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Inclusive Education: The Changing Scenario

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ABSTRACT

The progress of Human Society, remains incomplete till the weakest sections of the society both physically as well as socio-economically also, receive the benefit of development and are at par with other members of the society, as far as we are concerned with the disabled children, there are hundreds of disabled children living miserable life, in different parts of the world. These children have traditionally been neglected, isolated, within their families and schools and above all, the society also. The data collection for the study has been mainly done through observing classes and interviewing the principals of M.C.D schools about their own training and preparedness for inclusive education and other facilities provided by the department, data has been collected from primary sources mainly. The resource crunch has been the common problem in all the schools, response of the parents of the disabled children and the society as a whole has not been so encouraging for the teachers. Secondary data from government and other sources has been used for the study. The paper deals with the gradual shift in the focus from being completely neglected and isolated in terms of learning and education, to the formation of new stream of special education, which later on worked for the integration of regular schools as special children were allowed admission to the regular schools and now it has become completely Inclusive Education with the clear cut aim of "no one should be left behind". As the Inclusive Education aims to provide all the facilities in regular schools for Disabled Children. The feeling of doubt, fear, about how to deal with these children, also about their achievement and performance has to be uprooted as early as possible. Delhi being the National Capital is believed to be having all the infrastructural facilities available as compared to the other states of the country, we will also try to look into actual situation in Delhi after the implementation of new education policy 2020, which stresses on providing the infrastructural facilities including specially trained teachers and other staff also.

Keywords: Disabled, Traditionally, Fear, Facilities, Performance.

I. INTRODUCTION

In India Education is believed to be the third eye of a person, the society educates a child to train his/her mind to follow the norms and ethics of the society, and learn to behave as a law

¹ Directorate of Education, MCD, India.

abiding citizen, and be a productive member of the society in the future, therefore providing free education to all should be the objective of policy makers, specially the people below poverty line, disadvantaged groups females and disabled children. The education of disabled children has been the most neglected for different reasons, as with the development of technology and infrastructural facilities, the latest research and development reached from one corner to another of the world and a kind of reformist movement started in policy making, planning, allocation of resources, building infrastructural facilities, and last but not the least creating public awareness to accept the disabled children in regular schools.

The much talked about field of inclusive education at the world level is nothing ,but an attempt to go for the course correction, in other words to move in a right direction, as of now in most of the countries specially the third world countries have consistently ignored the needs and requirements of the disabled members of the society, thereby an undeclared division of the society was created and practiced also, it will not be an exaggeration if it is said that used to be a” parallel society”, cutting across all the levels that is both vertical and horizontal also, as the members of this society are scattered all over the world, living an isolated life forced to live in a world of their own, owing to the complete ignorance of the family members as well as the society also, the only place where these disabled children were accepted as a member of the society was the special school which were away from the busy and hectic routine of the other people in most of the cases the society had no day to day interactions with these special schools, as no one from outside used to take interest in the activities of these special schools besides the parents of the disabled children. The society in fact virtually denied the very existence of these disabled persons, as they were not counted as the members of the society, especially when the plans for the infrastructural development were made and implemented, unfortunately the disabled persons have never been in the focus of any plans meant for the development, the probable reason for this could be that after the industrial revolution in the sixteenth century the nature of the society drastically changed, and rapidly became a market oriented consumer society in which investing and earning profits became the only motive of the society which was time and again legitimised by the corporate businessmen by the famous phrase of “survival of the fittest” indirectly hinting that those who are not physically and mentally fit will not be able to survive or remain in the race in this cruel capitalist society which has no human face rather the society is no more a welfare society.

II. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIA: THE BACKGROUND

The philosophy in India underlines the fact that physical body is ephemeral and the soul is

