Inclusive Education: Perspectives and Problems

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Abstract

One of the major problems the world is facing today is the rapid increase in the number of persons who are being left out of their communities' economic, social, political, and cultural life. Such societies are never progressive and also not safe to live in. Inclusive education will play an important role to develop an inclusive society and moreover, inclusive education as a process addresses the diverse needs of all, whether children or adults by increasing participation of people and communities in learning and by reducing the educational marginalization. The rise in public consciousness, success in advancing technology and by making legal announcements in certain countries have made educational opportunities more accessible to children with special needs. In

India, educators, governments, and society at large are concerned about the integration of children with disabilities into normal classrooms for which many committees and commissions have recommended the path to follow. But still there are several impediments in the way of its implementation. The current chapter will highlight some of the major issues in India that hinder development and implementation of inclusive education.

Keywords Inclusion, children with special needs, inclusive education, issues

Introduction

Society as an institution does not exist without an individual. Individuals form the base where a society develops. A productive individual will develop a progressive society and to make an individual a productive asset to the society is possible only through education. Therefore it is and should be the right of every individual to get education without any discrimination. But human beings by nature have been found to manifest strapping reservations for others who are different from them whether physically, socially,or intellectually. So from the time of human creation, children with exceptional needs have been daunted, alienated and segregated from normal society. The earlier efforts of providing special education in special schools and special classes can be considered as a replication of the old aged practice of alienation, separation, and segregation practiced by a large number of societies for the education of specially abled children.As the society progresses from the orthodox to modern,a change in the outlook was found and a need to educate all children under

one roof(Inclusive education) was found to be the better option for eradicating the labels of isolation and segregation of specially abled children and maximizing human potential. Inclusive education has a long history dating all the way back to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which stressed that everyone without any sort of discrimination has the right to get education. Additionally, 1993 Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (20 Decemder, 1993) stressed the need to provide rights of education to children who have special needs. Another notable international agreement that supports specially abled children is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. There were a number of articles in that convention, but specifically article 7 of the said convention stated unequivocally that all the stakeholders must take all the possible steps to provide full access to specially abled children to all human rights (UN Convention, 2006). These three major announcements sparked the development of special education, the first step towards inclusive education.The roots where inclusive education develops, lies in Integration, mainstreaming, and normalization, all of which began in the United Kingdom, The United States of America, and Scandinavian.

Inclusive education India Scenario

In India, The numerous policies and legislative framework like National education policy 1968, Bahrul Islam committee 1985, National Policy on Education 1986 have recommended suggestions to enhance the system of education in general and inclusive education in particular. To Better integrate students with disabilities

into main stream education, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) teamed up with UNICEF in 1987 to develop Project Integrated Education for Disabled Children (PIED). Programme of action (1992), has emphasized the need to integrate students with special needs with those of normal children as equal partners so that they will be prepared for real life challenges.The scheme of Integrated Education for the Disabled Children was merged with other significant basic education programmes in 1997, including the DPEP (Chadha, 2002) and SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (Department of Elementary Education, 2000) to gain more fruitful results for children with disabilities. The 1995 Persons with Disabilities Act includes a clause requiring schools to educate specially abled children in the most suitable setting possible. The SSA, which was announced by the Indian government in 2001, emphasizes on right of children with special needs to be the part of mainstreaming. In its SarvaShikshaAbhiyan framework, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (2006) declares unequivocally that "SSA will guarantee that every child with special needs, regardless of the kind, category, or degree of impairment, receives an adequate education in a suitable setting." It was also stated that SSA will implement a zero-rejection policy to ensure that no child is excluded from the educational system.National Curriculum Framework (2005) has also stressed that there should be a policy of inclusion all over the country to maximize the opportunities for students with special needs , so that they consider themselves equal contributors in the progress and development of the country.

Concept and principles of inclusive education

Inclusive education is a process of enhancing the ability of educational system to provide educational facilities to all the learners whether normal or with special needs. It entails reorganizing school culture, regulations, and procedures in order for them to be responsive to the variety of children in their community.In order for a school to be considered inclusive, all members of the school community, including administrators, instructors, and other students, must have favorable attitude towards children with special needs. Inclusive education believes every child to be a part of mainstream setting or in the congenial environment or least restrictive environment, regardless of his level of competency, that children are taught in an equalizing manner without any consideration of their abilities, and that teachers must adapt curriculum and teaching strategies to cater needs of every child whether normal or with special needs. In comparison to non-inclusive settings, studies have demonstrated that inclusive system of education minimizes dropout rates and the need for repeating grades, as well as having greater overall average levels of accomplishment. The supporters of inclusive education often feel that non-inclusive system of education hinders the developmental ability of the child, and they are of the opinion that every child is unique and has the ability to learn. The UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Education (1994) established and underpin the following ideas upon which inclusive education is based;

1. All children have the right to get basic education;

2.   The capabilities, interests, learning style, and learning requirements of each child is different in its own respect;

3.   Education system should be such that accommodates the diversity of student needs;

4.   Students with special requirements must have equal access to mainstream education;

5.   Inclusive schools are the best means that could help to combat diverse attitudes, form hospitable societies and realize the dream of education for all.

Problems and Challenges of Inclusive education

Inclusive education in India has always remained among the top priority programmes but there is a significant gap between policy and practice of the government when it comes to the implementation of the objectives of inclusive education. This implementation of inclusive education in India is hindered by a variety of obstacles which include the following according to different researchers.

