

# CONNECTING CLASSROOMS

## **Taking the Matter into Own Hands: How Schools Can Participate in the Inclusion Agenda**

Ankur Madan, Ph.D.

Azim Premji University, Bangalore,  
India





In my presentation.....

I will attempt to answer the following two questions:

- *Why* is it imperative for schools in India to take responsibility for preparing themselves to participate in the inclusion agenda?
- *What* can schools do to equip themselves in order to do so?



## Our commitment to Inclusion

- We have expressed our commitment to creating an inclusive society and providing equal opportunities for education of children with disabilities in the regular school system through legislation as well as policy
- RTE, 2009 has brought the issue to the forefront
- It is however quite clear that we have not been able to achieve the goals of IE



## At the School Level

- IE is effective when it is driven by a clear vision and leadership supportive of inclusion
- Teacher in the classroom plays the most important role in translating this vision into reality
- How well is the teacher prepared to do so?
- What are some barriers that can impede the process?
- What skill sets do teachers need? Where do they acquire these skills?



## A Vision in Place

- Policy documents like the NCF (2005) and NCFTE (2010) lay down the vision for teacher education in the country
- In policy, commitment to inclusion is emphasized and the need for teachers to develop these skills is recognized.



## National Curriculum For Teacher Education

“It is necessary that teachers who teach and manage the classroom are sensitized and made aware of the philosophy of inclusive education and oriented to the different kinds of adjustments that schools have to make in terms of infrastructure, curriculum, teaching methods and other school practices to relate teaching to the needs of all learners. The concern is to make teacher education *liberal, humanistic* and responsive to the demands of *inclusive education*” (NCTE, 2010).



## NCTE Two Year B.Ed. Programme, 2014

- Course structure prescribed by the NCTE shows:
  - One single course in the entire two year programme titled ‘Creating an Inclusive School’, is offered in the 4<sup>th</sup> semester
  - Course content largely addresses issues and barriers towards inclusion in school
  - Skills in working with children of diverse learning needs finds minimal mention
- Do our TE programmes really equip teachers to adopt IE practices?



## Effective Inclusive Education

*“The literature on inclusive education is unanimous about no matter how excellent the educational infrastructure might be, how well articulated educational policy might be, how well resourced a program might be, effective inclusion does not take place until regular classroom teachers deliver relevant and meaningful instruction to students with disabilities” (p.2; Das, Sharma & Singh, 2012).*



## What teachers think they lack.....

- Teachers acknowledge negative attitude towards inclusion as the biggest barrier
- Lack of skills/knowledge-curriculum adaptation, instructional and evaluation methods, cooperative learning techniques etc.
- Sociological and psychological understanding of disability
- Poor availability of teaching and learning material and equipment
- Classroom management skills
- Inability to cope with large class sizes, extra demands on their time



## Schools must take charge.....

***Since our TE programmes are grossly inadequate in addressing the demands of IE, schools need to take the matter into their own hands!***

***Participation in the Inclusion agenda is no longer a matter of choice for schools***

***They must work towards creating enabling environments within their relevant contexts to empower teachers, in terms of skills as well as building positive attitude towards educating children with disabilities in their regular classrooms.***



## Creating Enabling Environments

- Embrace inclusion as an ideology through sustained dialogue
- Adopt a whole school approach: work with all stakeholders
- Let teachers be convinced that ADAPTATION in curriculum and teaching are integral to classroom practice
  - All classrooms are heterogenous
  - Adaptations in curriculum and teaching benefit ALL children in the class and not just those with special needs (Armstrong, 2010)



## Teachers Need Competencies

- Knowledge about special needs
- Differentiated Instruction
- Collaboration
- Assessment and Evaluation
- Classroom Management
- Assistive Technology

***Schools can create opportunities for teachers to work together to develop these competencies such that they are both contextually and culturally relevant.***



## Differentiated Instruction

- *“Differentiated classrooms are responsive to students’ varying readiness levels, varying interest levels and varying learning profiles”* (Tomlinson & Kalbfleisc, 1998; p. 54).
- Creating different levels of expectation for task completion within a unit or lesson is the essence of differentiating instruction.
- All children, irrespective of learning ability benefit from availability of variety of methods and support; This is the key to success of an inclusion programme.



## Key Elements of Differentiated Instruction

- One lesson is taught with variations to meet individual students' needs
- Individually appropriate learning outcomes are planned for the same curricular activity
- Decreases the need for separate programme for each child
- Adaptations are done at the level of:
  - Content
  - Process
  - Product
  - Affect
  - Learning Environment



## Some Examples

- Present material in visual, kinesthetic, auditory modes
- Encourage Activity and experiential learning
- Vary the pace of student work; Learning styles
- Prepare tiered assignments; Highlight critical passages in a text
- Develop different rubrics to measure student performance
- Allow students to present product in different formats
- Use peer tutoring, cooperative learning to enhance learning experience
- Allow group work; multiple seating arrangements in class



## Differentiated Instruction

- While curriculum tells us *what* to teach, DI tells us *how* to
- Use of these strategies benefit all children in the classroom
- Can be applied across all curricular areas
- Varying degrees of scaffolding, presenting material at different levels of difficulty and using variety of material to present content can take care of learning needs of almost all the children.
- Specialized support for individual children can be sought from special educators

## In Conclusion.....

- Provides teachers with confidence and positive attitude towards having children with different abilities in their classrooms
- Important to provide sustained, continuous opportunities to learn rather than one shot, isolated workshops and seminars
- Institutionally driven, collaborative efforts to build capacity within the school improves school climate and relationships



**CONNECTING**  
CLASSROOMS



Thank you !