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UNIT 9   EDUCATION OF DISDAVANTAGED STUDENTS

STRUCTURE

9.0 INTRODUCTION

Equity is an important issue in school education. There is a tremendous variation in the home background of the students attending Indian schools. On one hand we have students who have internet connection at their homes. On the other extreme end we have students who do not even get a daily newspaper for reading. On one hand we have students with educated parents who can help them in their educational endeavour. On the other end we have students whose parents are

utterly illiterate and hardly know the benefit of school education. Traditionally certain communities have drawn benefits from education system while certain other communities have remained aloof from it. It is a challenge to bridge this wide gap. This unit attempts to provide how to practice positive discrimination in school and in the classroom to encourage the first generation learners to benefit from school education.

9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- understand the heterogeneity among the school going children.

- visualise the educational problems of the deprived sections of the society.

- acquire skills to teach school subjects to first generation learners.

- work out methods to enhance access and retention of school children.

- adopt strategies to achieve equity in educational opportunities.

9.2 ISSUES ON ACCESS AND RETENTION

As per the Constitution of India the Government is committed to provide free and compulsory education to all the children in the age group of 6 to 14. A variety of efforts have been made in the post independent India to achieve this goal. A large number of primary schools were opened throughout the country to ensure that a child has a school in the vicinity. At many places a single teacher school was started to provide educational facilities in the village itself. Schemes like free instructional material, mid-day meal, distribution of school uniforms, assistance to girls from tribal areas were implemented. In the last decade of the 20th Century an ambitious programme called District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) was undertaken by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India in districts where the female literacy level was below the national average. All out efforts were made in this programme to ensure access and to enhance retention. These efforts were continued on a large scale under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). Both these programmes have brought certain dividends in terms of enrolment of students and their continuity on school education. Nevertheless, 100 percent enrolment and retention has still remained a dream. It is a challenge to fulfil this dream and primary teachers in the country have a major role to play in it.

9.2.1 Education of SC Children

Due to the caste system prevailing, for a long time in India, a specific group of people was categorized as untouchables. Engaged in doing menial jobs these

groups remained aloof from the education system. After independence un-touchability has been abolished by law. However, a schedule of castes was prepared to ensure that these groups of people are given extra benefits to compensate for their deprivation. People belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC) are also guaranteed certain constitutional rights. Not only are they given free school education but are also offered a reservation in institutions of higher learning. These measures have increased the percentage of SC students in schools and colleges. Many of them have successfully completed higher education too. The literacy levels of people from these communities have seen a constant growth over the past sixty years. Nevertheless, the problem needs thorough investigation and action plan to overcome it fully.

Segregated seating arrangement in the classroom for SC children is sometimes practised in schools. Moreover, undue harshness in reprimanding SC children, especially in relation to upper caste children happens in the classroom. For instance, scolding children for coming late to school, not giving time and attention to SC children in the classroom, not answering their queries – even rebuking them for asking questions in class are reported from time to time. Excluding SC children from public functions in the school such as not allowing them to participate in the morning assembly or other public events such as on Republic Day or Independence Day may not be easily detectable. Making derogatory remarks about SC children, their supposed inability to keep up with academic work, denying SC children the use of school facilities including water sources have been reported from many areas. Besides, SC children are also asked to do menial tasks in school, including sweeping the school premises and even the toilets. Peer groups often do not include SC children in games and play activities in the classroom or in break time when children go out to play. As a result SC children return to their own neighbourhoods to play with SC children who are not in school.

The interventions for children belonging to SC communities have to be based on the intensive micro-planning that address the needs of every child. Some of suggestions for the inclusion of SC children in school are:

1. Establishing norms of behaviour within the school for teachers, school staff and students.

2. Timely detection of the forms of discrimination practiced in a particular context by either teachers or school staff or students. This is not an easy task as many forms of discrimination have become part of accepted behaviour, go unnoticed and unchallenged by the majority.

3. Finding ways of listening to children's voices is crucial to this exercise.

4. Setting up a system of reporting on discriminatory practices at the school level is a starting point. Complaint boxes in the school must be checked

regularly and timely redressal of instances of discrimination at the level of the school or Block can promote better inclusiveness.

5. Norms for classroom interactions such as seating patterns that ensure children are not segregated on the basis of caste, community or gender have to be established. The 'Nali-Kali' model of multilevel learning, pioneered in Karnataka in the mid nineties is worth adopting as it allows children to sit in groups based on levels of learning rather than based on caste, gender, etc. This not only breaks social barriers but it also allows for a rotation and thus intermingling as children move in and out of the learning circles.

