

## Inclusive Education-Teacher Competencies

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### **Abstract**

*Owing to lack of knowledge, educational access and technology, disabled children were initially treated as unwanted and segregated from other children. Later their education was carried out in special schools. In recent times there has been a shift towards having children with disabilities attend the same schools as non-disabled children. The educationists now feel that each child should be allowed to learn in his own way. The concept of inclusive education has been spelt out in the Salamanca statement and the framework for action on special needs education 1994. It states that all Governments have been urged to “adopt as a matter of law or policy, the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise”.*

*Teacher competency is the ability to plan, control and facilitate interaction in the classroom that is appropriate to the activity and which takes into account the different needs and abilities of learners. With more confident and skilled teachers the inclusive education programme will have a positive impact on the awareness of the community. This would increase the enrolment of disabled children in school in the light of education for all and more disabled or differently abled children would be working and contributing towards growth of the society.*

### **Introduction**

Inclusive education means full inclusion of children with diverse abilities (giftedness and disabilities) in all aspects of schooling that other children are able to access and enjoy. It involves ‘regular’ schools and classrooms genuinely adopting and changing to meet the needs of all children as celebrating and valuing differences (Loreman and Deppler et al, 2005). The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its 1997 amendments make it clear that

schools have a duty to educate children with disabilities in general education classrooms. National Policy on Education (1986) has focused on the need to equalize education for all children, so Government of India through various schemes like Sarva Siksha Abhayan and programmes has been making special efforts in assuring the enrollment of children and youth with disabilities in the regular school system. As per the PWD Act (Persons with Disabilities, 1995) equal opportunities, protection of rights and full participation was enacted and has been enforced from Feb 2, 1996. The law deal with both preventive and promotion aspects of rehabilitation, every child with disability will have access to free and concrete education till age of 18 years.

Integration and inclusion are two terms that are often used interchangeably by teachers and schools the simple distinction that can be made is that integration involves coming from outside. Integration programmes aim to involve children with diverse abilities into the existing classes and structures within a school. They endeavor to 'normalize', to help a child fit into a pre-existing model of schooling. Inclusion differs in that it assumes that all children are a part of the regular school system from the very beginning of school.

Inclusive education believes that every child has the right to educate in the regular school including the child with special needs. A child with special needs does not have to be segregated and enroll in special schools. His needs can be served in a natural setting in the regular school. Thus, the goal of every teacher in an inclusive classroom is to make learning meaningful for every learner in his/her class. According to universalization of Elementary Education and Equalization of Educational Opportunity to All, teacher has to notice the mild disabilities in the classroom and see to meet their needs in regular classroom within the school premises with the help of resource teacher.

Inclusive education is the implementation of the 'policy and process' that allows all children to participate in all programmes. 'Policy' means that disabled children should be accepted without any restrictions in all the educational programmes meant for other children. It denotes equality, and accepts every child with his own unique capabilities. This principle must be accepted by all the international, national and local programmes. The 'process' of inclusion denotes the ways in which the system makes itself welcoming to all. In terms of inclusion of disabled children, it means the shift in services from 'care of the disabled child' to

his 'education and personal development'. Inclusive education goes one step further by defining these children as 'children with special needs' who need special attention, rather than children who are 'impaired' or 'handicapped'. Inclusive education is nothing but 'making the programme for disabled children as an integral part of the general educational system rather than a system within general education'.

The government has to give the highest policy and budgetary priority to improve their education system to enable them to inclusive individual differences or difficulties. The government has to adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular reasons for doing otherwise. The training programme for the teacher has to inclusive the education of disabled children. All children have access to general education system, to expand the coverage to reach the unreached population.

UNESCO (1994) states that children learn together, whatever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning and ensuing quality curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnerships with their communities.

The term "inclusion" has had a number of meanings, often relating to disabled or disaffected children inclusion is seen to involve the identification and minimizing of barriers to learning and participation and the maximizing of resources to support learning and participation .(Booth and Ainscow 2002). Educational inclusion ... is about equal opportunities for all pupils... it pays particular attention to the provision for, and achievement of different groups of pupils"(Ofsted, 2001)

A more encompassing definition of education inclusive relating to learning is summed up in Bristol LA's equalities and educational inclusive policy and framework as:

The process by which all those who provide education - whether in schools , early years or lifelong learning settings develop their culture, polices and practices so as to inclusive institutions are ones in which the learning, achievement, attitude and well being of all learner matters. They are able to engender a sense of community and belonging, and also offer new opportunities to learners who may have experienced previous difficulties. This does not mean that

they treat all learners the same way. Rather, it involves taking account of learners varied life experiences and needs.

