

Obstacles and Challenges in Inclusive Education in India with Special Reference to Teacher Preparation

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Abstract

Inclusive education is a strategy to make education universalized irrespective of any disability within the learner and to maintain equity in the society. It emphasizes that children with special need can be included in general school system without any demarcation and differentiation. Without segregating them into the boundaries of special school, provisions can be made for a child with special need who can also get opportunity to learn with other general students having equal quality and facilities. However, for achieving success in inclusive education in India there lies several obstacles and challenges. Many problems such as, lack of well educated teachers, curriculum, resources, good infrastructural facilities, awareness, positive attitude, plans, policies are creating hurdles for extending the concept of inclusive education in India. Among above mentioned hurdles one of the serious problem is to prepare good, effective and competent teacher who can lead and practice inclusive adequately. Therefore it is necessary to explore several problems creating hurdles in the field of inclusive education with special reference to teacher preparation. The objective of this paper is to point out the obstacles and elaborate challenges in the field of inclusive education in India with special reference to teacher preparation.

Keywords

Inclusive Education

I. Introduction

Education is the fundamental right of each child irrespective of his/her caste, religion or special need. All students, irrespective of their sex, race, color, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability I.....have the right to have equal opportunity in education (Klironomos et al., 2006) and to be considered as being an integral part of the learning community, In this respect inclusion of such marginalized students effectively in mainstream is the demand in present scenario and in this process role of teacher is crucial. However Teacher Education in this 21st Century still demand inclusive practices as many children are not getting opportunity to get quality education due to their social, physical and intellectual disabilities which is becoming an obstacle to achieve the main goal of universalizing education Teacher need to develop required competencies to teach such children effectively and understood concepts, strategies as well as tools that can be utilized to attain the goals of inclusion of children with special need. However such competencies can properly be developed during the phase of teacher preparation. Hence it is very essential to explore several problems of inclusive education with reference to teacher preparation.

II. Inclusive Education : Meaning and Status in India

“Inclusive education :- according to UNESCO, means that the school can provide a good education to all pupil irrespective of their varying abilities. All children will be treated with respect and ensured equal opportunities to learn together. Inclusive education is an on going process. Teachers must work actively

and deliberately to reach its goals”.[7]

In the 1990, inclusion captured that field after the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca in 1994, with the adoption of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. Ninety percent of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school, says UNESCO.[7]

Through, in India, there is no formal or official definition of inclusion, it does not only mean the placement of the students with SEN in regular classrooms. 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. [1]

Inclusive Education means including the children with disabilities in the regular classroom that have been designed for children without disabilities (Kugelmass 2004) Inclusive education refers to an education system that accommodates all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. For the development of social skills and better social interaction of the student’s inclusive education is the need of education system. [6]

UNICEF’s Report on the status of Disability in India 2000 states that there are around 30 million children in India suffering from some form of disability. The Sixth All-India Educational Survey (NCERT, 1998) reports that of India’s 200 million school aged children (6-14 years), 20 million required special needs education. While the national average for gross enrollment in school is over 90 percent, less than five percent of children with disabilities are in school. The majority of these children remain outside mainstream education. [8]

Thus it is necessary to explore current status of inclusive education in India as well as problems, prospects, challenges related to its expansion in the country.

For life to go on- change is inevitable. Change is never easy especially when it involves a large number of individuals and an established system. Yet change is necessary when innovative practices demonstrate greater effectiveness than past services. [3]

The World Bank Report (2007) reported that, educational attainment and attendance of the Children with disability were very poor and far below than the national averages. Data suggests that people with disabilities have much lower educational attainment rates, with 52 percent illiteracy against a 35 percent average for the general population. [9]

The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCERT, 2000) has recommended inclusive schools for learners with special educational needs by making appropriate modifications in the content, presentation and transaction strategies, preparing teachers and developing learning friendly evaluation procedures. The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) (2000), brought out by the NCERT, recommended inclusive schools for all without specific reference to pupils with

SEN as a many of providing quality education to all learners. According to NCFSE:

‘Segregation or isolation is good neither for learner with disabilities nor for general learners without disabilities. Societal requirement is that learners with special needs should be the educated along with other learners in inclusive schools, which are cost effective and have sound pedagogical practices’. [4]

The National Curriculum Framework 2006 speaks as below:

‘For teaching to serve as a means of strengthening our democratic way of life, it must respond to the presence of first generation school- goers, whose retention is imperative owing to the Constitutional amendments that has made elementary education a fundamental right of every child. Ensuring health, nutrition and an inclusive school environment empowering of children in their learning, across differences of caste, religion, gender, disability, is enjoined upon as by the Constitutional amendment’. [5]

The Right of children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 had a clear provision in its Chapter II under clause 3 sub-section 2 stated that- For the purpose of sub-section (1), no child shall be liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing the elementary education.

