

Inclusive education: Starring role of parents and educators

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Abstract

The success of inclusive education programmes depends on a number of variables. One of such variables, and perhaps the most important one, is the role of parents and regular classroom teacher. The nature of their work has undergone a tremendous change since the implementation of inclusive education programmes in India. They are now required to perform a number of additional tasks in order to meet the needs of diverse learners at various stages of life. This paper first discusses the change in their roles and responsibilities of parents and teachers in the context of inclusive education. It then provides a review of literature on additional competencies that they would need to have in order to be successful in inclusive classrooms.

Keywords: Inclusive education, Parenting and Educators

1. Introduction

The arena of the education of students with disabilities in India has undergone a tremendous change in the last three decades. The focus is to meet their educational and social needs has shifted from a segregated setting to a more inclusive one. Their needs currently are increasingly being met alongside their non-disabled peers. Such change, however, did not come overnight. It required hard work, perseverance and dedication from all stakeholders including policy makers, administrators, teachers, parents and researchers.

Policy makers in India were challenged by legislative developments in other countries (e.g. IDEA, 1990) and the initiatives made by the United Nations (e.g. Millennium Development Goals, 2000) to implement legislations, policies and programmes (e.g. PWD Act, 1995; SSA, 2001) that fostered more equitable educational opportunities for all students. Parental groups became more vocal and asserted their rights by demanding equal opportunities for their children.

Administrators, teachers and researchers witnessed the inclusive education models that worked well in other countries and started to adopt those models in their schools. Thus the inclusive education initiative that was being implemented in the rest of the world, particularly in developed nations, also gradually paved its way into Indian schools. Incremental progress has been made towards this endeavour during the last three decades and benefitted thousands of students. However, much work still needs to be done to meet the needs of about 30 million children with disabilities in India (Chief Commissioner of Persons with Disabilities, 2007).

Inclusive education is the provision of services to students with disabilities in their neighborhood schools with necessary support services and supplementary aids for both children and teachers. In the system like India in which all children from a given community learn together in the same local school including children with learning difficulties, special need or disabilities. It involves all children learning together with peers in the society from a very beginning. Provision of such a form of education inculcates the feeling of confidence in the minds

of disabled children and offers them access to formal system of education.

Education for disabled children is not only humanitarian but also utilitarian value. Proper education enables a disabled child to overcome his disabilities and make him a useful civilian. It runs in two ways,

- ❖ To prepare the disabled person to become the part of society and
- ❖ To prepare the society, to accept them.

By stating this, Smitha, N.R. and Sujatha Acharya suggested that Inclusive education means a philosophy of education that prompts the education of all pupils in regular school.

According to them the principles of this philosophy are based on following assumptions:

- ❖ All children have a right to learn and play together.
- ❖ Children should not be differentiated against by being excluded or sent away because of their disabilities in life.
- ❖ There are no reasons to separate children during the duration of their schooling time.

Similarly according to Donna, Lene; Principal of senses Inclusive Education for Samoa, "Inclusive education is a process whereby the school systems, strategic plans and policies adapt and change to include teaching strategies for a wider range of children and their families.

Taking in account various definitions and concepts of Inclusive education, we find that inclusive education is based on simple idea that every child and family is valued equally and deserves the same opportunities and experiences about the children with disabilities whether it is mild or severe, hidden or obvious condition.

It is better to building friendship, membership and having opportunity just like everyone else. Certain policymakers and educationists take it as the responsibility of everyone involved in child education i.e. teachers, parents, administrators, community and government. The partial elements necessary for Inclusive Education is to get off the group access for all and flexible teaching methods- from traditional large group

lecturing to child centered and interactive teaching learning method to continue and grow. This requires political will, perhaps some physical changes to school, material inputs different evaluation tools, reorienting the parent education, administration and monitoring what goes beyond score cards, classrooms and into the community.

Inclusive Education is not new for our Indian education system. In ancient system of education all children were taught together, be it under a shady tree or in the Guru Kul (school), whether normal, gifted or physically or intellectually disabled all were seen worthy of the benefits of education, based on their abilities. It was inclusive education in the truest sense. There were no special schools catering exclusively to specific disabilities or learning difficulties. So, in India, we have a rich cultural legacy for inclusive education and India has always been and is still today an inclusive society in the sense that a very wide variety of cultural and religious beliefs exist side by side. In present day, small rural schools provide education for all children under one roof, little realizing that they are following a system of education newly rediscovered in the west termed "Inclusive Education":

In a report for UNICEF, Bengt Lindqvist, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Disability, provided the following challenge: As education is a fundamental right for all, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and protected through various international conventions, this is a very serious problem. In a majority of countries, there is a dramatic difference in the educational opportunities provided for disabled children and those provided for non-disabled children. It will simply not be possible to realize the goal of *Education for All* if we do not achieve a complete change in the situation." Seeing this in 2000, *World Declaration on Education for All* was adopted which affirmed the notion of education as a fundamental right and established the new millennium goal to provide every girl and boy with primary school education by 2015. It is identified that Inclusive Education is one of the key strategies to address issues of marginalization and exclusion.

