

The Role of Teacher Training For Inclusive Education In Light of NEP2020

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ABSTRACT

The general viewpoint of inclusive education is to provide for good teaching practices, healthy connection between teacher and the students, to improve the quality of education for “all children” in a regular classroom and help in the development of “All children” in different ways. The concept of inclusion places emphasis on changing the system rather than the child.

The present study was taken up as NEP 2020 deploys focus on gender parity and, constitution of Special Education Zones, standardization of Indian Sign Language. The need to look into the present teacher education programs, the extent to which it prepares Pre service teachers with a focus of achieving the goal of NEP in context of inclusion.

The curriculum of teacher training programs of few courses in Delhi were studied and compared. The results indicated that the teachers teaching in an inclusive school studied the paper on inclusion. The paper with this nomenclature was taught during their training but intense hands on pre-service training regarding needs to be addressed. The students are only taught theory regarding inclusive education rarely do they get an opportunity to visit a school or an NGO. The stakeholders should understand these gaps as a major barrier to the actualization of inclusion at the Pre service teacher education level. To ensure parity between teacher preparation and the realities of inclusive classrooms, changes to the current approaches are essential and indispensable. Given the present situation, without proper attention being given at the pre service teacher education program, a policy on inclusion is hollow.

Keywords: Teacher Education Programme, Inclusive Education, NEP

Introduction

India's concern of Universalizing Elementary Education comes with addressing the issue of access, equity and quality which arises from the worldwide concern on 'Education for All'. The teachers are struggling throughout the world to respond to range of students in the classroom. At the school level, inclusive education seeks to address the learning needs of all with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion. The regular schools with inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discrimination, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all. (UNESCO, 1994). This was further restated in World Education Forum that school should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic and other conditions, (Dakar, 2000). The Indian National Policy on Education (1986, revised in 1992) and National Curriculum Framework (2005) emphasized the need for integration of all children with special needs in the regular schools. Keeping in view the observation of NPE (1986) and 'Persons with Disabilities, Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation Act (1995), Right to Education Act-2009 (RTE Act) and other international developments imposes inclusion of all children in a regular classroom in any school.

The RTE act (2009) implies that education of all children is mandatory and the government is committed to make provision for each child in the age 6-14 in general schools at the elementary level. Inclusive education is the keyword which ensures that all children should learn together. The 'Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)' is an extension of Universal Elementary Education (UEE) focused 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)' to secondary stage. The National Action Plan for inclusive Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities (IECYD) developed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) now Ministry of Education envisages their access and participation in all general educational settings from early child education, through school to higher education. The goal of the Action Plan is “to ensure the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in all available general educational settings, by providing them with a learning environment that is available, accessible, affordable and appropriate.” It indicates that all of them get equal chance for education and play.

The National Curriculum Framework for School Education brought out by National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has made significant recommendation for inclusive schools as a measure towards achieving quality education for all learners. “Segregation or isolation is good neither for learners with impairments. Societal requirement is that learners with special needs should be educated along with other learners in inclusive schools, which

are cost effective and sound pedagogical practices”. Therefore, it promotes participation of all learners without any discrimination in regular schools. It addresses reducing discrimination on the basis of gender, class, disability etc.

Inclusive education means all learners, young people with or without disabilities being able to learn together in ordinary preschool provisions, schools and community, educational setting with appropriate network of support services. (MHRD, 2003).

Inclusion as the process of addressing the barriers to the presence, participation and achievement of pupils in local neighborhood schools. (Anisow, 2003). Therefore, it calls for participation of all children with diversity and supporting diverse needs. The concept of inclusion placed the emphasis on changing the system rather than the child. In order to accommodate children with learning differences our educational system, structure and practices need to shift and become more flexible, more inclusive and more collaborative. This necessitates change and adoption in curriculum, teaching learning process and building a democratic ethos in the school. The index for inclusion is built on the idea of the ‘school for all’, which support education for all children within its local communities. The concept corroborates with the recommendation of Education commission (1964-66) and National Policy on Education (1986) on ‘Common School System’ and ‘Neighborhood School’ and Right to Education (2009). Therefore, every school has to accept inclusion as a basic philosophy or principle and provide space for each child- socially disadvantaged groups (Scheduled caste, scheduled tribes), minorities, disabled, rural poor, urban deprived, girls, disabled etc. Further inclusive education also recognizes that education is broader than schooling and school should support the education within communities rather be seen as its only source.

