Growth Of Inclusive Education In India And Its Relevance In Contemporary Period

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Abstract

As the development of any country is being depicted by its education system so inclusive education is one of the steps to achieve the same. Both nationally and internationally, inclusion of disabled students including children with minority race, women and children from rural areas, in the general educational classrooms along with their non-disabled peers is considered as a serious issue by the educational community. In order to face this issue there is a need to aware the people about the benefits and productive outcomes of inclusion. Inclusive means that all children irrespective of their strengths and weaknesses in any aspect should be the part of the school. Various research studies have been conducted which depicts that disabled students showed improvement in social and academic fields in the inclusive environment. Need of inclusive education is felt because disabled students develop positive attitude towards their non-disabled peers, each one having unique characteristics, interests, attitudes in an inclusive environment. Inclusive education also faces various challenges which are regarded as traditional and outdated but created a serious hindrance for making this program successful. Thus the present paper focuses on the concept of inclusive education, its need to keep our country at par with the developed countries and its various challenges.

Keywords Inclusion, Inclusive Education, Disability, Non-Disability.

Introduction.

The main concern towards the education of children with disabilities have changed dramatically from several years and few countries take steps forward to implement policies which leads to fostering the integration and, more recently, inclusion of these students into mainstream environment. Although a key element for the successful implementation of the policy and who have the major responsibility for implementing it is the teacher.

At the "World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality" (Salamanca Statement, Spain 1994), the principle of inclusive education was adopted and was restated at the World Education Forum (Dakar, Snegal 2000). This idea is further supported by the United Nation's Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disability Proclaiming Participation and Equality for all. Thus, the aim of Inclusive education is to meet the diverse needs of all the students by overcoming the barriers that creates hindrance within the learning environment. Inclusive education is a process to make the education system strong enough to reach to all learners. It is an educational philosophy which aims to provide opportunities for educational and social achievement. It provides opportunities to students for participation in social, recreational, arts, sports, music, extra-curricular and all other activities. Inclusive education is seen as vital in assisting students with SEN in building friendship and gaining acceptance from others as well as providing quality education. Inclusion is, about the right of the child to participate and the duty of the school to accept. The idea of inclusive education has been gaining ground all over the world in response to the changing and increasingly diverse needs of heterogeneous student populations (Ferguson 2008; Savolainen et al.2012). It is based on the belief that the right to education is a basic human right, and all children and young people, regardless of their individual characteristics and difficulties, should be served by schools in their communities (UNESCO 2001). Overall, developing inclusion in an education system involves positive attitudes in the community, strong educational frameworks that improve inputs, processes and environments to enhance learning both at the student and systemic level, completion of full cycle of education, and meaningful outcomes from educational experiences that target learning and the development of students (UNESCO 2009).The development to include children with special needs in regular education settings is generally described by the term 'inclusion', which refers to 'the process of educating children with disabilities in the regular education classrooms of their neighborhood schools – the schools they would attend if they did not have a disability – and providing them with the necessary services and support' (Rafferty, Boettcher, and Griffin 2001, 266).

Thus the concept refers to all learners with a particular focus on those who are due to superstitious and traditional thoughts, segregated and excluded from the educational opportunity on the grounds of any disability, ethnic minority, girl child, rural population etc. Various initiatives have been taken place internationally in order to increase their participation in the school activities. These initiatives reflected in growing enrollment rates and reduced dropout rates and also decreased the number of out of school going children. Parents also take initiatives towards inclusion because they expect to participate their children with their peer groups socially and academically and this is possible only by physical integration. According to Koster, Nakken, Pijl and Van Houten (2009), social participation consists of four key elements, namely:

(1) The presence of positive contact/interaction between children with special needs and their classmates,

(2) Acceptance of them by their classmates,

(3) Social relationships/friendships between children with special needs and their classmates, and

(4) The pupils' perception they are accepted by their classmates.

