

Teacher training for Inclusive Classroom: A Road Map

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Abstract

This paper presents the current status of teacher education for inclusive education, i.e. preparation of teachers for inclusive classroom as well as the need for introducing changes in the inclusive education curricula, leading towards a more efficient development of competences for working with all students. It is found that the inclusive education curricula do not contribute to the development of competences and preparation of teachers for inclusive classroom. The basic obstacles in preparation of teacher for inclusive education include inadequate curricula, dysfunctional professional practices and negative attitude of educators towards inclusive education. The concluding part of this paper points out that the key factors for changes in inclusive education comprise sufficient motivation of educators, awareness about the responsibility of the faculty to teach in accordance with the inclusive education concept, as well as the support to these faculties through wide social action. The implications for enhancement of training programme for teachers include introducing changes into study programmes and implementing the strategies in practice, leading towards more effective preparation of teachers for inclusive classroom.

Keywords: Inclusive education, Curricula, Professional practices, Study programmes

Introduction:

Inclusive education as an approach to meet the learning needs of all learners within single setting with specific needs. It implies that all learners with or without abilities being able to learn together, through access to common pre-school provisions, schools and community educational setting with an appropriate network of support services. This is possible only in a flexible education system that assimilates the need of a diverse range of the learners and adapt itself to meet these needs. Inclusive education is thus, about achieving the basic human and civic rights of all, including those with physical, sensory, intellectual or situational impairments, through the creation of inclusive policies and practices at all levels of education systems, their values,

knowledge systems and cultures, processor and structures. National Curriculum Framework for school education (NCERT, 2005) 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. Diversity of needs is undoubtedly a challenge. But inclusive education is also an opportunity to enrich learning and social relations. The pedagogical challenge is not only an individual problem, but it is a problem for system and institution as a whole. To overcome this challenge there is a need to reform the system and school and restructuring classroom activity so that all the learners can respond to opportunities and all teachers can construct them.

Indian scenario:

Till 1990 near about 90 percent of India's population i.e. about 40 million children between the age group- 4- 6 years with physical and mental disabilities are not allowed to get education along with normal children. The majority of them are vagrants, they are prohibited from entering the school because of heartless school managements and over-anxious parents of abled children in a travesty of humanity and social justice. Social justice, equity and other social organization demand to bring children with all sort of disabilities into the mainstream with additional support at primary and secondary schools. In spite of many efforts Fewer than five percent of children who have a disability are in schools, and majority of them are excluded. Against this injustice in education and social sector, there is an urgent need to find ways for developing potential of this large section of children.

Historical Perspective:

Special education as a separate system of education for disabled children outside the mainstream education system in India is traced back to 1880s. The first school for the deaf was set up in Bombay in 1883 and the first school for the blind at Amritsar in 1887. In 1947, the total number of schools for blind raised to 32 and for deaf and mentally retarded children are 30 and 3 respectively. By and by such institutions were increased in number. In 2000 the number of special schools rose to around 3000. In 1960s Govt. of India planned a scheme of training teachers for teaching children with visual impairment. Many such schemes for teaching children with other disabilities were gradually planned. The major problem in educating these children

arouse is the competent teacher, lack of uniform syllabi of various courses, eligibility norms for admission to these courses and also due to large extent of non-availability of teacher educators and literatures in the field. Keeping this in view the ministry of Welfare, Govt. of India, recognized the need of an institution to monitor and regulate the HRD programmes in the field of disability rehabilitation. All these special schools have certain pitfall which became evident as the number of these schools increased. These institutions have limited access largely urban and they were not cost effective. But most important among these special schools segregated children with special needs (CWSN) from the mainstream, developing a specific disability culture till date.

Legislation and Policy:

The Constitution of India grants its citizen, right to equality of status and of opportunity. The **Article 41** of the Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution provides the right to work, education and public assistance in certain cases including disability. **Article 45** provides the provision of free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years. **86th Amendment Act 2002** has been legislated by the parliament making education a fundamental right of all children in the age group of 6-14 years. Moreover the **93rd Amendment** to the Constitution of India makes it obligatory for the government to provide free and compulsory education to “all children of the age of 6-14 years”, with its preamble clarifying that “all” includes children with disabilities as well. **The National Policy on Education, 1986 (NPE, 1986)**, and **the Programme of Action (1992)** emphasis the need for integrating children with special needs with non-disabled children. The objective to be achieved as stated in the NPE, 1986 is "to integrate the physically and mentally handicapped with general community as equal partners, to prepare them for normal growth and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence"

Integrated Education

The notion of integrated education in India has emerged during the mid-1950s. It is based on the medical model of disability and its focus is to placed children with disabilities in normal schools. The major thrust is on attendance.