Teacher Education for Inclusive Education

“The best way to educate a disabled child in a country like ours is to send him/her to a normal school. However, to facilitate that it is important that the existing infrastructure is strengthened and the component on disability in SSA is fully understood and implemented thereafter”. (Chairman, Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), Hindu News Paper, 2004).

National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE), a statutory body in India, is responsible for planning and coordinating development of various teacher education programs. It lays down norms and standards for various teacher education courses, minimum qualifications for teacher educators, course and content and duration and minimum qualification for entry of student-teachers for the various courses. State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) and State Directorate of Education prepare teacher education curriculum at the elementary level for some institutions. Each university develops teacher education curriculum for the courses run under them. The teacher education curriculum both at elementary and secondary level comprises components like theory and practice teaching (Internship -In school). The type and level of the teacher education institutions depends on the structure of the school education.

The pre service teacher education is organized at three levels

- Pre primary teacher education
- Elementary teacher education
- Secondary teacher education.

In the elementary teacher education programme the teachers are prepared for primary/ elementary schools having entry qualification as matriculation/senior secondary. Two year or a four year (B.El.Ed-Bachelor in Elementary Education) elementary teacher education has now become national norms and desired qualification for admission to this course is senior secondary (Arts, Science and Commerce). The two year program leading to a Bachelor of education (B.Ed) degree of a University prepares teachers for secondary stage. The minimum qualification for this course is three-year graduation (i.e. a bachelor degree in Arts, Science, and Commerce etc.)

Handling a child with disability sometimes becomes a challenge for teachers in a regular class, the teachers need to ‘Accept’ the child with special needs in the class. “Preparing all teachers to teach all students” should be the key of all pre service teacher education programs if inclusive education has to be successful. As inclusive education is the acceptance of all pupils in the regular education system and teaching within a common framework. This requires building capabilities of the regular teachers to deal with diversity. According to Florian and Rouse (2009), 'The task of initial teacher education is to prepare people to enter a profession which accepts individual and collective responsibility for improving the learning and participation of all children'.

Pre service teacher education programs should be well equipped so that the student teachers can meet the needs of children with special needs in regular schools. Teacher development has to be the heart of initiatives for developing inclusive practices in schools (Anisow, 2003). This necessitates building competencies of all “regular teachers” to deal with diverse population of students and to learn pedagogical strategies that facilitate the learning of all students in their classroom. The entire teachers need to be prepared who can teach in inclusive setting, meeting the needs of all students. At the root of implementing a public education system that embraces a philosophy of full inclusion is well and appropriately trained teachers and school administrations (Magrab, 2000).

The crux of the entire process of teacher education lies in its curriculum, design, structure, organization and transaction mode and as well as extent of its appropriateness. A professional teacher education program has to be sensitive to changing societal needs and also to school curriculum.

As there is interdependent relationship between school curriculum and teacher education curriculum, they must focus in the following ways:

- Curriculum must create learning opportunities for all knowledge areas related to life and living
- Curricular experiences should be sensitive to social purposive ness reflected by concepts like equality, equity, secularism etc.
- Curricular inputs in all content knowledge areas must address the core values in consonance with the constitution of India. (Panda, 2005)

Various studies indicated that pre-service teachers felt the need for more preparation and experience in order to feel prepared for working with students with special needs. A study by Fayez, Dababneh, and Jumiaan (2011) showed that pre service teachers had strong and positive attitudes about the philosophy of inclusion with respect to children with special needs however the participants showed a narrow understanding of practical skills regarding inclusion when it came to implementation.

In another study by Hodkinson's (2006) the first-year teachers felt their pre service training provided them with a good understanding of the theory of inclusive education but understanding of the practical part was partial. The results implied that even though teacher educators are inclined towards inclusive education they expressed their apprehensions about their own teacher trainees gaining fundamental knowledge and skills of inclusive education as an integral part of their curricula as it is not a compulsory subject.

From the above literature it can be concluded that there is a favorable attitude and concern towards the education of children with special needs in inclusive setup however they need to have adequate theoretical and practical skills. New Education Policy (2016) has the objectives to ensure inclusive quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. How far the teacher education programs will be able to fulfill these goals, one needs to have a closer look.to fulfill this purpose the curriculum of a few teacher education courses in Delhi were studied.

The present paper reflects the extent to which teacher education programme prepares their students for the inclusive classrooms. The following parameters of the curriculum of various teacher education programs were studied -

- University offering the course
- Course
- Title of the paper
- Year/Semester in which course is studied
- Marks allotted (Internal and external)
- Practical Work Method

After taking the details of the curricula of these courses the technique of content analysis was employed.

