

Inclusive Education



The Future is Here

Inclusive Education – The Future is Here

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Contributors and Credits

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✓ **Making Education Truly Inclusive - Some Personal reflections**

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✓ **Lessons Learnt - Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Classrooms**

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✓ **Enabled by Art - Oregon Supported Living Program's Arts & Culture Program**

An Abstract of an article by Mathew Denis, which was published in The Register-Guard about Oregon Supported Living Program's Arts & Culture Program founded by Prof Dan Close, University of Oregon, Eugene, USA

✓ **Education for All - Lessons Learned in Training Teachers for Inclusive Education**

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✓ **SAI Centre - Empowering AWSNs and Creating a better Inclusive Society with Community participation**

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✓ **What's in it for Me?**

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✓ **Inclusive Education- A Case Study of Ankur Vidya Mandir**

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Symbiosis College Pune, first published in the Asia Pacific Journal of Management & Entrepreneurship Research (APJMER) Volume 4 Issue 1 January 2015, pp.142-156

Best Practices - Sources

✓ **Classroom Management and Effective Practices**

by Roma Gill, School Counsellor, DPS International School, Gurugram

✓ **Values Integrated Art and Craft Education Ideal for an Inclusive Practice Environment**

By Srividya Sridhar, Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vahinin, Prasanthi Nilayam, AP

✓ **Impact of Teacher's Individualized Support on Classroom Management / Classroom Instruction And on the Performance of Children with Special Needs**

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✓ **ICT, Assistive Technology and Assistive Devices Facilitating Curriculum transactions**

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✓ **Experiment with BaLA : Building as Learning Aid**

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✓ **Inclusion- Make it happen with Inclusive School environment –an experience of Reverse Inclusion at Minu School, Chachiyawas, Ajmer**

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✓ **School Environment and Inclusion**

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Best Practices - Sources

- ✓ **Building Bridges: Abridge for Effective Inclusion**

By Madhumita Dasgupta , Special Educator and Inclusion Facilitator, Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy , Kolkata

- ✓ **Immersive Spaces aids development and bonding of students in an Inclusive Practice Environment**

By Srividya Sridhar, Sri Sathay Sau Vidya Vahini, Prasanthi Nilayam, AP

- ✓ **Inclusive Pedagogy in a Government Primary School in Bangalore, India- A Case Study**

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Inclusive Education

Rationale and Rigour

General Introduction

Education is one of the principal ways in which human progress occurs. This progress needs to be all encompassing and should not negate any individual on account of race, religion, language or even physical and mental attributes. The general, broad and comprehensive nature of education must, hence, be inclusive. Inclusion is the process by which all people irrespective of their strengths, weaknesses or other needs enjoy equal rights as well as are regarded as valuable members of society. Inclusivity in education could thus go a long way in shaping a wholesome society.

The term specifically refers to the ‘process and practice of educating students identified as having exceptional needs (SEN) in general in classrooms in their neighbourhood schools’. Inclusive education ensures protection of rights of children with disabilities to enjoy a decent life, in conditions that ensure dignity, promote self reliance and facilitate active participation support to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of life of the school. It results in positive academic and social outcomes for all children. Differently-abled persons also have the right to enjoy all advantages of education. Instead of separating them, including them in general schools will help not only them but all of us too. The scope of inclusive education has expanded from mere accommodation of students with different learning needs to encompass the quality of school education and about how far they are helped to learn, achieve and participate fully in the life of the school. Clearly the ‘one fits all’ approach to pedagogy is replaced by creation of a class environment that makes participation of ‘everyone’ instead of ‘some’ or ‘most’, possible. Here the emphasis is on the adaptation and change that schools rather than students have to make in

fulfilling learning needs. Inclusive education differs from 'special education'. While the former acknowledges the significant role school environment plays in education and in enabling special needs to be satisfied, the latter concentrates on treating them differently and in isolation. In fact, mainstream and special education derive effective practices from each other.

In keeping with this paradigm shift in understanding, the quality of education must not only evaluate student performance but more importantly gauge the 'quality, competence and character of teachers'. Thus, it would be useful if learning difficulties are viewed as problems for teachers to solve rather than 'with learners' to counter. This approach would make teachers 'problem solvers'. In other words, they would seek ways to teach a variety of subjects, topics or tasks to learners. It would discourage teachers from assessing themselves as being 'unprepared' or 'not qualified' to deal with children with differing levels of difficulties in learning.

Jean-Ovide Decroly (1871-1932) was a pioneer in inclusive education. He developed special education practices especially creation of a 'homelike atmosphere' that helped students with special needs to achieve better and more consistent educational results than those typically achieved by other students in regular schools. In fact, he later applied the special education practices to regular classes when he opened the École de l'Ermitage in Brussels in 1907. He categorised the child's needs into food, shelter, defence and work. He designed the workshop-classroom based on centres of interest and educative games. The children were taught to read, write and count and guided to attain a comprehensive view of the experiences of life. He said, 'The school will be located wherever is the nature, wherever life is, wherever the work is'. Inclusive education is based on the belief

that all children irrespective of their physical, emotional and intellectual capacities can learn in regular age-appropriate classrooms and receive need-based curriculum while fully participating in all activities of the school. Thus, inclusive education is characterised by:

- Unconditional acceptance of all children in general schools
- Focussing on what children can do rather than cannot
- Ability-based education goals
- Adapting schools and classrooms to children rather than vice versa
- Equipping teachers with a variety of skills to teach all children
- Providing quality education in an inclusive environment

Globally it is estimated that 70% of children with disabilities even those with mild mental retardation can attend regular schools. However, the school environment has to be designed to be accessible in physical terms like provision of ramps for movement within the school, and small alterations in restrooms like support bars as well as a willingness on the part of the institution to accommodate them.

Why is there a need for inclusive education?

Special education reaches only a few children, mostly those in urban environments, and often at prohibitive costs. In countries that have modest resources for education – have more marginalised population due to various reasons including disability and incur prohibitive costs in catering to special needs –it is imperative that general schools are utilised optimally to provide quality education for all.

Inclusive education is preferred over special education for the following benefits:

- Increases the sense of belonging to a community for all children

- Seclusion or exclusion builds resistance to change and inability to socially adapt themselves making them more marginalised or isolated
- Research shows that inclusive environments offer better incentive for SEN children to practice learning and vastly improve social skills
- Learning opportunities are better. Research finds differently abled children are more motivated when learning in general classes. This is because peer encouragement and skill development is greater
- Develops individual strengths and skills. Once general students are made aware of the abilities of the special needs children, they would better appreciate them. Peer coaching methods could not only help SEN but also general students as they can comprehend concepts and ideas in novel ways that would help them too
- Helps students achieve individual goals while being with peers. Constant reinforcement by peers offers greater encouragement for special needs children to set out modest and later higher goals which are often easily attained
- Offers scope for knowledge and acceptance of individual differences. Misconceptions about special needs children can be replaced by better understanding and social acceptance of differences among individuals which would help later in life
- Improves respect for others and inculcates friendships. Regular interaction will help in identifying their strengths and appreciating them. It could also forge deep bonds of friendship and camaraderie among students

Thus inclusive education is not only helpful for persons with disability but also for the ones without.

International Efforts

Inclusive education received global attention gradually. At first the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, had spelt out the rights of every citizen (this indirectly includes persons with disabilities too) to appropriate education. Children's rights were advocated in a big way by the United Nations. It called for discrimination-free atmosphere. In particular, any exclusion or segregation in the field of education was to be barred. However it was the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality, 1994, that for the first time openly advocated inclusive education in proclaiming that 'those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs'. It also advocated local community, organisations and parents' participation in making and executing programmes for special education needs. The 2006 Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) prescribed inclusive education at all levels. The Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals also trained focus on inclusivity when it stressed lifelong learning. It talked of concerted efforts to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all guaranteeing equal and accessible education' for all be it marginalised, indigenous, vulnerable and PwDs.

In the United States, where there is a robust legal framework mandating inclusion from early childhood stages, the emphasis is on right of access and creation of all supportive services that enable inclusion in all settings and levels. The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) of 1975 called for the 'Least Restrictive Environment LRE' that caters to individual child's strengths and special needs. This was to be

facilitated for every child with disability in the surrounding geographic area irrespective of availability of public general early childhood programs in the vicinity. Elimination of any type of discrimination on the basis of disability has been legally enshrined. The Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 call for complete integration of people with disability in all facets of public life by providing the ‘most integrated setting’ that would help in full participation in services, programs and activities of public and private entities alike. In addition, under the Head Start Act of 1972, a separate allocation of 10% enrolment opportunities in educational institutions are earmarked for ‘children with disabilities’. Individual States are encouraged to utilise federal funding to improve ‘professional development opportunities and specialised training’, areas that require sustained focus if quality care is to be given to children with special needs.

In other parts of the world too, inclusive education has received continued attention. In Europe, all countries have legislative provisions to promote inclusive education. They have established a separate Agency called The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education in 1996 consisting of 31 countries and 35 jurisdictions including England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, as well as Belgium’s French and Flemish communities are each represented separately. The aim was to create a permanent and systematic structure for European collaboration in the field of special needs and inclusive education. It acts as a platform for collaboration of European countries on special needs and inclusive education. Many countries have set very high standards of performance and achievement. Italy for example, has abolished special schools through the Law 517/1977 and has reached 99.6% inclusion of learners with disabilities in

mainstream education. Other less developed countries like Albania too have made strides in policy guidelines and implementations regarding inclusive education. The Law on Pre-University Education approved in 2012, the Normative Provisions of 2013 and the Strategy of Pre- University Education 2014-2020 as well as law on Accessibility and Inclusion of PwD and National Disability and Action Plan 2015-2020 comprise its policy framework on inclusive education. However it still must work on best practices so that the situation where 30% of children with disabilities of 6-18 years old are out of school is rectified.

In Africa it is estimated that less than 10% of children with disabilities attend school and three times less likely to finish primary education. The World Bank has established a Trust fund for US \$3 million to support disability-inclusive education in Africa. South Africa has already framed pro-inclusion policies. Countries like Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia are planning to invest in capacity building in inclusive education and adopt a multi-sectoral approach . While it has been a government priority in South Africa since 2000s, the progress has been slow. The country now has established full-service schools. These schools admit students, including those who are disabled and meet the differing educational needs of all students. Experts are of the opinion that indigenous education, through the participation of parents, elders, families and cultural custodians could “complement the work of professionally trained educators” Community knowledge with its emphasis on togetherness, sharing and reciprocity could be relied upon. Indigenous knowledge systems including proverbs, cultural stories and mythologies that derive from culture, society, land, environment, history, and tradition can make inclusivity truly holistic and enriched by diversity and difference.

Indian Legal Basis

In India too, the Right to Education Act 2009 (RTE Act) ensures compulsory and free education to all children 6-14 years. This is a consequence of making it a fundamental right under the 86th amendment of the Indian Constitution. The operative word is all including children with special needs and aims to ensure “full time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards” . It places onus on the central and state governments to share financial responsibilities and provide for other requisites like trained teacher recruitment and development of “child-friendly system and child-centred learning”. These would be vital characteristics if an attempt to provide inclusive education includes children with special needs.

In fact, as early 1966 Kothari Commission recommended children with disabilities must form a part of education system which is what inclusive education concept advocates. The Union Government in 1974 began the Integrated Education for Disabled Children programme that aimed to create appropriate infrastructure including removal of architectural barriers making schools more disabled-friendly; providing resource rooms for schools and appointing special teachers tasked with assisting children with special needs in education. It was a nation-wide attempt that has been implemented in over 90,000 schools all over India.

The National Policy on Education unveiled first in 1989 called for attaining integration of the physically and mentally challenged with the general community as equal partners, preparing them for normal growth to enable them to face life with courage and confidence. The District Primary Education Programme of 1994 and the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) launched in 2002 have been started to

achieve Universalisation of Elementary Education. According to the 2011 census, it is estimated that 2.2% or 2.68 crore persons of India's population is affected by one form disability or other . In keeping with international recommendation local government authorities are tasked with inclusion in general schools and improving accessibility to special schools by setting them up in all parts of the country.

While India has legislative impetus for inclusive education, the implementation is at best in the nascent stage. It is predominantly non-governmental organisations that have provided the resources, schools and trained special educators in inclusive education now and special education at first. Schools for the deaf, blind and other special needs were set up separately in India as early as 1883 when the first school for the deaf was established in Bombay. The first school for the blind was set up in Amritsar. However, the implementation of the concept of inclusive education has been witnessed in India only recently and requires review and adaptation of best practices the world over.

Inclusive Education

Global Attempts

World Regions

While policy efforts are underway in a variety of countries around the world, it would be informative to know what would be the typical inclusion education setting, be it the school administration; the environment that consists of the classrooms, school premises, special facilities, and, most importantly, trained and competent staff to fully implement the concept of inclusive education as well as the adjustments to be made in curriculum framing and evaluation that would cater to the learning outcomes of all individuals.

If we can either imbibe or adapt the best practices that have been developed and successfully implemented in other countries or organisations and schools within India too, then inclusive education activists, special educators, organisations and general schools can benefit greatly from a road map to effective inclusive education.

Southeast Asia

This region is of particular interest as it is one of the most diverse regions in the world. The multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural milieu makes its study especially significant as several challenges to implementing inclusion can be understood better. It also offers insight into the efforts already in place in the region to achieve balanced and inclusive education. In Southeast Asia, there is a strong leaning towards Special Education while Inclusive Education is only seen as inclusive education activists as ‘veneer placed on top’. They are of the opinion that instead of aiming at quality education for all irrespective of physical, mental attributes, religion, race or any other distinction, the labelling as ‘special’ ignores the rights-based approach that views inclusion as a social and political issue. The

continued use of the semantics of ‘special’ and ‘Special Educational Needs’ are a real barrier to progress towards inclusion in the region.

Brunei follows inclusive education as it has no special education schools. The country at the other end of the spectrum is Cambodia where data regarding disabilities in children is not readily available. The Ministry of Education and Youth services of Cambodia has now set up the National Institute for Special Education that aims at training a nationally qualified teacher force that can interact with children with special education needs. Recently, a teacher training manual which contains techniques for teaching children with intellectual and learning disabilities in addition to autism – the first of its kind in Cambodia was launched. The manual has helped to identify children with disabilities and is planned to be used nationwide. This will benefit children that were not reached till now to schools where adapting to their individual learning needs enables them to develop to their full potential.

In Indonesia, special education falls under the purview of the provincial government while local district government is in charge of education in general. Thus, there is a non harmonisation of policies that challenges inclusive education implementation. Laos has a National Education Policy and action plan on Inclusive education, the school enrolment rate between the formative years of 3-5 have increased and dropouts have decreased. There have also been new private and public schools established.

Malaysia follows the ‘Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025’ and the ‘National Transformation 2050 Plan’ which focus on balanced and inclusive education (BIE)

aiming to improve quality of education and ensure equitable access. Schools hope to raise bi-language proficiency and place accent on vocational education and information and communication technology. Inclusive education is enshrined in the 1987 Philippine Constitution and there is recognition for non-formal, informal and indigenous learning systems too. Though there is an Inclusive Education Policy Framework for Basic Education it is in its infancy.

Singapore is a global leader in education. However, it follows a dual education system where special needs children learn in separate environments rather than form part of the general schools. The Child Development Program which identifies disability at the preschool level through Ministry of Education recognised educational psychologists has increased the number of enrollees. However, there is a dearth of trained early childhood educators. The qualification mode for mainstream teachers is much more rigorous than that of special education is only one year long and the Diploma in Special Education is the sole requirement.

The testing method followed by Singapore has made some concessions regarding extra time in exams; larger font sizes in question papers and keyboard changes. However, there is no flexibility in curricular content for children with special needs. Also, training mainstream teachers in special education must be taken up with much more rigour. Even physical access is a pertinent concern. This is because many Singapore schools are located in multi-level buildings. Thus, there needs to be more emphasis on greater awareness of infrastructure facilities available as well as the creation of safe, accessible classroom for all learners.

The Living, Learning, and Working in the 21st Century currently offered, but not

mandated, by the MOE may be most appropriate for any number of students. Its vision in inclusive education requires impetus for achievement. Professional development programmes to train teachers to be empathetic is seen as a way to implement inclusive education. As the teacher is a vital cog in the cognitive process and affective understanding of children with special needs and their parents could further strengthen this factor. Development of a board framework instead of individual strategies could also help.

‘For BIE to become a reality in Southeast Asia, teachers’ capacities need to improve, pedagogical practices need to be enhanced, more relevant curricula need to be created and implemented, contextually and situationally relevant learning materials that every student can understand need to be created and used, data and ICT tools need to be taken advantage of, and school infrastructure and facilities in response to the needs of 21st-century teaching and learning need to be built. Only with all of these can Southeast Asian nations truly realise ERF’s Four Pillars of BIE—*intra-culturalism, trans-disciplinarity, dialecticism, and contextuality*—and the vision of SDG 4.’

Europe

Norway that leads the Human Development Index places enormous emphasis on inclusive education especially at the primary and secondary levels. The unique feature of the Norwegian situation is that inclusive education is mandatory in the abovementioned levels. Norway follows the adapted tuition policy where learning is to cater to the talents and abilities of the students. Interestingly to receive special education a child need not enrol in a school. Special educational support encompasses a wide variety of needs be it language skills, social or

motorial development needs. Kindergartens are found to be most inclusive in the Norwegian education system. The significant role played by kindergarten staff in dealing with diverse set of children and the quality of interaction is highlighted by the awareness of such staff about inclusive practices.

Special needs can form part of the ordinary study programme or in an alternative programme. Accordingly, students can obtain an ordinary diploma or basic qualification training certificate. This flexibility in education practice is a best practice that can be adapted elsewhere. The Educational and Psychological Counselling Service (EPCT) provides support and guidance to improve learning environment of pupils. Statped the government agency for special needs education offers specialist expertise in several disability areas that would be required by municipal or county authorities. Norway also ensures that the needs and interests of children with disabilities are considered in their development cooperation assistance to other countries too.

