

## **CHAPTER I**

### **CONCEPT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Inclusive education has gained momentum in India since last decade to break isolation from special and general education, to bridge the gap between them and to mainstream Children with Special Needs [CwSN] into the general education to learn with their peers. Many policies and provisions have been made to make the inclusive education successful. India is striving to achieve the full enrolment and participation of CwSN in general schools. National level policies like National Policy on Education [NPE] (1986), National Curriculum Framework [NCF] (2000) and NCF for School Education (2005) strongly recommended providing inclusive education to CwSN. Despite many efforts through projects, schemes, programs and acts, the enrolment of CwSN in general schools is yet not upto the mark.

The lead role in the successful implementation of the inclusive education would be of a teacher. Without the teachers' attitude, knowledge, interest and skills, inclusive education will not achieve desired success. General teacher training courses are focuses on preparing general school teachers and merely study a paper on inclusive education. Thus, enrolling candidates with aptitude towards teaching in inclusive education would be helpful to large extent to prepare teachers for inclusive education. The present study was in this direction to measure aptitude of pre-service teachers towards teaching in inclusive education. Before we proceed further, it is pertinent to understand the concept of inclusive education. This chapter focuses about the concept of inclusive education, its status in India, basic skills required by teachers, teachers' role, teachers' training in inclusive education and the researches on teachers in inclusive education.

#### **1.2 CONCEPT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

The concept of inclusion has emerged from the ideas of providing equal opportunities to 'all' children. This means providing equal opportunities keeping in mind the diverse nature of their individual needs. The movement towards inclusive schooling gained

momentum since the World Declaration of Education For All [EFA] at Jomtein (1990) where emphasis was made for the special attention on learning needs of students (United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2008). The World Conference at Salamanca a Framework for Action (1994) promoted integration and participation of Persons with Disability [PwD] for minimizing their exclusion from mainstream. In India, PwD (Equal opportunities, protection of rights, and full participation) Act (1995) has been legislated to ensure every CwSN has access to free education in an appropriate environment till the age of 18 years (Chandra, 2003).

Inclusive education is a recent concept and an accepted approach in general education (Singh, 2016) in developed and under developing countries. The Dakar World Educational Forum placed a great emphasis on promoting inclusive education (UNESCO, 2000). Although there was no specific mention of CwSN, the term 'inclusion' has appeared in the framework for agencies to pledge and to create safe, healthy, inclusive and equality resourced educational environment conducive to excellence in learning with clearly defined lines of achievement of for all (UNESCO, 2000). Thus, inclusion means all children are welcomed regardless of their differences. The emphasis is not on treating the deficit but on adapting the environment to accommodate the disability by perceiving it as a normal difference. An inclusive school is a place where all the children are accepted and supported by their peers and other members of school and community during their course of training (Stainback & Stainback, 1990). Therefore, inclusive education is a flexible and individualized support system which is provided in regular schools, with a commitment to an appropriate EFA (Hammeken, 2008).

Vijayan & Geetha (2006) suggests that the major similarity between normal children and CwSN is their cognitive abilities. This proves to be a very supportive factor for these children to study along with their normal peers in the inclusive set up with the learning of the plus curriculum enabling them to cope with their disabilities. Thomas & Vaughan (2004) views that inclusive education as a pairing between philosophy and pedagogical practices that allow each student to feel respected, confident and safe so s/he can learn and develop to her/his full potential. Inclusion is based on the system of shared values

and beliefs among school and communities. These values and beliefs are centered on the best interest of the students, promotion of social cohesion, belonging and active participation in learning, complete school experience and positive interactions with peers and others in the school and community.

Today the concept of inclusive education has been accepted as an efficient means to realize the dream of EFA where the education of CwSN happens along with peers in a regular classroom. This concept is based on the premise that all children should get equal opportunity to learn irrespective of their diverse needs. Equal opportunity should be provided to all children to learn at their own pace in various ways. It is imperative to provide education to CwSN along with peers to fulfill the objectives of education in a democratic way.