Ofsted recognizes that: “effective schools are educationally inclusive schools. This shows, not only in their performance, but also in their ethos and their willingness to offer new opportunities to pupils who may have experienced previous difficulties”.

“An educationally inclusive school is one in which the teaching and learning, achievements, attitudes and well- being of every young person matter”.

The above opinion is also arrived at by Booth and Ainscow (2002) for after observation in schools they concluded that inclusion is...“the process of increasing and reducing the participation of students in the culture, curriculum and communities of mainstreaming schools”. It has an emphasis on: school culture, effectiveness, transformational leadership, schools as “learning organization”, teacher learning -enquiry and reflection, collaborative planning, student involvement, celebrating success.

“Education refers to the developments in the individual all the perfection he is capable”-Kant. The 86<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the Constitution of India ensures right to education to every child in the past decade, education of children with disabilities has seen a paradigm shift from segregated education in separate schools to inclusive education in regular school along with non-disabled children. Inclusive education is based on the principle that school should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic and other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, those from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups.

#### **Meaning of inclusive education**

- Is an “unending set of processes” in which children and adults with disabilities have the opportunity to participate fully in all community activities offered to people who do not have disability.
- Educating children with disabilities in the schools they would attend if they did not have disabilities.
- Providing services and support that parents and children with disabilities need in order to be in normal settings.

- Supporting regular education teachers and administrators having children with disabilities follow the same schedule as other children.
- Encouraging friendship between children with disabilities and their classmates/peers without disabilities.

So inclusive education goes beyond physical presence of a child in the classroom situation; going through the same curriculum as the non-disabled, appearing at the same examination with them and acquiring the same certificate. According to NCF Review (2005) inclusive education means all learners young people with or without disabilities being able to learn together in ordinary pre-school provisions, community educational settings with appropriate network of support services.

“Teachers today more fully recognize the value of inclusion because they see its power as an effective instructional practice. We feel that two factors are critical to the effectiveness of the district’s inclusion efforts: effective collaboration among classroom teachers and the special education staff, and a weekly block of instructional planning time”. (Logan, Diaz, Piperno, Rankin, MacFarland and Bargamian. (December 1994/January 1995). Educational Leadership)

#### **The opinion of some teachers about the philosophy of inclusion**

“Inclusion involves all kinds of practices that are unlimitedly practices of good teaching. What good teachers do is to think thoughtfully about children and develop ways to reach all children”. “Ultimately good teaching is a relationship between two people; teachers get good results because they enter into that relationship. Inclusion is providing more options for children as ways to learn. It is structuring schools as community where all children can learn. But there is no scope for becoming an inclusive teacher or an inclusive school. It is not a mechanized format”.

Many teachers are having the opinion that inclusion is not benefited for both (normal and special) children. In view of that following points are discussed.

#### **Benefits of inclusion for children with disabilities**

- Children with disabilities demonstrate high levels of social interaction with non-disabled peers in inclusive setting when compared with segregated setting.

- Social competence and communication skills of children with diverse abilities are improved inclusive setting.
- Friendship more commonly develop between children with disabilities and those without disabilities in inclusive settings.
- Inclusion assists in the development of General Knowledge for children with disabilities.
- The main motto of inclusive education i.e. 'learn to live together' can be succeeded.

#### **Benefits of inclusion for children without disabilities**

- Children without disabilities or giftedness can benefit from improved instructional technologies in the classroom.
- They can be benefited from increased funds in the classroom. These funds can be used in a variety of ways to provide additional learning experiences that benefit all children such as guest speakers outside of the school.
- These children are benefit from higher classroom staff ratios like additional staff and specialist teachers or paraprofessionals.
- They involve in peer-tutoring situations this can benefit from improved self-esteem and mastery of academic content.
- They can have the opportunity to learn additional skills such as Braille or sign language.
- They can learn to value and respect children with diverse abilities in inclusive classrooms.