No doubt integration is beneficial from various angles for both disabled and non-disabled children but at the same time children with special needs feel difficulty in their participation. Research showed that these children are less accepted by their peers, have fewer friendships and are less part of a network in class compared to their typically developing peers (Bramston, Bruggerman, and Pretty 2002; Kuhne and Wiener 2000; Mare and Ronde 2000; Pijl, Frostad, and Flem 2008; Soresi and Nota 2000).

In 1987, NCERT joined the hands with UNICEF and launched Project Integrated Education for Disabled Children (PIED) for the purpose of integrating disable learners in general classrooms

"If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way that they learn."-Ignacio Estrada.

"Inclusion is a right not a privilege for a select few"-Judge Geary, Obert V.

 Thus, inclusion is about:

- ❖ Removing separation or segregation or exclusion of learners from the discrimination on any ground - ability, gender, language, family income, disability, sexuality, color, religion or ethnic origin.
- ❖ Providing maximum opportunities of participation for all learners in the community schools of their choice.
- ❖ Make the learning more fruitful, meaningful and relevant for all, particularly for those learners who are most vulnerable to exclusionary pressure.
- ❖ Rethinking and reframing policies, curricula, and practices in schools and learning environment so that diverse learning needs of all the learners in the classroom can be met, no matter whatever the origin and nature of those needs.

The concept of inclusion was conceived in 1948 with the declaration adopted by the UN General Assembly on the "International Bill of Rights" which recognizes that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Fundamentally this declaration seeks to deal with the discrimination issue of on any ground at all levels of society. Thus Inclusion is, accepting all people irrespective of their differences i.e.; accepting and appreciating people for who they are and whatever their competencies and capabilities are, rather than how they walk, talk, or even behave. Inclusive education is, when all students, irrespective of having any challenge, are being placed in age-appropriate general education classrooms that are in their own neighborhood, to receive high quality instruction, interventions, and support, that will enable them to meet success like their peers. The most effective way is the education to

break the cycle of discrimination and poverty that the children with disabilities and their families often face in every walk of life. In fact, it is the right of every child to get education, and it is the duty of the school to accept him/her. According to Children's Act 1998, children with disabilities have the right to be educated with their non-disabled counterparts of their own age. The Act also states that children should have access to the same general curriculum taught to children without disabilities. Following are some important points on which inclusive education is based:

- ❖ Every child should learn and benefit from education.
- ❖ Schools adapt to the needs of children, rather than children adapting to the needs of the school.
- ❖ Schools should modify to meet the challenges of every child.
- ❖ Every child has an inherent right to education on the basis of equality and opportunity.
- ❖ No one should be excluded from, or discriminated within education on any ground like race, color, sex, language, religion, social origin, disability, birth, poverty or other status.
- ❖ Children's views are listen to and taken seriously because sometimes their viewpoints are acceptable and teacher should encourage their views which develops in them self-confidence, self-esteem and so many traits.
- ❖ Individual differences between children are a source of richness and diversity, because no two individuals are alike nor even the two twins and the teacher should not consider it as a problem.
- ❖ To facilitate access of girls with disabilities and disabled students from rural and remote areas to government hostels.
- ❖ To provide for home based learning for persons with severe, multiple and intellectual disability.
- ❖ To emphasis job-training and job-oriented vocational training.

Thus inclusion in its wider sense is comparable to equality as a social value in relating to all aspects of social disadvantage, oppression and discrimination. Inclusive education allows the children to develop friendship with their peers and feel less social tension about their disabilities. It is believed that children who are placed in standard classrooms with their peers show higher self esteem than the children who were placed in separate classrooms because of their disability.

