ROLE OF TEACHER'S IN ENHANCING QUALITY OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

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Abstract
Today, with the availability of ample opportunities across different fields, especially children with disabilities can excel across multiple myriad fields with basic academics and adequate life skills. The team "inclusion" is very crucial in this globalized world. Inclusion in education is an approach to educating students with disabilities. When children with disabilities learn in the same school as their non-disabled peers, then the society is said to be "inclusive". In a developing country like India which cannot afford to make huge investments, an alternative system becomes imperative so as to bring children with disabilities under the umbrella of education. Inclusive Education (IE) is one such viable approach to make the dream come true. The Directive Principle of the Indian Constitution (1950), the National Policy of Education (1986), The RCI Act (1992), the Persons with Disabilities Act (1995), and The SarvaShiksha Abhiyan (2010) project empowers to ensure admission, retention and education of all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years, including the disabled children. No normal school can deny admission to a disabled child. While there is a record of achievement during the last few decades when it comes to teaching children with special educational needs, it is tempered by the segregated settings in which it is carried out and the small proportion of those who qualify who participate. Progress toward full coverage and quality of service has been slow. This paper focuses on the quality enhancement of IE, role of teacher's and Teacher education programme for sustainable development of student with disabilities in India.

Key words: Quality Inclusive Education, ESD, Teacher's Role, Indian Context

"Inclusion is a way of thinking, a way of being, and a way of making decisions about helping everyone belongs. Educators must provide supports that align with that vision"

Causton-Theoharis, 2009

Introduction

In today's increasingly globalized world, with its rising disparities in income distribution, where 60% of the world's population live on only 6% of the world's income, 'poverty is a threat to peace'. While progress is being made towards the Education for All(EFA) goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as demonstrated by the drop in numbers of out-of-schoolchildren and increasing enrolment rates, there is now a stronger focus on those learners who are still out of school orare hard to reach. More attention is also being paid to the many children and young people who attend school but who are excluded from learning, who may not complete the full cycle of basic education or who do not receive an education of good quality.

However, it is equally important that they are able to take full part in school life and achieve desired outcomes from their education experiences. It involves improving inputs, processes and environments to foster learning both at the level of the learner's learning environment and at the system level to support the entire learning experience. A major factor towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in the education system is addressing the attitudes and skills of teachers. Focus on child-centered training can encourage teachers to be able to meet and support individual student needs.IE strives for addressing the learning needs of children with special needs, with a particular focus on those who are being isolated and excluded. While the awareness on IE in schools throughout the country is still at an infancy stage, educational institutions are somewhat skeptical about having both normal and special children studying in the same classroom. Hence, inclusive education and the teacher's role within it becomes a key reason for integrating a special child with the mainstream.

Why Inclusive Education?

Inclusion is the process of modifying the formal educational institutions in such a way that they may address and respond to the diverse needs of all children through increasing participation in learning and reducing exclusion from the main stream education. The exclusion of the students with special needs from the main stream institutions may aggravate their disability and negatively effects their development. According to *Tahir& Khan (2010)*, about 20% of the world's poorest people are those who suffer from some sort of disability. Over 90% of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school. The literacy rate of adults with disabilities is as low as 3% and, in some countries, as low as 1% among women with disabilities. All the above facts make it clear that the dream of EFA cannot come true unless all the children including the ones with disabilities and other vulnerabilities have access to the mainstream education. The state may realize its responsibilities to provide free educational opportunities to all children irrespective of cast, creed, race or religion. Therefore,

the IE is the only way to ensure that all children, including the children with special needs may attend schools. In this regard there are three (3) important justifications include *i.e.*