Inclusion is about school change to improve the educational system for all students. It means changes in the curriculum, changes in how teachers teach and how students learn as well as changes in how students with and without special needs interact with and relate to one another. In recent debate about inclusion, a premium is placed upon full participation by all respect for the right of others.

#### **Inclusive education**

- Takes a coherent approach
- Has a strategy for delivering equal opportunities and diversity policies
- Involves the whole institution
- Matches provision to student needs
- Incorporates regular reflection, review and refinement of strategies and methods that actively involve disabled students.

### Principles of inclusive education

- Every student has the inherent right to education on basis of equality of opportunity.
- No student is excluded from or discriminated within education on grounds of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, birth, poverty or other status .
- All students can learn and benefit from education.
- Schools adapt to the needs of students, rather than students adapting to the needs of the school.
- Individual differences between students use sources of richness and diversity.
- The practice of developing inclusive schools involves.
- Understanding inclusion as a continuous process, not a onetime event.
- Strengthening and sustaining the participation of all students, teachers, parents and community members in the work of the school.
- Providing an accessible curriculum, appropriate training program for teachers and for all students, the provision of fully accessible information, environments and support.
- Identifying and providing support for staff as well as students.

The following factors play a crucial role in determining the success of inclusive classroom.

- Family school partnership
- Collaboration between general and special education.
- Well- constructed individualized education programme plan.
- Team planning and communication.

Teachers can adopt a number of techniques to help build classroom communities.

- Games designed to build community
- Songs and books that teach community
- Openly dealing with individual differences
- Assigning classroom jobs that build community
- Teaching student to look for way to help each other

When curriculum design strategies are combined with differentiated instruction, individual students learning can be “personalized” to their current

abilities as their interests. Planning for differentiation involves thinking about different ways that any lesson or learning project may be changed to better meet student's needs. A teacher can differentiate content the student produced as evidence of learning. Teacher can consider aspects like students current abilities their interest and ways they learn best .when principles of differentiation are combined with meaningful curriculum design, classrooms become busy.

The teacher has a central role to play in this process of inclusion. The duty of the teacher is not only transforming the knowledge and help the students as philosopher and guide but he/she has to help as reformer in inclusive education. The teacher is sufficiently responsible for educational planning, instruction, evaluation, reporting and curriculum adaptation and so on. Teachers to thought in an inclusive classroom say the philosophy of inclusion hinges on helping students and teachers become better members of a community by creating new visions for communities and for schools. Inclusion is about membership and belonging to a community.

Any teacher dealing with diverse abilities in regular classrooms will feel that including these children can be a difficult and complex matter. Generally, teachers think inclusion demands high levels of teaching competence and organizational changes aimed at promoting affective learning that is so important for schools. Through the following discussed points a teacher can easily take up this task.

- **Developing positive attitude/relationship among all children:** The fundamental aim of education is to develop positive values and respect for other people. The duty of teacher is to guide/inculcate right attitude to have a healthy relationship between disabled and normal children. If the relationship is good between both the students then it is very easy to handle the inclusive classroom.
- **Collaboration with parents in the inclusive classroom:** Many researches proved that partnership between the home and the schools are particularly beneficial for children with diverse abilities and the notion that family involvement is important to the success of these children in regular schools. Parents' in-depth knowledge of their child's need an abilities can help schools and teachers to decide appropriate learning tasks, environments and teaching styles.



