

A STUDY OF MAJOR BARRIERS FOR INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Dr.Hena Siddiqui

Associate Professor & Head, Department of Education, Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow, U.P

Introduction

Inclusive education is still regarded as at an early stage of conceptualization and implementation in most of the countries. So long as the tussle to realize compulsory education for majority of children takes precedence over meeting the needs of those with disabilities, change for children with disabilities will continue to be erratic and painfully slow (Ainscow et al., 1995 cited in Yadav). It is now broadly recognized that to achieve the goal of universal education in India and in order to fulfil provisions laid out in the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, the education of children having disabilities cannot be set as the back burner. There could be many barriers for teaching children with disabilities in regular classrooms but the non-eliminating barriers and taking along all children in school regardless of their physical and mental abilities, or socio-economic status, and securing their participation in learning activities leads to the initiation of the process of inclusive education (Jha, 2002). Once the walls within schools are broken, schools move out of their boundaries, end isolation and reach out to the communities, the distance between formal schools, non-formal schools, special schools and open schools will be eliminated.

Need of the study

Inclusion is a process by which schools, local education authorities and others develop cultures, policies and practices to include pupils. With the right training, strategies and support nearly all children with special educational needs can be successfully included in mainstream education.

Internationally there have been efforts to include children with disabilities in the educational mainstream. In order to achieve inclusive education, we need to essentially think about and include children with special needs into regular schools because these children face certain kind of barriers to learning and participation in the classroom. As traditional education classrooms include more and more diverse learners, teachers understand the value of accepting each student as unique and exceptional. In actual inclusive programs, teachers adapt to activities and programme to include all students, even though their personal goals may be different. A number of studies have proven that inclusive education is a better way to help all students succeed. Researches confirm that most students learn and perform better when they study in general education curriculum.

Through participation and inclusion, the needs and concerns of persons with disabilities become clearer to professionals and to the general public. Furthermore, persons with disabilities will have the opportunity to raise issues and hold decision-makers accountable. Also, through participation and inclusion, persons with disabilities will become more visible, and persons without disabilities will have the opportunity to learn and change negative attitudes which continue to be the real barriers to full participation and membership in their communities.

Putting inclusive values into action.

- Viewing every life and every death as of equal worth.
- Supporting everyone to feel that they belong.
- Increasing participation for children and adults in learning and teaching activities,

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UNCRD (2006) on Persons With Disabilities -

Given the changing views of persons with disabilities from regarding them as objects to viewing them as subjects with both rights and responsibilities, rehabilitation will likely adopt a new vision like supporting empowerment of people with disabilities while at the same time re-educating the public. In turn, many attitudinal barriers as well as physical and program related barriers would diminish. This change is reflected in Article 26 of the UNCRD. Article 26, focusing on rehabilitation offer certain international obligations where it observes that States Parties shall take effective and appropriate measures, including through peer support, to enable individuals with disabilities to achieve and uphold maximum independence, full physical, mental, social and vocational ability, and full inclusion and participation in all aspects of life. It further stated that States Parties shall organize, consolidate, strengthen and encompass comprehensive rehabilitation services and programmes, chiefly in the areas of health, employment, education and social

services, in such a way that these services and programmes commence at the earliest possible time, and are based on the multidisciplinary assessment of individual needs and strengths; Support participation and inclusion in the community and all aspects of society.(UNCRD 2010).

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Barriers to Inclusive Education

❖ Special Educational Needs' As 'Barriers' to Inclusion

Mittler (2000) sees the identification and documentation of children with special educational needs as labelling and discriminatory. Ainscow observes the very idea of 'special educational needs' as 'barriers' to inclusion. He is of the opinion that the concept of special educational needs, mainly as it is perceived in this country, turns out to be another barrier and it does not have a productive contribution to make towards inclusive education agenda. The categorization itself is one of the barriers to moving forward (Clough and Corbett, 2000).Jha (2002)has further mentioned that the Salamanca Framework of Action did refer to a change from the term 'special educational needs' to inclusive education.

❖ Attitudinal Barriers

When looking at attitudes as barriers to inclusion of persons with disabilities, two questions arise: First what is a 'barrier', and, secondly, when does an attitude become a barrier? A barrier is anything that blocks equitable access to goods, services, or information of a person or group of people. Barriers can be physical or program related. Both these barriers are not owing to the characteristics of the individual or group of individuals but rather to the attitudes held by others towards that individual or group. Negative attitudes often result in denying basic human and civil rights afforded to other members of the community.

