SUCCESSIVE DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS INCLUSION IN EDUCATION: A PARADIGM SHIFT

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Abstract: Inclusion in education is one of the most recent approaches in the present context of education which has successively developed in course of time. Initially there was social exclusion of individuals with difficulty, then needs of special education was felt in order to educate them. After special education it was felt that there is an urgent need to merge children with diverse needs with the normal one in order to socialize them and like this integration came in existence. In present context finally the inclusion has introduced in order to not only socialize children with special needs but also develop their complete potentialities along with the normal children. It is the most acceptable stage of development of special education in which every child can get an opportunity of all round development. But, adoption of inclusive practice in education is not an easy task as there are many challenges and barriers in this regards. Therefore the stakeholders and policymakers should ensure the actual inclusive practice in the educational institutions in order to make it successful and develop a feeling of inclusive pride among all the students including differently abled and the normal one.

Key Words – Inclusion, Exclusion, Segregation, Integration, Children with special needs.

The education system where needs of all children including children with and without disabilities are considered in mainstream schools is actually termed as Inclusive Education System. Inclusion in education is quiet recent and most influential immerging issue of the present context which has successively emerged. Historically it can be observed that children with disabilities and children without disabilities were not permitted access to educational opportunities in the same school particularly in the traditional schools in most parts of the world. It was thought that there is no point in providing an education to children who would not contribute economically to society, and that's why these children were placed in institutions where they can get care by the medical staff (Scruggs, & Mastropieri, 1996; Winzer, 1993). The successive development of special education towards inclusive education is considered as the great advancement in the present context and this development has distinguished four successive stages (Buchem, 2013):
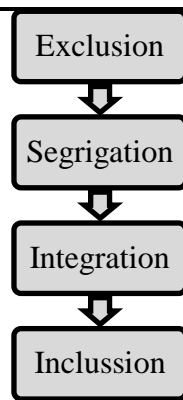
1. **Exclusion:** At this stage person with disabilities or special needs were completely excluded from all social contexts *i.e.* family, school and community.

2. **Segregation:** At this stage it was understood that person with disabilities or special needs required to be educated but by separating them from the rest of society. As a result some students were excluded from mainstream education on the basis of their disabilities and educated through special-education system.

3. **Integration:** At this stage, the mainstream education system was required to create new spaces for the students with disabilities or special needs so that they can be socialize with their non-disabled peers. However within those spaces there were special education classrooms along with regular classrooms but lacking proper accommodation for the students with disabilities and special need. Trough integration students with disabilities being included in the mainstream educational settings with some adaptations but the infrastructure, attitude of stakeholders and educational setup are not altered as per their needs. In that situation although differently abled students with special need were included in the regular classrooms but still there was segregation with regard to the provided accommodations.

4. **Inclusive stage:** At this stage; social structures *i.e.* classrooms, schools, communities and socio-educational actions *i.e.* curriculum, are designed in a new way considering the needs of students with without disability. In other words one can say that at this stage the complete educational set up is designed as per need of education for all *i.e.* male child, female child, differently abled child etc.

This is the last stage introduced by the World Conference on Special Needs Education, in which 92 governments and 25 international organizations were representatives and strongly emphasized their commitment to "Education For All" (UNESCO, 1994). Education is the fundamental right of every child and each child should have the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning. Children with special educational needs must have access to regular schools with the child-centred approach in order to meet their needs. Inclusive orientation in regular schools is one of the most effective means of eradicating discriminatory attitudes of stakeholders and developing an inclusive society in order to achieving education for all. However people have although developed the conceptual framework of the concerning issue but there is an urgent need to develop an inclusive practice in actual situation for making it possible at ground level. It can be best explained through an example- if any educational setup has decided to organize annual function of the institution. For this purpose the entire team is involved in the preparation of the function irrespective of their diverse need and the institution is equally inviting the

participation of the entire team in cultural as well as other various activities. For the performance of cultural programme stage is prepared and stairs are made to reach there but in order to insure inclusive practice there should be also ramp for the our differently abled participants through which they can reach there and perform their best. Although such participants may have some physical difficulties but they may express their talents in diverse areas like- they may deliver effective speech, may have melodious voice along with ability to recognize the rhythm of music to sing a song nicely, may have interest in sand art, role playing, painting etc. Every child is diverse in his/her characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs and if provided with stimulating environment, may be able to develop the his/her maximum potentialities. Therefore in the education systems educational programs should be designed and implemented so that it can facilitate and promote learning of the entire diverse group.

The model of inclusive education should be such where all children have a right to being enrolled in their neighbourhood school and attend classes with each other in their age appropriate grade and also engaged in the similar curriculum (Porter & Towell, 2017). Inclusion in education takes place when children with and without disabilities participate and learn together in the same classroom. It is the process of including the diversity of children by enhancing their participation in classrooms and reducing exclusion from general education (UNESCO 2007). However, adoption of inclusive practice in education is not an easy task. Although it has been recommended that there should be inclusion in the education system but practically it has not achieved completely till the date. Our schools have included normal children along with differently abled one but the question is- Is only placing children with and without disabilities together in the mainstream education system sufficient? Only including them is not the true sense of inclusion. In order to maintain inclusive practice as well inclusive pride the school has also enough resources and skilful members to use those resources like- there should be normal books in the library along with brail books too. If library of the lacking brail books for visually impaired children, than it will be the example of only integration not inclusion. When educators are provided with training and experiences for inclusive practices in education; they have to adjust their teaching practice, their overall teaching strategies what they are using and the whole classrooms environment what they have developed (Evans, 1996; Grierson & Gallagher, 2009; Mukhopadhyay, 2014). The teacher is completely responsible for meeting the needs of all learners in classroom regardless of their abilities or disabilities (Forlin & Cole, 1993).

It is evident that the positive academic and social outcomes can be achieved if a differently abled child attends classes along with normal one (Khan, Ahmed & Ghaznavi; 2012). Children with severe disabilities and specific learning needs require a specialized environment but if such environment provided to them in regular schools with main stream education, they can get maximum opportunities to develop their optimum potentialities. Inclusive practice can be successful only if children with diverse need are able to access conducive and friendly learning atmosphere in the mainstream education system. Through integration it is expected from the child that he/she has to adjust as per the available resources, although stakeholders like- policy maker, teacher etc. are trying to adopted various strategies as per needs for children but there is no proper accommodation and enough resources for them. Therefore in order to

produce positive outcomes through inclusion; progressive promotion, proper planning, enough encouragement and legitimate commitment in terms of loyalty are very important key elements.

Some of the major challenges that are barrios to the inclusion in education are- poor school infrastructure; inappropriate learning materials, incompetent teachers, poverty, disability associated with children and conflict due to the associated disability and a lack of supporting policy frameworks (Fernando, Yasmin, Minto and Khan; 2010). According to UNESCO (2009) lack of appropriate policy support, biased attitude towards children with disabilities and neglect of their right to education are the major challenges that cause hindrance in their right to access schools. On the basis of researches it can be suggested that there are many external factors like-teaching experiences, training practice, previous life experiences, support from administration and authorities etc. are responsible for true successful inclusion in the classroom. Teachers need opportunities to actively engage and experience success in using inclusive practices in their classrooms in order to change their beliefs and only then it is possible to positively change their attitude and perception about the inclusive education (Evans, 1996; Grierson & Gallagher, 2009; Forlin et al., 2009; Maskit, 2011; Sharma, et al., 2012; Somma, 2020).

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