

INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION: A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE.

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Introduction :

With the expansion and extension of education beyond the political boundaries of the country it has become mandatory to view certain issues from a different perspective including the issue of children with special needs.

Globalization in education has led to innumerable changes in the present day curriculum and the entire education system. Today we cannot think as an individual player in the educational set up, but, we have to make our education system capable of delivering courses that are in demand in the global market.

The global society is interested in debating and discussing the issue of integration and inclusion in education. The education system that is based on the inclusion of students in mainstream is more in demand by the global community. The questions here therefore arrive are that, Is our education system integrated in the real sense of term? Are we actually following the norms of inclusion in our day to day schooling? Are our children with special needs, treated specially in the classrooms? Are our teachers adequately prepared to deal with these special children?

Who are these special children that need to be included in the mainstream education? – mentally and physically challenged, children with learning disabilities (differently able or diverse learners as they are called), children from different culture and diverse socio economic background. When we talk about universalization of elementary education and, education for all we need to address the issues of these diverse learners.

Indian government has made many provisions for inclusive education and help students with special needs in gaining their right to education with the other normal students.

So, what is inclusive education?

- Inclusion is an educational philosophy that provides all students with greater opportunities for academic and social achievement. Inclusion is about making sure that each and every student feels welcome and that their unique needs and learning styles are attended to and valued. Inclusion is an effort to make sure that diverse learners – those with disabilities, different languages and cultures, different homes and family lives, different interests and ways of learning – are exposed to teaching strategies that reach them as individual learners
- Inclusive schools ask teachers to provide appropriate individualized supports and services to all students without the stigmatization that comes with separation

But, are we actually catering to the needs of these children or, their inclusion is only to create a fair image of an institution within the society? As teachers and teacher educators we need to understand the importance of inclusive education and the need to pay special attention to the needs of these diverse learners. To some of the questions raised above it becomes important to note certain recommendations made by NCF to encourage institutions to move towards inclusive education. The aim is to create an integrated school setting, providing equal opportunities to children with special abilities, varied social backgrounds and diverse learning needs (NCFTE,2010).

What is the role of the teacher?

Teachers need to be equipped to sensitively bring and include girls in the classroom transaction. It is necessary that teachers who teach and manage the classroom are sensitized and made aware of the philosophy of inclusive education and oriented to the different kinds of adjustments that schools have to make in terms of infrastructure, curriculum, teaching

methods and other school practices to relate teaching to the needs of all learners (NCFTE, 2010).

It is therefore, important that the curriculum for teacher preparation gives a fresh look to the issue of inclusive education and provide training to the student teachers in identifying diverse learners and change their teaching/learning strategies to suit their needs. Some of the strategies can be adopted by the teachers to enhance the teaching/learning experience are:-

1. Change her own perception about inclusion and blend her teaching strategies that suit the needs of all the learners.
2. To keep the track of students' academic performance - identifying the bright students who perform extraordinarily well in almost all the spheres of school life, similarly the under achievers.
3. Take the help of the counsellor appointed by the school in helping her to identify students who require special attention.
4. Consult the parents of such students to find out more about the problem.
5. Recommend for an I.Q. test from a renowned counsellor/psychologist.
6. Change the methods of teaching by involving lot of activities.
7. Team teaching, co-operative learning, project method should be the order of the day.
8. Identifying students requiring double promotion.
9. Collaborative decision making to help students with difficulties to be promoted to the next grade.

What is the role of Institutions?

The above strategies can be adopted by the teacher only if, the institution and the management running the institution challenge the existing status quo – the traditional dual system where the students with disabilities are segregated, in the separate education system. It also has to do with the readiness, on the part of the institution, to foster for the inclusion of students that need special nurturing and care, change in the existing pattern of

work by modifying curriculum, methods of teaching, infrastructural modifications and evaluation pattern.

Institution and society.

For this, it is important to develop a nexus between the institution and the community. School is considered to be a miniature society, it can utilize the resources from its environment to help students overcome the difficulties. It can receive the co-operation of educated parents to create awareness about inclusion and create a positive learning environment within the institution. Parents form important resources for the institution who support and give a vent to any new endeavour taken up by the institution.

It is very important for us, as educated citizens, to change our perspective towards educating children with special need in special institution. Studies have shown that when such children are segregated from mainstream education it further deteriorates their education. It is only through inclusion that we can bring diverse learners under one classroom and community without taking into consideration their strengths and weaknesses. The purpose of education is, to bring about all round development of students and inclusive education helps in fulfilling this aim by seeking optimum development of students' potentials.

Summary

Inclusive education is the 21st century phenomena which aim at protecting the rights of diverse learners to gain education with the other normal students in normal schools. It is an attempt to prove to the community that, including students with special need in the regular classroom does not affect the learning of the other students in fact, it gives them a boasting to enrich their learning experiences. It helps to sensitize the normal students to help their friends with disabilities, to grow and have their due in the educational system.

References

NCFTE, 2010.

<http://nvpie.org/inclusive.html>