6. Co-curricular activities, such as sports, music and drama which tend to break social barriers among children need to be encouraged. They have remained a hugely neglected area and would be an important strategy for increasing the interaction of children as well as allowing children from varied backgrounds to exhibit their talents and get recognition.

7. The teacher is a key figure in the school to ensure inclusion. But his/her role in this process has been largely neglected so far. Hence, sensitisation of teachers from the stage of pre-service training onwards, developing special modules for use in teacher education and training programmes. Special in-service training within the mandated days can be organised to deal with the specific problems of SC students at the Block level.

8. Some norms related to preventing corporal punishment and abuse included in the RTE require strict monitoring and adherence. Monitoring behaviour of teachers and school staff is one of the mandates of the SMC. BRCs and CRCs can help the teacher develop pedagogical tools and classroom practices that allow social barriers to be broken.

9. Providing adequate infrastructure for elementary schooling in districts with concentration of SC population can be useful for enhancing education among SC students. The Education Department can facilitate opening schools in SC concentrated neighbourhood wherever required.

10. There is need to undertake systematic research into the learning hurdles faced by SC students. It has been found that investigations of learning difficulties and measures to overcome them not only facilitates learning among SC students but also enhances their scholastic achievement (Kulkarni and Agarkar 1985).

It is to be recognised that problems of exclusion often take highly local and context specific forms. The above mentioned list is concerned with measures of general nature. In addition, area specific and community specific problems are to be identified an addresses urgently to deal with the problems of SC students fully.

ACTIVITY -1

Find out the information about the progress of SC students in India and then answer the following questions:

1.   What was the literacy level of people belonging to this community in 1950?

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2.   What is the level of literacy now?

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3.   Is the progress matching with the general progress in literacy?

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4.   Do you find any difference in the literacy level of men and women in SC communities?

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9.2.2 Education of ST Children

India's concerns towards the welfare of the tribal people have been well reflected in Article 46 of the Constitution which states that the state will promote their educational and economic development. Like the schedule of castes a schedule of tribes was also prepared. People belonging to Scheduled Tribes (ST) are given special incentives in school as well as in higher education. The tribal people are spread over almost all the states barring a few states. The tribal communities are not homogeneous and are at various levels of socioeconomic and educational development. Generally, a majority of the population belonging to ST community is educationally backward. Efforts are being made since independence to bring them into the mainstream of education. DPEP undertook special measures to

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attract students from tribal communities to enrol in nearby schools and continue until the age of school leaving stage. SSA also continued the same policy. Nevertheless, the success achieved is far from satisfactory. This issue, therefore, demands special attention.

The tribal people living in different parts of the country have different life styles and associated problems. Generally the problems of tribal people arise because of their isolation from the mainstream. They usually live in hilly terrains that are remote and inaccessible. Their economic status is low forcing them to send their children to work to augment family income. Tribal people use their local dialect in day to day conversations. Hence, many of the tribal students do not have adequate competence in using regional languages. Their habitation areas are not conducive to schooling. The nomadic nature of these communities forces them to move from one place to the other within the state as well as to other neighbouring states mainly in the quest of livelihood. Children, therefore, face serious problems with regard to their education as they cannot attend a particular school throughout the year. Hence, special interventions are needed for attracting and retaining tribal children in school. Some of the interventions are:

- Textbooks in mother tongue for children at the beginning of primary education where they do not understand regional language.

- Bridge Language Inventory for use of teachers.

- Establishment of Aganwadis and Balwadis or crèches in each school in tribal areas so that the girls are not required to do baby-sitting.

- Special training for non-tribal teachers to work in tribal areas, including knowledge of tribal dialect.

- School/EGS like alternative facility to be set up within one kilo meter of all habitations.

- Up-gradation of EGS to regular schools

- Special mainstreaming camps for out-of-school children under the Alternative and Innovative Education component.

- Mahila Samakhya like interventions from the innovation fund.

- Provision of process-based community participation with a focus on the participation of women and SC/ST parents

- Financial provision for context specific innovative intervention for girls' education and education of SC/ST children. The innovative programmes can include: Enrolment and retention drives, Special camps and bridge courses, Setting up special models of Alternative Schools, Community mobilisation including setting up new working groups and working with existing working groups, Monitoring attendance, Remedial/coaching classes,

Providing a congenial learning environment inside and outside the school, etc.

