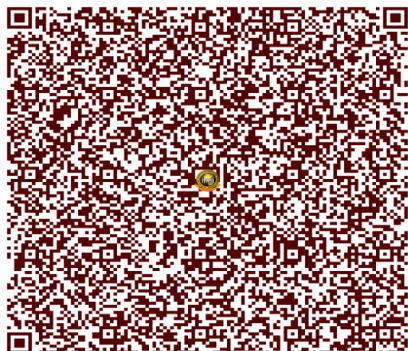


**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INFORMATIVE & FUTURISTIC RESEARCH***An Enlightening Online Open Access, Refereed & Indexed Journal of Multidisciplinary Research***Volume -1 Issue -9, May 2014****Inclusive Education: Key Role of teachers for its Success****Nandini N<sup>1</sup>, Dr HaseenTaj<sup>2</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, <sup>2</sup>Associate Professor & HOD  
Department of Education  
Bangalore University, Bangalore- Karnataka**Abstract**

Inclusion of children with sensorial impairment in mainstream education demands the preparation of teachers to suit their needs. It requires skilled and motivated teachers who are competent enough to deal with the complexities in the classroom. Inclusive education as stressed by EFA, is not achieved, may be due to the lack of competent teachers. Inadequate staff training has been identified as a significant factor leading to the failure of inclusive program. In general, administration usually focuses on organizing in-service education program for inclusive education. It is being carried through DIETs, CTEs, IASEs and other national level institutes. The duration of the program varies from two lectures to five days intensive programs depending upon the type of program, target group, availability of time, funds and resources. Arranging, only in-service teacher education programs do not serve the purpose and maintain quality in regard to meet the challenges posed by inclusion of sensory impaired children in mainstream education. It is also observed that the curriculum they received during pre-service teacher education course is not adequate enough to meet the special education needs of sensory impaired children in inclusive setting. Hence teachers were unable to meet the demands of modifying and delivery of appropriate curriculum children with disabilities. The teacher himself demands the training on inclusive education. This paper throws its light on In-Service Training Programs, role of key teachers in inclusive education.

**Key words:** Education Inclusion, Focus, Target, Key Teachers, Training Program**1 Introduction**

Education is the systematic and deliberate process that equips the learner with knowledge, attainment of skills, values and attitudes which enables them to participate effectively in all spheres of life. The process of education is worthless if it is not as per the consideration of the learner as an individual and as a part of a big society, so classrooms should be designed to welcome the diverse learners and

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address their individual needs. So teaching is indeed a very challenging job. It is because the welfare of our students is in our hands and it is our responsibility to instill knowledge in them. Yet, no matter how demanding the responsibilities of a teacher are, this is one of the most rewarding jobs found in the world today. The efforts of teachers do not only lie in educating children but these also contribute in huge circumstances such as training future leaders.

The World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in the year 2000, suggested that education for all should be achieved by the year 2015. The global EFA movement emphasized the Inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education. It is vital to achieve the target of EFA. Many models have been tried out in India and abroad in the past to provide education with special needs such as special schools, integration etc., and many new models are emerging. The latest one is the 'Inclusion'.

## **2 Inclusive Education**

**Inclusion** in education is an approach to educate students with special educational needs. Under the inclusion model, students with special needs spend most or all of their time with non-disabled students. Implementation of these practices varies. Schools most frequently use them for selected students with mild to severe special needs. By contrast, inclusion is about the child's right to participate and the school's duty to accept the child. Inclusion rejects the use of special schools or classrooms to separate students with disabilities from students without disabilities. A premium is placed upon full participation by students with disabilities and upon respect for their social, civil, and educational rights. Inclusion gives students with disabilities skills they can use in and out of the classroom. Fully inclusive schools, which are rare, no longer distinguish between "general education" and "special education" programs; instead, the school is restructured so that all students learn together.

Inclusive education has been internationally recognized as a philosophy for attaining equity, justice and quality education for all children, especially those who have been traditionally excluded from mainstream education for reasons of disability, ethnicity, gender or other characteristics. While inclusive education has been implemented successfully in many countries, other countries are still in the process of achieving this goal. Inclusive education is defined by UNESCO as a process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners by increasing participation in learning and reducing exclusion within and from education. This means that all children have the right to a quality education that caters, to the extent possible, to their individual needs.

