

Recent Trend of Inclusive education in India:
Challenges and Opportunities in inclusive setting

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Abstract

Inclusion of individual with disabilities has been a societal challenge for research and practice. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview to the readers about the developmental process of inclusive services for individual with disabilities in India. This paper highlights about the challenges are being faced by children with disabilities as well as rehabilitation professional , para-professional and other personal who are providing inclusive education services. Many challenges have opened the door of great opportunities in the field of education and rehabilitation in inclusive settings. The paper also provide a remarkable view of inclusive services across the world in order to depict the progression of inclusive services for children with special needs in India since Independence. It also highlights the key issues and challenges against successful inclusive education and made some suggestions that may assist in providing appropriate inclusive education with disabilities in India.

Introduction

The inclusion of individual with disabilities refers to the approach in which individual or students or children with special needs learn or receive educational services with the non disabled or regular students in barrier free environment. Inclusive class room settings might contains several students with disabilities or special needs that are mainstreamed full time into the general classrooms or some children with special need spend time each day in both special education class room and general education classroom. It is clarified that the terms least restrictive environment, inclusion and mainstreaming are often interchangeable. Least restrictive environment (LRE) refers to that students with special needs should be educated

with students without disabilities in an integrated school setting. The general population in India is still struggling with the awareness on the needs and services of students with disabilities. The major part of India's population lives on less than Rs.100 per day. In India, services for individual with special need are still provided in segregated settings, i.e. special school, special programs by NGOs. Education, researchers and even film makers are attempting to develop a public awareness concerning the range of services for individuals with special needs can achieve functional independency that can promote productive living in mainstream society. According to Bala Subramaniam (2012), "the awareness on inclusive education in schools throughout the country is still at an infancy stage: educational institutions are somewhat skeptical about having both disabled children and non-d children in the common classroom settings." Currently many children with disabilities are instructed in separated educational settings, but professional and parents are calling for more equitable inclusive education for these children. It is imperative that inclusion in schools takes place to promote equity of students with special needs in society's settings.

International and National Educational Acts and Policies on Inclusive Settings

Globally, there are millions of children living with disabilities in the world. These children have traditionally been marginalized within or excluded from school because of their apparent difficulties. In this regard various international and national endeavours have been taken till now. UN Convention on the Rights of the child (1989) imposed a requirement for radical changes to traditional approaches to provision made for children with disabilities. One year later, the 1990 world conference on education for all focused on attention on a much broader range of children with disabilities. In world conference inclusive education regarded as only means to achieve the goal of education for all. In convention on the rights of persons with Disabilities (2006),the disable persons should be able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and life-long learning without discrimination and an equal basis with others through reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. Standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities (1993)set an international standard for policy making and action covering disabled children and adults. It gives qualified support for inclusive education saying countries should recognize the principles of equal educational opportunities in integrated settings for disabled children; they should also ensure the education of disabled people is an integral part of the wider education system. The Salamanca statement (1994)marked a new point for millions of children who had long been deprived of education. It provided unique

opportunities to place special education within the wider framework of the “education for all” (EFA) movement. This led to the concept of inclusive school is that of developing child centered pedagogy capable of successfully educating all children including disabled. Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (2006) recognize that the disability is a developing concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barrier in society on an equal basis with others. After series of consultation meetings and drafting process, the Rights of PWD Act, 2016 (RPwD Act, 2016) was passed by both the houses of the Parliament. In the RPWD Act, 2016, the list of disabilities has been expanded from 7 to 21 conditions includes i.e. cerebral palsy, dwarfism, muscular dystrophy, acid attack victims, hard of hearing, speech and language disability, specific learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, chronic neurological disorders such as multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease, blood disorders such as haemophilia, thalassemia, and sickle cell anaemia, and multiple disabilities. There are various discrepancies which kills the right of some genuine victims and raising their voices to dissolve such discrepancies.

