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INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIA

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India is one of the few countries world over where the education of children with special needs doesn't fall within the purview of human resource development ministry. It is generally the burden of the omnibus ministry of social justice and empowerment, the prime focus of which is rehabilitation, not education. In fact, till today it does not have education as part of its agenda and the issue of education of children with disabilities remains imperceptible, hidden from the public domain, a private problem for families and NGOs to deal with. It's time that governmental agencies as well as mainstream institutions woke up to the reality that segregation of children with challenging needs is morally unjustifiable and a violation of human rights. Indeed there is no other way to provide education to 36 million disabled children. Seventy-eight percent of Indian population lives in rural areas without provision for special schools. Therefore, inclusive schools have to address the needs of all children in every community and the central and state governments have to train their teachers to manage inclusive classrooms.

INTRODUCTION:

Inclusive education (IE) is a new approach towards educating the children with disability and learning difficulties with that of normal ones within the same roof. It seeks to address the learning needs of all children with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. It implies all learners – with or without disabilities being able to learn together through access to common pre-school provisions, schools and community educational setting with an appropriate network of support services. This is possible only in flexible education system that assimilates the needs of diverse range of learners and adapts itself to meet these needs.

Inclusion is not an experiment to be tested but a value to be followed. All the children whether they are disabled or not have the right to education as they are the future citizens of the country. In the prevailing Indian situation resources are insufficient even to provide quality mainstream schools for common children, it is unethical and impracticable to put children with special needs to test or to prove any thing in a research study to live and learn in the mainstream of school and community (Dash, 2006).

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The principle of inclusive education was adopted at the “World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality” (Salamanca, Spain 1994) and was restated at the World Education Forum (Dakar, Senegal 2000). The idea of inclusion is further supported by the United Nation's Standard Rules

on Equalization of Opportunities for Person with Disability Proclaiming Participation and equality for all. Of late, a consensus has emerged among Indian intellectuals and pedagogues for adopting inclusive education in mainstream schools.

SPECIAL EDUCATION VS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:

The term “Special Need Education” (SNE) has come into use as a replacement for the term “Special Education”, as the older one was mainly understood to refer the education of all those children and youth whose needs arise from disabilities or learning difficulties. The Statement affirms: *“those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within child centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs”*.

Moreover, the concept of “Special Need Education” extends beyond those who may be included in handicapped categories to cover those who are failing in school for a wide variety of other reasons that are known to be likely to impede a child’s optimal progress. Whether or not this more broadly defined group of children are in need of additional support depends on the extent to which school needs to support their curriculum, teaching and/or to provide additional human or material resources so as to stimulate efficient and effective learning for these pupils. (International Standard Classification of Education ISCED, 1997)

But marginalization and exclusion of these pupils result in the growth of inferiority complexes among them and their parents/guardians. This leads the vision of “Inclusive Education”. Inclusive Education aims at integrated development of children with special needs and normal children through mainstream schooling. To develop curriculum for special education and its inclusion in general teacher preparation programmes, Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) made a historic collaboration with National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) on January 19, 2005.

Indian scenario:

Till 1990s ninety percent of India’s estimated 40 million children in the age group- four-sixteen years with physical and mental disabilities are being excluded from mainstream education. The overwhelming majority of them are vagabonds not out of volition but because of callous school managements and over-anxious parents of abled children in a travesty of humanity and social justice. They have consistently discouraged children with disabilities from entering the nation’s classrooms. Social justice and equity which are dominant sentiments of the Constitution of India demand that India’s 35 million physically challenged, if not the 5 million mentally challenged, children should be given preferential access into primary and secondary schools. Fewer than five percent of children who have a disability are in schools. Remaining nine-tenths of them are excluded.

Against this backdrop of continuous neglect, there is an urgent need to find ways for developing potential of this large proportion of challenged children.

