

Preparing Inclusive Education Teachers: A Descriptive Study

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ABSTRACT

Disability is not mere a health problem but it is more of a social construct. This notion cannot be comprehended and dealt beyond the classroom. In the educational practices since independence disabled children's need has been addressed in variety of ways. These ways were either setting up special educational institutions or integrated education for disabled children. To address the need of child and in his/her holistic development teacher plays a crucial role. International treaties and conventions has argued and urged the nations to address the problems related to teacher training. This paper has looked for sensitiveness of the teacher towards the diversity in the classroom. The paper compares the status of teacher's competence while dealing with disabled children in a classroom. The present paper researcher has used various secondary sources and find out and discussed various concerns and issues in preparing inclusive teachers in India.

1. Introduction

Although education has been acknowledged as a predominant factor in social and economic development, and in overcoming poverty and enhancing social equality in different societies (Tabutin and Schoumaker 2005; UNESCO UIS 2001), the world still faces colossal challenges in providing essential educational services, of appropriate quantity and quality, to those entitled to them. To accomplish the task of educating according to needs of child we must start design and build an atmosphere of collaboration and inclusiveness at the pre service level, as well as practices that demonstrate to prospective teachers the possibilities and promise of an inclusive world. Preparing teachers at the pre service level to teach in inclusive settings is essential if our schools are to truly teach all students in inclusive, collaborative, and diverse settings. India's approach to protection and promotion of human rights and child rights, provides for confirmatory action in favor of children. It also gives directions to the State to ensure that children are not maltreated and are given opportunities and facilities to develop sense of freedom and dignity. In 2009, Right to Education Act was enacted in the constitution to make elementary education a Fundamental Right for every child in the age group of 6 to 14 years. The new thrust area facilitated by constitutional (86th amendment) Act was education of children with special needs.

Inclusion

In spite of the fact that there were policies and acts for safeguarding the rights of such children, it is in the form of imparting special education and integrated education. But philosophically, without the concept of inclusion, the objectives of universalization of education cannot be achieved. Inclusive education has been internationally recognized as a philosophy for attaining equity, justice and quality education for all children, especially those who have been traditionally excluded from mainstream education for reasons of disability, ethnicity, gender or other characteristics (Nguyet & Ha 2010). The shortage of well trained and qualified teachers in many countries is still a major barrier to achieving EFA goals,

especially among marginalized groups (UNESCO 2010). Overcoming the hurdle of well trained teacher requires policy makers to cultivate a well-qualified and motivated teacher community that is equipped to work in more inclusive settings and deal with children with various educational needs. To realize the goal of providing an inclusive education can only be fulfilled by designing a teacher training programme well equipped. As The Right to Education Act has been passed and implemented all over the country, the job of the teacher becomes very crucial, and so does for the teacher training institutions. Challenges faced by teacher education institutions in India is not new, the others parts of world as facing similar problem.

2. Research Methodology

This study is a descriptive study where researcher used various secondary resources and information available by the reports of national as well as international organization and research papers.

2.1 Teacher Education Statures towards inclusion in various countries

China

China's approach to inclusion is based upon their deep rooted historical and cultural Confucian Educational philosophy which embodies educational concept of education. That approach is termed *sui ban jiu du*, is literally translated as "learning in a regular classroom" (LRC). LRC is a pragmatic Chinese strategy for placing into schools more of the children with disabilities who had been previously been denied an education (Yu, Su & Li 2011), but this learning in regular classroom has faced various challenges. Identifying a few disabilities and catering to those disabilities in classroom is far away notion from inclusion. This transition approach has raised various issues like teacher incompetence. This has been resolved to an extent with integrating pre service and in service teacher training in China.

Latin America

Likewise other countries Latin America is also facing the problem of exclusion of children with disabilities. This has become a complex problem and has been well researched still it poses serious challenges. According to Vaillant,(2011) teacher education curricula poses a major challenge which need to be responsive to the classroom diversity. The rigid teacher education program demands the flexibility and decontextualizes content towards flexibility. Demographic makeup and poor pre-teacher training add more to the challenge. Author has mentioned some measure through which challenge can be resolve to an extent. These are recruitment of competent prospective teacher, promoting professionalism and making a link between initial training and requirement.

