



Inclusive Education History, Current Trends and Barriers

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education is a worldwide response to the belief that all children have the right to be educated at their local early childhood centre or school. India's education system has undergone a series of transformations over many years, which has included modifications to how schools and their students are funded and managed, and the responsibilities various government departments have for ensuring all children receive the best possible education in a variety of environments. In this ancient system of education (the guru shishya parampara) all children were taught together, be it under a shady tree or in the gurukul, whether normal, gifted or physically or intellectually disabled and were seen as worthy of the benefits of education, each according to his/her abilities. It was inclusive education in the truest sense. But later with many changes in education system in India it has taken different ways and now the government had passed NPE and Right to Education Act, under which- every child have right to education free & compulsory. This article outlines those changes, suggests a way forward that will help ensure inclusive education practices in India match the current trends and barriers, and further reinforces the uniqueness that all children bring to their 'sense' of inclusion.

KEYWORDS : Inclusive Education, History, Current Trends, Barriers.

INTRODUCTION:

Inclusive education means that all students attend and are welcomed by their neighborhood schools in age-appropriate, regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the life of the school.

Inclusive education is about how we develop and design our schools, classrooms, programs and activities so that all students learn and participate together.

"I was too overwhelmed by the disability that I failed to see the child... Today, I am too overwhelmed by the child that I fail to notice the disability." (Told by a headmistress, based on her experience of inclusion, who earlier refused admission to a child because of the child's disability).

Inclusion means full inclusion of children with diverse abilities (that is both giftedness and disability) in all aspects of schooling that other children are able to access and enjoy. It involves regular schools and class rooms genuinely adapting and changing to meet the needs of all children as well as celebrating and valuing difference. --- Loreman & Deppeler(2001)

Inclusion is an effort to make sure children with disabilities go to school along with their friends and neighbors while also receiving whatever specially designed instruction and support they need to achieve high standards and succeed as learners. - National Institute for Urban School Improvement.

PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSION:

Every student has an inherent right to education.

All students can learn and benefit from education.

Individual differences among students are a source of richness and diversity, not a problem.

Schools adapt to the needs of students, rather than students adapting to the needs of the school.

The diversity of needs and pace of development of students are addressed through a wide and flexible range of responses.

No student is excluded from or discriminated within education on grounds of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, ethnic or social origin, disability, poverty or other status.

Inclusion is the direct outcome of Normalization.

In fact normalization principle applies very ideally to groups of people

who are not at risk in our community of being though less valuable. -----Wolfensberger (1972)

NORMALIZATION

The term normalization originated in Denmark (Wolfensberger, 1972). Nerje (1979) introduced the term to America and defined it as making available to all persons with mental retardation, patterns of life and conditions of everyday living which are close as possible to the regular circumstances of society.

According to Hallahan and Kaufman, there are three major steps to attain full normalization. They are-

1. Deinstitutionalization
2. Antilabeling
3. Mainstreaming

DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION

It is a process to take out those children who are admitted in segregated institutions and bring them back to that normal environment which is made for all.

ANTILABELING

According to Hobbs (1975), Antilabeling focuses on eliminating labels and categorization of children with mental retardation. It may be occasionally important for administrative purpose but not necessary for academic activities.

MAINSTREAMING

Mainstreaming is a term that refers to the practice of educating students with mental retardation in regular classes during specific time periods based on their skills or capabilities.

INTEGRATION

Integration is to provide a healthy social relationship between children without disability and children with disability at all levels by integrating them (CWD) in many academic classes and extracurricular activities.

An eye opener.....

Greek & Spartan times	Phase-1	Right to life denied
17 th Century	Phase-2	Children with Mental Retardation, were called as Idiots, Moron
18 th Century	Phase-3	Sub normal, Handicapped

19 th Century	Phase-4	Special Need Children
20 th Century	Phase-5	Intellectually Disabled
21 th Century	Phase-6	Persons with Disability

What was happening in India....

In this ancient system of education (the guru shishya parampara) all children were taught together, be it under a shady tree or in the gurukul, whether normal, gifted or physically or intellectually disabled and were seen as worthy of the benefits of education, each according to his/her abilities. It was inclusive education in the truest sense.

Even today, small rural schools provide education for all children under one roof, little realizing that they are following a system of education newly rediscovered in the west termed "Inclusive Education". The tragic fact seems to be that somewhere on our way towards modernization we have lost this unique system of education.

Salamanca Statement

"ON PRINCIPLES, POLICY AND PRACTICE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS- (1994)"

OBJECTIVES-

To promote the approach of inclusive education and enabling schools to serve all children, particularly with special needs.

To ensure the quality of education to all through appropriate curriculum, organizational arrangement, teaching strategies and partnership with communities.

