Effectiveness of special education for students with disabilities

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ABSTRACT

Today, the struggle for ensuring the right to education for disabled children is an undeniable reality. Assuring the social integration of this largely excluded group can only begin when educational inclusion is practiced and ensured. By doing so, we can move closer to the goal of Education for All. Approximately 80 percent of the world's disabled population lives in developing countries. The special education system has given children with disabilities much greater access to public education, established an infrastructure for educating them, helped with the earlier identification of disabilities, and promoted greater inclusion of these children alongside their nondisabled peers. Inclusion is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education.

KEYWORDS	Disabilities, Inclusion, Special education

All children and young people of the world, with their individual strengths and weaknesses,

With their hopes and expectations, have the right to education. Therefore, it is the school system of Our country that must be adjusted to meet the needs of all children.

Over half a billion persons are disabled as a result of mental, physical or sensory impairment. These persons are often limited by both physical and social barriers, which exclude them from society and prevent them from actively participating in the development of their nations.

Education must be viewed as a facilitator in everyone's human development and functionality, regardless of barriers of any kind, physical or otherwise. Therefore, disability of any kind (physical, social and/or emotional) cannot be a disqualifier. Inclusion, thus, involves adopting a broad vision of Education for All by addressing the spectrum of needs of all learners.

Special Educational Needs

According to 1981 Education act special educational needs defined as follows:

A child has 'special educational needs' if he/she has a learning difficulty, which calls for special educational provision to be made for him/her. A child had learning difficulty if he/she:

(a) has significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same

age;

(b) has a disability which either prevents or hinders the child from making use of educational

facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools within the

area of the local authority.

Recognizing the need to safeguard the educational rights of all students, recent federal legislation has addressed these concerns. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (USDOE, 1997) specified that students with disabilities must have access to the general education curriculum and participate in assessments. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (USDOE, 2002), a sweeping reform of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) creates additional provisions to ensure that no children—especially those with the greatest learning needs—are neglected in standards-driven learning environments. NCLB redefines the federal role in K-12 education with the goal of closing the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers. States must establish standards and test every student's progress using tests designed for the standards. Progress must be measured for all. (USDOE, 2002).

The special education system has given children with disabilities much greater access to public education, established an infrastructure for educating them, helped with the earlier identification of disabilities, and promoted greater inclusion of these children alongside their nondisabled peers. Despite these advances, many problems remain, including the over- and under identification of certain subgroups of students, delays in identifying and serving students, and bureaucratic, regulatory, and financial barriers that complicate the program for everyone involved

Barriers in schools:

There are walls between schools and children before they get enrolled, they face walls with curriculum inside the class rooms and finally 'they face more walls when they have to take examinations which determine how successful they will be in life' (Jha, 2002). The most school systems are confronting two types of barriers, external and internal. Children face external barriers before coming to and getting enrolled in schools. The nature of such barriers could be physical location of schools, social stigmatization or economic conditions of children. Sometimes non-availability of school or its location in area that cannot be accessed becomes the major barrier for children to get education. Children face barriers within schools and classrooms owing to organization of curriculum and teaching methodologies. At times, they are assessed and 'identified' and thereafter isolated within schools, or even classrooms, to receive discriminatory curriculum.

Origin of inclusive education:

Inclusion as we know it today has its origins in Special Edu

cation. The development of the field of special education has involved a series of stages during which education systems have explored different ways of responding to disabled children, and to students who experience difficulties in learning. In some cases, Special education has been provided as a supplement to general education provision, in other cases it has been entirely separate. In recent years, the appropriateness of separate systems of education has been challenged, both from a human rights perspective and from the point of view of effectiveness.

The 'Salamanca Statement' adopted at the 'World Conference on Special Educational Needs: Access and Quality' called upon all governments and urged them to: Adopt as a matter of law or policy the principles of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise (UNESCO, 1994, Statement).

There are two distinct perspectives on inclusive education. First, emerging largely from the developed countries, and the second, owing to the felt need and circumstances prevailing in the developing world. In richer developed countries, education is largely inclusive of girls, the disadvantaged and the ethnic groups. Children with disabilities physical and mental and learning difficulties, earlier getting education in separate special schools, are now being recommended to regular schools with inclusive orientation.

The approach has to be different in respect of the developing countries where large proportion of children is still out of school. Those who get enrolled are unable to complete minimum prescribed number of school years. The 1994 UNESCO World Conference also realized this situation when it argued that a school should,

…accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual,

social, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and

gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or

nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic, or cultural

minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized area and

groups. (UNESCO, 1994, Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, p.6)

These inclusive schools,

… must recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students,

accommodating both different styles of learning and ensuring quality

education to all through appropriate curricula, organizational

arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnerships with their

communities. (UNESCO, 1994, Framework for Action on Special Needs

Education)

Defining Inclusion
UNESCO views inclusion as 'a dynamic approach of responding positively to pupil diversity and of seeing individual differences not as problems, but as opportunities for enriching learning.' Inclusion is seen as a process of addressing and-responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children.

