



## **INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: KEY ROLE OF TEACHERS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In education, 'inclusion' refers to the placement and education of children with disabilities in regular education classrooms with children of the same age who do not have disabilities. Inclusive education refers to an academic system that allows special education students to become included in mainstream classes along with their peers. It is an opportunity of special need students to learn team work skills. Inclusive education demands preparation of teachers to suit their needs in the classroom and society. Education For All (EFA) stressed inclusive education in school. But it is not achieved due to lack of competent teachers. The curriculum of teacher education program is not adequate enough to meet the special education needs in inclusive setting. Hence teachers are unable to meet the demand of delivery of the appropriate curriculum for children with special needs. The teachers need training on inclusive education. The present study throw its light on the key role of teachers in inclusive education.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Education is a process of teaching-learning where a more mature person (teacher) imparts the necessary, adequate information to a less mature (student) to bring about modification in his behaviour. So, according to McDougall, education is a purposive, goal-directed activity. We generally understand 'education' as 'schooling' which is a deliberate endeavour of the society to make necessary arrangements where by the young learners may acquire various habits, knowledge and attitudes necessary to meet the demands of the society. School teachers are the main agent of education. A classroom should be designed in such a way that may welcome the diverse learners and their individual needs. Thus teaching become a very challenging job for the teachers. Every child is unique and different, for which inclusive, friendly-learning environment should be created in every schools.

The World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in the year 2000 suggested to achieve 'education for all' by the year 2015. The global EFA movement also emphasized inclusive education. The role of a teacher is major in inclusive education.

### **Inclusive Education**

Inclusion can be defined as "serving students with a full range of abilities and disabilities in the general education classroom, with appropriate in-class support".

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Inclusion is a process rather than a specific ideology or set of practices. However, Inclusive education means that all children, regardless of their ability level, are included in a mainstream classroom, or in the most appropriate or least restrictive environment (LRE), that students of all ability levels are taught as equals, and that teachers must adjust their curriculum and teaching methodologies so that all students benefit. Inclusive education "is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners".

Inclusive education has been internationally recognized as a philosophy for attaining equity, justice and equality for all children irrespective of their physical and psychological difference. Inclusive education is defined by UNESCO as a process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners by increasing participation in learning and reducing exclusion within and from education. This means all children must have a quality education.

### **Children with Special Needs**

The conceptualization of "Children with Special Needs" determines the policy, research and practice in special needs education. It is a concept of British origin. The Government Commission chaired by Baroness Mary Warnock in 1978 reported to the government on the findings of its inquiry into special education in Britain. The report said, it was wrong to identify children by means of their handicap. The report said to identify the educational difficulties of the children and provide accordingly. So, the term 'Special Educational Needs' (SEN) entered UK legislation, its classrooms and also to the teacher's thinking.

### **Components for Capacity Building in Inclusive Education**

- Increase awareness and attitudinal change through advocacy.
- Create trained professional by giving pre-service training.
- Build existing human resource by in-service training of teachers already working in the field.

### **Pre-Service Training Programs**

Inclusive Education should be a compulsory subject in pre-service teacher training curriculum. Fundamental knowledge and skills of inclusive education should be taught widely to the student teachers in pre-service training program.

### **In-Service Training Programs**

In-service training includes professional development of teachers who are already working in this field of teaching. Teacher's education is essential to implement the concept of inclusive education for the children with special needs. Teacher's can be benefited by the approach of inclusive education in the following ways :

- It help teachers to appreciate and understand the diversity of individual students.
- It help teachers to recognize that all students have strength and potential.
- It helps to realize a teacher the significance of individualized instruction.
- It develop within a teacher collaborative problem solving skills.
- It enhance accountability skills.
- It overcome monotony.

### **Teacher's Role in Inclusive Education**

Teachers play a pivotal role in mainstreaming inclusive education. The teacher in classroom has to provide holistic support to the children with special needs based on joint perspective, mutual understanding and networking. Teacher work as a catalyst between the principal of the school, the children with special needs and their parents. The key responsibilities of a teacher for inclusive education are as follows:

- Coordinating the provision of support services for children with special needs.
- Seeking advice from fellow special educators in regard to the education of children with special needs.
- Maintain the database of child with special needs.
- Development of assessment portfolio of children with special needs.
- Organize a periodic and regular teacher- parent meeting in school regarding the problems of the children with special needs.
- Ensuring that a child with special needs join in all the school activities with other normal pupils.
- The development of teacher training modules in inclusive education is best achieved by working in partnership with local teacher training institution.
- It is necessary to explore local adaptation and devise more possible ways of providing support to teachers and also the children with special needs.

- The teacher should have a positive attitude toward children with disabilities.
- The teacher must keep in a constant touch with different non-governmental organization working in this field for supporting children with special needs.
- The teacher must follow the principle of 'zero rejection policy' in the classroom.
- Developing a realistic self concept within the children with special needs.
- Making suitable adaptation in the curriculum transaction, so that the children with disabilities learn according to their ability.
- Parental guidance and counseling and public awareness program should be organized through school activities.
- Involving the disabled children in almost all the activities of the classroom.
- It is important for a teacher to create a safe classroom environment that allowed the children with special needs to learn with the normal children experiencing socialization.