1. *Educational Justification*: The requirement for inclusive schools to educate all children together means that they have to develop ways of teaching that respond to individual differences and that therefore benefit all children.
2. *Social Justification:* Inclusive schools are able to change attitudes toward diversity by educating all children together, and form the basis for a just and non-discriminatory society.
3. *Economic Justification*: It is less costly to establish and maintain schools that educate all children together than to set up a complex system of different types of schools specializing in different groups of children.
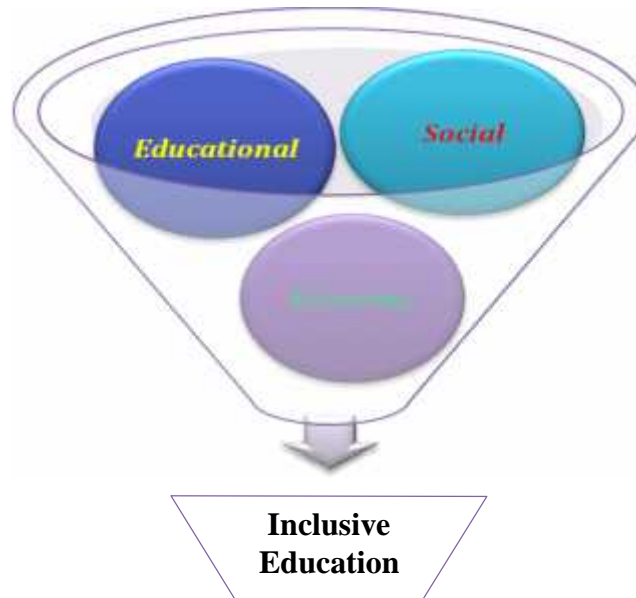

Fig-1: Three Major Rationalizations of IE

IE for students with *Special Educational Needs* (SEN) has been one of the most discussed issues in the school community for the last two decades. This means that in an IE setting the environment, curriculum, teaching methods, assessment and reporting need to be adjusted or differentiated. Putting students with SEN into ordinary classrooms without offering support and academic engagement cannot be the purpose of IE.

Inclusive Education: At a Glance
All over the world Education is a fundamental human right; a right of those who are the children with disabilities also. Not only that the provision of EFA is achievable; however for these goals to be reached, among other things, there must be enhanced educational provision for all students, including students with disabilities. The philosophy behind IE is to promote opportunities for all children to participate, learn and have equal treatment, irrespective of their mental or physical abilities. In India majority of children with special needs do not receive any formal education, in spite of the practice of IE in some schools. This is because children with disabilities and learning deficiencies are segregated from mainstream schools and other regular routines and social activities of normal children. For this inclusive schools have to be well-equipped in all aspects to cater and deliver quality education for all children. This includes having a balanced curriculum that is appropriate for all categories of children, teachers who have the ability to handle the individual needs within the classroom and thereby promote an environment where personal development, social skills and student participation are strongly encouraged.

Inclusive Education: Policy Perspective
With the growing prevalence of children with various disorders, IE can definitely benefit those children who have learning disability, mild or borderline intellectual functioning and other children with disabilities. And this is where the current education system of our country needs to focus on to empower children with disabilities. Despite the promotion of IE, Government documents focus on IE as being about including children with disabilities in the education system, but not specifically the mainstream *(Singal, 2005a)*.

Table-1: Policy Recommendations on Inclusive Education

S.N.	Year	Name of the Programme	Action Taken
1.	1944	Sargent Report	• Send all the children with disabilities to mainstream schools
2.	1950	The Constitute of India	• Free and compulsory education should be provided for all children until they complete the age of 14 years.
3.	1951-56	First Five Year Plan	• Launching of a small unit by the Ministry of Education for the visually impaired. • Subsequently, a training center for adults with visual impairments was established.
4.	1956-61	Second Five Year Plan	• National Advisory Council for the Physically Challenged started functioning to advise the central government on issues concerning education, training and employment of the disabled.
5.	1961-66	Third Five Year Plan	• To facilitate the training and rehabilitation of the physically challenged, the government formulated policies
6.	1964–66	Kothari Commission	• To access and participated in education sector by all. • A *Common School System* for open to all children irrespective of caste, creed, community, religion, economic condition and social status.
7.	1968	National Policy on Education*(NPE)*	• Expansion of educational facilities for physically and mentally handicapped children, and the development of an *'integrated program'* enabling handicapped children to study in regular schools.
8.	1969-74	Fourth Five Year Plan	• More emphasis was given to preventive work for people with visual, speech and hearing impairments
9.	1974	Integrated Education of Disabled Children *(IEDC)*	• Provides educational opportunities for the disabled children in common schools, to facilitate their retention in the school system, and also to place in common schools.
10.	1980-85	Sixth Five Year Plan	• Community-oriented disability prevention and rehabilitation services to promote self-reliance, economic independence and social integration of the differently abled in the community, and comprehensive primary health care.
11.	1986	National Policy on Education *(NPE)*	• The *'removal of disparities'* in education, while attending to the specific needs of those who had been denied equality so far.
12.	1986	Ministry of Human Resource and Development *(MHRD)*	• To integrate the physically and mentally handicapped with the general community as equal partners, • To prepare them for normal growth, and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence.
13.	1987	Project for Integrated Education Development *(PIED)*	• Wherever feasible, the education of children with motor handicaps and other mild handicaps will be in common with that of others. • Handicapped people enjoy the same rights as the rest; have opportunities for growth and development in environmental conditions available to the rest; have access to the quality of life like any other citizen; and are treated as equal partners in the community.
14.	1992	Program of Action *(POA)*	• Universal enrolment by the end of the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002), for both categories of disabled children: those who could be educated in general primary school, and those who needed to be educated in special schools or special classes in general schools.