After India has got its independence, inclusive education is written into India’s constitution as a fundamental right for all citizens. Parts IX, Article 45 of the constitution states, the state shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14years. In 1960, special education was organized and funded in India. The Ministry of Education splits and a new branch called Ministry of social welfare was created for the weak & vulnerable” section of society. The Govt. of India created the “Kothari commission” in 1964. It reads- we now turn to the education of disabled children. Their education has to be organized not merely on humanitarian grounds of equity. Proper education generally enables disabled children to overcome largely his/her disability and make him into a useful citizen. The Ministry of welfare created the Integrated Education of disabled children scheme (IEDC) which provided children with disability financial support for books, school uniforms, transportation, special equipment and aids, with the intention of using these aids to include such children in mainstream classroom although it was not enough to integrate children with disabilities into the mainstream classroom. National Policy on Education (NPE) was created in 1986 continuing with the spirit of (IEDC) that states children with mild disabilities should include in mainstream classroom, where as children with moderate to severe disabilities should be placed in segregated schools or special school. The 1992 programme of action (POA) created to implement the 1986 NPE, that a child with a

disability who can educate in the special school should not be in the special school. It says that once children with disabilities acquires basic living skills, which would be learned in resource room or special school, across India would accept responsibility by sharing their resources with other institutes. In 2002 the 86th amendment to the constitution was mandatory free & compulsory education to all children age 6-14 years. This result in, the Govt. of India , in conjunction with the world bank created SarvaShikshaAbhiyan(SSA),an initiative which translate to “Education for All”.SSA is not a disability specific program; but rather a disability - inclusive program, with specific aspects that benefits people with disabilities. The Govt. of India decided to make Amendment 21A of the constitution, giving children between the ages of 6-14 the right to free, appropriate and compulsory education : into an act- The Right to Education Act(2009). This Bill, framed through a social justice & collective advocacy perspective rather than through a framework of individual rights, is not disability specific ,but is inclusive of children with disabilities, with specific section that address the educational rights of students with disabilities. In 2009, the Ministry of Human Resources Development also drafted the Action plan for Inclusion in Education of children & youth with disabilities (IECYD). This action plan envisions that all children with disabilities will have access to mainstream education, in order to facilitate this, the Govt. specially collaborating between the Rehabilitation council and National Teacher’s Education will ensure that there are adequate numbers of teachers trained in inclusive education, as well as the proper physical and ideological infrastructure to facilitate inclusion in schools. The policy specifically concerning education and people with disabilities is the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment National policy for people with disabilities (2006). The National policy for people with disabilities utilizes SarvaShikhyaAbhiyan. The policy echoes the 2005 Plan of Action 2005 Bill by changing special schools in resource centre for people with disabilities & teachers. District disability and Rehabilitation Centre (DDRCs) which provides information in terms of availability of aids & appliances ensure the mandated 3% coverage of person with disabilities in poverty reduction programmes & target girls with disabilities.

Opportunities in Inclusive education

The inclusive education setting is an environment that relies on collaboration as special education teachers or professionals work closely with general education teachers, parents, teaching assistance, therapists and other pertinent personnel such as technical experts in order to best meet the needs of students with disabilities. Rehabilitation professional and

special education teachers enjoy the challenges of working with students with disabilities and the opportunity to establish meaningful relationships with them. All children in the inclusive setting are able to be part of their community, develop a sense of belonging and become better prepared for life in the community as children and adults. Successful inclusion attempts to develop an individual's strength and fosters a culture of respect and belonging. Technological advancement has also encouraged greatly many technical professionals to enter the special education for the rehabilitation of special need children. Special education teachers can advance to become supervisors or administrators with higher degree or certificates such as behavioral specialists, autism specialist and so on. Employment of special education teachers is expected to increase faster than average. Special education teachers, special language pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist ,assistive technology practitioner/ specialist will get huge career opportunities in the field of special / inclusive education.