Albania for instance under the policy directions special schools would transform into resource centres for inclusive education. The logic is since the teachers at special schools have vast experience in working with children with disabilities, they offer training to supportive teachers in inclusive schools as well as form the multidisciplinary assessment commission to evaluate CwD. The government has set 2020 as target year to convert all special schools into inclusive education resource centres. The inclusive school-teachers are assisted by the special educators to design IEP content so that inclusive education is a reality.

Schools identify CwD in the neighbourhood. After parental permission the children are assessed for their problems. They are enrolled and teachers are

offered appropriate training to cater to the students enrolled. Though there is a resource room that caters to special needs children; it is only for a short duration each day so that inclusive education is implemented in letter and spirit. Involvement of teachers in deciding IEP objectives is another best practice that needs to be imbibed. They also use the Index for inclusion that assesses the schools' strengths and weakness and is an important component in sustaining inclusive education practices. Higher education institutions are utilised for preparing education programmes and training the teachers on inclusive education. Yearly professional development programmes are also conducted by the Universities apart from imparting training to the teachers.

Thematic discussions in classrooms on diversity and other topics is a regular feature as is awareness projects designed by students. The best friend of the CwdDis also the peer tutor helping in the learning and socialisation process. Bonds develop beyond the classroom as they are invited to socialise and offer them company. Most educational institutions have complied with accessibility standards by renewal or reconstruction. This has markedly increased school attendance of children with disabilities.

Italy is one of the pioneering countries to legally establish a framework for full inclusion. As early as 1971 when Law 118/1971 granted rights to students with disabilities (aged 6–15) to attend general education classes in public schools except those with severe physical or mental impairments. Italy introduced the term 'Integrazione scolastica' in Law 104/1992 which meant total inclusion without any exception and regardless of type or severity of disability. While Italy had abolished special schools and called for general schools to host all students

there has been no indication regarding the quality of education that has been imparted. In fact ,Italy is among the lowest in terms of disability population served through education. Support teachers are designated to teach only the children with disabilities. This is also done in separate surroundings and is individualised – thus, inclusion in reality has not worked effectively. There is also a dearth of support teachers owing to educational budget cuts resulting in a reduction of support teachers, their training and co-teaching prospects. Therefore, the focus must be not just education for all but appropriate education for all with disability.

Africa

The African Report on Children with Disabilities published in 2016 reported that only 2% of disabled attend school. While the low turnout is mainly due to negative attitudes, physical barriers also exist. There is a misperception that children with disabilities cannot be educated. The social stigma results in isolation of disabled children often unknown to local authorities and schools, virtually hidden from society. Dropping out of school due to refusal of schools to keep the child; inaccessible facilities especially for far flung rural population and lack of assistive devices exacerbate the situation.

In Gambia, to counter prevailing prejudices and encourage increased enrolment of children with special needs in schools the child to child approach is adopted. By raising disability awareness among non-disabled students, they wish to address the problem of isolation from the grassroots. Here the non-disabled students can effectively utilise the ‘unrivalled access to and knowledge of their communities’ so as to identify isolated disabled children through village surveys.

This forms the initial step in bringing them to school. Later they become responsible members of the inclusion club and assist their disabled co-students.

South Africa has been a pioneer in this region to focus on inclusive education. The right is enshrined in the founding document of post apartheid South Africa namely Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996. In Section 29 (the Bill of Rights) it is stated that everyone has the right to ‘a basic education, including basic adult education; and to further education, which the state through reasonable measures must make progressively available and accessible’. It further states that the state may not discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including disability. South Africa addressed the diverse needs of children with different barriers to learning through the Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (Department of Education 2001). Under the National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS); (Department of Education 2008), sets out the process of early identification and assessment, and enrolment of learners in special schools. It also recognises the centrality of parents and teachers in implementing the strategy. Though policy is in place the execution has been slow.

Australia

The island continent-country released the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Commonwealth Government, 2006), an explicit interpretation of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth Government, 1992) for education systems. The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians was

published in 2008 (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs). This document outlined the twin goals of promoting equity and excellence and young Australians becoming successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens.

The significance of the document is that no reference was made to disability; rather the identified goals were aimed at all school students. From this time, Inclusive Education (IE) in Australia became about the successful education of all students. While conceptually there is a broader understanding of Inclusive Education, the ground reality leaves much to be desired. There is an increasing rate of drop out mostly due to disciplinary action. The lower income groups and indigenous population comprise most of these numbers.

Thus it can be understood that though the concept of inclusive education has been recognised worldwide as an achievable goal the attempts have been sporadic and often insufficient. Efforts of individual states must be intensified and successes elsewhere need to be adapted to make inclusive education a global reality.

Inclusive Education

India Focus

Best Practices in India

One of the most important aspects of inclusion is facilitating access to education in both physical and value aspects. Physical access would mean removal of architectural barriers that prevented students with special needs from attending general schools. Even prior to this, best practices in improving access include:

- early identification of children with special educational needs
- school enrolment and access to local services
- removal of architectural barriers from schools
- monitoring child progress in regular schools

Early identification of children with special educational needs

The primary task of societies in general and schools, in particular, is to properly identify and diagnose the level of special needs if any, in a child. More often the behaviour of children is mistaken to be ‘disruptive’ as the hidden neurological development disorders (NDD) are neither identified nor addressed. Performance of such students in general classrooms is often rated as ‘weak’ leading to more pressure on the child to improve. This further aggravates the situation and often the child is forced to leave school.

However, if teachers in general schools are trained to look for behavioural indicators that point to possible mental health issues, children can receive adequate and timely assistance or in certain cases, therapies to help them continue and perform in general schools. In a nation-wide programme called ‘Project Inclusion’ that aimed at providing the teachers in general schools with

appropriate tools to identify possible NDD cases, 18000 teachers in 12 states and the UT of Puducherry participated. A majority of the 14,411 children identified by them were diagnosed positive. Universities and other centres of higher learning or professional bodies and associations could form part of the training team by coming up with courses or short-term programmes and offering training sessions. This would increase the involvement of the local community in implementing inclusive education.

Neo-natal screening in maternity hospitals both government and private in all parts of the country could also provide vital chance to implement early intervention programmes that could mitigate or at times even reverse disability. Data collection of children with special needs could be easier if it begins at hospitals. Early intervention can accurately direct children with disabilities to receive timely support and clinical help that can enable the child to deal with the disability more easily later in life.

If children are of premature birth or have low birth weight or family characteristics like maternal mental health problems, limited financial resources and absence of support services the children have a high risk of disability. Such new-borns and infants must be referred to preventive intervention programs. Doctors of paediatric clinics and maternity hospitals as well as preschool teachers must be trained to identify discrepancies or delays in normal development of a child. Once observed, the children must be able to access early intervention therapies.

This particular stage is critical as the chance of rectifying or mitigating any

disability is particularly high in the first five years. Inclusion should be smooth, and child should feel comfortable and secure. The intervention programs must be well coordinated and not disparate. This is important as it helps to reduce parental anxiety and give them more time to increase the child's community involvement, and also plan family routines accordingly. Here the role of the parents in early intervention must be highlighted. Since they have the maximum opportunity to influence the learning and development of the child parental involvement must be vastly increased. A well-designed inclusive program will help the children developmentally and socially. Self-report checklists can help keep track of inclusion activities. The intervention programs also need to be assessed for success. The attempt should be made to balance the individualised planning and the quality of the programs. The assessment must be based on the prevailing family routine; the community activities that families participate in and the aim to maintain such activities and include children with disabilities in them. Periodic interviews with the families can record their experiences, understand factors that have helped achieve goals for the child.

Transition programs for example, movement from toddler to pre-school must be clearly explained to the parents offering them available options, their merits and demerits. Professional staff must build positive relations and build trust and confidence so that they can serve as a bridge to facilitate greater interaction of the child and family with the community. This would also assist in better inclusion. Professionals must also be prepared to appropriately support the children and help them master technologies and increase effective participation.

School enrolment and access to local services

Greater awareness regarding RTE Act and the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan in local

communities must be undertaken. This would enable parents to avail of the rightful place that is offered to all children in every school. School-based education offers a better chance at enhancing social skills.

Creation of an inclusive school environment

Removal of physical barriers : This would create access to school education. Schools need to make architectural changes including ramps and wheelchair access in the campus to enable free movement of differently-abled children. Provision of larger classrooms to allow better space for movement of special needs children must be attempted. Flexibility in usage of classroom sizes either to encourage inclusion or offer special attention to smaller groups of children must be present. Transport facilities must be changed to accommodate special needs students. Service areas like washrooms and toilets must be fitted with bars and made disabled- friendly.

Physical access

Coming to the school and accessing all parts of the school physically forms a vital part of inclusive education environment. The route from the home to the school entrance must be without any hindrance. Safe and disabled-friendly vehicles are needed to cater to the children with special needs. The School gates have to be wide for easy movement of transport and even wheelchairs through them. There need to be clear levelled paths to all school buildings. Ramps must be provided to enable access to buildings with many storeys. Lifts must also be disabled friendly.

The walkways that lead from one building to many others must be designed in a such a manner that there are no sharp turns in them as this would hinder the movement of wheelchair-bound children. The walkways must not be hindered by

overhanging windowpanes, branches of trees or sign-posts.

Even in places where ramps are provided, they must be built to specification standards and not be too steep. Handrails or guards must be provided throughout the length of the ramp and the surface must not be slippery and wide enough for use. The construction of toilets also must aid physical access. Toilets must be built in such a manner that the inner space must be wide for wheelchair users to move around, toilet seats have to follow standards and commode toilets are a must. Grab rails to help the student stand or sit on the toilet seat must be installed. Switches and door handles must be at appropriate height. The heights of taps for drinking water also have to be suitable. The surface around the drinking water installation must not be slippery and should be clearly identified. Sign-posts must be placed at readable height and must be visual and auditory too.

Classrooms must be well-ventilated and the corridors and floors must be skid-free. Classroom doors must be wide and without threshold panels on the floor. This will enable smooth movement from corridors to classrooms. Library books must be accessible for the children with disabilities too. If the school provides midday meals such areas must also be disabled-friendly. Access to sports facilities is yet another hindrance in CwDs attending school.

The schools can take up architectural audits periodically to ascertain any flaws in designs and adopt appropriate alterations to design and implement full access to all parts of the school. The parents and students can also be consulted to make requisite changes.

Offering a supportive environment

Montessori Method as a pedagogical practice seems highly suited for inclusive education. This is because as a philosophy it recognises that each child is different and learns according to their abilities and needs. The emphasis is on sensory education that can inform the child through experience. Here real objects instead of toys are used to develop functional skills and independence. The degree of interaction, the routines like circle time, greetings, discussion and a close working relationship with students, all create a welcome atmosphere.

The difference from traditional classroom teaching is that teachers are facilitators and not dictators of child responsibility for their behaviour and interaction with others. It is found that Montessori makes students energetic and motivated as well as focused thus offering scope for improved learning and motivation to learn further too. The harmonious working relationship between the teacher and the student helps in tapping the child's potential.

Using the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), customized instructional goals, methods, materials and assessments that work for all students can be created. Tiered lessons that teach the same concepts with multiple levels of complexity built into the lesson, giving students the choice to learn at a level that challenges, but does not overwhelm, them. Intentional teaching of learning strategies, so that special education students learn to be independent, and successful, in a general education setting is another best practice.

Training teachers will form a vital component of best practices in inclusivity.

When teachers are properly equipped to deal with the challenges of teaching special needs children in a general environment, the positive reinforcement offered towards the learning outcomes is enormous. In classes, teachers can adopt diversity in representation of a certain concept or problem. Instead of using just standard ones like worksheets for maths, oral reading or science explanatory videos, child-based activities can be introduced to offer a variety of teaching methods keeping the interest alive as well as helping the students understand better. Repetition of concepts in different ways can assist all students, both special needs children and general as they approach the same topic at their own pace and ability.

Inclusive education also does not end with schools but must also create opportunities for students with disabilities to lead life independently by becoming economically self-reliant by learning vocational skills and making a living out of it. Organisations like Society All Inclusive (SAI) cater to the ever increasing need for young adults with developmental disabilities to possess a sense of belonging and bonding in society that they had enjoyed till they were in school. The aim is to provide a holistic environment that could assist in young adult socialisation.

Though focus in India is on early intervention centres and schools not much work has gone into this vital area. The bakery was the brainchild of Srinivas who has ADHD and Asperger's Syndrome. Started in 2013, this cafe in Chennai is run and managed by people with Autism and other developmental disabilities. It is unique as it is a neighbourhood initiative for adults. Developing parents' positive perspective towards children with special needs - Parents' attitudes and family dependency were the biggest impediment in the venture. The parents needed to

be convinced that their child could lead an independent life. Developing a positive perspective in parents about children with special needs through social cohesion has brought about a change in mindset of caregivers. No longer are they ignored and viewed as “burdensome” (incapable of being independent). It uses collaborative efforts to build social cohesion with continuous inputs from caregivers. They also find joy and individuality in their roles as facilitators not just as special parents but also impacting society at large.

Enhancing self-image of children with special needs - Such ventures instil the children with a desire to live with dignity, greater confidence and assured respect. Working towards enhancing their entrepreneurial skills, has been largely contributing towards the enhanced self-image. Continuous discussions, empathetic treatment, creation of opportunity to explore and create newness in routine has been extremely emphasised through the running of bakery.

Building community (serial) entrepreneurs - While usually rehabilitation programmes concentrate on vocational training which only makes them job seekers, this venture initiative breaks this stereotype and showcases the need for job givers and has projected a rare sight of an entrepreneurial venture / start up.

Customisation to the core- The inclusion is carried out keeping in mind the innate strength each member possesses after thorough assessment and then assigned relevant tasks. Hands-on training in the different areas of pre-baking preparation, actual production and marketing has been provided to the members in a timely manner. Such customisation was undoubtedly challenging but has worked wonders in creating a suitable teamwork environment and team building spirit amidst all.

Social media marketing – A dedicated Facebook page has been created solely to promote the initiative and boost sales. Volunteers readily share content and insider stories of the happenings at the bakery which has helped to build an emotional connect with outside audience/ customers. It also enables to keep the atmosphere lively.

There has been marked change in the social behaviour of the adults who now work in the bakery making eggless, sugarless, flourless confections. The SAI Creations Centre helps recycling plastic and paper waste into utility craft items from cushions, doormats, veggie bags, flower vases, newspaper baskets to dresses and carry bags. A plant nursery sees a variety of plants grown by the adults with developmental disabilities. In 2015, SAI Bakery was also chosen as one of the Best Practices for Rehabilitation of Adults with Different Disabilities by the National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (NIEPMD) in Chennai.

Creation of a Facebook page and an account has made them tech savvy and updated on bakery related events and aware of the responses of a world-wide audience. Patrons across the globe express interest in buying the bakery products. The youngsters have their higher self-esteem. Stakeholder engagement and Partnerships opportunities have been created. Corporates have also come forward to help an individual parent or a few of them to help set up similar initiatives. As such initiatives require very little investment and resource it forms an ideal support system that will remain an integral part of the society.

Jai Vakeel Foundation and Research Centre Mumbai a 75 year old NGO working in the field of intellectual disabilities organised a unique art initiative where students

both with and without disabilities mentored by 15 artists to create 75 pieces of art that merged on a single canvas to make one work of art on the theme 'To a more inclusive world we remain committed'. In a community integration effort, students from six prominent Mumbai schools and colleges regularly interacted with children at Jai Vakeel and exchanged visits as well as went on field trips together. This helps in building empathy and sensitization and targets a prime population that can take inclusion into the future. Children express gratitude and understand that invisibility rather than disability remains the persistent challenge.

Arts in learning

The introduction of arts and crafts nurtures creativity, sensory learning, awareness of culture and history. It also develops self expression. Early exposure to art and craft is said to promote brain activity. This would help the student understand concepts in even subjects like Maths and Science. Arts and crafts offer scope for the students to experiment with different mediums and gives them greater self-esteem, self-discipline and self-motivation. Social interaction will also improve.

The Visual and Performing arts and craft curriculum can be designed to cater to all state boards and CBSE. Art activities can employ a variety of mediums like pencil, crayons, eraser, ink, paint, cotton buds, brush and sponge. The arts are child-friendly and can be used to practice cognitive, language, social, emotional and even motor skills. However, this would be integrated into themes and related to curriculum content. Simple crafts like paper folding, cutting, crushing, tearing or quilling can help in hand-eye coordination and improving grip to hold pens and pencils. Tactile learning can also be implemented using art and crafts. The

handling of beads and other small objects increases muscular strength in fingers and hands. Working with clay, dough and glue can later help in acquiring vocational skills. Class activities can be planned around these arts and crafts with clear objectives and simple, easy to repeat methods that could achieve desired outcomes. Arts and crafts can also offer options for vocational skill development that will be essential while looking for jobs and work freelance from home and make a living which will remain the ultimate goal of inclusive education.

Activity-based learning has been implemented in a big way in Tamil Nadu at the government level and teachers are confident it is helping both non-disabled and special needs students alike. Since activity-based experiential learning involves all the senses, SEN children have been seen to perform well. Since the student experiences discovery, movement and interaction with the environment it promotes student attention and increases on-task behaviour.

This builds focus and helps in retention and proper understanding of concepts and ideas. In Chennai city, the children are integrated into regular schools for four days a week and they attend special school once a week. The government has appointed and trained resource persons for specific learning disabilities. Activity based learning has immensely helped as it allows children to learn in groups and enjoy the experience of coming to school. Door-to-door survey of children out of school and motivation by the schools for enrolment has also worked.

Creating a supportive environment can also include Building as a Learning Aid (BaLA). This is a concept where the most expensive physical assets of a school are developed into a child-friendly, learning and fun-based physical environment.