### **1.2.1 Meaning and Definitions of Inclusive Education**

Inclusive education means providing access to all students with or without disabilities with equal opportunities to receive effective educational services. For preparing students as full members of society, supplementary aids and support services, admission in their neighborhood schools are given to them (National Centre on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion [NCERI], 1995). True inclusion can take place only when all pupils are accepted in the mainstream system and teachers' teach them with a common framework and responsibility (Thomas, 1997). The inclusion should be in all aspects of schooling that will be enjoyed and accepted by all children. By valuing the differences, necessary adaptations and changes should be made in the regular school and classroom in order to meet the needs of all children (Loreman & Deppeler, 2001). Thus to create an environment where all learners including CwSN and young people learn together with the suitable support system (Draft Scheme of Inclusive Education, Ministry of Human Resource & Development [MHRD], 2003). In this way, inclusive education facilitates integration in the school system where general and special education personnel along with the curriculum, are combined to provide educational experiences to meet needs of the students in an integral set up (Vijayan & Geetha, 2006). It is the process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in

learning, culture, communication and reducing exclusion within education (UNESCO, 2005).

From these definitions, it can be concluded that inclusive education is primarily about belongingness and acceptance of all children including CwSN. Inclusion is not merely determined by students' placement but it is based on creating an environment that supports and includes all learners. It is the process of increasing participation in learning along with identifying and removing the barriers which inhibit the learning and participation of all.

### **1.2.2 Objectives of Inclusive Education**

According to Comprehensive Action Plan for Inclusive Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities (MHRD, 2005), the main objectives for inclusive education under the action plan are:

- ☐ To ensure admission of all children into mainstream education.
- ☐ To ensure that every child would have the right to access an Anganwadi and school and no child would be turned back on the ground of disability.
- ☐ To ensure the mainstream and specialist institutes (both government and non-government) serving PwD, facilitating the growth of a cadre of teachers trained to work within the principles of inclusion.
- ☐ To facilitate access of differently abled (including girls with disabilities) students from rural and remote areas to government hostels.
- ☐ To provide for home-based learning for persons with severe, multiple and intellectual disabilities.
- ☐ To promote distance education for those who require an individualized pace of learning.
- ☐ To emphasize job and vocational oriented training to differently abled persons.
- ☐ To promote an understanding about development of inclusive education through awareness, motivation and sensitization campaigns.

### 1.2.3 Legislative Acts on Inclusion

The Government of India has enacted three legislations for PwD viz.

- ❑ Rehabilitation Council of India [RCI] (1992) Act deals with the development of manpower for providing rehabilitation services.
- ❑ PwD (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation), (1995) Act, provides for education, employment, creation of barrier-free environment, social security etc.
- ❑ National Trust Act (NTA, 1999) has made provisions for the welfare of persons with autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation and multiple disabilities with ensured legal guardianship and independent living.
- ❑ Replacement of PwD Act (1995) as Right to Persons with Disability Act (2016) was passed in parliament to bring the rights of disabled in line with the United National Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [UNCRPD] to provide effective mechanism for ensuring the empowerment of PwD and their inclusion in society.

Besides these acts, Right To Education [RTE] (2009) mandates free and compulsory education to all children from 6-14 years of age. The key objective of RTE-Sarva Siksha Abhiyan [SSA] is Universalization of Elementary Education [UEE]. The goal of access, enrollment and retention of all children in 6-14 years of age under UEE, has further been facilitated by 86<sup>th</sup> Amendment which makes free and compulsory elementary education to all children in the age groups of 6-14 years a fundamental right. Thus the education of CwSN have received a new thrust of their inclusion without which the objective of UEE is not possible to achieve.

Sarva Siksha Abhiyan [SSA] ensures that every CwSN, irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability, is provided meaningful and quality education (SSA Report, 2003). By adopting a zero rejection policy, SSA has ensured RTE for every child under the best suited environment for their learning needs. Teacher training is one of the interventions for inclusive education under SSA besides identification, functional and formal assessment, appropriate educational placement, preparation of an individualized

educational plan, provision of aids and appliances, resource support, removal of architectural barriers, research, monitoring and evaluation and a special focus on girls with special needs (MHRD. 2014).

### **1.3 STATUS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIA**

After independence, the Government of India created several policies for the education of CwSN by constituting Kothari Commission (1966), NPE (1986), Programme of Action (1992), Action Plan for Children and Youth with Disabilities (2005) and National Policy for People with Disabilities (2006). But implementation efforts of policies have neither resulted in an inclusive system of education nor achieved the goal of “EFA” (Chatterjee, 2015). This argument is supported by the fact that out of 2.9 million CwSN, 9,90,000 (34%) CwSN of 6-14 years age group are still out of the schools in India (Census, 2011).

Implementation of RTE Act (2009) was a massive effort which significantly improved by achieving the enrolment of CwSN to 89% in elementary schools of India, thus making the education system more inclusive (Unified District Information System for Education [U-DISE], 2016). Unfortunately, this figure decreases significantly to almost 2% CwSN as the level of education reaches to higher secondary school level against the national average 54.3% (U-DISE, 2016).