Arab World

Amr,(2011) conducted a study in t he Arab world and expressed that the area of inclusive education faces various problems, one of them is teaching vigor that is not adequately prepared to teach all children. There is shortage of well trained teachers. Looking in the pre service program there were only few universities who were providing introductory knowledge about disabilities, particularly mild disabilities. There was only theoretical concept with no pedagogical practice. The author realized three main challenges for inclusive education in teacher education program in various parts of Arab world. First was very few understanding of inclusive education as an educational philosophy and pedagogy and not given top priority in curriculum. Second was how to implement the policies at the ground level. Third, was the schools who proclaims of implementing the concept have just started a separate classes to cater the need of children. These students were taught by teachers have special education degree.

Vietnam

Nguyet & Ha (2010) in their paper addresses that preparing teachers does not minimally mean providing would be teachers with inclusive education skills but it is important to provide right kind of training and support for existing teachers as well. The author advocated that it is not important only to have skill training in inclusion but commitment of all the

teachers. There should be collaboration of classroom teachers, key teachers, school principals, education officers and policy makers. "Key teachers" is used to refer to groups of educators, usually vice-principals or district education officers, who are selected based on their overall competence and interest in inclusive education. These key teachers were selected on the basis of their collaborative behavior, communication skill and their good counseling skill. The role of key teacher is to make annual plan, field visit monitoring and reporting and most important arranging capacity building program for the prospective teachers.

Central and Eastern Europe

Florian and Becirevic, (2011) has pointed that the role of both teacher education and defecologists are important elements in developing inclusive education. As Rouse, Florian & Connolly (2000) point out, "Defectology is a multi-disciplinary approach that brings together psychology, medicine, philosophy, sociology and political theory in order to diagnose, educate and rehabilitate people with mental and physical handicaps" (p. 8). The authors has drawn an attention that defectology is not synonymous with "special education" as special education a western term which is criticized who see it as a obstruction to inclusion. Infact, defectology considers special education as only one component of a broader term. The author also raised the concerns that majority of teachers do not learn about issues of diversity in the classroom. They consider of understanding diversity of the children having special education needs and ignore the diversity and problems of minority groups. The issues of teacher professional development and the need to reform teacher education have emerged as concerns in various international reports on Education for All (UNESCO IBE 2008; UNICEF 2007, 2010). These reports document the view that teachers are not sufficiently prepared for inclusive education (UNICEF 2010). The twelve steps towards Education for All, identified in the 1998 Regional Monitoring Report (reproduced in Box 1) is still relevant. It provides a sketch of the kind of issues that should inform teacher education and teacher professional development in the region.

Box 1 Twelve steps towards education for all

1. Use teaching methods that encourage participation and individual development.
2. Reconsider streaming and selection in schools.
3. Institute systems of fair exams that allow each child to demonstrate his or her achievement.
4. Stimulate school support for extra-curricular activities.
5. Increase parental and community involvement in education.
6. Investigate labour and its links to school attendance and learning.
7. Pay more attention to the access to and quality of education for children from low-income families.
8. Integrate children with disabilities into mainstream schools.
9. Attend to the needs of ethnic minorities.
10. Encourage early childhood development in the broadest sense through various means.
11. Establish sufficient central control over local administration of schools, including curricula.
12. Ensure adequate financial transfers to local governments with weak resource bases.

Source: UNICEF (1998) Regional monitoring, report No. 5, Table 4.9, p. 86

3. Preparing Inclusive teachers in India

India has been a signatory to The United Nations Rights of the Child, United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities, the Jometien Declaration on Education for All and the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action. These all international treatise on education and equality has led India to make reforms via enactment of various policies and safeguarded various constitutional provisions. Although developing countries may have adopted the philosophy of inclusion there is frequently insufficient funding, support, or knowledge, to be able to assume an effective system-wide inclusive approach for all learners (Sharma, Forlin, Deppeler, & Guang-xue 2013). Education of children with disabilities in India, as all over the world, has moved from segregation, special schools to integrated education (Rao 2003). The Salamanca Statement and its framework for action is indeed a document which specifically talks about Inclusive education. In India an inclusive educational approach is now being promoted, either through policy or curriculum change. India having a diverse population poses a greater challenge in implementing those policies. The colossal inequality between urban and rural communities with extreme poverty acts as a major challenge to rectifying this inequity. The disabled child born in a poor family living in under privilege background makes the task even more challenging. To bridge a significant gap in human development is we ensure that every child gets best possible start in the early year. For this Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is playing a pivotal role by its various schemes. Still the major challenging aspect is how a teacher in a classroom will cater to the needs of various educational needs of the children coming from different socio cultural background. In a report of UNICEF 2010 addresses a concern that majority of countries teachers do not receive pre service training to prepare them to work in inclusive educational system, at the same time as in-service trainings are ad hoc and sporadic. India is again going through same situation.

