

ABSTRACT

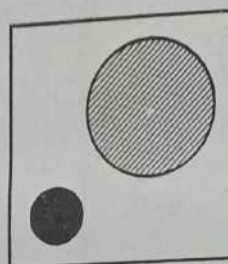
The idea of inclusive education is gaining ground all over the world. Inclusive education means creating effective classrooms where the educational needs of all children are addressed irrespective of ability or disability. Inclusive education is one way to empower the differently abled with some skills and give them a chance to explore their abilities and enhance their potentialities so that they can contribute to the advancement of the nation in the same way as the non-disabled people do. The present paper focuses on the concept of inclusive education, rationale for inclusive education, barriers to inclusive education, factors of successful inclusive education and types of services in inclusion.

INTRODUCTION

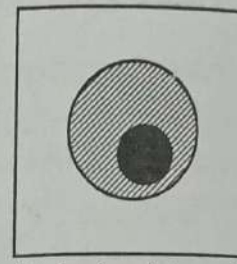
In a democratic country like India every child has the right to education. All children should be given equal opportunity to learn to the limits of their capacities.

India has 300 million children between 0-14 years of age. On this basis, India may well have 30 million children with one or more disability. Providing education for all the children with special needs is a challenging task and it should be realized through all means. India, efforts to educate those who are thus differently able, through specially designed educational strategies have history of over a hundred years. But a starkly visible change has come about on the education and rehabilitation scene in India in recent years. Enabling legislation like the RCI Act ultimate aiming of mainstreaming. It is marked by a shift away from the regime of treating the disabled in isolation and exclusion and towards empowering them to participate effectively in the mainstream of the society.

The general educational system acknowledges the fact that education of all types of children including that of children with disabilities should come under the mainstream education. In the Special school concept, the special education component is 'APART' from the general education system, whereas in the integrated approach, it is 'A PART' of the general education system. Inclusive education goes one step further. In this approach, the special education is an 'INTEGRAL PART' of the general education system.



Special school
a part
from the general
system



Inclusion integral
part of the
general system



Integration
a part of the
general system

From Special School to Inclusion

Therefore, from the 'Special school' concept to 'inclusive education' the situation in India can be treated as an evolutionary process in the service of children with disabilities.

RATIONALE FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive Education for children with disabilities be justified from educational, sociological, economic, humanitarian, democratic and legal points of view.

a) Educational

The rationale for inclusive education can be discussed in terms of benefit to students, teachers and society.

Children in inclusive classrooms are enriched having the opportunity to learn from one another, grow

Dr. A. Kusuma, Associate Professor, Human Development And Family Studies,
Dept. of Home Science,
Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam, Tirupur

care for one another, gain the attitudes, skills and values necessary for our communities, have positive peer interaction, and develop academic communication and develop friendship and social skills.

Inclusive schooling provides peer collaboration and consultation that help them to improve their professional capabilities and also provides opportunities to teachers to improve their professional capabilities and to participate in decision making and shaping daily life in the school.

Inclusive schools promote societies that support wider social acceptance, peace and co-operation despite differences.

Sociological

Inclusive Education promotes wider social acceptance, respect, peace, co-operation and support that help the children to function, perform normalized tasks and interact with peers in the school and the community. Inclusion of children with disabilities in regular classes and social and recreational activities can result in more positive ratings of disabled children by non-disabled children, and help non-handicapped children gain knowledge about, understand, develop tolerance for, and learn to accept handicapped children.

c) Economic

Inclusive Education is cost-effective. Establishment of additional special schools is expensive in terms of building cost, salaries of teachers, provision of aids and equipment, transportation etc. as compared to including children with disabilities in their neighborhood schools where education and care of such children become the responsibility of each and every teacher. In view of the financial constraints of State Governments, it is not feasible at present or in the near future to set up new special schools in each village / town to cater to the needs of children with disabilities. Most parents of disabled children are not able to meet the expenses of educating their children in special schools. If such children are sent to neighborhood schools, parents need not spend much on their education and will not be a burden for parents.

