



TEACHERS FOR ALL: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Education

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ABSTRACT

Globally we need more well-trained and motivated teachers. Good teachers can help and ensure that every child learns to their full potential from an early age and enters adult life well-equipped to be active citizens and support the development of their community and country. The newly enacted Rights of persons with Disabilities (RPD) Act 2016 mandates all educational institutes funded or recognized by the government shall admit Children with Disabilities and extend all facilities of accessible environment, books, scholarships teacher training, professional training colleges and take all measures on promoting inclusion. Thus the essence of provisions of RPD Act 2016 desires that each and every school in the country has ultimately emerged as an inclusive education. Moreover, as per the clause 47 of the RPD Act 2016, (which envisaged the Human Resource Development), Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) has been bestowed the responsibility to develop special education teachers by making different provision for inclusive education at different level. There is a prime responsibility for the stakeholders of disability rehabilitation & special education to relook at the special teacher's development programmes prevailing in our country. There is an urgent need to necessary up gradation of curriculum of teacher education in order to cater the need of children with disabilities and promote inclusive education. This paper discusses the required change in the roles and responsibilities of existing teachers in the context of inclusive education, quality of teacher education programmes and its curriculum, strategy to bridge the gap of trained teachers and additional competencies that they would need to have in order to be successful in inclusive classrooms.

KEYWORDS

persons with Disabilities, inclusion, RCI, RTE, Inclusive Education, special education teachers, Teacher Education, Children with Disabilities.

INTRODUCTION

Globally we need more well-trained and motivated teachers. Good teachers can help and ensure that every child learns to their full potential from an early age and enters adult life well-equipped to be active citizens and support the development of their community and country. Many countries do not have enough teachers, let alone enough teachers who have received sufficiently high quality pre- and in-service training and access to continuing professional development. India is one of the few countries world over where the development of teachers for the education of persons with disabilities (Divyangjan) doesn't fall within the purview of under human resource development ministry. It is generally the burden of the omnibus department of empowerment of persons with disabilities (divyangjan), ministry of social justice and empowerment, the prime focus of which is rehabilitation, not teacher development. In fact, till today it does not have teachers as well as special educator's development as part of its agenda and the issue of teacher's development remains imperceptible, hidden from the public domain.

At present the capacity of teacher education programs for Inclusive education is a new approach towards educating the children with disability with that of normal ones within the same roof. There is an emerging consensus that persons with disabilities need should be included in the educational arrangements made for the majority of children. This is the essence of inclusive education. In the prevailing Indian take care of divyangjan and disadvantage children in inclusive setting is quite limited. In India, no operational definition of inclusive education has evolved yet. One can, however, say that "Inclusive education means all learners, young people—with or without disabilities being able to learn together in regular pre-school provisions, schools and community educational settings with appropriate network of support services."

Furthermore, the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), a statutory body under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, has been entrusted the responsibility of framing the policies and programmes for developing the teachers and rehabilitation professionals required for education and rehabilitation of the persons with disabilities (Divyangjan). It is felt that there is an acute shortage of trained teachers for rehabilitating a very large population of persons with disabilities (Divyangjan) in the country. So far, the RCI has trained approximately one lakh professionals in total 16 disciplines from certificate to Ph.D. levels courses through 690; RCI training colleges throughout India.

Historical Perspective:

The disability sector in India has been neglected for a long time. No serious effort was made by the Government of India for special educator development for inclusive education for education of divyangjan. In fact, there were only a few teacher training colleges for development of teachers for the disabled children and most of them were located in urban areas. Initially, these schools and vocational centres were opened for disabled by Christian Missionary and other religious trusts. Prior to the independence, there was very little concern for systematic and scientific efforts in this direction. Serious efforts were made in this direction from the International Year for Disabled Persons in 1981.

Based on the recommendations on the National Education Policy 1986; the Rehabilitation Council of India was formed as a statutory body under the RCI Act 1992 (w.e.f. 1993) passed in the Parliament after which manpower development and training programmes came straightway to the grip of RCI. At present the capacity of teacher education programs to Inclusive education is a new approach towards educating the children with disability and learning difficulties with that of normal ones within the same roof. Inclusive education should cover not only children with mild disabilities (who are educable), but also street children, children from remote and nomadic population and children from other disadvantaged and marginalized area of groups. There is an emerging consensus that children with disabilities should be included in the educational arrangements made for the majority of children.