Teacher preparation for inclusion has been undertaken in an ad hoc, minimal, and isolated way most of the time. The Pre service teacher training curriculum does not have a compulsory course. However in service training given by Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is providing short term training for the school teachers in the area of inclusion. The way inclusion is perceived is again a problematic notion where only physical inclusion is considered as in important criteria. The concept of inclusion places the emphasis on changing the system rather than the child (Whitworth 1999). The pre service teacher training duration changed from 1 year to 2 year shall have significant effect upon the inclusion concept. The training aspect which earlier was restricted to the awareness or knowledge based shall now be replaced with purely training in area of Inclusion. In order to prepare pre-service educators for inclusive classrooms they need to feel comfortable interacting with persons with disabilities and embrace the philosophy of inclusion, Sharma (2008). According to NCF 2005, a teacher is one who discourages rote learning, critically examines curriculum, contextualize curriculum to local needs and promote values like justice, equality and have zeal for social reconstruction. NCF 2005 also advocates that teacher educator should have professional competencies to develop such

teachers. This can only be done when field based training for a longer duration is executed. NCFTE 2010 advocates for preparing trained professional and humane teacher. But there has been observed various challenges. One of the major challenges is M.Ed degree for preparing teacher educators. M.Ed as programme for preparation for teacher educator offered in most universities in country is lacking deeper concerns for preparing competent teacher education. M.Ed in most of the universities are woefully inadequate in facilitating deeper discourse. Hence, failing the concerns raised by NCF 2005.

3.1 Help from special education teacher

Special education program will help the pre service teachers to understand about inclusion in following ways

- Familiarize pre service teachers to special education legislation.
- Informing pre service teachers about the characteristics of students with various disabilities and their educational needs.
- Discussing the importance of association with families of children with special needs.
- Informing pre service teachers about the Universal Design of Learning (UDL).
- Teaching teachers how to take account of differentiated instruction and various modifications that they can make to accommodate students with disabilities in their classrooms.
- Requiring students to take part in a clinical experience wherein they spend good number of hours in an inclusive classroom where the pre service teachers get the opportunity to practice tutoring and one on one instruction with students.

3.2 An Inclusive Education teacher education model

Whitworth, (1999) has provided model making a framework for developing and implementing a teacher education program that will prepare teachers to teach in inclusive educational system. There are two main areas in the model. One is the component comprising specific program and other part deals with the outcome while using specific program.

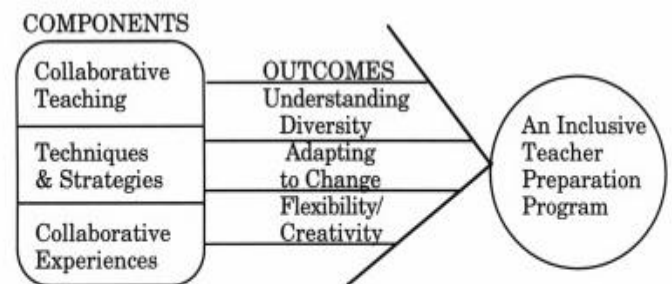


Figure One: An Inclusive Teacher Preparation Model

Source: Whitworth, J. W. (1999). A Model for Inclusive Teacher Preparation

The result of the program based on this model instills in pre service teacher to celebrate the diversity. The prospective teacher must understand that now the system of imparting

segregated education is a gone concept. Exposure to the field (children having various special needs) during training is very important.

4. Conclusion

In today's scenario of globalised world where demands of the society is changing so fast, the people are overly marginalized. The one of the root of this marginalization is formative years of schooling. If the children having special educational needs are given in a separated environment, the problem of exclusion will persist. So one has to understand that access to education in a common system of schooling where appreciation of diversity in a classroom is very important. This

appreciation is foremost acknowledged by teacher. Here the job of teacher becomes most challenging, because the type of pre service training teacher does is only at rudimentary stage. Various researches conducted at various parts of the world shows that most of them are facing the problem of faulty pre service training, insufficient funds, and incompetent professional. India is nowhere having the privilege position. The pre service preparation of teacher in the area of inclusion is an essential criterion so that school via teacher acknowledges the child's worth and helps the child to understand his/her worth. The pre service teacher preparation must move from mere giving awareness to training of prospective teacher in specifics areas of physical and social inclusion.

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