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A ROAD MAP FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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"Recognition is the greatest motivator"-Generd C. Eakadale.

ABSTRACT

Inclusive education values diversity and the unique contributions each student brings to the classroom. In a truly inclusive setting, every child feels safe and has a sense of belonging. Schools provide the context for a child's first relationship with the world outside their families, enabling the development of social relationships and interactions. Respect and understanding grow when students of diverse abilities and backgrounds play, socialize, and learn together. To develop greater sensitivity, better understanding & more tolerance is the goal. The main problem of the system of inclusive education in India is the lack of specially trained teachers and detailed developed legal framework. It is an endless journey to live an inclusive life. Inclusion isn't just an educational style, it's a life philosophy.

Key words:-

Inclusion, UNESCO, inclusive education,

Introduction:

Around the world, children are excluded from schools where they belong because of disability, race, language, religion, gender, and poverty. But every child has the right to be supported by their parents and community to grow, learn, and develop in the early years, and, upon reaching school age, to go to school and be welcomed and included by teachers and peers alike. When all children, regardless of their differences, are educated together, everyone benefits—this is the cornerstone of inclusive education. It's not just an education philosophy; it's an important life skill.

What is inclusive education?

Inclusive education means different and diverse students learning side by side in the same classroom. They enjoy field trips and after-school activities together. They participate in student government together. And they attend the same sports meets and plays.

Inclusive education values diversity and the unique contributions each student brings to the classroom. In a truly inclusive setting, every child feels safe and has a sense of belonging. Students and their parents participate in setting learning goals and take part in decisions that affect them. And school staffs have the training, support, flexibility, and resources to nurture, encourage, and respond to the needs of all students.

It is important for a school's whole community to understand inclusion and make it a goal: School administrators, teachers, parents and kids all have to buy into its value. When this happens, everyone benefits.

Why is inclusive education important?

Inclusive systems provide a better quality education for all children and are instrumental in changing discriminatory attitudes. Schools provide the context for a child's first relationship with the world outside their families, enabling the development of social relationships and

interactions. Respect and understanding grow when students of diverse abilities and backgrounds play, socialize, and learn together.

Education that excludes and segregates perpetuates discrimination against traditionally marginalized groups. When education is more inclusive, so are concepts of civic participation, employment, and community life.

At its core, inclusive education is about appreciating each individual's differences and unique set of strengths and limitations. It's not just an education philosophy; it's an important life skill. Children grow into adults who live in a world filled with people different from themselves; learning how to interact and work with these people is a key accomplishment of childhood, as integral as academic proficiency. An inclusive school is a perfect training ground for real life; because daily social, physical and academic interaction between kids who are typically developing and their special needs peers develop:

- **Greater sensitivity.** Children who develop in a typical manner become more sensitive by learning side-by-side with special needs children. They understand how words can hurt, they practice patience, and they learn empathy.
- **Better understanding of strengths/weaknesses.** Kids in inclusive schools learn that everyone has strengths and weaknesses. They learn to appreciate these differences and how to collaborate in order to accomplish something.
- **More tolerance.** Inclusive schooling teaches kids the value of another human being—no matter what that person looks or sounds like. Physical and mental differences do not equate to a lesser value.

Isn't it better to separate children who need specialized attention?

Separate, special education provides no guarantee of success for children who need special attention; inclusive schools that provide supportive, context-appropriate conditions for learning demonstrate far better outcomes. Extracurricular activities, peer support, or more specialized interventions involve the entire school community working as a team.

What are the basic elements of inclusive education?

- **Use of teaching assistants or specialists:** These staffs have the potential to be inclusive or divisive. For instance, a specialist who helps teachers address the needs of all students is working inclusively. A specialist who pulls students out of class to work with them individually on a regular basis is not.
- **Inclusive curriculum:** An inclusive curriculum includes locally relevant themes and contributions by marginalized and minority groups. It avoids binary narratives of good and bad, and allows adapting the curriculum to the learning styles of children with special education needs.
- **Parental involvement:** Most schools strive for some level of parental involvement, but it is often limited to emails home and occasional parent–teacher conferences. In a diverse school system, inclusion means thinking about multiple ways to reach out to parents on their own terms.

How can we advance inclusive education?

To make inclusive education a reality we need to do the following:

- ensure that educators have the training, flexibility, and resources to teach students with diverse needs and learning styles
- ensure that kindergartens and schools receive adequate and sustainable financial support so that all activities and services are fully inclusive
- empower parents to assert their children’s right to education in inclusive settings
- enable the entire community—including mainstream and special educators, social workers, parents, and students—to work together and participate in the design, delivery, and monitoring of education, thereby reframing inclusive education as a shared responsibility
- hold governments accountable for implementing antidiscrimination legislation, legal mandates for inclusion, and policies to remove barriers

Is inclusive education expensive?

Making education inclusive is not a cost-cutting measure. Governments must be prepared to invest substantial resources at the outset on system reforms such as teacher and staff training; improving infrastructure, learning materials, and equipment; and revising curricula to implement inclusive education successfully. However, by eliminating redundancy and the high costs of

running parallel systems, such investments are an efficient and effective use of funds, and hold the potential to improve education for all students.

