A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF RTE IN PALAKKAD DISTRICT

ABSTRACT

(Prepared and submitted for state level presentation at SIEMAT, Kerala)

STUDY TEAM

LOHIDHASAN. M. K.

SAFEENA BEEGAM

MOHAMMED BASHEER. K.

DISTRICT INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING, PALAKKAD

2012

Since the evolution of mankind, education has always assumed significance in their lives irrespective of caste, creed, religion, region, gender and even disability. It acquired different forms, modes, streams, and disciplines adding value and much to the delight and comforts of the people all over the world (Rao, 2007). The first 'World Conference on Education for All' held in Jomtien, Thailand (1990), was particularly significant because it acknowledged that large numbers of vulnerable and marginalized groups of learners were excluded from education systems world wide (Sharma, 2012; Rao, 2007; Alur & Bach, 2005).

The Salamanca Conference on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 2004) considered the implications of the pledge made by the world community in 1990 to include disabled children and other marginalised groups of learners in education. As far as India is concerned, The Programme of Action of the National Policy on Education, 1986 (Govt. of India) says that out of 12 million disabled persons, 2.6 fall in the age group 4-15 years. They constitute approximately 40 per cent of the population of persons with disabilities in India. As estimated, 40 million of the 115 million children who are enrolled in school have one or the other form of disabilities (Sharma, 2012). The latest EFA Monitoring Report estimates that only 10 percent of disabled children are in school and that one third of the 77 million (6-11 year old) children currently out of school have a disability (UNESCO, 2012).

The nineteenth century witnessed the advent of special education and special schools in Europe, America and India. But this does not provide a lasting solution to the educational problems faced by them, as such schools are few in number and more over, they fail to integrate these children in the social mainstream (Alur & Bach, 2005). Special education practices were moved into the mainstream through an approach known as "integration". NCERT (2005) pointed out that all children with special needs should be educated along with other learners in inclusive school, which are cost effective and have sound pedagogical practices (cited in Sharma, 2012). It is, therefore, unanimously agreed that the principle of inclusive education is the only way to realize the noble goal of 'Education for All'.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

We know from the global movements for equity rights for people with disabilities, disability itself is often held out as a reasonable ground for not applying human rights equally. No sufficient mechanisms are there to ensure that children with disabilities are fully included in all aspects of the strategy. While the concern and commitment are there, there is no way if integrating their issues and needs. Our system is also not in a position to fully address excluded groups like children with disabilities. So it is necessary to take up the effort of finding effective ways to ensure that people with disabilities can participate in and contribute to society in all spheres of life (Singh, 2010). The Right of children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (The Gazette of India: Extraordinary Part-1-Section-1) also emphasized the Equal Opportunities, Protection and Full Participation, Disabilities Act of 1996 in the clause (1) of the Section about the provision to be supported to the disabled children.

There is an urgent need for developing and implementing better strategies for effective inclusive education to establish a Macro level set (policy change required to set social, political, and economic context), Mezzo level set (building collaborative relationship between state, district and community level so that a culture of inclusion can be fostered), and a Micro level set (changing school and classroom practices to better support, accommodation and teaching). So District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), Palakkad took this opportunity to mobilize various observations and to contribute valuable suggestions and interventions in this connection. Study was conducted within a period of five months from August 2012 to December 2012.

STATEMENT OF PROBLLEM

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF RTE IN PALAKKAD DISTRICT.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Critical Analysis: The term critical analysis refers to the mental process of acquiring and evaluating information and coming to a logical, objective conclusion through study of components of a phenomenon or event (Bellingham, 2007).

Inclusive Education: The term inclusive education covers all children and persons who need special education support arising out of any social, ethnic status and disability, etc. That is, all children educated with their peers in regular schools (Alur & Bach, 2005).