Negative attitudes, like any cultural artefact, are social constructs. As such these negative (or positive) attitudes can culturally create a persistent image of an individual and group often resulting in stigma. Stigma in turn can become a doubled edged barrier. On one hand, a society can create barriers to education, employment, independent living, access to goods and services, and even rehabilitation. On the other hand, when stigma is internalized by the person or group in question, they are at risk of accepting a lower status in society. A vicious cycle emerges when members of society view the person negatively and the person behaves according to societal expectations which in turn strengthen the stigma. This malicious cycle becomes a subtle but dominant barrier.

When society sees disability as abnormality, people with disabilities are repeatedly seen as deviant and damaging for society. The emotions involved to these adverse images can be one of abhorrence, disgust, isolation, hostility or fear. The behaviour associated with this view of disability can lead to segregation and denial of basic civil and human rights creating a major barrier to rehabilitation and access to goods and services in the community.

Similarly, when people interpret disability as imperfection and defective, the emotions attached to this image can be of pity, compassion and mercy. Behaviours generating from view and its resultant emotions may lead to the development of asylums and "homes" where compassionate care is provided. Like the view of disability as deviance, this view can also result in the denial of basic civil and human rights, once again creating a major barrier to rehabilitation and access to participation in the community. In contrast, when the view of disability is based on disease and illness, emotions attached to this model can be similar to emotions attached to a deadly disease. There may be a combination of fear, pity, and hope - hope for a cure. Here we have the origins of the medical model of disability. Professionals try to cure the person with a disability. When functionally limited, the practice of trying to 'fix' the person, normalize their behaviour, or remediate the disorder to become more normalized might strengthen their categorization into a different group, mostly an inferior one. Negative attitudes towards people with disabilities can result in barriers to rehabilitation. They can also have devastating effects on the development of the person affected.

➤ Attitudes are Multidimensional

Attitudinal barriers influence our understanding of disability and therefore shape how we "manage" individuals with disabilities. Attitudes are habits of thought that are consistent over time, are complex and multi-dimensional. Attitudinal barriers refer to the fears and assumptions that prevent people with and without disabilities from a meaningful interaction with one another. Attitudes comprise of three interrelated dimensions of personality-

- i) Cognitive,
- ii) Emotional and
- iii) Behavioural.

These dimensions are a complex interplay of a number of factors and issues. Considering cognitive *dimension*, attitude is a view or understanding that a person has towards a certain state of existence of an object, an idea of another person or of other people. In this dimension, attitudes can be overt and explicit or they can be hidden and implicit. Furthermore, a person can hold an implicit attitude that he knows or assumes is not socially acceptable and for this reason, he may express overtly a completely opposite attitude. The person can be mindful of this incongruence or he can even be generally unaware of it.

The *emotional dimension* of attitudes is similarly complex. Attitudes are often laden with an emotional response. They can be positive like gladness, contentment, pleasure, wanting to experience an event, is near the person, or get hold of the object being mentioned. Attitudes can be negative also for example, when a person feels he has an aversion towards a situation or event, object, or another person. In this condition the person will most likely feel unhappy, fearful, disgusted, repulsed, sad, etc. These two dimensions of cognition and emotion may not be congruent all the time.

The third dimension of attitude is *behavioural*. Here, too, human responses are complex and multifaceted. Similar to the relationship between cognitive and emotional components of attitudes, there is not always congruence between our attitudes and our behaviour e.g. an individual can have a positive attitude towards persons with disabilities and is likely to hire (behaviour) a qualified job applicant (cognitive) with a disability. In this case there is congruence among emotion, cognition, and behaviour. However, there can also be incongruence between expressed attitudes and actual behaviour e.g. an employer can express a positive attitude towards the employment of qualified persons with a disability, yet at the same time the employer has a long history of not hiring any job applicants with a disability regardless of their qualifications. The reason for this apparent incongruence between behaviour (hiring a qualified person with a disability) and the expression of positive attitudes is that this employer may actually have deep-seated negative attitudes which the employer is either unaware of or is aware of but not willing to admit. In this situation, the implicit negative attitude is the real barrier to employment rather than the objective characteristics of the potential applicant with a disability.

Incongruence between cognition, emotion and behaviour can be the outcome of cultural norms. For example, school teachers can express positive attitudes, in general, towards educational inclusion but follow the practice of placing students with disabilities into segregated special education settings, justifying their behaviour by bringing forth a medical perspective. The medical view of disability is contrary to an inclusive model where the underlying principle is that any person with a disability is first and foremost a human being, albeit with a disability, which is a state of existence to be supported and accommodated rather than an illness to be cured. In such cases the incongruence between cognition, emotion and behaviour is not felt by the individual as problematic since their behaviour fits within societal norms.