Statement of the Problem, Growth of Inclusive Education in India and its Relevance in Contemporary Period.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

 The following objectives were formulated for the present study:

1 To study the "need and importance of inclusive education.

2 To study the relevance of inclusive education to the contemporary world.

METHODOLOGY

Philosophical method, according to Passmore (1967) is not exclusively employed by philosophers only. Every man utilizes philosophical method in his thinking on philosophical problems. However, the philosophical method is mainly utilized by the philosophers. The philosophical method is not absolutely different from scientific method because every method has its own procedure to investigate truth. There seems to be as many philosophical methods as there are different philosophies. Philosophical method is multi - sided. Though the philosophers have sometimes emphasized on this or that method exclusively, yet all the methods have been found to be useful in philosophical thinking. A researcher in the area of educational philosophy aims at analysis of the meaning and nature of different kinds of educational practices. The researcher identifies appropriate norms and standards

Need of Inclusive Education

The main focus of inclusive education is on the fact that it helps to build up the self confidence among disabled students which makes them to realize that they have their own part to play in this world. It works as a hope for them to survive in this world. The more the disabled children interact with normal children and people, the more they feel comfortable. Separating them from the society and making fun with them, makes them feel that they are not capable of doing anything which demotivates them from doing any contribution to the world. In inclusive environment all children feel to be a part of their community and develop a sense of belongingness and prepared himself as a member of the community. It provides better opportunities for learning. Children with different types of abilities are often better motivated to learn in classes surrounded by other children. Besides all children have higher expectations and inclusive environment prepares the ground for developing each individual's strengths and gifts. It encourages the parents to involve in the education of their children and fosters a culture of respect and belongingness which in turn helps to accept the individual differences. Inclusive education is more effective when teachers adapt activities to meet the diverse needs of all students. Thus inclusive education is a better way which helps all the students to succeed. Most of the researches show that child's learning and performance is better when they are exposed to general education classroom. By the inclusive program, better quality education is provided to all children that help in reducing the discriminatory attitudes. Respect and understanding grow in the children when children of diverse abilities play, socialize and learn together. Education that segregates the disabled children perpetuated the discrimination against the marginalized groups. Thus inclusive education enhances civic participation and community life. Pijl, Nakken and Mand (2003) drew a conclusion from their literature review, that there is no evidence for inclusive

education having a detrimental effect on the achievement of students without SEN, and that some studies even find positive effects. The NCF 2005 recommends that the curriculum should be flexible and appropriate to accommodate the diversity of school children including those with disability in both cognitive and non-cognitive areas. An important policy development after 1992 has been the enactment of persons with disabilities (equal opportunities, protection of rights and full participation) act 1995. Article 26 (a) of the Act makes it a statutory responsibility on the part of central, states and local govt. to provide free education in an appropriate environment for all children with disabilities up to the age of 18 yrs. Article 26 (b) of the Act calls upon appropriate Govts and local authorities to promote the integration of students in normal schools. Various research studies have shown that by integration, the regular students become more compassionate toward students with special needs. "When students with severe disabilities are included in the regular classroom, all students develop 3 social, communication, and problem-solving skills, as well as the ability to get along with others in diverse communities" (Farlow, 1996, p. 55). Without inclusion, students in general education would rarely communicate with the student with special needs.

Benefits of Inclusive Education

Increased academic achievement for both students with disabilities (Daniel & King, 1997; Luster & Durrett, 2003; Peetsma et al., 2001) and their nondisabled peers (Huber, Rosenfeld, & Fiorello, 2001; Sharpe, 1994) has been documented in a variety of research. A positive impact on social outcomes for students with disabilities when included in the general education classroom has also been examined (Klingner et al., 1998; Vaughn et al., 1998).

1. Enhanced learning:- By the inclusive education program, teachers became flexible in the process of making the use of instructional material and teaching strategies. They are no longer to use traditional methods but instead they use videos, audio, kinesthetic and even multimedia they can employ in order to make learning more accessible and exciting which helps in enhancing the learning of children without any disability. Various research studies have consistently demonstrated that the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms results in favorable outcomes. Dyson and others (2004) performed a large-scale study into the effects of inclusion on the achievement of students without SEN. At regional level, they found no relationship between the inclusiveness of the Local Educational Authority and achievement. At school level, a small effect was found: in schools with higher levels of inclusion, student achievements were on average lower. Positive outcomes have been shown for both students with high incidence disabilities (learning disabilities and other mild disabilities) and those with low incidence disabilities(intellectual, multiple, and severe disabilities)"(xuan Bui,carol Quirk,Selene Almazan, MIChele Valenti, 2010)Hollowood and colleagues investigated the degree to which the presence of students with severe disabilities affected the time allocated for instruction, the actual time used for instruction and students

engaged time. Results indicated no differences across the three domains when comparing classrooms that included students with severe disabilities and classrooms without students with severe disabilities. (Hollowood, Salisbury, Rainforth and Palombaro,1995).s

