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Inclusive Education: A New Challenge

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Abstract

Inclusive Education is the need and demand of present day cohesive and inclusive society. The fundamental rights enshrined in our Constitution make provisions for access, equity and equality of all type of opportunities including educational opportunities to all people with various caste, creed, society, gender and individuality. The goal of this paper is to examine the issues related to provisions, barriers and solutions for "inclusive education" in context with the present scenario of barriers for classrooms, students & teachers. It also reviews the research literature related to educational outcomes and educational context which are helpful to solving new challenges of inclusive education. In this paper we have discuss about some new trends and challenges in Teacher Education field for inclusive education.

Keywords: Inclusive-Education, Educational Outcomes & Benefits, Emerging Issues and Recommendations

Introduction

Education plays an important role to develop students as skilled human resources for the country. To educate means to develop and cultivate (Merriam-Webster, 1978). To teach, is defined as to course to know; to show; to guide; to make to know the consequences of (MerrianWebster,1978). Thus, education includes more than instructions, and teaching involves more than just delivery of information. The entire educational process transforms some values, skills and attitudes in a student which form our society. Inclusion as we know it today has its origin in Special Education. In Indian schools special education is treated as a separate dimension with general education system, but in recent years the appropriateness of separate system of education has been challenged, both from human rights perspective and from the point of view of effectiveness. Special Education practices have been moved into the mainstream through an approach known as integration.

Inclusion and Integration

In special school concept the special education component is a part of the general education system, whereas in integrated approach, it is a part of the general education. In Inclusive Education approach, the special education is an integral part of the general education system. Inclusion is a concept that visualizes the children with disabilities as full time participants as members of their neighbour-hood schools and communities (Knight 1999). Inclusion does not mean dumping. It gives a message, —everyone belongs to school and everyone is welcome to schooll. Inclusion is the provision of services to students with special needs in their schools with support services and supplementary aids for both students and teachers.

Inclusive Education in India: Present Scenario

Inclusive education as an approach is that seeks to address the learning need of all children with a special focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. To be inclusive in education means that all students in a school, with or without disabilities become part of the

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school community. One of the major goals of inclusion is to prepare students to involve and contribute in mainstream of society. Inclusive education is the need of the hour, keeping in view the population explosion and availability of resources to solve the problems of special learners. It is estimated that over 650 million people, 10 per cent of the world population, have a disability and eighty per cent of them have been living in developing countries (United Nations Human Rights, 2010). The 2001 census of India found 21.91 million people with disabilities (2.13 per cent of the population). Disabled people have much lower educational attainment rates, with 52 per cent illiteracy against a 35 per cent average among the general population. The 86th Amendment of the constitution of India has made education a fundamental human right for children in the 6 to 14 age group including children with disability. During Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) 1.70 million children with disabilities have been enrolled in regular schools (MHRD, 2007). The draft scheme on Inclusive Education prepared by the MHRD (2003) uses the following definition.

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 services.

The National Curriculum Framework 2005 states that a policy of inclusion needs to be implemented in all schools. The NCF 2005 says:

- Inclusive education is about embracing all.
- Children do not fail; they only indicate failure of the schools.
- Accept difference, celebrate individual differences with diversity.
- Learn human rights and conquer human wrongs.
- Make provision to maintain special needs of learners with disabilities.
- Support services are essential for inclusion.
- Teacher should identify the strengths and limitations of students.
- Remove physical, social and attitudinal barriers.
- Partnership is our strength such as school-community, teacher-teacher, students-students etc.

Educational Outcomes & Benefits

Brinker and Thorpe (1984) stated about influence of social interaction on special students that when level of functioning was held constant, the rate of interaction with typical students accounted for statistically significant 2.1 per cent of the variance. Cole and Mayer (1991) in their longitudinal study explored the benefits of inclusion for students with severe disabilities, found no significant differences over all two years period in the traditional domains of self-help skills, gross and fine motor co-ordination, communication and adaptive behavior for students in integrated versus segregated settings. Hollowood et.al. (1994) investigated the degree to which the presence of students with severe disabilities in inclusive classroom affected the time allocated for instruction, the actual time used for instruction, and students' engaged time. Classroom with and without students with severe disabilities were compared to in all the variables. The average time allocated and used for instruction was comparable for both classrooms. There were no differences in the percentage of time typical students were engaged in instruction across the classroom types. It demonstrated that the presence of disabled students did not have any negative impact on classroom situations. Cook (2001) and Sharma (2002) inferred that teacher's attitude towards disabled children depend on the nature, type and degree of disability among the children. Nayak (2008) concluded that parents of disabled children have actual interest in inclusive education and they

wanted their children to get education along with normal children. She also revealed that teachers look forward to teach in an inclusive environment and were ready to face the future challenges. The review of studies concluded that the prime factor in success of inclusive education is the commitment and attitude of school teachers, the real field workers towards special children who are to be imparted education in inclusive settings.