- Training programme for community leaders to develop capacities for school management, Setting up of Block and Cluster Resource Centres for effective academic supervision.

- Free textbooks to all children up to Class-VIII, Free hostel facilities with food, toilet items, notebooks, uniform etc.

- Adequate Teaching Learning Equipment for all Primary and Upper Primary schools.

- Provision for school and teacher grants for all teachers, community-based monitoring, partnership with research and resource institutions, and periodic feedback on interventions

Quality Improvement Programme for Ashram Schools

On the request of the Tribal Development Department of the Government of Maharashtra a programme was undertaken to improve the quality of science and mathematics education in Ashram schools (residential schools establish the lines during ancient Indain gurukul say to provide education to hitherto neglect tribal communites of students. The progamme was carried out by Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education 1993-97 in three districts located in Shayadri ranges (western part of the state of Maharashtra). It focussed on three things: 1. Capacity building, 2. Teachers training and 3. Enhancement of child-child interaction

1. Capacity building

In the context of capacity building of the school attention was given to the development of libraries and laboratories. Relevant books were made available to the library and system was set up to use them effectively. Similarly, science laboratory was strengthened with necessary equipments. In addition an attempt was made to develop mathematic laboratory.

2. Teacher training

Six training courses were conducted for science and mathematics teachers over a span of three years. During these courses the teacher were acquainted with the learning difficulties faced by the trivial students and were given guidelines on how to overcome them. The remedial material specially prepaid for tribal children was also made available to the teachers for reference.

3. Enhancement of Child-child Interaction

Students in the Ashram Schools lived together even after the class room hours.

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In order to make use of this time an attempt was made to enhance child-child interaction. They were suggested to undertake group activities like displaying a newspaper article on the Display Board or preparing Herbarium for the levels of nearby plant. The activities enabled them to channelize the leisure time available to them and enhanced their scholastic attainment considerably.

9.2.3 Children with Special Needs (CWSN)

The objectives of SSA can be realized only if all children including those with special needs are included under the ambit of elementary education. Experiences of programmes like DPEP have shown that with adequate support services, CWSN can be provided quality education, in regular schools. CWSN have often been marginalized on account of their disability, lack of awareness on the part of the parents and community about their potential. Apprehensions on the part of the teachers to teach such children also have denied them right to education. A general societal attitude of sympathy towards such children focusing more on what they cannot do rather than on what they can do has also been a barrier. Realizing the importance of integrating CWSN in regular schools, SSA framework has made adequate provisions for educating CWSN. SSA aims to ensure that every child with special needs, irrespective of the category and degree of disability, is provided meaningful and quality education. Hence, SSA has adopted a zero rejection policy. This means that no child having special needs should be deprived of the right to education.

The SSA framework, in line with the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights & Full Participation) Act, 1995 provides that a child with special needs should be taught in an environment which is best suited to his/her learning needs. These might include special schools, alternative innovative education or even home-based education. Hence, while planning for education at the habitat/village/block and/or at the district level, needs of CWSN is to be borne in mind. There are some requirements specific to CWSN - resource support, special teacher training, mobility aids and appliances etc. And there are a set of special facilities the CWSN would require which can be linked to other ongoing activities like community awareness, capacity building of village education committee, in- service teacher training, making school premises accessible and disabled-friendly, Early Childhood Care and Education and girls' education.

For proper planning to make right to education a reality for the CWSN, the CWSN have to be identified category wise, through the household survey. Data on the proportion of the CWSN in the total child population in the district and in school should be collected. Facilities available to CWSN in the district should be identified. Efforts to get functional and formal assessment of CWSN done should be undertaken. Special transport and other facilities required to enrol out of school CWSN in regular schools should be assessed. Data on the proportion of identified

CWSN requiring aids and appliances have been provided these assistive devices through convergence with State Departments, NGOs, ADIP/ALIMCO/ IEDC/ other schemes, SSA funds or other sources need to be collected.

Sources of funds for the appointment of trained special education teachers, long-term training of physio-therapists, occupational therapists, using NGOs/ special schools for training/ assessment/ implementing Innovative Educational Devices etc. should be explored. Alternately, resources and sources of support for short-duration or sensitizing all teachers through mass training programmes should be identified. Community mobilization/parental sensitisation programmes have to be held with a focus on bringing all CWSN to school. Efforts to adapt the curriculum to facilitate learning of all children including CWSN should be made.