School Based Approach:

On the basis of many researches in placing children with disabilities in mainstream, the Planning Commission in 1971 under its scheme a **programme for integrated education**. The Government has implemented the **Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC)** scheme in December 1974. It was a Centrally Funded Scheme aimed to provide educational opportunities to children with special needs (CWSN) in normal schools and to facilitate their achievement and retention. Teacher training programmes were also given priority. This scheme was applied in one administrative block each in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Nagaland, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Mizoram, Delhi Municipal Corporation, and Baroda Municipal Corporation. This scheme is an alternate to special schools in many ways and appears to be the only way towards universalizing education of the disabled children. This programme has also had a positive impact on the attitudes of the teachers, administration, as well as parents and the community in general. Also, the interaction between the disabled and the non - disabled children is good.

Inclusive Approach:

In 1997 inclusive education is added in **District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)**. It takes into account the core issues related to curriculum such as what factors limit the access of certain children to curriculum; what modifications are necessary to ensure fuller curriculum access. The emphasis was on imparting quality education to all disabled children. **The National Policy on Education, 1986** "...Future emphasis shall be on distance and open learning systems to provide opportunities and access to all the major target groups, especially the disadvantaged, viz., women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, the adult working class, and people serving in the far - flung remote areas." There after **Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992** was passed by the Parliament in 1992, this act makes it obligatory for every special teacher to be registered by the council and lays down that every child with disability had the right to be taught by a trained teacher. In fact it provided punishment for those teachers who engaged in teaching children with special needs without a license. **The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protections of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995** stresses the need to

provide free of cost education to all children in a suitable environment till they attain the age of 18 years. The **National Trust Act (National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disability), 1999** also came into force. It seeks to protect and promote the rights of persons with disability. The government is committed to provide education through mainstream schools for children with disabilities in accordance with **PWD ACT, 1995** and all the schools in the country will be made disabled friendly by 2020. The sum of 10 billion has been spent to fulfill the needs of disabled persons between the ages of 14 and 18 years.

No. of disabled person as per 2011 census

Total disabled population as per 2011 census	No. of disabled person(disability wise)							
	Seeing	Hearing	Speech	Movement	Mental retardation	Mental illness	Any other	Multiple disability
26810557	5032463	5071007	1998535	5436604	1505624	722826	4927011	2116487

Source: census survey of India 2011, data of disability

National Curriculum Framework, 2005 on the policy of inclusion:

It's essential to implement the policy of inclusion in all schools across the country. The participation of all children needs to be ensured in all spheres of their life in and outside the school. Schools need to become centers that prepare children for life and ensure that all children, especially the differently abled children from marginalized sections, and children in difficult circumstances get the maximum benefit of this critical area of education. Schools will succeed in inculcating these values only if they create an ethos in which every child feels happy and relaxed. School administrators and teachers should also realize that when boys and girls from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and different levels of ability study together,

the classroom ethos is enriched and becomes more inspiring. A child has special educational needs if s/he has difficulty in learning. This may require special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child may have learning difficulty because of a disability which hinders her/his from making use of the existing educational facilities provided for all other children of her class. A child may have learning difficulty because of some other reasons too. (NCERT, 2005)

Inclusive Education in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan:

To achieve the goal of Universalization of Elementary Education) Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was launched. It adopts a zero rejection policy and uses a tactic of uniting various schemes and programmes of similar nature. The key objective of SSA is Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE). Three important aspect of UEE are access, enrolment and retention of all children in 6-14 years of age. A zero rejection policy has been adopted under SSA, which ensures that every **Child with Special Needs (CWSN)**, irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability, is provided meaningful and quality education. (Govt.of India, 2014)

Coverage of Children with special need (CWSN) in Secondary Education:

As per States' survey the number of Children with special need (CWSN) covered under Inclusive education of disabled at secondary stage (IEDSS) scheme during 2009-10 to 2013-14

Year	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
No. Of students enrolled at secondary level	3,06,75,882	3,18,52,309	33,23,8,810	3,40,46,103	3,72,16,844
No. Of CWSN enrolled	76,242	1,46,292	1,38,586	1,96,884	2,22,957
% Of CWSN	0.25%	0.46%	0.42%	0.57%	0.60%

Source: Annual education report from 2009 to 2014

The preparation of teachers for inclusive classroom:

In India teacher training in special education is imparted through pre-service and in-service

Pre-Service Training:

