



STATUS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE STATE OF GOA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT:

Education of persons with disability is an integral part of the educational system. Inclusive education is a big and difficult task but if it has to move from a dream to reality, there has to be a will to create a way. Inclusive education needs Inclusive education is for all, irrespective of any social community, caste, class gender and (dis-) ability of the child. Inclusive education stands for improvement of schools in all dimensions to address the educational needs of all children. The major support for inclusive education came from the 1994 World conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, Spain which emphasized that: Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. Thus inclusive education is an approach that ensures the presence, participation and achievement of all students. Despite the Right to Education Act, many schools decline admission on the grounds of the child's disability. This says more about the schools that do this than the child's scholastic capabilities. The automatic response is that there are special schools that cater to these children. Is it true then, that mainstream schools cannot meet the demands of differently-abled children and children with learning disabilities? While there are some children who will require specialised treatment that might not be feasible within a normal scholastic setting, such as those with a high level of mental retardation, there are those with mild to moderate physical disabilities and learning disabilities who can be integrated successfully within mainstream schools.



In this paper an attempt has been made to discuss the issues relating to the challenges and prospects of inclusive education in the state of Goa. The paper analyses the issues and constraints faced by the stakeholders involved. This is followed by discussion of the implications for the future of inclusive educational for the children of Goa state. The study concludes with recommendations for effective implementation of inclusive education in school

KEY WORDS: Inclusive Education, Stakeholders, Mainstream, Prospectus.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education strives to address the learning needs of children with special needs, with a particular focus on those who are subject to being isolated and excluded. The philosophy behind inclusive education is to provide opportunities for all children to participate, to learn and have equal treatment, irrespective of their mental and physical abilities. Awareness on Inclusive education is still

lacking and most of the institutions of education display a large skeptical attitude about having both normal and special children studying in the same classroom. Globally, children with disability account for one-third of all children out of school. It is well known fact that the purpose of education is to make sure that students of all abilities gain access to information, knowledge and skills which will prepare them to live their lives fruitfully by contributing both to their communities and also to their work places. Thus the main purpose of education becomes increasingly challenging as more and more schools begin to accommodate students with different abilities and backgrounds in the same teaching-learning setup. But as one strives to meet the challenge of inclusive education through the Education for All the many concepts that are related to the area of inclusive education required to be studied, analyzed and understood to come to a clearer understanding of the concept of inclusive Education itself.

The UNESCO has defined inclusion as a developmental approach that “seeks to address the learning needs of all children, youth and adults with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. Inclusive education is therefore a process of removing barriers to the education of the disabled and enabling all students with all kinds of abilities and needs to get education within general school systems.

Goa Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has been playing a vital role in promotion & facilitation of Inclusive Education to the CWSN of the Goa State. It is undoubtedly a fact that the number of CWSN identified every year is less than 2% but the GSSA has reached out to this number and made their Educational life comfortable which otherwise would have been a distant possibility.

CURRENT STATUS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE STATE OF GOA

In Goa inclusive education promotion has been the raised when the first scheme for financial aid for CWSN was released. The scheme stated that schools providing integrated education would receive financial aid for CWSN as well as providing them with teachers.

However, the scheme made no mention of the support system required to include CWSN and therefore parents of CWSN had to bear a heavy financial burden if they wanted their children to be included in the regular school. In 2012 the Government of Goa took the bold step of modifying the scheme with input from all the stake holders in the field of special education. The government has to be commended because it included NGOs, teachers, therapists and principals in the process of redrafting the scheme.

The redrafted scheme talked about improving the process of assessment in order to provide certification to CWSN so that they could receive financial aid. It also talked about providing improved support services to schools (regular and special) in terms of therapists, co-curricular teachers and office staff. It also had provision for a vocational training.

But the biggest change mentioned in the redrafted scheme was the model of the resource room. This model provides for inclusion of children with all levels of disabilities - mild, moderate and severe. Starting from the year 2003, the resource room has been an important step in the process of including CWSN.

At this point it has to be stress that when we talk about inclusion we mean ALL children even those cannot do the general academic curriculum. That means that children who have moderate to severe intellectual disability (formerly called mental retardation) have an equal right to be a part of the regular school community. For these children more than anyone else the importance of being socially included is vital.

It is necessary for them to have a feeling of belonging to the community at large and it is necessary for regular students to learn values of tolerance, respect and human dignity. They should not be forced into special schools just because the government refuses to provide support to regular schools.