Eternal, the body is believed to be cloth of, or cover for the soul, so relationship between one soul to another was emphasised and deformities of the physical body were not taken into account or rather ignored and knowledge was easily available to seekers, the mythological philosophical text contains examples of many famous personalities, who had some kind of physical or other challenges for example ashtavakra, whose body had deformity at eight different points, was one of the famous philosopher thinkers, as mentioned in the Raja Janak versus Ashtavakra dialogue. the other example which can be cited here is from Mahabharata king Dhritarashtra was blind by birth but received education and was one of the best in the use of muscular power even his brother Pandu was also having health problems since birth both of them excelled in their respective fields another example which can be cited here is the famous Krishna devotee Surdas, who was blind since birth, but excelled in writing devotional songs and poetry which may not have been possible without some kind of education, even Mahakavi Kalidas who is compared with the Shakespeare in terms of the achievements, till the time of his marriage was probably illiterate, who could not even pronounce common words in Sanskrit, acquired education at later age and wrote famous books like Abhigyan Shakuntalam, Meghdoot, Kumarasambhava, all these examples have been mentioned here to underline the fact that indigenous system of education during that period was inclusive in nature, that is no one was debarred from receiving education on the basis of any physical disability in other words then educational system was such that every learner was trained in one field or another even if there was some physical handicap also, the physical inability was ignored and the teaching fraternity and the society never had any problems in dealing with such learners and no special arrangements were to be made for them. It was probably during the British rule that the education system introduced by them gradually discourage the disabled children, mainly because the main aim of British system of education in India, was to produce fully fit soldiers and clerks only. special education as a separate stream for disabled children outside the mainstream is traced way back in 1880 in India and at the time of independence in 1947, there were 32 schools for blind children 30 schools for deaf and 3 for mentally retarded. (Disability in India²)

(A) Objectives of the study:

- i. To study the gradual changes in Inclusive Education at World Level.
- ii. To understand the historical background of Inclusive Education in Indian context.

² <https://www.ccdisabilities.nic.in>

- iii. To assess the actual condition of Inclusive Education in Delhi after the Implementation of New Education Policy 2020.

(B) Delimitation: The study mainly focuses on Municipal Corporation of Delhi schools.

(C) Methodology:

The data collection for the study has been done by the primary, as well as secondary sources the primary data is collected by observing the classes of M C D schools and by interviewing the principals informally, about their knowledge and preparedness about inclusive education at primary level. Total number of 40 schools were chosen as samples, and their principals or in charge were interviewed

III. CONCEPT OF DISABILITY

In order to generally understand the disability in a Layman's language it is mainly the deformities in the physical body and problems in performing the day-to-day functions, due to mental or psychological challenges. the psycho analytical school of learning believes that no two children can be same even if they're twins, there has to be some difference between them and the children who were mainly differently abled, surely would differ in their learning and achievement in all three domains namely affective, cognitive and psychomotor, from the children, who are other than differently abled, the level of difference may be quite high or low in terms of their emotional communicative, social, and intellectual and above all physical ability it can be in one or more spheres. The common man can only understand the physical disability as it can be seen directly through eyes, but the other types of disabilities like emotional, communicative, psychological, and intellectual cannot be seen directly, but can only be measured by various means and tools, because of this only the word physical handicap is often used as disability, or say both are used as synonymous, whereas both have separate meanings. the simple definition for disability can be the one given as that special educational needs and requirements are identified as a disabled children, these disabilities can be termed as intellectual, locomotor, hearing and visual. (by district primary education programme).

The programs of Universalization of Elementary Education which is conducted by the Government of India which later on became Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan adopted the “zero rejection principle” to be achieved, the intention is to bring all the children to school and no one is rejected on any grounds this campaign itself provided the basis for inclusive approach in education to include special children in regular schools at all levels of schooling, and through this Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan monetary help is directly provided to the special children, and the amount has been gradually increased year after year, the money is directly sent to their bank accounts for

buying assistive devices and materials, to be more comfortable or at par with other children in the school.

