

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: A WORLDWIDE MOVEMENT OF 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

In education, 'inclusion' refers to the placement and education of children with disabilities in regular education classrooms with children of the same age who do not have disabilities. Inclusive education refers to an academic system that allows special education students to become included in mainstream classes along with their peers. It is a new approach towards educating the children with disability and learning difficulties with that of normal ones within the same roof. It brings all students together in one classroom and community, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area. Inclusive education also demands preparation of teachers to suit their needs in the classroom and society. Education For All (EFA) stressed inclusive education in school. But it is not achieved due to lack of competent teachers. The teachers also need training in inclusive education. Now there is also a trend of culture of inclusion in the higher education system. The increasing emphasis on inclusion in higher education around the world is due to the globalization and internationalization and partly due to the ongoing democratization of higher education and also to the emergence of lifelong learning as a human right. The main reform of Indian higher education would be to give emphasis on inclusiveness in higher education. The present study throws its light on the various aspects of inclusive education in the whole world.

KEYWORDS: *Education, Inclusion, Integrated Education, Segregated Education, Disability*

INTRODUCTION

Inclusion is a phenomenon and a worldwide movement which is at the top of the global agenda. In other words, inclusion can be defined as "serving students with a full range of abilities and disabilities in the general education classroom, with appropriate in-class support". Inclusion is a process rather than a specific ideology or set of practices. The philosophy behind inclusion is 'equity in education' which means all children have the right to be educated properly. Inclusive Education signifies the dictum, "Children who learn together, learn to live together". The major impetus for inclusive education came from the 1994 World Conference on Special Needs in Education in Salamanca. The World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in the year 2000 suggested to achieve 'education for all' by the year 2015. The global EFA movement also emphasized inclusive education worldwide. However, the Government of India is trying its best to improve their education system at all levels from primary to higher education and make it completely inclusive.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- The main objectives of this paper are:
- To define and discuss the term 'Inclusive Education' as a worldwide movement of the 21st century.

- To define the ‘Children with Special Needs’.
- To explore various aspects related to Inclusive Education.
- To identify the various barriers in the path of Inclusive Education.
- To specify the needs of Inclusive Education in school and higher education.
- To find out the role of teachers in Inclusive Education.
- To find out the legal provisions taken regarding inclusive education in our country.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is theoretical and descriptive in nature. The source used in this paper is purely secondary source of data, which is appropriate for this study.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

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 curriculum and teaching methodologies so that all students benefit. The increasing emphasis on inclusion in school and higher education around the world is due to the globalization, democratization and lifelong learning. The new mindset of inclusivity holds that every citizen has a basic human right to lifelong learning. As the great importance of education in the modern era, lifelong learning has emerged as one of the chief human rights aims of the 21st century. It is a matter of concern for me to explore various aspects of Inclusive Education in the world. The study shows, Inclusive Education as a worldwide movement of the 21st century.

INCLUSION- A WORLDWIDE MOVEMENT

Historically, we have two educational systems- one for children with disabilities and one for normal students. The movement towards integration of children with disabilities into the regular classroom started in the second half of the 20th century. The provision of facilities for children with special needs has progressed from segregation in a special school to inclusion in the neighborhood schools which aims at empowerment of all children.

- Segregated education occurs when students with disabilities learn completely separate from their peers. 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.
- 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”.
- Inclusive education “is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners.” Inclusion gives a message: “Everyone belongs to the school. Everyone is welcome to the school”.

The journey from segregated education to inclusive education is vast. And now this worldwide movement is also touching the great field of higher education. Implementing the principles of inclusive education within higher education is a challenging task. Now the inclusive education becomes a worldwide movement of the 21st century.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The conceptualization of “Children with Special Needs” determines the policy, research, and practice in special needs education. It is a concept of British origin. The Government Commission, chaired by Baroness Mary Warnock in 1978 reported to the government on the findings of its inquiry into special education in Britain. The report said it was wrong to identify children by means of their handicap. The report said to identify the educational difficulties of the children and provide accordingly. So, the term ‘Special Educational Needs’ (SEN) entered UK legislation, its classrooms and also to the teacher’s thinking.