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15.	1992	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific *(ESCAP)*	• India took place as proclamation on full participation and equality of people with disabilities in the Asia and Pacific Region.
16.	1992	Rehabilitation Council of India Act *(RCI)*	• To prescribe minimum standards for education and training of various categories of professionals dealing with people with disabilities.
17.	1995	Persons with Disability Act *(PDA)*	• Disabled children should be educated in integrated settings where possible, although it seems that the lack of implementation may be due to there being no enforcement agency for this legislation.
18.	1996	The Equal Opportunities and Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act *(EORPDA)*	• Equal opportunities, protection of rights and full participation to people with disabilities. • Endeavor to promote the integration of students with disabilities into normal schools.
19.	1999	National Trust Act *(NTA)*	• Seeks to protect and promote the rights of persons who within the disability sector, have been even more marginalized than others.
20.	2005	National Council for Teacher Education *(NCTE)*	• To develop curriculum for special education and its inclusion in general teacher preparation programmes
21.	2009	Right to Education Act *(RTE)*	• The 86th Amendment introduced new Article 21A, making the right to education of children from 6 to 14 years of age a fundamental right.
22.	2010	SarvaShikshaAbhiyan*(SSA)*	• Facilitate free and compulsory elementary education for children with special needs in the age group 6-14 (extendable to 18 yrs.) in mainstream education settings.

Source: Various Reports& Five Year Plans, Govt. of India

It is however arguable that special education is in fact regarded as superior in India due to its preferred status*(Mukhopadhyay and Mani, 2002)* and inclusion in the mainstream that is currently seen as the resource- constrained inferior alternative. The limited coverage of mainly urban-based, impairment specific special schools in India may effect in the exclusion of children with disabilities.

Inclusive Education: Growth and Development
The World Declaration on Education for All, adopted in *Jomtien, Thailand (1990)*, sets out an overall vision: universalizing access to education for all children, youth and adults, and promoting equity. IE is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners and can thus be understood as a key strategy to achieve EFA. As an overall principle, it should guide all education policies and practices, starting from the fact that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just and equal society. Inclusion is thus seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children.
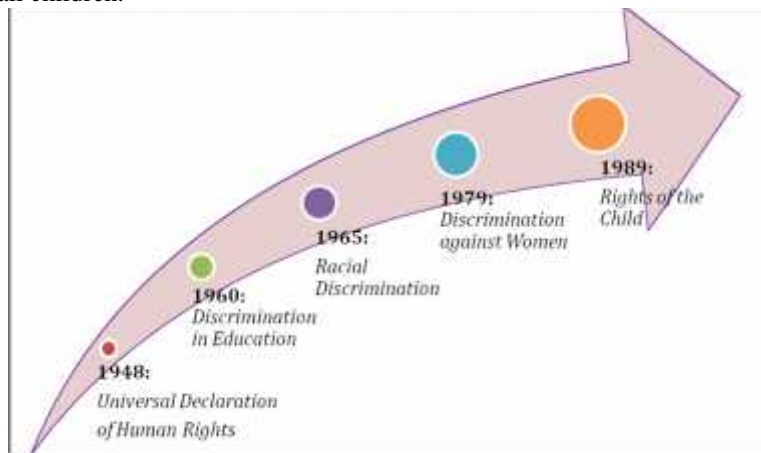

