Inclusive Education

A new approach to scale up education of disadvantaged children in South Asia

Education of children with disabilities has always posed a challenge to Educators. Rule 6 of the UN Standard Rules for Persons with Disabilities states:

'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 in integrated settings. Education for persons with disabilities should form an integral part of national educational planning, curriculum development and school organization.'

The Indian Equal Opportunities and Rights of Persons with Disabilities ACT 1995, rule 26, speaks about the education of children with disabilities up to the age of 18 years in an appropriate environment. There is no specific mention of integrated/inclusive education in the Act. In the Disability ACT of 1995 an emphasis is placed instead on special school, giving an impression that children with disabilities need more of special school and inclusion is just another option.

# Education of children with special needs in rural areas

Talking about rural areas in Disability sector is nothing new. Both Govts. and NGO's have realized the need to have a special focus on rural areas.

A majority of people with disabilities live in rural areas and a majority of service institutions are urban based. To ensure that children with disabilities in rural areas do not remain uneducated, there was a need to start integrated educational services. Thus was born IEDC - Integrated Education of Disabled Children. This is a centrally sponsored Scheme which is also implemented in Karnataka state. The concept of IED emerged with a commitment of the Govt. to provide access to primary education for children with disabilities without disintegrating them from their families and the community. Integration into neighborhood schools gained tremendous momentum in Karnataka.

In the year 1988 CBR Network implemented IED as per the guidelines laid down by the Govt. of India. The model of IED that was developed by CBR Network had cross disability focus from the beginning. This was done by training multi-category resource teachers who worked as peripatetic/itinerant teachers. The project continued until 1992, based on the model of resource teaching support to children who were integrated into general schools.

# Salamanca -a shift from mere Integration to full inclusive education

The Salamanca declaration was a turning point in the education sector. It has helped us to think why integrated education in India could not reach all rural schools in India. In Karnataka we could hardly reach even 14% of (please note it is out of the identified number) children with disabilities.

The below mentioned table (Table 1) is self-explanatory and shows the appalling situation we have in achieving the goal of Education for ALL. If this is the situation in much developed states such as Karnataka the status of children with special needs in other states where NGO's and govt initiatives are scanty in the Disability-Education sector the situation must be more alarming.

# Some of the draw backs of Existing IED scheme are:

1. IEDC was heavily dependent on resource teachers in the projects implemented by NGOs.
2. IEDC implemented by Government teachers had a questionable quality because the teachers were trained only for 42 days.
3. In the NGO implemented IED model the quality and support to children in rural areas was inadequate because the resource teachers had to travel from one village to the other, often covering long distances on foot. The time actually available for resource teaching was inadequate.
4. The resource teaching approach in NGO models was also questionable because children were either pulled out from regular classes for resource teaching or they were asked to come before school and stay back after school. This was not a child friendly approach, more so for children in the 4th standard and above, who travelled a long distance, often from neighboring villages, to reach the school.

# A review of the situation

The advisory committee on IED set up by the givt of Karnataka and IED cell in DSERT reviewed the existing scenario of IEDC in 1998. The number of children who were receiving education in special and integrated schools was analyzed It was noticed that only 2% of children with disabilities received any form of schooling. 1% of children with disabilities attended special/segregated schools and 1% attended integrated schools.

**TABLE 1:** Access to education for children with special needs in Karnataka state - an analysis

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Total | Special Education | Integrated Education |
| Number of childrenwith disabilities whoneed education: Location: Karnataka Age: 0-14 Yrs Source: Karnataka Door to door survey report-1991 | Number of children receiving education in special schools/ institutions (Number of Special Schools: 120)  | Number of children receiving education in integrated schools (Number of Integrated Schools: 2384) |
| 137044 | 10,000 | 7.30% | 9462 | 6.90% |
|   | Total Grants received Rs. 4 crores (approx) (1 crore: Karnataka Govt. 3 crores: Govt. of India) | Total Grants received Rs 1,15,00,000 |
| Cost per child | Rs 4000 | Rs 1215 |

# Special schools are expensive

It may be seen that the cost of segregated education is more than 3 times that of integrated education. Yet integrated education had been unable to provide quality education to ALL children with disabilities. An alternative had to be found.