COMPONENTS FOR CAPACITY BUILDING IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

- Increase awareness and attitudinal change through advocacy.
- Create trained professional by giving pre-service training.
- Build existing human resource of in-service training of teachers already working in the field.

BEST PRACTICES FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The World Declaration on Education for All, Jomtien, Thailand, which was reaffirmed in the Dakar Framework for Action (2000), gives the message:

“In order to attract and retain children from marginalized and excluded groups, education systems should respond flexibly. The education system must be inclusive, actively seeking out children who are not enrolled, and responding flexibly to the circumstances and needs of all learners.....”

Best practices for inclusive education found in educational institutions include the following-

- Inclusive services given with flexible, broad educational and extracurricular options. Choices for taking classes are not limited and students with intellectual and other disabilities are involved in campus activities and organizations, including student orientations.
- Students with disabilities become contributing members of the school and university community and are recognized as contributing members of all organizations.
- Students with intellectual and other disabilities are able to make relationships with disabilities and also non-disabled peers and take pride in their identity.
- Due to interactions with students with intellectual and other disabilities, faculty changes the way they view and enact the development and delivery of their course curriculum in a different way to cope up with the disabled children.
- Students with intellectual disabilities participate in all classes and cultural activities with flexible supports. Segregated classrooms do not exist.

- Incentives in the form of stipends, scholarships and financial assistance provided by the government for the students with special needs so that they can continue their higher studies without any delay.
- Special students are involved in the decision- making process in the institutions.

The inclusion should not mean dumping children into regular classrooms. So teachers are also ensuring quality education for all including human values, attitude, skills and competencies

TEACHER'S ROLE IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The key responsibilities of a teacher for inclusive education are as follows:

- Coordinating the provision of support services for children with special needs.
- Seeking advice from fellow special educators in regard to the education of children with special needs.
- Maintain the database of the child with special needs.
- Development of assessment portfolio of children with special needs.
- Organize a periodic and regular teacher-parent meeting in school regarding the problems of the children with special needs.
- Ensuring that a child with special needs joins in all the school activities with other normal pupils.
- The development of teacher training modules in inclusive education is best achieved by working in partnership with the local teacher training institution.
- It is necessary to explore local adaptation and devise more possible ways of providing support to teachers and also the children with special needs.
- The teacher should have a positive attitude toward children with disabilities.
- The teacher must keep in a constant touch with a different non-governmental organization working in this field for supporting children with special needs.
- The teacher must follow the principle of 'zero rejection policy' in the classroom.
- Developing a realistic self-concept within the children with special needs.
- Making suitable adaptations in the curriculum transaction, so that the children with disabilities learn according to their ability.
- Parental guidance and counseling and public awareness program should be organized through school activities.
- Involving the disabled children in almost all the activities of the classroom.
- It is important for a teacher to create a safe classroom environment that allowed the children with special needs to learn with the normal children experiencing socialization.

INNOVATIVE PRACTICES IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

The teachers are now required to practice some innovative instruction techniques which are not generally practiced in the regular classroom. A change in teaching practices, a shift from traditional teaching styles to innovative practices is necessary for inclusive education. Some innovative practices are as follows:

- Peer Tutoring.
- Cooperative Learning.
- Collaboration and Consultation.
- Team Teaching.
- Individualized Education Program.

BARRIERS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Basic Education Department of UNESCO (2003) has divided the obstacles into three categories:

Social Barriers

- Most of the people of any society take impairment as a curse of God and show their helplessness in this regard. The first social barrier is negative thinking of people.
- Prejudices are always the basis of discrimination. For which the disabled children remain always alone in an educational institution because parents do not like their children should interact with disabled children.
- Some people are very rigid and resistant to change. They think that big goal like inclusive education will bring about a Herculean change, for which they are not mentally prepared.
- Gender discrimination is a universal problem. It is prevalent in all societies for centuries. If a girl child is handicapped the discrimination becomes all the more severe crossing all tolerable limits.
- Parents in India, have a right to have high expectations for their children, but are not so readily available to put committed efforts to their wellbeing and progress. Hence inclusive education in higher education is not so much enthusiasm to get the cooperation and participation of parents in making the system a success.

