

Policies for developing Inclusive Education system: a Review

Sunanda Bishnu*

* Assistant Professor(C), Sponsored Teachers' Training College, Purulia, West Bengal, India-723101

ABSTRACT

Globally, there are millions of children living with disabilities in the world. These children have traditionally been marginalized within or excluded from schools because of their apparent difficulties. Various international and national endeavours have been taken till now. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) imposed a requirement for radical changes to traditional approaches to provision made for children with disabilities. One year later, the 1990 World Conference on Education for all: focused attention on a much broader range of children with disabilities. In Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (2006), disabled persons should be able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others through reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. In India, from the constitution to the Kothari Commission (1964), from the early days of the republic to the 2005 Action Plan for Children and Youth with Disabilities and the 2006 National Policy for People with Disabilities recently, the Indian government tends to write inclusive policies on education. This research deals with a review on the international and national trends occurring regarding the education of children with disabilities and finally shows a movement from special education to inclusive education and from seclusion to inclusion and provide some recommendations which focus on prevention, cure and steps to make these children as normal as possible.

Keyword:- Inclusive Education, Inclusion, National Policies, UN Convention, Kothari Commission

1. INTRODUCTION: DEFINING INCLUSION

Throughout the world, children who have disabilities and many others who experience difficulties in learning have traditionally been marginalized within or excluded from schools. These children with disabilities require the assistance of special educators in order to benefit from education. Depending on the degree of the disability and on individual characteristics, these children may be educated in residential schools, separate classes, or regular classes with support services provided by special teachers. It must be noted, not all children who have a disability require special education; many are able to and should attend school without any program modification. Special education has undergone significant changes over the last several decades. Many of these changes have occurred due to enactment of national laws, parental groups, technology, experimental methods of instruction, identification, assessment techniques, curriculum innovations, teacher training and certification (Taylor, G R, 2007). The recent international trends in special education focused on inclusive education of children with disabilities. The field remains confused as to what this means. In some countries, inclusion is still thought of as an approach to serving children with disabilities within general education settings. In 1970, UNESCO recommended "inclusive education as a cheap alternative" to other special education programs, specifically for developing countries (Kalyanpur, 2008). Internationally, however, it is increasingly seen more broadly as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners (UNESCO, 2001). It presumes that the aim of inclusive education is to eliminate social exclusion that is a consequence of attitudes and responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender and ability. As such, it starts from the belief that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a better society.

Consequently, as we consider the way forward, it is important to recognise that the field of inclusive education is riddled with uncertainties, disputes and contradictions. Yet throughout the world attempts are being made to provide more effective educational responses for all children, whatever their characteristics, and, encouraged by the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), the overall trend is towards making these responses within the context of general educational provision. As a consequence, this is leading to a reconsideration of the national educational policies meant for inclusive education and the development of practice in the field.

Thus, this paper deals with the essentiality of reconsidering Inclusive Education policies in relation to overall educational arrangements in our national context. In so doing, the researcher has drawn various international policies as well as national policies to develop a framework for moving policy and practices forward.

2. INTERNATIONAL ENDEAVOURS REGARDING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The adoption of **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)** by the UN General Assembly and its subsequent ratification by 187 countries imposed a requirement for radical changes to traditional approaches to provision made for children with disabilities (Ainscow and Halle-Giorgis, 1998). Article 28 of the Convention asserts the right of every child to education and requires that this should be provided on the basis of equality of opportunity. In other words, the Convention allows no discrimination in relation to access to education on grounds of disability. Other articles of this convention such as article 29, together with Articles 2, 3 and 23, seem to imply that all children have a right to inclusive education, irrespective of disability. So, the above convention confirm inclusive education and reflects the right to education in terms of the responsibilities of governments to make education 'available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable' to each and every child. However, this convention could not be assumed that initiatives to improve children's rights in general will automatically benefit the most marginalized children.

The world conference on education for all (1990) helped to focus attention on a much broader range of children who may be excluded from or marginalized within education systems because of their apparent difficulties. Such children may include: Those who are already enrolled in education but for a variety of reasons do not achieve adequately and those who are not enrolled in schools but who could, participate if schools were more flexible in their responses. In above conference, inclusive education is regarded as the only means to achieve the goal of "Education for All". After this conference, the field of special education has developed relatively recently and unevenly in different parts of the world (Reynolds and Ainscow, 1994). Its development has involved a series of stages during which education systems have explored different ways of responding to children with disabilities and others who experience difficulties in learning. Many of the other trends display the move to reintegrate the mildly handicapped in the regular education program (Bielinski and Ysseldyke, 2000), the increased interest in the training of the moderately and severely retarded and disturbed etc. are directly related to the social and legal pressures on the educational and mental health establishments.

Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) set an international standard for policy making and action covering disabled children and adults. Its gives qualified support for inclusive education saying countries should recognize the principle of equal educational opportunities in integrated settings for disabled children; they should also ensure the education of disabled people is an integral part of the wider educational system. According rule 6 (8), in situations where the general school system does not yet adequately meet the needs of all persons with disabilities, special education may be considered. It should be aimed at preparing students for education in the general school system. The quality of such education should reflect the same standards and ambitions as general education and should be closely linked to it. At a minimum, students with disabilities should be afforded the same portion of educational resources as students without disabilities. States should aim for the gradual integration of special education services into mainstream education. It is acknowledged that in some instances special education may currently be considered to be the most appropriate form of education for some students with disabilities.

The Salamanca Statement (1994) marked a new point for millions of children who had long been deprived of education. It provided a unique opportunity to place special education within the wider framework of the "Education for All" (EFA) movement. The goal is nothing less than the inclusion of the world's children in schools and the reform of the school system. This has led to the concept of "Inclusive School". The challenge confronting the concept of "Inclusive School" is that of developing a child-centred pedagogy capable of successfully educating all children, including those who have serious disadvantages and disabilities. This is leading to a reconsideration of the future roles and purposes of specialists and facilities in the special needs field.

Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (2006) recognize that the disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and Environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. Articles 24 of this convention provide "States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning" and (b) "Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live". This convention changed the clinical model of Special Education and disability to social model of disability. This Convention obliging Governments to develop properly supported and adapted

inclusive education for all and put in priority the children's rights to properly supported and adapted inclusive education.

3. NATIONAL ENDEAVOURS REGARDING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

After gaining independence in 1947, inclusive education is written into India's constitution as a fundamental right for all citizens. Part IX, Article 45 of the Constitution states, the state shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years. The significance of Article 45 was reaffirmed in 1993 which states that "No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law." The 1960s marked an important change in how special education was organized and funded in India. The Ministry of Education splits, and a new branch called the Ministry of Social Welfare was created for the "weak and vulnerable" sections of society.

The Government of India created the **Kothari Commission in 1964**. It read- 'We now turn to the education of handicapped children. Their education has to be organized not merely on humanitarian grounds of utility. Proper education generally enables a handicapped child to overcome largely his or her handicap and make him into a useful citizen. Social justice also demands it...on an overall view of the problem, however, we feel that experimentation with integrated programmes is urgently required and every attempt should be made to bring in as many children in integrated programs.'

The **National Policy on Education (NPE)** was created in **1986**. Continuing in the spirit of the 1974 IEDC, the NPE states that children with "mild" disabilities should be included in mainstream classrooms, whereas children with "moderate to severe" disabilities should be placed in segregated schools. The 1992 Program of Action (POA), created to implement the 1986 NPE, broadens the 1986 definition of who should be included in mainstream schooling, that a child with a disability who can be educated in the general school should not be in the special school. It says that once children with disabilities acquire basic living skills, which would be learned in resource rooms or special schools, that they should be mainstreamed. The POA does not define what constitutes basic living skills. The POA envisioned and expected that schools across India would accept responsibility by sharing their resources with other institutions.

The Ministry of Welfare created the **Integrated Education of Disabled Children Scheme (IEDC)** which provided children with disabilities financial support for books, school uniforms, transportation, special equipment and aids, with the intention of using these aids to include children in mainstream classrooms, although it was not enough to integrate children with disabilities into the mainstream classroom.

In **2002** the 86th amendment to the constitution was made, mandating free and compulsory education to all children ages 6-14. Resulting from this change, the Government of India, in conjunction with the World Bank, created the **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)**, an initiative which translates to "Education for All." SSA is not a disability-specific program, but rather a disability-inclusive program, with specific aspects that benefit people with disabilities. The major parts of this program that benefit people with disabilities were: 1) Rs. 1200 allocation per annum per child with a disability; 2) each district will formulate its own plan for children with disabilities; 3) key institutions will be encouraged to collaborate to further support these students with disabilities.

The Government of India decided to make Amendment 21A of the constitution, giving children between the ages of 6-14 the right to a free, appropriate and compulsory education, into an act- **The Right to Education Act (2005)**. This bill, framed through a social justice and collective advocacy perspective rather than through a framework of individual rights, is not disability specific, but is inclusive of children with disabilities, with specific sections that address the educational rights of students with disabilities.

