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The Journey of Inclusion

Lately, there has been a lot of debate on what constitutes inclusive education? While efforts have been made to include children with disability (CWD) in schools where the children without disability study, such experiments have fallen short of real inclusion as no enabling environment or support mechanism has been created in society so that inclusion can take place in the true sense of the term.

Government has a large number of schemes for inclusion of the children with disabilities into schools meant for the children without any disability but these too have not been able to create an enabling environment for inclusion to happen.

The Integrated Education for the Disabled Child (IEDC) scheme

This scheme was not pro-active and it has been left totally at the discretion of the respective schools for taking up benefits accruing from it and admits CWD into their fold. Moreover, the quantum of assistance given to the school is very meager compared to the facilities required for setting up a support system in the school.

District Primary Enrolment Programme (DPEP)

The second scheme for integration of the CWD into the regular schools was the World Bank aided DPEP programme. A child-centered pedagogy has resulted in support systems being formed in some schools and emphasis has been given to teacher training. However, due to the lack of an enabling environment in society, the scheme has not resulted in a total inclusion approach as was expected from it when the process began.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

Moreover, the realization that not every child can be put in a school and that special mechanism will always be needed, has resulted in a third Government scheme getting launched – the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) - the aim of which is to ensure education for every child by using all approaches – formal as well as non-formal – and by including everyone whether it is CWD or marginalized or disadvantaged.

The experiments tried out by the Government have been backed by similar initiatives by non-government organizations and by public schools which have taken the lead and started integrated sections. In Delhi, mention can be made of schools like Air Force Golden Jubilee Institute, Kulachi Hansraj, Vasant Valley, Laxman Public School, St. Mary and Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan etc. which have put CWD in either special sections or with children without disability in regular class-rooms with mixed results. **The efficacy of such efforts has to be studied to formulate a comprehensive integration strategy for promoting inclusive education in society.**



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Also there is a debate regarding what comes first – creating facilities in schools and training teachers so that more CWD can be admitted to regular schools or first putting them in schools and then creating support mechanisms. The State Council for Education and Training (SCERT) has laid emphasis on what it calls the “Dakhila Abhiyaan” while there is another view which calls appropriate models of education.

While this debate can go on, what is important is the realization of the fact that an enabling environment needs to be created for inclusion efforts to result in CWD becoming part of the mainstream education process. And for this, Brotherhood, an NGO working to bridge the gap between Children with and without disability has evolved the OIA model has three stages – **Orientation, Integration and Association** – and relies on awareness generation, frequent interaction and joint exercises undertaken by both categories of students as the three legs of a process for creating an enabling environment for total inclusion. While awareness generation exercises leads to elimination of prejudices and myths and misconceptions about disability, interaction increases the acceptability factor by making the children with disability realize that the CWD are persons like them having emotions and feelings. Associative exercises leads to acceptance by shared empathy and generation of love.

Repeatedly endlessly, the OIA model helps create an enabling environment for schools to go in for a range of inclusive services by seeking the support of community resources. In the future, we would like to evolve mechanisms by which community resource and support can be generated for inclusion to happen. This can range from helping schools identify potentials and possibilities or inclusion, to create bridge between education professionals and special educators, to formulate strategies for community support to enhance the inclusive process and so on.

At this stage Brotherhood planned a **total inclusive movement** by linking up ***Government schemes, existing inclusive efforts and an aspiration to provide education in an inclusive setting.***

In the first phase it will generate data by studying the inclusive process, identify the best practices and also the short-comings by carrying out an audit of various schools where integration has already been undertaken. Simultaneously, the efficacy of the Government policies will also be studied through a research project aiming to understand the processes and methodologies of inclusion and concrete policy action initiated in this regard.

The first phase will also see the strengthening of Brotherhood’s OIA model by enhancing the range of activities to include value-added services like forming film clubs where disability-related movies and documentaries can be shown, by exposing children to the “achievements” of persons with disability and helping them understand the nature of achievement in their context and by starting a process whereby the term “achievement” itself can be redefined to mean success in an individualized context with reference to subjective goals

In the second phase, Brotherhood will work towards evolving a range of inclusive services encompassing inclusion from within as also from without so that schools benefit from community resources and vice-versa. Vibrant and dynamic linkages between schools – both special as well



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as regular – (the former cannot be completely done away with) – and between disability professionals and educationists can result in the creation of a facilitative environment for integration and inclusion. In fact, this tantamount to placing OIA model in the community setting. And to show that the model can indeed work, we will select four schools from four different parts of the Capital and carry out intensive experiments. The aim would be to show a demonstrable model of community participate inclusive education.