Major challenges in Inclusive settings

Inclusive classroom settings are wonderful concept but they require lots of training, patience and compassion on the part of special teachers. Fully inclusive classrooms have students across the educational and developmental spectrum, ranging from typically developing students. For this reason, it becomes challenges for the teachers to find enough if balance to serve all the students. Teachers face a lot of problems in a special need inclusive classroom. Lack of experiences of some teachers has been exposed to special need classrooms and this can be a disadvantages. Educators need co-ordinate efforts and understanding the needs of the classrooms in term of developing skills and lesson plan. Students with severe and profound disabilities require more adaption and medical attention than the average students. Teachers must be skilled in handling severe disabilities and create lesson plans based on individual abilities and adhere to progressing skills or cause of adverse medical incidents. Special needs inclusion classrooms must be able to involve its students in all classrooms activities. Teachers need to address how the classrooms will communicate with each other and encourage participation. If there is a lack of adaptive equipment or adaptive communication and language tools, it makes it difficult for teacher to functions as united classrooms. When there are children of all abilities in the classroom, both physical and academic, children in the middle can easily fall between the cracks. Providing right amount of attention and adaption can be challenging especially if there is a higher teacher to students ratio. Normally, inclusive classrooms have a regular educator and special needs

educator. Due to the nature of the classrooms and size, it is imperative that there be an appropriate number of teacher's aids to assist the teachers with day to day activities. Not all students have been exposed to persons with special needs and these become challenges to teachers. Teachers must not tolerate insensitiveness and cruelty and teach that all students are to be treated with respect, regardless of ability. There are varying abilities in classrooms; teachers can be challenged to address individual academic needs. A special needs inclusion classroom needs to be well organized and allow for students to attend therapy sessions. However, this becomes a challenge in planning day to day activities and keeping all students engaged and learning. Although many schools are moving towards special needs inclusive classrooms, there are a number of issues or challenges that need to be addressed. Preparing and training a teacher is the first step in making special needs inclusive classrooms a success. Both special teacher and general classroom teacher are definitely benefited to an inclusive classroom but they face huge challenges to make it run as it is intended. For regular teacher or classroom teacher, they struggle to provide adequate material suitable for children with special needs, while providing mainstream instructions for other students. Sometimes it is found that mainstream students who are bored, develop behavioural problem because they are not stimulated enough. The number of behavioural problem student increase and it is difficult for the teachers to manage special need children and regular students. On the part of special need children the core subjects become very heavy to learner with special needs whereas regular students of inclusive settings face problem to learn the core subject broadly due to hetero peer group in spite of their ability. Teachers in inclusion setting have faced heavy burden while managing both category of students.

Suggestions for improving inclusive settings

Policy maker should provide adequate budget allocations for creating resources, proper enforcement of legal provision and policy guidelines, periodic effective review and correctional initiatives. Professionals should be updated their professional knowledge and skills. They should increase use of latest assistive and advanced technologies, devices, apps for the growth of children with special needs. School administration should appoint qualified staffs and ensure their long term retention through handsome remuneration, social security, career progression and proper HR policies. They should provide them work freedom, sufficient resources to conduct research, developing learning materials for accessible, create team work of administration, professionals, parents, PWDs, social workers,

local leaders. Parents should encourage their children to learn and provide resources to cope up with social environment. Local leaders/ social workers should aware people, parents of special needs children by organizing various programs and meetings so that persons with disabilities can rehabilitate and mainstream in the society. Teachers should be trained or updated regularly in order to acquire new skill to perform their role in inclusive settings more efficiently. Govt. must give necessary support to these learners and teachers handling inclusive classes must be properly trained and well equipped with skills. More teaching aids, teaching materials, teaching instruments and according to child needs should be implemented in order to enhance learner's learning. Inclusion requires careful planning in term of human and non- human resources. To this end, Indian schools should work collaboratively with parents and community to prepare productive citizen. This can generate an understanding of an inclusive society that can support the social value of equity and to minimize the stigma of disability for students who are served in special schools.

Conclusion

Inclusion is necessary in diversity. It is not only the right of the children with special needs (CWSN) but also the duty of the Govt. As well as Non Government organization to provide education to all, their rehabilitation and put them in mainstream of the society. To teach special need children in an inclusive classroom is a crucial task for the general teachers, for that sincere qualified, trained teacher is required. Nevertheless the success of inclusive education depends upon the attitude of the parents, teachers and peers of children with special needs.

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