

Disability and Inclusive Education

Dr. Lalit Kumar

Faculty of Education, Patna University, Patna

Inclusion of marginalized groups of people into the mainstream society has been cherished goal of all modern societies of the world. Differently abled persons form one such group that has attracted the attention of researchers and academicians in order to provide solution to the problems encountered in achieving inclusive schooling in particular and inclusive education in general. In the present paper the author has tried to understand the concept of disability/differently abled taking divergent issues and challenges related to this issue. He has tried to discuss the need and importance of inclusive education and diverse endorsements for inclusivity of disabled children. Finally the author has suggested some steps and measures that should be taken into account to expand the horizon of inclusive education of disabled children.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Disability and Differently Abled

Disability cannot be defined in absolute term as everybody has some form of disability or other. The concept 'Differently Abled' has rightly been discovered by the researchers, educationists and psychologists. History reveals that differently abled persons at times have contributed to the mankind more than the psychologically identified normal persons. Concept of Inclusive Education has emerged from the educational needs of the children with disability. Inclusive education has extended its boundary to the education of all in the same educational setting, but much has to be done. Education of disabled children under inclusive education setting is a problem due to lack of infrastructure, lack of suitably trained man power, governments policies and planning and attitude of mass towards the education of disabled children. Cooperation and Coordination among international, national & local agencies working in the field is essential for the success and development of inclusive education of disabled. Without ensuring proper planning & policy, infrastructure, manpower, governmental support, community participation, objectives based evaluation, attitudinal changes, appropriate learning material, balanced coordination among concerned authorities and taking care of education of uneducated adult mass it is difficult to manage & develop education of the children with special needs in inclusive education setting.

What is Disability?

It is difficult to define disability in absolute sense as no one is perfectly able to undertake every types of human activities with mastery. Mohan while writing on the black board requested Abraham to write the data on the upper part of the board due to his height deficiency. In the next class when Abraham was to draw a diagram of digestive system on the board he requested to help Mohan with his drawing skill. Again Mohan and Abraham could not manage the class in the absence of the teacher, Alpana taught and managed the class by the monitorial system. All the students during next morning session gave front place to Alam to deliver a speech on democracy and discipline. Ability is not equally distributed, ability is comprehensive and does not allow to specify its limit. The inability to not do a certain piece of work is disability in a sense, and on this line every individual is having some or certain disability. A physically challenged pupil can write faster than the most of the so called normal child, again a blind can sing a song more melodiously than that of an eyed student. A handicapped or hearing impaired may perform some tasks with more ease and efficiency than a psychologically defined normal child.

Above discussion clearly reflects that the disability is relative, task specific, field specific and every human being is disabled in some context or the other. The above discussion does not convey that disability has not been identified and studied psychologically, but relative disability has given a term differently abled by some researchers and scholars (Srinivasan, 2010). Impairment, disability and handicap are used interchangeably, but they are distinct and separate terms. If a child has a physical impairment and is disabled, he/she may not feel handicapped at all. Again a child who has no physical impairment is not disabled may be handicapped. Not every impairment causes disability and not every disability results in handicap. Impairment refers to biological forces, the disability to how a culture deals with impairment and the handicap to how the individual deals with physical impairment. Developmental disorders and behavioral problems are also certain types of disability. We also come across the concepts like intellectual and developmental disabilities. Disability was earlier considered to be a medical problem to be dealt with doctors only. Now it has got developmental and sociological dimensions. The models of disability reflect a paradigm shifts in thinking and understanding of disability. Now social model, with emphasis on environment and social construct, has gained more momentum than the earlier medical model. The UN convention for the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) firmly asserts that disability is a part of human diversity. UNCRPD defines disability as – persons with Disabilities include those who have long – term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (as quoted by Kacker, Stuti, 2013). We can categorize disabled children in some categories as – Blind, Partially Sighted, Deaf, Partially Hearing, Educationally Abnormal, Epileptic, Mal – Adjusted, Physically Handicapped, Affected by Speech Defect, Delicate, etc.

