NUEPA

National Conference on Policy and Planning of Inclusive Education with focus on CWSN

Concept Paper

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What is Inclusive education? Include why and whom? Why were they excluded at first place? What is the advantage of inclusion? Are there any challenges in doing so? How to overcome these challenges? The national conference on Inclusive Education is being organized to brain storm these questions in the context of India.

Inclusive education means all children in the age group of 6-14 years in particular learn together about society which includes them. If they do not study about one section/aspect of the society, it would lead to partial learning. Partial learning for the society is like autoimmune disease for the body. That starts harming itself. Partial learning is preventable, curable and also controllable.

There is interconnectedness in all the elements of the universe starting with solar system to all other systems. Society and individual body are models of that large system. The whole cannot develop if one part of it is under- developed. In the context of social order it was found that if any one section of the society is underdeveloped it had ramifications for the development of the whole society.

History of social development tells us that the cultural heritage of India has been built by absorbing cultures of migrants ever since history could be documented. There have been migrants coming from Greece, Arab, Turkistan, Persia, Magnolia, and Europe since 2nd century B.C. In the recent century also, invaders such as Mughal, British, Portuguese, French and Dutch have ruled the country or have established settlements in the parts of the country. It led to fusion in art, culture, literature, customs and traditions. It is strength of India.

However a few groups out of a need or desire to preserve its unique culture and identity from assimilation have remained outside the integrated, social, economic and educational life of India. The group that has retained and maintained a traditional lifestyle and livelihood got segregated and legged behind in developmental path. It led to asymmetrical development.

Further asymmetrical development also created denial of opportunities to certain section of society on one pretext or other. Denial or absence of opportunities to participate in the mainstream activities of the country led these groups to stay at the margin of the society. These marginalized groups have been identified and categorized in terms of sex, caste, religion, region, ability and impairment etc by the policy makers.

The marginalization results in loss of empowerment. It is visible in terms of poverty, unemployment, psychological disorders, poor health, civil riots, and terrorism. No country wishes to have its population to be attributed with such traits. India is struggling with the issue and has devised certain strategies from the time of drafting of its constitution. As per the Constitution of India, all citizens enjoy equal rights. But in reality many sections of the population got left behind in availing educational opportunities, employment and quality of life at par with others. The Indian Government launched many schemes and programmes ever since it's First Five Year Plan to alleviate status of its left behind population. These isolated efforts did not yield results. The major loophole was in terms of **connectedness.**

This fundamental concept of connectedness was found weighing down educational, health, and economic development of the world, country, state, district or a group of people. It was also found that improvement in one area has a positive effect on the other. If poverty is reduced, education and health status is alleviated. Out of all the elements of development namely education, health, employment, peace, justice etc., 'education' is found to be most critical to the development of all other elements. Similarly, there are elements that are mutually reinforcing disadvantages. It was seen that deprivation in one area further leads to deprivation in other areas.

In the global context, a few policies namely Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of 2030, UN Convention on Human Rights, UN Convention on Child Right, UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disability, UN Convention on Skill development have made it mandatory to change a few policies and practices of the countries to align thyself with the International declarations. India is also a signatory to all these conventions.

In the light of Sustainable Development Goals, India has prepared its action plan with the help of Niti Aayog where action is mandated to many ministries and departments. It has included all the ministries for all the goals. The SDGs are uniquely positioned for inclusive growth. The goal 'four' under SDG includes inclusive education as a means for inclusive growth. It reads as "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all".

Ministry of Human Resource Development is responsible for achieving this goal with the help of its offices and also with the help of Ministry of Skill Development and entrepreneur,Tribal Affairs, Women and Child Development. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and Ministry of Culture. It has launched seven centrally sponsored schemes (CSS) to achieve the targets. These CSS are : Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, National Programme Nutritional Support to Primary Education (MDM), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), Support for Educational development including Teachers Training & Adult Education, Scheme for providing education to Madrasas, Minorities and Disabled, Rashtriya Uchhtar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), and Umbrella scheme for Education of Scheduled Tribe students.

