

# ***THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES***

## **Inclusive Education: Impediment and Interstice Issues in Indian School System**

**Maninder Pal Singh**

Research Scholar, Department of Education, Punjab University, Chandigarh, India

### **Abstract:**

*This paper argues that inclusion is the major challenge facing educational systems around the world. Reflecting on evidence from a programmed of research carried out over the last ten years, it provides a framework for determining levers that can help to ease systems in a more inclusive direction. The focus is on factors within schools that influence the development of thinking and practice, as well as wider contextual factors that may constrain such developments. It is argued that many of the impediments experienced by learners arise from existing ways of thinking. Consequently, strategies for developing inclusive practices have to involve interruptions to thinking, in order to encourage an exploration of overlooked possibilities for moving practice forward.*

**Keywords:** *Inclusive Education, Impediment and Interstice*

### **1. Introduction**

The principle of basic education as a human right has been accepted internationally. However, the experience in many developing countries shows that a large number of children are not able to complete minimum number of school years. They face variety of impediments before coming to school and even within the school. Does 'inclusive education' offer a solution? The paper has attempted a response by analyzing the origin, concept and practices of inclusive education, as also the nature of impediments children, particularly those at risk and from the disadvantaged sections have to confront when they want to access school education.

### **2. What is Inclusive Education?**

An inclusive education is achieved when the education environment of children who have a disability cannot be distinguished from those of others in the school community. The three key components of inclusion are:

#### *2.1. Physical inclusion*

Simply being physically present – attending the local neighborhood school, playing in the same playgrounds, being in the same classrooms and having access to specialist groupings such as art, computer, physical education, at and for the same time as other children. It goes without saying that if the child is not present, then clearly they cannot be included.

#### *2.2. Social inclusion*

Nurturing positive social inclusion is far more complex than the physical presence of a child in the classroom. One can be rejected and lonely even in a crowded classroom. The people who belong in a group are those who share the same experiences as all the other members and any reduction in the amount of shared time tends to place social inclusion at risk.

#### *2.3. Curricular inclusion*

Curricular inclusion requires the involvement of all children in the same daily learning events and as such careful thought and preparation are essential. It is increasingly being recognized that every child is special, with individual skills and needs, and this has to be addressed by the teacher. The child who has a disability highlights the relevance of this issue for all children.

For these three components to come together requires the cooperation of students, parents and teachers, and the support of principals, school communities and the Department of Education.

### **3. Impediments in Schools**

While we cannot neglect the importance of inclusive education it remains unanswered why the practice of inclusive education is presenting problems. It appears that it is both at the level of government policy but rather at the level of implementation. While the policy states that all children should go to school – and governments are enforcing this rule – in many cases quality learning is not taking place, which is contradictory to the ethos of inclusive education. The reasons for the non implementation of the inclusive

education in India, is because of various impediments both external and as well as internal. The external impediments are confronted before coming to and getting enrolled in schools, which includes physical location of schools, non-availability of school, social stigmatization or economic conditions of the learners.

### *3.1. Attitudinal Impediments*

It has been noted that disabled students suffer from physical bullying, or emotional bullying. These negative attitudes results in social discrimination and thus leads to isolation, which produces impediments to inclusion. Regarding disabled children some regions still maintain established beliefs that educating the disabled is pointless. It is sad to note here that these impediments are caused by society, which is more serious to any particular medical impairment. The isolation which results from exclusion closes the doors of real learning. The negative attitudes often develop due to lack of knowledge. Along with information about disability or condition, their requirements must be provided to peers, school staff and teachers as well. Increasing interactions between learners with special needs and community through organization of fairs, meetings etc. It is also very important to counsel the parents of these learners, especially in rural areas about the importance of providing education for developing self-reliant individuals. There is also a need to shift in perspectives and values so that diversity is appreciated and teachers are given skills to provide all children, including those with different learning needs, quality education.

### *3.2. Physical Impediments*

Along with the attitudinal impediments which are faced by the learners on the daily basis, another important impediment is the physical impediments, which includes school buildings, playgrounds, washrooms, library etc. Apart from this, the majority of schools are physically inaccessible to many learners because of poor buildings, particularly rural areas. Since most schools are not equipped to respond to special needs, poses blockage for learners in physically getting into school. For example, many of the students require a personal assistant for such basic activities as taking lunch in recess, personal care, remedial education efforts. Most school buildings don't respond to the requirement of these learners properly. For example, if there is a ramp, sometimes it is too steep, often the doors were too heavy for the student to open unaided which impedes the access.