# Joyful Inclusion: A classroom for all

Joyful Inclusion is a pioneering model in which general teachers play a vital role in Inclusive education. Joyful Inclusion was started in 1998 with the goal of scaling up of primary education to all children with special needs in the selected rural areas in all schools. Joyful Inclusion Pack is based on the following major materials:

1. UNESCO Resource Pack
2. Portage guide to early education
3. EDY training Pack
4. Joyful Learning
5. OMAR software prepared by UNDP

"Joyful Inclusion is based on the rationale that any child may experience a special need during the course of education".(Based on UNESCO statement in the manual for teachers to develop a classroom for all)

The objectives of Joyful Inclusion may be described as follows:

1. To prepare general teachers in child focused learning, facilitating learning in least restrictive environments
2. To develop a single material that is curriculum based criterion referenced and may be used for identification, assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation of primary education.
3. To develop Facilitator cards and Child Self Learning cards and learning materials that could be used by children with and without special needs.
4. To prepare a monitoring tool in which even illiterate parents could participate.
5. To develop PLUS curriculum CRD, Facilitator cards, child self learning cards, low cost and appropriate learning materials to facilitate a process of demystification and enable general teachers to learn skills at their own pace based on the immediate needs in the classroom.

NALI KALI - A CHILD FRIENDLY EXPERIMENT: Nali Kali is a project implemented by DPEP and UNICEF in H D Kote, Mysore District. This is now slowly expanding to other districts also. This project has taken a majority of the issues relating to education of children in the general schools while designing the curriculum, The only missing element is that while planning Nali Kali the organizers did not take into account the factors which would influence the drop out rate. These would include failure to learn because of sensory, intellectual and/or physical disabilities.

# Development of the CCRD (Curriculum-based Criterion Referenced Data)

The curriculum at present does not take into account the needs of children with disabilities. UNESCO (Refer to UNESCO Resource pack) clearly states the need to have curricular view in the inclusion of children with disabilities in the mainstream education.

The curriculum for "ALL" needs to be:

1. Child centred: Children with disabilities need child-centred curriculum, which takes into account the individual needs of children. The curriculum needs to set specific, observable, measurable and achievable learning outcomes (SOMA).
2. Flexible: A flexible, locally relevant curriculum, teaching and learning strategies are intrinsically important for children with special needs to participate in the educational process.
3. Participatory: Children with special needs require a learning environment in which they can actively participate in learning in small groups learning settings.
4. Partnership with parents: Partnership with parents is a key factor as children learn not only in the classrooms but also at home.

Experts in the field of education were called in for a 5 day discussion as to how to develop the CRD. The broad outline, as detailed above, was followed and the CRD was developed.

# Training of teachers in general schools:

The project area for the feasibility study was chosen - 3 gram panchayaths of Bangalore Rural District - Kumbalahalli in Hoskote Taluk, Aralumallige in Doddaballapura Taluk, and Hemmigepura in Bangalore South Taluk.

# Stage 1-To prepare facilitator and child cards

30 teachers including teachers from special schools, resource teachers, DIET staff and general teachers attended a 10 days workshop. The primary aim of the workshop was to evolve Facilitator cards. The subjects were Kannada (language), Maths and EVS. Each facilitator card is based on the activities/ curricular objectives as prescribed in the CRD.

# What is a facilitator card?

The facilitator cards is prepared for each learning outcome and will give the following information to the teacher for each concept:

1. What is the concept, sub concept and specific learning outcome?
2. What are various task analyzed steps
3. Where will the child learn - indoors or outdoors (Location)
4. How will the child learn - methodology
5. What is required to assist the child - material
6. How to evaluate what the child has learnt or achieved - (Criterion for success and evaluation)
7. What are the modifications required to assist a child (who may have hearing, visual impairment or learning, moving difficulties)
8. A logo for each concept

# What is a child card?

A child card is prepared for each task analysed step mentioned in the facilitator card. All child cards are written in the first person and with self-learning materials (either print or 3 dimension materials)

A child card has the following features:

1. What is the concept, sub concept and learning outcome
2. Activity
3. Logo (for each concept to help the child to pick up the card and put it back after the activity - Note the child is still at pre literacy level and logos add beauty to the cards and environment)

# Gender and life skills

The Facilitator cards and Child cards are gender sensitive. Life skills as recommended by World Health Organization has been taken into account while designing facilitator cards and child cards

Achievable learning outcomes
Every child learns at her/his own pace in joyful inclusion

Learning outcomes are sequenced and are achievable by a child within a specific period of time (No learning outcome should take more 5 days for a child to accomplish - If the child has difficulty in learning the outcome then teacher has to check the baselines established for each child and individual child plans. If these two aspects are correct then the teacher checks the methodology, learning materials and evaluation methods.)

