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## UNIT 6 MANAGING DIFFERENTLY ABLED AND SPECIAL CHILDREN

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### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

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Good management is an art, encompassing as it does so many different areas. Terminology from business has entered the field of educational management. Managing a school is very different from managing a commercial unit. The core values of education are very different from those in business and the shift in management strategies to a more value based, people centered, emotional approach takes us naturally in education to inclusion. Concern for the rights of children and young people has led to a commitment to the development of inclusive practices in order to meet diverse needs. It is because of these core values that are intrinsic to education that we can speak today of schools that are inclusive. The concept of *inclusive education* has emerged in responses to a growing consensus that all children have the right to a common education in their locality regardless of their background, attainment or disability (UNESCO, Dakar, 2000). In this context many terms are used in different countries.

#### *Some Concepts*

It would thus be necessary to clarify at the outset the context and meaning of certain terminologies. Within the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, terms like 'integration', 'mainstreaming', and 'partial mainstreaming' and 'inclusion' have entered the field of education. While these terms are understood differently in various countries, in the third world these terms, are all methods of educational transaction. Inclusion is being used here to define a system of educational transaction which provides to children with disability similar platforms as those that typical or normal children receive. The underlying premise of inclusion is that all children can learn and belong to the mainstream of school and community life. In integration special arrangements are made to accommodate exceptional children within a system that is largely unchanged. While in inclusiveness we restructure schools to respond to the needs of all children. It involves educating children with special educational needs in settings where they have the maximum association, consistent with their needs, with other children.

'Inclusion' is the upper end of the continuum, in which children with disabilities and special needs are in an educational setup, where there is no segregation at all. Where as 'integration' is at the lower end of the spectrum where there is near total segregation in the school. 'Disability' or 'disabled' and challenged are synonymous and are used to describe children who have some physical or, mental, emotional or financial impediments which requires special or different interventions in a classroom. 'Typical' or 'normal' is used to describe children who apparently do not exhibit any symptoms

that require special interventions in the classroom. Some of these terms are quite contested but for the purposes of this unit these terms have been used as explained earlier. In this unit, we will discuss the concept of inclusive education. The sociological, physiological and curricular approach, relating to inclusive education will also be explained.

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## 6.2 OBJECTIVES

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After studying this unit, you will be able to understand:

- the legislative and policy background relating to the concept of special and inclusive education;
- the sociological, psychological and curricular approaches underpinning concepts of special and inclusive education management practices that are reflective of philosophies;
- the rationale beyond pedagogy and assessment practices how good management is reflected in inclusive practices.

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## 6.3 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND

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It is important to understand that inclusion has a strong legal standing. It is against the law for a school to deny education to any child because of his/her disability. In spite of this, schools across the country, both private and government, continue to deny admission to challenged children because they feel that it will be difficult to manage children who do not fit into the set parameters. Their argument against inclusion practices based on pragmatic, socio-political, and empirical reasons.

First, a number of researches have questioned the willingness and capability of general education teachers to make necessary adaptations to accommodate greater student diversity, including the integration of all, or most, children with disabilities. Second, most classroom teachers lack time, training, or right attitude to work effectively with extremely low achieving students (Schumm & Baughn, 1991).

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, the World Declaration on Education for All, and the Jomtein Conference 1990 have successfully raised the slogan of Education for All. In view of this policy declaration, it is urged upon all governments to give highest policy and budgetary priority to improve their education systems to enable them to include all children regardless of individual differences or difficulties.

In inclusion we believe that **“regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all”** (Salamanca statement on principle policy and practice in Special Educational Needs. UNESCO 1994).

Legislation reflects public attitudes and the shared meanings of dominant groups. Legislation is formulated so that it influences and determines our actions and our ways of perceiving events. But in spite of having a lot of legislation that looks to provide equal opportunities to the challenged, this legislation has a major weakness and that is its lack of summary procedures. For example, Government of India encourages compliance but schools across the country are reluctant to comply with the law.