There is a sense of realization for immediate course correction at the world level to adopt inclusiveness in education as the main objective. Earlier the general intolerance, ignorance unacceptance of disabled persons, in the governmental sector and private business sales all over the world has virtually blocked the learning process of disabled children but with the recent developments many of the countries have come up with the models of inclusive schools equipped with various infrastructural facilities, many other have made it mandatory to have inclusive education in the schools, and even in India also the C.B.S.E³ has set up inclusion panel for children with special needs. As we are moving from integration of special children to regular schools and transforming the regular schools into inclusive schools that clearly underlines that complete overhaul of the traditional education system has to be undertaken like redesigning the admission and transfer policy, providing the infrastructural facilities required for disabled children, the teaching learning strategies, all this to be reinvented and redesigned according to the needs of disabled children, the learning experiences of all the students and the outcome to include all the learners of differing abilities. In short it has to be the "Inclusive Education with Equity" that is disabled children not only studying in regular schools but have equal opportunity and rights in the school. This whole process of inclusive education with equity for the disabled children will immensely depend on the attitude of the principal and teachers of the school, as it has to be taken for granted that every child will not perform in the same manner, therefore teachers have to adopt a multidimensional approach in teaching every child specially the disabled children. The traditional mindset of the teachers about the disabled child being a burden for the school has to be done away with and the inclusion of disabled children must be taken in the right spirit as the "Celebration of Differences" as their very presence in the class will keep the teacher on the toes and teachers will be more and more energetic and innovative in their approach looking or adopting new approaches, to teach the children not only this the rest of the children in the class will also develop feeling of compassion, caring and sharing towards the disabled children. The approach to tag a child on the basis of physical or mental challenges as unfit for the class may prove to be counterproductive, and as many of the disabled children have performed remarkably well in various sectors like Paralympic, corporate sector and any of them can be like Stephen Hawkins, who is the genius in his field. the moment we start thinking about teaching a disabled child, we must also keep in mind that there is other side of the coin, that is whole new world of opportunities come up as we equipped our classroom with CWSN friendly

³ C.B.S.E- Central Board Of Secondary Education.

amenities, teaching aids, digital boards, one realises that kind of new industry, is ready to support the whole education system ranging from lesson plans, learning kits, lab items, analytical maps, digital boards, teaching platforms, virtual classes, augmented classes, the list is unending the only thing which we need is the determination coupled with the innovative ideas.

IV. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION - AT WORLD LEVEL

The traditional approach of ignoring the needs of disabled children continued in the form of special education as a separate stream where they were kept away from the social interactions this very approach became counterproductive at a later age the disabled children after finishing studies in special schools and trying to create his/ her own space in the society for example office, business, community it was far more difficult for the disabled child to adjust as the society was not able to accommodate them all of a sudden, mainly because their needs and requirements were different from others and a kind of rigidity prevailed in the behaviour of both the non-disabled and disabled person which virtually created a kind of conflict in the society, gradually the complaints of non-adjustment or misbehaving with disabled person's occurred on a large scale in every country to the extent that global community had to look for the options to avoid or minimise any such complaint after a prolonged discussion and debate at various levels the general consensus was reached that segregating disabled in the name of special education is not good for anyone as it has resulted in widening the gaps and created confusion all over, therefore it was decided that the disabled children must be integrated with regular schools even this option did not provide the desired results, and last but not the least, the inclusive education has been adopted by the world community although it was not a very easy journey to reach this point, as the idea of inclusive education took concrete shape when the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child 1989 was held and around 187 countries signed the declaration as the convention emphasised every child has the right to education without any discrimination and every child should have access to school the government should make education available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable for everyone.

Next year in 1990 the world conference on education for all, took place which virtually focused on those children who could be excluded owing to their disabilities from the education system and the conference grouped them into two categories, first those who were enrolled but could not perform up to the expectations, second, those who are not able to even enter the regular schools due to the rigidity of curriculum. this conference paved the way for the development of special education as a relatively new and unevenly developed in different parts of the world. the

efforts to reintegrate the mildly handicap children with the general schools, also began as it was believed that every disabled child does not need special education.

In another significant move the UN General Assembly set the international standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities in 1993 these guidelines work for the world community to guide them for policy making an action covering disabled children and adults.

The most important milestone arrived in the form of Salamanca statement in 1994 as the statement emphasizes on the regular schools working for inclusiveness which the conference feels is could be the most effective means for eliminating any kind of discrimination towards disabled children, thereby creating society which welcomes disabled children, that is not only education ,create inclusive society and should have inclusive approach and then only the goal of education for all, can be achieved in this way only effective education to every children can be provided and the education worldwide can become efficient and cheaper also. the conference also laid stress on the development of child centred pedagogy in different parts of the world which can be an instrument for successfully educating children⁴.

Another important milestone has been the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities 2006 the convention underlines that the disability is an emerging concept and the state parties should recognise the rights of persons with disabilities to education it was in this convention only the clinical model of special education and disability started becoming the social model, therefore there is an urgent need to increase the social cooperation to develop early intervention programs for the” at risk population” of children so that such children are brought to the schools and necessary remedial actions can be taken.