d) Humanitarian

The humanitarian point of view is based on the principle of normalization. It means that the child with disability should have the same range of opportunities, experiences and conditions of everyday life that are typically available to non-disabled children in the community and that appropriate development and educational programmes should be provided to enable the disabled child to share in, contribute to and benefit maximally from everyday life. The Framework for Action (Salamanca Statement) says, "Inclusion and participation are essential to human dignity and to the enjoyment and exercise of human rights".



e) Democratic

The reason for including all children in the mainstream is that it is the fair, ethical and equitable measure to do. Inclusive education promotes the value of equality by welcoming all the persons with diversified needs.

f) Legal

There are some Articles (Article 29(2), Article 45), Acts (RCI Act, 1992, Pwd Act, 1995) that focus on meeting the needs of the persons with diversified needs.

BARRIERS TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

1. Attitudes

The greatest barrier to inclusion is the attitude of teachers. If teachers hold an unfavorable or negative attitude towards inclusion of children with special needs in the regular classroom, if they possess negative beliefs about the educability of such children in the regular schools then inclusion will not be successful. Some parents of non-disabled children are not in favor of sending their children to schools where both disabled and non-disabled children learn together, on the grounds that the education of their children will be affected by including disabled children in the regular class and their children will imitate the undesirable behaviors and manners of disabled children. Such negative attitude of parents of non-disabled children makes inclusion a failure.

2. Labeling

In most cases regular teachers tend to categorize and address disabled children by a label. Some of these negative effects of labeling are:

- Labels usually focus on a child's negative aspects i.e. their inadequacies and defects.
- Teachers and parents tend to have low expectations about what a disabled child can do.
- Teachers tend to explain a disabled child's poor performance only in terms of his defects and not in terms of instructional failure.
- A labeled child develops a poor self-concept.
- Labels lead to rejection by the peers.
- Labels create a sense of helplessness, inferiority and stigmatization.

3. Peer Rejection

Children with special needs may be enrolled in the regular class, but they may not be accepted and respected by their age-peers. Under this circumstance, the child with a disability may be teased and bullied by his peers. This acts as a major barrier to inclusion. Peer rejection can be avoided by encouraging children to develop friendships.

4. Involvement and Collaboration / Consultation

Multidisciplinary Approach is essential for inclusion. Collaboration between parents, teachers, special education teachers, therapists, social workers, community people and doctors is an essential condition for the success of inclusion. If this partnership is missing, inclusion will not be successful. Involvement of such multi-disciplinary team is essential in terms of assessment, decision-making and education.

5. Traditionally Oriented Teaching

Children with diverse abilities have unique needs and need an innovative practice of teaching. Traditional

way of teaching is a method with a fixed timetable, a single text book and rigid age grouping.

The curriculum is not adapted to meet their needs. Individual attention is not possible in traditional teaching which will be a barrier to providing quality education for children with special needs in inclusive settings.

6. Linkage with Special Schools

Special schools with their expert teachers and special aids and equipments should function as resource centers for inclusive schools. Children enrolled in inclusive schools or who need specialized help may be referred to special schools or specialist teachers working in special schools may be requested to provide special assistance and services to such children. Lack of linkage between special schools and inclusive schools is a barrier to inclusion.

7. Leadership of the Headmaster

Lack of leadership qualities in the headmaster is likely to cause a barrier to effective inclusion. Headmasters are expected to possess the knowledge, attitude and leadership qualities, initiatives and resourcefulness to guide his colleagues in the art and science of inclusive education. They need to develop conceptual clarity about inclusive education, the objectives to be achieved and the activities to be organized in the school.

