

NURTURING THE INCLUSIVE SCHOOL CULTURE AT FOUNDATIONAL LEVEL: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education values the broad spectrum of learners' diversity and uniqueness to the contribution of each students bring to the classroom from grassroots level. National education policy 2020 aims to make school education more inclusive and accessible for students with special needs and provide special education and support for the students with learning difficulties. The objectives of the present study to reveal (i) Attitude of school teachers towards students with special needs and inclusive school culture (ii) role of school management and Principal for nurturing the inclusive culture (iii) symbiosis of teachers, parents and community in catalyzing inclusive culture in school. The study is conducted in independent school in Narsingarh. Data collected by using interview, observation and document analysis. The purposive and snowball sampling technique is used to draw the sample. The sample includes teachers, special educators, school counselor, parents of child with special needs and community members. The findings of the study reveals that teachers have positive mental attitude towards students with special needs and inclusive culture. The school management and principal provides supports and adequate resources for inclusive culture. The community members are actively involved in nurturing inclusive culture in school.

Keywords: Inclusive Culture, Teachers, Attitude, Children with Special Needs, School and National Education Policy 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

"Inclusion requires the teacher to believe that all students has something important to offer in the classroom and that we really believe are better off learning together" Beth Foraker.

Education is the drive for achieving the social justice and equality. Inclusive and equitable education is essential to achieve an inclusive equitable society. Every individual must get opportunities to dream, thrive and become productive citizen of society. The New Education policy -2020 focus on equitable and inclusive education. The equitable school education system, where students with special needs and unequal socio economical background are identified and recourses are distributed

equally to address the challenges. Inclusive education is an approach towards education for children with special needs and learning difficulties with normal school.

Inclusive education received the special attention in National Education Policy -2020. Every child has fundamental rights for quality education. Inclusive education bring students together having realistic obstacles in the comprehensive education system. Inclusive education is win- win situation for teachers, students, parents and community members. Inclusive school culture, policies and practices are key elements for inclusive education in school. The strong values and believes are the essential factors for successful implementation of inclusive culture.

The school principal is center to facilitating change and teachers to adopt new attitudes and new practices. The role of the school principal is crucial in successful inclusive school. The school principal's active participation is the single most important maker of successful in implementing change and for improving the services. The school principal is catalyst for successful implementation of inclusive culture and positive school culture. The key role of the school principal in nurturing inclusive culture are (i) making shared vision and commitment (ii) capacity building of the school teachers for shouldering responsibility of students with special needs and re-design the school (iii) all members of the school to shoulder the responsibility of school culture.

The successful school principal is most supported by good co-operation between parents and school. The positive interaction among the students, teachers, parents and members of the society are the core values of the school culture empowerment. To implement successfully, symbiosis must established between school and society. Building trust and positive school culture promotes the sense of belongings among the stakeholders .The strong school leadership, committed teachers, inviting school culture, collaboration and communication are driving force that symbioses between the school and the community. The positive school culture promotes students learning, lead to continues improvement and healthy relationship between stakeholders.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives are designed to guide the study

- 1) Attitude of school teachers towards students with special needs and inclusive school culture
- 2) Role of school management and principal for nurturing the inclusive culture
- 3) Symbiosis of teachers, parents and community in catalyzing inclusive culture in school.

3. METHODS

Research design: Qualitative research as a case study was employed to the present study.

Study area: The study is conducted in Gyanodaya Vidya Mandir. The school is situated at Narsingarh, Damoh District, MP in Central India. The study area is located between 23° 59' North latitude and 79° 23' East longitude. Narsingarh is a very small village between the banks of two rivers- Kopra and Sonar. It is nearly 20 kms. away from Damoh, on the Damoh- Chhatarpur State Highway No.37. It is connected throughout bituminous road.

Sample: Study used purposive and snowball sampling methods to draw the sample. It includes school teachers, special educators, school counsellor, principal, parents of students with special needs and community members.

Tools: Observation, interview and document analysis are used to collect the data,

Data analysis: Interactive model (Miles and Huberman) is used for analysing the data. It includes reduction of data, data display, verification and drawing conclusion based on findings.