Relaxation with respect to evaluation/ examination for CWSN, e.g. providing writer/ scribe to visually impaired children, providing extra time to dyslexic/ spastic, giving hearing impaired children/dyslexic the option of studying only one language etc. should be provided. District authorities along with community's help have to plan removing architectural barriers in existing schools to provide an enabling environment to CWSN (ramps/handrails/ toilet modifications/ arrangement inside the classrooms). Involvement of parents, NGOs and VECs to monitor enrolment and retention of CWSNs in schools should be enlisted.

9.2.4 EDUCATION OF GEOGRAPHICALLY REMOTE CHILDREN

Education guarantee schools in unserved habitations, alternative and innovative education for out of school children including children in difficult circumstances are also a part of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan framework. The management structure for implementation of EGS & AIE has to be incorporated in the Educational Plan. These require diversified strategies and flexible financial parameters. There are four broad focus areas:

i.   Full time community schools for small unserved habitations

ii.   Mainstreaming of children through bridge courses of different duration

iii. Specific strategies for special groups like child labour, street children, adolescent girls, girls belonging to certain backward communities, children of migrating families, etc.

iv.   Innovative programmes - the innovations can be in the areas of pedagogic practices, curriculum, programme management, textbooks and TLMs, etc.

All habitations not having a primary school within one kilometre and having a minimum of school age children are entitled to have an EGS type school. Children who have dropped out-of-school should have an opportunity to avail of bridge courses, aimed at their mainstreaming. The objective is to see the EGS and AIE

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as integral to the quest of UEE. The linkages with CRC/BRC/DIET/SCERT will be required for EGS and AIE.

There is a great heterogeneity among 'out of school children'. They could belong to remote school-less habitations, could be working children, street children, deprived children in urban slums, bonded child labourers, children of sex workers, girls belonging to the minority community, girls involved in domestic chores or sibling care, children who are engaged in cattle grazing etc. This heterogeneity demands diversified approaches and strategies for their education.

The EGS and AIE would accord a priority to setting up of EGS centers (primary level) in unserved habitations where no school exists within a radius of 1 km and at least 15 children (and 10 in case of hilly areas) in the age group of 6-14 who are not going to schools, are available. Alternate innovative educational interventions for mainstreaming of 'out of school children' through specially designed bridge courses of different duration can be designed. For difficult groups of children who cannot be mainstreamed, like working children, street children, adolescent girls, girls belonging to certain backward communities and children of migrant families, specific innovative strategies can be designed.

9.2.5 Urban Deprived Children

There is an urgent need to focus on the educational needs of deprived children in urban areas. Recent studies indicate the growing problem of schooling of poor children in urban areas. On account of different administrative arrangements for the management of schools in the urban areas, often a number of initiatives for UEE do not reach the urban deprived children. Some significant efforts have been made by NGOs like Pratham in Mumbai in partnership with the Municipal Corporation and the City Level Plan of Action in Calcutta. The Municipal Corporation of larger cities are considered as "district" for purposes of preparation of Elementary Education Plans. The arrangements for decentralized management also apply to these proposals. These proposals can be developed by municipal corporations and the state government have to recommend these for funding under SSA, clearly specifying wherefrom the state share will be provided. All norms of SSA apply to urban areas. Besides Ward, Urban Slum clusters will be unit of planning in such areas. Urban areas have special problems like the education of street children, the education of children who are rag pickers, children whose parents are engaged in professions that make children's education difficult, education of children living in urban working class slums, children who are working in industry, children working in households, children at tea shops, etc. A diversity of approaches is required to tackle the educational problems in urban areas. On account of separate administrative arrangements of schools in the urban areas, there is a need to coordinate and converge interventions across departments and local bodies responsible for elementary education in urban areas.

This calls for a provision of planning distinctively for the urban areas either as separate plans or as part of District Plans in the case of smaller towns. In either case, these require partnership with NGOs, municipal bodies, etc.

An important category of children which also needs special intervention lives in urban low income areas, usually referred as "urban poor". Urban poor children are not only economically poor, but often are deprived of family support and access to education. Children of urban poor are often excluded from education and reaching elementary education to them remains a challenge. Multiplicity of administrative units, lack of micro level planning and coordinated implementation, heterogeneous community, ill-equipped government schools, disparities as reflected in the curriculum transacted in the classroom, poor quality of teaching, lack of infrastructure, the location and timing of the school, loss of earning, lack of authentic database on out of school children, severe shortage of space for opening new schools are some of the numerous factors affecting their access to elementary education in urban areas.