This will promote learning, curiosity, wonder and incentive for lifelong learning. It results in learning to take place not just in classrooms but everywhere in the school be it the corridor, verandas and outdoors. These are called immersive spaces that make insightful, inspiring, enjoyable and participative learning possible. Bulletin boards can display human value quotations and posters. Paintings on walls can add colour and reinforce concepts and problems making it easy for students to self-learn. BaLA can comprise of:

- Mystery wall that builds creativity and imagination
- Children's wall where children can freely express through paintings and other methods
- Classroom Map and outdoor map will inform about the idea of scale, orientation, representation of important landmarks and how to follow directions using a map.
- Height chart that can measure students and familiarise them with measuring tools, concepts of length and comparing themselves as well as record and analyse data
- Pipe phone
- Milestones
- Tangram tiles to give visual stimulus and pattern creation
- Word wall
-And many others

Inclusive education does not depend on the amount of time the special needs student spends in the general classroom but the quality of it. Optimal use of

;available resources of the school can go a long way in effective inclusive learning. Innovative low-cost teaching tools can be developed with special needs children involvement. The establishment of learning centres that can accord additional support to children with special needs is also a best practice. Teachers must ensure all students participate in full range of programs and services. Co-curricular activities like art, craft, dance, theatre, indoor games and field sports are encouraged.

Short-term and long-term goals can be set with periodic inputs from parents and students. Classroom and home activities are designed to achieve short-term goals. The manner of achievement by each individual student is recorded in student learning plans. Workshops for parents can help build awareness of parents in dealing with special needs children and the vital role they can play in inclusive education implementation is emphasised. Showcasing the skills of special needs children through yearly programmes can raise their self-esteem and boost confidence and improve social skills. This should be done together with general students raising team spirit and cooperation. Exhibition and selling of products made by students is also a regular feature. Interaction with students of other inclusive schools through competitions or joint showcasing of co-curricular skills can help the behavioural aspects.

Buddy support system

Every general child could be paired with a special needs child in this system. As creating friendships and bonds of camaraderie can go a long way in making class environment more welcoming and encouraging. Cooperative learning and peer tutoring, which allow students to use their unique strengths to work as a team

with their peers is also a best practice. Children can even learn to help each other physically. It increases empathy in students and will help them understand the skills and abilities of special needs children better.

In Gambia, owing to the unique social structures, children are allowed into extended family living areas and communities where children with disabilities are isolated. Children serve as initial contact in identifying such children and the schools and local authorities rely on the preliminary survey of villages by general students. This is a best practice as it takes in account the local sensibilities and work around them for effective implementation of inclusive education. Peer involvement and co learning will go a long way in effective inclusive education.

In India too peer pairing for academic activities is being encouraged. In this approach each child with special needs is paired with a general child to enable strengthening academic support. Since children learn better with peers, this method can augur tangible results. It will also help the child without disability as his regular one to one interaction with Children with Special needs (CwSN) will enable greater understanding of the abilities of special children rather than just their disabilities. This in turn builds better empathy and appreciation for CwSN. Apart from assisting CwSN to complete curricular requirements it will also help them to learn concepts better and differently.

Individual attention by special educators can also incur advantages. This can be done by allowing teachers to interact with CwSN periodically and help them build confidence in their abilities.

Indian government policies aim to ensure inclusive education to all irrespective of

background, economic status and abilities. This is attempted through mandatory rules to enrol CwSN students in all government and public schools. However, schools often do not want to incur additional costs for infrastructure and manpower. In effect, the quality of inclusive education is affected. Thus, best practices in inclusive education must factor in the characteristics of cost effectiveness and posing no extra financial pressure on the already cash-strapped schools. The need here would be to make optimal use of available resources. In-house training of regular teachers through the involvement of NGOs and governmental organisations to handle CwSN; innovative class management methods; multiple uses of available assistive tools and continuous review of methods that succeed or need improvement must all form part of best practices. The concepts, approaches and methods discussed in the previous chapter are neither comprehensive nor prescriptive but offer a fair idea of practicable and in practice directions. These have fetched comparable results and have surely contributed to enhancing the quality of inclusive education.

The use of art and craft to enhance the manner of content dissemination to both children with and without special needs has been achieved in many inclusive schools. The Building as Learning tool (BaLa) is an interesting best practice. It elevates the school environment making it lively, cheerful and most importantly participative. This enlivens the process of learning and satisfies the needs of special children as it offers a pressure-free and reiterative learning experience. Moving the focus away from the standard classroom format, BaLa expands the scope of learning manifold. It also adheres to the cost effectiveness and resource optimisation stipulations.

Even in difficult areas like curriculum adaptation and implementation many

schools have introduced pedagogical innovations that are simple yet effective. Lack of special educators in schools is one of the principal impediments in schools being truly inclusive. This can be addressed by offering training to in-house teachers. Extended and focused interaction with CwSN will surely make teachers more confident and able to dispense their self-doubts on instructional abilities for special needs children.

Dispelling the myth about government schools, many have made enormous strides in inclusive education practices. It only reiterates that out of the box and innovative thinking regarding teaching methods and other associated issues can supplement for lack of additional funds and facilities. Enhancement of community participation through awareness programmes and showcasing the school's achievements and even formal exchange of ideas can go a long way in sustaining support and encouragement for inclusive education practices. The role of parents as support structures is especially crucial. It instils a sense of pride and responsibility in helping the school be more inclusive.

A vibrant networking that comprises of inclusive schools, NGOs, academic, research and governmental institutions will help in continuing a flow and exchange of ideas regarding best practices in inclusive education. Equally significant will be the adaptation of best practices the world over that can both inform and improve inclusive education approaches in India is the need of the hour. Participation in International conferences and seminars to discuss the quality of inclusive education, areas that need improvement and challenges that are encountered in achieving full inclusivity will also augur well for best practices.

The print, mass and social media can all be used to raise awareness about the

benefits of inclusive education to the society at large and the student population in particular. This accrues the advantage of obtaining information on hitherto unknown modifications and successes in implementation of techniques that have made schools more inclusive. Self-assessment by schools regarding steps taken to augment inclusivity and problems faced and solutions implemented should form an essential component of inclusive education best practices. The participation of students, teachers and parents in the review process will offer valuable inputs that could alter, modify or improve existing mechanisms. The link between institutions researching on inclusive education and schools must be strengthened and case studies and comparative analyses sought and published. Conducting local, regional and national level orientations and reviews and laying down minimal best practices standards could certainly make education inclusive in the fullest sense.

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Inclusive Education

Best Practices

The Road Travelled

It is pertinent to recognise the work that has already begun around India to realise inclusive education. **The SIEDI Resource Book on Inclusive Education Practices** offers copious literature on pan-India efforts at implementing inclusive education in a variety of environments. The contributors often draw from theoretical approaches in the field and relate them to actual practices on the ground. Many of them have adopted case studies to illustrate the efficacy of certain methods at achieving inclusivity. Sample surveys and studies have been undertaken on several aspects of inclusive education namely curriculum, pedagogy, management methods and impact on students. The innovative methods are simple, relatable and can be replicated. Given the diversity, complexity and need of India as a whole, the book truly reflects different rules and methods that have been adopted successfully.

Following is a synopsis of some of the selected articles to provide a fair understanding of the work already put in in our country towards Inclusive Education.*

Immersive Spaces’ aids development and bonding of students

The motto of Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vahini SSVV program is to make holistic education accessible for an integral education for all by all. The attempt is to achieve Insightful Inspiring Enjoyable and Participative (IIEP) learning experience. Implementing IIEP in 4Cs – classroom, corridor, campus and community. The approach aims to tap all physical spaces to create an immersive experience in learning. The utilization of the corridor to enable greater direct and indirect

* A list of the articles and contributors is provided in Annexure I

interaction of the children with the environment has been innovative.

The visual component of learning is further emphasized with the use of bulletin boards, attractive and educative posters on a variety of themes. Soft copies of posters that are informative like on festivals or Inspiring words or thought provoking puzzles can be displayed on bulletin boards. The focus is on recycled and reusable materials to adorn the corridors and walls. The school offers content and training to other schools with the inclusive goals. Painting of walls to make them attractive, lively and participative serves as an aid in allowing CWSNs to explore and engage more. For example, clocks with mathematical or chemical symbols on the dial instead of numbers are a very powerful image. A snakes-and-ladder board inculcating good habits and behavior as destinations and a height measuring scale in the form of an elongated “tweety” character are some more attempted to make walls inclusive space. Growing a garden improves involvement and educates on healthy living. It nurtures aesthetic sense and builds team work and unity. Reuse of materials like old tyres, plastic bottles, and such other items to create interesting playground, garden and waiting area items has also been done. These are not only economical but also underline need for environmental sensitivity. Designing a manual for such schools to use is another contribution of this concept.

The results from different schools that have implemented the SSSV's Immersive Spaces model is very promising. There has been marked improvement in enrolment and retention of students especially in rural schools. Learning has become interactive and interesting. Understanding of concepts is easier. Team work, cooperation and unity are evident. There is a reduction in

negative behaviour in students. Parents and community are also enthused into greater participation.

Building as learning Aid

BaLa is a concept of using the creative spaces of the school such as classroom, circulation space, outdoors, landscape and natural environment along with the built elements like floor, wall, ceiling, door, window, furniture and open ground to enhance the learning ambience. Offering the multisensory experience including visual, tactile and olfactory as well as kinesthetic move provides a unique learning experience for the child.

The BaLa elements include:

- Mystery wall that gives scope to exploration and learning and using their imagination to come up with their own games.
- Children's wall offers a chance to express their creativity and thinking through painting, graphics or other art.
- Outdoor and Indoor Maps familiarize them with the concept of scale, orientation, grid lines and top view.
- Library that is well stocked can create an appropriate ambience for improving language skills and giving shape to writing ability, self-expression and imagination.
- Height chart to record growth of a child as well as teaching about the use of measuring tools, comparing heights and how to record and analyse data
- Pipe phone not only adds fun but explains science concepts in a hands-on manner.
- Door angle marked on the floor bring geometric concepts to life.
- Tangram tiles offer the chance to experiment with polygons

- Classroom calendars record events and help understand the concept of time.
- Word Wall is a novel way to coin words and learn new ones.
- Board games on the floor inform the children of rules of the game, teach them to develop strategies and win and lose with grace.
- A variety of mirrors that illustrate reflection and inversion.
- Ramps around the school offer a kinesthetic experience of movement on slopes.
- Stairways illustrate counting, addition and subtraction exercises through walking or jumping on various steps.
- Goltara traditional arrangement that helps in knowing basic addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, percentages and discount in an understandable and fun way.
- Educational Pillars that act as illustrators of concepts like water cycle, pollution and related real life issues.

It is found that BaLa is useful as it increases interaction. Helps retention capacity; improve mobility; promote self learning and through peer assistance while simultaneously offering relaxation and enjoyment. The open friendly environment instead of mere classroom-based learning gives a greater chance at better learning experience.

The special educator must simply facilitate the optimal use of BaLa so that it is beneficial to the child. Small kits are also prepared using toys, seeds, ice cream sticks, blocks, beads, crayons, chalks, paper, measuring tape and other everyday use items. Other useful ones like grooming kits can be put together to help the students.

Reverse Inclusion Chichyawas

The Rajasthan Mahila Kalyan Mandal Sanstha was started in 1975 for the development of women, children and elderly from the deprived sections of society. Working with children with intellectual disabilities and cerebral palsy affected ones since 1991, RMKM provides education and training to help them attain self sufficiency.

To achieve the above goals RMKM runs a school at Chachiyawas Ajmer. The objective of the program is to integrate children with intellectual disabilities with normal children from underprivileged backgrounds. Just as attempts at making general schools inclusive are being made, there have also been projects where special schools have taken in children from lower income groups and other deprived settings. This is called reverse inclusion. The aim of reverse inclusion is to reach the underprivileged sections and integrate them into existing special education centres. In an aim to establish a resource centre and mainly to establish and demonstrate a replicable model the Pehla Kadam (first step) initiative was launched. Earlier as part of the special school mission they had worked with the intellectually disabled children in order to facilitate self reliance through intensive training. After continuous review attempts, RKMS identified areas that need attention and improvement in a variety of areas including capacity building of not only staff but more importantly parents, Anganwadi workers, doctors and other stakeholders; curriculum planning; designing of teaching-learning material; awareness creation; vocational training and constant upgrading of quality of education offered to the students.

This included suggestions to create optimal learning environments by adopting

multi ability and other heterogeneous grouping; improve parent participation and involvement through training sessions, creation of support groups and counseling. Another significant field is capacity building through the designing of training materials which can be used by other schools. Extension of activities through vocational training and employment opportunities has also been improved greatly.

Special and regular classes cater to the requirements of the entire student population. Prayer, lunch, event celebrations and sports competitions have been developed in a way so as to create and nurture a cooperative spirit among children, teachers, parents and the community at large. The project has resulted in a substantial increase in enrolment numbers. The learning process has become deprived settings. This is called reverse inclusion. The aim of reverse inclusion is to reach the underprivileged sections and integrate them into existing special education centres. In an aim to establish a resource centre and mainly to establish and demonstrate a replicable model the Pehla Kadam (first step) initiative was launched. Earlier as part of the special school mission they had worked with the intellectually disabled children in order to facilitate self reliance through intensive training. After continuous review attempts, RKMS identified areas that need attention and improvement in a variety of areas including capacity building of not only staff but more importantly parents, Anganwadi workers, doctors and other stakeholders; curriculum planning; designing of teaching-learning material; awareness creation; vocational training and constant upgrading of quality of education offered to the students.

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multi ability and other heterogeneous grouping; improve parent participation and involvement through training sessions, creation of support groups and counseling. Another significant field is capacity building through the designing of training materials which can be used by other schools. Extension of activities through vocational training and employment opportunities has also been improved greatly.

Special and regular classes cater to the requirements of the entire student population. Prayer, lunch, event celebrations and sports competitions have been more engaging and interactive. There has been a marked improvement in collaboration and team work. The employment rates of disabled have increased. The students from the underprivileged sections also vastly improved their learning levels and cognitive skills.

The conservation community of the area also acknowledges that fact that the school has been beneficial to their wards. The teachers have had adequate support through training, designing of teaching materials as well as other activities that have made them able and confident of handling challenges related to inclusive education. This includes handling a differential classroom; preparing worksheets and activity organization. One-to-one attention is also witnessed. Their approach has become more empathetic. Records of students are being well-maintained and effectively used to design the learning process. There is also a collaborative spirit among the teachers.

RMKM has grown to be a resource organization creating greater awareness. It has also helped other schools and NGOs with developing an orientation module for the ones aiming to become inclusive.

School Environment and Inclusion

Ensuring that inclusive schools are truly effective is driven by the desire that they need to be providing high quality education to all learning including one with disabilities and additional learning needs. This is achieved by designing a highly responsive teaching and learning environment, The committed teaching staff only view the CWSNs as having sets of capabilities that are required to be enhanced.

Thus the focus is not on learning disabilities rather on learning needs. The sample School at Kanatal, Uttarakand set up to fulfill the vision “to develop self inspired creative thinkers who become disciplined and caring citizens.” The school has adopted the differentiated instruction method. This means that since no two children are alike teaching caters to individual needs of children both with and without disabilities. Instead of the conventional mix of staff, they have employed youth workers, counselors, special educators, clinicians and volunteers including other students to assist student learning process.

Teachers are equipped to apply pedagogical knowledge in such a way that learning is meaningful. There is a constant feedback and reflection on ways to improve the curriculum design in a manner that makes learning relevant to real life. They also ensure participative method so that students are involved in all programs and activities of the school and community.

A Learning Centre has been established which principally modifies the school syllabus and exam papers according to the needs and even takes in CBSE exemptions already in place. Early intervention and early detection is done by

special educators and counselors who observe children in the kindergarten. This offers a better chance at equipping the students with adequate skills to combat various challenges. Report cards have stamp of the learning centre affixed if the student uses their services.

A variety of regular programs including KADAM, a workshop meant for parents of the disabled children – This is a biannual training workshop aimed at raising awareness and equipping the parents with skills, attitudes, competencies to help their differently-abled children. It is a collaborative platform between the parents and the Learning centre at the Sample School.

UDAAN to showcase skills of students in a non competitive environment – An annual three-day event forming a part of the inter school festival synergy. It is an inter school event where CWSNs can exhibit their talents in art, dance, music. They are presented with mementoes.

NEEV to facilitate the sale of products made by students in the prevocational classes. These include chocolates or folders made by students themselves. The school also arranges interaction with students of other inclusive schools through visits and participation in talent exhibitions.

In house counselors also organise sessions to help students from grades 5 to 9 namely tweens and teens to face growing up issues. They also discuss gender roles, acceptance of orientations and dealing with relationships. Thus appropriate transitions and life skill development are assisted.

Designing curriculum by the teachers that would enable them to engage all

students and achieve productive learning by facilitating participation and meaningful contribution to learning activities is another hallmark of the school. Though the mainstream curriculum is followed a parallel curriculum is adopted. This simply means the mainstream curriculum is adjusted to the pace of learning of the child rather than the other way round. The special educators at the learning centre also develop modified curriculum. Thus care is taken to make the curriculum need-based as well as functional.

Since the classroom plays a major part in the formative years of a child the teacher-student relationship must reflect coherence in words and action of the teacher. It must also emerge from a sympathetic attitude towards the child. Counselors help teachers nurture strong bonds and work towards building classroom solidarity that could immensely contribute to the all round development of the child.

Physical infrastructure incorporates the choice of flexibility in the use of physical space such as varying the size and composition of classroom groups. Thus two classes may be joined to form one large space or divided to make smaller more intimate spaces. They would also be connected to outdoors. This free flowing and flexible arrangement could reinforce freedom in movement and activity all across the school.

