

Inclusive Education “A Wholistic Approach to Education for All”



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Abstract

Children with special needs are children with a variety of different disabilities health and mental conditions that requires special intervention service or support. Inclusive education is means to remove all kinds of barriers and discrimination and to improve outcome of all children irrespective of their differences in physical, mental, social, emotional, economic and cultural prospective. Inclusive Education is the best approach to meet the goal of education for all (EFA). The goal of inclusive education ensures that all children, regardless of any individual differences they may have are fully included in the mainstream of life. Parenting a child with special need can be particularly challenging.

Keywords: CWSN, Inclusion, Disabilities, Special Need, Special Education, Education for all.

Introduction

In the words of John Dewey. “What nutrition and reproduction are to physiological life, education is to social life. It is through education man is able to control his environment and fulfill his possibilities.” So, Education is birth - right of all individuals.

One of the constitutional obligation of the nation is to provide elementary education to all children in a free and compulsory basis. But unfortunately due to various reasons, this obligation has not been achieved yet. The introduction of NPE 1986, 1992 and the scheme of sarva shiksha abhiyan have been taken as the efforts of the nation to achieve the goal.

The introduction of Right to education (RTE) Act 2010 has given importance on the education of children with special needs (CWSN) as without their inclusion, the objectives of UEE, can not be achieved.

CWSN

Children with special needs are children with variety of different disabilities health and mental conditions but require special intervention services or support. These children deviate from the normal children either in the positive direction or in the negative direction.

Types of CWSN

Various types of CWSN are-

1. Children with hearing impairment.
2. Children with visual handicap.
3. Children with mental retardation.
4. Children with learning disability.
5. Children with speech handicap.
6. Children with multiple handicaps.
7. Children with orthopedic handicap.
8. Children with emotional disturbance.
9. Children with superior intellectual ability or gifted children.
10. Children with creative talents.
11. Children with social disadvantages and.
12. Children with delinquent tendencies.

Aim of the Study

There have always been special needs children, but there have not always been adaptation of suitable educational programme to meet their needs. It is, therefore necessary to put some light on the significance of inclusive education for children with special needs.

The Indian education commission (1964-66) was first to suggest that “Education of handicapped children has to be organized not merely on humanitarian grounds but also on grounds of reality”.

The Commission has also emphasized that the education of handicapped children should be an inseparable part of the general education system.

Inclusive Education

In education, "Inclusion refers to the placement of education of children with disabilities in regular classrooms with children of same age who do not have disabilities. The underlying premise of inclusion is that all children can learn and belong to the mainstream of school and community life,

Which gives the Message as-

1. Every one belongs to the school
2. Every one is welcomed to the school.

According to Lindsay (2003) It (Inclusive Education) is championed as a means to remove barriers, improve outcomes and remove discrimination. Inclusion is however a complex and contested concept and its manifestations in practice are many and various."

Inclusion includes physical integration, social integration, and access to normalized educational, recreational and social activities that occur in school (Ryndark and Alper).

So inclusion is the provision of services to children with special needs in neighborhood schools with necessary support services and supplementary aids for both children and teachers. It aims at meeting the needs of all children with and without disabilities for a free and quality public education in the least restrictive and most effective environment of neighborhood school.

Historical Background

Inclusive Education as a movement got impetus since the adoption of Salamanca statement in 1994 of ninety two government and twenty five international organizations in the world conference held on special needs of education. "Access and Quality", Organized by UNESCO in Salamanca in Spain. The conference officially adopted for the first time, inclusive education as most effective means for securing Education for All, UNESCO 1994.

