

“Inclusion Education As Solution To Barriers Of Cwsn And Answer For Their Success”

¹Banoth Ramchand , ²Dummugudem

¹, S.A (English) B.B.M., M.A(Eng)., M.Ed.,

Zpss, Dummugudem,

². (Post & Mdl), Khammam District, 507137 Pin Code,
Telangana State

ABSTRACT: *Historically, attempts towards development and ensuring equality and justice for all have been done to conform to the norms and systems of the society. Quality basic education is a fundamental human right. However, many continue to be denied this right and the opportunity to enjoy its many benefits because of limited access to the participation in the education system. Through inclusive education, one can respond to the diversity of needs of all learners and thereby reducing exclusion to and within education system. Hence, inclusive education is a means to achieve fundamental right to education for all. The principle of inclusive education was adopted at the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education held in Spain in 1994, and was reaffirmed at the World Education Forum, the challenge of getting all children into school has been put on the political agenda in many countries and is reflected in the Right to Education Bill in India also. This paper will attempt to analyze the origin, concept and practices of inclusive education; also it focuses on a critical element of the inclusive education as a challenge towards achievement of equity for students with disabilities. It will also explain the nature of barriers will be confronted to inclusive education and suggest the approach for successful its implementation.*

I. INTRODUCTION:

Inclusive schools are designed with a vision and principle that believe in the culture of rights, social justice and equity. It believes that all children are not the same, and accepts diversity as strength rather than a problem. It believes in certain basic pedagogy that children learn in different ways, and relates success more with the learning of life and social skills than scoring high marks in exams. The admission policy of such schools would accept children from a diverse community rather than reject on the ground of admission test scores or other physical, social and economic factors. Inclusive schools follow flexible curricula that would respond to the diverse needs of children. Child-centered pedagogy and application of Gardner’s (1993) Multiple Intelligence (MI) theory are other major departure from the traditional schools that inclusive schools would follow. The UNESCO Framework has again highlighted the need of child-centered pedagogy for addressing the educational needs of the disadvantaged and the disabled: The challenge confronting the inclusive school is that of developing a child –centered pedagogy capable of successfully educating all children, including those who have serious disadvantages and disabilities.

The merit of such schools is not that they are capable of providing quality education to all children; their establishment is a crucial step in helping to change discriminatory attitudes, in creating welcoming communities and in developing an inclusive society. (UNESCO, 1994, Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, p.6. emphasized) .Traditional schools offer scope for the use of only two types of intelligences-linguistic and logical-mathematical. This approach itself creates learning barriers for a large number of children particularly those belonging to the first generation learners, the disadvantaged and the disabled, for Gardner (1993) has identified seven types of intelligences: linguistic or verbal, logical-mathematical, spatial or visual, musical, kinesthetic, interpersonal and intra-personal. Schools encouraging the identification and application of these intelligences would be able to remove unseen and internal barriers that children face in traditional schools. Inclusive schools use variety of innovative practices to get children involved and participating in learning processes. Some of the inclusion strategies are listed as under.

- Whole class inclusive teaching
- Group/cooperative/collaborative learning
- Peer tutoring/child-to-child learning
- Activity based learning
- Team approach/problem solving
- Equity in assessment/examinations

Inclusive education and its evolution in school system as a process for removing barriers to access and success is a growing phenomenon. The strategies suggested above have been tried out in many schools across the countries and have also conceptual and pedagogical backing. However, it is yet to be shaped into a reform movement or as a replacement of the traditional school system.

Meaning of Inclusive Education : The discussion on inclusive education started with proposal of the social model of disability, which proposes systemic barriers, negative attitudes and exclusion by society (purposely or inadvertently) as the ultimate factors defining disability. This shift in the idea came when it was realized that children in special schools were seen as geographically and socially segregated from their peers and failure of meaningfully integrating students in mainstream schools (integration). Inclusive education is not only limited to mainstreaming the learners with special needs but also concerned with identifying and overcoming all barriers to effective, continuous and quality participation in education.

Barriers and Suggestions for Implementing Inclusive Education

While we cannot neglect the importance of inclusive education it remains unanswered why the practice of inclusive education is presenting problems. It appears that it is both at the level of government policy but rather at the level of implementation. While the policy states that all children should go to school – and governments are enforcing this rule – in many cases quality learning is not taking place, which is contradictory to the ethos of inclusive education. The reasons for the non implementation of the inclusive education in India, is because of various barriers which according to Johan (2002) are both external and as well as internal. The external barriers are confronted before coming to and getting enrolled in schools, which includes physical location of schools, non-availability of school, social stigmatization or economic conditions of the learners. The internal barriers are mostly psychological barriers like self concept, confidence etc which are sometimes imposed by the external factors and first step to remove the internal barriers is to remove the external barriers. The following are some of the external barriers.