The same year, the Ministry of Human Resource Development also drafted the Action Plan for **Inclusion in Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities (IECYD)**. This action plan envisions that all children with a disability will have access to mainstream education; in order to facilitate this, the government, specifically collaborating between the Rehabilitation Council and the National Council for Teacher's Education, will ensure that there are adequate numbers of teachers trained in inclusive education, as well as the proper physical and ideological infrastructure to facilitate inclusion in schools. The plan specifically looks to move from integration towards inclusion, stating, whereas under the Scheme of Integrated Education for the Disabled Children (IEDC) as it stands at present, children with disabilities are placed in a regular school without making any changes in the school to accommodate and support diverse needs, the revised IECYD will, in contrast, modify the existing physical infrastructures and teaching methodologies to meet the needs of all children, including Children with Special Needs. The policy specifically concerning education and people with disabilities is the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment's **National Policy for People with Disabilities (2006)**. The National Policy for People with Disabilities utilizes Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. This policy echoes the 2005 plan of action and 2005 bill by changing

special schools in resource centres for people with disabilities and teachers. In addition, the policy seeks to bridge the gap between rural and urban areas by creating more District Disability and Rehabilitation Centres (DDRCs), which disseminate information in terms of availability of aids and appliances, ensure the mandated 3% coverage of persons with disabilities in poverty reduction programs and target girls with disabilities.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Accordingly, two trends are apparent worldwide in special education today. First, children with disabilities were receiving special education services earlier (ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children, 1989). Recent trend in research findings and best practices have indicated the need to develop early intervention programs for the at-risk population of children (Sanstead, 1999). The second trend is a change in the public's attitude toward employment of people with handicaps. Today it is recognized that even individuals with severe handicaps are willing and able to work.

Policy in India has always leaned towards inclusion. From the constitution to the Kothari Commission, from the early days of the republic to the 2005 Action Plan for Children and Youth with Disabilities and the 2006 National Policy for People with Disabilities recently, the Indian government tends to write inclusive policies on education. However, these policies often are not perfectly inclusive. Many of them tend to discriminate against people with "severe" disabilities, or people with intellectual disabilities, especially in terms of mainstream versus special schooling. Still, at present, the policies governing the education system are inclusive. At present, the problem is with implementation. As a result of this study, the recommendations can be provided to improve inclusive education for children with disabilities as below:

1. No special priority is being claimed for disabled children. Instead, it is said that they be included wherever there are services and activities for children.
2. The unconditional acceptance of all children into regular and neighbourhood schools and include them in regular classes afford more support to these children.
3. Collaboration between teachers, administration and others to support inclusive education is necessary.

6. REFERENCES

- [1] Ainscow, M and Halle-Giorgis M , (1998), "The Education of Children with Special Needs: Barriers and Opportunities in Central and Eastern Europe", UNICEF, Innocenti Occasional Papers, Economic and Social Policy Series, no. 67, Florence - Italy ,
- [2] Ainscow, M., (Oct, 2004), "Developing inclusive education systems: what are the levers for change?", The University of Manchester, UK.
- [3] Ainscow, M. & Miles, S., (2009), "Developing inclusive education systems: how can we move policies forward?", University of Manchester, UK.
- [4] Antony, P. J. (2013). "Special Education History, Current Status and Future: India. Journal of International Special Needs Education", 16(1), p5-16.
- [5] Bielinski J and Ysseldyke J E, (2000), "Interpreting Trends in the Performance of Special Education Students", NCEO Technical Report 27, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes.
- [6] Järvinen, R., (2007), "Current Trends on Inclusive Education", Regional Workshop –Gulf Arab States on Inclusive Education, Finnish National board of education, Finland.
- [7] Kalyanpur, M., (2008), "Equality, Quality and Quantity: Challenges in Inclusive Education Policy and Service Provision in India", International Journal of Inclusive Education. 12(3), p244.
- [8] Kohama, A., (June 2012), "Inclusive Education in India: A Country in Transition", Department of International Studies, University of Oregon.
- [9] Minou, T., (2011), "New trends in education of children with disabilities", Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences- Science Direct, Elsevier Ltd., 15, p1955–1959.
- [10] Reynolds, M.C. and Ainscow, M. (1994), "Education of Children and Youth with Special Needs: An International Perspective". In T. Husen and T.N. Postlethwaite (eds), The International Encyclopedia of Education, 2nd edition. Oxford: Pergamon.
- [11] Sanstead W G., (1999), "Early childhood special education for children with disabilities, ages three through five, an introduction", North Dakota department of public instruction, Office of Special Education,
- [12] Singh, J. D., (Jan 2016), "Inclusive Education in India – Concept, Need and Challenges", Scholarly Research Journal for Humanity Science and English Language, 3(13), p 3222-3232.

- [13] UNICEF, (2003), "Examples of Inclusive Education India", UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, Kathmandu, Nepal.

