



### Short Review Paper

## Teacher education program for enhancing inclusive education in India: an overview

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### Abstract

*Inclusive education is globally recognised philosophy of attaining justice, equity and quality education for all children including the children with disability who are traditionally excluded from mainstreaming education. Numerous policies have been formulated for promoting education in India and as fundamental rights, inclusive education is considered and affirmed in Indian constitution, Part IX, Article 45. Teachers are essential component to ensure quality environment for inclusive classroom. National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009) emphasized on equality and learners' achievements are determined by teacher competence, skills and knowledge. With increased complexity in educational environment, teachers are facing various challenges which require theoretical and practical knowledge of teachers to shape potential behaviour of learners. Teachers with experience of teacher training program should be skilled in teaching learner with or without disability in same classroom environment. But still, inclusive education is not a compulsory component of teachers' education curriculum due to which they lack in opportunity of dealing with multiple disabilities. As inclusive education is inadequately addressed in teachers' educational program, the pre-service training also provide only theoretical knowledge of inclusive education but not the practical skills related to handling special needs children within inclusive set up. The recent trend of special education is integrated as well as inclusive education which indicated a need to reorient the common teacher training programme. The New Education Policy (2016) also focused on reviewing the B.Ed. regular programs related to inclusive education in order to have quality education. So in order to have effective inclusive classroom, there is a need to change the current approaches in theoretical educational curriculum for teachers and more focus should be given to practical part of inclusive education.*

### Keywords:

### Introduction

In the period of education for all, it is very important to involve those also who are somewhat lacking behind. In this, children having some disability hold a main category.

The special need children are frequently excluded from schools due to negativism and non inclusive systems. Thus creating an education opportunity for special needs children is very crucial in order to foster their development and provide environment for growing up to their full potential which helps in achieving the 'universalization of education' goal.

### Concept of Inclusive Education

Globally 'Inclusive Education' is recognized as a philosophy of accomplishing justice, equity and quality education for all children, including children who are traditionally left out from mainstreaming of education due to their gender, disability or any attributes. Thus Inclusive education can be defined in numerous ways that indicates the learning needs of the disabled children.

UNESCO<sup>1</sup> defines Inclusive Education as a way of addressing and countering the various needs of all learners with increasing their participation in learning and decreasing exclusion from education. The principle of 'Inclusive Education' was accepted at the "World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality" at Salamanca, Spain in 1994 (UNESCO)<sup>1</sup>. It is based on the principle that appropriate learning environment should be provided to all children regardless of perceived difference or disability<sup>2</sup>.

Inclusive education aims promotion of child-to-child learning along with parents and community participation in planning as well as execution of services generally for all children particularly including disabled children also. 'The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities'<sup>3</sup> is an global treaty of human rights proposed to protect the rights and self-esteem of disabled persons that give clear reference towards ensuring the inclusive systems in education.

Numerous policies have been formed for promoting education in India and as fundamental rights, inclusive education is considered and affirmed in Indian constitution. 'National

Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)<sup>4</sup> with UNICEF<sup>5</sup> launched 'Project Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC)<sup>6</sup>' in the year 1987, for strengthening the incorporation of learners with disabilities in formal schools<sup>7</sup>. The Indian constitution states that "Persons with disabilities are not excluded from general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary or secondary education on the basis of disability".

'The National Policy on Education (1986)<sup>8</sup>', and 'the Programme of Action (1992)<sup>9</sup>', 'District Primary Education Programme' (DPEP)<sup>10</sup> and 'National Curriculum Framework' (2005)<sup>11</sup> focussed on the necessity of integrating children with physical and mental disability in general society as identical partners and for preparing them for normal growth and facing life challenges with determination and confidence<sup>12</sup>.

### Teacher Education for Inclusive Education

Teachers always have an important and decisive role in making the processes of inclusive culture in teaching learning environment. For success of inclusive education, it is extremely vital to maintain positive attitude of teachers and other stakeholders for inclusion. Inclusive education will not be successful if there is a lack of the enthusiastic support of stakeholders. Preparing teachers for inclusive classroom is a challenge in front of teacher education institutions. Teacher education curriculum plays vital role in preparing teachers for embracing inclusive education for providing learning environment besides curriculum that could meet needs of all learners. It requires knowledge, skills and commitment of teachers which are important factors to achieve inclusion goals in education. The 'teacher training programmes' is very effective in making teachers skilled for teaching all learners including learners with disabilities in same classroom. Teachers have important role in shaping potential behaviour of learners which enables them to face the challenges of life constructively. So it can be said that the development of teacher is a core initiative for implementing inclusion in schools<sup>13</sup>.