### **1.4 BASIC SKILLS NEEDED FOR SUCCESSFUL INCLUSION**

Based on the findings of Idol (2006), Allday, Gatti, & Hudson (2013) identified the four global categories of basic skills required by the elementary teachers in terms to include CwSN in general schools. These basic skills are also applicable for the secondary school teachers in terms to make the inclusive education successful.

- ☐ Teachers should possess a basic knowledge of the characteristics of CwSN and an understanding of their roles and responsibilities in the inclusive education.
- ☐ They must understand how to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of children with varied abilities.

- ❑ They should possess knowledge of effective classroom strategies to promote academic engagement and pro-social behaviour while minimizing disruptions to the learning environment.
- ❑ The teachers should learn strategies to communicate and collaborate effectively with resource teachers as well as special education teachers.

In addition to these, the teachers are required to have a grasp on the characteristics of each disability group to gain a general understanding of the disability since CwSN are educated in general education classroom. Moreover, teachers should have the ability to alter instruction in order to meet student needs, interests and abilities (Tomlinson, 2001). Many studies reported issues related to challenging student behavior (He & Cooper, 2011; and Scott et. al., 2007) and teachers feeling unprepared to manage the challenging behavior of some CwSN effectively (Clunies-Ross, Little & Kienhuis, 2008). Thus, teachers are required to have knowledge of inclusive practices for managing the behavior of CwSN. For more effective classroom management, the teachers are required creating an inclusive community, promoting membership from neighboring schools, facilitating friendship among students and supporting positive behavior in all students. In inclusive education, general and special educators are mutually involved and collaboration is at the forefront (Bessette, 2008). Thus all the teachers are required to work together to meet the diverse needs of students with and at risk of disabilities (Arthaud et. al., 2007).

### **1.5 ROLE OF TEACHER IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

According to Hammeken (2008) and Rinaldi & Stuart (2009), teachers should perform following roles in an inclusive classroom.

- ❑ The teacher at the outset should accept CwSN in his class as a pupil just like other students/children.
- ❑ He/she should assume responsibility for his education without any reservation and mobilize teaching resources from resource teacher and from other sources.
- ❑ The school teacher and the resource teacher should work in coordination rather than as an isolated professional.

- ❑ The classroom teacher should be given guidelines for adjustment of curriculum, adaptation of instructional materials and methods to suit the needs of CwSN in his/her class.
- ❑ He/she should also promote a healthy social interaction and sharing of experiences among the peers.
- ❑ He/she should develop attitudes, values and dispositions that creates conducive environment to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools, apply, extend and synthesize various forms of knowledge, motivate individual learners to fully realize their potential, promote inclusive education at all levels and adequately prepare the learner to participate fully in the national development effort.

### **1.6 TEACHERS' TRAINING IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

In India, teacher training for special education imparted through both face-to-face as well as through distance mode by 682 Teacher Education Institutions [TEIs] recognized by the Rehabilitation Council of India [RCI] both at elementary [D.El.Ed.] and secondary level [B.Ed. & M.Ed.]. The RCI is the apex body which develops, recognizes and regulates the course curriculum of special education. Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University [MPBOU], Bhopal, is the only university in India that imparts B.Ed. (Special Education) through distance learning mode. It also offers Post-Graduate Professional Diploma in special education for general B.Ed. students. The successful candidates of this program are eligible to serve in special as well as in inclusive schools.

Indian school system is considered to be one of the largest in the world and the number of CwSN is also high as out of total 2.68 crore disabled population, 17% of them are in the age group 10-19 years (Census, 2011). Thus, the prevailing situation of pre-service teacher training in special education needs to be strengthened or an elaborate alternative mechanism for incorporating the elements of special education in general teacher training programmes should be looked upon (Kumar & Kumar, 2007). Moreover the general teacher training programmes neither fully equip the pre-service teachers to deal with the CwSN nor manages the children with mild and moderate disabilities in general classrooms (Kumar & Kumar, 2007). The training to teachers in inclusive education is



focused only on providing in-service training under SSA which ranges from 1-2 days, 3-5 days or 45-90 days. While the longer duration training programmes covers large content areas of inclusive education but very few teachers are available or interested in such programs (World Bank, 2007). The shorter duration training programs on the other hand, covers less content but more teachers are available for such type of programmes. Thus even if teachers are available having undergone short training programmes, they find it difficult to handle an inclusive classroom due to their limited content exposure during the training program.