➤ Some Attitudinal Barriers

- Culture and Attitudes

Culture can be understood as the assimilated configuration of human knowledge, beliefs, and behaviour. It is the established set of collective attitudes, values, goals, standard and practices that symbolizes an institution, organization or group. Looking at culture in a holistic way we can see why attitudes are closely linked to social norms and structures, to the artefacts, and to the technical aids of a society.

Attitudes influence how a society prioritizes the distribution of its finite resources. If we view people with disabilities as sick or diseased, the investment in assistive technology for independent or architectural accessibility in the community is limited. Rather we are more likely to invest in building a segregated educational institutions, rehabilitation centres or asylums. If, on the other hand, we view people with disabilities as equal members of our society, not only will we remove physical, programmatic, communication, and social barriers, we will also build new technologies, structures, and programs that are responsive to the diversity of valued members of a society, including those with disabilities.

- Social exclusion and Discrimination

Disabled persons are often publically detested by non-disabled people in the less developed societies may be due to their attitudes of fear, ignorance, lack of awareness and traditional prejudices. Regarding disabled children some areas still have an established view that educating the disabled is pointless and futile. Many are marginalized by dimensions such as poverty, gender and caste. While many educational programmes have tried to stretch out to these formerly excluded children, those with disabilities are frequently forgotten, thus highlighting their obscure status in a severely categorised society. This social segregation and negative approaches result in social discrimination and thereby lead to isolation, which produces barriers to inclusion. These barriers are caused by society,

which is more serious than any particular medical impairment. Another social discrimination is the environmental exclusion which takes place when public services, buildings, and transport services are designed with total disregard to the access needs for persons with disabilities in mind.

- Peer Pressure

Recognition and acceptance by peers offers a much bigger challenge for children with disabilities. The peers in school, being the closest on similarity, play significant role in the lives of the children with disabilities. There is over-all support for the hypothesis that children who are not acknowledged and accepted by peers are generally at risk for complications later in life (Ochoa & Olivarcz Jr., 1995). McDougall et al. (2004) have found in their study that negative peer attitude as being the principal barrier to complete social inclusion at school for students with disabilities. Children having disabilities are ever so often an easy target for being harassed, teased and bullied by their non-disabled peers. Recent research findings suggest that vulnerability to bullying cuts across all types of disability (Nabuzoka and Smith 1993; Dawkins 1996; Mishra 2003; Smith and Tippett 2006 cited in Dutta and Banerjee, Attitude of regular teachers).

- Teacher's Attitude And Concern

The attitude of regular teachers is another strong barrier which the children face. A number of studies by means of both quantitative and qualitative data have studied teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about students with disabilities and inclusion. Several studies have concluded that attitudes and concerns of teachers affect their recognition and commitment to realizing inclusion (Agbenyega, 2007; Wall, 2002; Opdal & Wormnaes, 2001; Balboni and Pedrabissi, 2000; Chiang, 1999; Cornoldi et al., 1998; Brantlinger, 1996; Minke et al., 1996; Villa et al., 1996; Fulk & Hirth, 1994; Giangreco et al., 1993; Gerber, 1992 referred to in Das and Kattumuri).

There are mainly two general attitudes found to be challenges for children with disabilities in inclusive schools – Firstly, regular teachers consider children with disabilities as the concern and responsibility of the resource teachers. Secondly, they feel children with disabilities to be a 'disturbance' to the class and as causing distractions which result in late course completion (Das & Kattumuri, 2013). Consequently, they decide to ignore their existence and focus on finishing their lesson plans.

- ❖ Schools as Barriers

Children with disabilities who get admission in inclusive schools are confronted with number of difficulties and challenges. Some of them are:-

- Admission

All the schools in neighborhood locality do not grant admission to the students with special needs (Dutta and Banerjee). It has been frequently seen that children with disabilities who aspire to study in inclusive school face the biggest challenge of securing admission. The eligibility standards of these schools are rigorous; the nature and severity of disability is the foremost concern of the school authorities. It is seen that maximum inclusive schools register children who have only mild disabilities. They also found that schools also assess the parental support during the time of admission. They give preference to learners whose parents are willing to take on the extra responsibility of their child. The inability of the parents to pay exorbitant fees, mainly in case of private schools, is also another barrier to get admission.