According to survey of UNESCO (1995)<sup>14</sup> which was done in 63 countries globally, it was acknowledged that integrated and inclusive education were developing trends practised in few countries including support of teaching in regular classes and establishing resource-room facilities<sup>15</sup>.

In India, for pre-service training, the National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE), responsible for planning along with coordinating various teacher education programme in the country and laid norms and standards for teacher education courses, minimum qualifications for teachers; courses, contents, duration with minimum qualification for the various courses<sup>16</sup>. The Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programme is a professional course preparing teachers.

Various teacher training programmes are executed under 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan'<sup>17</sup> orienting teachers for Inclusive Education. There is no need to highlight the fact that teacher education curriculum do not enable them to be prepared for classroom with inclusive setup. The teachers' education degrees or diploma only offer "Education of children with special needs" as an elective subject, for preparing teachers to diagnose disability<sup>18</sup>. According to the B.Ed. revised syllabus since 2008-2013, in 'Pre-Service Teacher Education Programme'<sup>19</sup>, there will be no optional and core paper of inclusive education. Only two courses covering various topics or contents of inclusive education<sup>19</sup>.

The analysing curriculum of B.Ed. with respect to Inclusive School as a subject indicated that Inclusive Education is not compulsory subject in certain B.Ed. colleges due to lacks in fundamental knowledge and skills among teachers like understanding of needs and abilities of special need children, the use of suitable means and format of communication, educational methods and materials for supporting learners having disabilities. Along with this, pre-service teachers usually have inadequate exposure to work with special need children which affect experience of teachers<sup>20</sup>. It is also found that Universities covering certain aspects of 'Inclusive Education' in teacher training courses also fails in training teachers sufficiently for working in integrated setup due limited information related to practical strategies of inclusion<sup>21</sup>. The B.Ed. curriculum stressed mainly on theory part of Inclusive Education while ignoring incorporation of theory with skill-building with practical exercise which makes the teaching incomplete and inadequate.

As pre-service teachers have positive attitude for children with disabilities, but they do not feel equipped for teaching exceptional needs students due to absence of resources like equipment, materials education and lack of knowledge and skills needed for disabled children education in regular classroom required for their inclusion<sup>22</sup>. The current skill levels of regular school teachers of primary and secondary level teaching learners with disabilities in inclusive education settings and found that about majority of the teachers neither had training in special education nor they had any kind of experience of teaching special need children<sup>23</sup>. Additionally, eighty per cent of the teachers did not have approach for any support services in the regular learning environment. There is an inadequate theoretical and practical skills among teacher educator who can deliver knowledge of inclusion to trainees regarding handling disabled children in Inclusive setups. For ensuring quality education and lifelong learning opportunities, New Education Policy in 2016 frame an objective of reviewing the current B.Ed. regular programme regarding inclusive education.

### Conclusion

Finally, it could be concluded that inclusion is considered as a process not a program. This is a process consisting of

continuous elimination of barriers of restricting the special need children participation in a system. There are numerous published works on how to create effective inclusive settings. For effective inclusion in education, there is a need to have proper teacher training about inclusive education for preparing them. The teachers need to have knowledge of content and best practices. The curriculum of pre-service teachers regarding Inclusive Education must undertake certain issues such as inclusive education concept, its training, sensitization, types and level of disability, causes of disabilities, teaching techniques, learning disabilities, and rules & regulations for individual with special needs. The National Knowledge commission<sup>24</sup> in 2009 has also emphasized that training of teachers should not be understood in finite time period terms whereas it should be considered as a process due to that the teaching quality as well as learning in regular classroom could be improved frequently. Along with this, there is need to strengthened teachers' training programmes regarding inclusive education.

**Recommendation:** For developing human resources in education field, pedagogy and training need to be done at the pre-service as well as in-service levels both. The 'Inclusive Education' should be made a compulsory subject for all teachers as an integral part of teacher training curriculum. To the in-service teachers, need based training should be provided on inclusive education and strategies on curriculum and essential modification with respect to nature and types of disabilities need to be demonstrated in the classroom only for making is easy for teachers to understand its application. The principles of Inclusive Education need to be put into all training. The fundamental knowledge and skills of inclusive education should be provided extensively to teachers. There is a need to reinforce with required modification in the existing curriculum of B.Ed. in respect of inclusive education courses with focus on its practical aspects. There should be collaboration of educators that could facilitate inclusion by understanding the needs which could be promoted in the Teacher Training Programme. Hence, teachers' preparation for Inclusive Education at the pre-service levels as well as their continual improvement at the in-service levels is important for achieving the goal of 'Education for All'.

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