

LIFE SKILL BASED EDUCATION: AN APPROACH TO PROMOTE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Abstract

Life skills include the abilities, attitudes, skills and knowledge which a human being required to live his life happily and peacefully. These skills help the individual; to act empathetically, to think critically and to response to the diversity in an equitable manner. Diversity is seen in every sector of the society. Inclusion is considered as a process of including the children with diversity in normal classroom settings. The inclusion promotes the diligent assistance of the learner (with or without disability) as the leading objective rather than mere placement or settlement. It also emphasizes the need for changes within the education system and the school to accommodate the learner. Schools itself has to adopt various approaches for successful inclusion and probably the best approach is life skill based education which can transform the vision and mentalities of the young generation (teachers as well as students) regarding inclusion. A relevant curriculum with a life skill approach can help in motivating pupil teachers by providing not only the practical skills needed for everyday life but also the cognitive self-management and social skills which are required for inclusion. Teachers can use a range of specific strategies preferably the life skill based instructional strategies for inclusion in the classroom.

Keywords: Life skills, Inclusive Education, Adapted Curriculum.

Authors

Ms. Rajwinder Kaur

Research Scholar
Department of Education
Guru Nanak Dev University
Amritsar, Madhya Pradesh.

Dr. Gagandeep Kaur

Assistant Professor
Department of Education
Guru Nanak Dev University
Amritsar, Madhya Pradesh.

Inclusion of all children, without objectivity, and unfairness into regular or general schools is the primary objective of the inclusive education. Change in orthodox attitude of society against distinctive treatment of education for children with diversity is now seen and perceived as a positive change in the perspective and behavior of the society. It calls for a respect of difference and celebration of distinctiveness (Mitiku, 2014). It not only accommodates children with diversity in the regular or general school rather it goes beyond that. Its focus is on creating environment responsive to the differing developmental capacities, needs and potentials of all children. Inclusion is more than integration and is not just about including students with disabilities into mainstreaming. According to Wondwosen, 2014, “ Inclusive education develops the insight that all children have individual needs, and that teachers who are trained to facilitate an inclusive classroom, can better meet the needs of all children.” Therefore, it can be explained as a shift in service from simply trying to fit the child into “normal setting”, to trying to change the system of education to accommodate the child. Development of an inclusive and equitable education system requires the vision and perspective that students’ problems arise from aspects and structure of the education system itself, including: current ways and means of organization of education systems, the forms of teaching that are provided, the teaching learning environment, and the ways of assessment and reporting of students’ progress. The most important factor to be considered is to transform the positive attitudes and visions into tactile form and considering diversity not as a problem, but as a condition for the maximization and enrichment of the learning opportunities. This diversity can act as motivation for discoveries and innovations that can provide benefit to all learners, irrespective of their individual features, personality traits and family environment. Integrating the principles of equity and inclusion into education involves:

- Acknowledging the physical presence, involvement and academic achievement of all learners, irrespective of their issues and concerns.
- Recognizing the diversity and valuing that how they live happily with such diversity.
- Identification, collection, verification and comparison of fact based evidence on children’s barriers to their access to education, specifically to those who are under the risk of exclusion.
- Building understanding among masses that inclusive education system can motivate the society for promotion of gender equality, producing trained and capable teachers, development of effective curriculum and conducive learning environment for all the children despite of their disability.

All these efforts will definitely improve the standard of inclusive education particularly in India. Community stakeholders should participate in policy framework to improve the conditions for inclusive learning and empirical study and research on the principles of inclusion and equity is required for effective implementation of all the policies formed by the government and society to promote inclusive education.

I. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

It was the first time that the term inclusive Education was used when a world conference entitled special needs education: access and quality was held in Salamanca, Spain in the year 1994 and later on in the year 2000, World Education Forum (Dakar, Senegal 2000) suggested that governments should plan and prepare strategies for inclusive education

system on priority basis. United Nation's Standard Rules on Equality of Equalization of Opportunities for all further supported inclusive education. According to UNICEF, 2007 and the Jometin World Conference (1990), Inclusive Education (IE) is defined as a way of engraving the varied needs of all children by adjusting the learning environment. It means admitting and teaching the child into the class which is appropriate to his/her age group by seeking the support from society.”

Inclusive education is an approach that provides greater opportunities to all students for academic and social achievement. This includes the provision of all kind of social, cultural and recreational activities for children with diverse needs.in the year 1987, National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in collaboration with UNICEF initiated a project for disabled children for the inclusion of children with diverse needs into mainstreaming. From time to time the concept of inclusive education has broadened from mere integration to inclusion of all kind of children. National Curriculum Framework (NCF-2005) emphasized on the strong foundation of the curriculum in such a way that special children be integrated in mainstream schools through an organized and structured programme that boost the confidence and value of each child and provide enormous opportunities to all children to experience dignity and respect.

II. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIA: A RETROSPECT

India is known for its diversity due to varied number of languages, culture and religions and its social system has been stratified on the basis of caste and class system (Bhoje, 2017). India is leading nation over the globe in case of its population and approximate 20 percent of its population has not access to education. The purpose of inclusive education is to provide support to the students. The achievement of the primary purpose of inclusive education seems to be more difficult as schools are not entertaining students with diversity and variedabilities. According to Census of India (2011), “The number of people with disabilities in the country is 26.5 million, or roughly 2.1% of the total population.”

According to a survey report, “In India, number of people suffering from any kind of disability is around 30 million. Approximately 10% of the population of the entire world lives with a disability, out of which 80% of the population belong to developing countries. Furthermore 75% of people with disabilities live in rural areas in India.” Since independence the Government has framed a number of policies for education of children with diverse needs. But the effective implementation of those policies has been hindered by various challenges and factors. Some of those factors are: Physical settings of the classroom, behavior and competence of the teachers, strategies for the curriculum framework and pedagogy (Soni, Lynch etal,2020).

- The basic challenges are: unavailability of required human and material resources, unfavorable attitudes of all stakeholders like teachers, parents, non-disabled peers and their parents.
- Despite of all the efforts made by Government of India, effective promotion of inclusive education seems to be a tedious task.
- In poverty-stricken areas, the rate of drop out is getting higher due to lack of facilities and awareness. Moreover, students are compelled to drop the schools due to

economic reasons. They have to indulge themselves in any kind of employment which in turns also lead to the child labor.

- Lack of proper training to teachers is also considered as a major challenge because teachers are not aware about the methodology to handle special children in normal classroom settings and moreover they are not able to accommodate the curriculum according to the varies needs of the children.in his research Das, Kuyini and Desai (2013) studied about the training and skill development level of the primary and secondary school teachers and reported that around 70% of the school teachers had neither received any kind of training for special education nor they knew how to handle support and assistive aids in their classrooms.”
- Non-disabled peers usually don't have a positive attitude towards special need children and such children become a source of bullying and teasing for the whole class.
- Majority of the teaching and non-teaching staff in India are not properly trained to design and implement inclusive education practices for mainstreaming of the children with diverse needs in normal classroom settings (Myreddi& Narayan, 2000).

These all variables should be controlled directly. Awareness of human rights and publicity of inclusive education can be proved as a effective solution to deal with above mentioned challenges .To meet the challenges, the involvement and support all stakeholders related to inclusive education is necessary for the development of better educational opportunities to all. Such an educational plan is required for inclusive classroom which is activity oriented, learner friendly and practical based which can fill the children with disability with immense joy so that they feel themselves involved in the whole teaching learning process. As the paradigm of education has shifted from the mere instructor to facilitator and guide, more responsibility of implementation of inclusive education lies on the shoulders of the teacher. So the much responsibility of proper implementation of inclusive education policies lies on the shoulders of the teacher. The teacher should be trained in a manner that required skills can be inculcated and visions and mentalities can be changed.

Reforms and revisions are required in teaching profession like change in working conditions, and moreover curriculum in-service and pre-service teacher training have to be revised according to the changed vision and scenario. Actually, teaching and academic skills have been considered as the primary goal of the teacher education while social and moral objectives are usually been unnoticed (Dyson, 1999). Earlier in traditional teacher training programme curriculum is devised keeping in view the division of normal and special children. As a result curriculum of present teacher education is not able to cater the needs of children with diversity. Still it is considered that the teaching to disable children is the task and responsibility of special educator. Therefore, new curriculum of teacher education need to be developed (Lingard& Mills, 2007).

III. DEVELOPMENT OF AN APPROPRIATE LIFE SKILL BASED TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM

Principles of inclusion and equity can be enacted with in the education system with the effective curriculum framework. Developing a curriculum that include skills and practical work needed to teach all type of learners can satisfy the needs and demands of inclusive education. Teachers dealing with diverse children required to develop such techniques and

strategies that help them to create a unique educational environment in school. Teachers are required to combine their teaching competence with the inclusive education practices (Lakkala&Maatta, 2011). The curriculum for teacher education programmes should be carefully developed which includes skills attitudes and visions need to teach for all types of learners .The Government and various stakeholders of education are trying to uplift teacher education system with inclusive education focused curriculum. Therefore the burgeoning need is to introduce life skills based education as a course in teacher education curriculum both in pre-service and in service teacher education. Education development authorities of all the countries are in a view to produce competent and professionally sound teachers for secondary level. So are trying to develop need-based, rational curriculum frameworks for teacher education at secondary. To move along with the changing global trends, majority of the nations are in a process of developing Life Skills based integrating curriculum to at all levels of teacher training programmes for the optimal growth of the teachers and the society.