There are four key elements have tended to feature strongly in the conceptualisation of inclusion.

- Inclusion is a process. That is to say, inclusion has to be seen as a never-ending search to find better ways of responding to diversity. It is about learning how to live with difference and learning how to learn from difference. In this way differences come to be seen more positively as a stimulus for fostering learning, amongst children and adults.
- Inclusion is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers. Consequently, it involves collecting, collating and evaluating information from a wide variety of sources in order to plan for improvements in policy and practice. It is about using evidence of various kinds to stimulate creativity and problem-solving.
- Inclusion is about the presence, participation and achievement of all students. Here 'presence' is concerned with where children are educated, and how reliably and punctually they attend; 'participation' relates to the quality of their experiences whilst they are there and, therefore, must incorporate the views of the learners themselves; and 'achievement' is about the outcomes of learning across the curriculum, not merely test or examination results.
- Inclusion involves a particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalisation, exclusion or underachievement. This indicates the moral responsibility to ensure that those groups that are statistically most 'at risk' are carefully monitored, and that, where necessary, steps are taken to ensure their presence, participation and achievement in the education system.
- It is important to highlight that a holistic view of the education system, encompassing both the private and public system, must be taken when considering adopting an inclusive approach.

Initaitive of Government of India to promote Inclusive school Education of disabled children

1. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)
The key objective of SSA is Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE), three important aspects of which are access, enrolment and retention of all children in 6-14 years of age. SSA ensures that every child with special needs, irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability, is provided meaningful and quality education. Hence, SSA has adopted a zero rejection policy. The goal of UEE, has further been strengthened by the enactment of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 making free and compulsory elementary education a Fundamental Right for all the children in the age group of 6-14 years. This Amendment has given a new thrust to the education of Children with Special Needs (CWSN), including autism, as without their inclusion, the objective of UEE cannot be achieved.

2. Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS)
The Scheme of Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) was launched in 1974 by

the Department of Social Welfare and was later transferred to the Department of Education in 1982-83. The scheme was revised in 1992 and provided educational opportunities for disabled children in common schools to facilitate their integration and ultimate retention in the general school system. This has now been replaced by IEDSS, launched in April 2009. It provides assistance for the inclusive education of disabled children

of Classes IX – XII having blindness, low vision, leprosy cured, hearing impairment, locomotor disabilities, mental retardation, mental illness, autism and cerebral palsy.

Funds are provided for activities such as identification and assessment, assistive devices, allowance for transport, escorts, readers, uniforms, books and stationary, stipend for girls, etc. Besides, there is provision for engagement of special teachers, creation of barrier free environment, teachers' training, orientation of communities, parents, educational administrators, etc.

3. Making Schools Barrier Free
All States have been directed to ensure that all primary and secondary schools are made disabled friendly, in a prescribed time bound manner, taking into account the needs of different categories of disabled children. Each district will also have a model inclusive school.

4. Capacity Building of Special Teachers
a) Course curricula has been developed and standardized by the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) for

i) Diploma in Special Education (Autistic Spectrum Disorders), introduced in July 2003, and

   is operational in 11 institutions registered with RCI, producing 20-25 teachers every year

      per   institute

ii) B.Ed. Special Education (Autistic Spectrum Disorders) will become operational from the

   session beginning in July 2010 at 4 institutions across the country

b) Some other organisations imparting diploma in special education (ASD) include Spastics

   Society of Karnataka, Bangalore; School of Hope, Delhi; Action For Autism, Delhi; Jai

   Vakeel, Mumbai and Pradeep, Kolkata

c) State Nodal Agency Centre (SNAC) and State Nodal Agency Partners (SNAP) of the

   National Trust have conducted trainings on

i   Inclusive Education for Private School Teachers to handle the special needs of students

    with National Trust disabilities in inclusive classrooms. In the Govt. Schools, this is being

   done under the SSA Program.

ii Special School Teachers Training - National Trust has specially focused on Early

   Intervention and Autism.

5. The National Award to Teachers, conferred to teachers
from across the country by the President of India, has a dedicated category for disabled teachers/special teachers doing yeoman's service for the education of disabled children.

conclusion
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With their hopes and expectations, have the right to education. Over half a billion persons are disabled as a result of mental, physical or sensory impairment. These persons are often limited by both physical and social barriers, which exclude them from society and prevent them from actively participating in the development of their nations. Inclusion as we know it today has its origins in Special Education. There are four key elements in Inclusion. Inclusion is a process concerned with the identifications and removal of barriers, is about the presence, participation and achievement of all students and emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalisation, exclusion or underachievement. Indian government has taken many initiatives to promote inclusive school education of disabled children.

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