In India, there is a provision for pre-service teacher training in Special Education upto secondary level. The number of institutions at secondary teacher training in Special education are 159 and 11 at elementary level that imparts pre-service training. **The Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI)** is an apex body that sets the norms, frame and implement the policies and regulate the course curriculum for Special education. Unfortunately teacher training courses for general pre-service training programs neither fully equip the teachers and teacher educators to deal with the CWSN nor it prepare them to manage the mild and moderately disabled children in general classrooms. To overcome this challenge, MOU has been signed between the National Council for Teacher Educations (NCTE) and the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) leading towards a convergence so as to prepare all teachers and resource persons. The NCERT (2000) has set up a group under the National Curriculum Framework Review to examine the pedagogic inputs and classroom reorganization required for CWNS. Even, UGC National Educational Testing Bureau has already included “Special Education”, in curriculum of its Educational discipline. It includes details about special education, integrated education, education of mentally retarded (MR), visually impaired (VI), hearing impaired (HI), orthopedically handicapped (OH), gifted and creative children, learning disabled children and education of Juvenile delinquents. The Postgraduate Departments of Education in India is continuously strengthening the disability element in their respective curriculum.

In-Service Training:

Under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) various teacher training programmes are being implemented to orient elementary teachers towards Inclusive Education (IE). It includes 20 days mandatory training for in-service teachers under SSA. This programme aims to equip every teacher the concept, meaning and importance of inclusion. Further, SSA at state level programme

also taken up a 3-5 or 5-7 day teacher exclusively in Inclusive education. Around 2.5million 45.2 thousand teachers have been covered through regular teacher training programmes, which includes a 2-3 day capsule on inclusive education. 1 million 400 thousand teachers have been provided 3-5 days additional training for better orientation to Inclusive Education. 39816 teachers have been trained in 22 States with Rehabilitation Council of India for 45 days and act as Resource Persons in districts/blocks. 23 States have appointed 6147 resource teachers and 671 NGOs are involved in the IE programme in 31 States. Efforts were made to make Schools more disabled friendly by incorporating barrier free features in their designs. 444 thousand schools have been made barrier free and the work is on. 575 thousand CWSN have been provided the required assistive devices. At present all the educational schemes of inclusive education tend toward universalization of primary education. But the secondary and higher education is at the verge of ignorance. So, there is an urgent need to create Inclusive Education Department under State's Human Resource Development Ministry to overcome the challenges of inclusion.

Exploring the current Education system:

The present educational system primarily focusing merely on the 3R's that has lead to education being regarded not as a process, but as a product. The outcome consisting of a report, marks sheet, or degree at the end of the academic year. The overall goals of the educational system need to be restructure that helps the student in making independent, progressive and global citizens. When children fail to learn in school, it is only too tempting to perceive something wrong within them. It is time that the education system does some introspection.

In the traditional classroom the teacher remain dominant and make all decision concerning lesson, the teaching activities that the students are expected to learn, and the assessment which tend to focus on paper and pencil tasks that are quick and easy to evaluate. The common metaphor for this type of classroom is that of the students as containers that the teacher is to fill with necessary knowledge

Inclusive classroom on the other hand is an environment within which teacher and student provide support and guidance to the community of the learners within the school, where teacher and students may explore curriculum while benefiting from contribution of various ability peers. Teachers who are moving away from rigid textbook and follow cooperative learning, whole

language, thematic instruction, critical thinking, problem solving, and authentic assessment. If inclusive education is really to contribute to an accelerated achievement of education for all, it is important that account be taken of the new demands, challenges, difficulties, dilemmas and tensions that this change will imply.

School must be recognized as major areas of social experience preparing young citizens of the world community. In this light inclusion seems to be obvious solution for creating a more tolerant, civilized and plural world community. School have complex and conflicting responsibilities, being both products of their culture and cutting edges to challenge that culture .That is why involving local community is essential in any movements towards inclusive education. The diversity of learners is itself a rich source of for learning. Peer tutoring and peer collaboration draws on children to act as resources for their learning communities. Parents of learner have a deep knowledge about their children and this can be particularly valuable for children and young people whose learning become focus of concerning such as some learners with impairments describe. There are thus leaning opportunity within all communities which can be exploited for education.

Provision for diversity in inclusive classroom:

The success of inclusion lies in the hands of the class teacher who is the ultimate key to educational change and school improvement. He/she is the forefront of implementing the stated policies within the constructed educational realities. This requires an attitudinal change whereby all members of the community must be valued in spite of differences .Teachers must believe that all students can learn and plan for the success of diverse learners. It is imperative that teachers accept, recognize and celebrate diverse learners in the classroom.

Effective teaching in an inclusive classroom therefore demands teaching strategies that can accommodate a variety of learners with different backgrounds, needs and strengths. These strategies in my view address three crucial areas within the classroom:

- The context of learning.
- The content of learning.
- Teaching learning process.