1.   The skills of instructors who are in charge of implementing inclusive education are not up to the standards that they should have been and that are required for inclusion. As part of their investigation on the existing skill levels of primary and secondary school teachers of Delhi to teach students with special needs Das, Kuyini, and Desai (2013) found that approximately 70% of these teachers lack special training and had no prior experience of working with children who have special needs, it was further revealed that 87% of the

instructors did not have access to any kind of special support services in their respective classes. According to Coskun, Tosun, Macaroglu(2009),the inefficiency of teachers to develop and use instructional materials required for inclusive settings is also a major issue in the effective implementation of inclusive education in India.

2. The attitudes of mainstream teachers may be a hindrance to the effectiveness of inclusive methods (Avramadis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000; Bender, Vail, & Scott, 1995; De Boer, Pijl, &Minnaert, 2010). Teachers are generally pleased about the idea of inclusion, but many perceive its actual execution as a challenge (Avramidis& Norwich, 2002; Scruggs &Mastropieri, 1996). But it has been shown that teachers opinions towards inclusion are more likely to be indifferent or even negative (De Boer et al., 2010; Soodak, Podell& Lehman, 1998). A common complaint from educators is that including students with emotional ,behavioral and social issues is especially challenging because of the generally unfavorable views toward such students (Cook, 2001; Cook, Cameron &Tankersley, 2007; Hastings & Oakford, 2003; Shapiro, Miller, Sawka, Gardill, & Handler, 1999). Learning in the classroom is hindered by long-term behavioral, emotional, and interpersonal challenges of these students (Simpson, Bloom, Cohen, Blumberg, & Bourdon, 2005). Pupils with special needs are still as likely to be put in specialized programmes now as they were 30 years ago, unlike other categories of students (Cooper, 2004). Most of

the members of this group are from low-income families, and they have a lower educational level than their peers (Farrell &Tsakalidou, 1999; Simpson et al., 2005).

3. The general teachers, at all levels, lack basic awareness about children with disabilities. They have their own socially and culturally constructed notions about certain obvious disabilities but lack scientific and educational knowledge about the disabilities such as classification, labelling, special needs and adaptations etc. (Unianu, 2012).

4. Another main issue in the implementation of inclusive education is the inability of the mainstream schools to reorganize their strategies, curriculum and learning environment in accordance with the needs of inclusive setting (UNESCO,2005;as cited by Jha,2002).

5. Inclusive education has many obstacles; the most significant according to Das and Pillay (1999) is to cater needs of all students with and without disabilities. Inclusive education is not a simple process; it needs a great deal of effort and dedication to overcome all of the many sorts of obstacles, the majority of which are attitudinal and social in nature (Das and Pillay, 1999).It has been argued that for inclusive education to be meaning full , school must organised and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies , resources use and partnership with their communities

(UNESCO, 1994).

6. In many regions, the colleges and Universities do not provide training programmes for regular instructors who work with students who have disabilities, nor do they offer customized curriculum. Karna (1999) made the particular point that lack of appropriate facilities and resources is a significant barrier to implement inclusive education effectively and efficiently.

7. According to the Salemanca Statement and the Framework for Action on Special Needs education, a well-structured financial model is needed in order to cover the costs of providing suitable educational assistance to children with disabilities in inclusive settings. The lack of proper financial resources, on the other hand, continues to be one of the most significant impediments. Das and Pillay (1999) express this viewpoint as well, stating that money is a restriction in the implementation of an inclusive education programme.

8. There is a lack of basic infrastructure in majority of the schools to meet the needs of differently abled children. Most of the schools fail to get full support of the government in terms of financial assistance and also there is a big obstacle that hinders the implementation of inclusive education policies that is political instability (Parveen and Qounsar, 2018).

9. The main obstacles in implementation of inclusive education that are mentioned by Teena Sarao(2016), include lack of institutions that can prepare teachers for inclusive schools,

infrastructural unavailability, lack of resources, lack of adequate curriculum and teaching stratigies to meet the needs of children with special needs, lack of proper planning for skill development among teachers of inclusive classes, and lack of competency on the part of the teacher to cater the needs of both the normal and specially abled children.

10. Bhat and Geelani (2017), in their research article have highlighted several issues that hinder the implementation of inclusive education in India like, Less enrollment rate of students with special needs in the schools, Large number of students in the classroom, Negative attitude of parents and teachers towards inclusive education, lack of assistive devices in most of the schools, less participation of community in developing inclusive schools, and low rate of retention of specially abled children in schools.

Conclusion

Despite of several issues and challenges in the way of implementing inclusive education program in letter and spirit, yet there is possibility to attain its objectives overtime if all the stakeholders'especially educators show more commitment and dedication towards inclusion, make teachers, parents and overall community aware about the benefits of inclusive education.The time has come for a greater focus on diversity and inclusion. It is the primary duty of the normal system of education to ensure inclusion of students with disabilities. For the successful implementation of inclusive education, all the stakeholders whether professionals of special education, parents of specially abled children or parents of

normal children and overall community should be empowered. In addition, a barrier-free environment and appropriate transportation to school is required. Administrators, curriculum adjustments, assessment methods, and teacher training are all necessary to help teachers better serve students with special needs.

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