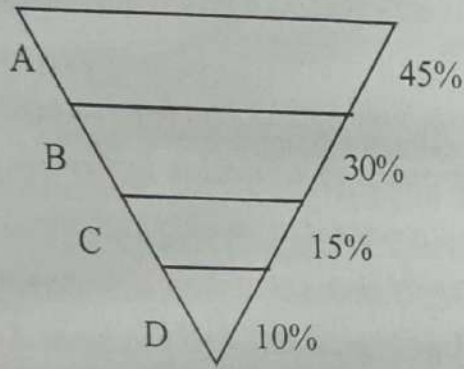
FACTORS OF SUCCESSFUL INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

a. Capacity Building in General Education

Orienting general classroom teachers on the educational needs of all categories of disabled children can contribute to an effective implementation of the programme. The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE, 1998) curriculum framework recommends the inclusion of content on special needs children in the pre-service teacher preparation course.

b. Need Based Instructional Strategies

Looking at the illustration below it is understood that children in the C and D categories may require the assistance of a special teacher to a greater extent compared to children at the other levels. Therefore, the extent of assistance for each child should be decided on the basis of his instructional needs. Inclusive education can prove to be successful with a proper understanding of need based instructional strategies and implementation of the same.



Percentage of Children with Special Needs Requiring Assistance

- A. Children with mild disabilities who can be handled by general classroom teachers.
- B. Children with mild / moderate disabilities who need counseling and some special assistance.
- C. Children with moderate / severe disabilities who need resource / special teacher's assistance including assistive aids.
- D. Children with severe disabilities who may require assistance from special teachers.

c. Manpower and Material Resource - Exchange

The success of this programme depends on how all departments concerned can effectively be involved in the total development of the child with disabilities. Since inclusive education is community based, its quality depends on the extent of interaction between the different functionaries that include the ICDS workers, special teachers, regular teachers, medical professionals etc.

d. Parent and Community Participation

For an ideal inclusion programme there must be a strong parent teacher association insisting on the importance of parental involvement. This would enable to bring about attitudinal changes on disability related issues in the community, not only among the parents but also among all the individuals concerned.

e. Child-to-child Learning

The influence of non-disabled children on the educational achievements of children with disabilities and vice versa is noteworthy in addition to the services provided by the general classroom teacher and the special teacher. Thus, the child-to-child approach holds good in our condition where the size of the classroom is fairly large, when the non-disabled peer can be the best teacher for enabling the child with disability to develop proper concepts, aiming at effective achievement levels among them.

f. Integrating Children with Disabilities in General Education System

Till the regular teacher is adequately equipped and capable of serving children with disabilities, the specialist teacher should function as an integral part of the programme at least serving a cluster of schools. She should be treated at par with the regular teacher for inclusion to take place at all levels.

To conclude, inclusion facilitates integration in the school system when general and special education personnel, as well as curriculum and instructional procedures, are combined to provide educational experiences to meet the needs of the students.

REFERENCE

1. Neema Dash (2007) *Promoting Inclusive Education*, Edited by Govinda Rao, L. Perspectives on Special Education, Vol.2, Neelkamal Publications Pvt. Ltd. Hyderabad, pp. 305-310.
2. Premavathy, V. and Geetha, T. (2006) *Integrated and Inclusive Education*, DSE (II) Manual, Rehabilitation Council of India in association with Kanishka Publishers, Distributors, New Delhi, pp. 23-27.
3. Ranganathan, R. (2007) *Inclusive Education, A Programme for the Students with Visual Impairment*, Edited by Govinda Rao, L. Perspectives on Special Education, Vol.2, Neelkamal Publications Pvt., Ltd., Hyderabad, pp. 332-335.
4. Rehabilitation Council of India (1996), *9th Annual Report*, New Delhi.
5. Sandeep Berwal and Sangeeta (2007) *Inclusive Education - A Move towards Bonding and Building the Society*, Edited by Govinda Rao, L. Perspectives on Special Education, Vol.2, Neelkamal Publications Pvt., Ltd., Hyderabad, pp. 312-316.