RTE: It refers to The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (The Gazette of India: Extraordinary, Part11, Section-1, 2009).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyse the status of inclusive education in Palakkad district during the year 2012, 2) To identify the adequacy of infrastructure in the context of inclusive education, 3) To examine the mode of functioning of headmasters in the context of inclusive education, 4) To find out the experiences of school teachers in the context of inclusive education, 5) To find out the inclusive practices of resource teachers in the context of inclusive education, 6) To find out the problems of students in the context of inclusive education, and 7) To suggest appropriate strategies to improve the effectiveness of inclusive education.

METHODOLOGY

Method: Survey method. Sample consisted of 78 schools including LP, UP, High schools of Palakkad District considering various strata of population such as government, aided, rural, urban, agricultural, linguistic minority, and tribal areas. It was also ensured the representation of sample from12 educational sub districts and tribal area (Agali). The sample also includes 78 head masters, 370 practicing teachers, 388 SEN students, 40 resource teachers, 312 parents and 20 LSG members. The data were collected using stratified sampling technique.

TOOLS: Tools used for the study are: **a) Questionnaire**-1) to collect data regarding infrastructure facilities, 2) mode of functioning of head masters, 3) experiences of practicing teachers, 4) practices of resource teachers, and 5) problems of SEN students, **b) Schedules for Focus Group Discussion** with practicing teachers, resource teachers, and parents/students, and **c) Interview schedules** to collect data from headmasters, and LSG members.

PROCEDURE

The data was collected from 78 schools, 78 headmasters, 40 resource teachers, 370 practicing teachers, 388 students and 20 LSG members of Palakkad district. The theoretical perspectives of inclusive education were collected from the documents of UNESCO, MHRD, and SCERT. The data so collected was analysed using SPSS (10 version), and results interpreted and triangulated qualitatively based on the wider perspectives of inclusive education.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES: The statistical techniques used for the study were percentage analysis, t-test, and ANOVA.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Adequacy of infrastructure facilities: The physical set up of the schools are not conducive and attractive for SEN students to have their education as visualized at national level. The wheel chairs (12.8%), ramp and rail (66.7%), attractive and gripped floorings (42.3), seating arrangements (60.3), adapted and attached toilets (19.2%), drinking water (61.5%), playing materials (41%), and play ground (70.5%) needs special mention in this connection. Majority of the schools are not equipped with respect to smart boards (6.4%), plug points (44.9%) audio-visual aids (17.9%), laboratories and teaching learning materials (TLM) (52.60). Availability of resource room (10.3%) and counselling room (16.7%) is another limitation. The library facility is good (84.6%), but most of the schools do not have provision for reading rooms (47.4%). The concept of 'Pedagogy Park' (5.1%) and vocational training centre (1.3%) is yet to be materialised. There exists significance difference in adequacy of infrastructure facilities between aided and government schools. The government schools are having high mean value connection with this. The multiple comparison shows that there exists significant difference between mean values of lower primary and high schools of palakkad district.

Mode of functioning of headmasters: Head masters do not have a thorough knowledge regarding the existing provisions for SEN students in schools. Only 7.7% of heads are trained to identify SEN students. Scientific monitoring of adaptation and class room activities (17.9%), utilizing the service of resource teachers (30.8%) and conducting

programmes for self confidence of pupil (41%) are not proper. The awareness regarding the rights of SEN children and responsibilities of resource teachers make the situation worse. As they are aware about the services from SSA and general education department, they keep a vague picture regarding the possible services to SEN children from agencies like Local Self Governments (39.7%), Social Welfare Department (19.2), and Health Department (24.4%). All the headmasters could keep vigilance to deal affairs like scholarship, aids and appliances as well as therapy treatments. No vocational training is provided to SEN children. Headmasters are not equipped and trained to ensure the participation of SEN students in co-curricular activities (30.8) as envisaged by the system. There exist no significant difference between the heads of aided and government schools in their mode of functioning. But a significant difference exists in heads of rural and urban schools in the mode of functioning. The urban schools heads have high mean scores when compared to rural heads.