Attitudinal Barriers: It has been noted that disabled students suffer from physical bullying, or emotional bullying. These negative attitudes results in social discrimination and thus leads to isolation, which produces barriers to inclusion. Regarding disabled children some regions still maintain established beliefs that educating the disabled is pointless. It is sad to note here that these barriers are caused by society, which is more serious to any particular medical impairment. The isolation which results from exclusion closes the doors of real learning. The negative attitudes often develop due to lack of knowledge. Along with information about disability or condition, their requirements must be provided to peers, school staff and teachers as well. Increasing interactions between learners with special needs and community through organization of fairs, meetings etc. It is also very important to counsel the parents of these learners, especially in rural areas about the importance of providing education for developing self-reliant individuals. There is also a need to shift in perspectives and values so that diversity is appreciated and teachers are given skills to provide all children, including those with different learning needs, quality education.

Also, at the policy level, it should be mandatory for all to educate about disability, so that a responsive individuals who respects disability could be developed.

Physical barriers: Along with the attitudinal barriers which are faced by the learners on the daily basis, another important barrier is the physical barriers, which includes school buildings, playgrounds, washrooms, library etc. Apart from this, the majority of schools are physically inaccessible to many learners because of poor buildings, particularly rural areas. Since most schools are not equipped to respond to special needs, poses blockage for learners in physically getting into school. For example, many of the students require a personal assistant for such basic activities as taking lunch in recess, personal care, remedial education efforts. Most school buildings don't respond to the requirement of these learners properly. For example, if there is a ramp, sometimes it is too steep, often the doors were too heavy for the student to open unaided which impedes the access. Hence, it is important for implementing the inclusive education in schools, it is important to overcome such physical barriers. Along with basic changes in the architectural designs such as widening doorways, removing unnecessary doors, installing proper ramps, technology could be used in the form of motion sensors to open doors, flush toilets and automatic door buttons for easier access through doors. Voice recognition technology can also used for activating many of the above-mentioned barriers. Since, there is an inadequacy of resources available to meet the basic needs in education, it is estimated that for achieving the inclusive education goal will require additional financial support from the government.

Inappropriate Curriculum as a barrier : In any education system, the curriculum is one of the major obstacles or tools to facilitate the development of more inclusive system. Curriculum includes the broad aims of education and has its implications on transactional and evaluation strategies. In our country of diversity, curriculum is designed centrally, hence which leaves little flexibility for local adaptations or for teachers to experiment and try out new approaches. This results in making the content inaccessible and demotivating. Therefore, the design and development of specific learning and teaching materials and teaching arrangements should take cognizance the needs, interest, aspirations and uniqueness of the learners. Elliot (2002) reports on changes being attempted in American schools where students 'learn social skills and group work in environment that celebrates diversity.' As a result of the knowledge based curriculum, the examinations are also too much content oriented rather than success oriented which is the demand of flexible inclusive curriculum. Supovitz & Brennan (1997) as cited by UNESCO, 2003 argued that , "while knowledge-based examinations are recognized to have their limitations in terms of both validity and reliability, formal standardized tests may also have adverse effects, such decontextualized facts and skills; ranking and sorting schools and children; narrowing the curriculum as teachers concentrate their teaching on the information, forms and formats required in the tests; and reinforcing bias in terms of gender, race/ethnicity and social class." In the inclusive settings, assessment of learners must be against the broad aims of curriculum and education and also must be evaluated against their own achievements rather to be compared by others, which will be truly individualized. Also, it is suggested that the assessment has to be continuous, based on the feedback of both learners and the teachers. This will surely help learners also teacher's in selecting appropriate teaching methods and styles. As a consequence, all learners can be evaluated against their own achievements as opposed to being compared to other learners. Portfolio assessment can also be used. This would include learners' own products such as final 'best' work, various works in progress, samples of tests completed, certificates earned, goals met, daily work samples, self-evaluation of the progress of learning and teachers' observations (UNESCO, 2003).

