



PRACTICES FOR CATERING DIVERSE NEEDS IN EDUCATION AND TEACHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

No two students are alike, they differ from each other in different aspects like external morphology as well as internal characteristics. The teacher has to pay equal attention to every student in the classroom irrespective of differences among them. The concept of Inclusive Education is the remedy to overcome all the factors of differences among the students. The different stakeholders involved in the education process should be trained effectively in the field of inclusive education to attain the objectives of education. The knowledge, skill, capabilities, beliefs etc should be taken care of during the training of teachers and also other stakeholders. Different aspects related to practices in inclusive education in schools & Teacher Education Institutes have been discussed in the present paper.

KEYWORDS: Inclusive Education, stakeholders, objectives of education, knowledge, skill, capabilities, beliefs.

INTRODUCTION:-

It has been said that, whole world comes to the class. Many a times we experience that, some students are tall, some are dwarf, some are shy, some are forward and bold, some learn quickly, whereas some learn very slowly. The likings of students also differ. The likings of students also differ, that is, some like sports, others do not, some are good singers, others are not, some read well, others do not, some are naughty. From this it can be inferred that, no two students are exactly alike. There are other differences like some children's growth and development gets impaired due to environmental factors and do not support their well being. They may not get enough food or a balanced diet, they may live in poor housing and are prone to illness, they may be beaten, their parents may have separated, sometimes they live on streets, they may abuse drugs. In many countries, these children do not come to school due to various reasons like 1) Their families do not know of their child's right to education or they chose to spend their scarce money on other children. 2) The School can not cope with children who have additional needs and they are not allowed to enroll. 3) The children come to school but soon drop out. 4) They attend special school instead. More children from deprived backgrounds or with disabilities are attending their schools. Indeed most countries

have laws which state that all children have to be educated. With reference to these students, Teachers have a particular responsibility for assuring that all children participate fully in society and that they have equality of opportunity in education. Inclusion is the solution to solve the problems of such students. The children become different/special because of their impairment, ethnic background, language, poverty etc and are excluded from or marginalized in society and local communities. Their inclusion means changing the attitudes and practices of individuals, organizations and associations and government, so that they can fully and equally participate in and contribute to the life of their community and culture. An inclusive society is one in which difference is respected and valued and where discrimination and prejudices are actively combated in policies and practices. Inclusive Education is the remedy to all such problems. Inclusive Education refers to schools, Centers of learning, educational systems that all open to All, for this to happen, teachers, schools, and systems may need to change so that, they can better accommodate the diversity of needs that pupils have and that they included in all respects of school life. It also means a process of identifying the barriers within and around the school that hinder the learning and reducing/ removing these barriers. Inclusive Education includes Integration, Open Learning, Ordinary schools, Referral, Resource Teacher, School Culture, Self Study, Special needs, special schools, Special units, special classes, special teachers, teaching strategies etc.

DEFINITION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Thomas in 1991 has defined the term Inclusion as , Inclusion thus has been defined as the acceptance of all pupils within the mainstream education system, taught within a common framework and identified as responsibility of all teachers.

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities in 1993. Rule 6 states that, states should recognize the principle of equal primary, secondary and tertiary educational opportunities for their children, youth, and adults with disabilities in an integrated settings. They should ensure that the education of persons with disabilities is an integral part of the educational system. The UNESCO issued Salamanca Statement and Framework For Action, adopted at the World Conference On Special Needs Education in 1994. It States that, 1) Every child has a Fundamental Right to Education and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning. 2) Educational Systems should be designed and educational programs implemented to take into account the wide diversity of characteristics and needs. Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools.3) Regular schools with the inclusive orientation are most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all .4) Ordinary schools provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost effectiveness of the entire education system.

SOME EXAMPLES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE), Integrated Education for the Disabled Children(IEDC), District Primary Education Project(DPEP), District Rehabilitation Centre & National Program for Rehabilitation for Persons with Disability(NRPD), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan(SSA) etc are some of the examples of inclusive education in India.

Although there is a widespread support for inclusion at philosophical level, there are some concerns that the policy of inclusion is difficult to implement because teachers are not sufficiently well prepared & supported to work in inclusive ways. Inclusion requires teachers to accept the responsibility for creating schools in which all children can learn & feel they belong. In this task, teachers are crucial because of the central role they play in promoting the participation & reducing under – achievement, particularly with the children who might be perceived as having difficulties in learning (Rouse Martyn).

There are many issues associated with the implementation of inclusive education. Of key importance is the impact on the role of teachers & their capacity to enact the philosophy in an effective way &

consideration is given to reforming education systems to become inclusive, removing barriers to inclusion, restructuring schools for Inclusion, Preparing teachers & the role of Universities in teacher education.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION & TEACHER'S ROLE

Inclusive Education requires generalist teachers to be able to cater for the needs of most of diverse student populations academically, socially, & culturally (Rose 2010) & for the school leaders to be accepting of & committed to the philosophy (Sharma & Desai 2007). An inclusive classroom is one in which all the students, regardless of their ability are educated together in common educational contexts. This may require modification of the environment, curriculum, pedagogical methods. School populations worldwide include students with special educational needs such as disability or learning difficulty but they also have learners with enormous range of other needs that can impact on their capacity to engage with the regular curriculum & Pedagogy, both academically & or socially. These can include among others, students from different socioeconomic backgrounds, racial minorities, asylum seekers, refugees, those in poverty & those who have mental health issues.