### *3.3. Inappropriate Curriculum*

In any education system, the curriculum is one of the major obstacles or tools to facilitate the development of more inclusive system. Curriculum includes the broad aims of education and has its implications on transactional and evaluation strategies. In our country of diversity, curriculum is designed centrally, hence which leaves little flexibility for local adaptations or for teachers to experiment and try out new approaches. This results in making the content inaccessible and demotivating. Therefore, the design and development of specific learning and teaching materials and teaching arrangements should take cognizance the needs, interest, aspirations and uniqueness of the learners. Elliot (2002) reports on changes being attempted in American schools where students 'learn social skills and group work in environment that celebrates diversity. 'As a result of the knowledge based curriculum, the examinations are also too much content oriented rather than success oriented which is the demand of flexible inclusive curriculum. Supovitz & Brennan (1997) as cited by UNESCO, 2003 argued that , "while knowledge-based examinations are recognized to have their limitations in terms of both validity and reliability, formal standardized tests may also have adverse effects, such decontextualized facts and skills; ranking and sorting schools and children; narrowing the curriculum as teachers concentrate their teaching on the information, forms and formats required in the tests; and reinforcing bias in terms of gender, race/ethnicity and social class."

### *3.4. Untrained Teachers*

For implementing the inclusive education successfully, it is important that teachers must have positive attitudes towards learners with special needs. But, because of lack of knowledge, education, understanding, or effort the teachers give inappropriate substitute work to the learners, which eventually leads to learners dissatisfaction and poor quality of learning. Another important feature of the schools is high teacher-student ratios (average 1:45) and where it is expected that learners of diverse abilities have to be taught together. At the first place, there is a scarcity of trained teachers to deal with the diversity and secondly, it is very wrong to assume to deal with 45 learners with diversity.

### *3.5. Organization of the Education System*

In our country, there are different types of schools such as private, government; public schools are developing inequality by offering differential levels of facilities and support. Those having an access to private schools have higher possibility of success as compared to those who go to government schools. Therefore, it is important like many developed countries, the common school system policy must be place properly. There is also a lack of information within many systems and often there is not an accurate picture of the number of learners excluded from the school system. Very often this leads to a situation where these learners do not have equal opportunities for further education or employment.

## **4. Interstice for schools**

A successful inclusion experience must be tailored around the strengths and needs of individual students, not around a label or designation. It requires deliberate consideration of the systemic capacity to provide the services that will enable these students to be successful. The Special Education Association (SEA) believes that there are certain, vital components required for successful inclusion. These components include, but are not limited to:

- An accurate understanding of inclusion
- An attitude of acceptance of the inclusion philosophy and the use of this philosophy to guide decision making and practice
- Teacher knowledge and skills that allow for inclusion to be successful
- Adequate student and teacher supports for program implementation

Along with these key components, system structures developed at the school, district and ministry levels are necessary to foster ongoing, long-term commitments to making inclusion work. We support and defend inclusion as a model for our schools and our society, with the knowledge that a concentrated, collaborative effort has to be maintained to ensure its feasibility.

#### *4.1. Understanding Inclusion*

Inclusion is often confused with integration however these terms are not synonymous. Inclusion is a philosophy of belonging that is supported by a number of educational practices. Integration is a practice, a strategy that can be used as one means to facilitate inclusion. Integration is the process of having students participate in regular school programs and interact with same age and grade peers when possible and appropriate. Integration does not mean that a student with special needs will always be placed full time in a regular classroom. Nor does it preclude the use of alternate instructional settings when it is appropriate. It is the participation with peers in the school and classroom community in meaningful ways that is the intent of integration, and this practice fosters the ultimate goal of belonging, of being included.

#### *4.2. Attitudes*

Attitudes on inclusion can serve to support or act as a impediment. For inclusion to work, classroom teachers must be willing to acknowledge their responsibility for the educational program and success of every student in their classroom, including those with special needs. This acceptance is demonstrated by teachers who structure positive and welcoming classroom settings, embrace the value of diversity, and view each student as a contributing member of the group. Inclusive teachers recognize that children have more commonalities than differences. They also have an attitude that fosters problem-solving in order to find ways to create opportunities for all students to participate successfully. Attitudes are influenced by experience. Educational environments that allow for inclusion to be successfully practiced must be created. This goes beyond the classroom to the larger school setting. A positive school climate requires collaborative teamwork that includes a shared staff vision along with administrative support and leadership. Trust among partners is critical to the equation, and this is established when action plans to achieve the goals set for students are supported by adequate resources and consistent professional support. School, district and provincial organizations must be structured to acknowledge challenges and allow for them to be addressed to the benefit of all.

