



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Researches indicate that every student has better opportunity to attain quality education in inclusive classroom. They learn better at par with his or her pace and receive education as per their specific need. Inclusive education also helps all students learn the meaning of equal worth and equal rights. It enables children develop a positive understanding of themselves and others. As per Salamanca Statement (1994) regular schools with inclusive orientation can provide effective education to all children with cost-effectiveness. Inclusion focuses on tuning the education system responsive to include all children with disabilities. After enactment of Right to Education Act 2009 every school is inclusive and it is the duty of every school to enroll all children including children with hearing impairment. So, this article is focusing on historical perspective of inclusive education for children with hearing impairment in Indian context.

Key Words: Children with Hearing Impairment, Inclusive Education etc.

Introduction:

If we seriously analyze the history of children with special need we find significant changes globally in services for students with special needs. These changes realized in four phases: relative isolation, integration, inclusion and empowerment (Polloway, Smith, Patton, & Smith, 1996).

The relative isolation phase that encompasses the period of first 60 to 70 years in the 20th century denied the regular education to children with special needs and forced them to have isolated education in special setting. So far as integrated phase is concerned, this phase started in 1970 at global space. In this system children with special needs were placed in regular school with typical children. Then in 1980 came the phase of inclusion, in which focused place on students with special needs being included in all school activities.

Kalyanpur, Maya (2008) reported that in 1970, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommended “inclusive education as a cheap alternative” to other special education programs, specifically for developing countries.

Inclusion in India before Independence:

Kohama, A. (2012) has claimed that archeologists discovered evidence of inclusion of people with disabilities in India from 2000 or more years ago in the form of adapted toys made accessible for children with disabilities. These toys were prepared in “gurukul” system of education that existed in India for centuries before British rule.

The gurukul system was put on an end after India was colonized by the British. The education system introduced by Macaulay in 1835 did not include information regarding people with disabilities. This is because people with disabilities were not considered good enough to be modeled into British-style Indians.

In colonial period we saw a trend of giving education to these children with special need in a segregated setting. The first special school for the blind was opened in 1869 by Jane Leupot, with support of the Church Missionary Society. A school for the deaf was opened in Mumbai (then Bombay) in 1883. Christian missionaries opened a school for the blind in Amritsar in 1887. All special schools accommodated people with physical disabilities. And in 1918 the first school for people with intellectual disabilities was established. But the problem with these schools was that these were situated in urban areas only.

Inclusion in India after Independence:

India broke the shackles of dependency and got freedom in the 1947, and wrote its own constitution and made education as a fundamental right for all citizens. Article 45 of the Constitution states, "The state shall endeavor 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 1960s marked an important change as the Ministry of Education split, and a new branch called the Ministry of Social Welfare was created. The Ministry of Social Welfare got the responsibility to take care of "weak and vulnerable" sections of society. The Ministry of Social Welfare started providing grants to non-profitable organizations that provided education for children with disabilities. This steps prevented inclusion of these children within the public or mainstream sector.

But, at later stage, it was thought that these children with special needs must be given opportunity to have education with typical children in regular classrooms. Hence, the concept of integrated education was emerged. We found the foundation of integrated education somewhere in the Kothari commission.

The Kothari Commission (1964-66):

To create a plan of action for improving the education system the government of India constituted the Kothari Commission in 1964, named after its chairman, P.S. Kothari. Kothari commission (1964-66) also stressed on starting common school system to all children irrespective of caste, creed, community, religion, economic condition and social status.

The Integrated Education of Disabled Children Scheme of 1974:

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (then Ministry of Social Welfare) launched the Integrated Education of Disabled Children Scheme (IEDC), in 1974. This scheme provided children with disabilities or special needs financial support for books, school uniforms, transportation, special equipment and aids, with the intention of using these aids to include children in mainstream classrooms.

In 1992 the IEDC scheme was transferred to the Department of Education. The scheme was apparently intended to encourage co-operation between mainstream and special schools in order to support integration, although Julka (2005) believes this co-operation did not happen.

IEDC scheme was then replaced by the Integrated Education for the Disabled (IED) component of the national District Primary Education Project (DPEP) (Mukhopadhyay, 2003).

The National Policy on Education of 1986 and its Plan of Action 1992:

The spirit of IEDC continued with The National Policy on Education (NPE) which was launched in 1986. The National Policy on Education 1986 also stated 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 policy made special education component as a compulsory part in pre-service training of general teachers. To implement the provisions made in NPE 1986 the Plan of Action was created in 1992.

Project on Integrated Education for Disabled (PIED):

To encourage integration In 1987, UNICEF & NCERT launched the Project on Integrated Education for Disabled (PIED) in 10 blocks (Thomas, 2005b) that focused on teacher training in order to encourage integration. PIED was later amalgamated with the DPEP and SSA and by 2002 extended to 27 States (Julka, 2005).