Findings: Based on the observation, interview and document analysis, the followings are research findings

Figure 1

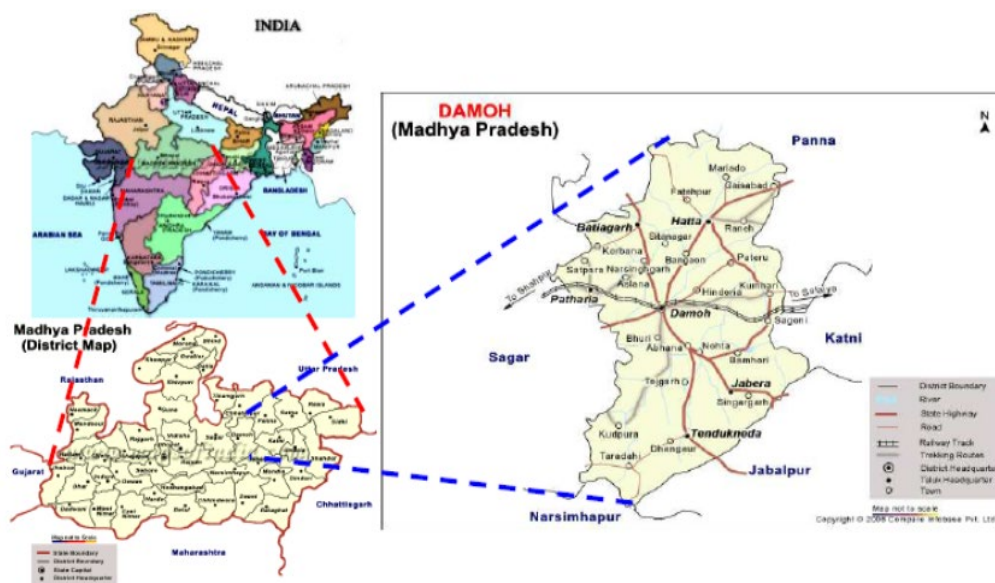


Figure 1 Study Area

1) School teachers attitude towards students with special needs

Not only in social interactions but also in classroom instructions teachers shows positive attitude towards students with special needs. Teachers are inclined to enroll the students with special needs. Teachers have clear understanding about the school policy on inclusive education and Right to Education Act -2009. The school record shows that there are 15 students with special need, who are enrolled in the school. It shows that school teachers and principal are aware and are ready to accept the students with special needs. The students are also sensitized to accept, empathize and make friendship with students with special needs. The teachers motivate students to have social harmony and cohesion. School counselor, special educators and teachers ensure behavioral and emotional balance of the students with special needs. Teachers play an important role in maintaining healthy relationship in the classroom. The school organized continuous capacity building programme and equip the teachers with essential competence and provide effective instructions to students with special needs. The School ensure regular in-service training of teachers in inclusive education at the elementary and secondary level. The school has full time special educator and counsellor. Teachers paid full attention to the students with special needs and also ensure their active participation in

teaching learning process. The school teacher and special educator effectively handle the teaching –learning process of the students with special needs. The collaboration and synchronisation is observed during the class room instructions between school counsellor, special educators and school teacher during the regular class. Teachers focus on the students and special educator on the students with special needs at foundational level. There was good communication, coordination with all stakeholders.