The problems of educating the deprived urban poor child are complex and varied. These include lack of reliable data, inadequate schooling infrastructure, lack of incentives for deprived urban poor children to attend school, the location of schools, and so on. Although a number of NGOs have been working in the area, yet the coverage has been uneven and many have been left out. Moreover, a good proportion of these children belong to migrant families. The urban self governments have not been able to meet the challenges of reaching elementary education to this group of children. Urban poor children can be categorized as:

1. Children living in slums and resettlement colonies

2. Child workers/labourers, including children working as domestic servants

3. Street children

4. Children of sex workers

5. Children of migrant workers

6. Children in remand homes, juvenile homes, and in conflict with law.

7. Child beggars

8. Children of urban poor with disability

Many of these groups will require long-term support and very individualized personal attention. While planning for this group of children, clear focus on flexible strategies is important. Besides formal schools, SSA also provides support to out of school children in the form of Education Guarantee Scheme and other strategies under Alternative and Innovative Education programme. NGO's assistance could be effective to reach these children for government alone cannot cater to their needs. The out of school children can also be provided education

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through bridge courses, remedial courses, national open schooling programmes and back to school camps.

9.2.6 Working Children

Child labour is banned in India. Those who employ young children are punishable by law. However, the dire poverty in the house forces many children to opt for work to augment the family income. These children are unable to attend regular schools as they are on work during school hours. The real solution would be see that they are taken out of work and enrolled in schools. This measure would need financial compensations for the parents which would be difficult to manage. Instead a via media can be worked out by enrolling these children in night schools.

In the present circumstances there are a large number of night schools in urban areas. Their number in metropolitan cities is quite high and the enrolment of the students in these schools is also appreciably high. The problem with these schools is that they are forced to teach the curriculum that is meant for formal day schools. The time at the disposal of night schools teachers and students is severely limited. Moreover, these are the students who are tired of day long work. It is, therefore, necessary that a different curriculum is planned for the night school students. Since they have work experience and since they are older than formal school children they can be taught differently. Part of the education can be given through assignments that they can complete on job or during leisure time. There is no need to pressurize them to study the theoretical curriculum that the formal school students go through. Instead, the curriculum should be framed in such a way as to help them achieve life skills and to support their day to day work. Trade based training might help these student more than the formal study of facts and principles. Such a curriculum would serve the purpose of improving their skills on job, enhance their chances of higher earnings.

9.2.7 Education of Minority Children

Education is generally directed towards the needs of the students coming from homes having a majority status in the society. As a result, students belonging to minority community often feel excluded in school environment. Some of the reasons for their exclusion can be given as follows:

1. The language used in the text books and in classroom transactions could be different from the mother tongue of the students.

2. The experiences referred to in the text book and in a classroom discourse might be unfamiliar to the students.

3. The preconceived notions of the students might be different from those of the majority due to difference in cultural background.

4. Students might find the content irrelevant as they are.

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9.3 ACADEMIC SUPPORT SYSTEM

Teacher empowerment is a crucial aspect in school education. A practising teacher can be empowered in a variety of ways. Increase in the salary, enhancement of school facilities, freedom in classroom transactions are some ways of empowerment. What we are referring to here is the academic support that the teachers need to fulfil manifold demands placed on him/her. Some countries have set up "Teacher Support Services" to provide help to practising teachers. Teacher is expected to approach the organization for support in his/her day to day teaching which is offered free of cost and without delay. We in India do not have such a support system. Nevertheless, we have set up DIETs (District Institutes of Education and Training) and district levels and BRCs (Block resource Centres) and CRCs (Cluster Resource Centres) at block and cluster levels respectively to provide support to school teachers. Practising teacher can approach resource persons at these places and get the help that he/she needs.

Developments in technology have influenced our lives considerably. Technology has shown us the way to increase food production, to control deadly diseases, to transport material from one place to another and to communicate with each other. School being a part of the society cannot remain aloof from the impacts of technology. The gadgets like the slide or overhead projector have entered into school system long back. In the recent years even an LCD projector has made its headway into the school system. This projector coupled with a computer can empower teacher to deal with school subjects effectively.

Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has come forward to help us in our educational endevour. In October 2004 it has launched a dedicated satellite called EDUSAT. Located in the geostationary orbit this satellite is available for educational activities 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. It has brought experts and teachers close to each other. At the same time it has brought teachers together through video conferencing to share their ideas and experiences and to get advice from colleagues working in different district or state.