Lifts in every floor offer better access to all students throughout the school space. Specially designed toilets are in place. These are essential to make the school environment disabled friendly. Two wheelchairs are provided to enable its use at any time on school premises. The school building also incorporates

wheel chair friendly ramps on either side. This fulfills the barrier free condition of inclusive schools. Support staff for the learning centre are available to assist in movement of disabled children. The library offers story telling experience that improves auditory skills, kindles imagination and makes learning joyful. Audio books are also available. The prevocational activities are undertaken in a dedicated part of the cafeteria. This would go a long way in building confidence in the students and giving them employable skills.

Cumulative records are maintained regarding progress in performance, curriculum implementation, counseling support offered, therapies adopted and referrals made. Physical movement of students is done with care and safety. POSCO committee takes note of treatment of children within the school campus. Capacity building of teachers happen through the services of a consultant and several orientation and in service training programs. Another unique feature is the Buddy support system encourages children to help each other in academics and other activity.

Counseling services

Counseling is offered to students at all levels. The focus is to deepen understanding about the challenges they face and the manner of increasing emotional and mental strength to overcome them. Students are often referred to counselors by teachers, parents or counselors themselves when they observe challenging behavior or emotions. Individual and group counseling are given. Complete confidence is maintained and care is taken to prevent labeling. Teachers are informed of such cases to enable them to offer appropriate classroom management and support. Parents also attend separate counseling sessions.

Life skill training

CWSNs are offered weekly counseling sessions that help adjust in the classrooms better; have effective peer interaction and increase overall functioning in school. The UDAAN and NEEV are an integral part of the life skills training. Activity teachers and counselors focus on identifying talents of children and honing their skills. This will raise their self esteem and assist in their overall personality development. All CWSNs are encouraged to participate in art, craft, theatre, music, gymnastics, and sports like taekwondo and skating.

Peer moderator workshop

Another unique aspect of Srijan School is the conduct of peer moderator workshops. Students who have completed training programmes organized by mental health organizations conduct these hour-long workshops under the guidance of the school counselor. As they are fully interactive the workshops are very well received by students. Role play, brainstorming, group activities and short videos are used followed by discussion on real life situations.

The Srijan School highlights the need for constant introspection and review of methods adopted by schools that share the belief that all students can learn. There is a need for recognizing and celebrating student diversity. Facilitation of an innovative, flexible and inclusive environment would provide much needed motivation to learn. The employment of better teaching and learning strategies and practices should cater to the learning needs of all across the board. Tapping the potential of a variety of professionals and continuously self-evaluating their effectiveness in fulfilling aims and including professional improvement opportunities will go a long way in achieving effective inclusive education.

Building Bridges

Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy Calcutta aims to bring about positive change in the lives of cerebral palsy affected people. This is aimed through the framing of policies and offer of services that enhance their skills that essentially give them a chance to involve themselves fully and contribute substantially to the community at large.

The National Resource Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (NRCAAC) is one vital component that performs the task of building communication support systems including low and high tech tools, including indigenous software like a picture-talking grid. It also develops classroom resource materials and strategies. This is made possible by the team of special educators, inclusion facilitators and professionals in assistive technology.

Building Bridges programme was started by IICP in 2012 to improve social network circles around the child and brings together parent network, academic and professional institutions as well as education and training. This is in consonance with the social model attempted in the 2009 RTE Act. The programme was kickstarted through the launch of several leadership training workshops in schools, universities and professional organizations using Assistive technology. It caters to students with complex communication who seek admission into mainstream or inclusive schools by offering qualitative and quantitative services that are both child-centric and teacher-directed. It draws on the strength of the student and available access.

The Family Service Department, Community based rehabilitation unit and the

vocational training centre of the IICP have greatly helped in implementing the building bridges project. Intervention therapy and management programs are offered by the family service Department to all children whether two-week infant or 10 year-old. The CBR unit works towards inclusion of cerebral palsy affected persons and others with multiple disabilities in rural as well as urban communities. VTC builds upon their functional skills and helps them find mainstream employment.

IICP has built a library of indigenous picture symbols that are easily understandable to children and their communication partners. Teachers in mainstream schools where the parents wish to admit their wards are suggested to use symbolic or pictorial representation for communication.

The aim of NRCAAC is to assist children with cerebral palsy and other communication needs by providing access devices that enable operating a computer as well as custom-made software. It should be borne in mind that such solutions are the only chance to enlist their participation in the learning process and realising their full potential.

The case studies that illustrate how ICT helped students with cerebral palsy and other difficulties being integrated into mainstream schools are given below. The first is Abhirup Sarkar who due to athetoid involuntary movements could not write legibly on paper and the mere effort of the task was strenuous. Having secured admission in a mainstream school, the augmentative tools like QWERTY alphabet board as well as a Bengali spell board helped him spell words by pointing to the alphabets and a single switch enabled functional writing through

computer keyboard. The teacher provided that lesson plans in advance so that the AAC tools can be readied. Simple message strips, textual answer-based communication pages and low tech spell boards were made by the teacher and inclusion facilitator. Parents were given updates on his class performance. Initially typing on his personal laptop in Bengali, he now is able to complete his classwork in English, Bengali and Mathematics. He participates fully in oral discussions.

Mridul Kedia, a student with cerebral palsy joined the mainstream inclusive school Akshar. To overcome his speech impairment, he was trained to use a voice output device. These are electronic AAC systems that replace speech. They can have pre loaded or synthetic speech. To increase the employment of VOD activities like self introduction, story-telling were encouraged. In fact with peer help he operated a powerpoint presentation of Three Little Pigs using a single switch.

Picture-text based displays are developed by his teachers and parents that now allow him to talk about his favourite games, his family and even to recite poems in Hindi and English.

However these abovementioned successes also point to the need for individualization of technology as well as the requirement of intensive training for not only the student but also the care givers, parents, educators. IICP serves as a research and training centre offering short courses in Continuing Rehabilitation Education and a recognized B.Ed course in Special Education. Customised training is also given to anyone working in the field of special education.

Values integrated art and craft education

Based on the guiding principle of making Human values based secular information freely available to rural students, the Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vahini program was launched in 2010. In order to achieve a seamless, synergetic, safe medium for nurturing and sharing knowledge by harnessing the power of collaborative ideas, people and technology for the welfare of humanity an Insightful, Inspiring, Enjoyable and Participative learning experience is provided in the four domains of classroom, corridor, campus and community. Rooted in the belief that art and craft nurtures creativity, visual learning, cultural and historical awareness and self expression, together with value integration the school is ideally suited for inclusive education.

The use of a variety of mediums to undertake art activities include pencil, crayons, eraser, ink, paint, cotton buds and sponge. Each of these allow the student to understand various concepts like direction, motion, number sequence, alphabets, knowledge about space. Time, and experience sensory stimulation. Activities like colouring, drawing and painting help the child to develop fine motor skills, and improve coordination through handling pencils, brushes and crayons. The use of codes and rules to complete tasks increases cognition and following instructions and rules. Hand eye coordination is vastly enhanced when they attempt to trace and draw. Tactile development is also achieved when handling a variety of materials, shapes, colours and textures.

The use of paper, glue, scissors, clay, beads wool or recyclable items help them to practice pincer grasp. Methods of folding, tearing, cutting, crushing and quilling offers them better control on their limb movements and separation of

fingers through cutting. Beads support strengthening and coordination of their fingers and hands. Later it equips them with vocational skills. The unique approach of inculcating human values through the use of arts and crafts as medium of instruction is the hallmark of SSSVV. Lesson plans reflect the human value that is learnt by the effective use of art and craft. Thus the effort is to incorporate the core values of love, truth, right conduct, peace and non violence into the individual and group activity like stories, games, quiz, puzzles, debates, role play, quotations and group discussion.

The teachers are given orientation workshops. They also benefit from a structured training module prepared by SSSVV. A hands-on approach to using art and craft to pursue value-based education is also followed. The method has been successfully adopted in rural schools across South India which validates the implementation of arts and crafts programs to essentially make schooling enjoyable and a place to cultivate values.

Effective Classroom management practices

In order to achieve the goal of inclusion in educational institutions the role of the educator in creating a well managed learning environment is critical. By this we mean that classes have a designated structure and follows routines that despite disruptions help the students to succeed and learn.

Classroom management refers to the various methods and strategies adopted by educators to offer a conducive classroom environment for all students in order that they learn to their fullest potential. Thus it includes all actions and directions employed by teachers to positively impact the learning goals and achievements of all students.

It mainly focuses on three elements: Motivation, Discipline and Respect. Motivation refers to all classroom practices that maintain student interest and focus. Discipline is seen here as the reaction to disruptions that restore the learning environment. Respect implies the acceptance of diversity in the classroom and addressing the individual learning needs of everyone. The practices need to always be structured, reinforcing and consistent. When classes are “safe” from criticisms and judgments, children can learn without fear. Also verbal acknowledgment of appropriate behavior must be made with high degree of frequency. Approval of the teachers is reinforcing often motivating the student to increase his/her participation. Hence maintenance of a positive classroom environment will project a healthy, warm and accepting ambience that encourages students to express themselves freely.

Positive teacher-student relationship characterized by greater intimacy; lower conflict and less dependency is invaluable in building student confidence and supporting in their performance. There is mutual acceptance and respect in such a class. The cordial relations maintained by the teachers will make them approachable to all students. Teachers must maintain professionalism and not exhibit personal emotions. They also need to be proximate and sustain understanding and empathy.

Some of the effective teaching-learning practices include creation of a structured classroom with designated areas for group and individual work with display of coloured class schedule. Through the provision of checklists, folders and containers help children organise learning materials. Structuring lessons either by employing differentiated instruction that would offer choices to

students to perform activities and undertake assessments according to their learning styles. Else, a “universal design” based curriculum would incorporate alternatives such that it is accessible and appropriate to students of any background, learning style, ability or disability.

Cooperative learning strategy can be adopted if students are allowed to work in small groups to complete meaningful tasks and mutual dependence and cooperative behaviour are encouraged. Use of Graphic organizer for example, lesson outline as note-taking tool can be adopted. The arrangement of the classroom should be such that attention of all students is directed towards the teacher. There must be unhindered view of board, screens as well as the teacher himself/herself.

However care should be taken to keep the arrangement flexible so that different teaching activities can be performed. Rules of behavior must be clear and inappropriate behavior must not be punished rather the consequences of such action should be made apparent. Teachers must maintain flexibility in approach and must possess consistent expectations and consequences so that learning is child-centered. Effective classroom management could thus only be a reflection of a good student-teacher relationship, warm environment and result oriented classroom practices.

Impact of Teacher’s individualised support : A comparative study

In an effort to examine the role of teachers especially by offering individual attention in a mainstream set up, this comparative study was undertaken by creating two sets of children with special needs (cwsns) and their academic and

all round performance was observed with and without individualized teacher support. This was taken up in Spring Dale Senior School, Amritsar. The parent of a child with special needs seeking admission in a mainstream school realized the need for special educators and took up getting qualified as a special educator and not only admitting her ward in the school but herself joining as a special educator.

The sample comprised of 20 students with special needs divided into two groups ranging between the years 3 and 17 studying grades 3 to 8. The first group had a teacher for every CWSN take individual classes 45 minutes every week. This was scheduled taking into account the free periods available for the teacher but also not affecting the co curricular activity that CWSN attended with their peers as part of their regular timetables.

Also, since the CWSN are exempt from 3rd language, the special educator interacted with them during this period outside the class. The teachers were to make a note of the CWSN's progress in the areas of behavior, problems faced and resources provided by the teacher. This was regularly reviewed by the special educator and changes if needed suggested. The second group CWSNs did not have any individual attention. After a six month period of comparison, it was found that the reading, writing and communication skills of the first group children had better improvement. However the more pronounced difference was in the general academic profile where grades of the CWSNs of the first group showed good improvement.

Even the feedback notebooks showed that the first group teachers offered a

more positive feedback, began to believe in their potential were more comfortable with CWSNs in their general classes and could handle them better. They could also help the students complete the special worksheets and teacher-student relations improved. They could also come up with new ideas that led to better classroom management. Behaviours of the CWSNs were managed better and peers began respecting the CWSN more.

This method thus is not only cost effective but also makes optimum utilization of resources and manpower as it is the same general teachers who have acquired the ability to handle CWSNs in their classes. Periodic Training for all faculty could make it possible that real holistic development of CWSNs is achieved with just a little more efficient use of teacher time and resources.

Role of Early Intervention for Children with delayed developments.

Normal development in the life of a child must be closely monitored. This is because if there are any discrepancies then the early intervention could surely help in overcoming the age gap and vastly increase chances of age appropriate functioning. This would make subsequent inclusion smooth and the child would feel more comfortable and secure. Thus early intervention should be implemented in all pediatric clinics and schools. The identification of cases showing signs of delayed development can be done by doctors in pediatric clinics or teachers in pre schools. They can then be referred to an Early Intervention centre.

Early Intervention Services aim to help prevent child abuse or neglect; improve parenting skills; help children with delayed developments to achieve age

appropriate measures; improve the physical, cognitive and emotional development of a child and pave the way for inclusion.

At Prayatna an Early Intervention Centre in Ahmedabad, the pediatrician examines the child for any hearing or visual impairment. Further if there are any concerns on delays in development, a screening is done by the counselor. If a delay is observed to be more than three months an occupational therapist makes a more detailed assessment, giving a greater clarity on problem areas be it sensory, cognition, comprehension, perception or social skills. The concerned therapist works on the problem area and attempts to bridge the age gap.

It is seen that the parents initially need counseling to understand the child's condition better and become active participants in its betterment. The emphasis also is to make the parent the main therapist as they spend maximum time with their children. An IEP with a detailed record of maximum number of activities that could be performed in a day and the actual performance of the child is maintained. The aim is to strengthen the parent-child bond which would greatly help in the therapy stages too.

The parents are also encouraged to make the life inclusive for the child by enabling greater social interactions through play dates, meeting relatives and visiting public places. They are also asked to nurture parent networks so that awareness creation and sharing of concerns occur.

Inclusion in the Early Intervention system is characterized by a well-informed and general screening programme that is accessible to all and removes any

doubts or questions parents would have over the process while ensuring that no one who seeks such assessments are stigmatized. If screening is done but referral is not made though concerns remain, monitoring through the complete participation of the family is required. If early intervention forms part of a non-discriminatory, community-based, child development service, then it is more advantageous. Later a comprehensive interdisciplinary assessment mechanism must be family-friendly and such focus mainly on positive development features rather than disability or issues. Here a variety of inclusive options must be made known to the parents. This can include lists of local community agencies especially ones offering inclusive child care programs as well as details of peer groups available for interaction and exchange.

There may also be children who are at risk of developing problems due to various issues like premature birth, low birth weight or even family traits like mental health history or poor financial resources. Such children may be referred to preventive intervention programs. Enough information must be gathered as part of assessment on the abovesaid elements too so that a viable developmental systems model is adopted for the child. Any program developed should essentially factor in community orientation and maximize family participation and involvement.

To ensure that early intervention programs are inclusive all around, checklists for implementers together with periodic interviews with families can easily help monitor the inclusivity quality of the intervention programs. The preference of families of community embedded interventions reinforces the model adopted by Prayatna in making Early intervention truly inclusive.

Inclusive teaching in a govt school – case study

Dispelling the myth that only private schools are equipped to implement inclusive education goals, this case study of the efforts at inclusive education at a government-run primary school in Bangalore is an eye opener. With the help of Brindavan Educational Trust with its 20 year experience in special education, an academic program was designed to address the diverse needs of all children of this Primary School. The school had students principally from lower economic and often non educational backgrounds. They were first generation learners and since future instruction in various subjects required English language foundation, a Language Development Programme or LDP was designed.

As a first step towards inclusion, the teachers were targeted for awareness creation and use of strategies that incorporate difference in student functioning style, learning style and learning pace. They were made suggested possible changes to curriculum such that content remains the same however, slight adaptations were made in presenting concepts in language which was simpler and assessments more lenient. A new pre primary curriculum was developed to give emphasis to listening and speaking skills. Literacy skills number sense and environmental awareness through innovative use of storytelling, songs, play, art and crafts.

Inclusive teaching practices focused on equipping then teacher to make their classes more inclusive. This began by designing lesson plans that catered to content, process and result. Multi sensorial teaching strategies like visual (e.g. mind maps, flow charts, keyword webs and story maps); auditory and kineasthetic and tactile were found to be most effective.

The physical environment of the class was made attractive and colourful. Separate areas were designated for teacher made materials and display of children projects and activities. Classroom rules were displayed as charts.

Since the learning level of each child is varied, differential evaluation worksheets were used for assessment. As part of the Progress Monitoring Process a whole school assessment was carried out to gain a realistic picture of the skill development among all children in the school. Areas of spelling, writing, mathematics and individual reading and comprehension were assessed. This gave a fair idea of extra support required for some students at every level. An Individual Education programme was designed for such students. A Resource Room offered remedial programme for forty minutes five times a week. Continuous teacher training arrangements can help in overcoming the reluctance to effect a change in teaching methods and approach. Support was given to the teachers to prepare concept based vocabulary and extended general English vocabulary. Integration of activities within classroom teaching to sustain student interest was made. The teachers could successfully manage student behavior in class and inculcate much of the inclusive strategies to good effect.

ICT, Assistive technology & devices for facilitating curriculum transactions

Adapted low tech aids and teaching learning materials for children with vision impairment or associated disabilities could enable inclusion. Since these children are disadvantaged in receiving information from the world around them, simple teaching-learning materials and toys can be created to facilitate learning. A hand-made textured soft ball allows the child to understand texture, shape, size

and weight of objects. It can help to better grasp things and improve two-hand manipulation. This would later develop tactual sensitivity and dexterity that would be of immense use in learning Braille and computers.