Experiences of Practicing teachers: The involvement of teachers for dealing SEN children is very limited in the district because of reasons like lack of training in adaptation (64.1%) and in dealing SEN students. Unawareness about the need, significance and strategies of adaptation is the reason for less participation of resource teachers in subject council (32.7%), and planning adaptive activities with resource teachers (39.5%). The teachers' work is very limited in connection with seeking help from local bodies. Though all teachers keep an empathetic attitude to the very section of children under discussion, it is interesting to note that 6.2 % and 28.4% of teachers having the notion that education and training is not suitable to them and all of them is to be educated in special schools respectively. There is no significant difference exists between the practicing teachers irrespective of management and locale.

Experiences and Problems of SEN students: SEN students enjoy the assistance and protection from teachers, parents, and their peer group especially for reaching school. But they do not get proper consideration for traveling (47.2%) in passenger vehicles. The weak physical set up of schools adversely affect their confidence to meet the prescribed goals. Lack of availability of drinking water facility in the classroom (59.8), special

arrangements in lab and library (33.5%) are a few among them. They feel it difficult to relax and play according to their will and spirit. Though, teachers and headmasters keep interest to render all kinds of support to them the school atmosphere do not ensured good academic performance on the part of SEN students due to less participation in group activities (24.2%), lack of resource teachers (9%), low rate of participation in medical camps, availability of medical certificates, and availability of scholarships. There exists significant difference in the mean scores of problems of SEN students of government and aided schools. The high mean value for aided school SEN students indicates that they confront more problems when compared to government schools. The results also indicate that it is high among SEN students of high schools.

Practices of Resource teachers: Physical facilities of schools play a significant role in educating SEN children. As most of the schools are weak in this area, resource teachers are not in a position to render their service at an expected level. Since lack of awareness of heads and teachers about SEN students (90%), lack of cooperation (95%), provision for sharing problems of SEN in SRG (55%), and unawareness of duties, responsibilities and resourcefulness of resource teachers (82.5%) are the major issues connection with this. So the capacities of resource teachers are not properly squeezed and utilized for the schools from time to time. Though resource teachers ensure participation of SEN students in art festivals (90%), they become incompetent to keep some performance in areas like sports and games (15%), parliament (25%), club activities (65%), and subject fairs (42.5%). The length of service of resource teachers in each school (90%) is another problem which needs special attention. The freedom and pressure of time on the part of resource teachers act as deciding factor with respect to the process management of the section in the classroom with a pedagogic concern. There exists a significant difference in the mean scores of inclusive practices of resource teachers of government and aided schools. The high mean value for inclusive practices of resource teachers working in the rural schools indicates that rural resource teachers getting better chance in schools to work according to their interest and vision.

SUGGESTIONS OF THE STUDY

Adequacy of infrastructure facilities: It is desirable to take necessary policy decisions to change the norms of SSA to ensure the availability of wheel chairs and resource rooms in all schools irrespective of the nature of management. Adequate number of classrooms also may be allotted to furnish resource rooms. Autism rooms and counselling rooms are also essential for ensuring inclusion. Classrooms are adequately furnished with gripped floorings and echo free atmosphere as they are very useful for the categories of visually impaired (VI), cerebral palsy (CP), orthopedically handicapped (OH) and Autism students. The civil work norms of SSA may be changed to ensure the same. Proper vigilance may be kept to equip the classrooms with respect to seating, black boards, playing materials, adapted learning materials, computers, shelves, and drinking water facilities. Ensuring a reasonable utility of common facilities provided in the school such as toilets, play ground, laboratory, library, computer lab, and drinking water facilities for SEN students also is a major concern. It is desirable to provide attached and adapted toilets with suitable taps, ramp, rail, handle, and easily movable large doors in all schools irrespective of their management. A full time Ayah (helper) may be appointed in every school. The classrooms desirably equipped with smart boards with animation facilities. Ensure the availability of black boards around the classroom for the use of SEN students also. All classrooms may be electrified with enough plug points for the use of audio-visual materials. It is advisable to ensure the establishment and use of laboratories for various subjects such as science, social science, mathematics, and computer education. And also ensure reading rooms attached to library rooms. Proper emphasis may be given to scope of pedagogy parks and vocational training centres in every school