2. Increased positive self-understanding:- when children attend classes that reflect the similarities and differences of people in their community, they develop an increasing understanding of other children and their own (Odom et al.2002). They learn to appreciate and respect their own as well as other cultures. Children become more understanding of and to develop positive attitudes towards their diverse counterparts (Odom and Bailey, 2001). Children gain cultural fluency across cultures with exposure to different cultures.

3. Increased pro-social behavior:- More time in the general classrooms with students with disability are associated with absence and referral of some disruptive behavior. Multiple studies show that children in inclusive educational setting demonstrate increased "pro-social" behavior. Typical peers can learn to identify targeted ways to engage peers with differing abilities (Tsao et al, 2008). This translates to increased initiation of interactions/engagement of peers with differing abilities (Tso etal; 2008). Some children can learn to adjust their communication without teacher instruction to engage their classmates who communicate differently than they do (Guralnick and Paul-Brown,1997). Diamond and Hong(2010) found that typically developing children are more likely to approach their decisions to include children with disabilities in play based on fairness and equity. Collectively, these positive behaviors improve the atmosphere and generate a sense of collegiality within the classroom and across the school.

4. Enhanced and expanded friendship:- Schools are important places for children to develop friendship and learn social skills. Respect and understanding grow when children of differing abilities and cultures learn and play together. Friendships emerge based on common experiences and mutual enjoyment regardless of observable and perceived differences. Children are more likely to approach children with disabilities with acceptance (Rafferty et al, 2001) and are less likely to view a disability as an impairment (Burnstein, Sears, Wilcoxen, Cabella and Spagna, 2004,idol,2006). Research shows that typical peers are willing to initiate and maintain friendships with children who may be different (Burnstein et al, 2004, idol 2006).

5. Positive classroom culture:- A peer-support model, with peers acting as tutors(with proper teacher support), leads to a better managed classroom in which all students can benefit (Scruggs and Mastropieri, 1998). In an inclusive educational setting, typical peer who have strong grasp of content and material often assist classmates with school-related tasks and tend to move into a tutoring role. As children do this, they are also likely to show increased self-esteem, confidence, autonomy and leadership skills (Katz and Chard, 2000). A long term benefit to these students is that they actually tend to approach course material and

school in general with more enthusiasm (Fuchs, Fuch, and Burish, 2000; Scuggs and Mastropieri, 1998).

6. Development of leadership skills:- students in inclusive environment learn to become empathetic and take the responsibility of caring for one another. Sometimes they face such situations where they have to talk to protect their disabled peers which in turn help to develop in them various leadership qualities. Teachers should also give opportunities to all students to discover their diverse talents. Although disabled students lag behind in some capabilities but at the same time they excel in other fields as well.

Conclusion. The more the disabled children interact with normal children and people, the more they feel comfortable. Separating them from the society and making fun with them, makes them feel that they are not capable of doing anything which demotivates them from doing any contribution to the world. In inclusive environment all children feel to be a part of their community and develop a sense of belongingness and prepared himself as a member of the community. It provides better opportunities for learning. Children with different types of abilities are often better motivated to learn in classes surrounded by other children. Besides all children have higher expectations and inclusive environment prepares the ground for developing each individual's strengths and gifts. It encourages the parents to involve in the education of their children and fosters a culture of respect and belongingness which in turn helps to accept the individual differences. Inclusive education is more effective when teachers adapt activities to meet the diverse needs of all students. Thus inclusive education is a better way which helps all the students to succeed. Most of the researches show that child's learning and performance is better when they are exposed to general education classroom.

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