Assistive Technology refers to any equipment that increases, maintains and improves functional capabilities of persons with disabilities anywhere be it school, workplace, home or community. The focus is on low-tech aids which are made from easily available, cost-effective or reusable materials. The reasons for developing low-tech aids are below:

- Specialised toys are not readily available. More often they need to be adapted for use.
- Since each child has unique learning needs, the aid also needs to be individualized.
- As children hail from modest economic backgrounds, the aids need to be affordable.
- These greatly increase the chances of achieving learning and academic goals.
- The Saksham organization has developed some teaching learning materials. Here are their descriptions, functions and results:
- Visual stimulation flash cards made with fabric incorporating textures, patterns and shades aimed at improving visual fixation and tracking for visual processing disorders. Showed vast improvement in cerebral palsy and cortical visual impaired children.
- Sensory hula hoops made using crinkling sheets, laces and ribbons to offer sensory stimulation. Colours and sounds help children learning to roll over and in need of NDT exercises.

- Adapted Cardboard chairs to help children gain neck control, assist seating posture and upper body control.
- Tactile sort and match game using cardboard, fabric. buttons and laces let children identify, sort and match helping them develop finger sensitivity and differentiate a variety of textures by touch.
- Working model of the respiratory system using a plastic bottle, straws, balloons and rubberbands. This teaches children the process of exhalation and inhalation. They can easily correlate blowing and inflating balloons with inhaling and exhaling.
- The study found direct correlation between the use of low tech aids and achievement of growth and developmental milestones and the results were satisfactory.

Inclusive Education

Initiatives from Pondicherry

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is the Government of India's flagship programme launched in the academic year 2001-02 at the national level to achieve the main goal of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE). The aim is to achieve it in a time bound manner in collaboration with states and local governments, as mandated by the 86th amendment of the Constitution of India making free and compulsory education to the children of 6-14 years age group a fundamental right.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan covers the whole country and addresses the needs of 192 million children residing in 1.1 million habitations (SSA Framework for Implementation, 2011). It is the apt response to the demand for quality education and promoting social justice through basic education. It provides an opportunities for human capabilities of all children through provision of community owned education in a mission mode. SSA's main aim is to bridge social, regional and gender gaps and its special focus on disabled children with the active participation of community in the management of schools.(Puducherry Annual Report, 2010-2011).

It is the apt response to the demand for quality education and promoting social justice through basic education. It provides an opportunities for human capabilities of all children through provision of community owned education in a mission mode. SSA's main aim is to bridge social, regional and gender gaps and its special focus on girl's education and disabled children with the active participation of community in the management of schools. A group that forms a very important part of equity issues under SSA is Children with special needs

(CWSN). The key thrust of SSA will be on providing Inclusive education to all children with special needs in general schools. SSA ensures that every child with special needs, Irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability, is provided quality inclusive education. It will also support a wide range of approaches, options and strategies for education of children with special needs. This includes special training in the form of school readiness programmes for CWSN, education through special schools, Home based schooling, community based rehabilitation(CBR).

The ultimate aim of SSA would be to mainstream all CWSN in neighbourhood schools. Inclusive education for CWSN under SSA seeks to develop full potentiality of each child with a disability for emphasizing on ending all forms of discrimination and promoting effective participation of all. Thus inclusion of CWSN has to be seen in terms of physical, social and quality of access.

Physical Access to Children with Special Needs

1. Mapping of CWSN
2. Assessment of CWSN for Mapping of Needs
3. Educational Placement
4. Aids and Appliances
5. Removal of Architectural Barriers

Quality of Access to Children with Special Needs

1. Support Services
2. Teacher Training
3. Resource Support
4. Curricular Access
5. Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)
6. Building Synergy with Special Schools

Social Access to Children with Special Needs

1. Parental Training and Community Mobilization
2. Peer Sensitisation

SSA And CWSN in Puducherry

The Union Territory of Puducherry ranks seventh in the place of Literacy Rate percentage next to Kerala, Lakshadweep, Mizoram, Tripura, Goa and Daman& Diu. As per the 2011 census, the literacy rate for the Union Territory of Puducherry is 86.55% with 92.12% males and 81.22% females being literates. Among the districts of the U.T of Puducherry, Mahe has the highest literacy rate with 98.35% and Yanam, the lowest literacy rate with 80.26%. 9, 66,600 persons are literates in the Union territory of Puducherry, of which 5, 02,575 persons are males and 4, 64,025 persons are females. The highest numbers of literates (3, 48,524) are living in Puducherry, whereas the lowest numbers of literates (19,932) are living in Yanam.

Inclusion in Puducherry Today :

The SSA has inclusive education as a principal focus area. According to the National Educational Policy every CWSN must be provided quality education. It looks at a holistic method of inclusive education taking into account the issues related to physical access that allows unhindered scope to reach schools as well as the availability of assistive aids and quality teachers together with social access through peer sensitisation and community mobilisation. From the year 2003 the state of Pondicherry has implemented the Samagra Siksha programme under various nomenclatures. Under this programme, the category of disabilities is assessed and the budget allocation according to MHRD guidelines is disbursed based on the number of children identified. The early intervention and other programmes are implemented with the help of NGOs and other organisations. The generation of state wide child-wise data on the different categories of disability is a unique aspect of the Union Territory of Pondicherry.

This helps in better implementation of the scheme and other aspects pertaining to the assistance through surgery, therapy, providing aids and a more comprehensive coverage in the care of the disabled including the facilitation of special educators, attendants and escorts. The creation of awareness through training and orientation among educational administrators and other stakeholders is also undertaken through sensitization programmes.

The 6 Block Resource Centres spread through the Union Territory assist in proper assessment of the disabled children. The Directorate of School Education is availing the services of NGOs and special education organisations like NIPMED, Aurobindo Society and Satya Special School to develop SOPs, protocols and identification training for teachers on a rolling basis. It also collaborates with the Department of Social Welfare for distribution of aids and other facilities through an eligibility certification provided by the Social Welfare department.

The Directorate of School Education also has implemented the barrier-free infrastructure requirements in schools. The building of disabled-friendly toilets has also been completed in most of the schools. The Inspection officers conduct periodic assessment of the Disabled plan targets in terms of implementation and work completed. The reviews are made quarterly, in addition to assessment conducted by the MHRD periodically. The department also carries out a yearly household survey on children with disabilities so that follow up action and updation is effective.

Success stories from other states are also taken into account during the planning stages so that best practices from other areas are imbibed, adapted and used in order to implement welfare schemes more effectively.

Total number of Enrolled CWSN category wise and gender wise																					
REGION	BLINDNESS			LOW VISION			HEARING IMPAIR			SPEECH AND LAN			LOCOMOTOR			MENTAL ILLNESS			SPECIFIC LEARNI		
	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T
PONDY	119	107	226	107	110	217	48	46	94	16	10	26	28	37	65	31	19	50	40	18	58
KARAIKAL	1	0	1	25	16	41	19	9	28	8	2	10	21	10	31	16	4	20	2	2	4
MAHE	0	0	0	43	35	78	0	4	4	5	4	9	3	3	6	8	6	14	48	19	67
YANAM	0	0	0	17	14	31	3	3	6	45	26	71	16	15	31	25	19	44	38	19	57
GRAND TOTAL	120	107	227	192	175	367	70	62	132	74	42	116	68	65	133	80	48	128	128	58	186

The above table confirms the fact that the state of Pondicherry has made consistent progress in increasing enrolment numbers even in the case of children with disability in an inclusive education set up. The implementation of schemes especially of inclusive education to the fullest has been the driving force of the state's role in achieving the National Education Policy goals.

AICE - Alternative Inclusive Centre for Education

One of the initiatives of Satya Special School, Pondicherry was the Early Intervention Centre that looked at alleviating the condition of new born or young children who have been diagnosed for any delay in development. While the children were treated for possible disorders or therapies administered, their educational needs and integration into mainstream schools were still unfulfilled. This was mainly because of the teachers not being equipped with appropriate skills and the inability to bridge the gap between the special needs children and typically developing children. The most important issue was the age-specific system of educational instruction that is followed. The special needs children invariably cannot adjust to age-specific educational requirements given their conditions added to it was also the existing traditional teaching methods followed in mainstream school which prove to be ineffective.

While exploring various options in Puducherry available to integrate CWSNs we also came across a section of normally developing children who were from challenging social situations. They are referred to as “environmentally challenged” i.e., children growing in difficult circumstances, children of prisoners, or of sex workers, children who have faced any kind of abuse or had some psychological issues, street children and those from the gypsy or narikkoravar community. The needs of both CWSNs and environmentally challenged children were not being met and hence were at a risk of being marginalised. This group needed a more holistic, child-friendly school environment which was not just inclusive but also conducive to learning using alternative methods of instruction.

Keeping the objective of ‘Including the Excluded’, Satya Special School started the Alternative Inclusive Centre for Education or AICE to cater to the needs of this special group of children. AICE aimed to create an ambience of learning that enables the children who have either dropped out of school due to workload, unable to cope with studies or cannot attend due to economic circumstances to avail of another opportunity to learn according to his or her ability regardless of their age, social or intellectual capacity.

In order to address the weaknesses in the current general stream, the inclusive education provided in AICE has adopted the following mechanisms:

1. Classification of students only by ability not age or social or emotional capacity.
2. Classroom strength maintained at 7-10 students
3. Adoption of play way method instead of blackboard-based pedagogy
4. Focus on life skills, counselling and value education
5. Constant updation of teacher training strategies so that children learn in the best possible manner
6. Standardised education curriculum followed

The CWSNs have exhibited better social interaction and begun showing improvement in learning exercises. The other children have exhibited greater empathy. There is greater emphasis on visual learning and more importance given to project work that encourages group activity and dynamics. Mock tests encourage the students to overcome the fear of exams. This child-centric approach to learning involves the extensive use of drama, music and other arts. The children are also made aware of leadership, advocacy, rights, importance of health and hygiene and the significance of sexual reproductive rights.

The introduction of the National Institute for Open Schooling where there is a choice of a variety of subjects to the CWSNs is seen as a boon due to the flexibility and range of options available in pursuing education.

Alternative Inclusive Centre for Education is a wonderful experimental initiative providing ample space for peer learning and behaviour modification. A truly **INCLUSIVE SCHOOL FOR EXCLUDED CHILDREN!!!**

Inclusive Education

Expert Contributions

Making Education Truly Inclusive

Some Personal reflections

Prof. R. Srinivasa Murthy

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Prof.R.Srinivasa Murthy, Professor of Psychiatry (Retd) from National Institute of Mental Health and NeuroSciences, (NIMHANS)Bangalore has nearly 50 years of experience of working with persons with IDD and their families.

Recognising the emotional needs of persons with IDD and the families with a 'special child' and the need he has worked towards empowerment of families.

Prof. Murthy's association with persons with intellectual disability and their families has been since 1973. He started work in this field, by providing professional support(as a postgraduate) to Prem Ashram, Una (Himachal Pradesh) during the 1970's through once a month visits. During the 1980's and 1990's he guided many initiatives of Action Aid (disability division), CAPART of Govt. Of India, National Institute of Mentally Handicapped,(now National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disability-NIEPID) Secunderabad and a number of voluntary organisations. From 2007 to 2014, he guided the Association for the Mentally Challenged (AMC), Bangalore to develop community care programmes.

Background

Inclusive education for children with Intellectual developmental Disability(IDD) is the most recent of the growing attempts during the last century to assure quality of life to persons with IDD. It is symbolic and in a way a reflection of the changes of the times and societal attitudinal changes, the measure that led to categorisation of children with IDD, one hundred years back, and separated from the families and communities, is now used to integrate the persons with IDD in the society.

As a psychiatrist for nearly five decades, Prof. Srinivasa Murthy's principal exposure to institutional care of persons with IDD, (then referred to as mentally retards) happened in December 1970. As a UK Nuffield Fellow, he visited one of the largest institutions for the persons with IDD in Bristol. At that time, separating the individuals with IDD was the norm- both for their safety, care and comfort of the families. He was surprised when he was informed by the social worker shared that at that time, families were paid money to take their own child home for the weekends!!

He started working with persons with IDD and their families as a postgraduate student at Chandigarh, when he began providing professional support to Prem ashram, a special institution for persons with IDD. During the 50 years, Prof Srinivasa Murthy has witnessed massive changes in the understanding and response to persons with IDD in India. Some of these are:

- Change of terms -from idiot, imbecile to mental retardation to handicap to IDD;
- Separation of legislation covering the mentally ill and IDD- from Indian Lunacy at 1912 to Mental health care Act 2017, and Persons with Disability Act 2016;

- Formation of the National Trust 1999;
- From institutionalised care to community living;
- From Exclusion to Empowerment;
- Independent living and sustainable development of persons with IDD;

A reflection of these changes is the shift from ‘Special Schools’ to ‘Inclusive Education’. Professionally this can be seen as the progress of the society to understand, accept and support persons with special needs, in place of exclusion. Importance of ‘Inclusive Education’ for persons with IDD and their caregivers Inclusive education certainly is the desired goal for all persons with IDD. Such inclusion removes stigma, provides children with IDD opportunities for socialisation with other children and acquire social skills and most importantly keeps open the possibilities for personal growth beyond that can be provided by the special schools.

Inclusion is mandated in Schools by the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Few schools practice inclusion. Others find it difficult due to lack of physical and human infrastructure. Often the need for special teachers and resources are met by less qualified personnel. However, there are many questions about the shadow teachers:

- Who is a shadow teacher?
- What are the basic qualifications necessary?
- What are the minimum standards of care and skills necessary?
- Who will pay for the shadow support?
- What are the disorders that need shadow support?
- How many children with special needs can be in one classroom?
- And many other questions need to be answered.

This 'Inclusive Education' is a project in evolution and development. In the following sections, FOUR areas of difficulty are identified for greater attention.

1.Logistic support for implementing inclusion of children with IDD:

The primary education in India is still in a developmental phase, with many inadequacies. In this atmosphere of deprivation of facilities and lack of trained teachers, the expectation that the additional needs of the children with IDD will be provided in adequate levels is unrealistic. Whether it is the trained teachers, speech and physio therapists etc will be required to be part of the school staff, to achieve inclusive education. This requires adequate funding.

Equally important in the current school atmosphere of looking for pass percentages, marks, children with IDD should not be seen as impediments to school goals of claiming dramatic results. There is an additional need for motivated, committed persons taking up these professions as their careers.

2.Delay in recognition of special needs of persons with IDD

There is a serious possibility of another disadvantage to children with IDD in inclusive education. In the current school system, once the child is admitted, government schools have to admit all children seeking admission, the child gets promoted till 8th standard. This would mean around 13-15 years of age. This can be a disadvantage to the group of children who cannot develop mentally go to the 14 years age. For example, a child of 6.7, 8 years of developmental age, the years in school beyond the developmental capacity, will be lost opportunity. What is being referred to here is the special advantage of special education, pre-vocational training etc which could have optimised the development. There is a

significant group of children, largely in the moderate IDD group, who will experience this loss. The lost few years could be significant barrier to full rehabilitation.

However, if the school had a system of assessing the intellectual/developmental age and taking decisions at appropriate age period, this could be minimised. If such a 'selective' assessment is not made, then the child is likely be 'marginalised' (Professor recalls a parent sharing how her son was called 'SHUNYA-ZERO' by others) in such a situation. The harm of such an isolation needs to be kept in mind.

3. Parental reluctance to accept the disability

One of the greatest barriers to timely intervention with persons with IDD , in India, is the late identification. Inclusive education can facilitate the non-acceptance of the special needs of the child by the parents. It is often voiced by the parents, "he /she is going to normal school, how can she/he be IDD'. In order to avoid the emotional hurt and disappointment, many parents would prefer the child to go to a regular school, for as long as possible. This would mean they need not confront the challenges of IDD. However, at the age of 14 or 16, to suddenly recognise that the child needs support and sheltered care, is very shattering.

4. Barriers to Integration in schools

In India, because of the limitations of resources, specialist personnel and the educational system, it is often the 'symbolic' activity that gets attended to rather the processes needed to make the policy a success. This is seen in the

reservation for children of poor socio-economic group as part of the Right to Education Act, 2010.

There is a need to recognise the multiple challenges of inclusive education and create the opportunities required for inclusive education. If the above mentioned resources are not available, the harm of inclusion could be greater than the benefits.

Way forward and conclusion

The development of inclusive education as an educational approach is in line with the century long efforts to understand the special needs of persons with IDD and make their lives fulfilling. However, there is need to understand the additional resources and efforts needed to make this a reality. Such additional interventions require, (i) parental education; (ii) early identification and early intervention; (iii) specialised staff to support the persons with IDD in schools; (iv) periodic individualised review to understand the progress and identifying the best place for their education/training; (v) additional funding; (iv) professional groups of psychologists, social workers and psychiatrists to support persons with IDD, their parents, teachers and special staff and (vii) a system pf monitoring and evaluation of the whole inclusive education.

In conclusion, inclusive education offers both challenges and opportunities for the society to assure equal citizenship and opportunities to persons with IDD. If seen as a simple policy prescription, it can do much damage. But taken as a project in evolution it has tremendous value. This is the way forward for the country.

Lessons Learnt

Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Classrooms

Judith Newman

Co-founder, Early Childhood CARES, University of Oregon, Eugene

Board Member - Kindergarten through 12th Grade School, USA

In 1975 the United States federal government passed a law stating that all school age children with disabilities are entitled to a free and appropriate public education. The law was based on several principles that have guided the implementation since the beginning till today. One of these principles is that students must be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE) which means they must learn with their typical peers to the full extent possible. Another principle is that children receive educational services that are individualized to their needs and ensure their progress. The intent for meaningful education and inclusion with typical peers has been clear from the beginning, but the implementation has been slow and challenging largely due to resistant attitudes resulting from fears and concerns and largely due to the lack of training, time and resources to ensure teachers have the skills to effectively include all children. First let's take a closer look at the resistant attitudes created by fears and concerns from all stakeholders in this process.

There are concerns expressed by parents of children with disabilities: "Will my child be excluded from activities and from peers? Will my child be teased? Will my child be safe? Will my child get the help they need?" The response is: There

is evidence that children with disabilities develop better social and communication skills in inclusive settings. Their self esteem and feelings of acceptance are improved and their feelings of isolation are reduced and the likelihood of developing friendships is increased.