Historical Perspective:

In India special education as a separate system of education for disabled children outside the mainstream education system evolved way back in 1880s. The first school for the deaf was set up in Bombay in 1883 and the first school for the blind at Amritsar in 1887. In 1947, the number of schools for blind increased to 32, for the deaf 30 and for mentally retarded 3. There was rapid expansion in the

number of such institutions. The number of special schools rose to around 3000 by the year 2000 (Department of Education, 2000). The Govt. of India in the 1960s designed a scheme of preparing teachers for teaching children with visual impairment. Similar schemes for teaching children with other disabilities were gradually developed. However, the quality of the trained teachers was in question because of lack of uniform syllabi of various courses, eligibility criteria for admission to these courses and also due to large extent of non-availability of teacher educators and literatures in the field. Therefore, in 1980s the then ministry of Welfare, Govt. of India, realized the crucial need of an institution to monitor and regulate the HRD programmes in the field of disability rehabilitation.

However, these special schools have certain disadvantages which became evident as the number of these schools increased. These institutions reached out to a very limited number of children, largely urban and they were not cost effective. But most important of all, these special schools segregated children with special needs (CWSN) from the mainstream, thus developing a specific disability culture.

Legislation and Policy:

The Constitution of India (26 November, 1949), clearly states in the Preamble that everyone has the right to equality of status and of opportunity. The Article 41 of the Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution supports the right to work, education and public assistance in certain cases including disablement. Further, Article 45 commits to the provision of free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years. Based on this, the Constitution (86th Amendment) Act 2002 has been enacted by the parliament making education a fundamental right of all children in the age group of 6-14 years. Moreover the 93rd Amendment to the Constitution of India (now renumbered as the 86th), passed by the Lok Sabha on November 28, 2001, makes it mandatory for the government to provide free and compulsory education to "all children of the age of 6-14 years", with its preamble clarifying that "all" includes children with disabilities as well. Yet inevitably again, vital loose ends of such enabling legislation and policies are not tied up.

The National Policy on Education, 1986 (NPE, 1986), and the **Programme of Action (1992)** stresses the need for integrating children with special needs with other groups. The objective to be achieved as stated in the NPE, 1986 is "to integrate the physically and mentally handicapped with general community as equal partners, to prepare them for normal growth and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence"

Integrated Education

The concept of integrated education in India has emerged during the mid 1950s. It is based on the medical model of disability and it emphasizes placement of children with disabilities in mainstream schools. The major thrust is on attendance.

School Based Approach:

Consequent on the success of international experiments in placing children with disabilities in regular schools, the Planning Commission in 1971 included in its plan a programme for integrated education. The Government launched the **Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) scheme** in December 1974. It was a Centrally Sponsored Scheme aimed to provide educational opportunities to children with special needs (CWSN) in regular schools and to facilitate their achievement and retention. Under the scheme, hundred per cent financial assistance is provided to for setting up resource centers, surveys and

assessment of children with disabilities, purchase and production of instruction materials and training and orientation of teachers. The scope of the scheme includes pre-school training, counseling for the parents, and special training in skills for all kinds of disabilities. The scheme provides facilities in the form of books, stationery, uniforms, and allowances for transport, reader, escort etc.

In spite of all these facilities, IEDC met with limited success — only a little more than 100 thousand CWSN have been covered. However, it was successful in creating awareness on the importance of integrating CWSN in the mainstream of education, a fact noted in the National Policy on Education, 1986.

Composite Approach:

Project Integrated Education for the Disabled (PIED) was another experiment on IE in India. Due to combined effort of the Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD) and UNICEF, the PIED came into existence in 1987. After it's launching there was a shift in strategy, from a school based approach to a Composite Area Approach. In this approach, a cluster, instead of the individual school approach is emphasized. A cluster, usually a block of population is taken as the project area. All the schools in the area are expected to enroll children with disabilities. Training programmes were also given to the teachers. This project was implemented in one administrative block each in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Nagaland, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Mizoram, Delhi Municipal Corporation, and Baroda Municipal Corporation. The approach is an improvement over the special schools in many ways and appears to be the only way towards universalizing education of the disabled children. It is more cost effective and easier to organise, since existing school infrastructure is to be made use of. Under PIED, there has been a significant increase in the number of not only mildly disabled, but also severely disabled children, with the number of orthopaedically handicapped children far outstripping other disabled children. All these perform at par with non - disabled children; in fact their retention rate is higher than that of non - disabled children and absenteeism is low. PIED has also had a positive impact on the attitudes of the teachers, the heads of schools, as well as parents and the community in general. Also, the interaction between the disabled and the non - disabled children is good.

