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Making Sense of Inclusion in Schools

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ABSTRACT

India is one of the countries in the world where 90% of disabled children do not receive any kind of education, although there are numerous of schools in our country, where inclusive education is being practised. Keeping with demands for a more inclusive system of education in India, the government promises to include disabled children in all its educational programmes. In a move to make the educational system more inclusive, the government has promised to include these children in all its educational programmes through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS). Many schools however, remain unconvinced that inclusive education will work in the long time; they have different sections for disabled students. It's a problem because these children need special care and we can't have them in the same class as other children. While Inclusive education is more in tune with the social model of disability which sees the system as problem. Whole education system is enabled to change in order to meet the individual needs of all learners. So in the present paper, focus on making inclusion in schools through the development of their own philosophy, system approach and emphasis on promoting inclusion in classroom.

KEY WORDS: Inclusive Education, Philosophy of Inclusion, system Approach

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INTRODUCTION

Education as fundamental right specified that every child has the right to education irrespective of age, gender, background, socio-economic status, race, caste, creed, religion and ability. Thus children with special needs also deserve an equal chance to pursuing their academic aspirations. The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 in the section on "Education for Equality" has emphasized the need for removal of disparities and to equalize educational opportunity by attending the specific needs of those who had been denied so far[1]. For achieving equalization of educational opportunity children of remote or nomadic population, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities, girl child, street and working children, children with disabilities, children affected by HIV/AIDS should have access to quality education comparable to other children.

Individual differences that exist in a classroom influences the way of teaching as well as learning. Diverse classrooms have benefited for all learners and teachers. Children have different experiences, skills, knowledge, value and abilities. All children contribute and bring some ingredients to the teaching learning process to the classroom. We live in a society of increasing diversity where success will come to those who learn to work and live cooperatively with others.[2]

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

It is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners and can thus be understood as a key strategy to achieve Education for All (EFA).[3] it works on the principle that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just and equal society. Inclusion is thus seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children, youth and adults through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children. Hence inclusion involves change in the system through modification in content, approaches, structures and strategies helping each child to develop equally in a classroom environment.

In theory, inclusion is establish to encourage collaborative, supportive, and nurturing environment for learners that are based on giving all students the services and accommodations that they need to learn, and allows them to learn from each other's individual differences through inculcation of respect towards each other. Inclusion is not necessarily just focused on the students with disabilities in regular

education classrooms but the children who do not have any disabilities also include in inclusive education classrooms. It is also designed to be able to accommodate and respond to the needs of regular educations as well. While Integration was used to denote the physical placement of students with disabilities into mainstream schools, without any change in the schools where the students were admitted, inclusion on the other hand is a much broader concept that focuses on fulfilling the need of each and every child. Inclusion in education is a much wider concept and context than the others. Inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society.4

Therefore, most confidently it can be said that inclusive education is a strategy for building inclusive society where everyone has right to access, participate and get complete success in education in the neighbouring regular school along with other age mates without any discrimination. It has become the most effective approach to address the learning needs of all students in regular schools and classrooms. In this setting provision of services to children with special education needs in the neighbouring schools with necessary services and supplementary aids for both students and teachers[5].

PHILOSOPHY OF INCLUSION

It is a social and educational philosophy that all people are valuable members of mainstream society, whatever their difference and diversity may be in education. This implies that all children irrespective of their abilities and disabilities socio-economic background, religion or ethnic, language or cultural background, religion and gender go together to the same school.[2] It is the philosophy that aims to improve the quality of education for children in a classroom. It reflects on human rights and social justice. It is a way to reach out all the children. It does not look at whether children are able to follow the regular educational system but looks at teachers and schools in terms of how they can adapt educational programmes to individual needs.

Inclusive education is a pairing of philosophy and pedagogical practices that allow each student to feel respected, confident and safe so he or she can learn and develop to his or her full potential.[6] It is based on a system of values and beliefs centered on the best interests of the student, which promotes social cohesion, belonging, and active participation in learning, a complete school experience, and positive interactions with peers and others in the school community. These values and beliefs will be shared by schools and communities. Inclusive education is put into practice within school communities that value diversity and nurture the well-being and quality of learning of each of their members.

SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

To provide the quality education for all learners, school should establish their own philosophy based on democratic, egalitarian principle of inclusion and belongingness. A quality inclusive education system should focus on all round development not merely on academic achievement.[2] Each Inclusive School maintains their philosophy so that children with special needs are accepted as equal members of the school community and believe that every child can learn. So school should be a supportive community and every student feels welcome and that their unique needs and learning styles are attended to and valued. Each and every member of school is responsible for the education of special need children.

MISCONCEPTION ABOUT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Some opinions about inclusive education are based on unsound information. Three common myths about inclusion are: [7]

Myth 1: Separate is better.   But in reality segregation doesn't work. Whether children are separated based on race, ability, or any other characteristic, a separate education is not an equal education. Research shows that typical children and children with disabilities learn as much or more in inclusive classes.