### **Teacher's role in the changing scenario**

The role of teachers in changing environment is also necessary to change, if there is to be a smooth transition from mainstream education to inclusive education. The teachers must see the value of change. They may need to acquire new skills and also reject some of their old believes and practices. Teachers are required to reconsider their roles and construct new knowledge to equip themselves for the change. For inclusive education teachers need to upgrade their knowledge and skills. In inclusive settings a teacher required to teach the content differently to meet the needs of different learners. The content must be integrative and interdisciplinary in nature. The regular classroom teachers are now considered as thoughtful professional, who is able to understand the relationship between teaching and learning as well as develop the cognitive functioning of the differently abled students. A school teacher now need to be a professional diagnostician in order to deal effectively to the children with special needs and also to the gifted learners. So, now a days a school teacher must have the appropriate knowledge, skills and attitude to fulfill their new roles and responsibilities.

### **Enhancing the efficiency of teachers**

In order to enhance the efficiency of teachers in inclusive classroom there are three interdependent practical components – the organizational component, the procedural component and the instructional component. The organizational component includes cooperation of teams and individuals. The procedural component includes collaboration and consultation to plan and implement programmes for diverse learners. The instructional components include co-operative learning, peer tutoring, etc.

### **Innovative Practices in Inclusive classroom**

The World Declaration on Education for All, Jomtien, Thailand, which was reaffirmed in the Dakar Framework for Action (2000), gives the message:

“In order to attract and retain children from marginalized and excluded groups, education systems should respond flexibly. Education system must be inclusive, actively seeking out

children who are not enrolled, and responding flexibly to the circumstances and needs of all learners.....”

The World Conference on Special Needs Education, Salamanca calls on the international communities to endorse inclusive education and to support the development of special needs education as an integral part of all education programmes.

The teachers are now required to practice some innovative instructional techniques which are not generally practiced in regular classroom. A change in teaching practices, a shift from traditional teaching styles to innovative practices is necessary for inclusive education. Some innovative practices are as follows:

### **Peer Tutoring**

Peer tutoring has been a favoured practice in inclusive settings. Peer tutoring is an instruction provided by the peers of students. It means children teaching other children usually on a one-to-one basis. The main goals of peer tutoring is to develop cognitive domain by teaching cognitive skills to the children with special need. It also helps to improve the tutee's social behaviour like cooperation, mutual respect, etc. It can also develop the psycho-motor domain of any learners. The success of peer tutoring depends upon the interpersonal and communicative relationships between peers. It benefits children with special needs and also other children.

### **Cooperative Learning**

Cooperative learning is a procedure used by a mixed ability group to achieve a common goal with mutual collaboration and support. In an inclusive classroom, children can be taught with the help of cooperative learning techniques. It provides opportunities to children to learn academic skills and pro-social behaviour. Here the teacher operates as a planner, facilitator and also evaluator. Its gives opportunity to the child with special needs to learn academic skills, to develop friendship and to develop problem solving skills through mutual collaboration and support. When children with disability learn together with the normal children, they learn to live together in the community.

### **Collaboration and Consultation**

Collaboration is essential for meaningful inclusion to occur. Collaboration is essentially a process where the participating teachers develop shared meanings and shared agenda in a cooperative way to implement that agenda. This can be achieved through interaction and communication.

### **Team Teaching**

In inclusive settings where children with disabilities are learning with the normal children in a regular classroom. Here sometimes teachers feel defeated to teach. They lack confidence. For which the regular education teachers are hesitant to include special needs students in their classrooms.

Team teaching is the best way towards helping teachers to face the challenge. It is an instructional technique in which two or more teachers jointly teach together in a classroom. It ensure cooperation and collaboration between regular education teachers and also special education teachers. It also help to develop teacher's confidence while teaching children with special needs in inclusive setting.

### **Individualized Education Programme**

Individualized Education Programme (IEP) refers to a carefully designed, systematically implemented and objectively evaluated programme to meet the special needs of a child. It helps to ensure that these children are making progress in a regular schools. It has valued not only for the child with special needs but also for teachers in a classroom.

## **CONCLUSION**

The children with special needs in an inclusive school have unique experience where they have to interact with the normal children who are non-disabled. Teachers are an essential components for a successful inclusive program. Teachers have direct interaction with the students and play a critical role in determining student's experience in the inclusive classroom. So, classroom teachers have to learn the necessary skills to provide quality education to children with diverse learning needs. Teacher's role is pivotal in imparting education and bring a qualitative change in any educational system. For a successful inclusive education the collaboration among the classroom teachers, school principals, education officer and all stake holders is highly desirable. Inclusive education depends on the quality of the teachers and their attitudes.

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