Current Status

The Rights of persons with Disabilities Act (2016) replaces the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995. The Act includes the following 21 conditions under disability. The Act allows the central government to notify any other condition as a disability. Persons with "benchmark disabilities" are defined as those certified to have at least 40 per cent of the disabilities. As per the clause 47 of chapter VIII of the RPD Act 2016, (which envisaged the Teachers Development) Rehabilitation Council of India has been bestowed the responsibility to develop trained teachers. RCI ensure a steady supply of competent and well trained people at all levels to the different areas spelt out. Presently, the rehabilitation courses in the field of disability and special education are broadly classified in following category.

The newly enacted Act mandates all educational institutes funded or recognized by the government on local authority shall admit Children

with Disabilities and extend all facilities of accessible environment, books, scholarships teacher training and professional training and take all measures on promoting inclusion. Thus the essence of provisions of RPD Act 2016 desires that each and every school in the country has ultimately emerged as an inclusive school. These provisions are very much consonance with RTE Act 2009. With this premises another factor that would result in the school becoming inclusive is appointment of specific special teachers to deal with specific type of disability.

Need of Trained Teachers for Inclusive Education:

Much attention has not been paid towards the development of teachers for persons with disabilities in India so far. Initially, few teacher training colleges for blind and deaf & dumb were opened by Christian missionaries. Teachers in these schools were not trained. No planned efforts were made in this field for developing trained manpower that could help in rehabilitation of the persons with disabilities. Disability rehabilitation in India has a long past but a short scientific history. Groups and individuals initiated measures for betterment and improvement of the disabled persons but unfortunately these efforts were individualistic and perhaps unorganized and ad-hoc in nature though they were committed to improve the condition of disabled persons. There was little concern for systematic and scientific efforts in this direction.

Many academics in the field of inclusive education point to teacher education and school leadership as essential for the implementation of inclusive education in the classroom (Ainscow, 2005; Sandhill & Singh, 2005; Booth et al, 2003; Ainscow, 1991), yet the standard of teacher training courses across India varies hugely, and they usually approach the inclusion of children with disabilities from a deficit perspective. In the general teacher education diplomas and degrees available nationwide, there is an optional 'special needs' paper to train and 'prepare' teachers to identify and diagnose disability. However, it is not an integral part of the training, and it does not train teachers to deal with diversity or challenge negative attitudes (Singal, 2005a). This reinforces the 'difference' of children with disabilities who, some believe, can only be taught by teachers qualified specifically for them (Singal, 2005a). However, it is ultimately teacher treatment of students in the classroom, rather than the training per se, that would reinforce this difference.

There is evidence to suggest that many teachers do not feel equipped to teach children with disabilities and complain that they need more time to instruct these students. Many government programmes have included a teacher training component in an attempt to instigate institutional change. However, a 'special needs' focus and a lack of training for management, combined with didactic training methodology do little to alter the classroom status quo, especially when responsibility is shifted onto a specialist resource teacher rather than methods altered to suit all students. When teacher training is taken out of the context of programme islands and geographically accessible environments, teachers are found to be reluctant to attend training because it takes place in their free time and holidays (Lal, 2005).

Strategies for Teachers Development for Inclusive Education:

A key reason why teacher training often fails to address inclusive education – and in particular the inclusion of students with disabilities – is because those involved in planning and running teacher training do not have disabilities, and often have no direct experience of working with people with disabilities. There is a growing movement towards community involvement in and management of schools. If this is to be successful it must include representation from diverse groups in the community, including people with disabilities. This needs to be further extended to ensure that teacher education, and the ongoing support and professional development of teachers, is done with the involvement of people with disabilities (and people from other marginalised groups too). As we saw above, teachers/trainee teachers need their training to be practical and contextually relevant. This means training needs to be designed with input from a range of stakeholders living, working and studying in the communities in which the teachers will work – and this must include inputs from people with disabilities.

a. Teacher Training Policy:

The success of a student depends most of all on the quality of the teacher. With the advent of standard based reforms, the quality of teachers has become a major concern of policy-makers, college and university presidents, especially at the colleges of teacher education

and the public in general. Every child deserves a quality teacher. In an era of increasing standards and accountability in education, teacher quality and teacher training will be more important than ever. In facing up to the numerous challenges to teacher education in the era of digital technology and globalizations, this book will facilitate the quest for new teacher education for the future. The target audiences are teacher educators, educators, graduate students, researchers, policy-makers and those interested to reform teacher education for the future.

b. Curriculum:

