best interests of those for whom the decisions were claimed to be made.

Understanding the Difference: Inclusive, Integrated and Segregated Education:

Globally, children with disabilities count for one-third of all children out-of-school. In developing countries, the numbers are even more staggering, with 90% of all children with disabilities out-of-school. Although it is imperative that children with disabilities receive an education, it is also being recognized by bodies around the world that the type of education that children with disabilities receive is just as important. There are three basic types of Special Education, although many different models of classroom organization and teaching are available within each type.

Segregated education occurs when students with disabilities learn completely separate from their peers. Often, especially in "developing" countries, segregated education takes place in the form of special schools created specifically for the education of students with disabilities, or in completely separate classrooms for students with disabilities. Segregated education pinpoints the child as the problem in the system, the impediment to learning, and as

a result, these students will often receive a completely different curriculum and different methods of testing, rather than being taught the same curriculum as their peers. This separation in school often creates separation within other areas of life as well. Integrated education is similar to inclusive education, but without any ideological commitment to equity. Integration places students in a mainstream classroom with “some adaptations and resources.” However, students are expected to “fit in with pre-existing structures, attitudes and an unaltered environment.” Integration is often mistaken for inclusion because students are placed in a mainstream classroom, which is a step towards inclusion.

However, if there has not been a paradigm shift within the school and these students are not perceived as equals, if curriculum is not taught for the understanding of all instead of some, then the students are integrated, but not included in the school. Inclusive education “is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners.” “It involves restructuring the culture, policies and practices in schools so that they can respond to the diversity of students in their locality.” For a school to be inclusive, the attitudes of everyone in the school, including administrators, teachers, and other students, are positive towards students with disabilities. Inclusive education means that all children, regardless of their ability level, are included in a mainstream classroom, or in the most appropriate or least restrictive environment (LRE), that students of all ability levels are taught as equals, and that teachers must adjust their States.

This could stem from a variety of reasons, although a lack of education on the original meanings connected to the words seems to be the most logical explanation. curriculum and teaching methodologies so that all students benefit. This also avoids wasting resources, and “shattered hopes,” which often occurs in classrooms that are “one size fits all.” Studies have shown that systems that are truly inclusive reduce drop-out rates and repetition of grades, and have higher average levels of achievement, compared to systems that are not inclusive. People who believe in inclusive education believe that the education system is the impediment to learning for a child, and that every child is capable of learning! It is important to note that within government documents and scholarly publications in India, the three different terms-segregation, integration and inclusion-are often used interchangeably, or with different definitions than those attached to the three words in the United States. This could stem from a variety of reasons, although a lack of education on the original meanings connected to the words seems to be the most logical explanation.

Teacher Education:

Many academics in the field of inclusive education point to teacher education and school leadership as essential for the implementation of inclusive education in the classroom yet the standard of teacher training courses across India varies hugely, and they usually approach the inclusion of children with disabilities from a deficit perspective. In the general teacher education diplomas and degrees available nationwide, there is an optional 'special needs' paper to train and 'prepare' teachers to identify and diagnose disability. However, it is not an integral part of the training, and it does not train teachers to deal with diversity or challenge negative attitudes. This reinforces the 'difference' of children with disabilities who, some believe, can only be taught by teachers qualified specifically for them. However, it is ultimately teacher treatment of students in the classroom, rather than the training per se, that would reinforce this difference.

Interestingly, distrust in both the special and mainstream education systems leads some parents to keep their children with disabilities at home for fear of their abuse or neglect in the classroom, which may then be interpreted by teachers as a lack of community interest in education for their children, as demonstrated in the PROBE Report. This raises the question of how teachers are being trained to include children with disabilities and to what extent they put this training into daily practice. Without access to qualitative research data specifically observing these teacher education outcomes, it is impossible to know. While it may be true that a lack of teacher training to deal with diversity or challenge negative attitudes results in a specialist, medical deficit, focus, there is certainly a need to train teachers in specific disabilities (which the Rehabilitation Council of India does) for students who could benefit from special lessons in skills such as Braille, sign-language or speech therapy.

There is evidence to suggest that many teachers do not feel equipped to teach children with disabilities and complain that they need more time to instruct these students. Many government programmes have included a teacher training component in an attempt to instigate institutional change. However, a 'special needs' focus and a lack of training for management, combined with didactic training methodology do little to alter the classroom status quo, especially when responsibility is shifted onto a specialist resource teacher rather than methods altered to suit all students. When teacher training is taken out of the context of programme islands and geographically accessible environments, teachers are found to be reluctant to attend training because it takes place in their free time and holidays. Teacher posts remain unfilled, even in Delhi, because of a lack of qualified personnel, which can also

lead to state employment of under-qualified teachers, further impacting on school quality. However, a teacher can be fully qualified, but if the training is sub-standard it will still have a negative impact on teaching and learning quality in the classroom, whereas an under-qualified, poorly paid teacher with some imagination and innovative practices may have a positive effect.

