
EDIFYING PEDAGOGUE TOWARDS INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

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Abstract

Human variations and differences are natural and they bestow to the richness of every society. And amongst these variations are humans from slums and those known to be not fully abled. Following the tune of legislative rights, if we aim to give education to one and all, such variations must of course be echoed in schools. So the onus to ensure that these diversities are admired in teaching learning scenarios too, the educational institutions has to plan the opportunities for their equal participation for all. In this context inclusive education has gained currency. Inclusive education has emerged as an international buzzword over the past two and a half decades and is being promulgated as a means of addressing miscellaneous needs in schools. The inclusion of students with special needs education especially those who needs specialized skills and technical support give more rising challenge to the training of teachers to handle such diverse children. Structurally classrooms are inclusive to some extent, but practically they are not and teachers at the present day struggle to include equally 'all' students in the learning process. In some countries the initiatives towards inclusive education are greatly being implemented. But in the nation like ours still paucity is seen. Teachers play a critical role in shaping potential behavior of learners, so they must have capacity to create an inclusive learning environment. This paper focuses on the challenges confronted by the teachers and equipping the teachers with modern means to face and handle an inclusive classroom in India.

Nobody is superior, No body if inferior,

But nobody is Equal either.

People are simply unique.

You are you. I am I. (Osho)

How dull and grey this world would have been if everybody were the same – dressed the same, thinking the same, liking the same thing and with similar goals and desires. So, diversity is a wonderful spice of life. The diversity is valued by the nature as well. The genes and the environment do not concocts similar human beings. An element of individual differences is there. We, as humans do inherit certain traits from our parents via genetic codes, but due to intervening impact of socio cultural environment, we are not exactly like our parents and also our parents are not exactly like our grandparents.

These natural human variations that are enriching every society, has to be reflected in schools. Education is critical for growth of any society. It is the most effective vehicle of socio economic empowerment. And growth is meaningful and sustainable only if it is inclusive i.e. contributed and enjoyed by all (Kacker & Kumar, 2014).The recent years have seen a growing urgency for providing education for all children. The Constitution's 86th Amendment act, 2002 inserting Article 21- A, making education for all children in the age group of 6 – 14 years as a fundamental right or be it EFA i.e Education For All – a global

movement led by UNESCO, aiming to meet the learning needs of all children and adults. These provisions imply that education now a day is no longer a privilege for a few lucky ones, but has become a fundamental right of one and all.

Education is now not restricted to only those who are capable of going to normal or general schools, having at least an average intellectual ability and other features that seems fit to gain school experience. The others who are different from them by means of Intellect, Physique, Society and economic status should not be deprived of learning and availing other experiences at schools. Thus arises the concept of Inclusive Education - A vehicle with schools to provide quality education to all pupils regardless of their varying abilities.

Social, economic and political inclusion of persons with disabilities is now a part of the international human rights movements, which has been emerging and developing throughout 20th century. There have been shifts in the ways of thinking about disability. No longer is disability a matter of deviance, deficiency or disease and the pathology of individual or his family. Rather it is today considered as pathology of society, and a matter of environmental and societal failure. (Rioux, 2001)

The diversity in the classroom continues to expand as SSA adopts Zero Rejection Policy and the large number of out of school children, including children with disabilities is now added to the burgeoning school population. Classroom teaching is at the heart of inclusive practices as it directly impinges on every pupil. In fact the success of inclusion lies in the hands of the classroom teachers who plan for the success of diverse learners. So here are 6 M's that needs to be indoctrinated in the present day teachers, so as inclusive classrooms can be practically be effectuated.

Edifying the Pedagogue with 6 M's

M1: Mind

The mind's of the teachers needs to be trained towards inclusive culture. Unless and until they are mentally prepared to take up the challenge, all the efforts may go futile. So, in its tune we need to address:

