

## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: A PATH TOWARDS EQUALITY OF EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACT

Many national as well as interpersonal programmes have attempted to reach out the marginalised children but those with disabilities are often forgotten and remain invisible. In the 1990s international aid agencies recommended that poverty reduction programmes specifically target people with disabilities in addition to other disadvantaged groups, such as women scheduled cast or dalits and tribal communities (World Bank 2004). The MDGs approved by world leader at the united nations millennium summit in 2000, recommended that poverty reduction efforts has to include individuals with disabilities along with already targeted groups. These MDGs have been provide the framework for government intervention in India , contributing to legislation and programme for inclusive education as accost effective and quality option for all excluded children. Despite these efforts for inclusive education in India about 94% of the children with disabilities didn't receive any educational services. It is due to short coming of the earlier legislation. As a response to these limitation of earlier efforts for promoting inclusive education, the government of India introduced new policies on the education of children with disabilities.

This paper identifies the limitation of these earlier efforts in the context of survey findings and examine the responsiveness of the recent policies for inclusion to these limitation to earlier efforts. The challenges of inclusive education policy and the services provision in India have discussed in the paper.

### INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest problems the world is facing today is growing number of persons who are excluded from meaningful partnership in the economic, political and cultural life of their communities. Such a society is neither efficient nor safe. Education empowers individuals to get rid of the stigma of social inequality. Indian government took step and declared education as a fundamental right of each and every individual. Inclusive education means to provide equal opportunity of education to all. It is new approach towards education the children with disability and learning

difficulties with that of normal ones within the same roof. It is a process of removing barriers and includes all students from excluded groups. Inclusive education is meant to make schools as centres of learning and our educational system works as supportive educational communities where the needs of all children are met in true sense. Inclusive education is an approach which aims to develop a focus on children with different needs and can be educated.

The national Policy on Education 1986 emphasised the removal of disparities for equalization of equal opportunities. For achieving equalization of opportunity children from remote

areas, children from linguistic, cultural minorities, girl child, and children with disabilities should have to access the quality education in comparison to other children. The Jomtien World Conference on Education for All in Thailand in 1990 set the goal of Education for all UNESCO along with other UN agencies and a number of international and national non- governmental organization, has been working to worlds achieving this goal- adding to the efforts made at the country level.

Ten Years after the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 many stakeholders maintained that insufficient progress had been towards the realization of Education for All (EFA) and that a renewed commitment was necessary. The world Education forum in Dakar, Senegal, adopted a framework for Action Focusing on the achievement by 2015 of six EFA goals.

Despite encouraging developments there are still an estimated 113 million children in the world not enrolled in primary school (DFID, 2001). In case of India there are an estimate 25 million children out of school (MHRD 2003 Statistics, cited in World Bank 2004) many of whom are marginalized by the dimensions such as poverty, gender, disability and caste. Many national as well as international programmes have attempted to reach out these excluded children but those with disabilities are often forgotten and remain invisible. It is recognized that current strategies and programmes have largely been or inappropriate with regard to needs of children and youth who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion where programmes targeting various marginalized and excluded groups to exist they have functioned outside the mainstream.

In the 1990s international aid agencies recommended that poverty reduction programmes specifically target people with disabilities in addition to other disadvantage groups, such as women, schedule cast, or dilute and tribal communities, (World Bank 2004). The Dakar World Education forum 2000 conformed that Education can play a key role on overcoming inclusion of the disabled. Inclusive Education was identified as a key strategy

for the development of EFA. The MDGs approved by world leaders at the United Nation's that Millennium Summit in 2000, also recommended that poverty disabilities along with already targeted groups. These MDGs have been provided the framework for government intervention in India, contributing to legislation and programmes for inclusive education as a cost effective and quality option for all children- children with disability included.

