CHALLENGES FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Abstract

Education is the single greatest tool for achieving social Justice and equality. And 'Inclusive Education' is an approach to make education universalized irrespective of any disability within the learner and to maintain equity in the society. It stresses that children with special needs can be included in general School system without any distinction and differentiation. The paper presents a comprehensive framework concerning the condition of research in the field of education of Children with Disability/Disabilities (CwDs/CwDs) with a view to identify the key challenging areas of Inclusion for the effective teaching-learning environment of CWSN and for the sustainable development of educational programmes in India. The current issue carries the research related to prevalence and participation of children with disability in the schooling process, early intervention, early education, assessment, psychosocial dimensions, academic performance, role of family and community, effect of other marginalized conditions, role of teacher education and teacher competence, availability of materials and policy/ programmes implementation. The study aims to find out the issues and challenges faced by the teacher or educators in accommodating children with special needs in regular schools and the training needs of teachers to provide meaningful learning experiences to these children. Barriers regarding the inclusion of disabled students, drawn out of various studies have been highlighted in the paper.

An attempt has been made to identify the research gaps and suggest areas for upcoming research. It explores teachers' perception about children with special needs (CWSN) and analyses the extent of preparedness and use of inclusive practices in the schools.The analysis indicates that the area of study is expanding, reflecting tremendous growth with a long journey yet to cover. Fostering learning through various strategies, understanding the relationship of psychosocial factors in development and learning, academic performance, impact of significant people in development, and supporting learning through material development emerged as prominent choices of researchers. However, the analysis also shows that the research still seems to be considering disability as a deficit and the need for shifting the focus to empowering, capacity building approach by magnifying personal capabilities, potentials and dignity of CWSN is strongly felt. The paper points out that meeting diverse needs is a huge challenge, but at the same time, it is an golden opportunity to enrich learning and to make healthy school and social relations.

Keywords: Inclusion, Education for All (EFA), Children with Special Needs (CWSN), Barriers, Capacity Building, Discrimination, Individual Education Plan (IEP).

INTRODUCTION

Education is the single greatest tool for achieving social justice and equality. It is panacea of all ills & evils of the society. It has immense potential to impart each individual, opportunity to dream, thrive, and contribute to the nation. At present, 'Inclusive Education' or 'Education for All' has taken central stage within the human rights framework. In inclusive education, children with disabilities are taught in general/regular schools with their age group peers with the basic required support services provided within the school system. Inclusion involves valuing diversity in

teaching learning environment and the curriculum adaptation, effective pedagogical approaches and flexible assessment techniques to support them. Inclusion cannot go very far without developing the capacity of schools, teachers to respond to diversity among children.

The challenge of addressing diversity among the learners continues to be a major concern in education. The concern has been spelt out in major International declarations, documents, conventions and treaties where India is a signatory and trying to fulfils the obligations to the World Declaration for Education for All (1990),

UNCRPD(2006), Global Monitoring Report (2016) and Sustainable Development Agendas (2030)(SDGs).The full title of SDG4 is to ensure inclusive and equitable, quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. GEMR (2021) advocates the 'Rights from the start: build inclusive societies through Inclusive early childhood   education'. The major focus of all these documents and reports are children with 'disability' and intended to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities for creating sustainable futures for all.

In the Indian context, the philosophy of inclusion has its reflection in many ways in various acts/ schemes and rights in relation to education that included children with disabilities at par with the other children. Since the 1970s, various schemes of the Government of India, especially those concerns with Universalization of Elementary Education(UEE) have been promoted for the inclusion of children with disabilities(CwDs) into the mainstream educational system. These schemes include the Integrated Education for Disabled Children Scheme, 1974; the District Primary Education programme(DPEP), 1994: the National Policy on Education, 1986; the Project Integrated Education for the Disabled, 1987(for strengthening the IEDC); the Persons with Disabilities Act(Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation), 1995; the National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism Cerebral Palsy , Mental Retardation and Multiple Disability 1999 (where it carry out multiple activities for increasing the awareness, Home Care, support etc. through different Schemes viz. DISHA,VIKAS, SAMARTH, SAHYOGI etc.); the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA,2000) (A zero rejection policy has been adopted under SSA which ensure that every child with special needs irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability, is provided meaningful and quality education & Inclusive education is the integral component of it). 86th Amendment to the Constitution in 2002 which bring alteration and modification in article 45 and substituted as the state shall endeavors to assure early childhood care and free compulsory education for all

children until they complete the age of 6 years; the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE)Act, 2009; and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PWD)Act,2016. As per the