V. CONDITION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN DELHI

The primary education all over the world is undergoing complete transformation and a new form of primary education is coming up which is more accommodative, flexible, and innovative in its approach, even in India also the inclusive education is being implemented at primary level. In order to understand the present condition of the inclusive education in the primary schools of Delhi specially the M. C. D schools, which caters to the more than 90% of the population of Delhi, we tried to assess the infrastructural facilities provided for disabled children, the funds allocated, the availability of special educators, other support staff, and above all the readiness to accept the disabled children to the regular schools.

⁴ <http://www.dinf.ne.jp/doc/english>

The Principals and Teachers of the inclusive school have the key role to play in future as the success of inclusive education completely depends on the attitude of the principal and teachers of the school, without changing the traditional mindset of the principal and teachers of taking disabled child as a burden for them nothing can be achieved, the teachers and the principal must have the attitude of compassion, of celebrating the differences, and they should destroy the fear of being unsuccessful, or less achievement, or any kind of failure also this fear of how to deal with the disabled child has to be removed from the minds of teachers, on the other hand they need to be very sympathetic, compassionate, and must hear the voices of disabled child they should not judge the achievement of all the students by their performance in the exams rather they must remain prepared for different types of achievements and performances, and should keep in mind that no overnight turn around in the performance of students with learning disabilities can be expected or in other words the concept of inclusiveness allows them to perform according to their own capacity and not according to the set standards of the curriculum and syllabus, that means the curriculum and syllabus must be flexible. The teachers should avoid the habit of tagging disabled students as used to be the case during the Hitler's regime the Jews were tagged with yellow star and homosexuals with pink triangle because tagging a child creates stigma in the mindset of the whole society, one of the glaring examples of disabled person performing remarkably well could be the Stephen Hawking the person who excels in his field even with his physical disabilities in a way it can be said that inclusiveness in education will make teacher more energetic and innovative, as it is expected that the teacher's will try to find ways to improve the learning and achievement of differently abled child so that they are at par with their classmates

VI. THE DATA COLLECTION

The data collected through the primary sources of interviewing the principals and teacher in charge of the schools, and also by observing the infrastructural facilities in the classrooms, the data clearly shows that huge and robust kind of investment is immediately required, so as to transform the traditional primary schools to inclusive school for the purpose of data collection 40 schools were chosen as the sample and principals/ teacher in charge were orally interviewed about the inclusive education

1. The first question which was asked to these principals was, what do you understand about the Inclusive Education?

Almost all of them could not clearly define what exactly is inclusive education instead they admitted that they have been given instructions by the department, that they cannot deny

admission to any disabled child on the grounds of physical and mental disability of the child.

2. The next question was whether they are having disabled children in their school?

Out of the 40 principals 38 said yes, they are having but their number is in single digit and 2 said no, right now there is no special child in their school.

3. The 3rd question which was asked was is your school building fully Children with Special Needs friendly?

Most of them said yes, but when further elaborated, the ramps are without handrail, special toilets, classrooms, modified furniture, audio visual aids, all these are there, then they all said no.

4. The 4th question which is asked to have you undergone any kind of training about how to implement inclusive education and deal with disabled children?

All of them said that till now they have not received any such training barring few instructions from the department.

5. The 5th question which is asked was does your school have full time special educator?

Out of the 40 only 10 said yes, they have special educator on contract basis, 15 said they have counsellors visiting the school once in a week, and rest of them said no.

6. Next question which was asked was are you aware of the legal provisions for disabled persons?

Only 3 of them were having some knowledge about the legal provisions like *Rights of Persons With Disabilities Act, 2006* and rest of them had no idea about the provisions in the law.

7. the 7th question which was asked was do you have support from specialized person or group to help you in Inclusive Education?

All of them said no 40, they don't have any support of specialised persons in implementing Inclusive Education.

8. Question which is asked was is there any NGO working for the school for the improvement in infrastructure facilities?

Only 10 of them said yes there is an NGO which is working in the school but most of them are there providing the stationary and other items to the children and are unable to make changes in the building to facilitate the disabled children as they are not having enough finances for the purpose.

9. The 9th question which was asked was do you have specially allocated funds for inclusive education?

All the 40 principals or in charge of the schools denied that they are not having any funds for inclusive education.

10. The 10th question which is asked, are the parents or School Maintenance Committee fully cooperating with you in implementing inclusive education?