Following the successful development of Facilitator cards 30 teachers from 28 government and 2 NGO run primary schools were trained in the use of CRD at a 5 days workshop. The teachers had to develop the Child Self-Learning cards. The child cards explained the activity that would enable the child to learn a particular concept by himself/herself. At the training program the teachers:

1. Were able to express the impact of disability on learning
2. Learn the skills required using curriculum based CRD for establishing baselines on current levels of learning, planning annual, half yearly, quarterly, monthly, weekly and daily learning schedules.
3. Learn the skills for small group formation, facilitation, and classroom management.
4. Were able to use facilitator cards
5. Were able to prepare child self-learning cards and learning materials that were disability friendly.
6. Were able to identify all the areas required to establish Akshara resource centers at Panchayath level.
7. Were able to identify the strategies required for formation of Inclusive Education committees at Panchayath level.

# Joyful inclusion pack and kit

After the 5 days training the teachers were equipped with a kit containing materials that they would need to implement Joyful Inclusion. Each kit contained Facilitator and Child Cards, the CRD, cut outs of letters, and other learning materials. The follow up included a one day training in teaching arithmetic using Montessori methodology. A further 7 days workshop is scheduled to be held 3 months after the initialisation of Joyful Inclusion in the respective schools.

# Plus curriculum pack

At first the CRD, facilitator and child cards were developed based on the general curriculum as prescribed by NCERT.

However it is not enough for inclusive education. Because children with special needs have additional needs. So in order to meet the plus curricular needs a plus curriculum pack was developed.

Joyful inclusion plus curricula pack consists of:

Curriculum based Criterion referenced schedules for each area such as Braille, Orientation and mobility, Sign language, Lip reading, Behavior modification skills, Mobility, physiotherapy and others. There are 45 areas and 250 cards are prepared to meet the needs of chidlren from the age group 3-9 years. The plus curriculum pack can be used even by Anganwadi workers along with Portage-Montessori based pre school pack developed by CBR NETWORK. This model was also successfully tested in Manvi, Raichur District in Karnataka state with support from Govt. of Karnataka.

# Inclusive learning materials

CBR NETWORK has developed inclusive learning materials. Both language (Kannada) and arithmetic kits are ready). These materials are low cost and take into account the needs of all children in the classroom. What is inclusive learning material? In simple words it means a learning material which can be used by all children. For example the sand paper letters are fixed on card board which also has finger spelling in one corner and Braille symbols on the other corner. The size and colors are chosen keeping children with low vision, mental retardation and specific learning difficulties in mind.

# How does the inclusive classroom look like?

MODEL CLASSROOM: Based on the experience of the Nali-Kali schools in Mysore District a model classroom for Inclusive education was developed. The classroom needs to be child friendly. Children should feel enthusiastic about coming to school. Thus the classroom will have to be colorful and interesting, a place to investigate and to learn. Firstly since most of the schools are at a height above the ground it is necessary to provide ramps (for children with physical disability) and a hand rail (for children with visual impairment). A mug and bucket of water may be kept outside the classroom to ensure that children maintain basic hygiene after playing outside.

# A mirror to enhance communication skills and self image

At the entrance of the classroom, and at the height of the child, a full-length mirror may be placed (If a full-length mirror is not within the budget, 3 small mirrors may be placed). This is to give the child the notion that it is important to keep clean at all times. The mirror may also be used to teach children with speech and hearing impairment. The classroom may be decorated with potted plants, which may also be used to explain about numbers (counting leaves), agriculture and various other concepts. From the ground up to a height of 2 ½ feet the wall may be used, after appropriate painting, as a blackboard. Each child could use this to learn various concepts, drawing etc.