<p><b>Activity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <i>Examine the legislative policy on education for the disabled in your country. Does it comply with the international legislative policy?</i></li></ul> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
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## 6.4 DIVERSE TRANSACTIONAL STYLES

It would do well for all of us to ponder about what it says about ourselves if we do not want to find the right teaching methods for pupils who do not respond to the existing arrangements. Head teachers often are immensely satisfied with the way an institution is running when the academic results are good and the school is recognized as an achiever. They feel that schools are rational organizations offering an appropriate range of opportunities and those pupils who experience difficulties do so because of their own limitations or disadvantages. When faced with children who have challenges, head teachers feel that these challenged children need some special intervention. They feel that these children need to be moulded to fit into an established and accepted system and that institutions themselves do not need to change.

The popular assumption is that systematic replication of particular methods will generate successful learning, that the methods or systems being used have proved their worthiness and if it is not working then it is the atypical child that is the problem and not the system. Such observations and understandings serve to divert attention from important questions such as why even so called typical children do not do well in the 'normal setup'. Schools need to have diverse transactional styles of teaching in order to address different learning styles. This is more relevant in a time when the theory of multiple intelligences have been recognized and accepted by the educational community.

Culture has an immense impact and influence on educational transaction. (Indian culture presently regards education for the disabled based on the charity model) Inclusion will have no place in education until there is a shift from the charity model to the rights model. The social model of disability is an indicator of the way disability is viewed. It is viewed as an important dimension of inequality. Head teachers who refuse admission to children on the basis of financial, emotional or physical disability are reflecting deeply entrenched social biases. Schools are influenced by perceptions of social economic status, race, language and gender. These perceptions have a strong influence on classroom dynamics. The perceptions and biases of the management and head teacher then reflect in the way curriculum is transacted and the way in which assessment procedures are designed to fit all children. When students are exposed to years of such entrenched biases they are in turn conditioned to enact similar mind sets and interactions.

There is a deeply entrenched deficit orientation towards difference among educators. These are educators who subscribe to a belief system that regards certain pupils at best as disadvantaged and in need of fixing or at worse as deficit and beyond fixing. Pupils who experience difficulties in learning can and should be treated with respect and viewed as potentially active and capable learners. This approach not only helps the child who is coping with challenges but also those who are typical. Both learn tolerance and understanding, they learn to live in a society that is accepting of difference. Once educational institutions start to see all students as a whole rather than as individuals with certain disabilities they will be able to work towards an inclusive climate.

**Reflection**

- *What are your perceptions of education for the disabled and inclusive education?*

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## 6.5 CASE STUDY

In order to understand the management of inclusion it would be interesting to look into the case of when and how a school changed to inclusion. Komal Gupta a child with severe cerebral palsy had finished his class X from the Spastic Society of Northern India, Delhi. The Spastic Society said that their teachers were only qualified to teach up to class X and if Komal wished to continue his studies then he would have to find another place to do so. Komal's sister studied in a school close to the house so Komal's mother went knocking on the doors of the school. She convinced the management that the boy was bright and that he would not trouble anyone. All that required was that Komal be allowed to sit in his wheelchair in class. The school agreed. And therein lies the first lesson of good management.

### **Rule No. 1 : Open yourself to opportunities**

The school had no clear cut policy statement on inclusion. In fact at that point the school was not even very clear about the difference between integration and inclusion but the school had a definite vision about what education was, the vision was clear. Education was about making a difference. It was not about dividing people but about including and celebrating difference.

If the vision of the leader is to have a school that consistently gets high grades in the board exam then he/she may decide to have an admission test and only admit students who consistently score high marks. The head teacher then trains his/her teachers who in turn train their students to memorize and regurgitate the information they have gathered. On the other hand if the head teacher has a vision that the students in his/her school should be change makers. He/she works on that vision consistently to do that he/she would first ensure that his teachers are change makers. Thus the vision and drive of the leader is extremely important in the management of change. What is also important is that the leader is consistent in his/her pursuit of that vision.