Despite these efforts for inclusive education in India, about 94% of children with disabilities didn't receive any educational services and some specific groups like children/ Youth with mental retardation, disabled children in rural areas, and girls/ women with disabilities were further marginalized and remain unidentified. In addition to NSS survey, many studies indicated fragmented implementation of inclusive education (Alur, 2002: Jangira 2002) exclusive of people who don't fit the required criteria (singal, 2005) inadequate resources and dissemination (Jha 2001) miniscule coverage of children with disabilities in the mainstream (Julka 2005). All these studies indicate towards the lack of quality programming for inclusive education. In the prevailing Indian situation resources are insufficient even to provide quality in mainstream schools for common children. It is unethical and impracticable to put children with special needs to test anything in research study to live and learn in mainstream of school and community. (Dash, 2006).

According to Britannica Concise Encyclopaedia "Children with motor disabilities, once considered subjects for special education, are usually integrated into standard classroom, often by means of wheelchairs and modified tasks. Children with learning disabilities and speech problems usually require specialised techniques, often on an individual basis. For children with behavioural and emotional disorders, special therapeutic and clinical services may be provided".(Britannica Concise Encyclopaedia)

There are many factors which contribute to exclusion from schooling. In our country there is a diverse circumstance that location, gender inequality and poverty vary across the communities and state.

Further as a response to these limitation of earlier efforts for promoting inclusive education. The government of India introduced two new policies on the education of children with disabilities. The Action plan for Inclusive in Education of children and Youth with Disabilities (IECYD) 2005 and the National policy for persons with Disabilities, 2006.

Hence, inclusive education becomes a key reason for integrating a special child with mainstream. The philosophy behind inclusive education is to promote opportunities for all children to participate, learn and have equal treatment, irrespective of their mental or physical abilities. But in Indian classes scenario is totally different, there are more than fifty students and non-disabled students do not accept disabled students. Government made some policies to eradicate these drawbacks, here are the brief information about the policies for inclusive education.

## GOVERNMENT'S RECENT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICIES

As a response to the limitations of the earlier efforts, the government of India has introduced two new policies respond to the short comings of the earlier effort and the lacuna identified in the census? This section attempts to answer this question.

### POLICIES

The directives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have resulted in two Government policies on Disabilities. The Action plan for Inclusive in Education of children and Youth with Disabilities (IECYD) in 2005 under the ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and the National Policy for persons with Disabilities in 2006 under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJE).

## THE ACTION PLAN FOR INCLUSIVE IN EDUCATION OF CHILDREN AND

## YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES (IECYD) 2005

Unlike the earlier scheme of IEDC that started to place the children with disabilities in the regular schools without making any changes in the school to accommodates, the revised IECYD, in contract, stresses to modify the existing physical infrastructure and teaching methodologies to meet the need of all children, including children with special needs(MHRD 2005). In this way it clears the confusion with the concept of inclusive education. It also promises to provide in service and pre-service training to regular education teachers of disability and inclusive education through collaboration with

Rehabilitation Council and the National Council for Teachers Education as well as to pre-school worker in the Integrated child Development Services (ICDS) programme.

The Action plan under the Ministry of Human Resource Development preceded the National policy for persons with disabilities 2006 and it provided many implementation strategies that policy are implicit in the policy. Both the ministries have same objectives, where one has framed it its action plan and other in its vision.

## THE NATIONAL POLICY FOR PERSON WITH DISABILITIES, 2006

There was a growing realization that the quality of lives of person with disabilities and be raised by providing them opportunities and appropriate facilities. The person with disabilities have equal right with other members of the society to enjoy the fruits of development. The National policy for person with Disabilities announced by the Government of India in 2006 reflects the new emphasis of bringing persons with disabilities into the mainstreams of society. The policy seems to adopt the social model of disability. It recognized that a persons with disabilities are valuable human resource for the country. It seeks to create an environment that provides them equal opportunities protections of