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act of 2016, the seven major disabilities of PwD,Act,(1995) have been increased to 21.The RPWD Act (2016) in the chapter 1, point 2(m) defines inclusive education as "inclusive education means a system of education wherein students with and without disability learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with Disabilities"(p. 3).

CHALLENGES/BARRIERS TO INCLUSION

Of the major problems that our country is facing today is the increasing number of children with special needs(CWSN) being excluded from meaningful partnership in socioeconomic, political and cultural life. Children with disabilities are one of the most marginalized and excluded groups in society. Facing daily discrimination in the form of negative attitudes, lack of adequate policies and legislation, they are effectively barred from realizing their rights to healthcare, education, and even survival. Inclusive education can be seen as a step to build an 'inclusive society' with equal opportunities and social Cohesion for everyone, including CWSN. Each student is unique. Therefore, there must be no discrimination on the ground of class,creed, race, religion, color and intelligence quotient (IQ) or ability,etc. In an educational setup the term 'inclusion' is used for including and embracing this diversity without discrimination. But there are many barriers, issues which I believes need to be addressed to get the cent percent enrolment, retention, access and achievement of the CWSN. This paper tries to explore the issues/ challenges which create hindrances for the universal education of all. Where "Barrier" means any factor including communicational, cultural economic, environmental, institutional, political, social, attitudinal or structural factors which hampers the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in societies.

The following are the major barriers in front of the successful Inclusion which have been identified through different research Studies

- Forlin (2001) expressed concerns about lack of preparation for inclusion and for teaching all learners.

- Pinto and Sahur (2001) observed that many families are reluctant to record disability, particularly in view of prevailing negative attitudes in most communities.

- Singhal (2005) noticed that optional 'Special Education' paper is not an integral part of training and it does not trained teachers to deal with the challenges, diversity and negative attitude.

- Singal (2006) stated in India there were serious concerns regarding the accuracy and reliability of reporting due to lack of well trained field investigators and the family's inhibition to disclose detailed information about member with disability due to existence of social stigma and scanty systematic research.

- Philips (2007) found negative attitude towards CWD.

- Pandey (2009) pointed out a lack of knowledge on provisions in implementing of IE.

- While there is no second opinion about the critical outcome of beginning /early intervention to reduce the impact of disability, the practice seems to be elusive. Evaluation of integrated child development services(ICDS) Scheme by the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD,2009) puts on record the absence of awareness about disability among the Anganwadi Workers and total lack of intervention and referral service. The study strongly recommends training of AWW on skills required for early detection of disability/ children at risk and primary prevention.

- Das (2009) best noticed disability as iceberg phenomenon of disease.

- Das and Kattumuri (2010) identified two major barriers to inclusion in their research, including bullying by non-disable peers and attitude of teachers.

- Das et.al.(2012) found that teachers are not adequately prepared for the implementation & not witnessed the true functioning model of inclusion. Ground has emerged to theorize that CwDs are not able to achieve their potential due to lack of opportunity coupled with a negative attitude based on traditional thinking.

- Dubey and Pandey (2012) have identified many problems as non- cooperation of the Govt. officials, job insecurity and heavy workload etc. adversely affect the implementation of Inclusive education under SSA.

- Gobalakrishnan (2013) found officials and AWWs not aware of Govt. Schemes.

- Kuyini and Desai(2013) observed that 87 percent of teachers in India did not have access to support services in classrooms.

- Lamichhane and Sawada(2013) clearly noted that failure to invest in education of CwDs has a significant negative impact on national, economic and social development.

- Concerns perceived by regular school teachers viz. Poor infrastructure, financial limitations, large class size and Barriers such as lack of trained teachers, lack of inclusion policy, lack of differentiation in instruction, parental pressure, teacher anxiety and negative attitudes were reported by Bhatnagar and Das(2014a,2014b), Shah et.al.(2016).