There are concerns expressed by parents of typical peers: “Will my child learn negative or strange behaviors? Will my child be ignored because the children with disabilities need more help? Will my child be safe?” The response is: There is evidence that the rate of progress of typical peers in inclusive settings is the same as those not in inclusive settings. Additionally, typical peers in inclusive settings develop greater empathy skills and are more sensitive in social interactions with peers and have improved self esteem.

The concerns expressed by regular education teachers are: “I don’t know how to teach a child with disabilities. I do not have the training, skills or expertise. Can I do this? Will I have time to work with a child with special needs? Can I keep all the children in my classroom safe?” The response is: The biggest barrier to inclusion is fear. It is important to remember that children with disabilities are children first and more similar to their typical peers than different. Teachers must have an attitude of acceptance and openness to make inclusion work well. There are specific skills and training that help in accommodating children and adapting curriculum that can be learned. There also must be professionals with special education knowledge and skills assigned to consult, teach, coach and support regular education teachers in the classroom.

The special education teachers have the following concerns: “How can I share

how to help a child with disabilities in the context of a regular education classroom? Will the teachers want help from me? Will I know how to help teachers adapt the regular education curriculum for each student with disabilities?” The response is: Training can teach professionals effective strategies for consultation and for coaching skills that special education professionals working in inclusive settings can learn and use in order to provide meaningful support to children with disabilities and their regular teachers.

On the other hand, education administrators worry about: “Do we have the resources and time to include children with disabilities effectively? Do we have the appropriate professional development to help teachers teach and support children with disabilities? How can I explain the benefits to parents and teachers?” The response is: Education administrators must ensure that the best professional development is provided to regular education and special education teachers. Time must be built into the school schedule so that training is provided and classroom teams have time to plan lessons and individualize for children and problem solving. It is critically important for administrators to create time and a safe space to listen to and acknowledge the concerns and fears of all stakeholders and then address them with research and real-life positive examples. Ideally this can be done preemptively, as a program embarks on creating an inclusive classroom.

Now let’s take a look at the benefits of inclusion followed by the challenges and barriers to doing effective inclusion. Over the years a significant amount of research on inclusion has been published demonstrating the benefits and also confirming that there are no liabilities to children.

A review of the research literature shows that:

- Inclusion benefits children with and without disabilities.
- Children with disabilities can be effectively educated in inclusive programs using specialized instruction.
- Parents and teachers influence children's values regarding disabilities.
- Families of children with and without disabilities generally have positive views of inclusion.
- Inclusion is not more expensive than having separate programs for children with disabilities.
- Successful inclusion requires intentional and effective collaboration and teaming.
- The individual outcomes of inclusion should include access, membership, participation, friendships, and support.
- Individualized and embedded instruction can be used to teach a variety of skills, related to early learning and educational standards, and to promote participation in inclusive preschool and school programs for children with and without disabilities.
- Children with disabilities do not need to be “ready” to be included. Programs need to be “ready” to support all children.

The same review of many years of research and experience identifies barriers and challenges that need to be addressed in order to implement successful inclusive practices in classrooms. They include:

- Negative attitudes, beliefs, fears and concerns related to people with disabilities must be addressed and changed through information, example and experience.

- Adequate finances and resources are needed to implement effective inclusion.
- Approval and implementation of school policies that support inclusion are needed.
- Transportation and facility policies that allow access are needed.
- Curricula, materials and environments that are flexible and adaptable are needed.
- Regular and special education personnel that are trained and ready to implement inclusive practices are needed.
- Overall program quality must be high because the quality of educational settings impacts the effectiveness of inclusion.

It is commonly accepted that there are numerous benefits from including children with disabilities with typical peers in regular classroom and settings. But it is not enough to just put children with disabilities in classrooms and assume inclusion will happen or provide additional staff and expect them to know how to include children effectively. We need to provide training and supports and this requires resources and expertise. The lack of training for regular education and special education teachers coupled with the lack of time and resources to plan and implement an inclusive classroom is an ongoing challenge. Each year work is being done to come closer to implementing effective inclusive practices in more and more classrooms by obtaining and allocating the necessary resources, expertise, time and supports to achieve the vision of all children learning in inclusive settings.

Enabled by Art

Oregon Supported Living Program's Arts & Culture Program

An Abstract of an article by Mathew Denis, which was published in The Register-Guard about Oregon Supported Living Program's Arts & Culture Program founded by Prof Dan Close, University of Oregon, Eugene, USA

An Abstract

Splotches of paint on smocks of avid artists trying new mediums in an open studio, showcases one of United States' first inclusive arts and culture program. It is an example of how inclusion can extend far beyond classrooms and renew community connections where all individuals irrespective of the barriers they face emerge as contributors to society.

Professor Dan Close of the University of Oregon started the Oregon Supported Living Program in 1978 with an aim of providing support services for individuals with mild disabilities to establish semi-independent living. It grew by leaps and bounds to first run a residential program for differently-abled adults throughout Eugene and Springfield.

The non profit organisation through the Community Inclusion and Employment program places differently-abled in a variety of local community supported businesses for jobs like dog walking, volunteering at the library, filing books or helping greet people at different businesses.

The effort received fillip from the 2013 executive order of the Oregon Governor

John Kitzhaber, who stipulated that people with disabilities be offered local employment opportunities. Self esteem of individuals has improved, builds team spirit and warrants allocation of tasks by companies.

“When Amy (Baker, owner of) Threadbare Prints hired Lisa Sansevere, she had no idea that the staff that works with Lisa would be so profoundly impacted.”, said OSLP executive director, Gretchen Dubie.

Dubie said Sansevere affects workplace morale with her pride in coming to work every day and taking joy in the simplest tasks. Not only does Sansevere keep work cheery, she also tries to make it fun. This gave rise to her joining co-workers for Tuesday foosball nights and Sansevere developing a whole new social network without the support of OSLP staff.

The Arts & Culture program ensures that all members of the community have the opportunity to a productive and enriching experience through art. The creativity and the ability of expression will help in breaking down barriers.

“Look Me in the Eye,” a OSLP campaign to break down barriers between all people, particularly those who are marginalized or ignored increases community awareness.

Isolation is the biggest disability. So if individuals feel connected to neighbours and community it would fulfil the true meaning of inclusion where PwDs are involved, active and doing things side-by-side with other people in the community. From just 35 participants in 2010, the program now boasts of 500

enrollees per year attending seven different classes per quarter and improving their creativity in the open studio three days a week and workshops on nights and weekends.

The artists now participate in community business related showcasing Fiesta Cultural, Wildcraft's Harvest Party, Market Fest, Lane Arts Council's First Friday ArtWalk. In fact, there is a dedicated wing at the Eugene Airport that exhibits OSLP artists' works.

The story of artist Perry Johnson illustrates this. Retiring in 2010 as a detailer and janitor at the former Wentworth-Buick dealership, he has attended every arts and culture class since. He has moved from line drawings initially to intense portraits and landscapes which adorn many public and private galleries. He is now dabbling in mosaics. Resident artist Joe Peila encourages every artist to use new materials, do different things and discover a variety of ways to unlock their creativity.

OSLP has impacted volunteers like Taro Baugnon too. Though he initially joined the English and writing program at UO, he found his calling in the art of illustration. At the Lincoln Gallery he found the connection with its ability to bring people together. He has now launched a comic illustration class ensuring his drawing techniques can be accessed by everybody.

Funded only by private donors and business sponsorship who are committed after feeling the impact of the work done at the studio and workshops, the arts and culture program has truly made the right connections.

Education for All

Lessons Learned in Training Teachers for Inclusive Education

Ashley Rila and Pam Ries

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Across the world, countries are adopting initiatives that call for educating all students. These initiatives focus on an educational inclusion model to create societies that “include everyone, celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs for all students (p. iii),” regardless of ability level (UNESCO, 1994). Educational systems strive to educate students for life after school and to be productive and contributing members of society. When millions of individuals with disabilities are excluded from these education systems, they are robbed of an education, their dignity, and basic human rights.

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is a model of education that includes all students, regardless of ability or disability. Importantly, inclusive education is not placing a student with a disability into the regular education system without additional support or educating this population in separate locations. Rather, inclusive education is a systemic reform focused on education all students by reducing barriers to receiving age-appropriate educational content alongside their neighborhood peers (Hehir et al., 2016). That is, an educational system that alters the learning environment and teaching strategies to meet the individual students’ needs.

Inclusive education has been researched for decades and numerous societal and individual advantages are consistently identified. Namely, individuals with disabilities who are educated alongside their neurotypical, same aged peers are held to higher expectations by teachers when compared to those in segregated settings (Hunt & Farron-Davis, 1997) and have shown substantial growth on both academic and behavior measures (e.g., Hehir et al., 201), both important aspects of developing productive, contributing members of society. Additionally, neurotypical peers in these diverse classrooms learn valuable life skills such as acceptance, understanding, and empathy (e.g., Shady & Larson, 2010).

Barriers to Inclusive Education

Despite the overwhelming positive evidence to include individuals with disabilities into mainstream educational systems, there are numerous challenges and barriers to inclusive education found across all countries. One of the main barriers to inclusion is teacher attitudes. Despite research from multiple countries indicating teachers are generally supportive of the idea of inclusion (e.g., Chiner & Cardona, 2013) few are willing to have individuals with disabilities in their classrooms (e.g., Blackorby et al., 2004). Many teachers indicate they do not have the proper skills necessary to support the diverse learning and behavioral needs for this population of students. This lack in self-efficacy stems from an absence of initial training in teacher preparatory programs (Das, Sharma, & Singh, 2012) and a lack of in-service professional development for practicing teachers (Bhatnagar & Das, 2014). Other barriers to inclusion include a lack of time, both in preparing educational materials and professional development activities, the fear of the unknown with systemic

change, and a lack of government and school policies supporting inclusive education.

Lessons to be Learned

Despite these barriers, schools should still strive for inclusion to better meet the needs of all students versus using barriers as excuses not to move forward with implementation or revise their educational policies. Countries can, and should, learn from the experiences of others. The United States has been implementing inclusive education since the 1960's and continues to refine their practice and policies (e.g., IDEA 1997, 2004). Here are a few lessons to be learned for effective implementation of inclusive education.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a way of thinking about and planning instruction that allows access to the content for ALL students. Commonly used components of UDL include closed captioning for the hearing impaired and text readers for the visually impaired. Text readers are unable to “read” pdf files/pictures requiring the author to include a description of what the picture represents so the material will be accessible to the visually impaired. UDL best practices suggest presenting information and assessment in multiple ways that utilize various modalities (orally, visually, kinesthetically, etc.). The result of this type of presentation is that the accommodations originally provided for the benefit of the disabled end up helping the general public. By designing lessons with flexible ways to access the content and assess the students' learning, teachers are able to effectively instruct diverse groups of learners. (CAST) For further information

about UDL refer to this website: <https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/treatments-approaches/educational-strategies/universal-design-for-learning-what-it-is-and-how-it-works>

Classroom Management: Research indicates that all students, especially those with disabilities, learn best in classrooms that are managed effectively. Classroom management encompasses a range of skills, but effective classroom managers include: a) maximizing classroom structure (i.e., easy flow in classroom, elimination of road blocks); b) establish, post, and teach positively stated classroom expectations; c) actively engage students in instruction; d) utilize a consistent continuum of strategies for responding to appropriate student behavior; and e) utilize a consistent continuum of strategies for responding to inappropriate student behavior (Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008). When classrooms are managed effectively, students know what is expected, feel safe, and can focus more attention on academic learning as teachers spend less time on correcting student behaviors. Further, effective classroom management prompts teacher well-being.

Differentiated Instruction: Differentiated instruction is an instructional framework, whereby teachers employ a variety of strategies to meet the diverse needs of students. Teachers can adjust the instruction for students across three main areas including content, process, and product. Content refers to the knowledge or skills a student needs to learn. Not all students need to learn the same skills at the same level. There is some information everyone needs to know deeply. There is some information that most students need to know. And some students may only need to acquire a surface level knowledge

of certain topics. Process refers to the activities student embark upon to learn the content. Again, not all students need to complete identical activities. For example, some students may take notes during lecture, where other students may get a copy of the teacher notes in order for them to follow along with instruction. Lastly, product refers to how students demonstrate they have learned the content. Students can demonstrate their learning in different ways and still meet the objectives of the lesson. Differentiated instruction is not a one size fits all approach (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). Rather, differentiated instruction requires teachers to know their students and assess their understanding, informally or formally, on a continual basis in order to make informed decisions about the next instructional steps.

Data-based Decision Making: Data-based decision making is the process of collecting and assessing data to understand students' progress, or lack thereof, on certain academic and behavioral standards (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Malone, 2017). To implement such a process, first a system (electronic or paper-based) to house student data needs to be created or adopted. This data system should include frequent academic marks on assessments and assignments, as well as data measuring student behavior. The type of behavioral data collected and recorded will depend upon your school system, but should include student infractions on the student code of conduct such as number of times a student is sent to the office. After the system has been established, these data need to be assessed frequently. This analysis is essential in determining how students are progressing in order to make an informed decision about how to alter instruction and student supports. Decisions to alter instruction or change supports should be informed through student data analysis and not just teacher feelings.

Professional Development: One effective way to build teacher's capacities to promote effective inclusive classrooms is through ongoing professional development (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Professional development can take on many forms, such as: short 30 minute sessions over lunch or right after students are released; day long sessions; or in-person or online sessions. Many schools accomplish this by having students leave campus early one day each week to allow all teachers to participate in professional development sessions or by having teachers come to campus a couple days before the term starts for day long sessions.

The professional development may focus on a particular content area such as universal design, classroom management, differentiated instruction, or data-based decision making. Regardless of the format or topic, educational leaders must prioritize these essential learning opportunities for teachers to build their capacities by providing support through time and money. Schools can prioritize professional development by carving out time in the school day and academic year. While partnerships with local or global experts can be established for professional development delivery, schools should not overlook the strengths and expertise teachers and staff within their school's buildings have to offer.

Although a lot of components are necessary for effective inclusive education, schools should not be paralyzed into inaction. It is important to get started. Building the capacity of a school for effective inclusive education will take time. Select one component and begin by implementing that strategy systemwide. When a strategy is implemented, it is important to evaluate the process by collecting baseline and ongoing progress data, and analyze that data to make

adjustments as necessary. It is also important to build collaborative relationships within and outside of the school system. As UNESCO indicated, “special needs education cannot advance in isolation (UNESCO, 1994),” and neither should school systems embarking upon an endeavor such as inclusive education.

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SAI Centre - Empowering AWSNs

Creating a better Inclusive Society with Community participation

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Introduction about the Organisation

It is a neighbourhood initiative for Adults with Special Needs which aims to provide a Holistic Canopy for Adults with different Neurological Conditions to evolve. The concept of neighbourhood initiative is not entirely new, but yes with regards to adults with special needs, it is something that is taking shape now. Today, in the social realm, we have so many centres and special schools that cater to the educational needs of children with special needs, however, what is also very important to remember that these children do grow and as they do, so do their parents. Now the problem or the real challenge arises when there is no more school to go to and when the vocational training centres are all full and there is no breathing space for the youngsters. The parents are in a fix as to not knowing what to do with their young adults who are in their late 20s and 30s. That's when we bring in an initiative that doesn't look at a big investment or a large group or infra structure. That which would be set up at different neighbourhood in within the living premises of a parent and thereby have an economic activity set up.

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SAI Bakery :

It prepares and sells over 20 varieties of Cookies, Muffins and Brownies. The USP being of the items are

- ❖ Eggless
- ❖ Maidaless
- ❖ Butterless

SAI Nursery :

We grow different Medicinal Herbs, Flowering Plants and Green Leafy Vegetables in Upcycled Waste Water Containers.

SAI Creations:

We upcycle and create lot of beautiful items from waste Fabric, Newspapers, cartons and Plastic Bottles. From Cushions, Doormats, Veggie Bags, Flower Vases, Newspaper Baskets to Dresses and Carry Bags, we are involved in several Utility Products.

2.Innovative and best practices used

Community development is a method where local members come together to take collective action and create solutions to common problems. The best practices as emerged from above are the following

- Developing Parents Positive Perspective towards Children with special needs- Often ignored and viewed as “burdensome” (incapable of being independent) this initiative has pioneered the change in mindset of caregivers. It uses collaborative efforts to build social cohesion and enhances the positivity among the caregivers with continuous inputs.

- Enhancing Self-image of Children with special needs- With the creative venture like SAI bakery, purpose of life gets redefined. It instils the children with desire to live with dignity, greater confidence and assured respect. Working towards enhancing their entrepreneurial skills, has been largely contributing towards the enhanced self-image. Continuous discussions, empathetic treatment, creation of opportunity to explore and create newness in routine has been extremely emphasised through the running of bakery.
- Building community (serial) entrepreneurs- Often the rehabilitation programmes have been lopsided with inputs through vocational training thereby leading them to become job seekers. This venture initiative has in fact broken this stereotype and has showcased the need for job givers and has projected a rare sight of an entrepreneurial venture / start up
- Customisation to the core- Each member is assessed with the innate strength that he or she possesses and accordingly relevant tasks are assigned. Hands-on training in the different areas of pre-baking preparation, actual production and marketing has been provided to the members in a timely manner. Such customisation was undoubtedly challenging but has worked wonders in creating a suitable team work environment and team building spirit amidst all.
- Social Media Marketing – A dedicated Facebook page has been created solely to promote the initiative and boost sales. Volunteers readily share content and insider stories of the happenings at the bakery which has helped to build an emotional connect with outside audience/ customers. It also enables to keep the atmosphere lively.

3.Impact of Best practices used

Having created a Facebook page and an account makes them tech savvy and they are updated on what's happening pertaining to the Bakery and the responses of the world-wide audience. Like, it has friends from Mumbai, Delhi, Boston, New Jersey, Sri Lanka, Dubai wanting to buy our cookies. The youngsters have their esteem raised.