In the third phase, we will spread this model to the other schools including Government schools with the help of the State Governments so that this holistic inclusive process catches on and becomes a movement with a self-generating momentum. Simultaneously, the gains of the first and second phase will be consolidated so that awareness and sensitization processes for creating such an enabling environment continue. It is a journey without any end, only with definite milestones for qualitative improvement so that the distinction between children with and without disability on the basis of disability goes away and the person, nay the child, emerges triumphant with its rights fully respected, its place in society fully granted and its integration in society a foregone conclusion.

Awareness and sensitization of normal school children, and the success of “Sarva shiksha Abhiyan”

While the “Sarva shiksha Abhiyan” envisages schooling for all categories of children through a network of regular schools and support centers wherever possible, the success of this movement depends on the **preparedness of the regular school management to accommodate children with disabilities**. The inclusive education movement in schools is in a very nascent stage and wherever it has been tried out; there have been mild and moderate gains. To ensure that it evolves into a full-blown movement, **sensitization of regular school children, principals and their management to the need for inclusion is very necessary**. Even in schools where inclusive education is happening, the acceptance by the regular school children is not total. This is because the **children do not know the potentials and possibilities of children with disabilities**, they do not seem them as part of the diversity pool and there are **myths, misconceptions and prejudices** in their mind vis-à-vis the children with disabilities. Unless they are taught to accept the children with disabilities at a mental level, the acceptance on a day-to-day basis will not come. It is here that the OIA model developed by BROTHEROOD can help achieve the goals of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan by

1. Facilitating inclusion in the classroom
2. Breaking the myths, stereotypes and prejudices regarding persons with disabilities, so that they accept them as part of society.
3. Orienting the children in regular schools towards the rights of persons with disabilities especially to make them study in regular schools.



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The OIA Model comprises the following steps

- 1) Orientation - Of young minds of school children about the state, status, needs, physical, mental and psychological problems of the disabled.
- 2) Interaction - Direct interaction between children with disability and other ordinary school children to understand each other better.
- 3) Association - The above two steps will result in a long term understanding an association among children with disability and other ordinary school children

ISSUES TAKEN UP DURING ORIENTATION

1. Change of perception about disabled and disability,
- 2) Definitions of various disabilities,
3. Difference between disability, handicap & impairment,
- 4) Integration and inclusion,
5. Barrier free environment,
- 6) Rehabilitation of persons with Disability,
7. About Acts, policies, schemes, concessions etc.,
- 8) Attitudinal problems etc.
9. Identification of various disabilities
10. Classroom modifications – disability wise
11. Classroom management

Some of the inputs of OIA model are :- orientation lectures, interaction with achievers with disabilities, screening of films / documentaries on various issues with discussion, joint picnic, joint programmes on social & cultural level. Exchange visits to schools. Quiz contests etc.

To make the OIA model an inclusive part of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the awareness and sensitization component can go hand-in-hand with the infrastructural support offered to schools for achieving the goal of education for all. If even little amount spent on a disabled child is diverted for awareness programme, it could ensure that the SSA is a tremendous success.

ORIENTATION OF REGULAR TEACHERS TO THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The Planning Commission has accepted that 100 million of India's people have physical or intellectual impairments. Of this, India has 40 million impaired children of school going age. At present, not more than one or two percent children with special needs have access to education.

The Government of India launched Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan. Such an Abhiyaan can not but take into consideration the needs of the children with various impairments. Experience shows that a very large number of children with impairments can join regular schools and become productive citizens.

The most important Act is the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Full Participation), Protection of Rights) Act of 1995. This Act refers to the placement of disabled children in the most appropriate environment.

Chapter V of the Act deals with education. This part of the Act promises access to education to every child with a disability between 3-18 years of age. It also enjoins on the state to provide



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various modes including special schools, integrated education, open school and home based education.

Each education authority must make appropriate assessment of every child with a disability and taking into consideration his/her limitations, economic circumstances and the total environment take a decision on what will be the most appropriate environment for a particular child.

Objectives:

1. To acquaint the regular teacher with difference between Disabled, Impairment and handicap.
2. To acquaint the regular teacher with important impairments and there educational implications
3. To sensitize the regular teacher to educational potential of children with various disabilities
4. To give regular teacher basic information about the management of these children in the regular classroom
5. To promote acceptance of children with disabilities by there peers in all activities of the school
6. To enable the teachers to counsel parents in order to build positive attitudes towards these children at home
7. To orient the teachers to cope with problems of children with special needs in all settings, including integrated or inclusive setting.
8. To orient the teachers the strengths of inclusive education
9. Role of teachers