Inclusive Approach:

In late 90s (i.e. in 1997) the philosophy of inclusive education is added in District Primary Education Programme (DPEP). Moreover, DPEP also addressed core issues related to curriculum such as what factors limit the access of certain children to curriculum; what modifications are necessary to ensure fuller curriculum access. Thus, with its child-centered pedagogy, DPEP set a stage where children with special needs could be provided learning opportunities tailored to their needs. By 1998, many DPEP states had conducted surveys, assessment camps and evolved strategies to provide resource support to those children with special needs who were enrolled in DPEP schools. The IED guidelines in DPEP intend clearly that "DPEP will fund interventions for IED of primary school going children with integrable and mild to moderate disabilities". Towards this end DPEP supported community mobilization and early detection, in-service teacher training, resource support, provision of educational aids and appliances and removal of architectural barriers.

IED was initially introduced in the Indian states in a small way by taking one block/cluster as a pilot project in each DPEP district. From a few hundred blocks in 1998, IED is currently being implemented in 2014 blocks of 18 DPEP states. Ten states of Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala,

Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Tamil Nadu and Uttaranchal have up scaled the IED programme to all the blocks.

DPEP estimates clearly showed that there were a large number of disabled children in the relevant age group. Gradually realization dawned that UPE could not be achieved unless children with special needs were also brought under the ambit of primary education. This led to more concrete planning and stratification of providing resource support and remedial assistance to children with special needs.

As the programme progressed, many models of service delivery evolved with the sole aim of providing supportive learning environment to children with special needs. The thrust was on imparting quality education to all disabled children. **The National Policy on Education, 1986** "...Future emphasis shall be on distance and open learning systems to provide opportunities and access to all the major target groups, especially the disadvantaged, viz., women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, the adult working class, and people serving in the far - flung remote areas." There after **Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992** was passed by the Parliament in 1992, this act makes it mandatory for every special teacher to be registered by the council and lays down that every child with disability had the right to be taught by a qualified teacher. In fact it provided punishment for those teachers who engaged in teaching children with special needs without a license. **The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protections of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995** stresses the need to provide free of cost education to all children in an appropriate environment till they are 18 years old and further emphasize their right to measures like:

- a) Transport facilities to the students with disabilities or alternative financial incentives to parents or guardians to enable their students with disabilities to attend schools;
- b) The removal of architectural barriers from schools, colleges or other institutions imparting vocational and professional training;
- c) The supply of books, uniforms and other materials to students with disabilities attending school;
- d) The grant of scholarship to students with disabilities;
- e) Setting up of appropriate fora for the redressal of grievances of parents regarding the placement of their students with disabilities;
- f) Suitable modification in the examination system to eliminate purely mathematical questions for the benefit of blind students and students with low vision;
- g) Restructuring of curriculum for the benefit of students with disabilities;
- h) Restructuring the curriculum for benefit of students with hearing impairment to facilitate them to take only one language as part of their curriculum.

The National Trust Act (National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disability), 1999 also came in to existence. This landmark legislation seeks to protect and promote the rights of persons who within the disability sector, have been even more marginalized than others. It was first of its kind in the category of persons addressed. It recognized the range of independence in skills, daily living and financial management. It is prime decision making body for persons with disabilities and aims to provide total care to persons with mental retardation and cerebral palsy and also manage the properties bequeathed to the trust.

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994) emerged as a result of deliberations held by more than 300 participants representing 92 governments and 25 international organizations in June 1994. For furthering the objectives of Education for all, it considered the fundamental policy-shifts required to promote inclusive education. It emphasizes that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. The Statement affirms: "those *with special educational needs must have*

access to regular schools which should accommodate them within child centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs”.

India was a signatory to the Salamanca Statement. In this perspective the Human Resource Development minister of India Sri Arjun Singh on the 21st March 2005 assured in the Rajya Sabha that MHRD has formulated a comprehensive action plan for the Inclusive Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities. The government is committed to provide education through mainstream schools for children with disabilities in accordance with PWD ACT, 1995 and all the schools in the country will be made disabled friendly by 2020. Rupees 10 billion have been outlaid to fulfill the needs of disabled persons between the ages of 14 and 18 years through a revised plan for Inclusive Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities (IECYD). In 2005-06, the Project Approval Board has allocated an amount of Rs.187.79 crores under this component for a total 20.14 lakh Children With Special Needs (CWSN) identified. The commitment of the Government of India to Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) cannot be fully achieved without taking care of special educational needs of the physically and mentally challenged children.

MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (MHRD) ACTION PLAN:

An outline of MHRD action plan is presented below:

- To complement and supplement IEDC and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programmes in the movement from integration to inclusion.
- Enrolment and retention of all children with disabilities in the mainstream education system. (Free and compulsory education from 0 to 14 under draft Bill/free education 0 to 18 yrs under PWD Act).
- Providing need based educational and other support in mainstream schools to children in order to develop their learning and abilities, through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource and partnership with their communities.
- Support higher and vocational education through proper implementation of the existing reservation quota in all educational institutions and creation of barrier free learning environments.
- Disability focused research and interventions in universities and educational institutions.
- Review implementation of existing programmes, provisions to identify factors leading to success or failure of the drive towards enrollment and retention of children with disabilities in mainstream educational settings. Address administrative issues arising out of review.
- Generating awareness in the general community, activists and persons working in the field of education and more specifically among parents and children that the disabled have full rights to appropriate education in mainstream schools and that it is the duty of those involved in administration at every level including schools to ensure that they have access to education.
- Ensure enrollment and intervention for all children with special needs in the age group 0-6 years in Early Childhood Care and Education Programs.
- Facilitate free and compulsory elementary education for children with special needs in the age group 6-14 (extendable to 18 yrs.) in mainstream education settings currently under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) (SSA is a governmental program shared by both union and state governments for achieving universal elementary education in India by 2010).
- Facilities for transition of young persons with disability wishing to pursue secondary education.

- Ensuring physical access of children and youth with disabilities in schools and educational institutions by enforcing the requirement for provisions of universal design in buildings and provide support in transportation.
- Development of national norms for Inclusive Education, to set standards of implementation, training, monitoring and evaluation for the program.
- Provide inputs in all pre-service and in-service training for mainstream and special education teachers to enable them to work with children with disability in an inclusive education system.
- Appropriate Resource Services support through appointment of special educators, rehab professionals, provision of resource rooms, etc to support mainstream schoolteachers in the classrooms.
- Put in place an effective communication and delivery system for specific delivery of TLM, aids and appliances, hardware/software.
- Participation in sports, co-curricular activities, to promote all round ability development.
- Ensuring physical access for young persons with disabilities (18 plus age group) in all colleges and educational institutions by enforcing the requirement for provisions of universal design in buildings and provide support in transportation.

The Tenth Plan (2002-2007) aims to provide Universal Elementary Education by the end of the plan. It also aims to provide basic education for the un-reached segments and special groups. The special interventions and strategies like pedagogic improvement and adoption of child centered practices are focused on the groups like the girls, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, working children, children with disabilities, urban deprived children, children from minority groups, children below poverty line, migratory children and in the hardest to reach groups.

National Curriculum Framework, 2005:

A **policy of inclusion** needs to be implemented in all schools and throughout Indian education system. The participation of all children needs to be ensured in all spheres of their life in and outside the school. Schools need to become centers that prepare children for life and ensure that all children, especially the differently abled children from marginalized sections, and children in difficult circumstances get the maximum benefit of this critical area of education. Opportunities to display talents and share these with peers are powerful tools in nurturing motivation and involvement among children. In our schools we tend to select some children over and over again. While this small group benefits from these opportunities, becoming more self-confident and visible in the school, other children experience repeated disappointment and progress through school with a constant longing for recognition and peer approval. Excellence and ability may be singled out for appreciation, but at the same time opportunities need to be given to all children and their specific abilities need to be recognized and appreciated. This includes children with disabilities, who may need assistance or more time to complete their assigned tasks. It would be even better if, while planning for such activities, the teacher discusses them with all the children in the class, and ensures that each child is given an opportunity to contribute. When planning, therefore, teachers must pay special attention to ensuring the participation of all. This would become a marker of their effectiveness as teachers. Excessive emphasis on competitiveness and individual achievement is beginning to mark many of our schools, especially private schools catering to the urban middle classes. Very often, as soon as children join, houses are allocated to them. Thereafter, almost every activity in the school is counted for marks that go into house points, adding up to an end-of-the-year prize. Such 'house loyalties' seem to have the superficial effect of getting all children involved and excited about winning points for their houses, but also distorts educational aims, where

