

VALUE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is to examine the value of inclusive education in order to make learning environment conducive not only for specially-abled children but also for children from diverse backgrounds. Every individual deserves a life of dignity and equal opportunity- this includes the disabled section of the society. Inclusive education is perhaps the most important component in pursuance of these goals. Inclusive education is not a marginal issue; it is considered as central to the achievement of high quality education for the whole society. It has been seen that if these children are treated like normal children and if opportunities are extended to them they will surely not let down anyone including themselves. A good number of them have brought laurels to parents, society and the state to which they belong. Specially-abled people have proven their metal in different fields.

Keywords: Inclusive Education; Children with Disabilities; Integrated Education; Value.

Introduction

Every individual deserves a life of dignity and equal opportunity irrespective of his socio, ethnic background or his physical or mental limitations. And what greater tool can there be in realization of this goal other than education. Education is a fundamental human right to which every individual is entitled. With the advancement of education, the awareness about the persons with special needs has taken a completely new turn. They are no longer kept hidden away from the public view like in the past centuries. Rather they are treated like all other normal children. When we speak of education as a driver of social change we must first consider the best model – one that envisions the realization of a better evolved future that is inclusive of all

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sections of the society especially the disabled ones. The best model for this is of course the inclusive model of education. Inclusive education stands for educating all students irrespective of their physical or mental challenges within a common classroom environment alongside children with no disabilities to achieve synergized progress in their development.

Inclusive education is a “process of strengthening the capacity of the educational system to reach out to all learners”. Inclusive education involves contemporary schools with emphasis on active learning, applied curriculum, appropriate assessment methods, multi-level instructional approaches. It means changes in how teacher teach, how students learn and also how students with and without special needs interact with each other.

- The **Constitution of India** ensures equality, justice and dignity of all individual and mandates inclusive society for all.
- **Kothari Commission (1964-66)** stressed a common school system open to all children.
- Regarding inclusion of children with disabilities it suggests that the education of handicapped children should be organized not merely on humanitarian grounds of utility. It observes that proper education enables a handicapped child to overcome largely his or her handicap and make him into a useful citizen. The Commission felt that experimentation with integrated programmes is urgently required and every attempt should be made to bring as many as possible children in the integrated programmes.
- The **National Policy on Education (1986)** and modified in (1992) also laid special emphasis on education of persons with disabilities.

The goal of inclusive system is to provide all students with suitable, more appropriate and congenial environment and to achieve best of their potential. It is a programme which is offered to meet the individual needs of each student within the school community and develop among students the intellectual, social, emotional and physical aspects of life. Researches show that most students learn and perform in better way when exposed to the richness of the general education curriculum. Integration is often mistaken for inclusion because students are placed in mainstream classrooms, which in fact is a step towards inclusive.

Integrated education is similar to inclusive education, but without any ideological commitment to equity. Integration, places students in a mainstream classroom with “*Some adaptations and resources*”. However, students are expected to fit in with pre-existing structure, attitudes and unaltered environment. This means if there has not been a paradigm shift within the school and these students are not perceived as equals, if curriculum is not taught for the understanding of all instead of some, then the students are integrated, but not included in the school.

Inclusive education is meant to make schools centres of learning and the educational system caring, nurturing and supportive educational communities where the needs of all students are met in a true sense. It also means identifying any barriers within and around the school that hinder learning and participation and removes these barriers.

For a school to be inclusive, the attitudes of everyone in the school including administrators, teachers and other students should be positive towards students with disabilities. A least restrictive environment should be present in such a setup. Inclusive education isn't a programme, a place or a classroom but it is a way of understanding and living in the real world. In other words, it should be open to all, and should ensure that all students can learn and participate in a common situation and a common milieu.

According to UNESCO the concept of inclusive education is that, "it involves the admission of children with special education needs in 'ordinary' or 'regular' schools and may be described as pedagogic integration.

Standards of Inclusive Education:

- Every student has a right to education on the basis of equality of opportunity.
- No student should be discriminated from education on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, social, national, disability, birth or poverty etc.
- All students can learn and can get benefited from education.
- School should adapt to the needs of students, rather than students adapting to the needs of the school.
- Maximum participation of all the learners in the community schools of their choice.

But What Does Inclusive Education Achieve:

When a child with disabilities and special needs attends classes along sides his normal peers who do not have disabilities some fruitful things happens. They show the ability to keep up with the rest of their peers. In this mode of education every child feels secure and has a sense of belonging. They participate in the process of setting goals and the act of learning. They also take part in making decisions that affects them. The children learn at their own pace and style within a nurturing and learning environment which actually solves many academic problems.

Inclusive education in essence stands for equality and accepts every child with his or her unique capabilities. Inclusive therefore entails the educational system making itself open and welcoming to all. This notion has gradually been accepted by all the international, national and local educational programmes. Studies have shown that systems that are truly inclusive reduce drop - out rates and stagnation of students

and have higher average levels of achievement as compared to systems that are not inclusive. How children are treated in schools often mirrors how they will be treated in later life. As with other minorities, segregated school placement leads to segregated society, whereas inclusion in the earliest years promotes increased opportunity and greater understanding of differences for all involved. A society that separates its children is likely to maintain those separations indefinitely, reinforcing attitudinal barriers to disability in all aspects of life. Inclusive education is child's right, not a privilege. In short inclusive education is a process of enabling all students, including previously excluded groups to learn and participate effectively within main stream school system. Inclusive education aims to develop a child focused approach by acknowledging that all children are individuals with different learning needs and speeds and yet can be educated and trained without alienating them from their normal peers.

You may all recall the movie "*Taray Zameen Per*", and how the teacher played an inclusive role for the boy well within the system.

Inclusive education is part of development and development must always be inclusive, which means it must respond to the needs of real people who are all different. So a radical change in our attitude is necessary. A change in our attitudes will cause a change in our practices. Our attitudes will drive a continuum of support for every child as opposed to a default position of segregation. Our attitudes will bring more than tolerance. They will bring understanding and acceptance.

Conclusion

So I may conclude with these words that it is really necessary to have inclusive education everywhere so that the children having disabilities will live their life normally and happily. I would also like to say that especially abled people deserve an equal standing in the society, a life of dignity and an opportunity to participate in social, political and economic affairs of the society and each one of us should try to play our roles in this noble pursuit.

In the end I will like to quote Renee Laporte, "*When someone is truly included, no one will question their presence- only their absence*".

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