Inclusive education has been found to be an effective means of educating all children in a variety of educational domains including academic & social environments. Some educators have reported the feelings of anxiety about the implementation of the approach(Macmillan & Meyer 2006). Many teachers consider themselves to be undertrained, under skilled to meet the demands of managing an increasingly diverse classroom(Anderson, Klassen & Georgious 2007).

TEACHER EDUCATION FOR INCLUSION

Teachers are crucial to the successful implementation & Sustainability of inclusive approach. Of vital importance is the need for the teachers who are better trained to provide inclusive practices for learners with diverse needs (Forlin 2012). The lack of suitably qualified or trained teachers continues to be a major concern in many regions to meet the requirements of inclusion. Preparation of teachers for inclusion requires appropriate & effective training to be available both prior to & during the establishment of inclusion.

TEACHER'S BELIEFS ABOUT INCLUSION

The confidence that teachers have in their own knowledge, Skills, Capabilities to implement inclusive education is considered an essential aspect to the success of the approach, along with other factors, e.g., positive attitudes & contextual variables. According to Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk- Hoy 2001, Teaching efficacy beliefs are powerfully related to many meaningful educational outcomes, including teacher's persistence, enthusiasm, commitment & instructional behavior & student outcomes such as achievement motivation & self efficacy beliefs. Teachers working in diverse conditions need to be persistent, enthusiastic, & especially adequately prepared to become competent instructors. Effective teacher education for inclusion would thus seem essential for improving teaching efficacy in inclusive practices. The education system should be reformed so as to become inclusive according to the policy guidelines on inclusion by UNESCO, 2009.

RESTRUCTURING OF SCHOOLS FOR INCLUSION

To implement an inclusive education system that will ensure equity & equal opportunities for all children & youths require schools to implement a range of initiatives to support the enactment of the Philosophy. To be effective in doing this, there are a range of approaches like 1) Developing a positive school ethos that values diversity, 2) Developing a positive attitude towards inclusion. 3) Providing appropriate & relevant training for teachers. 4) Employing continuous problem solving. 5) Applying universal design for curricula. 6) Employing effective child focused pedagogies 7) Providing alternative assessments to cater for different learning styles.

PREPARING TEACHERS FOR INCLUSION

Teachers should be appropriately prepared to establish & enact an inclusive educational approach that ensures sustainability, has the support of all stakeholders & provides a positive outcome for all involved. Along with teachers, leaders, advisors, Principals, consultants should have an in depth understanding, exhibit positive attitudes & beliefs regarding inclusion & should be aware of the needs of their staff in implementing inclusive practices. Greater emphasis should be placed on leadership training in preparing personnel to act as advocates of inclusion.

Institutions / Schools: Teacher Educators , University lecturers, teacher training institutions/ agencies

In regard to training for inclusion, the focus has been mainly on preparing Principals, teachers & other staff & there has been little emphasis on preparing teacher educators to undertake the training on inclusion.

Initial Teacher Education: Teachers in Training, Pre-service under-graduates, Post-graduate students

Under-graduate training would seem to be a key time for preparing teachers to cater for diversity.

Professional Learning : Teachers in Practice, in service teachers

For teachers who are already working in schools, it is similarly critical that they are provided with access to relevant & evidence based professional learning. The teachers must have the necessary skills & expertise to develop appropriate curriculum & implement effective pedagogies to meet the needs of all students.

Other school staff, education assistants, administrators, parents

The Principals & teachers need to be effectively prepared for inclusion. Likewise there are many other staff , parents & the students themselves who require the training about inclusion. Teachers have to work with a wide range of stake holders & this requires specific training in collaborative skills.

The Role of Universities

If teachers are to be effectively prepared for inclusion, the role of Universities who continue to undertake the major training programs for teachers, needs to be reviewed to ensure that courses are better aligned with the practical needs of teachers & schools.

There are many options for Universities to reform their teacher training programs so that, teachers are better prepared for inclusion. Following suggestions may be given as key aspects that need to be taken into consideration 1) Universities should lead the debate by enacting more research into the outcomes for teachers engaged in inclusive schooling. 2) Universities have to accept greater responsibility for providing courses that meet the needs of teachers to become inclusive. 3) Teacher education courses should be related to the practicality of implementation rather than simply focusing on the theoretical underpinnings of the paradigm or government policy that dictates the direction of change.4) All teacher educators need to be trained about the inclusive education before they can appropriately prepare teachers. 5) Course content should take greater account of the opinion of Principals & teachers & the approaches that they have found useful & manageable in supporting inclusion. 6) Courses should provide appropriate content using innovative methodologies & especially engage teachers with the new technologies. 7) Pedagogies should be based on research that justifies that, these will lead to the desired outcomes of teachers having appropriate Knowledge , skills, attitudes to become inclusive Practioners. 8) Inclusive education should be considered as part of all training courses & embedded across all curricular areas, not just offered in an exclusive stand alone course. 9) Pre service teachers training for both regular & special schools should have more opportunities to work collaboratively during their training. 10) A greater connectedness between governments & policy makers, training institutions & schools in which teachers work is essential.

CONCLUSION

Inclusive education at all levels is need of hour. The components involved in different practices in school education as well as Teacher education should be well trained with respect to the knowledge, skills, capabilities, beliefs etc for proper delivery in inclusive education.

DISCUSSION

The students from Primary to higher education classes differ in one or other aspects. The education process has to give justice to every student, so as to secure his/her fullest development. Hence, the different stakeholders of education ranging from the Principal, the teachers, the management, the parents, the society, the government, the universities should be well versed & well trained in the sphere of inclusive education. As the teacher plays a central role in inclusive education, he should be effectively trained. The component of inclusive education should be incorporated in the curriculum at pre service & in service training programs.

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