excessive competitiveness promotes doing better than someone else as an aim, rather than excelling on one's own terms and for the satisfaction of doing something well. Often placed under the monitoring eye of other children, this system distorts social relations within schools, adversely affecting peer relations and undermining values such as cooperation and sensitivity to others. Teachers need to reflect on the extent to which they want the spirit of competition to enter into and permeate every aspect of school life performing more of a function in regulating and disciplining than in nurturing learning and interest. Schools also undermine the diverse capabilities and talents of children by categorizing them very early, on narrow cognitive criteria. Instead of relating to each child as an individual, early in their lives children are placed on cognitive berths in the classroom: the 'stars', the average, the below-average and the 'failures'. Most often they never have a chance to get off their berth by themselves. The demonizing effect of such labeling is devastating on children. Schools go to absurd lengths to make children internalise these labels, through verbal name calling such as 'dullard', segregating them in seating arrangements, and even creating markers that visually divide children into achievers and those who are unable to perform. The fear of not having the right answer keeps many children silent in the classroom, thus denying them an equal opportunity to participate and learn. Equally paralyzed by the fear of failure are the so called achievers, who lose their capacity to try out new things arising from the fear of failure, doing less well in examinations, and of losing their ranks. It is important to allow making errors and mistakes to remain an integral part of the learning process and remove the fear of not achieving 'full marks'. The school needs to send out a strong signal to the community, parents who pressurize children from an early age to be perfectionists. Instead of spending time in tuitions or at home learning the 'perfect answers', parents need to encourage their children to spend their time reading storybooks, playing and doing a reasonable amount of homework and revision. Instead of looking for courses on stress management for their pupils, school heads and school managements need to de-stress their curricula, and advise parents to de-stress children's life outside the school. Schools that emphasise intense competitiveness must not be treated as examples by others, including state-run schools. The ideal of common schooling advocated by the Kothari Commission four decades ago continues to be valid as it reflects the values enshrined in our Constitution. Schools will succeed in inculcating these values only if they create an ethos in which every child feels happy and relaxed. This ideal is even more relevant now because education has become a fundamental right, which implies that millions of first-generation learners are being enrolled in schools. To retain them, the system — including its private sector — must recognize that there are many children that no single norm of capacity, personality or aspiration can serve in the emerging scenario. School administrators and teachers should also realize that when boys and girls from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and different levels of ability study together, the classroom ethos is enriched and becomes more inspiring.

A child has special educational needs if s/he has difficulty in learning. This may require special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child may have learning difficulty because of a disability which hinders her/his from making use of the existing educational facilities provided for all other children of her class. A child may have learning difficulty because of some other reasons too.

Inclusive Education in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan:

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was launched to achieve the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education. This adopts a zero rejection policy and uses an approach of converging various schemes and programmes. The key objective of SSA is Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE). Three important aspects of UEE are *access*, *enrolment* and *retention* of all children in 6-14 years of age. A zero rejection policy has been adopted under SSA, which ensures that every Child with Special Needs (CWSN), irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability, is provided meaningful and quality

education. It covers the following components under education for children with special needs:-Early detection and identification, functional and formal assessment, Educational Placement, Aids and appliances, Support services, Teacher training, Resource support, Individual Educational Plan (IEP), Parental training and community mobilization, Planning and management, Strengthening of special schools, Removal of Architectural barriers, Research, Monitoring and evaluation, Girls with disabilities.

SSA provides up to Rs.1200/- per child for integration of disabled children, as per specific proposals, per year. The interventions under SSA for inclusive education are identification, functional and formal assessment, appropriate educational placement, preparation of Individualized Educational Plan, provision of aids and appliances, teacher training, resource support, removal of architectural barriers, monitoring and evaluation and a special focus on girls with special needs. Residential bridge courses for CWSN with the main objective of preparing CWSN for schools, thereby ensuring better quality inclusion for them. Facilities for home-based education for children with severe and profound disabilities are provided with the objective of either preparing CWSN for schools or for life by imparting to them basic life skills.