In some developing countries, the process of creating an inclusive system is more difficult. Factors such as lack of available funding, administrative and policy level support, and trained personnel pose challenges that can slow down progress.

## **3 Components for Capacity Building in Inclusive Education**

1. Increase Awareness and Attitudinal Change through Advocacy
2. Create a Future of Trained Professionals: Pre-Service Training
3. Build on Existing Human Resources: In-Service Training and Professional Development.

When developing human resources to support an inclusive education system three areas must be considered: the attitudes of teachers and education staff, pre-service training programs to help and

ensure that future generations of teachers enter the profession with the skills and knowledge to work in an inclusive environment, and in-service training to improve the capacity of teachers already working in the field.

#### **4 Attitudinal Changes and Awareness Rising**

For inclusive education to succeed, it is vitally important that teachers, principals and other education stakeholders maintain a positive attitude towards inclusion. They must be firmly convinced of the benefits that inclusive practices bring to all children. Even if inclusive education is mandated by law, it will never succeed without the enthusiastic support of its practitioners. Obtaining such support involves behavior and attitudinal change which is not a quick or easy process.

##### **4.1 Activities and strategies that can be used**

- Organize training workshops for educators and key community members on general inclusive education techniques, especially those which highlight how such techniques can benefit all children by improving overall quality of teaching.
- Integrate awareness about inclusive education into schools' regular professional development activities.
- Integrate knowledge about the benefits of inclusive education into initial training programs for student teachers in colleges and universities.
- Develop mass media activities and materials that emphasize the value of inclusive education increasing awareness which improves the confidence of teachers in their ability to teach students with diverse learning needs.
- Increase awareness of many benefits of inclusive education through the interaction of educators and key community members with people with disabilities. Also utilizing special events such as International Disability Day and inviting different members of the community to participate and gain awareness. Inviting members of existing disabled people's organizations to discuss disability issues with teachers is also a good way to change attitudes and provide knowledge which helps to bring about mutual understanding and respect. People with disabilities should also be encouraged and helped to become trained teachers themselves.

##### **4.2 Pre-Service Training Programs**

In order to build human resources in the field of education, training must be done both at the pre-service and in-service levels. Ideally, inclusive education should be a compulsory subject for all teacher candidates and an integral part of teacher training curricula. Fundamental knowledge and skills of inclusive education, such as understanding needs and abilities of children with special needs and pedagogic skills such as instructional accommodation and activity differentiation, should be provided widely to teacher candidates.

##### **4.3 In-Service Training Programs**

In-service training includes professional development for teachers who are already working in the classroom. In addition to developing the skills of professionals before entering the workforce, it is essential that teachers already teaching be provided skills and techniques for inclusive education. Teachers in many countries are required to upgrade their professional skills on an annual or regular basis to enhance their teaching performance. In-service training programs offer Pre-school teachers enjoy thematic training on inclusive education particularly effective strategy to improve the quality of

an entire educational system for all children regardless of their needs. Inclusive education methods are child-centered, employing active and participative learning techniques that improve teachers' capacity to teach children both with and without disabilities. Collaborative and participative techniques not only enhance learning outcomes, but also reduce prejudice and discrimination among children.

#### **4.4 Focus**

The earlier in life that children with special needs receive educational support, the more successful their schooling will be in later years, and the higher their quality of life as adults. Early intervention for children, including linkages to early childhood, health programs and preschool inclusive education programs, should be a priority in any country context. In reality, however, in many countries these programs are underfunded and poorly staffed, especially where compulsory education in state schools generally begins at the primary level. If possible, inclusive strategies should begin at the preschool level (age 3 to 6) in order to assist children earlier in life. In countries where intervention at the preschool level is not possible, primary schools may offer a more accessible alternative for systemic change towards inclusion. In addition to the clear benefits of early intervention, preschool and primary school are logical starting points due to feasibility of application and implementation in the field. Usually, preschool and primary school teachers receive general training in the key subjects of language, mathematics, and natural and social sciences, while training for secondary teachers requires more in-depth specialized knowledge of a variety of specific academic disciplines. Preschool and primary school children are usually taught by a single teacher or a small group of teachers and teaching assistants. Students therefore spend more time with their teacher and have a greater number of interactions with that one instructor. Children at junior and senior secondary levels receive instruction from a much greater variety of teachers. Therefore, in order to have a wider reach, pre-service teacher training programs for inclusive education should target preschool and primary school teachers first before expanding to higher educational levels.