Educational Barriers

- Teachers, administrators, and organizers etc. in higher education are less sensitive towards diversities.
- Teachers and all stakeholders in our education system develop a rigid attitude towards any change in society. They always preferred for a rigid and inflexible curriculum.
- A substantial number of teachers view inclusive education a process of lowering down the quality of education and thus hampering the status of education in the society. Many administrators and organizers of higher education department also think of this pattern.

- Many teachers in our country do teaching work half-heartedly, that is why they perceive inclusive education as a very difficult process.
- To make inclusive education a success, a teacher should be ready to learn happenings, concepts, and practices emerging in the field of education. But unfortunately in our country, teachers are not even ready to learn a new technology in the class.

Economic Barriers

- Inclusive education is said to be a very costly approach in terms of time, money and also human energy. It is very much difficult in a developing country to execute the program successfully.
- Grant-in-Aid allotted for higher education has always been inadequate may it come from central or state Govt. For which inclusiveness in higher education is not working well.
- Whereas in many places the grant-in-aid is expanding in a wasteful manner without any proper planning and execution.

LEGAL PROVISIONS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The constitution provides the right to education for all citizens, including disabled. Article 29 (2) of the constitution provides that no citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the state or receiving aid out of state funds. This implies that every child with a disability has right to receive education in inclusive settings. Article 45 of the Constitution directs the state to provide free and compulsory education for all children (including the disabled) until they attain the age of 14 years. Inclusion does not mean dumping disabled children into the regular classroom. In order to serve the purpose of inclusion, disabled children must be provided with support from trained and qualified professionals.

- The Government of India decided to regulate all such training of rehabilitation professionals. For this purpose the Govt. of India enacted the Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992 (RCI Act, 1992). The main objectives of the RCI Act are to constitute the Rehabilitation Council of India as a statutory body. To regulate the training of rehabilitation professionals and also to promote research in special education in higher studies.
- The Persons with Disabilities Act (1995) seeks to give effect to the proclamation on the full participation and equality of the people with disabilities in the Asian and Pacific region. The PWD (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act was passed in 1995. It spells out the responsibility of the state towards the prevention of disabilities, protection of rights from primary to higher educations, provision of education at all levels and also training and employment after higher education. The PWD Act also directs the authorities to make schemes for conducting part time classes in institutions, imparting education through Open schools and Open Universities. Conducting, University classes through various media.

BENEFITS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Here are some key findings about the benefits of inclusive education:

- Families' visions of a typical life for their children can come true when they confront inclusive settings in higher educational institutions. In inclusive settings in universities and colleges can make this vision a reality for many bright students with disabilities.
- Students develop a positive understanding of themselves and others while going for further studies.
- Students learn at their own pace and style within a nurturing learning environment in higher educational institutions.
- Students with disabilities can also benefit academically in an inclusion setting. In a well-designed inclusion classroom, however, the teacher uses inclusion strategies to help students succeed academically. By which, students encounter higher expectations – both from their peer group and their teachers, as well as the positive academic role models of their non-disabled classmates.
- Inclusive campus climate also helps disabled students engage in the decision making process and to confront with responsibilities.
- Higher expectations ultimately lead children with disabilities to achieve more, gain confidence and independence, and develop a stronger sense of self.
- Inclusive classrooms are ripe with opportunities to engage children with disabilities in the daily routine and in activities that elicit and challenge academic performance.

CONCLUSIONS

The children with special needs in an inclusive school have a unique experience where they have to interact with the normal children who are non-disabled. Teachers play a vital role in a successful inclusive program. So, classroom teachers have to learn the necessary skills to provide quality education to children with diverse learning needs. For a successful inclusive education program the collaboration among the classroom teachers, school principals, education officer and all stakeholders is highly desirable. The success of an inclusive education highly depends on the quality of the teachers. A conference on “Inclusive Education in Higher Education” on 23rd and 24th September 2016, was organized by the University of Patras in collaboration with the Region of Western Greece. The aim of the conference was to discuss the best practices in inclusive higher education at a European and national level. The speakers of this conference concluded that the effective implementation of inclusive education systems is the shared responsibility of all educators, leaders, and decision-makers. This type of approach must be followed in our country also then only inclusive education program will be successful in our country.

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