Life skills have been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as “abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life”. These skills actually lead to the development of psychosocial skills among individuals involving critical thinking, creative thinking, managing emotions etc. Practice of life skills can bring qualities like self-esteem, sociability and tolerance, action competencies among the teachers to decide what to do in a special situation and how to teach in an inclusive classroom

IV. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF LIFE SKILL BASED EDUCATION

Life Skills-Based Education (LSBE) is now playing a crucial role in growth and development of child and health promotion across the globe. A brief history of life skills based education showed that from the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (1986) to the United Nations in Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989), Jomtien Declaration on Education for All (EFA)(1990) , Dakar World Education Conference (2000) United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on HIV/AIDS (2001), UNGASS on Children (2002), World Youth Report (2003), World Program for Human Rights Education (2004), UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (2005), UN Secretary General’s Study on Violence Against Children (2006) and the World Development Report (2007) all emphasized on the life skills based education and considered life skills as essential learning tools for better survival, better aptitude development and a better life. (Munsi and Guha, 2014).

Adolescence age is considered as a crucial life span of any human being as this age is featured with rapid psychological and physical changes which may deviate them from the achievement of their actual objectives of life and they may indulge themselves in anti-social activities like Drug Abuse and sexual activities. Teachers can play an important role in personality grooming of the students through proper guidance and counseling and through the development of necessary life skills in them.

Life Skills-Based Education is related to the development of right kind of attitudes, knowledge and skills among the students so that sensitivity level can be maintained and remarkable behavioral changes can be brought so that inclusive practices can be implemented properly. Life skills should be developed from the early age and primary level curriculum should be incorporated with some activities which can develop life skills among them in the

normal teaching learning environment. Keeping these in consideration, integration and incorporation of life skills in primary and secondary level curriculum has become a recent global trend.

The National Curriculum Framework-2005 & NCFTE (2009) considered that the adolescence education and Life Skills education should be linked together. Adolescence education programme focused on enhancing life skills among the adolescents for the development of required skills like thinking, social and emotional skills both for the children with or without disability. The NCF (2005) emphasized that the AEP should not be a crucial part of the school curriculum and it should not be practiced separately. There should be some mentors or nodal teachers in every schools and it should be the responsibility of nodal teachers for implementation of life skill based education to the secondary school students. Cascade Training model should be used to train the nodal teachers and interactive methodologies be used.

V. BENEFITS FOR TEACHERS

1. **Change in Perspective of Teachers:** Life skill based education will change perspective of the teachers to view their teaching in a more critical way, supporting an increasingly self-reflective teaching practice. The shift from a teacher-centered to a more student-centered classroom will inspire some teachers to discover a new role of the teacher and made them more attentive to the needs of the children.
2. **Self-Reflection:** The different perspective will be brought to the teachers through the life skill based curriculum. The openness and the freedom being offered by life skill education may encourage many of them to experiment and adapt. Teachers will enjoy a new school environment through their changed vision
3. **Adaptation to Students' Needs:** Teachers will realize that they need to focus more on their students' needs. Clearly, it is easier to adapt teaching to students' needs if you know them better. By putting the students at the center of attention and giving them the opportunity to talk and reflect about themselves and their surroundings, life skill based education will offer teachers a precious insight into their students' world, making it easier for them to adapt their teaching to their students' needs). Student-teacher communication and classroom atmosphere

Teachers will become more attentive to the aspect of teacher-student. Teachers will listen more attentively to students and will encourage them, especially, to express their opinions freely and without fear of mistakes. The importance of making students feel accepted as they are, regardless of their school achievement and behavior was also mentioned as an insight. These aspects will have a positive effect on classroom atmosphere and ultimately on student learning. Teaching life skills will help most of the teachers get to know their students better, in terms of their background but also with regard to the way they learn and their learning needs.

4. **Home-School Partnership:** Teachers act as an agent for dissemination of knowledge among masses. Through life skill based training teachers can develop a better home school partnership by developing a good rapport with the parents of diverse need student s and can change their attitudes regarding disability.

VI. CONCLUSION

Quality education equipped with life skills should be given at all levels of teacher education so that they can face the challenges of inclusive education and can fulfill the requirement of inclusion of children with diversity in mainstream. A well-structured programme of life skill based education should be framed to satisfy needs and outcome based participatory learning which aims at increasing positive and adaptive behaviors among individuals on different psycho-social skills. Integration of life skills into formal education system can help in the determination of sense of equality, realities of schools, capacity of teachers and social system of a country. Training of life skills is an effective way to empower the youth to think positively, behave sensibly, to take initiative control over the unfavorable situations. The method generally used in teaching of life skills in secondary level and as part of teacher education curriculum involves the process of participatory learning techniques like role playing, debate, declamation, educational games, cooperative learning techniques, storytelling and simulation gaming etc.

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