



## Inclusive Education

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### ABSTRACT

Inclusion is not an experiment to be tested but a value to be followed. All the children whether they are disabled or not have the right to education as they are the future citizens of the country. In the prevailing Indian situation resources are insufficient even to provide quality mainstream schools for common children, it is unethical and impracticable to put children with special needs to test or to prove any thing in a research study to live and learn in the mainstream of school and community. Inclusive education (IE) is a new approach towards educating the children with disability and learning difficulties with that of normal ones within the same roof. It seeks to address the learning needs of all children with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. It implies all learners – with or without disabilities being able to learn together through access to common pre-school provisions, schools and community educational setting with an appropriate network of support services. This is possible only in flexible education system that assimilates the needs of diverse range of learners and adapts itself to meet these needs.

**Keywords:** Inclusive education, children, pre-school, citizens

“Special Need Education” (SNE) the concept of “Special Need Education” extends beyond those who may be included in handicapped categories to cover those who are failing in school for a wide variety of other reasons that are known to be likely to impede a child’s optimal progress. Whether or not this more broadly defined group of children are in need of additional support depends on the extent to which school needs to support their curriculum, teaching and/or to provide additional human or material resources so as to stimulate efficient and

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effective learning for these pupils. The term “Special Need Education” (SNE) has come into use as a replacement for the term “Special Education”, as the older one was mainly understood to refer the education of all those children and youth whose needs arise from disabilities or learning difficulties. The Statement affirms: “those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within child centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs”.

**Historical Perspective:** In India special education as a separate system of education for disabled children outside the mainstream education system evolved way back in 1880s. The first school for the deaf was set up in Bombay in 1883 and the first school for the blind at Amritsar in 1887. In 1947, the number of schools for blind increased to 32, for the deaf 30 and for mentally retarded 3. There was rapid expansion in the number of such institutions. The number of special schools rose to around 3000 by the year 2000 (Department of Education, 2000). The Govt. of India in the 1960s designed a scheme of preparing teachers for teaching children with visual impairment. Similar schemes for teaching children with other disabilities were gradually developed. However, the quality of the trained teachers was in question because of lack of uniform syllabi of various courses, eligibility criteria for admission to these courses and also due to large extent of non-availability of teacher educators and literatures in the field. However, these special schools have certain disadvantages which became evident as the number of these schools increased. These institutions reached out to a very limited number of children, largely urban and they were not cost effective. But most important of all, these special schools segregated children with special needs (CWSN) from the mainstream, thus developing a specific disability culture.

**Legislation and Policy:** The Constitution of India (26<sup>th</sup> November, 1949), clearly states in the Preamble that everyone has the right to equality of status and of opportunity. The Article 41 of the Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution supports the right to work, education and public assistance in certain cases including disablement. Further, Article 45 commits to the provision of free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years. Based on this, the Constitution (86<sup>th</sup> Amendment) Act 2002 has been enacted by the parliament making education a fundamental right of all children in the age group of 6-14 years.

Moreover, the 93rd Amendment to the Constitution of India (now renumbered as the 86<sup>th</sup>), passed by the Lok Sabha on November 28, 2001, makes it mandatory for the government to provide free and compulsory education to “all children of the age of 6-14 years”, with its preamble clarifying that “all” includes children with disabilities as well. Yet inevitably again, vital loose ends of such enabling legislation and policies are not tied up. *The National Policy on Education, 1986 (NPE, 1986)*, and the Programme of Action (1992) stresses the need for integrating children with special needs with other groups. The objective to be achieved as stated in the NPE, 1986 is “to integrate the physically and mentally handicapped with general

community as equal partners, to prepare them for normal growth and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence”

**Integrated Education:** The concept of integrated education in India has emerged during the mid 1950s. It is based on the medical model of disability and it emphasizes placement of children with disabilities in mainstream schools. The major thrust is on attendance.

### **Inclusive Approach**

In late 90s (i.e. in 1997) the philosophy of inclusive education is added in District Primary Education Programme (DPEP). Moreover, DPEP also addressed core issues related to curriculum such as what factors limit the access of certain children to curriculum; what modifications are necessary to ensure fuller curriculum access. Thus, with its child-centered pedagogy, DPEP set a stage where children with special needs could be provided learning opportunities tailored to their needs. By 1998, many DPEP states had conducted surveys, assessment camps and evolved strategies to provide resource support to those children with special needs who were enrolled in DPEP schools. The IED (Integrated Education for Disables) guidelines in DPEP intend clearly that “DPEP will fund interventions for IED of primary school going children with integrable and mild to moderate disabilities”. Towards this end DPEP supported community mobilization and early detection, in-service teacher training, resource support, provision of educational aids and appliances and removal of architectural barriers.

IED (Integrated Education for Disables) was initially introduced in the Indian states in a small way by taking one block/cluster as a pilot project in each DPEP district. From a few hundred blocks in 1998, IED is currently being implemented in 2014 blocks of 18 DPEP states. Ten states of Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Tamil Nadu and Uttaranchal have up scaled the IED programme to all the blocks.

