

INCLUSIVENESS IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

UNESCO, Bangkok has given the messages of advocacy for successful inclusive teacher education by the collective discussion from the educationalists of Asia Pacific region. It gives the strategies and documented it through advocacy guides viz., introduction, policy, curriculum, materials and methodology. When we are able to see humanness in every human inclusion takes place normally. Awareness in policy makers, curriculum developers, educational authorities, institution heads, teacher educators will develop a inclusiveness atmosphere in teacher trainees and when they experience the spirit of inclusion it will be easy for them to create an inclusive classroom in their future endeavors. One should be able to differentiate between the exclusion, segregation, integration and inclusion. Flexibility, integrity, self and mutual respect are essential elements of inclusion and this will lead to overall development and happiness.

In inclusion, differences in gender, ability, body, culture, language, nationality, social status are happily working together for the betterment of the humankind. Everyone is able to see the humanness in the differences. As Gandhi quoted “By education I mean an all-round drawing of the best in child and man – body, mind and spirit”-(Harijan,31-7-1937), total inclusion will happen when human come to know that when there is a perfect harmony between body, mind and spirit, human will understand each other and will see that there is no ‘two’ there is only ‘one’ as Adisankaran prophesied.

For perfect implementation of inclusiveness in the society the institution which produces future citizens ie., schools should be inclusive. Before that teachers should experience and motivated to build inclusive classrooms. Pre-service and in-service teachers should get hands on experience and theoretical background of the ethics of inclusion.

As Forlin (2009) says

“It expects that teachers will be prepared to cater for all children in their classes regardless of the learners’ ability, ethnicity, culture, linguistic or social differences.”

All teachers should be trained in inclusive education ie., not only the special educators.

Challenges in the Inclusiveness in Teacher Education:

UNESCO (2013) shows light into the various barriers in the implementation of the Inclusive atmosphere in the Teacher education settings. These guidelines have evolved as a result of the discussions of the educationalists from countries in the Asia-Pacific region. It discusses the whole procedure in 5 Advocacy Guides viz., Introduction, Policy, Curriculum, Materials & Methodology. The following barriers we can identify when thinking in the Indian context. These are taken from school and teacher education institutions.

1. Lack of experienced teacher faculty: In Indian education system a major drawback is that the majority of the teacher educators started their teaching life in the teacher education institutes. They are guiding the teacher trainees without the hands-on experience in dealing with the different age group students in different settings. The only experience they had is their exposure in the Bachelor level training. They are able to teach prospective teachers only what is in the literature not from their own experience. Without experimenting and experiencing by self, how he/she can impart valuable facilitation to the teacher trainees.

2. Lack of Flexibility: Here things planned in a structured manner. I would like to show light on some examples of inflexibility.

Eg.1. Lesson plans: students are asked to follow a pattern instituted by the institute. The lesson plans are very huge and student trainees are wasting their huge time in writing and rewriting the lesson plan in the prescribed form. In the actual practice the lesson plans are not followed. A lesson plan structure which suited to the trainee's aptitude could be given the chance to implement, and it should be precise.

Eg.2: A teacher educator can't take the role of a school teacher: The teacher educators also should get the flexibility to work in the actual school setting.

Eg.3: Centralized Curriculum: Curriculum and the textbooks are made and distributed from a centralized system. Local adaptations and evolving of curriculum is not given the chances.

3. Dealing with syllabus and textbooks with false priority: Textbooks are only a means for the learning. Students are not for the textbook or for the syllabus, but they are for the students.

4. Lack of Precise knowledge about the individual differences: Every child is special. When the child is having major deviation in their behaviour, body or brain then he is more special. When sufficient knowledge and experience about the individual differences is lacking the teachers are unable to understand and cater to their special needs.

5. **Using fear as a tool for discipline and completion of work in time.** Teachers believe that if they allow freedom to the students they will start to walk on their heads and **Students are seen as inferior to the teachers.** The teacher trainees are seen as a human beings inferior to the teacher educators. The same teacher trainees will look at the students as they are inferior to them.

6. **Lack of proper mentality and platform to share the experiences and knowledge:** Success stories and effective strategies are not shared well. Discussion regarding the problems and its solutions is not taking place with cooperation and collaboration.

Solutions for the Successful implementation of the Inclusion in Teacher Education

These are some solutions.

1. **Exposure for Teacher Educators and teacher trainees in general school, special school and Inclusive school settings.** Especially the teacher educators should get opportunities to work, observe and do creative works in three types of school settings with the support of other teachers as well as independently. The learning environment should be in a relaxed mood. The teacher trainees also able to learn by working in these institutions with ease of mind. The preparation of teaching materials, lesson plans, records, etc., should not close their mind in observing and experimenting with creative ideas.

2. **Understanding the basic cry from the learning disabled child “ If I cannot learn the way you teach, will you teach the way I can learn”:** This quotation goes along with another statement ‘Children are not careless, but cared less’. There can be a reciprocal cry from the teachers ‘If I cannot teach the way you learn, will you learn the way I teach’. Every person can learn to learn and learn to teach. So the effectiveness of teacher education will come when the teacher trainees and teacher educators get exposure to learn the way to teach in an inclusive set up.

3. **Create high involvement of the parents, siblings, teachers, peers, other grade peers, other professionals, alumni and digital resources in the learning.** When all people are actively involved in the learning system real education will happen with optimum use of the resources. The curriculum should give options for inter grade learning situations. Parents and siblings can also be involved as well. Parental involvement is seen as a very good catalyst in the education of children with special needs. College PTAs should actively involve in the curriculum transaction. Since teacher education is now Two year programme, there is a better chance of involvement for students of 2-4 batches.

4. **Researches with real intention to social change:** With the appropriate research methods and with real intentions, researches will change problems into opportunities.

5. **Proactive Assessments:** Inclusion promotes formative and authentic forms of assessments. Assessment should help the teacher trainees to reflect and introspect for a good change. There should be options for assessing the teachers also.

6. **Availability of Add-on courses and student exchange schemes:** This pertains to the flexibility and freedom component. Schools as well as teacher education institutes should get more freedom in terms of curriculum design, teacher and student selection, etc. Till the last year the teacher training courses in special education are exclusively for particular disabilities. Now one more special area can be taken. Teachers should get options widen their area of knowledge by flexible attending of trimester courses. Exchange programmes will develop intercollegiate understanding and more.

Conclusion

It is a common trend to see females are more involved in the area of teaching and the majority of the high scoring students is going to opt for other courses. When the nobility of the teachers is raised the teacher education also will regain its inclusiveness. When one is able to include himself, he will be able to include all others. Meditating on the challenges and solutions with the help of yoga will also make wonders. As Confucius quotes “ If one learns from others, but does not think, one will be bewildered. If, on the other hand, one thinks but does not learn from others, one will be in Peril” (Yu, D.2009). Teach for India Initiative, Innovative teacher training initiatives by the Azim Premji foundation, initiatives by NGOs, etc. are giving new hope to the field of teacher education inclusiveness.

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