All of them regretted that the SMC⁵ members are from the poor background and are” hand to mouth “they have to work every day to survive, therefore they cannot spare more time for the school and they cannot also support the school financially and many of them don't even have the idea about inclusive education.

11. The last question which was asked today do you have the support staff in your school for disabled children?

All of them said, no and many of them came up with the complaints that even for other purposes like nursery and primary wings they don't have the attendant/ peon and in many of the schools sweepers are posted on daily wages.

besides interviewing the principals and teacher in charge of the school, classrooms of the schools were personally observed to assess the infrastructural changes which are required for accommodating the disabled children in the classroom and it was found that most of the buildings are multi Storey building and barring the ground floors rest of the buildings remain inaccessible for the disabled children as all the floors are having stairs and not connected with the ramps as advised for inclusive education “ no step entries” which is missing.

Secondly, the classrooms at the ground floor also does not have any visible change made according to the needs of disabled children like wide entry - exit gates, CWSN⁶ friendly furniture, digital boards audio visual aids, adjustable, appropriate handles, handrails, switches etc, whiteboards within reach, ramps not too steep, none of these changes have been initiated in the schools and the classrooms remain the same.

Thirdly, the other teaching aids like sign boards to guide the way and other key areas of the school for example labs, staff room, library, washroom, etc are also missing. The schools do have the ramps but most of them are on the ground floors only and are without the handrail. The classrooms are on the same pattern suited for traditional teaching learning process that is chalk

⁵ SMC- School Maintenance Committee.

⁶ CWSN- Children With Special Needs.

and talk, only one room has the smart board in each school.

The M. C. D Schools in Delhi although have undergone complete transformation as majority of the schools are now very well equipped with basic infrastructural facilities, like double Storey building, instead of sheds, and furniture, electricity, and drinking water with water purifier, but still so much is to be done to change the present facilities in to CWSN friendly school, which will obviously require huge investment as the sweeping changes are to be made in the design of the building and the other facilities available.

VII. CONCLUSION

Inclusive Education today has become the mainstream Education it is a principle which has been accepted by all the countries in letter and spirit the move by the society to change the trend ignoring the needs and requirements of the disabled children, the unacceptance and general intolerance towards differences With the disabled children, the Government of India in its New Education Policy 2020 has made provisions for the Infrastructural Development, appointment of special teachers and also the training of general teachers to teach disabled children, there has been budgetary allocations earmarked for inclusive education, in this study it has been found that although the attitudinal change is there in the school staff and they are ready to welcome the disabled children with open arms, but still the primary education is lagging far behind in terms of the infrastructural facilities required for the disabled children, the Inclusive Education in Delhi at primary level specially in the M. C. D Schools has miles to go to reach up to the level which is required, although the disabled children are admitted to the schools without any question marks but there are no facilities for them and even the special educator is also not appointed in many of the schools that hampers the learning achievement of the disabled child and thereby disappoints the parents of disabled children as the children were coming to the M. C. D School are the '*poorest of the poor*' the parents of disabled children cannot afford to spend money on their education that's why they are not able to withdraw their child from the M. C. D Schools and take them to these special schools therefore it is the need of the hour, to immediately provide the infrastructural facilities and other support staff to make M. C. D Primary schools, inclusive school in reality without which all the efforts will be in vain the Government should focus on drawing a plan to make all the schools inclusive schools in letter and spirit.

VIII. SUGGESTIONS

- i. It is suggested that the Principals and Teachers of the schools must be trained to prepare their school as an Inclusive School suited to the needs of disabled children, as the

Principal and teacher of the school have to play the crucial role in providing inclusive education a lot will depend on their attitude towards disabled children, that is how do they accept disabled children without even bothering about their achievements and results, the school staff should learn to celebrate the differences, as every child has different ability to perform in different fields, therefore the government and other agencies must concentrate on the principal as the nodal authority and the teachers who are to implement the inclusive education and make it a success.

- ii. A group of experts and special educators must be attached to the schools for helping and guiding the principals and teachers in their day-to-day problems and help redesign their teaching strategies and invent new methods to teach.
- iii. The school should have sufficient funds to employ the services of doctors, psychiatrists, counsellors, and educationists as and when required, and make payments.
- iv. The schools should allow community participation regularly so that, disabled children mix up with the society easily.

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