Developments in Information Technology have brought the world closer. It has become possible to establish fast linkages between two professionals using a world wide web. A teacher working in the remote corner of the country now has a scope to virtually interact with his/her counterparts from different parts of the world. In addition he/she has all the information at his/her fingertips through Open Educational Resources (OER). OER suitable for students and teachers at different levels of schooling are made available free of cost. What is more important is the fact that OER material can be downloaded and used for classroom teaching without any charge. The internet facility is penetrating fast in India very fast. One can, therefore, be sure that days are not far when a typical teacher from a typical village school in India would access OER and use them for his/her classroom deliberations.

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A Project on Open Educational Resource for Schools (OER4S)

Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education (HBCSE) a national centre of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) for science and mathematics education (http://www.hbcse.tifr.res.in) has recently embarked on developing free knowledge resource (www.gnowledge.org). As a next step it wishes to design open educational resources for schools that can be used to provide quality education to the students studying in small remote villages of the country. The project is being funded by the Rajiv Gandhi Science and Technology Commission of the Government of Maharashtra and is implemented jointly by HBCSE, Maharashtra Knowledge Corporation Limited (MKCL) and the Indian Consortium for Educational Transformation (I-CONSENT). The project aims at developing suitable resources in school science and mathematics taking into account the needs and requirements of the system and make it available through the MKCL website. Over the past decade MKCL has developed a brand of distributed classrooms that make the website data available to the stakeholders without any difficulty.

Students, teachers and parents are identified as three main stakeholders of school education. Material is specially developed in Marathi to fulfil the needs of all the three stakeholders in the state of Maharashtra. Special workshops were organised to design the material involving resource persons drawn from the pool of experienced teachers, enthusiastic parents, subject experts and researchers in education. It is uploaded to the website specially designed by MKCL (www.mkcl.org/mahadnyan). Anyone can access the material download it free of cost for further use. It is proposed to make available the school based OER in other languages after its field testing and appropriate modifications based on the feedback received from the end users.

9.4 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education is a process whereby the school systems, strategic plans, and policies adapt and change to include teaching strategies for a wider more diverse range of children and their families. Inclusive education implicitly means to identify a child's learning style and adapt the classroom and teaching strategies to ensure high quality learning outcomes for all members of the class. Everyone is important, unique and valued for their contribution to the school.

Inclusion is an educational approach and philosophy that provides all students with community membership and greater opportunities for academic and social achievement. Inclusion is about making sure that each and every student feels welcome and that their unique needs and learning styles are attended to and valued.

Inclusive schools put the values upon which America was founded (pluralism,

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tolerance, and equality) into action; they ask teachers to provide appropriate individualized supports and services to all students without the stigmatization that comes with separation. *Research shows that most students learn and perform better when exposed to the richness of the general education curriculum, as long as the appropriate strategies and accommodations are in place.*

At no time does inclusion require the classroom curriculum, or the academic expectations, to be watered down. On the contrary, inclusion enhances learning for students, both with and without special needs. Students learn, and use their learning differently; the goal is to provide *all* students with the instruction they need to succeed as learners and achieve high standards, alongside their friends and neighbors.

Why isn't inclusive education the norm in our schools?

Many years ago, special classes were created for students with special needs. Special educators felt that if they could just teach these students separately, in smaller groups, they could help them to catch up. However, the reality is that students in segregated special education classes have fallen further and further behind. Over time, we have learned that inclusive education is a better way to help *all* students succeed.

How can our schools be transformed?

The extent to which professional educators, families, and community leaders enter into a discussion on how to improve education for all our students holds the promise for the transformation of American schools from a 20th century educational system, dominated by a narrow cultural perspective, to one that reflects and values the multicultural and diverse nation that *is* the United States today. You can make the difference by becoming involved!

What is "inclusive education"?

According to UNESCO, inclusive education is seen as "a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion from education and from within education." The goal is that the whole education system will facilitate learning environments where teachers and learners embrace and welcome the challenge and benefits of diversity. Within an inclusive education approach, learning environments are fostered where individual needs are met and every student has an opportunity to succeed.

9.4.1 International Scenario

The term inclusive education has gained importance in recent years. Nevertheless, its origin can be traced in the history of education in the international scenario.

Although the inclusive education movement is now an international phenomenon, it had its origins in the relatively rich developed countries. These countries shifted their emphasis from special schools for the disabled to the placement of such learners in regular schools. This change was a part of wider movements in which disability began to be viewed no longer as a handicap that required people to be segregated from the mainstream of the society. As a result, there began the era of integration that saw the movement of inclusive education for all in normal classrooms.