### **Rule No. 2 : Leaders need to have a vision**

Once Komal joined the school the school toyed with the idea of a special educator but because of insufficient funds decided that it would be better for them to introduce all teachers who were dealing with Komal to cerebral palsy. They would need to be equipped to deal with any problems that may come up. It was also concluded that teachers have a ready repertoire of teaching styles and once they were exposed to the learning styles of Komal, it would be a simple matter for them to match a teaching style to the learning style. Thus began a planned empowerment of teachers program.

The school encouraged teachers to become reflective activists or thinkers confident enough to experiment with aspects of their practice. Through workshops and group discussions they were helped to overcome their deficit orientation to difference. Through the various interactions teachers realized that reflection alone is not sufficient it has to be supplemented with confrontation with other points of view and implementation of new ideas.

This they knew would benefit all children. "We believe that methodical and organized changes made in response to pupils experiencing difficulties are likely to benefit all children" (Ainscow 1995).

### **Rule No. 3 : Empower your teachers**

Once the teachers had been exposed to a variety of teaching and learning styles they were required to decide when to apply these styles. The teachers were given the freedom to change the curriculum so that it suited Komal's requirements. More radically they were even given the freedom to change assessment procedures, so that the methodology of testing was in sync with Komal's abilities and not counter indicative.

The teachers were also free to reduce the amount of units to be covered or raise the levels of a particular subject that Komal exhibited greater proficiency in. In short Komal had a flexi curriculum and assessment procedure.

**Rule No. 4 : Practice democracy**

The school had not been built for children like Komal. It was on three floors and had two large flights of steps. The boys' toilet was on the first floor while Komal's classes were on the ground floor. To go to the computer block Komal had to traverse a portion of the play grounds and also maneuver a short flight of steps. A change in infrastructure was definitely required. The school raised money for a lift and built small ramps wherever possible. In the boys' toilet a western style toilet (commode) was constructed to make things easier for Komal and railings were put close to the toilet to enable Komal to hold on in the event of his losing balance. A special table and chair were made to enable Komal to sit comfortably in the classroom. The school was also faced with the question whether the dominant autocratic model of management needed to be restructured to a more democratic one in order to support teachers in their efforts to help all children. It seemed that a motivational, problem solving approach of management would have to be taken.

**Rule No. 5 : Be prepared for change (in this case infrastructure)**

It was apparent that Komal could not fight this battle on his own. He would need help from every quarter. It was also apparent that if we wanted to help Komal. We would need to work on the problem in a concerted manner from all sides. In order to get the support from every quarter from Komal it was necessary that we involved his family i.e., his parents, his siblings, his neighbours, his teachers and his peer grouping the school.

Komal's father was the one who got Komal dressed for school in the morning. It can be a depressing experience for a father to bathe and toilet his sixteen year old son knowing that this would continue all his life. Komal would come sometimes to school with milk split on his shirt because his father could not take it anymore. Komal's father and mother needed help. They needed to talk and discuss their fears and anxieties. They needed a shoulder to lean on. The school supported and counseled Komal's parents and siblings so that their feelings of frustration and helplessness were reduced.

Komal's peer group was also counselled in order to help them empathize with his situation. Komal did not need anybody's sympathy. He needed people to help him empower himself. At the same time his peer needed to know and understand Komal's disability in order to help him better. Komal's teachers and neighbors were also counseled and advised on methods of tackling cerebral palsy in a manner that made the individual independent. The school got used to Komal crawling and accepted that was natural as far as Komal was concerned. The class four employees learned to stand back and allow Komal to fight some of his battles himself. Komal learned that he was able to do a lot of things that he thought he couldn't do. He learned to improvise.