Benefits of Inclusion

Inclusion provides some positive concerns to special learner such as:

a. Inclusion provides many situations for social interaction with normal students.
b. Through this they observed and followed peer's social behavior.
c. Students with special educational needs are taught age appropriate, functional components of academic content which are not available in segregated settings.
d. Common students can play the role of peer tutors during classroom situations.
e. Other students can learn about many of the series professions such as special education, speech therapy, recreational therapy and vocational rehabilitation which provide career opportunities in future.
f. Inclusive education ensures that a school and community are interrelated to cope up their needs and problems (Jha,2002)

Emerging Issues and Concerns:

The Right to Education Act (2009) has brought ample pressure to the government to provide compulsory quality education to all children irrespective of any discrimination. In this context these are some emerging issues in school education across the country as follows:

- Basic changes in pre-service and in-service teaching structure
- Developing national support system for schools
- To develop strategies to fulfill educational needs of special learners
- Capacity building and empowering teachers and stakeholders
- Emphasizing skilled teaching learning practices
- Create positive social and educational environment including maintaining attitudinal and traditional circumstances
- Recommendations for effective implementation of Inclusive Education

National Focus Group on Education of Children with Special Needs (2006) NCERT suggests some major recommendations. These are as follows:

a. Making all options of schools, regular schools, special schools, non-formal and alternative education system for special child
b. Ensure some support services in the form of information and communication technology (ICT), Teaching learning materials and specialists
c. To develop partnership with institutions of higher learning, government and NGOs to promote participation of special child
d. Make Basic changes in curriculum, related policies and programmes
e. Reduce class size to a maximum of 30 students and a minimum of 20 for inclusion
f. Reviewing barriers created by admission procedures (screening, identification, selection and evaluation etc.)
g. Reforms in all teacher education programmes (both pre- service and in-service) to developing the pedagogical skills

h. Introduce and recognizing the diversity among learners, medium of instruction should include sign language, Braille, Finger Braille to all students
i. Human Right Education introduce as a optional/ compulsory course in Teacher Education to inculcate the values of equality to common all students

Inclusive Education and Teacher Education

Teacher education is a core element for building the capacity of teacher in education system to do inclusion. Teacher education is essential to implement the concept of inclusive education for children with disabilities in our existing education system. It is the need of time to train all teachers in the same way to enhance their skills and update their knowledge in reference to methodology, special education, individual differences, instructional strategies etc. Zerin (2005) mention the following suggestions in this regard:

- Inclusive education helps teachers to appreciate the diversity of individuals.
- It develops teamwork, participation, collaboration and creativity among students.
- It helps to recognize different skills and problems in a group of students according to group dynamics.

The training of general teachers of pre-service and in-service levels should address the issues of education of children with disabilities so that teachers are better equipped to work in an inclusive environment. Some of the issues in training that need to include in curriculum such as identification of disabled child, classroom management, proper teaching methodologies, develop teaching learning material, new evaluation techniques etc.

Krishnaswamy and Shankar (2003) stated that differentiated instruction could be a suitable approach for the teacher to weave individual goals into the classroom content and instructional strategies. Mani and Mulharah (2003) have talked about creating effective classroom through cooperative learning. Malhotra (2003) stated that teachers should be provided flexible syllabi, which would give them more time and freedom. Kamens, Loprete and Slostad (2000) advocated to include some changes (a) helping each child to deal with frustration and inferiority (b) provide self-concept and self-esteem (c) maintaining consistency in expectations.

Teachers should teach through Co-operative learning, Co- teaching, Peer Tutorial, Participative approach to create healthy, enthusiastic and social environment in class. There is a need for perspective teachers to be prepared to work with others. During training period teacher trainee need to learn how to communicate effectively with the special learner, work and plan their strategies according to them. Students in co-operative learning groups also showed improvement with regard to teachers rating of classroom behavior and self-confidence.

Conclusion

In the perspective of human rights--Education to all and Social and Learner Equality, Inclusive Education plays a vital role to make revolutionary changes for special learners. The goal of this review was to provide a summary of research outcomes and Emerging issues related to Inclusive Education. Considering the above content some specific recommendations have been made for developing effective policies and programmes which help us to say —We accept all the challenges

to provide a meaningful life for students who are innocent and special children and try to ma them special & link them with the real life scenario.

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