Mode of functioning of Headmasters: It is advisable for a comprehensive training programme for heads and teachers in connection with education of SEN students. Monitoring of adaptation and classroom process for SEN students may be strengthened at any cost. Much emphasis should be given for discussion of matters of SEN in SRG/SSG meetings, dissemination of achievements of SEN students, and discussion with parents. Also ensure programmes for improving the self confidence of SEN students, and their

participation in co-curricular activities such as arts, sports, subject level fairs, field trips, laboratory, library, assembly, club activities, day celebrations and parliament activities. All headmasters should be empowered to maintain a child friendly atmosphere in the school to feel pleasure and comfort to the SEN students.

Experience of Practicing Teachers: All teachers may be empowered to maintain a child friendly atmosphere to feel, SEN stuents, pleasure and comfort in schools. It is desirable to incorporate resource teachers in all academic planning. programmes for want of effective implementation of various tasks. Practicing teachers need to be equipped by providing training in adaptation and use of TLM for SEN students. It is desirable to provide teachers with adequate knowledge regarding the sense and spirit of mainstreaming, special education, and inclusion. The findings related with teachers conceptions regarding education of SEN students should be considered seriously.

Experiences and Problems of SEN students: It advisable to ensure that all SEN students are enrolled in their neighbourhood schools for lesson the hazards of accessibility. The Local Self Government may take this responsibility. A community level establishment also may be established in connection with this. It desirable to ensure the basic needs of SEN students such as availability of water, use of playing grounds, and playing materials. The tendency to neglect SEN students from the part of teachers may be checked from time to time by strengthening of monitoring system.

The practices of Resource Teachers: It is desirable to take necessary measures to employ permanent resource teachers at all levels of education. These teachers may be trained in all categories of disabilities. Steps may be taken to ensure adaptation process and preparation of adaptive teaching learning materials. Enough adaptive soft ware and computers may be supplied for the use of SEN students. Use of multimedia facilities also may be ensured by arranging infrastructure as it is useful for all categories of SEN students. It is advisable to strengthen monitoring system for ensuring the participation of SEN students in curricular and co-curricular activities.

REFERENCES

Alur, M., & Bach, C. M. (2005). Inclusive education: From rhetoric to reality. New Delhi: Viva Books Pvt. Ltd.

Ballard, K. 2011). Thinking in another way:ideas for sustainable inclusion.*International Journal of Inclusive Education.* DOI:10.1080/13603116.2011.602527.

Bellingham, J. (2007). Academic dictionary of education. New Delhi: Academic India Publishers.

Blankenship, T., Fore, III, C., & Boon, R. T. (2005). Efficacy and Perception of Inclusion at the secondary Level for Students with Mild Disabilities: A Review of the Literature, *Electronic Journal for Inclusive Education, 1* (9). http://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/ejie/vol1/iss9/2/

Government of India (2009). The Rights of children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. New Delhi: Ministry of Law and Justice.

Grham-Brown, S. (1991). Education in the developing world: Conflict and crisis. London: Longman group (FE) Ltd.

Rao, L. G. (Ed.). (2007). Perspectives on special education (vol.1). New Delhi: Neelkamal Publications Pvt. Ltd.

Sharma, P. L. (Ed.). (2012). Inclusive education: What, why and How. Mysore: Regional Institute of Education (NCERT).

Vira, S. (2008). Encyclopedia britanica. New Delhi: Encyclopedia Britanica (India) Pvt. Ltd.