Figure 2



Figure 2 Inclusive Culture Model Adopted

Figure 3

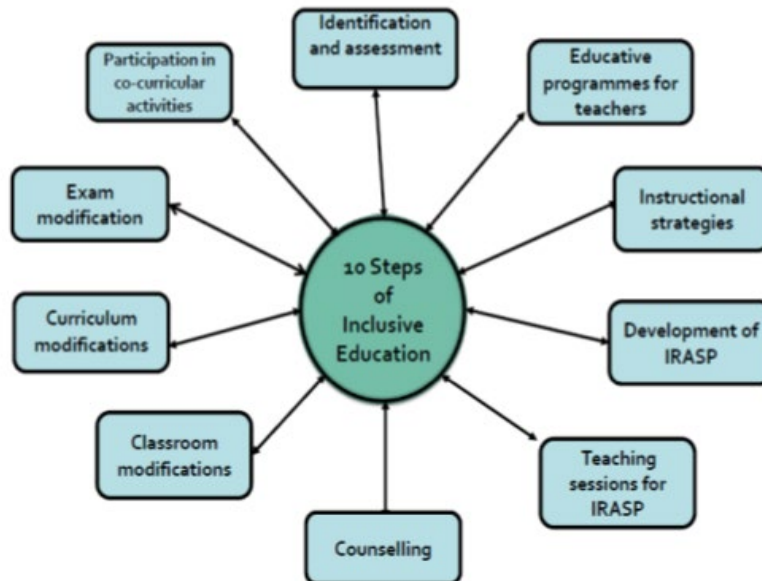


Figure 3 Steps for Inclusive Culture Model

Figure 4

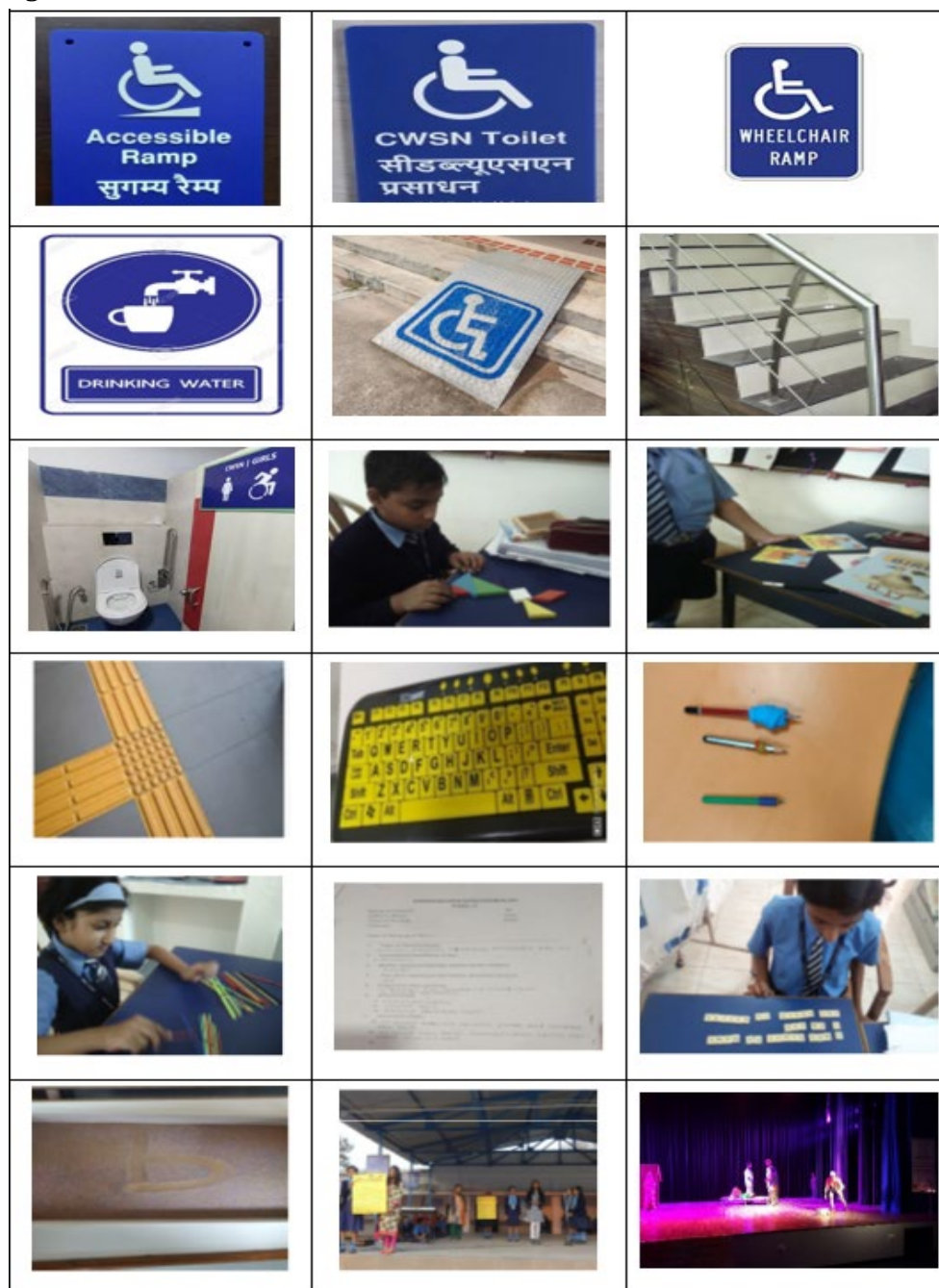


Figure 4 Inclusive Culture Practices

2) Principal as catalyst for creating inclusive school culture for inclusive education

The school principal is the catalyst for the creating inclusive culture in the school. Principal with other member's drafted the inclusive education policy for the school and ensured that 3% reservation of the students with special needs are admitted. The school is disabled friendly including libraries, laboratories and buildings that have barrier free access for the disabled. Principal ensured the availability of Study material for the students with special needs and Talking Text

Books, Reading Machines and computers with speech software. School has adequate number of sign language interpreters, transcription services and a loop induction system will be introduced for the hearing impaired students. School policy continues improvements. Principal provides supports to the socialisation of inclusive education, community participation and capacity building through in-service training. Develop informal assessment through various types of activities to measure various skills and abilities such as reading perception, auditory perception, attention span, eye-hand coordination, reading comprehension etc. Monitoring and mentoring therapy section by the special educators and counsellor (Individualized Reasonable Accommodation and Support). Ensure the skill training for the students with special needs.