- Commutation Problem

Physical location of schools is another problem. Many times the non-availability of school or its location in area that is difficult to access becomes major barrier for children to get education. Inclusive Schools are often far away. Students undergo difficulty in reaching schools by themselves or with the help of their parents. Lack of adequate local transport facilities is an added problem.

- Buildings and Infrastructure

The differently abled children face barriers if the building is not constructed with their mobility needs in mind. Most school buildings don't adhere to the requirement of these learners appropriately. Special needs pupils are not capable to access and use all the places such as playgrounds, washrooms, library, doors, passageways, stairs and steep ramps, recreational areas, etc. Generally the infrastructure in schools is not suitably made.

- Materials and Technology

Most of the teachers hardly use any visual aids for the hearing impaired students. Similarly, for the visually impaired the schools often do not provide Braille slate, Braille, Braille sheets, Braille-Text books for teaching.

- Instructional Barriers

It is an established fact that inclusion is here to stay. We need to understand that education of students with special needs is no longer the responsibility of just special education teachers. In general education setting the inclusion of students with disabilities is now

accepted as the norm rather than an exception. However, for many teachers (including special education teachers) there are certain barriers that may prevent successful inclusion in the class.

Most teachers receive little or no training before students with disabilities are included in their class. In spite of this, planning is the key. Both teachers- special and general, make effort to plan together. There is no denying that working with students having special needs require great amount of effort and time. It needs to be firmly realized that teaching of special children comes with added responsibilities. But, when it comes to organizing the classroom and planning lessons, knowing the type of inclusion model that will be in practice is the first line of action.

The Inclusive education programs vary from school to school as does the amount and nature of provision and sustenance given to both general and special education teachers. This is a major constraint for teachers to feel prepared to teach in inclusive settings.

➤ Collaborative Teaching Programme Barrier

Lack of knowledge of both general education teaching and special education teaching is another instructional barrier that can impact the success of an inclusive classroom. A number of general education teachers feel that they do not have the professional knowledge or training needed to work with special needs learners, whereas there are some special education teachers who are not well-informed about general education curriculum. This is where the group effort and collaboration between both special and general education teachers is mostly required. A collaborative teaching program requires understanding between general education and special education teachers with regards to instructional beliefs, time for instructional planning, agreement on the establishment of classroom routines and classroom discipline norms, and a classroom where both teachers are equally responsible for instruction. General education and special education teachers are required to work together in a mutually respectful manner without holding any type of power struggles.

Together the general education and special education teachers bring a great deal of information and knowledge to an inclusive classroom. Here the general education teachers share their knowledge of content areas, the grade level curriculum, and effective teaching methods, including large group instruction. Special education teachers can facilitate individual learning styles, instructional strategies, clinical teaching, analysis and adjustments of instruction and curriculum, and behaviour management. In addition, special education teachers can supplement the work of general education teachers with regard to Individualized Education Programmes (IEP) that can improve the quality of outcomes for students with disabilities.

➤ Classroom Size

High teacher-student ratio is another major challenge faced by inclusive schools. Usually there are fifty to sixty students in a normal classroom. For a teacher it is not possible to deal with so many learners with diversity. It becomes difficult for students to adjust with so many students and sometimes children with special needs feel out of place in the normal classroom.

➤ Curriculum as A Barrier

The curriculum in any education system is one of the major obstacles that hinder the development of an inclusive system of education. Presently in our country, the school curriculum is unable to suffice the needs of a wide range of differently abled learners. In several contexts, the curriculum is centrally designed and inflexible, leaving little options for local adaptations or variations and does not even permit the teachers to experiment and try out new methods. The consequence of knowledge based curriculum is that the examination system have become too much content oriented rather than being success oriented. Typically children with special needs require more time to read or write their paper. In some cases major problem arises for arranging writers to help children with special needs during examination.

➤ Untrained Teachers as Barrier

Teachers' training, abilities and attitudes are some of the major limitations for imparting successful inclusive education. The teachers are not trained effectively to impart education to children with special needs. There is often inadequate training of staff at all levels. Presently, the teacher training is mostly fragmented, uncoordinated and inadequate, that takes place in a segregated manner i.e. one of the types is for children with special needs and another for students with normal capabilities. Consequently, most of the teachers lack in proper skills and positive attitudes towards students with special needs and then it is quite unlikely that these children will receive satisfactory schooling(Singh).