Identification and enrolment:

Household surveys and special surveys have been conducted by all states to identify CWSN. 3 million 38 thousand CWSN have been identified in 33 States/UTs. 20 thousand 30 thousand CWSN (66.84 percent of those identified) are enrolled in schools. Further 88009 CWSN are being covered through EGS/ AIE in 15 states and 77083 CWSN are being provided homebound education in 19 states. In all 72.27% of the identified CWSN in 2006-07 have been covered through various strategies.

Barrier-free access:

Making schools barrier free to access for CWSN is incorporated in the SSA framework. All new schools to be barrier free in order to improve access for CWSN, is incorporated in the SSA framework. 4.44 thousand Schools have ramps for CWSN. Focus is now on improving quality, monitoring of services provided to and retaining CWSN in school.

Simulation Park:

In Tamil Nadu to facilitate inclusion, local schools has been involved in building low cost 'Simulation Park' by using local low-cost material, which can be used by all children. The main aim of this simulation park is to give CWSN and their peers a chance to be able to experience various kinds of play equipment jointly. Since this playground is for the benefit of both disabled and able-bodied children, each BRC in the State has this playground at a low cost. The play equipment can be designed depending on the child's abilities.

MODE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS OF INDIA :

Children with disabilities are educated in India through special schools. There exist a few schools exclusively for blind and deaf under government sector. But there is not any special provision in mainstream government schools for education other disabled children like low vision, leprosy cured, hearing impaired, locomotory disabled, mentally retarded, mentally ill, autism affected, cerebral palsy affected and multiple-disabled. These children with disabilities are nurtured to some extent through the special schools of non-government sector.

FIGHTING EDUCATIONAL EXCLUSION:

Inclusion is a complex issue. The curriculum is a powerful tool (Swann, 1988) and may be part of the problem. On inclusion Reuven Feuerstein viewed that “Chromosomes do not have the last word”. However, his view on inclusion are challenging for everywhere. He argues there are three pre-requisites: a) The preparation of the child, b) The preparation of the receiving schools, c) The preparation of parents, but it could not be achieved without d) The preparation of the teachers.

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a. The preparation of the child:

Some children with special needs may require some prior training before they are placed in a regular school. Special educators made available for the purpose can provide such training and thereafter CWSN may be admitted in mainstream schools. States of Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh have conducted exclusive residential bridge course for CWSN to prepare them for regular schools but in rest of the states it is not yet to be done. From 683 thousand, 100 thousand CWSN were identified in 2002-03. By 2006-07 3 million 38 thousand were identified. From 566 thousand CWSN enrolled in schools in 2002-03, the enrolment of CWSN currently in SSA stands at 2 million 20 thousand (Dec. 2006). The target for 2006-07 include enrolment of 3 million 38 thousand CWSN in 34 States.

b. The preparation of receiving schools:

Some mainstream secondary schools may be selected and developed as “Model Inclusive School” on priority basis. First of all barrier-free access to CWSN are made in all such institutions. Effort should be taken to provide disabled-friendly facilities in these schools. Development of innovative designs to provide an enabling environment for CWSN should also be made in these schools as a part of preparation programme. In India total 222 thousand schools have been made barrier-free countrywide under SSA.

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c. The preparation of parents:

It has been seen that the parents/guardians of CWSN generally face problems, both social and psychological resulting into marginalisation and exclusion of CWSN in mainstream schools. Hence, it is important to undertake widespread awareness among the people especially parents of CWSN. They should be counseled so that they may prepare themselves to send his/her ward to mainstream schools.

d. The preparation of teachers:

In India teacher training in special education is imparted through both face-to-face and distance mode.

1) Pre-Service Training:

In India, there is provision for pre-service teacher training in SE, but it is mainly concentrated in secondary level training. There are 159 institutions of secondary teacher training in SE whereas there are only eleven institutions in the country that imparts pre-service training at elementary or primary level in SE. The Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) is the apex authority to develop, recognize and regulate the course curriculum of SE. The Madhya Pradesh Bhoj (Open) University, Bhopal is the single university in the country, imparting B. Ed. (SE) through distance learning mode. Recently, it has launched Post Graduate Professional Diploma in Special Education Course for general B.Ed. students. The successful candidate of this program becomes equivalent to B.Ed.-SEDE degree holder with specialization in opted disability area. As the Indian school system is one of the largest in the world and

number of CWSN are very high, the prevailing situation of pre-service teacher training in special education needs to be strengthened or elaborate alternative mechanism for incorporating the elements of special education in general teacher training programs needs to be found out.