Funding mechanisms must be reformed so that schools that enroll students with special needs receive the necessary additional financial resources. When students move from special schools to mainstream schools, the funding should also follow.

- Inclusive integrated education brings numerous benefits for both, students with and without disabilities. The benefits of inclusion for students with disabilities are greater social interaction; increased ability to develop friendships, more relationships and stronger networks; engagement with peer role models for academic, social and behavioral skills. In addition, increased achievement of Individualized Education Program goals; greater access to general curriculum; enhanced skill acquisition and generalization; increased inclusion in future environments; greater opportunities for interactions; higher expectations; increased school staff collaboration; increased parent participation; and more family integration into the community.
- In the same way, the benefits of educating students without disabilities in inclusive institutions are meaningful friendships; increased appreciation and acceptance of individual differences; increased understanding of diversity; respect for all people; preparation of all students for adult life in a society that accommodates variant abilities; sensitivity to marginalization; opportunities to master activities by practicing and teaching others; greater academic outcomes; all students' needs are better met; greater resources for everyone; and efficient use of resources for all.

Spotting the inclusive school

Inclusive education in the real world requires a delicate balance of resources, goodwill and monitoring in order to make the experience successful and beneficial for all students. Parents of all children will find an inclusive school has:

- A learning resource center or an in-house team of specialists who can address the unique needs of special needs children.

- A sensitized teaching staff with the enthusiasm and skill to teach inclusively.

The main problem of the system of inclusive education in India is the lack of specially trained teachers and detailed developed legal framework. The UNESCO Policy Guidelines present some of the many issues that need to be addressed to appropriately position inclusive education in the policy cycle. The suggested actions present a holistic approach to changing the entire education system. Although a co-ordinated action plan is the ultimate solution, every initiative and action will be valuable in the move towards greater inclusion.

- Promote innovative programmes and support the community in its capacity to identify out-of-school children, youth and adults in order to get them into school and other education or training programmes
- Involve communities in services that reach out to adults in need of education.
- Engage schools and communities in;
 - Mapping households and identifying out-of -school children
 - Enrolment campaigns and community mobilization in partnership with local leaders
- Provide support for mechanisms at local levels that aim at reaching out to children, youth and adults currently deprived of education
- Build appropriate data systems at the national level
- Encourage use of household surveys
- Strengthen the capacity of local NGO s to collect data
- Involve local communities in data collection
- Ensure that national legislation is in line with international conventions
- Ensure that policies reflect rights-based and pro-poor approaches, and target disadvantaged children
- Support programmes for youth and adults
- Conduct awareness campaigns via media, posters, conferences and training
- Involve communities and local leaders
- Ensure effective planning and budgeting in the education sector and with other sectors of society

- Decentralize the use of funds within the education system
- Ensure that budget allocations support currently excluded groups
- Allow flexible use of funds to support activities for inclusive schools, education and /or training programmes
- Ensure cross-sectoral planning for education
- Develop long-term policies for economic and social development to achieve and sustain inclusive education objectives
- Strengthen ECCE provisions, linking them to inclusive approaches
- Involve the private sector in supporting education
- Initiate meetings among staff to discuss and define roles and areas of cooperation
- Provide information on activities and experiences gained at lower levels
- Encourage sharing experiences through staff exchange
- Governments must ensure transport to and from schools when needed
- Encourage schools to build their own ramps and improve sanitary conditions
- Provide incentives for the construction of accessible schools and elicit support from the private sector
- Adopt methods to assess learning outcomes
- Improve teaching methods
- Take account of cognition and cognitive development
- Ensure effective use of resources
- Provide support when needed and make curricula open and flexible, allowing for different learning styles and content that makes the curriculum relevant to learners and society
- Involve the local community in teaching in local languages
- Include issues on early childhood programmes in the curriculum to secure easy transition
- Ensure that curricula do not focus only on academic skills
- Encourage new methods and ways of learning
- Initiate discussions in schools about teaching and learning processes
- Improve pre- and in-service training, mentorship, teambuilding
- Provide teacher education for teachers at early grades and early literacy

- Promote the use of new and alternative methods for teaching
- Encourage methods for planning education based on individual educational needs
- Encourage teachers to organize their work in teams and to apply problem oriented teaching methods as well as paying respect to diversities and different learning styles among their pupils
- Set up work with groups of mixed abilities to facilitate peer tutoring among pupils
- Encourage the use of new technology and ICT
- Initiate the elaboration of capacity development plans for educational staff both at national, regional and local levels
- Develop a set of criteria for the requirements of capacities needed for school managers, inspectors and teachers
- Develop systems for monitoring and evaluation that relate to all levels (national, regional, local and private)
- Improve monitoring and evaluation of performance at schools and in non-formal education programmes
- Train and involve school heads and inspectors in assessment and evaluation
- Early identification of children at the risk of dropping out followed by analysis of the factors and conditions that constitutes this situation should be part of all evaluations

Conclusion:

We have to live an inclusive life. Inclusion isn't just an educational style, it's a life philosophy. Children pick up cues from adults early on, and if you make a big deal of people's differences, your children will, too. Inclusive education combats the world's tendency toward prejudice and fear, and produces more tolerant, peaceful, and open children—and adults.

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