The right of child to education appeared in a number of international declarations. The first international declaration that proclaimed this issue was Charter of the United Nations (1942). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) also reiterated the importance of right to education. Learners' right to education was enhanced further in United Nations' Declaration of Rights of child (1959). This declaration puts the responsibility of education of the child on their parents. Later, the equality of education was included in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (UN, 1966). In the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (held in 1992) 107 countries have given formal commitment to education for all. In addition to the right of the child to education the covenant specifies that it should be on the basis of equal opportunities and directs the development of child's personality, talents, mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential. In tune with this international thinking Government of India has also passed a bill for Right to Education (RTE) in the parliament.

Salamanca statement produced under the aegis of UNESCO (1994) states the following:

"The guiding principle that informs this framework is that schools should accommodate all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted learners, street and working learners, learners from remote and nomadic population, learners from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and learners from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups." It is clear that this statement includes all those categories of students that we are referring to in this chapter. It should be noted that the practice of inclusive education would enable us to overcome a variety of problems mentioned above.

9.4.2 Advantages of Inclusive Education

More than the developed countries inclusive education bears importance for developing countries. Practising inclusive education would prove beneficial in following aspects.

The efficient use of resources: Education is a resource intensive venture and has to compete against other demands of the country like health care, infrastructure etc. There is therefore always a resource crunch for education in developing

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countries. Setting up schools for different groups of students would not be possible for these countries. Instead, using the limited resources for the benefit of all types of students would be a viable solution as it makes use of resources efficiently.

Cost effectiveness: Inclusive education is not only cost efficient but also cost effective. Inclusion promises the enhancement not only of disabled but also of non disabled learners. It thus achieves good education for all taking care of individual differences among different learners. In addition, inclusive education acts against stratification of the society helping to maintain harmony on different groups of the society.

Decentralization: Practice of inclusive education encourages decentralization. Decentralization, as it is evident, allows national and local governments to reduce spending on central management and administrative costs. At the same time it encourages local decision making that is often close to meet the needs of the local people. It also enables local community groups to have a say in decision making. In short it would be a consumer driven policy of education rather than a beaurocratic mode of centralised decision.

9.4.3 An Inclusive School and Classroom

The real purpose of building an inclusive school is to facilitate the development of inclusive society in which every member has an opportunity to achieve his/her potential to fullest extent. In order to achieve this objective it is necessary that diversity among learner population is given due importance and provision is made to achieve everyone's rights. Access for all is the central concept in inclusive schools. It involves the psychological and physical environment of the school including curriculum transactions. All these aspects of the school should be conducive to learners with different abilities and social background. In short, it is necessary that the school should have inclusive learning environment that fosters the personal, academic and professional development of all the students.

The essential aspect of an inclusive classroom is the attitude of a teacher. A teacher who believes that the intelligence is inherited and nothing much can be done to improve it will hardly encourage the development of all the students. On the other hand a teacher who is optimistic about the potential of individual and who maintains that the intelligence can manifest in different forms would provide an inclusive environment in the classroom to foster individual talent. Teacher must realise that diversity in learner is inevitable and everyone would have different requirements. Taking these diversities into account a teacher has to create both psychological and physical environment in the classroom. In such a conducive environment every child has a chance to progress.

SSA framework provides Rs.1200 per disabled child per year. While planning for the utilization of this money, it should be borne in mind that the amount available is not only for the use of a particular child with a special need, but also

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has to be utilized for planning of *Inclusive Education* activities at the school/ habitat/village levels. The SSA State Mission Societies are allocated funds for implementing the programme of *Inclusive Education* depending on the total number of disabled children identified in the district. While some disabled children may only need the help of a special education teacher, others may require simple equipment like assistive devices like hearing aid etc. However, this does not mean that this amount has to be spent annually; it can be accumulated for a year or two and utilized on a sizeable facility.

Other activities on which this amount could be used include assessment camps, development of training material, community awareness campaigns, 45-day Rehabilitation Council of India recognized teacher training, requesting specific services from NGOs, workshops and meetings. An attempt should be made to provide aids and appliances to identified CWSN through convergence. If this is not possible, then SSA funds could be used for this purpose. Referral to residential special schools should be made only in exceptional circumstances. As far as possible CWSNs should be allowed stay with their family. Interventions for education of children with disabilities have to be planned by each district keeping in view available resources. Overriding emphasis should be on inclusive education in normal schools and not isolating them in special schools.