But three years down the line the scheme has not been put into action and all schools providing inclusive education are facing a constant struggle to get the required number of teachers for their CWSN. Every year principals have to go individually to request NOCs. Teachers who have worked for many years are not made permanent. Though the numbers of parents opting to put their child (no

matter how severe the disability) into a regular school is increasing, the department of education has not seen fit to increase the numbers of teachers provided to schools.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Murickan and Kareparampil (1995) also conducted a study on persons with disabilities in the state of Kerala and found that there was much lacking in the manner Inclusive education is being carried out.

Mukhopadhyay and Jangira(1997) prepared a useful handbook for Education Officers titled 'Planning and Management of IED Programme' and this work helped in streamlining inclusive practices at the official level

The study by Krishnaveni and Pavitra, (1997) titled "Perception of general and special school teachers towards physical disability" tried to find out the attitudes of general and special teachers towards the education of the students with disability. This study looked at the attitudes and views of special education trainee, special school teachers and general school teachers and it was found that both male and female teachers, special education trainees and general school teachers had same attitudes towards disability which was one of guarded support.

CHALLENGES FACED BY STAKEHOLDERS

The key stakeholders in inclusive education are teachers, schools and administrators, parents of children who are physically and intellectually challenged and last but not least the local community. Adequate academic as well as administrative support is the key for the success of inclusion of children with disabilities in general schools. Simply enrolment of these children will not serve the purpose of inclusion. Respecting need of each child is a real challenge for the teachers and administrators. The basic challenges confronted by the stakeholders associated with inclusive are as follows:-

- a) **Teachers-** Many teachers do not feel equipped to teach children with disabilities and complain that they need more time to instruct these students in teachers it is found that, there is a lacking of the necessary attitude, skills and competencies required to deal effectively with children with various special educational needs. The number of skilled and trained teachers for supporting inclusive practices is not adequate to meet the needs of different types of disability.
- b) **School & Administrators:-** Majority of schools in India are poorly designed and few are equipped to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities. The lack of disability friendly transport services and inaccessible building are considered by some to be far greater problems than social prejudice and negative attitudes. Besides this, architectural barrier are also an important obstacles as school buildings do not have facilities of ramps, accessible toilets, etc .In terms of school administration teaching methodology and rigid curriculum acts as a barrier. In a regular school it is difficult to provide special material and method in the instructional setting The curriculum lacks the required flexibility to cater to the needs of children with disabilities. There are limited developmentally appropriate teaching-learning materials for children both with and without disabilities. The teaching-learning process addresses the individual learning needs of children in a limited way. Thus in short it can be said that lack of physical facilities and inclusive infrastructure for those with disabilities, lack of training to teachers either pre-service or in-service, to "address the learning needs of all children including those who are marginalized and disabled" (Julka, 2012), lack of pedagogical research for effective teaching in inclusive settings, lack of inclusive culture and inclusive practices in schools, lack of "knowledge base about various impairments... and how it affects the learning process" (Auluck, 2012) and lack of special co-educators in schools. Gillis& Carrington (2004) point to a dire need to review the attitude, organisational structures, curriculum and pedagogical practices of education to guide a transformation regarding inclusion of all children.
- c) **Parents:-** Parents mostly seek to get the right kind of help for their children. They even don't know how to deal with the behavioral challenge of their wards. Families do not have enough information about their child's particular disability, its effects and its impact on their child's capacity. This often leads to a sense of hopelessness Parents can have apprehensions of ridiculed of their child by other

children. Parents of a child with disability may prefer the protective special class to the large regular class where their child may not get attention from the teacher. It is difficult for them to avail appropriate services and programs to fulfill their child's needs. There have been occasions where the parents of a child without any special needs were also afraid that their child might 'behave' in an odd manner by being with children with special needs.

- d) Community:-** Children, parents, families, teachers and education officials all live in communities. Community involvement and partnerships between government agencies and NGOs have been lacking in promoting inclusive education. UNESCO (2010), identifies public attitudes as a barrier to equal education of people in India. Research indicates that negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities may lead to low expectations which in turn can lead to reduced learning opportunities (Sharma, Forlin, Loreman and Earle, 2006). The provision of resources and the involvement of the community in identification and intervention in the child's own milieu need emphasis and focus. In short, in community due to low level of awareness, it becomes difficult to make realistic interventions to overcome the problems of such child's needs

IMPLICATIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS TO COPE WITH EMERGING PROBLEMS AND ISSUES:

Possible strategies adopted so as to address and tackle some of the emerging problems and issues regarding inclusion of children with disabilities by the various stakeholders are as follows:-

- a) Teachers:-** Training for sensitization towards disability and inclusion issues, and how to converge efforts for effective implementation of programmes, are of important concerns. The teacher would need to be provided with intensive training to work with various disabilities and would then act as an integration specialist or an inclusion facilitator for one or a number of schools located in close proximity. Sharma, K (1992) suggest that the curriculum for pre-service training programs should be carefully developed. The training of general teachers at pre-service and in-service levels should address the issue of education of children with disabilities, so that teachers are better equipped to work in an inclusive environment. Some of the issues in training that need to be addressed include the methodology to be adopted for identifying children with disabilities; classroom management; use of appropriate teaching methodologies; skills for adapting the curriculum; development of teaching-learning materials that are multisensory in nature; evaluation of learning; etc
- b) School & Administrators:-** Based on the type of disabilities the school is likely to admit, some basic infrastructural changes.

Building of ramps, railings, disability friendly toilets, and magnified sign boards may be some of these. An effective communication and delivery system for specific delivery of teaching/ learning material, aids and appliances, hardware/ software etc. must be provided. Thus, schools should use variety of innovative practices to get children involved and participating in learning processes.

SOME OF THE INCLUSION STRATEGIES ARE LISTED AS UNDER-

Teaching students to look for ways to help each other. Utilizing physical therapy, equipment such as standing frames, so that students who use wheelchairs can stand when other students are standing.

- Encouraging students to take the role of teacher and deliver instruction.
- Focusing on the strength of a student with special needs.

Peer tutoring, Co-operative learning, Multidisciplinary Approach, Collaborative Teaching, Teaching and Activity Based Learning should be used for the better results in the present scenario. Beside these, it is expected from school administrators to provide appropriate resource services support through appointment of special educators, rehab professionals, provision of resource room, etc to support mainstream schoolteachers in the classrooms.

In short, It is essential that issues related to infrastructural facilities, curriculum modification and educational materials should be addressed by them.

- c) Parents:-** Parents need to be trained in the development and evaluation of their own children. They must be encouraged to send their wards to local schools and also train them to manage the use of

low cost teaching materials. Resource teachers should train parents and other family members alongside disabled children when developing disabled children's potential and daily life-skills at home. Parents must provide a social environment which is gender-sensitive and child-friendly.

- d) Community:-** Community should humanize education by promoting awareness, acceptance and feasible techniques for inclusive education. The attitude that 'inclusive education is not an alternative but an inevitability, if the dream of providing basic education to all children is to ever become a reality' needs to be cultivated among all community members. Linkages also need to be established between community-based rehabilitation programmes and inclusive education. Community involvement and partnerships between government agencies and NGOs will act as an instrumental in promoting inclusive education.

SOME OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OFFERED FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:

- Aggressive campaigning to create awareness and sensitization about the Children with Special Needs (CWSN) scheme.
- Infrastructure to cater to the needs of CWSN, providing accessibility and a barrier free environment.
- Introduce technology in schools that will aid CWSN.
- Differentiated teaching with curriculum modification so that each individual child's needs are met.
- Parents should be involved with everything their special needs child is doing in school to keep in step with and assist the child specific plans made by the special educator.
- Inclusion of vocational courses and making sure vocational trainers are available for the same.
- Inclusion of training in identifying and reaching out to CWSN in the regular BEd programme.
- Sensitization of parents, mainstream children, and administrative authorities of schools.
- Special educators should be treated on equal footing with general teachers.
- Workshops to keep all involved in special education, including parents, updated on new findings in the field.
- Having a team of experts to deal with CWSN in every school.

CONCLUSION:-

The success of inclusive education in any context depends upon many factors. Teachers themselves are an essential component to ensure the quality of students' inclusion in the school and teacher education institutions. Preparing teachers with essential knowledge and skills for inclusive education requires the commitment of all factors. The literature has identified many of the challenges that face the full and successful implementation of inclusion. Inclusion without 'adequate' preparation of general schools will not yield satisfactory results. It is essential that issues related to infrastructural facilities, curriculum modification and educational materials should be addressed. Building the capacity for inclusive education must be done at community level, by including awareness activities such as community involvement, community mobilization. Thus, to conclude it can be said, that, including children with disabilities in education is a challenging task and needs a mass community mobilization and involvement and above all provision of appropriate responses to wide spectrum of learning needs of special children in both formal and non-formal settings.

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