Disability in one context may not be the guarantee of failure in all the fields or area. History reveals that the disabled or differently abled personalities have given more than the normal persons to the mankind. We still remember John Milton, whose blindness could not stop him to enrich English literature. Michael Angelo, Mozart, Newton, Einstein, Darwin were autistic, but their contribution speaks about their relative ability. Beethoven was deaf, Byron got difficulty in walking – but they contributed immensely. Stefan Hawking, Hellen Keller shown their talent despite their relative disability. Of course they all were affected by their body conditions, but they were great in their spirit. It has rightly been discussed that disability is less of a bodily

deprivation and move of a socio-psychological constrain that deprives a person to use his/her full potential. Natarajan, Poonam (2013) has rightly concluded that, "Once evolving capacities are accepted then sky is the limit for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities." It is also true for other types of disability.

Why Inclusive Education ?

No other man made tool is as powerful as the education is. Education is necessary for every type of human development – physical, social, ethical, economic, political, cultural, technological and what not. The development of a society, nation or the mankind is directly linked to the education of the mass. No country and no civilization has got desire change without education. Considering the importance of education Amartya Sen correlated it to development, specially of economic development, to win Nobel Prize in Economics. John Dewey has said that the function of education is to help the growing of a helpless young animal into a happy, moral and efficient human being. Deniel Webster considers function of education to discipline feelings to control emotions, to stimulate motivations and to develop religious sentiments. Ralph Borsodi finds humanization of mankind as function of education. In fact, education performs various functions towards the individual, towards the society and towards the mankind. Primary education is even more important as everybody cannot attain the higher or highest level of education. During infancy and childhood, a human child is like an animal. Education is the tool which prepares the child to lead a group life and to effectively adjust to the human environment. It refines, culturizes, prepares and develops the child. Without education neither individual can grow nor the human civilization can develop.

It is sad state of affair that despite uncounted and unlimited utility of education a large sections of society is uneducated due to some reason or other. Even after understanding the individual and social importance of education, as a powerful tool, the mankind is having a large number of illiterate, uneducated and first generation learners. It has also been identified that there are certain groups, certain sections and certain divisions of society where persons are deprived of education. The concept inclusive education emerges under such circumstances that are making some sections or groups deprived of education. Eradication of illiteracy, universalization of primary education, continuing education, education for all and other similar efforts found that education is not available to everyone and there are certain constrains that are responsible for the non-education of certain groups or sections. It was also found that girls SC, ST, poor, down-trodden, marginalized and disabled children are suffering due to their present social, economical and educational status. Inclusive Education is to attack on such discrimination or deprivation. In fact, Inclusive Education favors selective discrimination in favor of the groups that are lagging in education.

Inclusive Education is based on the idea of eradication of exclusion in education. It is also to meet educational needs of marginalized and uneducated sections of the society. The ideology behind Inclusive education is to check, minimize and eradicate exclusion from education. It is based on the idea of removing factors responsible for exclusion in education to take care of the education to all, specially to the educationally backward. It also puts emphasis on special arrangements & provisions for education of girls, SC, ST, marginalized and disabled children. Tuli, Uma (2013) rightly concludes, "Inclusive education is primarily about restructuring school culture, policy and practice so that it responds to the diversity of students in

the locality. It sees individual differences not as problems to be fixed, but as opportunities to enrich learning and embrace change." Explaining inclusion and equity Nawani, Disha (2013) has also tried to define inclusive education in these words, " 'Inclusion and equity' have several meanings in the context of education – all children, irrespective of their age, gender, region, religion, caste and class etc. are able to access education (complete school cycle) of a formal type as against a part-time, short-term or non-formal education." Kumar, Lalit (2014) has defined inclusive education as, "Inclusive education focuses the participation of every children in education. It conveys that not even a single child should be deprived of education due to any possible reason. It has educational concern for all irrespective of caste, class, region, section, religion, sex, disability, etc."