their rights and full participation in society. The policy also stresses on the special needs of women and children with disabilities, importance of creating barrier free environment and social security and the important role that can be played by the NGOs in service to the persons with disabilities. However although it mentions about specific programmes for women, there are none that proactively target girls with disabilities, particularly in the context of health and social attitudes (Kalyanpur 2008). The National policy emphasized the need for mainstreaming of the persons with disabilities in the general education system through Inclusive Education. The policies show that although the government has responded to the earlier shortcomings especially in the sense of considering the human rights issue of the person with disabilities, it is still not satisfactory as many of the promises are out in policy documents but the real implementation is poor. The policies fail to address the bigger issue of inaccurate identification measures, inadequate and training quality of education in the non-formal and vocational context, flexible services provisions for children with disabilities in regular schools, gender disparities and negative attitude of stakeholders.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The inclusive education policy in India needs to be reformed in several ways. Though there have been efforts given a good beginning to the inclusive education, a lot has to be done for its proper functioning. This section would explore the policy implications so that the Inclusive Education could benefit the Indian Education system.

## LABEL FREE POLICY AND SURVEY

The children identified in the policies or surveys are identified as disabled or 'SEM' learners. The labels in the policy show that the policy itself is reinforcing segregation by means of language that is declaring the children with disabilities as 'disabled' and is categorized learners based on individuals

characteristics. Policies that don't require labelling of students in order to identify need for services should be considered preferable. It should be based on needs for services and not on the category of special education needs.

## ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

Access should not be limited to only physical access (building) but also with the academic program access (to curriculum and instruction through adaptation and support) social access (to peers) and economic access (to affordable schooling). Physical access to schools does not ensure meaningful participation.

## ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

In India, there is a lack of expertise in conducting assessment. There is a heavy reliance on standardized test scores as outcome measure of success at the school level. There is a strong need to develop policies that allocate resources (economic and technical) to schools for training in evaluation and assessment that measure academic as well as social outcomes.

## ATTITUDINAL CHANGES

Attitude constitutes a big challenge before Inclusive Education in India. The societal attitudes or culture constructs can't be ignored when looking at the policy implications because attitudes are largely responsible for the poor and improper implementation of IE policy. Negative attitudes towards the children with disabilities especially towards the children with mental retardation is one of the main causes of unsuccessful implementation. There is a need for bringing attitudinal changes among all stakeholders ranging from government officials to teachers as well as parents and their communities members.

## PRE-SERVICE TRAINING AND IN-SERVICE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Though the Action plan for Inclusive in Education of children and youth with Disabilities 2005 stresses on the pre-service and in-service training of the general as well as special teachers, there is still a big gap between the pre-service training and in-service professional development that acts as a barrier to teach a diverse range of learners.

Teachers should be given training to learn curriculum development strategies facilitate flexible structure provide alternative (multiple assessment and address culturing) linguistic diversity of learners.

## CONCLUSION

India being the largest democracy in the world, needs to be highly focused with the issue and constraints of Inclusive Education so that all the marginalized children may be able to fulfil rights as citizens. Government need to think that despite best intentions to promote inclusive education, why the result is still exclusion. The issue like socio-economic constraints, attitudes, curriculum, environment, language and communication, govern and human resource development should be given their due attention for enforcing better implementation. There is also a need of proper accountability mechanisms to check the policy implementation. Some kind of legal enforcement mechanisms need to be created (Alur 2002). There should be a network of regular monitoring and evaluation by external evaluators (to avoid report corruption) in order to ascertain whether the policy is indeed being implemented. Government officers should be trained at all levels of managing monitoring and evolution systems and enforcing accountability as well as for conceptual awareness of inclusive education and disability. If India has to meet the EFA

goals and the collective MDGs within a specified timeframe, there should be a strong commitment by the government as well as all stakeholders to provide support to Inclusive Education. Census must be learnt from the shortcoming of the earlier efforts for inclusive education and the necessary steps must be taken to embrace inclusive education that can result in the poverty reduction in the country.

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