The poor quality educational provision in many schools is reflected in the fact that many government job reservations for adults with disabilities remain unfilled. Some may interpret this as due to the lack of ability many in Indian society believe is inherent in the disabled community. It is more likely to be directly related to the fact that so few children with disabilities get to, or stay in, school, that there is a lack of qualified, let alone confident, candidates. However, although school (and pedagogical) quality would appear to be one of the keys to an end to marginalization for children with disabilities, the current locational inclusion focus of inclusive education in India is a major obstacle to the unlocking of this doorway to freedom and empowerment.

MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (MHRD) ACTION PLAN:

An outline of MHRD action plan is presented below:

- ✚ To complement and supplement IEDC and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programmes in the movement from integration to inclusion.
- ✚ Enrolment and retention of all children with disabilities in the mainstream education system. (Free and compulsory education from 0 to 14 under draft Bill/free education 0 to 18 years under PWD Act).
- ✚ Providing need based educational and other support in mainstream schools to children in order to develop their learning and abilities, through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource and partnership with their communities.
- ✚ Support higher and vocational education through proper implementation of the existing reservation quota in all educational institutions and creation of barrier free learning environments.
- ✚ Disability focused research and interventions in universities and educational institutions.
- ✚ Review implementation of existing programmes, provisions to identify factors leading to success or failure of the drive towards enrollment and retention of children with disabilities in mainstream educational settings. Address administrative issues arising out of review.

- ✚ Generating awareness in the general community, activists and persons working in the field of education and more specifically among parents and children that the disabled have full rights to appropriate education in mainstream schools and that it is the duty of those involved in administration at every level including schools to ensure that they have access to education.
- ✚ Ensure enrollment and intervention for all children with special needs in the age group 0-6 years in Early Childhood Care and Education Programs.
- ✚ Facilitate free and compulsory elementary education for children with special needs in the age group 6-14 (extendable to 18 yrs.) in mainstream education settings currently under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) (SSA is a governmental program shared by both union and state governments for achieving universal elementary education in India by 2010) .
- ✚ Facilities for transition of young persons with disability wishing to pursue secondary education.
- ✚ Ensuring physical access of children and youth with disabilities in schools and educational institutions by enforcing the requirement for provisions of universal design in buildings and provide support in transportation.
- ✚ Development of national norms for Inclusive Education, to set standards of implementation, training, monitoring and evaluation for the program.
- ✚ Provide inputs in all pre-service and in-service training for mainstream and special education teachers to enable them to work with children with disability in an inclusive education system.
- ✚ Appropriate Resource Services support through appointment of special educators, rehab professionals, provision of resource rooms, etc. to support mainstream schoolteachers in the classrooms.
- ✚ Put in place an effective communication and delivery system for specific delivery of TLM, aids and appliances, hardware/software.
- ✚ Participation in sports, co-curricular activities, to promote all round ability development.
- ✚ Ensuring physical access for young persons with disabilities (18 plus age group) in all colleges and educational institutions by enforcing the requirement for provisions of universal design in buildings and provide support in transportation.

Conclusion:

The government is committed to provide education through mainstream schools for children with disabilities in accordance with PWD ACT, 1995 and all the schools in the country will be made disabled friendly by 2020. Enrolment and retention of all children with disabilities in the mainstream education system should be ensured providing need based educational and other support to these children in order to develop their learning and abilities. The special interventions and strategies like pedagogic improvement and adoption of child centered practices are focused on the children with disabilities.

In India teacher training in special education is imparted through both face-to-face and distance mode. The teacher training course curriculum of general pre-service training programs neither fully equips the teachers and teacher educators to deal with the CWSN nor it equip them to manage the mild and moderately disabled children in general classrooms. Different kinds of teacher training programs are being implemented under SSA to orient elementary teachers towards Inclusive Education (IE). 1 million 400 thousand teachers have been provided 3-5 days additional training for better orientation to Inclusive Education.

This suggests that the twin-track approach advocated by DFID (2000) may be a constructive way forward for the inclusion of children with disabilities in the Indian education system. While some programmes could focus specifically on educational provision for children with disabilities, others could mainstream disability alongside gender and other exclusionary dimensions such as poverty. This would ensure the inclusion of all in programmes intended to widen the impact of institutional systems such as education. With the development of much-needed research into the inclusive education discourse and the implementation and outcomes of IE policy, reconceptualization of inclusive education as a whole school quality issue for all children may be able to grow alongside this merging of agendas. Thus, EFA and the Fundamental Right to education for all children as declared by the 86th Constitutional amendment in 2002 may be fulfilled in the long-term through the improved implementation of inclusive education.

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