9.5 PROTECTING CHILD RIGHTS IN SCHOOLS

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) was set up in March 2007 under the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005, an Act of Parliament (December 2005). The Commission's Mandate is to ensure that all Laws, Policies, Programmes, and Administrative Mechanisms are in consonance with the Child Rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and also the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. According to international law, a child means every human being below the age of 18 years. This is a universally accepted definition of a child and comes from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). India has always recognised the category of persons below the age of 18 years as distinct legal entity. That is precisely why people can vote or get a driving license or enter into legal contracts only when they attain the age of 18 years.

While all children need protection, because of their social, economic, or even geographical location, some children are more vulnerable than others and need special attention. These children are:

Homeless children (pavement dwellers, displaced/evicted, refugees, etc.), Migrant children, Street and runaway children, Orphaned or abandoned children, Working children, Child beggars, Children of prostitutes, Trafficked children, Children in jails/prisons, Children affected by conflict, Children affected by natural disasters, Children affected by HIV/AIDS, Children suffering from terminal diseases,

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Disabled children and Children belonging to the Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes.

All people under the age of 18 are entitled to the standards and rights guaranteed by the laws that govern our country and the international legal instruments we have accepted by ratifying them. **The Constitution of India guarantees all children certain rights, which have been specially included for them. These include:**

1. Right to free and compulsory elementary education for all children in the 6-14 year age group (Article 21 A).

2. Right to be protected from any hazardous employment till the age of 14 years (Article 24).

3. Right to be protected from being abused and forced by economic necessity to enter occupations unsuited to their age or strength (Article 39(e).

4. Right to equal opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and guaranteed protection of childhood and youth against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment (Article 39 (f)).

Besides these they also have rights as equal citizens of India, just as any other adult male or female:

1. Right to equality (Article 14).

2. Right against discrimination (Article 15).

3. Right to personal liberty and due process of law (Article 21).

4. Right of weaker sections of the people to be protected from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46).

Research, documentation and interventions by government and the civil society groups in the past have clearly brought forth many of the child protection issues. Some of them that concern school education are: Gender Discrimination, Caste discrimination, Disability, Corporal Punishment in schools, Examination Pressure and Student Suicides, etc. It is the responsibility of the school teacher to ensure that rights of school students are protected properly and they are not subjected to injustice in school premises.

9.6 LET US SUM UP

Indian society perhaps is one of the most heterogeneous social organization comprising individuals, facilities, communities castes etc., which vary tremendously in terms of their access to resources and education. There are social groups in some states which are badly deprived of even the basic needs and

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requirement for existence, not to speak of living a comfortable life. There are then sections of people who are disadvantaged as a class or caste, vizi the SC/ST, women, children living in remote areas or in hilly areas then there are people with special needs like the physically handicapped, hearing impaired, or with visual deficits mentally retarded. Such category of children are called disadvantaged children because they are at a disadvantage in obtaining the economics, social and educational benefits in comparison to the normal children. They are also called children with special need. The present unit addresses itself to the education of such disadvantaged dkjfdjk of the India kdjf. Our efforts has always been to bring them at par with their normal counterparts.

In the unit we have discussed many issues on access and retention of this special group of children. We have discussed about the education of SC/ST children CWSN, and education of children who are geographically remote then the Urban deprived working children and children in the streets have also special needs, and how can the education of such children can be organized has been discussed in this unit.

The concept and relevance of inclusive education has also been discussed at length. Apart from all this the unit has drawn our attention to how we can project we right of children who became of no fault of their are living a life of a dgf in urban slums, working in factories or small shops or they became if compelling circumstances have started begging. The Constitution of India guarantees certain Rights to Children, which need to be protected at all costs.

9.7 SUGGESTED READINGS & REFERENCES

www.oecd.org/

www.wpi.edu/News/Conf/ISTAS/Presentations/it**education**.pdf

Center for Research on Effective Schooling for *Disadvantaged* **...**

www.csos.jhu.edu/otherlinks/cds/cds.html

nvpie.org/**inclusive**.html

www.ibe.unesco.org/.../Interview_Clementina_Eng13Nov.p df

9.8 UNIT-END EXERCISES

1. Explain the issues and access and retention of disadvantaged students.

2. Define inclusive education in respect to school and classroom education

3. What are the advantages of inclusive education?