3) Symbiosis

The school established symbiosis among the parents, teachers, students and members of the community. The school focuses more on socialization and communication. There are total fifteen students studying in school with cerebral palsy, Autism spectrum disorder, *Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder*, blood disorder - sickle cell anaemia, Hard of hearing and physically challenged. Among them fourteen are boys. Most of the students who are enrolled come from the families with economic, social and educational challenges background. There are mainly two types of parents such as cooperative parents and non-cooperative parents. Role of parents is very pro-vital in achieving goals of inclusive education and achieving student's specific learning outcome. School provides free education under RTE act, free books, free uniform and free transportation facilities under the CSR. The school inclusive culture provide effective solution to the society and family having children with special needs to enrol them in the school. As there are limited special school and mostly far away, the role of community is important in the promotion of inclusive education and promotion of acceptance in the society is necessary. To enhance the social acceptance to students with special needs school establish collaboration with other institutions to foster the skills and knowledge of students, parents and teacher. The community was found to be supportive and understanding the role of school in inclusive education.

4. DISCUSSION

The positive attitude of school teacher and staff towards students with special needs illustrate that school has inclusive culture. The findings of the study shows that teachers had positive attitude, knowledge and competence of the inclusive practices. This was evident in the adequate use of the instructions adaptation to individual's needs.

The school principal and teachers motivate the students to be empathetic with students with special need. The school culture, practices developed culture, confidence and self -esteem among the students with special needs. The findings of the study reveals that the school that has better culture, positive behaviours of teachers, positive attitude, positive perception and strong community participation are indicator of inclusive culture.

The positive teacher attitude during regular teaching practices is apparently observed. School offer continuous professional development through capacity building programme building competence of the school teacher in terms of special education and effective monitoring - mentoring of the students special needs. The presence of students with special needs in the class-room illustrate school has

inclusive education. This finding of our results are in line with [Cassady \(2011\)](#). The positive attitude of the school counsellor, special educators and principal play significant role in school culture in nurturing inclusive culture. There is positive correlation between continuous professional development and employment statuses of teachers on nurturing positive mental attitude towards inclusive school culture. This finding of our study is in line with [Alhassan \(2014\)](#). The experience teachers has sound collaboration with special educators. The school teacher has competence to manage the diverse students with special needs. School provide adequate teaching-learning material and good eco-system, Teachers, special educators, counselor are committed to inclusive culture.

The school management and principal is the driving force behind the inclusive culture. It is achieved through effective leadership, direct involvement and building strong team. School principal build committed team and shared vision, responsibility. Hence principal is the key element for successful implementation of inclusive culture. School principal are prospective leaders required knowledge, skills and disposition to equip with and work with stake holder.

The symbiosis among the teachers, parents and community. According to Epstein overlapping sphere of the influencing model and such overlapping has balls. The ball reveals that school, teachers and parents has share to influence in students education. The overlapping of the sphere illustrate that entrust and impact of stakeholders on students education in independently. The school and community symbiosis plays a significant role in success of school, providing support and adequate resources to meet requirement of students and family.

The socio-economic conditions of the parents if students with special needs significantly affect the level of thinking and pattern of life. Students with special needs are mostly from the family has week economic condition, low education and has social challenges. The barrier to learning not always rooted with leaners. It is also affected by pedagogy, socio-economic condition, poverty and non-flexible curriculum.

5. CONCLUSION

The school teacher has positive mental attitude for the inclusive culture. Teacher has acceptance to students with special needs in school system. The school policy, continuous professional development through capacity building, stability of teacher's jobs, school welfare scheme and ability to collaborate with team members has significant influence in inclusive teaching -learning practices and handling students with special needs.

The school management has significant role in creation of the inclusive culture. The support of the school leader and capabilities to embrace all stakeholder is the key to sustainability of inclusive education in school. School principal is driving force for germination of inclusive culture. Effective leadership make the school friendly with students with special needs.

The school and community symbiosis in inclusive education in school. It provides support, positive ecosystem, resources. It provides needs of students. To overcome socio-economic challenges school provide free education, free uniform free transportation, and free books to students of special needs.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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