Context of learning:

If inclusion is seen as a two-way process of increasing participation and reducing or removing barriers that inhibit the learning and participation of learners, the planning of the context of learning is a crucial element. This involves not only environmental modifications such as good strategic locations, rearrangement of the floor space for wheelchair accessibility, etc. but also a shift in focus from the prevalent rigorous academic approach in mainstream schools, in which the measurement of academic performance is the critical variable. In an inclusive setting, where a great sense of community and trust exists because of children of different age work together in an atmosphere of different of cooperation rather competitiveness, provides evidence that a carefully planned environment with relevant materials and experiences for the learners is essential for all children.

It is important that general education accepts the notion that social skills and peer relation are equal to, if not more important than academic achievements. Teaching strategies for enhancing a climate of trust and interactive peer relationships through cooperative learning groups work very successfully in mainstream schools. Students not only help explain material to each other but share experiences, providing multiple perspective and mutual support.

Content of learning:

Teaching has so far been mainly based on criterion of averages, which means that while some students do not keep up others find teaching “too easy” and boring. In order to meet diverse needs in the classroom, differentiated instruction must be planned based on the unique learning profiles of individual students. Differentiated classrooms offer a variety of learning options designed to tap different readiness levels through providing:

- A variety of ways for students to explore curriculum content.
- A variety of activities through which student can understand and own information and ideas.
- Options through which students demonstrate what they have learnt.

To meet the varied learning needs of students in a classroom, method that focus on differentiating instruction must move away from a single prescribed lesson and provide teachers with the flexibility to adjust factors such as learning objectives and pace of instruction. Instruction that is concept focused and principle driven utilizing task analysis that benefits not only children with disabilities, but also other students in the classroom to reach established goals.

Teaching learning process:

Inclusion cannot mean simply folding all children into the status quo of the general classrooms to be fed pre-decided information. Acquiring knowledge is active, not passive. It has to transform and this requires the learner's participation. In an inclusive classroom varied activities will often occur simultaneously. Therefore teaching process must undergo a shift from being teacher centered to learner centered. Students must develop into "active explorers" and for this, the strategy of promoting inductive thinking is a very useful teaching tool.

Utilizing this strategy requires the teacher to provide all students with a series of relevant experiences, providing support to analyse rules and principles through discovery learning. Keeping this in mind, the national council of education research and training has recently developed exemplar material on curricular adaptations, inclusive teaching and how to adopt flexibility in evaluation for children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. The material is based on an approach where by the teacher provides meaningful learning experiences to all children in the class and uses simple language and expressions that values all children. The material comprises of a number of examples that demonstrate how to change the current teaching practices in inclusive classrooms, and support students to become independent learners and actively participate in the learning process. 1.58 lakh mainstream teachers under sarva shiksha abhiyan have already been trained on this exemplar material.

Teacher capacity building for inclusive classroom: Future steps:

The development of inclusive education not only demands a constant change in teacher's values, attitudes, professional expertise and knowledge, but also on those responsible for their training and support. To deal with this a continuous and coherent programme of professional development is needed for all educational personnel. Since the teacher will be primarily

responsible for bringing about this radical change in practice, it is vital that careful planning is undertaken to provide the required capacity and make inclusive education a reality.

Although educators may admit a more learner centered approach to education, the methods of teaching and learning employed in teacher education may contradict the commitment and the teacher trainers may remain unconvinced. In many teacher education courses, inclusive education is considered as an add on system, usually associated with learners with impairments or those categories as having special education need rather than permeating the approach to education in all courses for all students. Thus, issues of gender, ethnicity, language differences etc. are silently brushed aside. There is a need for urgent reflection and introspection of both general and special education courses in order to pave the way for a dynamic inclusive education courses that meet the challenge of the day.

The new approach of continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE) is a positive step in this direction. CCE refers to a system of school based evaluation of students that cover all aspects of student's development. It emphasis on two fold objectives. These objectives are continuity in evaluation and assessment of all aspect of child's educational process. Evaluation of identified aspects of student's growth and development in a continuous process rather than one annual exam or half yearly exams conducted after a specified period of time. The second term comprehensive mean that the process covers both the scholastic and the co-scholastic aspects of student's growth and development. (Chandha, 2016)

Conclusion:

Educating students in an inclusive setting, therefore, will succeed, when it is pedagogically equitable and the focus is on the inclusion of all learners to be taught using the diverse ways of learning education delivered through a format of questioning, research, cooperative learning, individualized expectations, and critical thinking all generally captured under the term "**best practices**". Every child in school should be provided with equitable access to curriculum ,textbooks and teaching learning materials in the form best suited to his/her learning needs.

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