Literature related to inclusive education reflects that inclusive education is primarily related to the education of the children with disability. BCF (2006) quoting UNESCO's Salamanca conference in support of her view has clearly demarcated inclusive education meant for disabled children, "The term inclusive education is generally used in the context of education of children with disabilities resulting largely due to organ impairment. It is usually regarded as an extension of special education, or the concept of special educational needs or integrated education. While special education refers to the education of the children in separate schools, under integrated education they are brought into mainstream schools. UNESCO's Salamanca conference in 1994 called for the improvement of the general education systems 'to enable them to include all children regardless of individual differences and difficulties'. The framework of action explained the idea of inclusive school as follows: schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote and nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic and cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups the term 'special educational needs' refers to all those children and youth whose needs arise from disabilities or learning difficulties There is an emerging consensus that children and youth with special educational needs should be included in the educational arrangements made for the majority of children. This has lead to the concept of inclusive education (UNESCO, 1994)." Singh, Raman P (1999) by studying the multi-grade schools of South Wales, New Zealand and Australia has also expressed inclusive education in terms of the education of disabled children.

Inclusive Education for Disabled Children

Education of disabled, physically challenged or differently abled children is the responsibility of the society and the concern governments. Inclusive education or inclusive education of disabled children is not an Indian problem, rather the world has identified it as an essential element of human development. Justice Balaskrishnan, KG (2011) in the context of human rights has identified education of disabled as essential element for human development, "The ambit of social justice has gradually expanded to include among other rights, the right to healthcare, education, food, forest rights for indigenous communities, and policy – level interventions in the form of affirmative action for the historically marginalized and discriminated communities. Further, issues of gender, youth and the disabled are also increasingly being viewed as social justice issues requiring policy interventions." Inclusive

education for disabled children is related to the idea that all human beings are entitled to the fulfillment of certain basic needs and rights, regardless of their differences as economy, gender, ethnicity, class, race, disability or health. Inclusive education for disabled children are useful and essential for two important reasons – development and enrichment of Individual disabled children and making him a productive entity for the overall growth of the humanity. Understanding the importance and utility of the education of disabled children International and national organizations have contributed. Society and other non-government organizations have also done much work in this regard. No doubt, it has been undertaken somewhat late, but education of disabled has gained momentum in recent years. In 1948 when universal declaration of human rights was adopted by the UNO civil as well as political rights along with economic, social and cultural rights gained momentum. In the 2001 census India started the identification of disabled children which gave some basic information for the development of disabled children.

Indian constitution takes care of disabled children and focuses on inclusive education directly and indirectly. Article 41 of Indian constitution pronounces that the state, within its limits and economic capacity, shall secure the rights to work, to educate to all including the disabled. Article-21 has made education as fundamental right to the children of 6 to 14 years of age, of course disabled are not exception. Article-15 also states that the state shall not discriminate against any citizen. Focusing the spirit of inclusive education article 29 (2) states that no citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the state. Article-46 also takes care of educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people. The constitutional commitments about inclusive education have been reflected through various commissions, committees and programs of education. Indian Education Commission (1966), National Policy for Children (1974), National Policy on Education (1986), Rammurthy Committee (1991), Program of Action (1992) all advocate inclusive education directly or indirectly. Legislations like National Policies on Disabilities (2006), National Curriculum Framework (2005); Action Plan for Inclusive Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities (2005); National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities (1999); Persons with Disabilities Act (1995) (for equal opportunities, protection of rights & full participation); Rehabilitation Council of India Act (1992); etc are taking care of education of disabled some way or other.