Fig-2 (a): Chronological Legal Frameworks of IE

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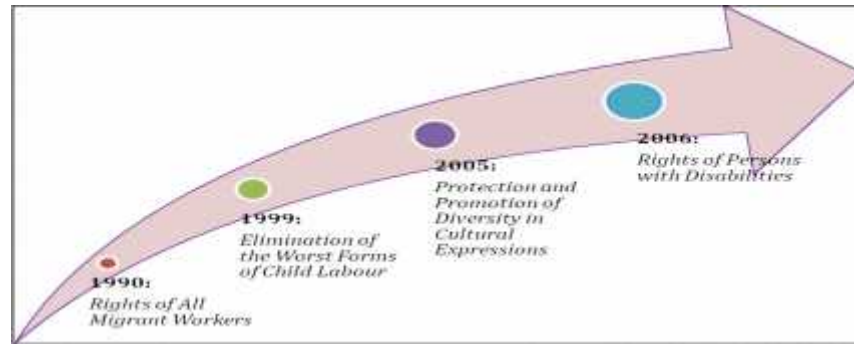*E- ISSN - 2349-6746*
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Fig-2 (b): Chronological Legal Frameworks of IE

Therefore, students are not to be segregated from mainstream schools because of different social reasons, biases or learning difficulties. Mainstream schools are the most appropriate for implementing inclusive education, creating social and cognitive competences, and a positive school atmosphere can promote inclusion best of all.

ESD and IE

Education has increasingly been discussed as not only a development goal in its own right, but also a key way of reaching other development goals. A country that provides free access to quality education for all its citizens is far more likely to reduce poverty, promote economic growth, lower child and maternal mortality and achieve social inclusion. The recent draft Executive Summary for the United Nations World We Want Post-2015 Global Consultation on Education positions education as both a human right and the foundation for development. A draft report by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network also proposes a framework for post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that includes goals for *Education, Poverty Reduction and Environmental Sustainability*. Their proposed goal on education is to *"Ensure effective learning for all children and youth for life and livelihood"* with proposed targets on access to early childhood development programmes. It is encouraging to see that the proposed SDGs also recognize the importance of learning in addition to access. It is promising that education is included as an essential component of the SD framework, as education supports so many other SDGs, including gender equality, social inclusion and environmental sustainability. Both the World We Want consultation goals and the SDGs emphasize the importance of equitable access and learning. However, further steps must be taken to ensure that final post-2015 education goals are clear and measurable.

IE and Quality of TEP

The quality of education is of central concern in virtually all countries, largely because both national and international assessments of learning outcomes continue to reveal alarmingly weak and uneven levels of achievement in many countries worldwide. In order to realize the right to education, the EFA movement is increasingly concerned with linking IE with quality education. The *EFA Global Monitoring Report (2005)* stresses that learning should be based on the clear understanding that learners are individuals with diverse characteristics and backgrounds, and the strategies to improve quality should therefore draw on learners' knowledge and strength. From this perspective, the report suggests five dimensions to influence the teaching and learning processes in order to understand monitor and improve the quality of education

1. *Learner characteristics*
2. *Contexts*
3. *Enabling Inputs*
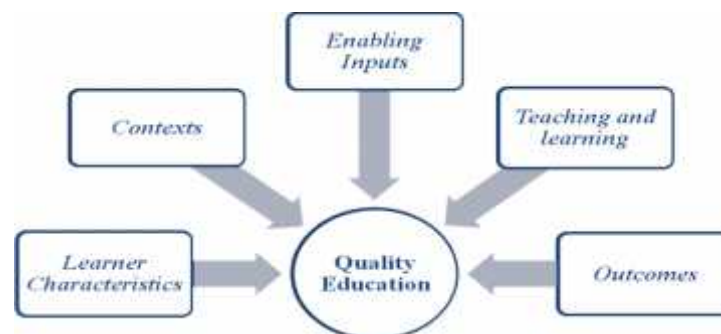4. *Teaching and learning and*
5. *Outcomes*