**Rule No. 6 : Involve the community/parent. Encourage and facilitate the participation of parents and community.**

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## **6.6 SOME REFLECTIONS**

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It can be concluded that managing challenged children is not easy but is a definite opportunity for growth for the whole institution. The head that takes up inclusion gives him or her opportunity to display good leadership skills. Apart from this inclusive education is a human right, it is good education and it makes good social sense.

### Human rights

1. All children have the right to learn together. They must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning.
2. Children should not be devalued or discriminated against by being excluded or sent away because of their disability or learning difficulty.
3. Disabled adults describing themselves as special school survivors are demanding an end to segregation.
4. There are no legitimate reasons to separate children for their education. Children belong together- with advantages and benefits for everyone. They do not need to be protected from each other.

### Good education

5. Research shows children do better academically and socially in integrated settings.
6. There is no teaching or care in a segregated school which cannot take place in an ordinary school.
7. Given commitment and support, inclusive education is a more efficient use of educational resources.

### Good social sense

8. Segregation teaches children to be fearful ignorant and breeds prejudice.
9. All children need an education that will help them to develop relationships and prepare them for life in the mainstream.
10. Only inclusion has the potential to reduce fear and to build friendship, respect and understanding.

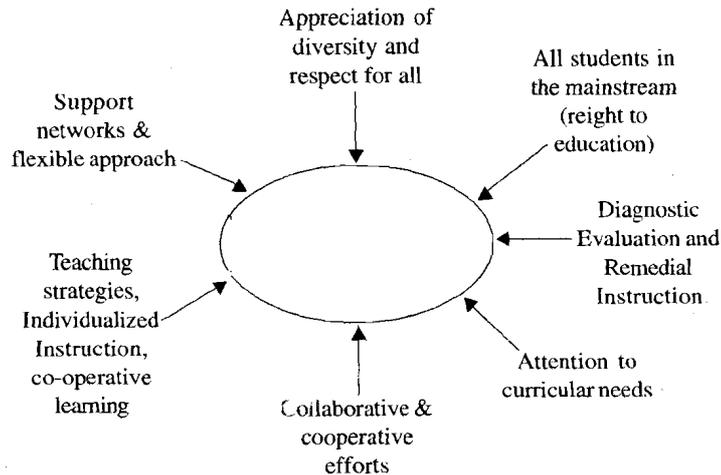
The characteristics of inclusion reflect good, value based, people centered management paradigms, for instance:

Inclusive schools will

- be in a well balanced state of change and development.
- support staff in innovation, experimentation, risk taking, problem solving;
- adopt collaborative working practices such as:
  - joint planning
  - teaching partnerships
  - peer coaching and critical friendships.

While having classrooms that cater to a mixed heterogeneous group of pupils, the head of an inclusive school will promote cooperation, collaboration and group work among pupils, while ensuring that active learning and meaningful participation is happening for all. The head will encourage inclusive teaching which will make effective use of the classroom's natural resources- including pupils themselves, so that pupils contribute to one another's learning and where learning is seen as a social process. Inclusive teaching will also ensure that teachers are responsive to the feedback offered by pupils and that plans and activities are modified as they take place.

The significant features of *Inclusive Education* are schematically presented in the following figure:



Leaders who opt for inclusion give themselves the opportunity to practice sound management practices. They bring to their management the modern core elements of democracy, spirituality and relationships. They are visionary change makers who leave behind a legacy of values within sound managerial practices.

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## 6.7 LET US SUM UP

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Children from all walks of life come to a school. They show individual differences and possess different abilities. Schools usually cater to the interests of the larger group. The curriculum and infrastructure are usually geared to serve and accommodate the common interests and abilities. Therefore, often, a differently abled child is considered disabled and misfit by the stakeholders of common interests rather than viewing disabled as differently abled. In this unit, we have discussed a cerebral palsy case lone of the Delhi schools in India with a focus on counting the ways to “why and how inclusion” rather than exclusion.

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