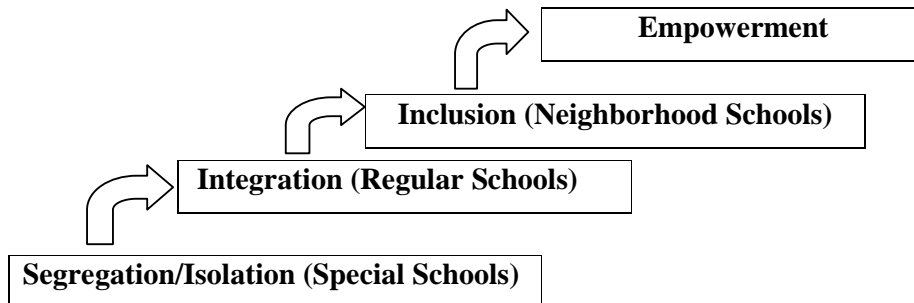
- **Collaboration with colleagues:** Colleagues include specialist teachers, psychologists and speech/language therapists. Working with these the teacher will get extra assistance, experience and ideas. Special education teachers can often offer practical advice and support when it comes to planning in terms of how to be more inclusive and if that special teacher also who teaches the same age group, same sub area then so much of benefit of co-planning in instruction. This collaboration can bring together expertise of two teachers in one classroom i.e. like team teaching.
- **Model classroom:** The classroom needs to be child friendly; children should feel enthusiastic about coming to school with colorful charts of explaining all abstract concepts and its look like a place to investigate to learn. School administrative have to provide the necessary facilities like ramps (for children with physical disability) and a hand rail (for children with visual impairment).
- **Teaching with the help of Information and communication technologies:** Teachers need to integrate ICT with effective teaching and learning strategies to expand opportunities for students in their subject/teaching areas with applications appropriate to the stages of learning. ICT provides a set of tools that help both the students with their school work also. Through engaging pupils in joint endeavor ICT can help to make the
- Classroom a more inclusive environment. During in-school experience teachers are required to deliver effective teaching and learning activities through the sources such as the Internet, CD-ROMs, DVD-ROMs to achieve their learning outcomes.
- **Collaborating with paraprofessionals:** Paraprofessionals help schools and teachers to gather data on disabled children and provide services to children with diverse abilities. They support the learning of children with diverse abilities when they are not in the classroom at all. Sometimes the most inclusive and effective use of paraprofessionals is in the preparation of materials for use in the classroom and some children require a significant amount of assistance in order to complete classroom tasks.
- **Through the training programs:** Through attending various programmes conducted by RCI and NCERT teachers can get basic knowledge of various disabilities, their diagnosis, management and rehabilitation. Through these

programmes they can improve the skills of managing classroom to meet the needs of special children. Through the training programmes to the teachers they can guide to be able to distinguish between sympathy and empathy.

#### **Inclusive education and teacher competencies**

Inclusive education is a worldwide movement aiming to create one education system that values all children to devise a classroom that welcomes all children irrespective of disability, community background, sexuality, ethnic background etc. The current conceptualization of Children with Special Needs has replaced the negative labels of the past which called disabled children as lame, crippled, less fortunate or mentally retarded. The modern concept consider such children as unique whose uniqueness may be noticed in one or the other dimensions-vision, hearing, communication, adaptive behavior etc. Researches are being conducted across the world so that inclusive education can be made more adequate and there by prove more useful.

Julka (2001) has traced the path of inclusion figuratively in the following way.



As the figure indicates the policy for the provision of facilities for children with special needs has progressed from segregation in special schools to inclusion in the neighborhood schools which aims at empowerment of all children.

Teacher competency is the ability to plan, control and facilitate interaction in the classroom that is appropriate to the activity and which takes into account the different needs and abilities of learners. It enables the teacher to manage the energy levels, ensure appropriate learners participation and create pairs and groups that have a positive impact on learning. It helps to motivate learners and ensures that different styles of learning are catered for and different needs are met.

What competences do general education teachers and special education teachers need to be competent inclusive teachers?

- Ability to solve problem, to be able to informally assess the skills a student needs rather than relying solely on standardized curriculum.
- Ability to take advantage of children's individual interests and use their internal motivation for developing needed skills.
- Ability to set high but alternative expectations that are suitable for the students; this means developing alternative assessments.
- Ability to make appropriate expectations for each student, regardless of the student's capabilities. If teachers can do this, it allows all students to be included in a class and school.
- Ability to determine how to modify assignments for students; how to design classroom activities with so many levels that all students have a part. This teaching skill can apply not just at the elementary or secondary level, but at the college level as well. It will mean more activity-based teaching rather than seat-based teaching.
- Ability to learn how to value all kinds of skills that students bring to class, not just the academic skills. In doing this, teachers will make it explicit that in their classrooms they value all skills, even if that is not a clear value of a whole school.
- Ability to provide daily success for all students. Teachers have to work to counteract the message all students get when certain students are continually taken out of class for special work.

Other competencies that will help general education teachers in an inclusive environment include.