Fig-3: Dimensions of Influencing Quality TLP

The focus must be on supporting to the education and teachers education aligned to inclusive approaches to support societal development, thereby ensuring that each citizen is able to participate effectively in society. *National Curriculum for Teacher Education (NCTE, 1988)* has articulated the essence of teacher education in its call for teacher education to be responsive to the vital concerns of regional, social, gender, class and locale disparities in education. It wanted the teacher education to provide training in specific competencies like designing local specific curriculum and learning experiences, and compensatory education for disadvantaged children. *National Curriculum Framework for Quality Teacher Education (1998)* also wanted teacher education to equip teachers with competencies needed to deal with discrimination, disparities and inequalities. Hence, the regular teacher preparation courses are building up the competency of student teachers with necessary knowledge, understanding and attitudes regarding IE, will help to improve teacher education. The need for specific training of the teachers teaching in inclusive setting becomes more apparent when one takes into account the multitudes of pedagogical strategies needed for effective inclusion.

Inclusive Education: Role of Teacher's

The success of IE largely depends on teachers because they are to play the most crucial role in classroom practice (Jerlinder et al, 2010). A number of recent studies suggest that while teachers develop negative attitudes towards students with SEN, they are less likely to accept any changes in their pedagogical practice (Barnyak& Paquette, 2010; Malak, 2013). Teachers' knowledge of diverse learning needs influences their attitudes and overall behavior towards students with SEN (Ryan, 2009). Their motivation may also be connected to behavior. The behavior of teachers in the classroom determines how students will learn. Forlin et al (2009) argue that the inclusion of students with SEN is associated with the regular teachers' willingness to work with them. Pre-service teachers are important agents for the implementation of IE. With the increasing inclusion of students with SEN in ordinary classes, it has become essential to create 'pathways' for pre-service teachers (Lancaster & Bain, 2010) to enhance skills for teaching more diverse groups of students. However, it is also evident that teacher education institutes sometimes fail to motivate pre-service teachers towards inclusion due to inappropriately designed preparation programmes.

Deficiency of Inclusive Education

The major challenges for the teachers in inclusive schools were discipline related issues such as hooting and stigmatization from the peers, non-availability of transport, critical learning difficulties, inaccessible school building, curriculum adaptations and adjustment in assessment practices. IE approach may need to be compatible with the factors that may influence learning of the students in the school. It needs full involvement of the parents to support teachers for the education of special needs students. It also needs funding to modify the infrastructure of the school for adjusting it according to the needs the special students. Approaching curriculum on the basis of psychological basis also exclude the students with disabilities. A few deficiencies are found with inclusive school practice in both developing and developed countries *i.e.*

1. Inadequate policy and legislative provision;
2. Limited coordination of social and economic agencies with schools;
3. Inadequate administrative provisions to assure proactive leadership;
4. Limited accessibility and provision for physical support;
5. Inadequate school and classroom practices to support diverse learners;
6. Inadequate training and re-training of teachers;
7. Inadequate funding for basic education and for support services for students with special needs

The regular schools will now increasingly play a major role in making provision for children with special educational needs available nation-wide. Making the school system flexible and adopting an inclusive approach may, however, prove the most challenging task of all. There is no need of reinforcing the fact that teacher education remains a very weak link with respect to equipping teachers to be prepared for an inclusive classroom environment. However it gives them a holistic perspective with respect to dealing with diversity or challenge negative attitudes.

Conclusion

IE must respond to all pupils as individuals, recognizing individuality as something to be appreciated and respected. It is not our education systems that have a right to a certain type of children. Therefore, it is the school system of a country that must be adjusted to meet the needs of all its children. Many government programmes have included a teacher training component in an attempt to instigate institutional change. Partnerships between government and community based action groups are highly productive and provide promise of assuring maximum benefits for the children who are not excluded and neglected by the education system. There are a number of areas for constructive action to promote the development of IE in India. Some actions primarily require policy development and leadership and can be initiated without significant financial commitments. Finally, we need to remember that the purpose of education and for inclusion in education systems is to advance the cause of social justice and equity. It is the personal opportunities to achieve both knowledge and acceptance that makes a life in the community a reality.

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