- Singh(2014) found that lack of knowledge and understanding regarding individual differences and unwelcome attitude of teachers towards disabled learners play a major role in restricting the success of inclusive practices.

- Lack of facility for CwDs in different types of pre-schools have identified by Kaul et.al.(2015).

- Nagpal (2015)Majority have high degree of concern about inadequate special education instructional material and teaching aids but they do not have knowledge and skills required to teach.

- Ramaa (2016) concluded that the main areas of concerns were a lack of well thought out policy, scanty resources, and limited understanding of inclusion.

- Singh (2016) observed that poor social economic condition of many disabled children, lack of adequate human and material resources, negative attitude of teachers, community members, non-disable peers and their parents, inadequate teacher training in special education, large size of classrooms and scant support services in classrooms are major challenges in implementing inclusive education in true spirit.

- Kharlukhi (2017) indicates 60.56 % teachers use traditional approach of teaching without proper modification, no trained teachers, lack of expert support services,75% teachers expressed lack of training to handle CWSN, 38.47% CwDs lacked confidence, were shy & anxious, hesitant to participate and remained aloof, 27.5% students are irregular due to their situations & problems , unavailability of proper aids and appliances also hamper the performance of CwDs.

- Behera and Gowramma (2018) observed that CwDs though enrolled, are not attending Anganwadi Centres (AWC) due to lack of awareness in the community.

- Sharma (2018) highlighted the long prevailing issue of high student- teacher ratio in Indian context seems to be acting as one the major barrier in the process.

- Kaur and Bansal (2019) revealed that around 14% teachers found the school infra to be lacking, one third (30%) of the teachers reported that they do not have enough TLM, 76% teacher lack special training,65% teacher needed in-service training to meet the needs of CWSN in an Inclusive set up, around 46 % of the teachers were not able to complete syllabus within the time,40% pointed the challenge of non-cooperative attitude of parents, 24% teachers were not getting any support of professionals and specialists to evaluate the performance of the CWSN.

- Sharma and Kannadi (2021) identified limited resources, poor infrastructure, ineffective teaching strategies, lack of proper awareness ,Lack of provisions like electricity and power back-up system further worsens the situation especially in unfavourable whether conditions.

- Yadav and Birla(2022) observed that Poverty play a major role in both exclusion and discrimination. Indeed, any analysis of the existing curricula, pedagogy or textbooks exhibits a biased picture of life where the view of the "powerful" prevails.

CONCLUSION

The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994) has been identified as the international breakthrough for Inclusion education. Since the Salamanca Statement was published in 1994 a massive amount of research has addressed the issue of inclusive education yet there is a sense of lack of progress which seems to necessitate a critical look at the field while not neglecting advancements made. According to UNICEF (2021), inclusive education is the most significant way to give access to all children a barrier - free education to learn and develop the skills they need to thrive. Such a paradigm, not only would improve the quality of life but would ensure sustainable well being. There are 240 million children are struggling with some physical or mental disabilities. They need to realize their full potential like a common child .Barriers viz. lack of access to mainstream education, insufficient funding, untrained teachers and resource personals and support system, lack of individualized education plans, negative, unwelcoming & discouraging attitude of the peers and teachers ,community & inadequate and large pupil-teacher ratio, overburdened educators, lack of appropriate curriculum and teaching learning material, social Stigma / Labelling, transportation, lack of parental recognition, and involvement, poverty, inappropriate

assessment techniques, architectural barriers, lack of infrastructure are the serious challenges in achieving the Goals of inclusive education. The study may be a help to the policymakers and stakeholders to address the challenges which intervene while implementing inclusive education. Although, there are five pillars of NEP-2020 which will strengthen the quality and equality education in India e.g. accessibility, equity, quality, affordability and accountability. NEP-2020 is a landmark policy that is set to bring about a paradigm shift in Education System. Therefore, government educators, policymakers and society at large need to take effective measures to improve the condition and dignity of CWSN and to attain the goal of inclusive education and SDGs through better practices & execution of NEP-2020.Hence the need of the hour is to build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive and effective learning environment for all.

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