Sample

The present study reviewed the curriculum of various teacher education programme (B.Ed,B.ElEd,B.A/BSc-B.Ed) for inclusive education of some Universities situated in Delhi and NCR.The curriculum related data was obtained from the websites of most of the institutes. Besides this the faculty members of some institutes were approached for getting the details.

Results and Discussion

For critical reviewing the curriculum of Inclusive Education in B.ElEd(4 year) B.Ed.(2 year)B.A/B.Sc-B.Ed(4 year) were studied. Different components i.e. title of the paper and whether its compulsory or elective, year/semester in which the subject is taught, marks allotted to the subject and practical/activities related to the subject were studied and given in the below mentioned table

Table ACurriculum of various courses in different universities with respect to different parameters

S.No	University	Course	Title of the Paper	Year/Semester	Marks	Practical
1	Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha(GGSIPU)	B.Ed	Creating an Inclusive School	II year (IV semester)	100	No
2	University of Delhi	B.Ed	The Inclusive school	II year	50	Yes
3	University of Delhi	B.ElEd	Special education (Elective)	IV year	50	No
4	GD Goenka University	B.Ed	Creating an Inclusive School	II	100	No
5	KR Mangalam university	B.Ed	Childhood and Growing up(one unit on inclusion)	I year	100	No

6	KR university	Mangalam	B.A/B.Sc- B.Ed	Inclusive Education (Elective)	II year	100	No
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The analysis and review of curriculum with reverence to Inclusive School as a subject tell some significant insights concerning the direction, scope and quality of the curriculum which has been undertaken in various universities. According to Jangira, Singh, & Yadav (1995) the Universities, which do cover some aspects of special/ inclusive education in their teacher training programs, fail to train teachers adequately to work in integrated settings.

Title of the Paper- After reviewing the curriculum of various courses in different Universities it was seen that a paper on Inclusive education is there in four universities. Either this paper is taught in IV semester/II year which is after the internship period. It is compulsory in 3 courses only, It is taught as an elective in two courses or it is part of a psychology paper. The students are taught about the various disabilities, different models of disability, policies and provisions for the disabled. Mostly the curriculum addresses the theme relating to teaching in integrated setting, integrated education, objectives, inclusive schools and special schools. The notion of inclusion or integration as part of curriculum addresses only the disabled ones not any other category of children like autism, various learning disabilities (dysgraphia, dyscalculia), and gifted children.

Practical Work/ Activities- Practical activities help the student teacher to plan as each aspect of the theoretical inputs. Few practical activities like case studies of disabled, visit to special institutions, observation of a special child, which are organized by few states/ provinces. These practical activities should be given some weightage. It has been found that practical work has been included in the curriculum of Inclusive Education in only one University.

Marks Allocation

Besides the difference in nomenclature of the unit/units in some courses some universities use the terminology like learners with special needs, exceptional children, special education. The units also vary in terms of weightage and marks.

The overall study tells that basic knowledge about inclusive education need is meant to be part of all pre service teacher education programs in India. The practical work should be made an essential component of internalizing the theoretical concepts of inclusion In this regard any theory which has a practical component should integrate it with to inclusive education. These activities provide a chance for student teachers to explore their theoretical knowledge base in the field. This Besides these activities, few states have practical activities relating to different school experiences, work education, school community interaction, action research, projects etc. These activities could also be linked to inclusive education.

According to Panda (2005) the fundamental shift in school policy necessitates curriculum reforms at school level, teacher education reforms and building of a support system. Further it requires three fold changes at teacher education level

- Teaching about inclusion
- Re orienting teacher education curriculum-content and process
- Developing inclusive teacher education.

Teacher education as one field of action in which despite continued efforts to enhance its impact potential there is persisting concern to actualize it. Inclusive education requires not a mere rearrangement of existing curricular inputs in teacher education in general and elementary teacher education in particular but demands a clear articulation on the substance on the conceptual contours of teacher education.

Diversity in various forms should be addressed in inclusive education, it should go beyond the arena of disability. Providing quality education to all diverse students should be the aim of teacher education curriculum, its renewal needs to be based on this dynamic concept of inclusive education so as to prepare all teachers more specifically at elementary level. There is need for operationalizing, humanizing and evolving indicators for inclusion and give support to strengthen capacity at all level of teacher education institutions.

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