The question of what knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and skills; teachers should possess the subject of much debate in many cultures. This is understandable, as teachers are entrusted with the transmission to learners of society's beliefs, attitudes and deontology, as well as of information, advice and wisdom and with facilitating learners' acquisition of the key knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that they will need to be active in society and the economy. Generally, Teacher Education curricula can be broken down into these blocks: foundational knowledge and skills usually this area is about education-related aspects of philosophy of education, history of education, educational psychology, and sociology of education content-area and methods knowledge often also including ways of teaching and assessing a specific subject, in which case this area may overlap with the first (foundational) area

c. Innovations in Teachers Education

Inclusive education, as we all know is all about removing barriers and increasing educational opportunities for all. It involves levels and kinds of educational gains for every group of students within schools. In spite of having good policies and faith at the administrative level, lack of resources and knowledge to accomplish the extraordinary goals may become a barrier. The main purpose of the RCI is to accelerate and diversify teachers development in such a way that rehabilitation and education reach to every child and adult with disability in the country. In this direction, RCI has standardized the curricula on the training of 16 categories of professionals. RCI also maintains a Central Rehabilitation Registrar for qualified professionals and personnel who are engaged in the field of rehabilitation of persons with disability. By the RCI Act, it is mandatory to register every professional who is working in the field of rehabilitation of disabled.

d. Role of the Principal/Headmaster

Principals/headmasters can be actually considered as agents of change in the teacher training centre. A proactive and committed teacher training principal/headmaster is crucial to successful inclusion. It is only through the principal's leadership, a teacher training college can become a model inclusive teacher training college that accepts and welcomes students from different backgrounds and with different abilities. The principal/headmaster can encourage collaborative teaming, parent involvement, resource support, flexible curriculum and relaxation in examination procedures.

e. Pre Service Training In India

There is provision for pre-service teacher training in special education, but it is mainly concentrated in secondary level training. The teacher training course curriculum of general service training programs neither fully equip the teachers and teacher educators to deal with the child with special needs. For this NCERT, has set up group under the National Curriculum Framework Review to examine the pedagogic inputs and classroom reorganization required for child with special needs. Even UGC National Educational Testing Bureau has already included 'Special Education in curriculum of its educational discipline. It include details about special education, integrated education, education of mentally retarded, visually impaired, hearing impaired, orthopedically handicapped, gifted and creative, learning disabled children and education of juvenile delinquents, The post graduate department of India is on way to strengthen the disability element in their respective curriculum.

f. In Service Training

Different kinds of teacher training programmes are being implemented under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan to orient elementary teachers towards inclusive education. Two training modules Ujala III (2006) and Samanth (2006) has been developed with specific focus on initial screening of children with special need and basic classroom management skill. Besides this the teachers are also being exposed to the concept of inclusive need based pedagogy through training on principles of effective teaching such as classroom organization seating arrangements, evaluation process etc.

g. Teaching Strategies for Inclusive Education

Intensive teacher training should be undertaken to sensitize regular teachers on effective classroom management of children with special needs. Resource support could be given by teacher working in special schools. Specially trained resource should be appointed for teaching special skills to children with special needs. Individual education plan should be prepared by the teachers for every child with special need. Researches in all areas of education of children with special need including research for designing and developing new assisting devices, teaching aids, special teaching materials and other items should be encouraged. Small group meetings with teachers may be held where the administrator presents the programme in a formal manner. Free expression of ideas and apprehensions should be permitted during such meetings to allow teachers to clarify their doubts and seek appropriate answers. It is desirable that at least a few regular teachers of the school undergo specialized training to work with children with special needs. Short-term and ongoing in-service training programmes for teachers organized by governmental agencies such as the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) or a local NGO may prove useful in this regard.

Conclusion:

Teachers help young people to take responsibility for mapping out their own learning pathways throughout life. Teachers should be able to take charge of their own learning pathways also. Furthermore, as with members of any other profession, teachers have a responsibility to develop new knowledge about education and training. There is an urgent need to necessary up gradation of curriculum of teacher education in order to cater the need of children with disabilities and promote inclusive education. Further, the National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) has given a new thrust to inclusive education by notifying minimum eligibility criteria for teachers as well as special educators. It is also need to take action on the UGC directive at least one state university in each State have a Department of Disability studies, which should address all issues relating to persons with disabilities – specially human rights, rehabilitation education etc. Inclusion will entail a large-scale system-wide planning and capacity building and also planning at the school level. Inclusive Teacher Education is a new approach towards educating the children with disability and learning difficulties with that of normal ones within the same roof. Of late, a consensus has emerged among Indian intellectuals and pedagogues for adopting inclusive education in mainstream teachers training college. Organised programmes and packages in the field of teachers' development are required to be evolved to effectively manage Rehabilitation activities being undertaken by the NGOs.

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