Myth 2: Children must be "ready" to be included. But in reality all children have to the right to be with other children of their own age. A child with disabilities does not have to perform at a certain grade level or act exactly like the other children in their class to benefit from being a full-time member in general education.

Myth 3: Parents don't support inclusive education. While in Reality parents have been and continue to be the driving force for inclusive education. The best outcomes occur when parents of children with disabilities and professionals work together. Effective partnerships happen when there is collaboration, communication and, most of all TRUST between parents and professionals.

MAKING INCLUSION- A SYSTEMS APPROACH

Successful promotion and implementation of inclusive education require the following systems-level practices: [8]

i) *Connection with Best Practices*

Inclusive education is most easily introduced in school communities that have already restructured to meet the needs of their increasingly diverse student populations in regular education. These initiatives facilitate the inclusion and development of students with disabilities within general education. School leaders should clearly communicate to educators and families that best practices to facilitate inclusion are identical to best practices for educating all students. This message will help members of the school community understand that inclusion is not an add-on, but a natural extension of promising research-based education practices that positively affect the teaching and learning of all students.

ii) *Visionary Leadership*

Visionary leaders recognize that changing in any organization is a complex task. They know that organizational transformation requires ongoing attention to consensus building for the inclusive vision. It also requires skill development on the part of teacher and everyone involved in the change; the provision of extra common planning time and fiscal, human, technological, and organizational resources to motivate experimentation with new practices; and the collaborative development and communication of a well-formulated plan of action for transforming the culture and practice of a school. For inclusive education to succeed, administrators must take action to publicly articulate the new vision, build consensus for the vision, and lead all stakeholders to active involvement.

iii) *Collaboration*

Inclusive education presumes that no one person could have all the expertise required to meet the needs of all the students in a classroom. For inclusive education to work, educators must become effective and efficient collaborative team members. They must develop skills in creativity, collaborative teaming processes, co-teaching, and interpersonal communication that will enable them to work together to craft diversified learning opportunities for learners who have a wide range of interests, learning styles, and intelligences.

iv) *Redefined Roles*

For school personnel to meet diverse student needs, they must stop thinking and acting in isolated ways: "These are my students, and those are your students." They must drop distinct professional labels, and redistribute their job functions across the system. To help school personnel make this shift, schools must clarify the new roles—for example, by making general education personnel aware of their legal responsibilities for meeting the needs of learners with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. In addition, schools must provide necessary training through a variety of vehicles, including in-service opportunities, coursework, co-teaching, professional support groups, and other coaching and mentoring activities. After clarifying teachers' new responsibilities and providing training, schools should encourage staff members to reflect on how they will differentiate instruction and design accommodations and modifications to meet the needs of all students. School administrators should monitor the degree of collaboration between general and special educators.

v) *Adult Support*

Teaching models in which general and specialized personnel work together as a team are effective and efficient ways of arranging adult support to meet diverse student needs.[9] such models include

- *Consultation*. Support personnel provide assistance to the general educator, enabling him or her to teach all the students in the inclusive class.

- *Parallel teaching*. Support personnel—for example, a special educator, a psychologist, or a speech language therapist—and the classroom teacher rotate among heterogeneous groups of students in different sections of the general education classroom.

- *Supportive teaching*. The classroom teacher takes the lead role, and support personnel rotate among the students.

- *Complementary teaching*. The support person does something to complement the instruction provided by the classroom teacher (for example, takes notes on a transparency or paraphrases the teacher's statements).

- *Co-teaching*. Support personnel co-teach alongside the general education teacher.

PROMOTING INCLUSION IN THE CLASSROOM:

Apart from the system approach various curricular, instructional, and assessment practices benefit all students in the classroom and help ensure successful inclusion. The majority of the districts implementing inclusive education reported cooperative learning as the most important instructional strategy supporting inclusive education.[9] Some other general education theories and practices that also effectively support inclusion are

- Current theories of learning (such as multiple intelligences and constructivist learning).
- Teaching practices that make subject matter more relevant and meaningful (for example, partner learning, project- and activity-based learning).
- Authentic alternatives to paper-and-pencil assessment (such as portfolio, role playing, and demonstrations).
- A balanced approach to literacy development that combines whole-language and phonics instruction.
- Thematic/interdisciplinary curriculum approaches.
- Use of technology for communication and access to the general education curriculum.
- Differentiated instruction

CONCLUSION:

Inclusive education is a general education initiative, not another add-on school reform unrelated to other general education initiatives. It incorporates demonstrated general education best practices, and it redefines students, teachers and administrators roles and responsibilities as creative and collaborative partners. The strategies described here can bridge the gap between what schools are doing well and what they can do better to make inclusion part and parcel of a general education program. Although we could not deny that the inclusion is a great challenge to the teachers as well administrator. We should understand the need and the challenges of the process. We have to cope up with the problems and try to find the solutions with the help of available resources and above all with our clear cut vision and attitude towards the inclusion of the students with special needs. Because it is not my duty, nor yours, but it's our duty.

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