



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION – A ROAD TO EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN INDIAN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

“The problem is not how to wipe out the differences but how to unite the differences intact.”- Rabindranath Tagore

Inclusive Education system refers to the inclusion of disabled children in regular class room activities alongside the children without disability with proper support system. An inclusive class room is the highest form of integrating each and every child in learning with essential diversity. It rejects the idea of Special Education and embraces the difference. It is based on the ideas of social justice and equity in terms of educational opportunities. Our country has some 40 to 80 million disabled peoples. Inclusive Education accommodates them all under same roof. It diminishes the binary ideas like centre/ periphery; inclusion / exclusion; segregation / integration etc. Disabled individuals are an integral part of our society and they have every right to take part in all spheres of life. Inclusive Education intends to highlight the ethos of social justice and equity as enshrined in Indian constitution.



KEY WORD: Inclusive Education, Special Education, Mainstream, Social justice, Indian Constitution.

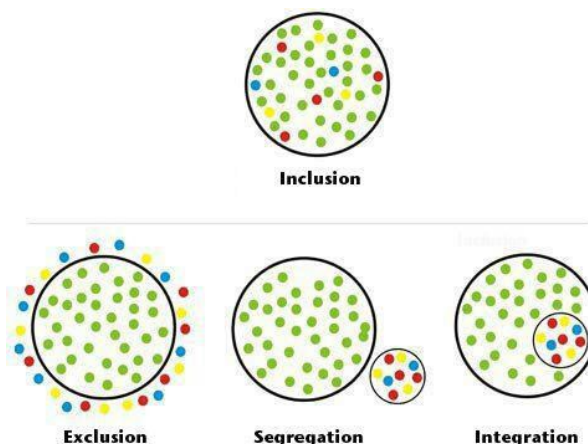


Fig: Inclusion Vs Exclusion and Integration Vs Segregation

INTRODUCTION-

Inclusive Education system is a recent phenomenon first had its root in the USA during 1970's. In 21st century it is a big canvas which got full momentum after Salamanca conference (1994). According to Jenny Corbett, 2001 " Inclusion is not just about disability but concerns a school culture which welcomes and

celebrates differences and recognizes individual needs .Secondly, it has to be something more than a “dump and hope” model if it is to be successful”.

Ballard (1995) and Barton (1995) regard “inclusion as a political struggle against exclusive attitudes, approaches and structures of the overall education system. Inclusion is seen as a process through which schools develop responses to value diversity”.

Bailey (1998) , from an Australian perspective , says inclusion as: “ being and ordinary school with other students, following the same curriculum all the time , in the same class room , with the full acceptance of all , and in a way which makes the student feel no different from other students”.

Booth and Ainscow, 1998, emphasize “the welcoming and valuing aspect of an ‘Inclusive’ schools. All pupils must belong to and be welcomed by and participate in the school and the community. Their range of interests, abilities and attainments are welcomed as an enrichment to the school”.

According to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (wade, 1999), Inclusion as “Securing appropriate opportunities for learning, assessment and qualifications to enable the full and effective participation of all pupils in the process of learning”

According to NCERT and its greatest Curriculum Framework for School Education has added:- “Segregation or isolation is good neither for learners with disability nor for general learners without disabilities. Societal requirement is that learners with special needs should be educated along with other learners in inclusive schools, which are cost effective and have sound pedagogical practices”(NCERT,2000).

So Inclusion, be it academic, social, cultural or political; is the integral part of a welfare state. The two terms exclusion and segregation are discriminatory in nature. Prevention from or denial of access to education in any form is labelled as exclusion. Segregation takes place when disabled children are taught in separate environments with special response to their limitations in isolation from other pupils. Successful inclusion covers a wide area where all children with their different needs are accepted, welcome and understood in mainstream education. If we consider a class room as the miniature form of larger society, then inclusive class room talks about cohesive, tolerant and pluralistic society offering equal educational opportunities to all. It creates a road to socialism as stated in the preamble of Indian Constitution (1950, 26th January)



Fig: Inclusive Education

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ❖ To provide the education for all.
- ❖ To integrate all disadvantage groups in mainstream.
- ❖ To obtain social justice and equity through inclusive education.
- ❖ To fulfil the promises of a welfare state through inclusion.
- ❖ To ensure human rights for disabled peoples.
- ❖ To look into the Indian scenario on inclusive education.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF OBJECTIVES.