DPEP estimates clearly showed that there were a large number of disabled children in the relevant age group. Gradually realization dawned that UPE could not be achieved unless children with special needs were also brought under the ambit of primary education. This led to more concrete planning and stratification of providing resource support and remedial assistance to children with special needs. As the programme progressed, many models of service delivery evolved with the sole aim of providing supportive learning environment to children with special needs. The thrust was on imparting quality education to all disabled children. The National Policy on Education, 1986 “...Future emphasis shall be on distance and open learning systems to provide opportunities and access to all the major target groups, especially the disadvantaged, viz., women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, the adult working class, and people serving in the far - flung remote areas.” There after Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992 was passed by the Parliament in 1992, this act makes it mandatory for every special teacher to be registered by the council and lays down that every child with

disability had the right to be taught by a qualified teacher. In fact it provided punishment for those teachers who engaged in teaching children with special needs without a license. The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protections of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 stresses the need to provide free of cost education to all children in an appropriate environment till they are 18 years old and further emphasize their right to measures like:

- (a) Transport facilities to the students with disabilities or alternative financial incentives to parents or guardians to enable their students with disabilities to attend schools;
- (b) The removal of architectural barriers from schools, colleges or other institutions imparting vocational and professional training;
- (c) The supply of books, uniforms and other materials to students with disabilities attending school;
- (d) The grant of scholarship to students with disabilities;
- (e) Setting up of appropriate for the redressal of grievances of parents regarding the placement of their students with disabilities;
- (f) Suitable modification in the examination system to eliminate purely mathematical questions for the benefit of blind students and students with low vision;
- (g) Restructuring of curriculum for the benefit of students with disabilities;
- (h) Restructuring the curriculum for benefit of students with hearing impairment to facilitate them to take only one language as part of their curriculum.

The National Trust Act (National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disability), 1999 also came in to existence. This landmark legislation seeks to protect and promote the rights of persons who within the disability sector, have been even more marginalized than others. It was first of its kind in the category of persons addressed. It recognized the range of independence in skills, daily living and financial management. It is prime decision making body for persons with disabilities and aims to provide total care to persons with mental retardation and cerebral palsy and also manage the properties bequeathed to the trust.

MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (MHRD) ACTION PLAN: An outline of MHRD action plan is presented below: National Policy for Persons with:

- ❖ To complement and supplement IEDC and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programmes in the movement from integration to inclusion.
- ❖ Enrolment and retention of all children with disabilities in the mainstream education system. (Free and compulsory education from 0 to 14 under draft Bill/free education 0 to 18 yrs under PWD Act).

- ❖ Providing need based educational and other support in mainstream schools to children in order to develop their learning and abilities, through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource and partnership with their communities.
- ❖ Support higher and vocational education through proper implementation of the existing reservation quota in all educational institutions and creation of barrier free learning environments.
- ❖ Disability focused research and interventions in universities and educational institutions.
- ❖ Review implementation of existing programmes, provisions to identify factors leading to success or failure of the drive towards enrollment and retention of children with disabilities in mainstream educational settings. Address administrative issues arising out of review.
- ❖ Generating awareness in the general community, activists and persons working in the field of education and more specifically among parents and children that the disabled have full rights to appropriate education in mainstream schools and that it is the duty of those involved in administration at every level including schools to ensure that they have access to education.
- ❖ Ensure enrollment and intervention for all children with special needs in the age group 0-6 years in Early Childhood Care and Education Programs.
- ❖ Facilitate free and compulsory elementary education for children with special needs in the age group 6-14 (extendable to 18 yrs.) in mainstream education settings currently under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) (SSA is a governmental program shared by both union and state governments for achieving universal elementary education in India by 2010).
- ❖ Facilities for transition of young persons with disability wishing to pursue secondary education.
- ❖ Ensuring physical access of children and youth with disabilities in schools and educational institutions by enforcing the requirement for provisions of universal design in buildings and provide support in transportation.
- ❖ Development of national norms for Inclusive Education, to set standards of implementation, training, monitoring and evaluation for the program.
- ❖ Provide inputs in all pre-service and in-service training for mainstream and special education teachers to enable them to work with children with disability in an inclusive education system.
- ❖ Appropriate Resource Services support through appointment of special educators, rehab professionals, provision of resource rooms, etc to support mainstream schoolteachers in the classrooms.

- ❖ Put in place an effective communication and delivery system for specific delivery of TLM, aids and appliances, hardware/software.
- ❖ Participation in sports, co-curricular activities, to promote all round ability development.
- ❖ Ensuring physical access for young persons with disabilities (18 plus age group) in all colleges and educational institutions by enforcing the requirement for provisions of universal design in buildings and provide support in transportation.

## CONCLUSION

All these efforts aims to provide Universal Elementary Education by the end of the plan. It also aims to provide basic education for the un-reached segments and special groups. The special interventions and strategies like pedagogic improvement and adoption of child centered practices are focused on the groups like the girls, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, working children, children with disabilities, urban deprived children, children from minority groups, children below poverty line, migratory children and in the hardest to reach groups.

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