➤ Organisation of the Education System

The education system in our country is controlled by central or state boards. Education systems are frequently centralised and this deters change and ingenuity. Responsibility for resolutions tends to be placed at the top level and the focus of administration remains



angled towards workers conforming with rules rather than on safeguarding quality service delivery. The correct picture of the number of learners disqualified from the school system due to dearth of coordination within many systems is also not available. Moreover, the different kinds of schools such as private, government and public schools are developing inequality by offering different levels of facilities and support. Those having an access to private schools have higher probability of achievement as compared to those learners who go to government schools but high cost of education in private schools turn out to be a barrier.

➤ **Constraint of Resources**

Sufficient financial resources are a great challenge to imparting inclusive education. India is amongst the countries having low 'Education for All Index'(EDI)of less than .800 and is ranked 105 out of 129 countries. All the countries having high EDI (above .950) has government spending ranging from 5.4% to 7.7%, with the only exception of Germany with 4.6% (Educational Statistics at a glance 2005 - 06). For inclusion every institution would be required to make financial provisions for providing facilities like lifts, ramps, barrier free classrooms, toilets etc. Technology can be used as facilitators, in the form of motion sensors to open doors, flush toilets and automatic door buttons for easier access through doors. There would be a need to create learning resources for persons with disability for example in the form of digital library, Braille literature and additional visual resources for students with hearing disability etc. Financial resources would also be requisite to train and retrain faculty for teaching individuals with disabilities in an inclusive setting. The budget allocation for education will have to be increased to provide inclusive set up (Bhama, 2009).

❖ **Policies as barriers**

Policy makers who do not realize or accept the idea of inclusive education are a barrier to the implementation of inclusive policies. There are some countries where certain policies still exist that enhances the likelihood for authorities to pronounce that some children are 'uneducable'. Generally this practice relates to children with severe intellectual disability. In some other countries, education of some specific groups of learners might be the responsibility of another authority than the Ministry of Education. Time and again this leads to a state where these learners are not anticipated to participate in conventional education and, subsequently, they do not have the same opportunities for further education or employment.

❖ **Physical Barriers**

Creating a barrier free and easy access environment begin with the belief that each person has something to contribute for the progress of the nation. Major H. P. S. Ahluwalia, Former Chairman, RCI(Rehabilitation Council of India)opined that a freely accessible society without any physical obstacles is a first and foremost requirement to mainstream people with disabilities. Right to education and work and freedom of movement and expression is of no bearing unless the points of entry to success, work place, sports and cultural grounds are made easy to access. It is only then that persons with disabilities will be able to tap and utilize their potentials, hidden talents and capacities and contribute to the society what they receive from it.

A barrier free environment which is easily accessible allows people to move around safely, independently, and without restriction. Rough estimates state that 4-5% of India's population is people with disabilities and they are from the young and the old, rich and poor, rural and urban. Creating a barrier free environment not only benefits persons with disabilities but also people who are temporarily disabled due to illness or accidents, the elderly, expectant mothers, and children.

Principal Areas Of Intervention

➤ **Physical Accessibility For Persons With Different Disabilities**

In order to blend between accessibility and needs of diverse groups, there is an immediate requirement to have an appropriate understanding of these needs which vary from one disability to another.

- People who use wheelchairs:

Many accessibility requirements relate to dimensions and other aspects of wheelchairs e.g.to achieve a complete turn with the wheelchair, it is essential to provide a clear circle with at least minimum diameter of 1.50m.

We are well acquainted that considerable energy is required to push a wheelchair manually up the ramps, over changes in level and over soft or uneven surfaces. Resistance between the floor and the wheels of the wheelchair depends on the floor surface of the passageway. Variations in level should be completely avoided and essentially the floor surface should be hard, even and slip resistant.

- People using crutches or sticks.

Extraordinary care must be taken to avoid damaged, uneven or sloping floor surface and also areas that become particularly slippery after rains, such as wood covering, granite, hard burnt bricks and gravel.