# Using the waste to beautify the classrooms

To keep the cards within reach of the child, a wall hanging with pockets to hold the various cards could be made using locally available material such as jute sacking (Teachers in government schools in villages have used old rice bags, saris to make beautiful decorative bags to display cards). The bags could be made with the help of senior children. They could be decorated to make them attractive. The cards would have to be sorted based on the curriculum objective and subject. Each subject would require a separate bag (In Karnataka only 3 subjects are taught at the primary level hence 3 bags would be required per classroom). The teacher cards may also be kept in a separate bag. One sided paper may be cut up into small 4 inch square pieces. A large quantity of one sided paper is required to encourage children to actively draw or write. Thought for the day could be written on cardboard sheets and a different one put up every day. A resource /teaching material store room could be made at the back of the classroom using a string to tie across and old saris or sheets as partition. The resource center could be used to store low cost teaching aids or to store children activity such as paintings, drawings etc. Teaching materials could be developed by taking used items from the village itself. Based on the resourcefulness of the facilitator any item may be used as a teaching aid. But these materials must be cleaned, labeled, and kept in a systematic manner.

# Assessment

A functional assessment tool is prepared for children in the age group of 0-14 for screening and functional ability assessment. This is based on tool developed by NCERT in PIED and WHO CBR Manual project. This tool is available in English, Kannada, Telugu, Urdu, Nepali, Tamil, Hindi, Malayalam, and Bhojpuri. Individual child records (one record is sufficient for 4 years of schooling is maintained to record the progress of every child. It is essential that the facilitator take some time to record the baseline of every child with the help of the parents. The CRD is used to measure the baseline of the child. Based on the findings a yearly, half yearly, quarterly, monthly, weekly, daily plan may be developed for each child. This has to be updated every day to ensure that the children are really learning the concepts that they need to know.

# A progress report that can be used even by illiterate families

CBR Network has developed an assessment tool to measure both the baseline as well as achievement levels of every child. This is a very simple tool and will help not only the facilitator but also the parents of the child, even though they may be illiterate. All concepts have logos and learning is measured in terms of number of cards child has learnt, which is recorded as staircase of progress.

# Seven Teacher friendly steps in joyful inclusion

1. The teacher establishes a baseline of the existing levels of each child's competencies using the CRD.
2. Based on the levels of the child's competency, teacher plans long and short-term educational plans.
3. Based on the education plan children will be formed into small groups.
4. Using facilitator cards the facilitator will prepare group educational programs with graded support from the teacher.
5. Children use child cards and materials
6. Teacher evaluates individual child learning and records concepts learnt without help.
7. Teacher records the progress in a child log for the use of the school.

# Community Mobilization - Partnership with families -a key to success

Joyful Inclusion can yield best results with active participation and cooperation of the community and the family.

Democratization at grassroots has picked up tremendous momentum in the last decade. Panchayath Raj System is one example of decentralization of policy decision making and implementation of all development programs. NGOs have played an important role in creating public awareness, promoting self-advocacy/group advocacy, and implementing government development programs.

In India, Mahatma Gandhi emphasized the need for self-reliance and self-sustainable villages as early as the beginning of this century. The concept of Self-help and Gram Swaraj are not foreign concepts to us.

The ancient village management system was also based on the principle of sharing and caring.

# Village schools are called Government schools!

Somewhere along the line, after independence people started playing the role of recipient of services and benefits and became beneficiaries. This passive role of the community did not help in sustaining the projects. The schools supported by state unfortunately has very little community participation. Even if there is a caring community, it is restricted only to giving materials for construction, almirahs, chairs, etc.

# Akshara resource centre (Sampanmoola kendra) and Self Help mutual aid groups of families

Neither government nor the community can afford to remain aloof in the process of education. Home-school, community linkages need to be more meaningful in order to get the communities and families to cooperate fully in all the schools' activities.

"There has been an increasing realization that the chances of sustaining programs without the community's participation at all levels of implementation are close to nil."

The formation of Self help groups by CBR NETWORK in almost all development programs addressing different issues and in varying degrees is one of the most important developments. This has resulted in a major shift:

1. From charity to development perspective
2. From service providers to the role of facilitators/catalyst agents.
3. Transfer of skills to grassroots
4. From role of passive beneficiary to active participant in the development process.

Akshara sampanmoola kendra is located in a village panchayath which has the following facilities. (A village panchayath may have more than one Akshara resource center).