Welfare of persons with disabilities are taken care of by four national institutions – National Institution for the Visually Handicapped, Dehradun; National Institution for the Orthopedically Handicapped, Calcutta; Ali Yuvar Jung National Institute for the Hearing Impaired, Bombay and National Institute for the Mentally Handicapped, Secunderabad. Two institutions – The Institute of the Physically Handicapped, Delhi and The National Institute of Rehabilitation Training & Research, Cuttack are also working in the same direction. Ofcourse these institutions are not directly responsible for the education of disabled, but their contributions have bearing on the education of the disabled children.

In 2007 India has signed the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disability and has committed to provide equal opportunities to all persons including children with disability. The Declaration of the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons (1971); The Declaration of the Rights of the Disabled Persons (1975); National Draft Plan for Education of Handicapped (1981); World Program of Action concerning Disabled Persons (1982); Decade for Disabled

Persons (1983-1992); The Asian & Pacific Decade of the Disabled (1993-2002); The Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All (1990); UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993); Biwako Millennium Framework for Action (2002); World Education Forum (Dakar, 2000); Beijing Declaration of the Rights of People with Disabilities (2000); etc. have given the educational opportunities of disabled children a new dimension. Right to Education, Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan, Mid-day-Meal, Rastriya Madhaymik Shiksha Abhiyan, Operation Black Board, Integrated Education for Disabled children and the District Primary Education Program, etc. have greatly contributed the inclusive education in India, but much needs to be done to take care of the proper education of the disabled children. NGOs are working in this direction, Institution like Amar Jyoti School in Delhi and Gwalior; Action for Ability Development & Inclusion (AADI), New Delhi; Digidarshika Institute of Rehabilitation & Research, Bhopal; Drishtidan, Guwahati; Vidya Sagar, Chennai; National Centre for Inclusion, Mumbai; Blind People's Association, Ahmedabad; Tamanna, New Delhi; etc. are actively engaged for the disabled children, but as per their population demand the efforts are not significantly higher because the census figures of 2001 puts the number of persons with disabilities more than twenty million (Kacker, Stuti, 2013).

What more for Inclusive Education of Disabled Children ?

It is evident from the above discussions that education of disabled children has been taken care of seriously, but India having a large number of disabled needs more to do in this direction. Srinisan, R (2010) has given a figure of disabled in India through his writing, "The disabled in the Indian context usually constitute these four categories : Visually Handicapped, Orthopedically Handicapped, Hearing – Impaired or Deaf and Dumb and the Mentally Retarded. If we include the other categories of the disabled too as recognized in the developed countries, the disabled sector in India will be much larger than what it is supposed to be at present. As per the UN standards, every sixth Indian is disabled in some way or other. It is roughly estimated that less than 10 percent of children and youth with disabilities have access to any form of education." Some steps and measures are to be taken into account to expand the horizon of inclusive education of disabled children as

- * developing policy and planning for inclusion at National and International Level. NCF (2005) has advocated in this context for school education, though it is needed in every sphere of human walk, "A policy of inclusion needs to be implemented in all schools and throughout our education system. The participation of all children needs to be ensured in all spheres of their life in and outside the schools. 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."

- * developing coordination mechanism among international, national and local agencies working for the education of the learners with special needs.

- * managing attitudinal changes among the mass regarding disability and education of disabled. Rai, AS (2011) has lamented about the attitude of mass

towards the education of disabled children, "Disabled children are often excluded from education as a result of society's lack of knowledge about impairments in general, and the negative attitudes and stigma attached to them. Social prejudices assume that children with learning, speech, physical, cognitive, or sensory impairments are unable to participate in education."

* strengthening and preparing government schools for inclusive education of all the marginalized groups under one roof by considering the ideology of multi disciplinary institution and institution for greater specialization. NCF for School Education (2000) suggests, "segregation or isolation is good neither for learners with impairments nor for general learners without impairment. Societal requirement is that learners with special needs should be educated along with other learners in 'inclusive schools' which are cost effective and have sound pedagogical practices."