To enable independent movement for people using wheelchairs and other assistive devices the following aspects must be considered:

- Changes in level should be avoided.
 - Floor surfaces should be hard, even and slip resistant.
 - Rails should be provided on stairs and ramps.
 - Ramps should have resting places and be of low slope along travel routes.
 - Pathways should be of limited slope and include sufficient turning radius.
 - Doors should be light and easy to turn, and entrances should be sufficiently wide.
 - Parking space should be close to the main entrance.
 - Furniture, counters, equipment, power sockets, and plugs should be placed at suitable heights reachable by persons who use wheelchairs.
 - Handrails should be easy to grasp.
- Persons with visual impairments

For persons with visual impairments the following aspect needs to be looked into -

- Positioning can be eased by the use of contrasting colours and changes in the texture of the floor material as this aids the visually impaired person in identifying doors, stairs, steps, ramps and pedestrian crossings.
 - The path of travel should be easy to detect by a blind person using a long white cane. A guide strip with a distinct floor texture running parallel to main alleyway should be used.
 - The use of protruding elements and low overhanging signs should be avoided in pathways.
 - Visual capability is different from one person to another and changes with age and disability.
 - Lighting systems should be made to suit different needs. In order to deliver a barrier-free environment for visually impaired individuals and also for blind persons, the physical surroundings should be organized in a simple and consistent way.
 - Visual information should be accompanied by audible information; handrails should be available for grip when using stairs. The ramps, entrances, stairs, and information boards should be well lighted.
 - Blind persons are aided by tactile and auditory information. The written information should be accessible in Braille and visual information should be supplemented by audible information also.
- Persons with hearing impairments
 - People with hearing impairments may experience difficulty in distinguishing words and sounds in noisy environments. Therefore, rooms should be acoustically insulated.
 - Supplementary visual information should be provided for deaf persons and persons with hearing impairments, such as visual information at airports and bus stations, and alarms and bells in lifts.
- People with learning or intellectual disabilities

Some people with learning or intellectual disabilities experience difficulties in understanding or interpreting information like signs, and in distinguishing between different colours or between left and right.

The following design elements will enable people experiencing these difficulties to physically access the built surroundings:

- simple design with clear and unambiguous sign postings;
- use of signs and notice boards with pictures and symbols; and
- separation of a mass of information into a number of signs that can be more easily read and understood than in one sign.

Strategies for Barrier Free Environment

The following strategies need to be adopted to create a barrier free environment:

- i. Make accessible all public buildings both functional and recreational, transport services including roads, sub-ways and pavements, railway platforms, bus stops/ terminals, ports, airports, different means of transportations like bus, train, plane and waterways, playgrounds, other spaces etc.
- ii. Usage of sign language in all public functions should be enforced.

- iii. Modification of Curriculum of Architects and Civil engineers should be started to include matters concerning the construction of barrier-free buildings. In service training should also be provided to the government architects and engineers.
- iv. State Transport Undertakings should ensure disabled friendly features in their vehicles. Railways should provide barrier-free coaches in a phased manner along with making the platforms, buildings, toilets and other facilities barrier-free.
- vi. The Government need to ensure that all the Industrial establishments, offices, public utilities both in public and private sector offer disabled friendly work place for their employees.
- vii. Practical steps should be taken to make sure that disable-friendly IT environment is provided in the country.
- viii. Presently, the buildings which are for public use should be audited for its accessibility for persons with disability. Needful steps should be immediately undertaken.

Universal Design

Lately, the deliberations for inclusion are centred on 'Universal Design.' Universal Design is a framework for the design of places, things, information, communication and policy to be accessible by the widest range of people in all types of situations without special or separate design. Basically, Universal Design is human-centred design of everything keeping everyone in mind.

Universal Design is also being termed as Inclusive Design, Design-for-All and Lifespan Design. In other words, 'Universal Design' or 'Universal Access' endorses inclusion of the total mainstream society. Such an environment also aids able-bodied people, mainly when they are burdened with luggage, children, pushcarts, etc.

UNCRD- Article 9: "Accessibility"

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (adopted in December, 2006 and signed by India on 30 Mar 07) is a foremost step in the direction of changing the very perception of disability and in illustrating existing Human Rights in the context of disability. "Article 9 – Accessibility" of this convention impulses the states/ Government "to ensure persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, data and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas". The denial of access to services and information to individuals with disabilities is a violation of Human Rights.

Conclusion

Creating a barrier free environment essentially requires people from different arenas of life. Persons who are able to understand and comprehend the underlying discrimination and lack of opportunities faced by persons with disabilities. Also people who are willing to come together to work out strategies, and thereafter implementing them. These include policy makers and the government, architects and builders, law enforcement and town planning officials, people with expertise in disability issues, and, essentially, people with disabilities themselves.

There is no doubt that making inclusion work can be a hard job. But putting in efforts in breaking down barriers to inclusion can make it a little easier. Being educated about the importance of inclusion and participating in on-going collaboration with fellow teachers, the inclusive setting can be filled with meaningful learning experiences for all.

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