- Awareness: Being aware about the special needs of children with disabilities, the necessary modifications in class curriculum, and the awareness about the need for extra input are all significantly essential for teachers to be able to be truly inclusive in the type of education they impart. When teachers are aware and well informed about the concept of inclusion, they feel more confident about the roles they need to play in the classroom. A lack of awareness and skill to include and support students with disabilities along with other children in such a process. (Maheshwari & Shapurkar, 2015)
- Values: The inclusive values needs to be infused in the would be teachers. Inclusive Education should be introduced as a compulsory subject rather as an optional one. Because taking up this theme as a special module can give impression the Inclusive education differs from the normal education and thus it is not the responsibility of all the teachers.
- Attitude: Attitudes have a powerful influence on behavior. Teachers' thoughts and beliefs about inclusion impact their behavior in the classroom. Teachers' beliefs about their ability to succeed in teaching in an inclusive setting, or their sense of self-efficacy, also impacts on teaching behaviors. If teachers do not think that they are

able to meet the needs of all students in the regular classroom, they may not invest the time and effort required to develop knowledge and skills in inclusive education. (Graham & Scott, 2016)

M: 2 Masters/ Mentors

The Masters or Mentors who will act as a task force to train the inclusive minds has to be focused upon.

- **Involve special ones in Teacher's Training:** Teacher training has to be designed with esteemed support and co-operation of different stakeholders. But often lack of experience and dearth of working with disabilities necessitates the representation of people with disabilities and disabled people organizations (DPO's). So one way could be to involve people with disabilities or DPO's in teacher training. They could be involved in policy discussions on educational strategies, curricula development and actually teacher training.
- **Chaining:** A core group of teachers can be trained in well methodical manner, with all the required competencies to deal with an inclusive classroom. Further this trained genus can in turn train further a group of teachers. In developing countries like ours, this chain is one of the most cost effective manners to reach a large group of teachers.
- **Mentoring:** The new teachers in the field must participate and trained under the accompaniment and mentoring of the experienced teachers in order to learn consolidation of an inclusive vision.

M: 3 Methodology

The props that needs to be positioned in the hands of teachers in inclusive classrooms are utmost important too.

- **Ask & Ask:** The teachers who are actually on an encounter in inclusive classrooms should collect information about student's prior knowledge, educational experience and personal experience that may impact their learning. Asking on one to one basis can provide honest and accurate feedback. They may inquire about the comfort and discomfort of the special students by way of questionnaire or verbal conversation.
- **Strategies:** The teaching learning strategies may act as gun powder in the hands of teacher. Collaborative learning, Peer tutoring, Multisensory learning, Reflective Teaching, ICT based helping devices, Multi-age Groupings, Project-based Learning, Advanced Planning and Creative Problem-Solving are few of the techniques which can be utilized authentically.
- **Research:** Woodward (1993) pointed out that there is often a cultural gulf between researchers and teachers. Researchers may view teachers as unnecessarily conservative and resistant to change; whereas, teachers may consider researchers unrealistic in their expectations and lacking in understanding of the school system and culture. The teachers must be motivated to carry out research in the field of inclusive education. This shall ensure that research questions are grounded in practice.

M: 4 Match Ups

For the success Inclusive education, participation and involvement of different stakeholders is mandatory. So the teachers have to be in regular contact with:

- Parents of the special children
- Social Workers
- Psychologists
- Local education authorities and School Boards
- Community
- Therapists

M: 5 Models

No doubts teacher has to be a role model for her students in a classroom. But while teaching in an inclusive classroom, time to time a teacher needs to give few exemplary figures from around the world that defeated their disability and excelled in varied fields. Be it, Physicist Stephen Hawking, Famous Classical Dancer Sudha Chandran who dances on one artificial leg, One of the most successful actresses who was deaf, Marlee Matlin, U.S President Franklin Delano Roosevelt who was a wheel chair User and many such geniuses.

M: 6 Myths

There are few myths around that needs to be demolished from the minds of a teacher, who's going to deal in an inclusive classroom: (Gupta, 2016)

- Myth that normal school teachers will not be able take proper care of disabled children
- Myth that Inclusion has to have a continuous support of well resourced specialist services
- Myth that inclusion is only for rich countries
- Myth that disabled children are infectious

These 6M's if infused in the prospective teachers, the vision of inclusion can actually be realized. The agglomeration of theories that has been piled up regarding inclusive settings, is absolutely feckless unless put into shape by the teachers. So, it is the teachers who are shouldered the responsibility to mould up the upcoming generation and if we are able to modify our teachers disposition towards inclusive perceptions, we can boast to have won have the battle.

"...all children have stories to tell; try to listen.

All children have fears; try to erase them.

All children have abilities; try to nurture them."

(Carol Garhart Mooney)

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