- A realization that every child in the class is their responsibility. Teachers need to find out how to work with each child rather than assuming someone else will tell them how to educate a child.
- Knowing a variety of instructional strategies and how to use them effectively. This includes the ability to adapt materials and rewrite objectives for a child's needs.
- Working as a team with parents and special education teachers to learn what skills a child needs and to provide the best teaching approach.

- Viewing each child in the class as an opportunity to become a better teacher rather than a problem to be coped with.
- Flexibility and a high tolerance for ambiguity.

Teacher competencies for inclusive education (Azad, 2001)

- Discuss the concept of inclusive education.
- Know the rights of special needs children.
- Recall different sections related to education and rehabilitation children, of PWD Act 1995 as and when required.
- State the rationale for inclusion of different types of children in the school.
- Appreciate the attitudinal change required for inclusion in personnel at different levels.
- Assess individual needs of children and set appropriate, realistic and measurable goals while planning IEP.
- Evaluate each student's present level of functioning.
- Plan appropriate arrangements and adaptations of classroom physical environment.
- Know their roles and responsibilities in inclusive schools in the areas of accommodating and adjusting learning environment, co-ordination with colleagues and co-operative relationship with parents.
- Realize importance and role of parents and community and NGOs in education of children at different levels.
- Use and help others in using different methods of adopting teaching methods for successful inclusion.
- Adapt curriculum content suited to the needs of SEN children present in the class.
- Counsel special needs students while joining regular classroom and regular students for entry of a special needs child in their classroom.
- Seek out consultative relationship with support personnel.
- Design variety of alternative teaching strategies to compensate the deficient area of the SEN children.
- Procure relevant special educational material from special teacher/educator/support personnel.
- Collect useful information and record it to evaluate students progress.

- Use evaluation data to assess attainment of goals set in IEP and to set new goals.
- Assist special teacher and SEN children in special self contained class in their school in instruction and evaluation processes.
- Develop a feedback system that would furnish data on relevant issues related to special needs students, teachers, parents and other personnel.

Teachers must redefine their roles to enable rather disabled students. Teacher educators share responsibility for giving future teachers a lens through which to view every learner as ordinary and essential. As teachers are regarded highly as the key to change in education, their feelings of frustration and inadequacy are potential barriers to inclusive education. The teachers are not well equipped with the basic knowledge of various disabilities, their diagnosis, management and rehabilitation. They need programmes for their skills development to manage classroom to meet the needs of special children. The exposure should be given not only to teachers but also to the head of schools to various aids and appliances, equipments and infrastructure needed to cope with basic needs of special children.

It seems that the real key to inclusivity in this context is through pedagogical decision-making. In fact, advocates of inclusion do not tend to focus upon inclusive education as a product but as a process (Roberson, 1999; Booth and Ainscow, 2002) found very much on the democratic principles of mutual respect and collaboration (Jacobson, 2000; Marshall et al, 2002). Inclusive processes are becoming central to school effectiveness research and development. The National institutes, the District Rehabilitation Centers and other training institutions can also play a role in building capacity to facilitate inclusive education.

The regular educators should inculcate the following skills and competencies in them to prepare them for inclusive education.

- Teaching basic skills
- Class management
- Professional consultation and communication
- Referral
- Individualized teaching
- Interactional skills

- Orientation strategies for entry into mainstreaming
- Goal setting
- Adjusting curricula
- Goal setting
- Use of teaching strategies
- Promoting classroom climate
- Resources managing
- Evaluation and monitoring

#### **Inclusive curriculum and the teacher**

Inclusive curricula are based on a view of learning, as something, which takes place when students are actively involved in making sense of their experiences, which emphasizes the role of the teacher as a facilitator than the instructor. The curriculum should be flexible enough to respond to the needs of all students. It should therefore not be prescribed rigidly, but constructed flexibly enough to allow not only for school level adaptations and developments, but also for adaptations and modifications to meet the individual student's needs to suit each teacher's style of working. More inclusive curricula make considerable demand on the teachers, as they have to become involved in curriculum development at a local level and be skilled enough to adapt the curriculum at their classrooms. In addition they need to manage a complex range of classroom activities, be skilled enough in planning the participation of all the students and know how to support their student's learning without giving them predetermined answers. They also need to understand how to work outside traditional subject boundaries and in culturally sensitive ways. Curricula that are rigid and content-heavy are generally the cause for segregation and exclusion, making it obvious that the development of an inclusive curriculum is the most important factor in achieving inclusive education.