-Provided that a child suffering from disability, as defined in clause (i) of section 2 of the persons with disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection and full Participation) Act, 1996 shall have the right to pursue free and compulsory elementary education in accordance with the provision of Chapter V of the said Act [2]

III. Projects of education of children with disabilities in India

There are some projects education of children with disabilities in India:

1. Project for Integrated Education Development (PIED)
2. Integrated Education for the Disabled Children (IEDC)
3. District Primary Education Project (DPEP)
4. District Rehabilitation Centre and National Programme for Rehabilitation for Persons with Disability (NPRPD)
5. UN Support to primary education : Community School Programme.
6. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) (Movement to Educate All).
7. Inclusive Education of the Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS)

IV. Obstacles Faced by Inclusive Education with Special Reference to Teacher Preparation.

Some of the obstacles related to inclusive education with special reference to teacher preparation are:

- Lack of Teacher preparation Institution
- Lack of Competent Teacher Educator
- Lack of Infrastructure and Resources
- Lack of Proper Curriculum with special reference to Inclusive education during teacher preparation.
- Lack of proper strategies to improve practical skill and competency development on the part of student teachers.
- Lack of time for preparing teachers for inclusion in general classes.
- Lack of continuous workshop, seminar, projects, internship for special children education.
- Lack of adequate pedagogy and strategy to educate children with special need.

V. Challenges

Teachers are the key to success in inclusion. Here, seven essential components for Teacher Preparation Programmes should be introduced based on the experience of training teachers in several teacher education institutions.

1. The Inclusive Teacher is a professional in education with a strong commitment to his/her community. The Teacher Preparation Programme should include subjects with high social and community content because they need to be sensitive to the needs of students and the environment.
2. The Inclusive Teacher recognizes individual differences and implements learning strategies for all. The educational intervention is oriented to diversity and promotes learning strategies for all (equality) for quite a few and for only one (equity). These are other essential aspects in the teacher preparation Programmes. Quality, equality and equity concepts should be translated into specific actions of educative interventions.
3. The collaborative work among educators, facilitates inclusion and needs to be promoted in the Teacher Preparation Programme, Inclusion is funded on a collective ss of teachers, a team sharing knowledge, making decisions, solving problems together and generating actions in order to improve the school and to increase the learning for all . All pre service teachers should know and develop skills in this way because.
 - The teacher learns when teaching and the students teach when they learn.
 - Everyone assumes tasks of leadership because we assume as protagonists.
 - Outcomes increase when we make synergy and identity is strengthened when we make joint decisions, shaping teams in the resolution of problems, allowing everyone to learn or re-learn social skills.
 - The results begin when we work together because nobody, will do it for us whatever we must to do, let's do!
 - The economic resources are a result of collaborative work and not a condition.
 - Heterogeneity provides a great richness.
 - Collaboration boosts accountability and recognition processes in all communities.

VI. The process is shaped in six important steps as follows:

1. Building a common vision. Who are we? What do we want to be? What are our goals, expectations and interests?
2. Recognizing our reality. How are we? Why are we like this? We need to analyze our beliefs and precise data information.
3. Decision making. What are our proposals to improve our present? We need to build and establish agreement about participation.
4. Developing proposals. What are we doing to change the situation? Who? Everyone needs to know all the actions.
5. Evaluating our actions. How and how much have we advanced? Are our agreements functioning? What needs to be modified, strengthened or implemented? We need to make necessary adjustments.
6. Beginning a new. Which areas do we need to improve? What do we do? New actions for improvement.

The common reference on inclusive education frameworks that must be present in all Teacher Training Programs are:

(a). Common vision: The philosophy of inclusion, legal frameworks that enable an education for all with quality and

equity, educational policy that promotes attention to diversity, the historical evolution from marginalization to inclusion and conceptions among others, are fundamental aspects in educational programs.

(b). Language and common knowledge: Emphasize the student's possibilities and support systems, with a clear vision that all children can learn. In this way the school needs to prevent the barriers and limitations for learning that could marginalize children and young people from their potential. It also includes learning conception, individual differences, the values of solidarity, respect, and collaboration, Cognitive and affective elements framed in the conception of collectivity and community empowerment as well.

(c). Educational attention to diversity practices includes strategies for large or small groups and one-on-one, mentoring, curricular adjustments, alternative support systems, diversity assessment actions, collaboration with other professionals and co-teaching trans-disciplinary action, among others. They are essential for the development of the professional skills of attention to diversity.

VII. Mentoring

New teachers must participate with experienced teachers at least during the first two years. This includes dialogue sessions, reviews of situations, decision making arrangements and work plans, among others to provide the following to the new teacher: intervention (guidance), facilitation (advice) and cooperation (co-responsibility).

VIII. Conclusion

Though there lie several obstacles and challenges related to teacher preparation to promote inclusive education it is not impossible to attain success in inclusive education in country through effective teacher preparation strategies. To make inclusion appropriate teacher preparation for inclusive education must be made compulsory in all teacher education programmes irrespective of elementary or secondary level. Further quality resources, faculties and facilities must be supplied to each teacher education institution to make inclusive education programme successful....

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