Education for All (EFA) is a global attempt initiated by UNESCO to achieve the universalisation of elementary education by 2015. In similar fashion government of India launched Sarva-Shiksha-Abhiyan (Education for All Movement) in 2000-2001. The purpose was to provide free and compulsory education to

children between the ages of 6 to 14 which is now a fundamental right as mandated by the constitution of India through 86th amendment. So we should not exclude the disabled children from the existing regular education system. It is the fundamental rights of children; any kind of segregation is an offence before law. Our society is enriched by the diversity of its people. This difference is our strength. Disability is natural and disabled people are essential part of our society. Education is key to integration. Inclusive Education emphasizes to integrate them all under same roof irrespective of their caste, creed, race, colour, and ethnicity, social, cultural and economic backwardness. Those whom we consider disadvantaged by birth, status or physicality should be taken into mainstream. It opens a vista for the children with special needs to interact with their peers, participates in curricular and co-curricular activities; learn in collaboration and achieve academic success together. It is the best way to socialise them, a chance for adapting, adjusting, and modifying themselves in diverse class room situation. PIED-Project Integrated education for the disabled – assisted jointly by UNICEF and NCERT lay stress on making the general school system responsive to meet special needs of children with physical and intellectual disabilities along with fulfilling the educational needs of all children.

Social justice is impossible without education. Social justice denotes the equal treatment of all citizens without any social distinction based caste, colour, race, religion, sex and so on. Inclusive Education paves the way for egalitarian society and offers the equal opportunities to each and every individual regardless of their limitations. Fairness and justness are two basic concepts of social justice. In a class room when we talk about these two concepts Inclusive Education is the only way to fulfil them. Inclusive classroom embraces the diversity of learners and their needs; therefore fairness and success vary. Equal opportunity and equity are two strategies to achieve social justice in its true sense. There is a basic difference between equality and equity. Equality means giving everyone the same. Equity refers to the exact amount an individual needs. That is why inclusive class rooms celebrate differences, respond to individual needs, encourage learning and make learners successful according to their potential.

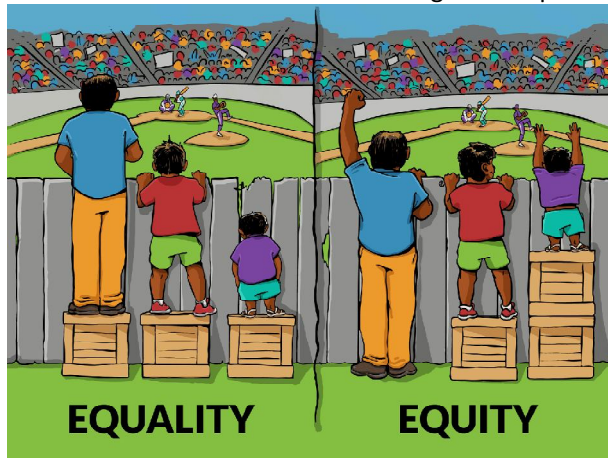


Fig: Equality vs Equity

The Directive Principle of State policy, enshrined in Part IV of the Indian Constitution declares that India is a welfare state. That is why India is committed to protect and promote the social and economic wellbeing of its citizens. Vulnerable sections like the scheduled castes (SCs), scheduled tribes (STs) backward classes, minorities and the handicapped should be paid the due attention. This is how India is determining to form an inclusive society in broader perspectives. And definitely inclusive education system is a right path to achieve it.

The constitution of India gives a special status to children to mete out their needs. Article 39(e) states that “the state shall, in particular, directs its policy towards securing that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop a healthy manner and in condition of freedom and dignity and that

childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.” Inclusive Education is a legal right as well as moral right for persons with disabilities. The Convention on the Rights of Person with disabilities (2006) is an international treaty which talks about the human dignity, non-discrimination, equality of opportunity, accessibility, full and effective participation and inclusion in society for the disabled people. UNCRPD has 50 articles and article 24 asserts inclusive education at all level for learner with disabilities.