1. A card library on village stories, rangoli, craft work, folk songs, our village sports, our village theatre, our crops, our village needs etc. These cards are written by children in classes 4th and above and educated youth also participate in the preparation of these cards by conducting interviews with the elderly people, carpenter, blacksmith, potter, etc. in the villages.
2. All resource materials needed for children with special needs - wheel chair, sensory training materials, sign language kits, walkers, early stimulation materials for children with special needs, parallel bars, prone boards, corner seats etc, in various models made from low cost locally available materials.
3. A tape recorder and cassette for children with special needs such as talking books and music cassettes, speech training cassettes.
4. A directory of gram panchayath about skilled people, educated people in the community, donors list, achievements of village people in all the fields etc.

The raw materials for Akshara resource center are crds, jute sack, materials prepared using waste paper technology. The place for Akshara resource center is given by Panchayaths.

How Akshara resource center works:

1. Children use it as library for additional reading materials
2. Teachers use it to enhance their own learning
3. Teachers borrow learning materials from it.
4. Community uses it as a cultural center for documentation of the village resources.

# Monitoring of the project

In the project areas of CBR Network, 3 field staff have been nominated, 1 per gram panchayath. They have been entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that there is no obstacle in the implementation of Joyful Inclusion in the schools in their region. Two members of the office staff have also been deputed to help each of the field staff. The process of implementing Joyful Inclusion must necessarily begin with the identification and assessment of the children with disability. Then the enrolment into the general schools must take place. The community has to be prepared to support Joyful Inclusion, and they must feel the need to educate the children with disabilities. The gram panchayath members were approached and they were advised about the needs of children with disabilities. The parents are now in the process of forming self-help groups to enable them to help each other in times of need. Once the self-help groups are formed the children with severe to profound disability may be trained in Tasks of Daily Living Skills in the self help group itself. The self help group will also function as an advocacy forum to help raise awareness in the community and to ensure that schemes for the persons with disability are implemented without delay. The self-help group will also ensure that the drop out rate is reduced.

# Scaling up of access to education-some ideas

Since the project area was small and the number of schools limited it was possible for CBR Network to conduct the following training program. To ensure that Joyful Inclusion is implemented in all primary schools in the State and later on in the country different strategies need to be adopted. Some of the strategies such as

1. Distance education
2. Inclusion of Joyful inclusion in all in-service training programs for teachers

# Implementation Strategy I

Training requirements: The resource base in India in terms of skilled personnel for CBR/education programs is insufficient to sustain a major national program. The available professionals have mainly worked for the national institutions or for NGOs. Their expertise is related to single disabilities and to the use of segregated approaches. Training of Master Trainers: Master trainers are selected from DIETs, general primary school teachers, headmasters, Block Resource Persons, and NGOs in the field of education. The criterion for selection is that they should have sound experience in educational practices with 2 to 3 years actual teaching experience. They should also have a high level of communication skills as they will be asked to transfer the skills learnt to the grassroots teachers. During this training they would be understand the use of Curriculum-based Criterion Referenced Data (CRD), create teacher and child cards, learn to evaluate the progress of the child, small group teaching, etc. At the end of this training program the Master trainers will have all the skills necessary to set up a Joyful Inclusive School. Master trainers will train all teachers in all the schools in the selected gram panchayath. The training will be conducted in 2 stages, a 5 days training program and after 3 months a 7 days training program. The DPEP, Karnataka has been approached with the pilot project to implement this training program.

# Implementation Strategy II

To ensure that children with disabilities all over the country will receive the benefits of Joyful Inclusion it was necessary to train a large number of teachers in the development, use and implementation of the Joyful Inclusion pack. The new strategy that is in the process of being evolved is to develop a distance education program. This will be done in collaboration of DPEP Distance Education Program. IGNOU could be the agency for dissemination of the distance education pack. Discussions are also taking place to publish the pack including the child and facilitator cards in various Indian and South Asian languages. This could be widely disseminated to ensure that a majority of children with special needs get the education they require to empower them to become productive citizens.

# Research focus

CBR Network is developing an index to measure the impact of Joyful Inclusion. Index on inclusive education developed by other countries has also been referred.

An interactive CD-ROM is also in the process of development. This CD ROM will help different states to modify the CRD, teacher cards and child cards using local culture and skills.

We look forward to guidance and support from the government and all other organizations concerned about education of children with special needs.

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