According to educational experts, in performing the various activities in the inclusive curricula, the teacher in the inclusive classroom needs to use a variety of organizational and graphic aids to help all students make better sense of the curriculum. Under the leadership of the special education teachers, the general teachers and educators teach students the strategies that help them to overcome the difficulties in processing and training the acquired information.

### **The inclusive classroom and the teacher**

It is learnt that in ancient India, inclusive education in the truest sense of the word, was practiced with no specialized schools or classrooms catering to the specific disabilities or learning disabilities. This was done when students found incapable of learning were provided with options to learn other occupations, which they could do easily so as to be employed. An inclusive classroom is one wherein the teacher nurtures a relationship between chronological age-mates of students with special needs and those without special needs. Several factors determine the success of the inclusive classroom such as:

- Collaboration between the general and special educators
- Well-constructed individualized education programme plans
- Team planning and communication
- Integrated service delivery
- Ongoing training and staff development

For the programmes of individualized education to succeed, the teacher needs to resort to a variety of techniques to help build up the inclusive classroom communities, like the following:

- Games designed to build community
- Involving students in solving problems
- Songs and books that teach community
- Openly dealing with individual differences
- Assigning classroom jobs that build community
- Teaching students to look for ways to help each other

Thus the inclusive classroom is a child-centered classroom, where students are engaged in problem solving activities, with various types of activities that would provide opportunities for the students of varied abilities. There could be a language center with learning goals, perhaps a media center with opportunity to listen to recorded stories or create a multimedia presentation on the computer. There could be a music center, with various types of musical instruments that students could practice upon depending on their talent and interest; there could be a math center with many manipulations. Whatever the activity, the goals pertaining to the same is made clear prior to the students engaging themselves in the activity.

During the performance of these activities, the teacher will remind students about the accepted noise level, learning goals, and what the completed tasks would be like. Throughout the activities, the teacher will focus on the specific centers of learning, taking into consideration the Multiple -intelligence, varied abilities and learning styles. Learning begins with the teacher giving instructions to whole class, and ends with discussions on the learning that has taken place.

According to Sue Watson, the following considerations are keys to the success of the inclusive classroom:

- a) Students need to be active-not passive learners.
- b) Children should be encouraged to make choices often as possible, a good teacher will allow students some time to flounder as some of the most powerful learning stems from taking risks and learning from mistakes.
- c) Parental involvement is crucial.
- d) Students with disabilities must be free to learn at their own pace and have accommodations and alternative assessment strategies in place to meet their unique needs.
- e) Students need to experience success, learning goals need to be specific, attainable and measurable, and have some challenge to them.

#### **Inclusive classroom practices and the teacher**

The Nevada partnership for inclusive practices list out the following classroom practices which are specifically recommended in the national reports:

- Less whole-class, teacher-directed instruction
- Less student passivity
- Less praising and rewarding of silence in the classroom
- Less classroom time devoted to fill-in-the-blank worksheets, dittos, wordbooks and other 'seatwork'
- Less student time spent reading text books and basal readers
- Less effort by teachers to thinly "cover" large amounts of material
- Less rote memorization of facts and details
- Less stress on competitions and grades
- Less use of pull-out special programmes
- Less use of and reliance of standardized tests
- More experimental, inductive, hands-on learning
- More active learning



- More enacting and modeling the principles of democracy in schools
- More choice for students
- More time devoted to reading full, original books
- More deep study of a smaller number of books
- More deep study of a smaller number of topics
- More emphasis on higher order thinking skills when learning key concept and principles of a subject
- More co- operative and collaborative activity.
- More varied and co-operative roles for teachers, parents, administrators and community members when teaching and evaluation of students' performances.

### Conclusion

The need for inclusive pedagogy has been established and operates on the belief that inclusive education is about acceptance, access and participation to be inclusive. We need to create a classroom environment that welcomes an opportunity for growth. Finally the success of inclusive education resets with the schools which should believe that inclusive is not just for students with disabilities but for all students, educators, parents, families and community members.

The teachers have to play a very crucial role in the implementation of the educational policies. This means that inclusion of children with disabilities in the main stream is possible only if the teachers are provided with skill training to address to the learning needs of special children in a regular class.

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