### **1.7 RESEARCHES ON TEACHING IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

The National Council of Educational Research and Training [NCERT] (1998) had acknowledged the existence of lack of clarity at different levels in understanding regarding inclusive education in the Indian context and urgently needs to evolve operational frameworks for the planning and management of inclusive education. From the experiences by visiting municipal schools of Ahmedabad city, Nayak (2008) reported that there was a visible attendance of the CwSN in the classrooms but majority of them were unattended by the teachers. The teachers felt that they lack necessary training to address the special needs in the classrooms.

The areas of education have changed during the last decades and teachers have to work with the rapid changes and their roles also changes accordingly. Sachs (2003) opined that the changes involving the development of new understanding about the interactive nature of children's needs and a need of shift in focus from 'what is wrong with the child' to 'what does the child need to support his/her learning'. Such developments have substantially affected the professional identity as well as the roles and responsibilities of many teachers (Rouse, 2017). It also has implications for how teachers are trained and supported their professional development. The failures and difficulties in the development of inclusive practices can be of lack of proper funding, lack of proper resources and existing practices (Evans & Lunt, 2002). The other difficulties are lack of teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes to carry out the work in inclusive setting (Forlin, 2001).

Researches from the countries in which inclusive education has been implemented for many years suggests that the successful implementation of inclusion reforms depends on atleast three factors: (i) policy that supports inclusive education (Fullan, 2001; Kugelmass & Ainscow, 2004; and Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996); (ii) adequately trained educators (teachers, para professionals and school leaders) (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; and Forlin, Douglas & Hattie, 1996); and (iii) a commitment to provide necessary ongoing support including special teaching resources and the availability of specially trained educational consultants, for classroom teachers and school participants (Moore, Gibreath & Mainri, 1998). Of these, perhaps one area in which India has not yet made significant progress is the training of educators. A majority of training institutes in India provide limited, if any, information about how to teach CwSN. Without adequate training, teachers may be resistant to the idea of including CwSN in their classrooms (Sharma, Moore & Sonawane, 2009).

Forlin, Douglas & Hattie (1996) and Forlin et. al. (2009) argued that the success of mainstreaming is largely dependent on the regular classroom teachers' ability and willingness to make adaptations to accommodate individual differences. In support of this argument, Smith (2000) noted that positive perceptions and feelings may encourage appropriate policies and supportive integration practices whereas negative attitudes tend to sustain low achievement expectations and unacceptable behavior in CwSN. So, the negative attitude among pre-service teachers, if not addressed during initial teacher education, may continue to hamper the efforts in direction of inclusive education in schools (Sharma, Moore & Sonawane, 2009 and Forlin et. al., 2009). Based on the review of research on pre-service teacher preparation, Carroll, Forlin & Jobling (2003) reported that initial teacher programs tend to overemphasis knowledge acquisition and pay limited attention to practical skills for teaching a diverse range of students including those with disabilities ergo the pre-service teachers lack confidence and have negative attitudes to inclusion.

In India, inclusive education has started after the agreement on UNESCO Salamanca statement in 1994. Though studies have been conducted on inclusive education, none of the studies have focused on measuring aptitude for teaching in inclusive education. Although some studies have tried to measure attitudes of in-service teachers (Jangira & Mukhopadhyay, 1991; and Parsuram, 2005) and school principals (Sharma & Desai, 2002) towards inclusion in India, but barring the study of Sharma, Moore & Sonawane (2009) on pre-service teachers, there is a dearth of literature in the area of pre-service teacher education.

RCI is conducting various courses of teacher training (B.Ed./M.Ed./D.Ed.) in different disabilities through its recognized institutions. It has recently implemented All India Online Aptitude Test [AIOAT] for admitting candidates at certificate and diploma level special education course. This AIOAT is meant only for the candidates who opt to become special education teachers. But the general TEIs neither conduct a pre-entry level test nor measure aptitude of the candidates before admitting them into the special B.Ed. course. Moreover, very little work has been done in the teacher aptitude test construction in India and there is a great dearth of a reliable and valid measure of teaching aptitude in India (Mangal, 2007). Though there are aptitude tests constructed and developed to measure general teaching aptitude, the investigator failed to come across evidence which focused on construction of a teaching aptitude test focused exclusively on inclusive education. So through the present study, an attempt has been made in this direction. As the pre-service teachers will carry the responsibility for the implementation of the inclusive education policy within the Indian education system, an understanding about their aptitude for inclusive education will be useful for the teacher educators, stakeholders and policy makers involved in the field of inclusive education. Thus it was thought worthwhile to explore the pre-service teachers' teaching aptitude towards inclusive education.