There is political environment to follow certain policies and programmes for inclusion. However marginalized population in terms of size, nature, reason for marginalization is unique and challenging in India. It is not where one size can fit to all its population to overcome the inequalities. Therefore there is need to study its uniqueness, define its status in terms of marginalized population and areas, and define its action and road map for inclusion. There are a few concepts which need to be deliberated upon in general and in Indian context particularly to realize inclusive growth through inclusive education. It requires academic and research based understanding of the status as well as strategies.

In the global policies, Inclusion has been defined in observable and measureable terms. An inclusive society is a society that over-rides differences of race, gender, class, generation, and geography, and ensures inclusion, equality of opportunity as well as capability of all members of the society to determine an agreed set of social institutions that govern social interaction and Social Integration. (Helsinki, July 2008). Inclusion could be seen in the following outcomes for all: Inclusive policies and legislation; Access to clean and safe places for living, work and recreation; Access to information and communication; Access to public spaces; Access to resources; Access to basic services; Access to equal quality of education, health care, clean water and sanitation; Access to transportation; Transparent and accountable decision-making processes; Adequate income and employment opportunities; Affirmation of human rights Opportunity for personal development; Respect for diversity Freedom (of choice, religion, etc.); Participation in decision-making; Social protection; Solidarity.

The academic discourses and regulatory policies have defined inclusion. But there is need to support this vision with reliable data, experiences so as to build inclusive society. The data (DISE) on participation in education shows that there is steep decline in the number of Children with Special Needs whereas it has improved considerably for girls and other marginalized social categories.

It is also an established fact that Education is a powerful enabler that can transform society. With education, marginalized persons of all types including persons with or without disabilities can hope to realize their potentials and equip themselves with the knowledge and skills for a better future. Education empowers individuals and societies to reach a desirable level of all round development.

Education systems are also facing challenge in terms of philosophy, infrastructure and practices. So far, education system is based on the paradigm of homogeneity. It practices exclusion if not found confirming to the norm. Be it age, capability, gender or any other norm. This approach of conforming to existing norms is seen as barrier to form inclusive society. A school is only a smaller unit of the same large society where it is located. If it practices exclusion, society practices exclusion.

In an inclusive school all children are able to take part in the educational activities and develop a sense of belongingness and become better prepared for life in the community as children and adults. It provides better opportunities for learning. Children with varying backgrounds and

abilities are often better motivated when they learn in classes surrounded by heterogeneous children rather than homogeneous. The expectations of all the children are higher for themselves. Successful inclusion attempts to develop an individual's strengths leading to development. It allows children to work on individual goals while being with other students. It fosters a culture of respect and belonging. It also provides the opportunity to learn about and accept individual differences. It provides all children with opportunities to develop friendships with one another. Friendships provide role models and opportunities for growth. Therefore as a value, inclusive education reflects the expectation that all children are to be included, appreciated and accepted in the school as well as throughout their life.

Inclusive education calls for departure from many existing paradigms of education. It is enrollment vs participation, incentive vs right, assessment vs evaluation, it is capability vs curriculum, lesson plan vs Individualized Plan, blackboard vs Information Technology, Teacher vs Facilitator, detention vs no detention, teacher centric vs learner centric, information vs constructivism, text book vs learning material, and so many more.

Therefore the 'National Conference on Policy and Planning of Inclusive Education With Focus on CWSN' is being organized with the following objectives:

1. To define inclusion in the context of India and drawing examples from other countries.
2. To understand the value of inclusive society for the development of the Country.
3. To devise strategies to make it a doable concept.
4. To identify best practices and strategies in India and abroad to be fed into policy.

The conference would provide platform for exchange of ideas, share initiatives, and strengthen networks of the organizations working in this area. The conference is not restrictive on themes but encourages paper related to the title of the conference.

Venue of the conference: National University of Educational Planning and Administration, 17 B Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi- 16

Date of the conference: 9-10 th Nov. 2017

Important dates
Abstract submission   30th Aug. 2017
Acceptance of abstract   10 th Sept. 2017
Full paper submission   30th Sept. 2017

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