Inclusive Education in India

The MHRD India introduced the scheme of integrated Education for children with disabilities (IEDC) in the year 1974, which was meant to cover all classes in school education. The introduction of "The person with disability Act (PWD)1995, has made integration of students with disability a legal responsibility of the Government". The national Action plan for inclusion in education of children and youth with disabilities (IECYD Developed by MHRD, Nov 2005), emphasized the inclusion of children and young persons with disabilities in all general educational setting from early childhood to higher education. The concept of inclusive education was first introduced in the country under the scheme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

Effects of Inclusive Education

Inclusive Education has a lot of positive effects to make the learning environment conducive that leads for better improvement in the personality of CWSN. Studies have shown that including young children with disabilities in integrated settings has produced positive social outcomes for children with and without disabilities. Children with disabilities have

increased levels of social contact with children without disabilities, give and receive higher levels of social support, and have larger friendship networks than disabled peers in segregated settings (Fryxell and Kennedy, 1995, Hunt et al., 1994; Salisbury et al., 1993, Mc Gregor and Vogelsberg (1998) suggest that firstly, children with disabilities demonstrate high levels of social interaction with their non-disabled peers in an inclusive school setting when compared to a segregated setting. This socialization was greater if there was adult support and if the children with disabilities were represented in the school in their normal proportion. Secondly, in inclusive settings social competence and communication skills in children with disabilities are highly improved. This is attributed to the interactions with their non-disabled peers, who assist the children in developing age appropriate behaviors. Thirdly, some research work points towards better academic gains as the inclusive schools follow a more rigorous programme than the special schools. Fourthly, inclusive education results in social acceptance of children with disabilities due to frequent and close interaction amongst all pupils.

Lastly, there are enhanced friendship networks of children with disabilities with their non-disabled peers as compared to segregated settings.

Teachers also play a facilitative role in developing these friendships.

Characteristics of Inclusive School

There are certain 'School Factors' which influence students achievements like professional leadership, learning environment, high expectation, positive reinforcement, monitoring student's progress and parent-school co-operation (Ayres, Sawyer & Dinham, 2004; Bentley, 200; Steve Dinham, Cairney, Craigie, & Wilson, 1995; Alma Harris, 1999; Owens, 1998)

Kuth (2005) identified some common characteristics of inclusive schools; committed leadership, democratic classrooms, reflective teachers, a supportive culture, engaging and relevant curriculum, and responsive instruction.

Committed Leadership

People in the leadership positions like principal, administrators, board members have a key role in inclusion. They provide encouragement and support to teachers, educate families and communities about the school's philosophy and commitments, celebrate success and solve problems.

Democratic Classrooms

Democratic classroom is an approach where everyone (Students, teachers, staff, and family of students) is responsible, contribute and participate in the teaching-learning process. Everyone is treated with respect and dignity, their opinion is respected and the individuals work in close co-operation.

Supportive School Culture

The inclusive school culture is 'open, accepting and caring'. The leaders and educators take interest in creating cultures which is enabling and welcoming for instance, invite and implement suggestions from students, parents and community, and give equal opportunities to all students.

Engaging and Relevant Curricula

The curriculum and instruction in inclusive school must be appropriate to suit individual needs and learning styles to nurture each child's abilities and talents. The teachers must inform children about the diversity amongst learners and must promote cooperative learning.

Responsive Instruction

Teachers have to be flexible and must be skilled to adapt materials, lesson structures and instructional arrangements.

Child to child methodology is perhaps the most effective way of involving children in the process of implementing inclusive education. Inclusive setting allows students with and without disabilities to play and interact every day even when they are receiving their therapeutic services.

For better inclusion the following suggestive programs should be followed -

1. Identification and enrollment of CWSN in the general education institution.
2. Organization of Democratic school environment.
3. Child friendly class room environment.
4. Supportive school culture.
5. Adaptation of relevant curricula.
6. Child friendly TLM.
7. Peer to peer approach
8. Individualized education plan (IEP)
9. Training facility to resource Teacher on special Education.
10. Innovative practices.
11. Improvement of teachers attitude.
12. Parents perception.

13. Collaboration, consultation and team teaching.

Conclusion

However, there is no perfect recipe for inclusive education to yield better result. Each classroom has to be a community which satisfies every child needs a positive treatment as an individual from his peers. The educator must focus on child's strength. Cooperation learning should be a goal for all. There must be sincere attempts in classroom, families and society to minimize competition and promote cooperation for better inclusion.

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