Rehabilitation Council of India Act (1992):

The government of India enacted Rehabilitation Council of India Act in 1992 and produced its amendment in 2000 to standardize and monitor the training of 16 categories of rehabilitation professionals in the country.

District Primary Education Programme (1994):

The government of India in assistance with the World Bank launched the DPEP in 1994 of to boost the process of including more children with disabilities into the regular school system. In this DPEP programme in-service training were provided to the general

teachers which enabled them to detect problems in early years in children, provide them skill how to assess, troubleshoot and maintenance of aids and appliances, and provided the knowledge about making of individual educational plans. The programme was implemented in 176 districts in 15 states.

Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunity, Protection of Rights, Full Participation) Act (1995):

To safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities and to give equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of life the government of India passed Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunity, Protection of Rights, and Full Participation) Act 1995. In this act disability is defined into seven categories i.e. blindness, low vision, leprosy-cured, hearing impairment, locomotor disability, mental retardation, mental illness. This act basically focuses on prevention of disabilities and calls upon the government to take necessary steps in this regard. The Act also emphasize on giving free education to children with disabilities till they attain age of 18 years in an appropriate environment. It made the government responsible for making the environment non-discriminatory for disabled by making it barrier free. It also talked about bringing non-discrimination in giving employment opportunities to persons with disabilities in government and private sectors. To protect the rights of disabled this act calls for the appointment of chief disability commissioner who will take care of the same. PwD Act 1995 also talks about making proper economic arrangement for weaker and poor persons with disabilities by providing unemployment allowances.

Janshala Programme:

This community schools programme was started in collaboration between the Government of India and the UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, the ILO, and UNFPA in 1998. This programme was later on replaced by SSA. This programme supported the government drive towards universal primary education as it covered 120, mainly rural, blocks in 9 States where there is evidence of low female literacy, child labour, and SC/ST children not catered for under DPEP (Mukhopadhyay, 2005).

National Trust Act (1999):

On 30th December 1999 the government of India for welfare of persons with autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation and multiple disabilities passed an act namely “National Trust for Welfare of persons with autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation and multiple disabilities Act 1999”. This act was basically enacted for protecting and promoting the rights of aforesaid persons with disabilities, who, in fact are more marginalized than others. Its programmes promote inclusion and independence by creating barrier free environment, developing functional skills in these persons with disabilities and promoting self help groups.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA):

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was initiated to universalize elementary education. The goals are that all children aged 6-14 i) will be in some form of education by 2003, ii) will complete 5 years’ primary education by 2007, and iii) will complete 8 years’ education by 2010 (GOI, 2002).

Inclusion in Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities (2005):

In 2005 the Ministry of Human Resource Development launched the Action Plan for Inclusion in Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities (IECYD) to provide children with a disability access to mainstream education. For this to happen the government of India, envisioned through collaboration between the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) and the National Council for Teacher’s Education (NCTE), to make sure adequate numbers of teachers trained in inclusive education, and proper physical and ideological infrastructure to facilitate inclusion in schools. According to IECYD, it is must to modify the existing physical infrastructures and teaching methodologies to meet the needs of all children, including Children with Special Needs.

The IECYD talks about accommodating students with disabilities in universities, and for the mandatory arrangement of “disability coordinator” who can provide inclusion services for them. This scheme also insisted on home-based training and accommodation in hostels (dorms) or distance learning to be made available for people with disabilities that will learn better with these accommodations. The IECYD advocated for special schools to play a role of resource centers for people with disabilities.

The National Policy for People with Disabilities (2006):

The government of India created National Policy for People with Disabilities in 2006. This policy changed the role of special schools by making it as resource centers for people with disabilities and teachers. Under this scheme more District Disability and Rehabilitation Centers (DDRCs), were established to disseminate information in terms of availability of aids and appliances.

The Inclusive Education of the Disabled at the Secondary Stage (2009):

In 2008, the government of India made the scheme of Inclusive Education of the Disabled at the Secondary Stage (IEDSS) and implemented on April 1st, 2009. The main objective of IEDSS is to enable the disabled children who have completed eight years of elementary education to continue their education at the secondary stage in an inclusive environment in regular schools. Under IEDSS

students with disabilities ages 14-18, studying in public or government-funded schools, gets Rs. 3000 per school year from the central government to purchase the necessary materials to use to ensure inclusion of the student in regular school system.

The Right to Education Bill (2009):

To give children, between the ages of 6-14, the right to a free, appropriate and compulsory education The Government of India in 2005 drafted the Right to Education Act. Its clauses ensure that students with and without disabilities are guaranteed an education. According to this act no school can charge any type of fee that may prevent children from completing their elementary education. Secondly, a child will be admitted into an age-appropriate classroom, and will not be admitted into a classroom based on their perceived level of education. Thirdly, the government will make arrangement for schooling for a child either by creating school or by arranging hostel nearby school or making transport facility for child.

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