The teacher training course curriculum of general pre-service training programs neither fully equip the teachers and teacher educators to deal with the CWSN nor it equip them to manage the mild and moderately disabled children in general classrooms. Towards this end, an MOU has been signed between the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) leading towards a convergence so as to sensitize all teachers and resource persons. The NCERT (2000) has set up a group under the National Curriculum Framework Review to examine the pedagogic inputs and classroom reorganization required for CWSN.

Even, UGC National Educational Testing Bureau has already included "Special Education", in curriculum of its Educational discipline. It includes details about special education, integrated education, education of mentally retarded (MR), visually impaired (VI), hearing impaired (HI), orthopaedically handicapped (OH), gifted and creative children, learning disabled children and education of Juvenile delinquents. The Postgraduate Departments of Education in India is on way to strengthen the disability element in their respective curriculum.

Residential Bridge Courses for CWSN in A.P., U.P. & Rajasthan:

Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan have developed a roadmap to implement residential Bridge Courses to develop skills of readiness for successful integration in regular schools. The other objectives of the course are: (i) equip with required skills among students with severe disabilities to use special equipment independently, (ii) develop adequate 3R's skills as well as academic competencies required for immediate inclusion in the regular classroom appropriate to the child's grade level and (iii) develop sense of independence, self-confidence and motivation for personal growth, to orient the children with various environments, not only for school inclusion, but also community and social inclusion.

II) In-Service Training:

Different kinds of teacher training programmes are being implemented under SSA to orient elementary teachers towards Inclusive Education (IE). The component IE has been incorporated as a part of 20 days mandatory training of in-service teachers under SSA. This aims at orienting every teacher to the concept, meaning and importance of inclusion. Further, the state SSA programme also taken up a 3-5 or 5-7 day teacher exclusively in I.E. Total 2 million 45.2 thousand teachers have been covered through regular teacher training programmes, which includes a 2-3 day capsule on inclusive education. 1 million 400 thousand teachers have been provided 3-5 days additional training for better orientation to Inclusive Education. 39816 teachers have been trained in 22 States with Rehabilitation Council of India for 45 days and act as Resource Persons in districts/blocks. 23 States have appointed 6147 resource teachers and 671 NGOs are involved in the IE programme in 31 States. Schools are being made more disabled friendly by incorporating barrier free features in their designs. 444 thousand schools have been made barrier-free and the work is on. 575 thousand CWSN have been provided the required assistive devices.

Bihar Education Project Council, popularly known as BEP, (BEP Council is a governmental body of the state of Bihar which is the main agency for implementation of various programs for achieving universal primary and elementary education in Bihar.) began its exercise in empowerment of primary teachers with different in-service packages. Two training modules Ujala-III (2006) and Samarth (2006)

has been developed with specific focus on initial screening of CWSN and basic classroom management skills. Through Ujala-III, BEP intends to sensitize in-service teacher of upper primary classes (grade 6 to 8) towards integrated education. The issues undertaken in this module are provision of educational concession, travel facilities and some other supplementary schemes. The disability element of this module is insufficient to sensitize the teacher towards CWSN.

On the other hand, Samarth (2006) another three days teachers training module is concentrated exclusive upon I.E. The issues undertaken in this module are: concept of inclusive education, need of its training, sensitization, types and level of disability, IEP, causes of disabilities, teaching techniques, learning disabilities, and facilities for CWSN, rules & regulations for individual with special needs. The content of the module is enough for primary level in-service teacher.

Beside, the teachers are also being exposed to the concept of inclusive need based pedagogy through training on principles of effective teaching such as classroom organization, seating arrangements, TLM, IEPs, evaluation process etc. It is worth mentioning that similar in-service training programs are in operation in all Indian states under SSA.