Untrained Teachers as Barrier : For implementing the inclusive education successfully, it is important that teachers must have positive attitudes towards learners with special needs. But, because of lack of knowledge, education, understanding, or effort the teachers give inappropriate substitute work to the learners, which eventually leads to learners dissatisfaction and poor quality of learning. Another important feature of the schools is high teacher–student ratios (average 1:45) and where it is expected that learners of diverse abilities have to be taught together. At the first place, there is a scarcity of trained teachers to deal with the diversity and secondly, it is very wrong to assume to deal with 45 learners with diversity. Hence, it is important to reduce the teacher-learner's ratio in the classroom, which is only possible if we have more schools with trained teachers to deal with the diversity of learners. At present, training to teachers is fragmented, uncoordinated and inadequate taking place in a segregated manner i.e. one for special children and another for students with general capabilities; both of them are preparing teachers for the segregated schools. However, there is an effort by SCERT, DIETs in providing ongoing training programme, which are not adequate because of various reasons. Therefore, it is important that an inclusive teacher education programme must be designed which can foster proper skills among teachers.

Organization of the Education System : In our country, there are different types of schools such as private, government; public schools are developing inequality by offering differential levels of facilities and support. Those having an access to private schools have higher possibility of success as compared to those who go to government schools. Therefore, it is important like many developed countries, the common school system policy must be place properly. There is also a lack of information within many systems and often there is not an accurate picture of the number of learners excluded from the school system. Very often this leads to a situation where these learners do not have equal opportunities for further education or employment.

SOLLUSITIONS FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:

Quality with Equity: There is one more dimension to the inclusion concept. It addresses the issue of quality in consonance with equity. In traditional style of schooling quality and excellence are divorced from equity. The institution of the school as a public system for mass education has its origin in the industrial era. It grew on the production line factory model in a period when democracy was yet to flower fully; elitism, hierarchy and even feudalism guided the social and economic fabrics of the society and its institutions. School was not an exception. It borrowed not only vocabularies from the industries, such as 'products', 'performance', 'standard', 'test' etc., but also its ethos. Admittedly, now we are in the 21st century, and in the information age. Hence, it calls for a re-look at the institution of school. Skrtic (1991), Lipsky and Gartner (1999) and Llyod (2000) have questioned the 'adequacy, relevance and appropriateness' of the public education system that was shaped and influenced by the needs of the industrial era. The post-industrial work place of rapid technological change and development require more of collaborative, problem solving and teamwork skills. Besides, authors have

established a linkage between collaboration, equity and excellence in the 21st century schools. 'Collaboration means learning collaboratively with and from persons with varying interests, abilities, skills and cultural perspectives' (Skrtic, 1991). Equity, therefore, becomes pre-condition for the postindustrial era schools. The author further observes, The successful schools in the postindustrial era will be ones that achieve excellence and equity simultaneously – indeed one that recognizes equity as the way to excellence.

Open education: Open education is characterized by the removal of 'restrictions, exclusions and privileges' (Richardson, 2000). It provides an alternative curricular route to students who are not able to cope with the rigid curriculum and fixed timeframe of the traditional school system. To many students and parents, however, it is regarded as a secondary choice, considered after they have not been able to access or secure 'success' in the existing regular school system. It is considered as a non-contact educational delivery system, though its interactive learning materials are more learner friendly than the textbooks as the sole means of learning in many schools. The growth of information and communication technology in recent years and its application in education is reducing the distance between open education system and 'not-open' system. Children in regular schools are accessing information with the help of modern educational technology and the Internet. They are becoming active partners in knowledge production, as they would do in the open system. Teachers are changing their role and are becoming facilitators. Schools are becoming learning places for dialogues and exchanges. Inclusive education in its philosophy as also in practice is closer to the open education system. In India's 'national open school', students have demolished the myth that 'open school' must correspond to the mode of 'distance education', whereby students should not assemble daily at a place and teachers should not be around to help them. Many children with disabilities in special schools as also non-disabled students in some regular schools are opting for open school curriculum in preference to the traditional school boards' curricula. Such open schools are removing barriers to access for a cross section -13 of students and are assuring success that might have been denied by the traditional school system.

Case examples: Two schools in India have been studied closely as examples. They have addressed the issues of equity and quality simultaneously and are close to the concept of inclusive schooling, though they remain within the confines of the school boards. Loreto Day School, Sealdah (Kolkata) is affiliated with the West Bengal State School Board, but is not like many other private or partially aided schools in the country. In 1979, it had 90 poor and non-fee paying students out of a total of 790 on its roll. In 1998, the school roll had 1400 students, and 700 were non-fee paying. These students are subsidized by the fee-paying students, sponsors and donors and by the West Bengal government for the dearness allowance as they give to other registered private schools. This increase in percentage of non-fee paying students is not just a numerical or mechanical exercise aimed to open access to these students by an established reputed school. It flows from a vision and value system that school has created for itself. Its other programmes include the 'Rainbow School' - a school-within-a-school for street children, which is not a tag- on afternoon programme to take care of equity, but is a structured and integral programme of curriculum development and child-to-child teaching and learning. The street children are individually tutored by 'regular' pupils from class V to X as a part of their work experience time slot. Many 'rainbow children' succeed in getting enrolled in regular schools, and others have found secure jobs in organized or unorganized professions. The school runs many other programmes and activities to reach out to the