#### **4.5 Target**

While creating teacher training programs or developing curriculum adaptations it is very important to find out about existing national educational guidelines. This allows University and college lecturers enjoy doing group work in inclusive education training for the creation of inclusive education modules that complement and integrate into the pre-service curriculum.

#### **5 Questions to be considered while creating an Inclusive Education Curriculum**

- What is the current staff structure of our country's education system?
- Are there built-in supports for teachers integrating children with diverse needs in the classroom?
- Do classroom teachers in our country have the skills and training to teach children with special needs in regular classes?
- Is there a cadre of teachers who are experts in special needs education?
- Who regulates the job requirements of teachers?
- Are teachers required to teach all children regardless of their special needs?
- Do the regular pre-service teacher training curricula provide essential knowledge and skills for student teachers to teach children with diverse needs?
- Are training institutions willing and able to integrate inclusive education into their education programs regardless of government requirements?

- What are the current policies in our country to support both education staff and children with disabilities?

With this information, development practitioners, educators and policy makers can work together to decide on appropriate ways to prepare teachers to teach children with special needs.

## **6 Classroom Teachers are Responsible for Children with Varying Levels of Needs**

In countries that lack resources to pay for specialized support staff, regular classroom teachers are responsible for all children with and without disabilities. In this case, promoting inclusive education training modules that can be integrated into the regular teacher training college curriculum would be more appropriate.

### **6.1 Creating a Network**

In countries where inclusive education has not become a compulsory subject in pre-service program, the development of teacher training modules in inclusive education is best achieved by working in partnership with local teacher training institutions and colleges. Working with local training institutions is an effective way of disseminating Information both at the pre-service and in-service levels. Faculties from teacher training colleges are responsible for training teachers both at the pre-service and in-service level.

### **6.2 Identify Key Networks**

In addition to partnering with local provincial teacher training institutes, in countries where inclusive education is a new idea and not yet an established policy, it is helpful to develop a network of key training institutions which can act as experts on inclusive education at the national level. The chosen institutions should ideally have some expertise in special education.

## **7 Developing a Network of Key Teachers**

Students with disabilities need strong support from their teachers in order to fully participate in class activities with non-disabled peers. Inclusive education requires that teachers have additional skills support from them to be able to design inclusive lessons with a variety of activities that cater to diverse student needs. In some countries, classroom teachers are supported by a network of inclusive education coordinators, or specialist teachers, whose only job is to provide special support to both classroom teachers and students with disabilities. They collaborate with regular school staff to provide technical counseling in lesson planning and provide direct support to students and teachers as well. However, in many developing countries, this support model is not in place due to lack of funding and appropriately trained personnel. Therefore, it is necessary to explore local adaptations and devise more feasible ways of providing support to classroom teachers and students with disabilities.

### **Who are key teachers?**

The term “key teachers” is used to refer to groups of educators, usually school vice-principals or district education officers, who are selected based on their overall competence and interest in inclusive education.

### **Why key teachers?**

The development of a network of key teachers is cost-effective because they are already part of the educational system and not a new set of specialists requiring additional funding. Key teachers are mostly school-based and often part of the local community, making this system more sustainable.

**How are key teachers selected?**

Criteria for selection can vary depending on the expected role and tasks of the key teachers.