At present all the educational schemes of inclusive education tend toward universalization of primary education. But the secondary and higher education is at the verge of ignorance. So, there is an urgent need to create Inclusive Education Department under State's Human Resource Development Ministry to cater the challenges of inclusion principles.

Summary and conclusion

Inclusive education (IE) is a new approach towards educating the children with disability and learning difficulties with that of normal ones within the same roof. Of late, a consensus has emerged among Indian intellectuals and pedagogues for adopting inclusive education in mainstream schools.

The term "Special Need Education" (SNE) has come into use as a replacement for the term "Special Education", as older one was mainly understood to refer the education of all those children and youth whose needs arise from disabilities or learning difficulties. The Statement affirms: *"those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within child centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs"*.

This leads the vision of "Inclusive Education". Inclusive Education aims at integrated development of children with special needs and normal children through mainstream schooling. To develop curriculum for special education and its inclusion in general teacher preparation programs, Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) made a historic collaboration with National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) on January 19, 2005.

Fewer than five percent of children who have a disability are in schools. In India special education as a separate system of education for disabled children outside the mainstream education system evolved way back in 1880s.

Consequent on the success of international experiments in placing children with disabilities in regular schools, the Planning Commission in 1971 included in its plan a programme for integrated education. The Government launched the **Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) scheme** in December 1974. It was a Centrally Sponsored Scheme aimed to provide educational opportunities to children with special needs (CWSN) in regular schools and to facilitate their achievement and retention. All the schools in the area are expected to enroll children with disabilities. Training programs were also given to

the teachers. Under PIED, there has been a significant increase in the number of not only mildly disabled, but also severely disabled children, with the number of orthopaedically handicapped children far outstripping other disabled children.

In late 90s (i.e. in 1997) the philosophy of inclusive education is added in District Primary Education Programme (DPEP). By 1998, many DPEP states had conducted surveys, assessment camps and evolved strategies to provide resource support to those children with special needs who were enrolled in DPEP schools. The thrust was on imparting quality education to all disabled children.

The government is committed to provide education through mainstream schools for children with disabilities in accordance with PWD ACT, 1995 and all the schools in the country will be made disabled friendly by 2020. Enrolment and retention of all children with disabilities in the mainstream education system should be ensured providing need based educational and other support to these children in order to develop their learning and abilities. The special interventions and strategies like pedagogic improvement and adoption of child centered practices are focused on the children with disabilities.

At present 20 thousand 30 thousand CWSN (66.84 percent of those identified) are enrolled in schools. Further 88009 CWSN are being covered through EGS/ AIE in 15 states and 77083 CWSN are being provided homebound education in 19 states.

Making schools barrier free to access for CWSN is incorporated in the SSA framework. 4.44 thousand Schools have ramps for CWSN. The play equipment can be designed depending on the child's abilities.

In India teacher training in special education is imparted through both face-to-face and distance mode. The teacher training course curriculum of general pre-service training programs neither fully equips the teachers and teacher educators to deal with the CWSN nor it equip them to manage the mild and moderately disabled children in general classrooms.

Different kinds of teacher training programs are being implemented under SSA to orient elementary teachers towards Inclusive Education (IE). 1 million 400 thousand teachers have been provided 3-5 days additional training for better orientation to Inclusive Education.

The general issues undertaken in the IE training modules for in-service elementary teachers under SSA are: concept of inclusive education, need of its training, sensitization, types and level of disability, IEP, causes of disabilities, teaching techniques, learning disabilities, and facilities for CWSN, rules & regulations for individual with special needs. At present all the educational schemes of inclusive education tend toward universalization of primary education.

IE is not only the alternative measures for CWSN for want of separate special schools for these children but it is a scientific well thought strategy for their overall development; of course it is cost effective and doubly suitable for a developing country like India. Various initiatives for teaching of CWSN along with normal children in main stream schools popularly known as IE are being taken at different levels but still 95 percent of CWSN are out of mainstream schools. Even the schools where IE is in operation, infrastructural facilities required for inclusive teaching-learning processes are poor. Capability of teachers required to deal CWSN along with normal children also appear to be poor reflecting the poor quality of training for IE. The only point of satisfaction is that importance of IE has been recognized and government is working hard to provide universal education to CWSN under IE.

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