II. COMMUNITY.

Loreto challenges a fixed view of school and its structure by seeking to live out a set of values which continually challenges parents, teachers and pupils of the school to build an outward looking community, to be flexible, and to live in simplicity...flexibility places utmost value on people...simplicity places the resources at Loreto's disposal in the broader context ...it therefore stands against acquisitiveness, consumerism and the trappings of modern life in favor of valuing people and relationships (Jessop, 1998). The school has also maintained the conventional academic performance by its students, 50% scoring first class annually at XII class public exam conducted by the school board. Loreto has succeeded in breaking the conventional mindset that creates barriers to access by poor students as also the very concept of quality and success. 'There are lessons for all schools, worldwide, rich and poor, in the boundary breaking strategies which Loreto has adopted to maximize its resources'. (Source: Jessop, 1998). There are many schools in Kolkata and other cities in India which bring better off children in face to face with children from weaker sections, though not to the extent and in the manner Loreto does. The point being made is that breaking the barriers to access may not be an isolated strategy but could be made a systemic issue to bring in inclusion, equity and redefined quality as the philosophy and vision of the educational institutions. St. Mary's school in New Delhi got into inclusion mode with the admission of Komal Ghosh, a student with cerebral palsy of severe nature, who was earlier in a special school. 'Komal's presence helped school become more humane', says Principal Annie Koshy. Since then school has opened its gate to other type of children with disabilities, orphans and poor students.

The priority in admission is given to neighborhood students and all children learn together in the same classroom. The school's teachers evolve variety of teaching methodologies to actively involve children in learning activities. The school has not kept high score by their students in the central board exam as its main motto. Teachers meet frequently to share their experiences in a problem-solving mode and as a team for taking care of the learning needs of all children. In addition the school has also outreach programmes whereby it helps children and adults from underprivileged groups in literacy and skill building. The two examples suggest adoption of the inclusion processes by the schools in a natural way, which have helped them in breaking barriers that are created by rigid policy and structures in most schools. As a matter of policy the Indian law requires that children with disabilities be educated in regular schools as far as possible. Many schools, including some private schools, are following this policy by giving admission to these children. But, in the absence of a vision and orientation, children get isolated and many times they are segregated in separate units or even if in the same class they do not feel included. The concept inclusion, though initiated in the background of education of children with disabilities and special needs, goes beyond special school, particularly when one thinks of children in developing countries. It takes into its fold the vulnerable and the children at risk, for whom access is not just a question of physical availability of space in schools and services of teachers and success does not mean only passing public examinations. 16

III. CONCLUSION:

Disability is seen as a developmental issue in any economy, as the disabled group is often being marginalized due exclusion from the society and thus leading to poverty. Inclusive Education approach doesn't only provide the basic human right to education but also dignity which is often being linked with the socio economic status. It is seen as a device for both access and quality education which are also fundamental aspirations of EFA and MDG action frameworks. Through, inclusive education the learners gets a chance for not only getting into the system but also a support to complete it successfully. Inclusive education results in improved social development and academic outcomes for all learners as it provides opportunity to get exposed to the real world which leads to the development of social skills and better social interactions. It also provides platform to the non-disabled peers adopt positive attitudes, tolerance. An important prerequisite for inclusive education is have respect for differences, respect for different learning styles, variations in methods, open and flexible curricula and welcoming each and every learner. A success of any learner is dependent on both school and community, but, both of them poses barriers in the implementation of the inclusive education policy. These barriers are both external and internal in nature and in order to facilitate inclusive education there has to have a modification in the environmental conditions, which includes the physical changes in the school buildings and increased number of schools. Apart from that, very importantly there is a need to change the negative attitudes and more responsibility towards learners with special needs, which can be brought about by policy changes. There is a need to provide proper training to the teachers dealing with the diverse needs of the learners, applying appropriate individualized pedagogy and assessment system. Also, this training must be continuous. Barriers to access and success can be viewed in physical as well as structural sense. But more than that, it is the curriculum, the pedagogy, the examination and the school's approach, which create barriers. Unless these unseen barriers are taken care of, access to All children and an assurance of success to all would remain a far cry. The inclusive education movement, combined with technological development and a new approach to open schooling has come at this crucial juncture. Countries and school systems choosing a holistic approach to access and success are more likely to succeed in reaching education for all.

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