It can be argued that the attitudes of some teachers who were once open to the concept of inclusive education have shifted negatively, due to experiences of constantly trying to make it work with less – fewer supports required to address the challenges of teaching to the range of diversity in the classroom. Nothing motivates like success, and successful experiences are imperative to developing and maintaining a positive attitude toward inclusion and internalizing the belief that inclusion should be the philosophy embraced by our public education system.

#### *4.3. Teacher Knowledge and Skills*

Research demonstrates that it is the classroom teacher who plays a pivotal role in the success of student inclusion, so the knowledge and skills necessary to fulfill this role are crucial. Fortunately, there is a large and growing knowledge base about successful inclusive education practices. Unfortunately, there is evidence to suggest that this information is not being obtained by pre-service or in-service teachers. For example, 43% of a sample of B.C. teachers report feeling unprepared to teach to the diverse range of students in their classrooms. Pre-service teacher training programs should be guided by the philosophy of inclusion and must intensify their focus on strategies for teaching to the range of student abilities that are demonstrated in all classrooms. As well, in-service classroom and specialist teachers need on-going access to professional development that enhances their knowledge about diverse learners and their ability to develop educational programs in response to current research on effective practices.

#### *4.4. Adequate Supports*

The Special Education Association believes that successful inclusion requires multiple, interconnected supports. To this end, the five principles of support that have been approved by the BCTF Council of Professional Specialist Association presidents is a useful model. These principles outline a continuum of strategies (prevention and intervention) which include:

- Professional development to extend teacher knowledge of effective classroom practices
- Manageable class sizes
- Prompt assessment procedures to identify and respond to student difficulties early
- Appropriate interventions
- Access to services from qualified specialist teachers.

### **5. Conclusion**

Disability is seen as a developmental issue in any economy, as the disabled group is often being marginalized due exclusion from the society and thus leading to poverty. Inclusive Education approach doesn't only provide the basic human right to education but also dignity which is often being linked with the socio economic status. Through, inclusive education the learners gets a chance for not only getting into the system but also a support to complete it successfully. Inclusive education results in improved social

development and academic outcomes for all learners as it provides opportunity to get exposed to the real world which leads to the development of social skills and better social interactions. It also provides platform to the non-disabled peers adopt positive attitudes, tolerance.

## 6. References

1. Ainscow, M. (2004). Developing inclusive education systems: what are the levers for change? *Journal of Educational Change*. Retrieved on 31may, 2014 from [http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mel\\_Ainscow/publication/44838506\\_Developing\\_inclusive\\_education\\_systems\\_what\\_are\\_the\\_levers\\_for\\_change/file/5046351e75080afca8.pdf](http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mel_Ainscow/publication/44838506_Developing_inclusive_education_systems_what_are_the_levers_for_change/file/5046351e75080afca8.pdf)
2. Fewster, S. (2006). Inclusion: Making education work for all students. Retrieved 29 may, 2014 from <https://bctf.ca/diversity/BC-projects/SEA-InclusionPaper.pdf>
3. Jha, M.M. (2002). Barriers to Access and Success: Is Inclusive Education an Answer? Retrieved May 29, 2014 from <http://www.col.org/pcf2/papers%5Cjha.pdf>
4. Pivik, J., McComas, J., & Laflamme, M. (2002). Barriers and Facilitators to Inclusive Education, Council for Exceptional Children. 69(1) 97-107. Retrieved 30 may, 2014 from <http://www.itari.in/categories/facilitators/researchbyfacilitatorsforspecialchildren.pdf>
5. Singh, V. (2010). Access to Equality in Education for Children with Disability through Inclusive Education Retrieved 28 may, 2014 from <https://www.google.co.in/#q=Access+to+Equality+in+Education+for+Children+with+Disability+through+Inclusive+Education>
6. UNESCO. (2003). Overcoming Exclusion through Inclusive Approaches in Education A Challenge. Retrieved 28 may 2014 from <https://www.google.co.in/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCYQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.education.gov.za%2FLin>
7. Yadava, S. (2013). Inclusive Education: Challenges and Prospects in India, *Journal of Educationia Confab*, 2(4). Retrieved 28 may, 2014 from <http://www.confabjournals.com/confabjournals/images/652013815205.pdf>