* focusing education and problems of disabled children through mass media & film to make the public aware about education & educational needs of disabled children. Dhar, Pranjali (2013) has mentioned films like Barfi, Sholay, Koi Mil Gaya, The King's speech, Taare Zameen Par, Black and many others to make the mass sensitive to the problems & educational needs of the disabled children.

* researching for the development of educational structure of learners with special needs.

* employing unconscious, comprehensive and learner friendly mechanism of evaluation. Kumar, Lalit (2008-2009) has rightly suggested proper application of evaluation for the development of mathematics learning at elementary school level. His suggestions for employment of criterion referenced evaluation, internal evaluation, oral evaluation, unconscious evaluation and training the teachers in the techniques of evaluation is relevant for the evaluation of learners with special needs.

* planning & managing for educational setting and for the education of the teachers of differently abled children. NCF for teacher education, draft for discussion (2009) has rightly said in terms of inclusive education, "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 special needs of all learners."

* pairing and grouping differently abled children at times in the normal settings of the inclusive school to inculcate mutual respect and inter – dependence among learners with special needs. Considering the diverse educational need of these children NCTE curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (1996) has concluded, "These children differ from the normal group in their psychological, physiological, sociological, emotional and mental make-up and are also different from one category to the other because every kind of disability is a special problem and calls for its own educational arrangement, with certain broad framework."

* planning and managing for integrated efforts of different ministries of government of India regarding inclusive education of all the marginalised sections of the society. Abidi, J & Sharma, D (2013) has rightly concluded in this context, "What is urgently needed is the political will to ensure that disability is included across all policies, across all Ministries and Departments the nation is not pulling its money where its mouth is." Kacker, Stuti (2013) concludes that some disability related legislations are dealt by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, some by Ministry of social justice and empowerment. Chona, S & Juneja, R (2010) has clearly suggested in this regard, "Issues related to disability should be jointly addressed by Ministry of Health, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of HRD and Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment."

* appointing specialist teachers for disabled in common school system in order to manage the educational needs of the differently abled students.

* managing for application of modern teaching strategies and technologies in education system. Razi, Shahin (2013) has quoted the launch of National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology in February, 2009. He has advocated to address the personalised needs of learners and this may be beneficial for disabled children too. Other related schemes needs to be attached with the education of disabled children. Cooperative learning method may also serve the purpose judicially in this regard.

* managing and checking corruption to get the available resources for children with special needs fully utilized. Sharma, Harikishan (2014) has reported corruption in handicapped related schemes.

* providing supplementary instructional material for the children with special needs.

* mobilizing community resources and parental support for the learners with special needs. BCF (2006) states, "Guardians and other community members can be involved in the management and logistics support to the school either through Vidyalaya Shiksha Samitis or Parent Teachers Association or Mata Samitis or even independently."

* removing attitudinal, social and physical barriers of the learners as far as possible. This is possible only if they participate in the educational process. What is true for inclusive democracy for Chatterjee, MD (2013) is also true to the inclusive education of disabled, "The concept of 'inclusive democracy' stands for participation of all in the democratic process and ensuring that no one should be kept outside that very process."

* taking care of education of the mass, especially of the uneducated parents of the school children. Kumar Lalit (2014) has rightly concluded, "Uneducated weaker sections of the society are not enjoying the benefit provided to them by the government. Right to Education, Mid-Day-Meal, SSA, UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank, European Commission, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, Village

Education Committee, Operation Black Board, Open Schooling, etc. are not doing much due to non-education & exclusion from school education of a large section of the society."

* developing the spirit of inclusive democracy and inclusive society to attain education of children with special needs in inclusive education setting. In this regard Sadashivam, T (2014) has rightly concluded that without economic, social and political inclusiveness inclusive democracy will not be possible in true sense. In fact, without inclusive education it is difficult to attain any type of inclusiveness.

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Contact address of the author

**[Faculty of Education, Patna University, Patna]
C-1/5, Professors Colony,
Saidpur Complex of Patna University,
Behind Rajendra Nagar Stadium,
Patna-800016.**