Education is enlisted in the concurrent list of Indian constitution. Therefore, both the central government and the state government are responsible for making policies, programmes, implementing them and granting funds. The government of India has taken up many initiatives after independence along with other global projects. Disability is now a global concern. 10% of total global population are disabled people. In India 2.21% people are differently abled and it is 26 million of total 1.25 billion people (census 2011). Such huge chunk of peoples are socially and economically backward and suffering humiliation, bantering and social exclusion. State has to play a great role by addressing their obstacles and provide them a life of dignity and respect. Article 45 of Indian Constitution affirms the free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years. In post- independent India Kothari Commission (1964-66) first stresses on common school system. Then came National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1968 and the second one in 1986. These policies focused on the equalisation of educational opportunities and removal of disparities. Programme of Action (POA 1992) calls for integrating children and aims at universal access and enrolment. Rehabilitation Council of India (1993) was set up to regulate and monitor services given to persons with disabilities. In order to strengthen inclusive practices DPEP(1994), SSA(2002), IEDC(2008) have been launched. SO government of India is keen to promote Inclusive Education in all possible forms. Non-governmental sectors like NORAD, SIDA, and DANIDA have a major role in educating disabled children.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- It is clear from the various international and national efforts that the success of Inclusive Education is not a distant dream but reality in making.
- Inclusive Education inculcates the values of socialism which starts with the inclusive class room.
- Disability or the persons with special needs is not a bane but a boon. Diverse learners with their unique individual needs offer the educational system, parents, teachers and community members ample scopes to learn the lesson of participation, collaboration, acceptance and togetherness.
- Inclusive school in its true sense is beautiful and colourful in terms of variety and diversity. In inclusive class room teachers must be creative to organise and manage pupils.
- Social and cultural inclusion of the persons with special needs is very much important. Schooling is just a part of inclusion. There are all other activities like theatre, music, assembly, annual sports, carnival and picnic for them to participate freely.
- Inclusive school fosters positive attitudes, confidence, self-esteem and better social skills to the special need children. It is a fact that the children learn better in inclusive schools than special schools.
- Inclusivity strengthens a sense of belongingness, identity, coherence and consensus among students who will be the future citizens of India.
- Buddy system, guided learning, co-operative learning and collaborative learning etc. are some effective teaching techniques in inclusive classroom. This is how one student can be instrumental to the learning of others. Children with disability and without disability both get benefits from the inclusive environment.
- There are some challenges that we need to address. These are lack of awareness, inadequate opportunities, resistance of parents, inadequate infrastructure, paucity of funds, scarcity of trained teachers and the poor linkage between pre-school to high-school.
- The path of inclusion should be smooth. It has to be hassle-free and barrier-free to get the highest results.

CONCLUSION:

Overcoming the challenges to inclusion is difficult but possible. We must ensure equity and social justice for the marginalised, less privileged sections through Inclusive Education. Disabled peoples are still unwanted, neglected and deprived from the mainstream society. An overall awareness among the parents, community, teachers would be crucial to the success of Inclusive Education. Only making laws and policies for the excluded people does not guarantee them social justice. Proper implementation and regular monitoring and honest political will can change the present scenario of Inclusive Education in India as well as the globe at large. The idea of inclusion and its broader perspective at the grassroots level can make the society tolerant, fair, just and united. There should be a holistic approach from all corners of society. The convergence of efforts from government, corporate sectors, communities, educational institutions, and social agencies play pivotal roles in attaining the victory of Inclusive Education. The success of Inclusive Education depends on the sensitivity of the school authority, policy makers, administrator, suitable infrastructure, trained teachers, well planned curriculum, proper learning designs and techniques, and diversified evaluation systems. Govt. of India has adopted many initiatives yet the goals are not achieved. There is a gap between intention and execution. Our school system should be flexible and accessible to the people with different needs. Some school authorities show callous attitudes towards the admission of these special needs learners. There are various types of disability. Our schools do not have any clues about them. Our school system is not ready to address the challenges and barriers related to Inclusive Education. It is the duty of Govt. to protect the fundamental rights of the disabled people and ensure their full participation in all areas of life.

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