Stakeholder engagement and Partnerships opportunities have been created. Corporates have also come forward and help the individual parent or a few of them to help set up such initiative. Presently MEC Chennai has readily bought the cookies daily and also gives orders for Festive occasions Connect the dots particularly for parents who were invisible or were often suffering as a “Victim” have reckoned this newness in their roles. Often never identified themselves with any individual entity but today find new joy and individuality not just as a special Parent but also as part of promising initiative impacting society at large.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

When more Parents and Professionals come together and join hands I'm within a Neighborhood, the possibility of creating a holistic Program becomes very meaningful. An Initiative that requires very little investment and resource makes it ideal for people to lend their own spacious rooms or garages for such a societal concern. It's time we look at life differently and not put everyone on the same platform as trying to streamline them into the Society but rather create a Support system that will be an integral part of the Society.

Project Inclusion

All Teachers Geared Up for Mental Health Awareness & Support

Dr. Simmi Mahajan

Head - Project inclusion, Sri Aurobindo Society

Introduction about the Organisation

Project Inclusion (PI) addresses the issues of extreme shortage of special educators in government schools. Most of the students with special needs are not able to reach secondary education, and retention is an even bigger challenge for children with mental health issues or neuro-developmental disorders (NDD) since most of the time their disabilities remain hidden. In effect, there is no statistical data available on such children and instead they are labelled as ‘weak’ or ‘disruptive’ students in the classrooms.

Sri Aurobindo Society believes that the first step to providing equal and quality education to these lost souls is to enable their teachers to identify their special needs. Only then their presence can be acknowledged by the education system, their due rights provided to them, and empathy-based mechanisms created to support their education journey.

Through PI, regular school teachers are trained to identify such students using simple checklists based on behaviour observation. By the end of the training, teachers are able to submit case studies of students who might have an NDD. These children, along with parents and siblings, are then invited for a formal

screening by a Project Inclusion clinical psychologist. After various scientific tests, if the psychologist diagnoses an NDD, the child and his/her family is provided counselling and tools and techniques to support the child. The teachers are then provided on-the-job handholding to help them adopt their teaching techniques for inclusive classrooms.

Key Intended Outcomes

- Inclusion of NDD students in the mainstream
- Improvement in school drop-out NDD
- Improvement in Learning Outcome of NDD Students
- Identify and foster the extraordinary abilities of intellectually gifted students (During clinical assessment, few superior IQ levels, i.e. IQ of over 130)
- Mindset change in the educators and well as parents towards mental health issues in children
- Increase in Community's acceptance and empathy level towards these students
- Improving the teachers' skill sets for handling students with disabilities
- Address juvenile crime instances Realisation of PWD and RTE Act through creating awareness about programmes and schemes of government for these students

What's in it for Me?

Padma Shastry

Director - Samam Vidya

Why is inclusive education a desirable pedagogical model? And, before that, what is inclusive education?

Inclusive education means that all students attend and are welcomed by their neighborhood schools in age-appropriate, regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the life of the school, in a common learning environment. The demographics of the classroom looks like a demographic of society. This means every minority group should be visible in schools. Rich and poor, both genders, religious groups, language groups, and students with disabilities would be a part of every class.

However, this is not always the case, is it? When was the last time you saw a wheelchair user at the cinema or the local restaurant? Have you seen a blind or deaf student at your school?

But why is this important?

Why should a student in a wheelchair attend my school? Shouldn't there be a separate school for people with disabilities? Can students with disabilities attend school? Are they even capable of learning?

Your answers to the last question might have involved altruistic responses - like the good of the world, the right thing to do, and such other moralistic reasons.

Educating the marginalized has been viewed from a charity model point of view. Accepting the marginalized, such as the poorer sections of society, the girl students (in some cases), various minorities, and people with disabilities is viewed as a noble gesture from the mainstream community towards the marginalized. As long as such a mindset is in place, the mainstream community loses out on a lot of potential benefit.

The Folly of the Charity Mindset:

Ponder this: How can interacting with the disabled population benefit the mainstream population?

This brings us to the definition of the word ‘education’. What is education? Is it the same as academics?

Is academic knowledge the only thing you learn at school?

***Ponder this:** If a genie from a bottle allowed you one boon - a choice between academics and social soft skills - which would you pick? You are allowed all of one and none of the other. Which would serve you better in life? And where would you learn this?*

Consider this thought experiment.

- What would happen if I didn’t have an education?
 - This is reasonably easy to answer as we all have strong reasons to become educated. List a few of them.

- Now turn to the person next to you, and tell him or her, how it would matter to **you** if s/he or his/her child was not educated.
 - This is a relatively harder question to answer, yet you'll be able to come up with a few reasons for it. List them out.
- Now discuss in a small group how it would affect **you** if the vendor's child, the maid's child, the construction worker's child and everybody else in society was not educated. Essentially the question boils down to, why is education for all important?
 - This is quite a difficult question, and you may have to think hard about it. Were you able to justify the need for universal education?

Ponder this: *Why does every government in the world invest in universal free education?*

Your answers to the last question might have involved altruistic responses - like the good of the world, the right thing to do, and such other moralistic reasons.

Educating the marginalized has been viewed from a charity model point of view. Accepting the marginalized, such as the poorer sections of society, the girl students (in some cases), various minorities, and people with disabilities is viewed as a noble gesture from the mainstream community towards the marginalized. As long as such a mindset is in place, the mainstream community loses out on a lot of potential benefit.

The Folly of the Charity Mindset:

Ponder this: *How can interacting with the disabled population benefit the mainstream population?*

Discuss with your friends and list out your reasons.

Our education can get us a lot of wealth and material goods. It also confers upon us the resulting happiness of acquiring such wealth, such as privileged status and connections. But can the richest person in the city breathe better air than the poorest person? Can the rich drive on better roads than the poor?

Personal wealth is rarely useful to create public wealth (clean air, clean water, crime-free cities, bridges and roads, etc.) To develop public wealth, the resources of society have to be developed, and there is no greater resource than the **people** of the country.

Every single person's potential needs to be developed fully in order for ALL of us to enjoy a high standard of living. We have to grow public wealth by educating every single person in society, and not just in academics.

OK, but why does such education have to happen at my school?

Why does my school have to be inclusive?

Since many people think from a charity mindset, the answer might seem counterintuitive.

Inclusive education benefits the mainstream demographic as much as it benefits the rest of the population. Nothing develops understanding, character and people skills like interacting with the minority sections of our society. When that marginalized student is your neighbor in class, your own potential is further realized.

Imagine a potential Stephen Hawking, Beethoven or Sudha Chandran as your classmate....

What might you have gained from being their classmate?

Ponder this: Have you heard of the zero-sum game? It states that for one to win, another has to lose. Is education a zero-sum game? Why is this question germane to our topic?

This poignant verse from German pastor Martin Niemöller written after the gruesome 2nd World War underscores the tragedy of exclusionary policies.

“First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out— because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.”

What if the poem ran like this?

“First they came for the wheelchair users, and I did not speak out-because I was not a wheelchair user.

Then they came for the intellectually disabled, and I did not speak out-because I was not intellectually disabled.

Then they came for the economically depressed students, and I did not speak out-because I was not economically depressed.

Then they came for me-and there was no one left to speak for me.”

Lastly, is this practical?

Inclusive education is not new. It has been practiced in the past, and is currently the law in many countries. I have taught in an inclusive setting my entire career. Speaking as a person who's been there and done that, it's eminently possible!!

Ask me how?

Contact Samam Vidya to learn more about inclusive education or to enroll in an Inclusive Teaching course for teachers.

Spread the word on inclusive education! Live in an enlightened world!

Ankur Vidya Mandir

A Case Study of Inclusive Education

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Abstract

Inclusive education implies the conception and the implementation of a vast repertoire of learning strategies to respond in a personalized way to learners' diversities. In view of the current condition of education such a structure will facilitate the betterment of all parties involved. It provides prospects to physically, mentally and socially challenged students as well as to normal students. Considering the importance of Inclusive education which address the issues of access and participation by all, National Policy on Education in India has given an importance to this. The present paper is based on the case study of Ankur Vidya Mandir which is based on Inclusive education and equality in educational opportunities approach. Started in 1988, Ankur Vidyamandir is a venture by COER (Centre for Opportunities in Education and Rehabilitation) and DES (Deccan Education Society). It is unique because it accommodates normal as well as special students in their curriculum. The students come from diverse backgrounds, lifestyles and mental capacities and thus, Ankur Vidyamandir creates an exceptional environment for its students. It aims at

starting, promoting and sustaining activities that uphold and assist in integration of individuals with varying abilities into 'normal' society. It functions on the basis that the best way to impart knowledge is to provide a supportive yet challenging environment for the students. The children do not learn in seclusion but they learn, play and evolve together.

Introduction

The Concept of Inclusive Education: There is no universally agreed understanding of inclusive education, as you will discover if you read any selection of documents, EENTS'S (EENET is an inclusive education information-sharing network, open to everyone. Our network members include teachers, parents, students, non-governmental organizations and policy-makers. We promote and share information and documentation originating in the South (developing countries) . Definition of Inclusive Education was developed during a participatory seminar with education practitioners from around the world, held in Agra, India in 1998 UNESCO (2009) gives the following definition: 'Inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners ... As an overall principle, it should guide all education policies and practices, starting from the fact that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just and equal society' '.¹

UNESCO's actions follow the following framework: "... Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions." (Article 3, Salamanca Framework for Action).

"Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of

combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building and inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system." (Article 2, Salamanca Statement)⁴

Inclusive education is a structure that ensures equal opportunities for students with special needs to pursue education with other neuro-typical or "normal" students. It aspires to provide as many prospects to physically, mentally and socially challenged students as normal students to receive quality education that is suited to their needs.

It is a guiding principle that works towards school integration for all children. "In the context of a broader vision of integration, inclusive education implies the conception and the implementation of a vast repertoire of learning strategies to respond in a personalized way to learners' diversities."⁵ Thus, this is an essential concept that is very necessary in view of the current condition of education and such a structure will facilitate the betterment of all parties involved.

Definition of Inclusive Education was developed during a participatory seminar with education practitioners from around the world, held in Agra, India in 1998. This definition has since been used and adapted by a number of organizations and governments. The brief explanation given in the table below shows how EENET interprets the concept, based on their knowledge of the inclusive education.

Government Policy in India:

The first education commission in India (Kothari Commission, 1964–66) addressed issues of access and participation by all. It stressed a common school system open to all children irrespective of caste, creed, community, religion, economic condition and social status. In 1968, the National Education Policy followed the commission's recommendations and suggested the expansion of educational facilities for physically and mentally handicapped children, and the development of an 'integrated programme' enabling handicapped children to study in regular schools.

Two decades later, the National Policy on Education (NPE) (1986) stressed the 'removal of disparities' in education, while attending to the specific needs of those who had been denied equality so far (MHRD, 1986). It stated 'the objective should be to integrate the physically and mentally handicapped with the general community as equal partners, to prepare them for normal growth, and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence.' In 1987, to fulfill the provisions for disabled children in the NPE, the government launched the Project for Integrated Education Development (PIED). It states 'wherever feasible, the education of children with motor handicaps and other mild handicaps will be in common with that of others.' According to the NPE, 'the indicators of integration are that handicapped people enjoy the same rights as the rest; have opportunities for growth and development in environmental conditions available to the rest; have access to the quality of life like any other citizen; and are treated as equal partners in the community.' The programme of action outlined measures to implement the policy including massive in- service training programmes for teachers; an orientation programme for

administrators; the development of supervisory expertise in resource institutions for school education at the district and block level; and provision of incentives such as supply of aids, appliances, textbooks and school uniforms.

The NPE underwent modifications in 1992 (MHRD, 1992). It made an ambitious commitment to universal enrolment by the end of the Ninth Five-Year Plan for both categories of disabled children: those who could be educated in general primary school, and those who needed to be educated in special schools or special classes in general schools. It also called for the reorientation of pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes. The NPE (1986) and revised NPE (1992) are the guiding policies at all levels. The most notable pedagogical recommendation is as follows.

‘Curriculum flexibility is of special significance for these children. Special needs for these children will be met if child-centered education is practiced. Child-to-child help in education of the children with disabilities is an effective resource in view of large classes and multi-grade teaching.’ Another significant policy development in India took place following the ESCAP Proclamation on Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in the Asia and Pacific Region in 1992.

The Equal Opportunities and Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 1996 called for the education of children with disabilities up to the age of 18 years in an appropriate environment. The act grants ‘equal opportunities, protection of rights and full participation’ to people with disabilities. It includes a number of provisions that ‘endeavor to promote the integration of students with

disabilities into normal schools'. It also upholds the role of special schools by asking schools in the government and private sector to promote their establishment. Although there is no specific mention of inclusive education in the act, it is judged to be breakthrough legislation relating to education and economic rehabilitation of people with disabilities. The economic rehabilitation section under this act stipulates that certain posts in various government departments and in the public sector are to be identified, and a percentage (three per cent) are to be reserved for people with disabilities. In 1999, the government passed the National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act especially for the rehabilitation of people with disabilities.

The issue of 'disability' has also found a place in all the country's five-year plans . Various national/apex-level institutes were established to deal with problems of specific disabilities. These institutes have been set up for education, training, vocational guidance, counseling, rehabilitation, research and training in various aspects of disability.

In addition to the various policy initiatives at the national level, India has actively participated in the global declarations on Protection of Child Rights, Protection of Rights of Persons with Disability, UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child, Salamanca Declaration and other international policy initiatives. The UN Standard Rules for Persons with Disabilities states the following.

'States should recognize the principle of equal primary, secondary and tertiary educational opportunities for children, youth and adults with disabilities in

integrated settings. They should ensure that the education of persons with disabilities is an integral part of the educational system. General education authorities are responsible for the education of persons with disabilities integrated settings. Education for persons with disabilities should form an integral part of national educational planning, curriculum development and school organization.'

'Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education '... schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions.'

Over the years, although government programmes such as Operation Blackboard and Lok Jumbish focused mainly on infrastructure, girls, scheduled caste and scheduled tribe children, others had, or have, inclusive education components which ensure the visibility of children with disabilities.

Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC)

The Ministry of Welfare, now Social Justice and Empowerment, implemented the Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) scheme from 1974 to 1982, when it transferred to the Department of Education. The scheme was apparently intended to encourage co-operation between mainstream and special schools in order to support integration, although Julka (2005) believes this co-operation did not happen. Singal (2005) too, argues that the

programme is seen as an overall failure by those outside the government. IEDC has been replaced by the Integrated Education for the Disabled (IED) component of the national District Primary Education Project (DPEP), and supports community mobilization and early detection, in-service teacher training, architectural design in schools, the establishment of resource centres, teacher training, identification and assessment of children with disabilities, and the supply of specialist aids and appliances.

Project on Integrated Education for Disabled (PIED) In 1987, UNICEF and the government-funded National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) launched the Project on Integrated Education for Disabled (PIED) in 10 blocks (the administrative level between district and village), that focused on teacher training in order to encourage integration. PIED was later amalgamated with the DPEP and SSA and by 2002 extended to 27 States. While enrolment of children with disabilities in the mainstream increased and retention was high, coverage has been “miniscule” with only 2-3% of children with disabilities integrated in mainstream institutions. Criticisms made in the project evaluation pointed to implementation issues, such as children getting financial assistance who were not classified as disabled, or teacher training courses being unregulated. However, the design of the project which encouraged continued labeling of children and withdrawal of those with disabilities from particular activities in school was not highlighted.

District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)

The 1995 District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), funded 85% by Central

government via a World Bank loan and support from the European Community, UNICEF and the UK and Netherlands governments, and 15% by the State governments, focused on the universalisation of primary education, particularly for girls. The intention was for district-specific planning to make the programme contextual, and for participatory processes to empower and build capacity at all levels (GOI, 2002). However, Kobayashi (2006) found that the programme focused on quantitative targets and educational administration capacity-building more than participation, hence failing to empower local communities, unlike Lok Jumbish. Children with disabilities were included with the aim of achieving EFA. Extensive construction led to the creation of 200,000 new schools, and a teacher-training component led to the in-service training of all teachers. Alur (2002) argues that there were failures not so willingly reported such as corruption in the form of budgets for non-existent non-formal education centres, tribal dropout, the difficulty of multigrade teaching in one-teacher schools, low learning achievement, and no integration for children with disabilities due to continued reliance on special school systems. However, it is arguable that the existence of special school systems does not necessarily obstruct locational integration in the mainstream.

Janshala This community schools programme, started in 1998 and now replaced by SSA (see below), was a collaboration between the Government of India and the UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, the ILO, and UNFPA, and supported the government drive towards universal primary education. It covered 120, mainly rural, blocks in 9 States where there is evidence of low female literacy, child labour, and SC/ST children not catered for under DPEP . Unfortunately,

due to limited availability of data, it is not possible to elaborate on any issues arising on the Janshala programme, which has a component designed to improve the attendance of difficult to reach groups of children, including children with disabilities.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is the government's millennial Education For All umbrella programme for all education schemes, which aims to universalize elementary education. The goals are that all children aged 6-14 i) will be in some form of education by 2003, ii) will complete 5 years' primary education by 2007, and iii) will complete 8 years' education by 2010 (GOI, 2002). Disability indicators are included in the government agreement for SSA (Thomas, 2005a), although what exactly these are and whether they are taken on at local level is unclear. In fact, although one of the official SSA objectives is the enrolment of children with disabilities, the World Bank (2004) SSA project appraisal does not list disability as a key indicator, unlike gender, SC and ST.

The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 and the Programme of Action (1992) gives the basic policy framework for education, emphasizing on correcting the existing inequalities. It stresses on reducing dropout rates, improving learning achievements and expanding access to students who have not had an easy opportunity to be a part of the general system. The NPE, 1986 envisaged some measures for integrating of children with physical and mental handicap with the general community as equal partners, preparing them for their normal growth and development and enabling them to face life with courage and confidence. India has also been a signatory to international

declarations like the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994) and the Biwako Millenium Framework for Action (2002) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006 that emphasize the need for fundamental educational policy shifts to enable general schools to include children with disabilities.

The Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Integrated Education for the Disabled Children (revised 1992) is presently being implemented in States and UTs in over 90,000 schools benefiting over 2,00,000 children with disabilities. The scheme was introduced with a view to providing educational opportunities for children with disabilities in general schools, to facilitate their retention in the school system.

Education of children with disabilities in India, as all over the world, has moved from segregation, special schools to integrated education. There is a national level central government sponsored scheme called Integrated Education of Disabled Children (IEDC). This project was started in 1980s and designed based on the experience gathered from a UNICEF assisted pilot project called PIED (project on integrated education of disabled children).

In the mid-1980s many NGOs implemented this IEDC with grants from government of India. This project is implemented by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The Scheme of Integrated Education for the Disabled Children (IEDC) has been replaced by the scheme of Inclusive Education for the Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) with effect from 1.4.2009. The scheme IEDC was meant to cover all classes in the school education stage. With the

coverage of children with special needs in the elementary stage under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), the scheme of IEDC was replaced by IEDSS under which children with disability in the secondary stage (classes IX to XII) are covered. The objective of IEDSS is to enable the disabled children who have completed eight years of elementary education to continue their education at the secondary stage in an inclusive environment in regular schools. The scheme will cover all children of age 14 + passing out of elementary schools and studying in secondary stage in Government, local body and Government-aided schools, with one or more disabilities as defined under the Persons with Disabilities Act (1995) and the National Trust Act (1999) in the age group 14+ to 18+ (classes IX to XII), such as Blindness, Low vision, Leprosy cured, Hearing impairment, Locomotor disabilities, Mental retardation, Mental Illness, Autism, Cerebral Palsy, and may eventually cover Speech impairment, Learning Disabilities, etc. Two important components include (i) Student-oriented components, such as medical and educational assessment, books and stationery, uniforms, transport allowance, reader allowance, stipend for girls, support services, assistive devices, boarding the lodging facility, therapeutic services, teaching learning materials, etc. (ii) Other components include appointment of special education teachers, allowances for general teachers for teaching such children, teacher training, orientation of school administrators, establishment of resource room, providing barrier free environment, etc

This is basically an itinerant resource teaching approach and one resource teacher was given to every 8 children with special needs. There are around 60,000 children with disabilities getting access to education under this scheme. By and large the project is managed by the NGO sector.

Although the goals and objectives of the IEDC program were laudable, the number of children with disabilities enrolled was woefully small. For example in Karnataka state, about 2% of all children with disabilities acquire education. About 1% of these children are enrolled in special schools and the balance 1% are in the integrated education system. In the state of Maharashtra, educational institutions: 2% seats are reserved for handicapped for extension programme like short term courses in the following: Mental Retardation, Awareness programme (pertaining to all disabilities and rehabilitation), Learning disability and 1% seat is reserved for handicapped for admission in technical Institutions.

In the view of review of literature and the existing scenario regarding the policies on inclusive education objective of the study was

Objective of the study: – To present a case study of Ankur Vidya Mandir.

Importance - Why this topic for study? In a world where approximately 113 million children are not enrolled in primary school, Lewin (2000) highlights the potential for education to reverse the negative effects of social exclusion. There are an estimated 25 million children out of school in India (MHRD 2003 statistics, cited in World Bank, 2004), many of whom are marginalized by dimensions such as poverty, gender, disability, and caste. While many educational programmes have attempted to reach out to these previously excluded children, those with disabilities are often forgotten, emphasizing their invisible status in a rigidly categorized society. Inclusive Education denotes that all children irrespective of their strengths and weaknesses will be part of the mainstream education. The feeling of belongingness among all community members – teachers, students and other functionaries is developed through

inclusive education. Inclusive education is for all, irrespective of any social community, caste, class gender and (dis-) ability of the child.

In fact, there is no disability indicator at all, which is potentially excluding millions of children from a high-profile global campaign in which they were vaguely included in the category of “children in difficult circumstances” in EFA goal two at the Dakar Conference (World Education Forum, 2000), where the drive for Education For All was finally agreed by 92 countries. Hence, although EFA is about ‘all’ children, it appears that children with disabilities do not count in the final analysis.

Methodology

Data were collected using structured interview and observation method.

Data analyses: - Data were analyzed using qualitative method of data analyses. Thematic analyses were carried. This was carried out by making sense of a set of field notes/ transcripts from focus groups and in-depth interviews.

About Ankur Vidya Mandir - Started in 1988, Ankur Vidyamandir is a venture by COER (Centre for Opportunities in Education and Rehabilitation) and DES (Deccan Education Society). It is unique because it accommodates normal as well special.

Rehabilitation was started in 1988 by founder members Madhuri Deshpande (Managing Director), Pradeep Deshpande (Financial Advisor) and R. D. Bhav

(Management Consultant for Quality Systems & Certification). It aims at starting, promoting and sustaining activities that uphold and assist in integration of individuals with varying abilities into 'normal' society. Deccan Education Society was founded by Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar and Mahadeo Ballal Namjoshi. It was established in 1884 and registered on the 13th of August, 1885.

Ankur Vidyamandir is based on the principle of inclusion and equality in educational opportunities. It functions on the basis that the best way to impart knowledge is to provide a supportive yet challenging environment for the students. The children do not learn in seclusion but the special and normal students learn, play and evolve together. Having such a model of education ensures that the special students wanted and inspires empathy in the other students. The students come from diverse backgrounds, lifestyles and mental capacities and thus, Ankur Vidyamandir creates an exceptional environment for its students.

Information has been classified into four major categories: Curriculum, Facilities, Admissions and Staff. Each of these has been elaborated on below.

Curriculum - At Ankur Vidyamandir, the students are exposed to various types of activities. The school timing is from nine to four and the students are provided three meals. Their curriculum includes a wide array of activities. The students are encouraged not to look at studying as a chore but as a fun activity. The Marathi Mandal Syllabus is followed by the school. Teachers use various methods to create interactive sessions for the students in the class. In each

classroom, approximately one-fourth of the students have special needs while the remaining are normal students. These students are taught the same things as the normal students, in the first fifteen minutes of class, the teacher teaches at a certain pace and then classwork is assigned to the students, after this, she pays special attention to the special students, helping them with whatever they have not understood and the guiding them while the others do their classwork.

The faculty uses varied methodology so as to ensure the attention of the students. They do not follow a bookish curriculum but a more interactive one. They make use of Models, Charts, Actual samples and field trips. For instance, for a science class, when studying the planets, they may use a model to study it or make their own art projects, while studying the anatomy of a flower, they will use an actual flower to do the course. These methods make sure that the classes remain active and interesting.

Ankur Vidyamandir follows the method of continuous assessment. There are about 6 tests, including term end exams that are spread over the academic year that assess the academic progress of these students. The questionnaires, however, are different for the special students and normal students.

Facilities - There are several facilities that aid the education of the students. There is a pick up and drop facility for the students. Children from all over the city and as far as Lohegaon come to attend school here. There are wheel-chairs at hand to help students who need intensive care. There are physiotherapy sessions for the students. Students are required to go to the Fergusson Campus for sessions, there is a time-table for the students. For students who need

intensive care and for whom it is difficult to go to the other campus, there is a room assigned in the secondary school building itself where these students have their physiotherapy sessions. Ankur has, at hand, the following basic equipment that is used for physiotherapy: Exercise Ball (30 cm, 60cm and 100cm), Bolsters, Wedges, Stools + tilt boards, Muscle Stimulators, Parallel bars, Stationary Cycle, Shoulder wheel, Therapy bands, Steps, Walker, Wheelchair, Sticks, Elbow crutches, Special PT toys and Special PT mats: The games and activities such as stringing beads, making cards, help strengthen motor skills. The students also have activities like cutting vegetables, cards, that are sold and the proceeds are used to better the school.

Students are provided meals in the school itself, thus parents do not have to pack them lunch. A dietician determines the meals and the menu changes every week. The dietary requirements of the students are met this way. Speech Therapy is given to all children with motor disabilities. We have a Computer based speech therapy program called VOICE. This software turns computers into a powerful, comprehensive speech development tool. The displays and games enhance therapy results with speech issues related to autism, apraxia, head injury, stroke, hearing impairment, cerebral palsy, oral motor articulation deficits, mental or emotional challenges, and other disabilities. It also makes the therapy fun for the kids. Speech Therapy is administered under the able guidance of a trained and certified speech therapist.

Remedial teaching is mainly for children with learning disabilities. It is essential to not only take into account the disability, but also the nature and temperament of the child involved. Each child has a different level and method

for understanding concepts. Remedial teaching has to cater to each child's needs. Hence, it is essential that remedial aids be personalized to suit each child.

There is constant feedback given to the remedial teachers by the parents of the child as well as class teachers. This helps the teacher decide whether a particular method is working or not. The method is altered accordingly. Thus, remedial teaching is a combination of the use of teaching aids, individual attention and constant feedback to help overcome the impairment.

Admissions: Ankur Vidyamandir follows the process of rolling admissions. Students are admitted throughout the year. For normal students, the class of admission is determined by the student's academic history, progress made in previous school, report cards, etc. for special students, the psychologist determine the class of entry. The psychologists compare the mental age and physical age of the student to determine the class. The development plan for each disabled student is charted out during admissions.

Staff: All the teachers at Ankur have atleast a basic B.Ed. degree. They are well trained and have good knowledge about the subjects they teach. But above all, they have that 'humane' quality which equips them to handle children with care and understanding.

"Since our school is special, our teachers also have to be special. Hence, we make sure that every staff member we hire is handpicked", says Madhuri

Deshpande. “We do not give out ads asking for teachers. We make it a point to personally visit teacher training centers and that’s how the process for choosing teachers starts.”

Before joining Ankur, teachers are briefed about the school and its policy of inclusion. Only the teachers who seem genuinely interested are called for interviews. The interviews help determine the teaching aptitude of the teachers and also gauge their attitude towards children. The best among them are chosen to join the Ankur family.

Every teacher goes through a three-week training programme in April. At this analyses. This might result in collecting a large amount of information as a result it becomes time consuming method.

Conclusion: It is important to have a holistic, comprehensive and inter-sect oral approach where all pieces are put together. It is not enough to present and implement one part only.

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Inclusive Education

Supporting Organisations

Helping Hands

PADEM is a Luxembourg-based NGO that aims to improve the quality of life of vulnerable populations, especially children, in developing countries through sustainable actions based primarily through partnerships with local civil society actors. It has been helping since 2002 it aims at helping the marginalised. It aims to strengthen and empower partner organisations in the respective countries as a sure way to factor in the unique culture of the area.

Whether setting up experimental solar greenhouses in Mongolia; promoting handicrafts of remote Andes communities in Peru; helping women of Senegal with climate change adaptation; or empowering the marginalised women in India have all been projects that PADEM has nurtured.

It has graduated from mere co-financing of projects to signing a framework agreement in 2017 that allows carrying out variety of projects themes such as the fight against child begging, the fight against excision and other forms of violence, the fight against discrimination, especially children with disabilities or those belonging to so-called disadvantaged sections of society.

It supports the payroll giving concept where donations as little as a few cents can go from once salary account directly to the project of one's choice through a payroll software and entails tax deductibility as well as tax receipts at the end of each financial year for the total donations made every individual. There is flexibility

in terms of the project that is offered support, the amount pledged or even the duration of such donations. This covers a variety of projects from vocational training in quake affected Nepal or sensitisation sessions against excision and other violence against women and children.

PADEM joined Satya Special School which in 2016 opened a Learning and Therapy Center for Children with Autism. The PADEM sponsored 2018/19 project has a training program and various therapies for 50 autistic children in Pondicherry. Through this project the aim is to develop the capacities and independence of the autistic children. It also attempts to develop a parental support program with monthly training for them. Teachers and other employees of the school are trained in new techniques to care for children with autism. Through this, PADEM hopes to raise awareness about autism among the general population as well as change their outlook on the condition of autism.

Including the excluded

Overview

Satya Special School was founded in 2003 to serve as an integrated and holistic centre for disability rehabilitation in Pondicherry. Apart from providing free and quality rehabilitation services to the socioeconomically weak and the underprivileged, Satya is working tirelessly towards making CWSNs as independent as possible and alleviating the social stigma that affects these individuals and their families.

Currently, around 950 children with special needs are under the care of Satya Special School. We function in 10 urban and rural centers. There is a Mobile therapy unit covers 44 rural villages of Pondicherry by providing home based services to over 124 disabled children. Satya Special School runs the NEW BORN HIGH RISK clinic in JIPMER the only one in Southern India to identify children at birth susceptible to a developmental delay at a later stage. In the last 2 years we have identified as many as 2500 new born babies out of which 50 % cases are provided rehabilitation and counselling services. The services are free benefiting mostly children from BPL families.

While the school caters to all people regardless of the degree of disability, intellectual or otherwise, socio economic condition and age, the overarching aim is to eradicate the stigma associated with intellectual disabilities and improve the quality of life of CWSN by offering quality health care and individualised rehabilitation programmes that could help them lead confident and self reliant lives.

In keeping with the holistic approach, Satya has set up an Alternative Inclusion Centre of Education to impart necessary training and education to the children from disadvantaged & difficult circumstances. It also arranges continuous guidance and counselling session for care givers as well as CWSNs. SATYA also believes in using non-traditional teaching methods and hence organises educational activities, recreation and other programmes. Collaboration with foreign and Indian universities and research institutions to develop rehabilitation research processes is also undertaken. This includes student exchanges and gaining technical support from research outputs of such institutions.

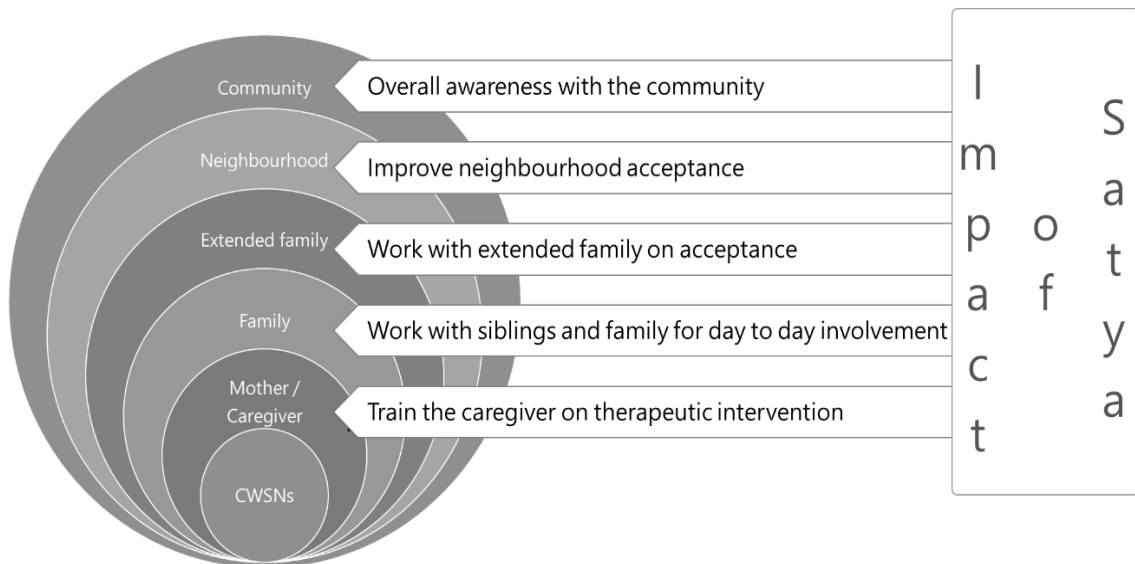
Catering to the whole gamut of services from early intervention (that facilitates clinical identification of risk and potential children who could be susceptible to future disorders) to vocational and life skill training that prepares the CWSN Satya Special School has adopted a holistic approach. Capacity building also forms a major part of SATYA's effort to make the society more disabled-friendly. This aspect focusses on the support that can be provided to women to increase their understanding about CWSN as well as help them deal with everyday conditions through income generation activities.

Networking and cooperation with government organisations and corporate entities to encourage philanthropic assistance to the cause of the disabled is also another area of SATYA's concern. Constant interaction with entities related to the planning and implementation of the schemes for disabled and raising awareness about various rights and privileges of the disabled people have also been a regular feature of SATYA's work.

Satya Vision

- Work for the upliftment of any individual with special needs, regardless of the type/severity of their disability, socio-economic status, or age.
- Work towards eradicating the stigma associated with mental health especially intellectual disability.
- Empower the children thereby making them confident and self-reliant.
- Improve the quality of life through better healthcare and individualised rehabilitation programmes.

The Satya Focus



Special Needs catered to

Mental Retardation, Cerebral Palsy, Autism, Multiple disabilities, Down's syndrome, Learning disability, slow learners.

Services offered:

- Early Intervention programme for children (0-6 years)
- Special School - Day School (6- 14 years)
- National Open Schooling (OBE- 1 TO 12TH STANDARD)
- Alternative Inclusive centre for Education
- New Born High risk centre in collaboration with JIPMER
- Centre for Autism (0-25 years)
- Centre for Multiple Disabilities (6-14 years)
- After School Remedial Centre for Slow Learners
- Prosthetic & Orthotic Unit
- Pre-Vocational Training (14 – 16 years)
- Skill Training Centre, (16 years and above)
- Sheltered Workshop (18 years & above)
- Placement Centre for PWDs in collaboration with Youth4jobs-Hyderabad
- BPO centre for intellectually challenged in collaboration with AMBA-Bangalore
- Free Play Centre
- Audio Hybrid Braille Library for Visually Impaired
- All-inclusive play park
- Microcredit (interest free soft loans for families of PWDs)
- Village Rehabilitation Centres - Villanur, Kodathur, Seliamedu
- Mobile Therapy Unit - covers 44 villages
- Research, Training & Development in disability
- State Nodal Agency Centre(SNAC) –National trust



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