Inclusive education happens when children with and without disabilities participate and learn together in the same classes without any difference in views and thoughts. With the references to various research studies and discussions with our experienced colleagues, it has shown that when a child with disabilities attends classes alongside peers who do not have disabilities, good things happen. For a long time, children with disabilities were educated in separate classes or in separate schools but the present scenario gives a very different outlook towards inclusion.

People think that special education is meant to provide separate education. But we see that if children are educated together a positive academic and social outcomes occur. Inclusive education occurs when there is ongoing advocacy, planning, support and commitment. Ordinary or extra ordinary things can happen in Inclusive classrooms. Inclusive classes can be active and have supportive settings that get children involved in various activities that develop the sense of mutual cooperation helping spirit and understanding one's problems.

Parents are first teacher of student who educates them by all mean so today's requirement is that parents of disabled children have a say in how education should be provided to children with disabilities. It is necessary to involve parents in the forecasting

of the implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy for better results.

As Parents do not understand what is required of them; they feel inferior and do not understand their role in implementation of Inclusive Education Policy. No policy can be successful *without* the participation of parents. It is important to listen to them and involve them as a partner in making the policies for Inclusive Education. Over the last decade inclusive education and inclusive parenting have become part of most school's discussions around education; it means that by partnering with child's school, parent can make a difference.

Today schools are inspiring parents to be the integral part of their child's learning experience. By functioning together parents and teachers experience mutual collaboration, sustenance and satisfaction showing positive attitudinal change in children, helping not only in achievement but self-esteem, attendance and improved behavior in various situations.

Parents Role to Promote Inclusion for Their Child

- ❖ They should encourage the child to participate all activities where they can meet children of same age with different abilities. They can also check online for activities or organizations that a child may want to join according to child's taste and interest.
- ❖ Children should be stimulated by parents to develop a healthy alliance with classmates or other vicinity children.
- ❖ Parents can discuss their objectives, outlooks and preferences for a child with their teachers, therapists etc., before going to school and deciding upon the education plan for them.
- ❖ Parents should also be fully aware of rights of their child to have an inclusive education.
- ❖ Sometimes schools do not sustenance a family's desire for inclusion. parents as well as family should try to explain th at why they believe in inclusion education for their child.
- ❖ Parents can also take guidance and direction from expert to share information about benefits of inclusive education.
- ❖ At the school level parents can endeavor to facilitate inclusion in many ways including the alteration in child's curriculum, helping them in a classroom and can provide resources on their children disability to teachers.

Role of Teachers

Special education students in India also have high hopes and ambitions as their equivalents do in western countries. They not only need the teachers with right attitudes but also with appropriate

Acquaintance and skills that will help them realise their dreams. A well- proficient classroom teacher is the single most important factor in the success of inclusive education programmes. The inclusion of students with disabilities in regular education classrooms requires regular school teachers to upgrade their skills to respond to the new challenges provided by their changing roles and responsibilities.

These teachers are now expected to address difficulties and offer solutions to encounters posed by special needs students who may vary in their skill levels. They are now requisite to undertake initial screening of at-risk students, adapt instruction to make them responsive to special needs students, participate in Individualised Education Programme (IEP) meetings, work collaboratively with parents and other specialists, and use technology to assist students overcome their shortfalls.

Along with parents, tutors are also important characters in the Inclusive education. Only through an open hearted teacher a disabled child could be properly educated. True teacher can enable a disabled child to overcome his abilities and make him a dynamic citizen of society.

By getting the required sustenance and prospect from the teachers, the disabled are capable of achieving success in different field. Disabled students also need compassion, kindness, love and care from the side of teachers. To show teacher's prominence for disabled students Gandhi Ji, also had stated that, "Education of heart could only be done through a living touch of a teacher." Thus Inclusive Education becomes effective only with the loving touch of those teacher shaving capability and aptitude for teaching.

Conclusion: An ideal inclusive education concept goals at facilitating total integration of the child in the communal. The upcoming inclusive education programmes in India are avoiding separation of children with disabilities from their families for the purpose of education. Mere creation of a milieu for inclusion is not sufficient. Efforts are needed to provide real educational sustenance in the inclusive setting. The concept of inclusion as a dogma should be assimilated right from the classroom level, and in this context general teachers are the key players in inclusive education.

Increasing positive outlook of teacher in inclusive education starts with dedication of himself to the work to be done. For the success of inclusion, the class teacher must accept the children with SENs and by showing a positive outlook towards them, the variation of the children to the educational environment is facilitated. To open up the regular school system to disabled children is not enough. The policy on inclusion and mainstreaming can easily become "mere abandoning" if not implemented carefully.

A big gap exists between the ideal condition and the present reality. Thus there is a crucial need for interventions for equipping general teachers with distinct skills, making general curricula, teaching methods. Evaluation procedures, learning material disability sensitive and addressing the attitudes/ needs of other children in the school to ensure that such interventions benefit all children.

Finally we can say that, Inclusion is about providing the assistance, children need to learn and participate in meaningful ways. The fundamental is to give only as much help as needed Inclusive education is a child's right, not a privilege. All children with disabilities should be educated with non-disabled children of their own age and have access to the general education curriculum. Therefore best outcomes occur when parents of children with disabilities, teachers and professionals work together.

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