**Criteria for Selection of Key Teachers**

Prospective key teachers must:

- Have positive attitudes towards children with disabilities
- Hold good qualifications and pedagogical performance records
- Be confirmed as long-term resources for schools and districts by local education authorities
- Demonstrate good collaboration and communication skills
- Have good skills as a trainer and facilitator
- Have a sound professional reputation
- Possess good counseling skills

**What do key teachers do?**

Key teachers are the core human resource for inclusive education implementation in the field. Once trained, key teachers are usually assigned to a group of three to five neighboring schools, which they visit on a rotational basis. Their visits usually coincide with the school's regularly scheduled meetings. These meetings take place once a week, usually for one or two hours. Duties of key teachers may vary according to country context and local needs, but fall into the following general categories:

**Planning**

- Assist in development of annual plans for inclusive education implementation at school, district and provincial levels.
- Provide guidance to teachers and school leaders on the implementation of inclusive education plans, especially Individual Education Plans.

**Monitoring and Reporting**

- Conduct field visits to monitor the implementation of inclusive education at the school level, including tracking the progress of students with disabilities, observing lessons and providing feedback to teachers.
- Write reports summarizing the results of field visits, which are then sent to the project office as well as to district and provincial offices of education.
- Make prompt recommendations to improve the learning results of children with disabilities.

**Capacity Building**

- Replicate training received from external experts on inclusive education knowledge and skills for the benefit of classroom teachers.
- Organize thematic workshops for classroom teachers on teaching children with specific disabilities.
- Create opportunities for teachers to share their experiences in teaching inclusive classes.
- Coach classroom teachers on an individual teacher applies what she learned from training in workshop with a student with learning difficulties or group basis when needed on specific topics or skills.

**Technical Advice and Counseling**

- Provide technical advice to school principals for inclusive education implementation.
- Provide counseling and advice to teachers on the progress of children with disabilities in their classes.
- Provide counseling and advice to parents of children with disabilities.

In addition to possessing general knowledge about inclusive education, each key teacher may specialize in a particular disability, such as vision or hearing impairments, learning difficulties, or speech disorders. District education departments, together with schools, usually assign key teachers an area of specialty based on the number of children with disabilities identified in the particular area.

### **8 The coaching process for key teachers can be described in several steps:**

**Step 1:** Key teacher and inclusive education expert observe lessons by classroom teachers in this initial step, the key teacher and an inclusive education expert observe an inclusive lesson taught by a classroom teacher. These experts are hired by the project to provide training for key teachers.

#### **Step 2: Key teacher observes the coaching process demonstrated by the expert**

After the lesson, the expert coaches the classroom teacher, discussing the lesson plan and appropriateness of the teaching methods used. In addition, the expert helps the classroom teacher to evaluate the students with disabilities using the Individual Education Plan. The key teacher observes the entire process: the lesson and the interaction between the expert and the classroom teacher.

#### **Step 3: Key teacher observes classroom teacher and practices coaching skills**

Applying what was learned from observing the expert in Step 2, the key teacher observes a lesson delivered by a classroom teacher. The key teacher then offers similar coaching and advice based on the model provided by the expert. The key teacher continues this process of observation and coaching over a period of one or two months, allowing the key teacher to conduct several working sessions with the same classroom teachers and students. This way, both key and classroom teachers can assess students' progress together and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching methods used or adjustments made. The expert observes the key teacher's coaching and provides feedback, pointing out strengths and areas for improvement.

#### **Step 4: Key teachers and classroom teachers discuss learning**

After key teachers and classroom teachers have worked together on several occasions, a workshop is organized for all participants (key and classroom teachers) within a specific district to share their experiences, identify common problems, and brainstorm potential solutions. This is a forum for key teachers to reflect on what they have learned and to modify approaches if necessary. The coaching process allows key teachers and classroom teachers to be active learners and to have a voice in the type of training they receive.

### **9 Conclusion**

The reputation of a School and its influence on the life of the community invariably depends on the kind of teachers working in it. Thus, a teacher's role is pivotal in imparting quality education and bringing about qualitative change in an educational system; all this depends on competencies and attitudes of the teachers that can be developed with the help of appropriate teacher education programs in pre-service and in-service teacher education program which can be prepared by designing its curriculum, fulfilling all the essential needs of the prospective teachers to teach in an inclusive setting to produce a structured set of learning experiences for prospective teachers to teach sensorially impaired children in their classroom.

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