It is an issue of organizing and recognizing our system of schools, rather than organizing and placing the children with mental retardation at one place or another place.

It is a system which has to change and inclusive education is necessary because it is socially desirable for changing the attitude of the community.

After Salamanca -Convention (1994)....

Inclusion is acceptance of all people in the mainstream system, taught with a common framework and identified as the responsibility of all teachers.

Thomas(1997)

- CHILD AS PROBLEM....
- Does not respond, cannot learn
- Has special needs
- Needs special equipments
- Cannot go to school
- Is different from other children
- Needs special environment
- Needs special teachers

EDUCATION SYSTEM AS PROBLEM....

- Teacher's attitude
- Rigid method : Rigid curriculum
- Inaccessible environment
- Many dropouts : many repeater
- Teacher and school not supported
- Parents not involved
- Lack of teaching aid and equipments
- Poor quality teaching

Traditional Approach....

- Education for some
- Static/ Rigid
- Learning in segregated society
- Emphasis on teaching
- Subject centered
- Labels children
- Diagnostic
- Opportunities limited by exclusion

Current (Inclusive approach)

- Education for all
- Flexible
- Individualized teaching
- Learning in integrated society
- Emphasis on learning
- Child centered
- Holistic
- Equalization of opportunities for all
- Curricular views
- Equalization of opportunities for all
- Curricular views
- Planning is made on ability
- Label free

P.W.D ACT(1995)

This act provides certain rights for the persons with disabilities-

- Right to free education in appropriate environment up to the age of 18 years.
- Right to equal opportunity with the non disabled.
- Right to full participation in the activities of the school at par with those who are non disabled.

BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY

- Get an opportunity to learn social skills in natural environment.
- More stimulating and motivating environment (e.g. the halls, the recess yard, school bus, where much social exchange takes place) improve capacity for socialization.
- Availability of age appropriate role models without disabilities.
- Learn appropriate skills (e.g. appropriate greetings, wearing age appropriate dress- better and adaptation to the school).
- Opportunities to participate in a variety of school activities appropriate to their chronological age (recess, lunch, assemblies, music, art and athletic events).
- Has greater potential for new friendship with peers without disabilities.
- More probability for improved scholastic performance and faster acquisition of knowledge and skills.
- Overcome other problems such as speech problems faster.
- Show less mal-adaptive behavior.
- Better self-image and most importantly, they learn to lead as 'normal' life as possible and to think of themselves as being the same as others and not as persons with disability.

ATTITUDINAL BLOCKS AND OBSTACLES TO INCLUSION

- Resistance from teachers
- Inadequate preparation of teachers and schools
- Lack of support services
- Unhelpful and negative attitude
- Misconceptions about the program
- Afraid of investments
- School and children are not yet ready with positive attitude
- Bureaucracy
- Vested interested of those who have invested in segregated education

FACILITATING ACCEPTANCE:

There are four major players who can facilitate social interactions, acceptance and inclusion of students with disabilities....

Facilitating Inclusion through Teacher Behavior

- Have a positive attitude
- Be the teacher for all students in your general education classes
- Model appropriate behavior
- Include the students with disabilities in as many activities as possible
- Individualize the curriculum and instruction
- Be knowledgeable about the students with disabilities
- Conduct workshop for teachers

Preparing Classmates without Disabilities

- Invite guest speakers with disability to speak to the class
- Lead a discussion about disabilities
- Conduct elocution, competitions and debates about persons with disabilities

- Talk about famous people who have disabilities
- Discuss about the specific students who will be included
- Explain how to interact with specific students with disabilities
- Encourage and promote peer support practices

Preparing Parents

- Joint orientation programs
- Parents meeting to clear out all fears and doubts
- Training programs
- Exposure of successful programs
- Involving parents in planning and implementation of inclusive education
- Discussion in parent-teacher association
- Making children speak
- Arranging guest speakers
- Developing children's network
- Workshops and counseling services

PREPARATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES:

Children with disabilities also need to be prepared for successful inclusion. "Catch them young" if inclusive education is to be very successful. The earlier children experience being with, working with and playing with peers with disabilities, the easier will be their ability to accept them and accommodate them as class room peers.

DESIRED INCLUSION PARADIGM: IT CONCERNS ALL

The inclusion philosophy suggests that only through a merger of resources, knowledge base and talents of general and special education teachers can both children with and without disabilities receive a comprehensive and appropriate education.

"Continual support to teachers and use of various co-teaching arrangement is an effective way to facilitate inclusive education." (Lipsky and Gartner, 1998)

CONCLUSION:

Inclusive education does not mean dumping children with special needs into the regular classrooms. We have to accept their diversity, respect their individuality and create opportunity for their participation in all the activities of the school.

Ballard says-

"Inclusion values diversity not assimilation."

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