

Focus Group Discussion

Inclusive Education for Social Transformation

Date: 5th July 2019

Venue: Deepak Foundation, Vadodara

Attendees:

1. Ms Deepa Avashya, Head, Riverside School
2. Ms Hiral Dholakia, Special Educator, Riverside School
3. Dr Ruchi Mehta, Deepak Foundation
4. Dr Bhaumik Trivedi, District Institute of Education and Training, Ahmedabad
5. Ms Alka Smart, Vice-president, Disha Charitable Trust, Vadodara
6. Dr Sanubar Chinwala, Occupational Therapist, Disha Charitable Trust
7. Ms Paras Mahendru, Educational Consultant, Preschool guru educational consultancy
8. Mr Bipin Mehta, Blind People's Association
9. Ms Archana Joshi, Director, Deepak Foundation
10. Mr Peter Gibson, Accessibility Expert, EnableMe- Access
11. Ms Jagu Gibson, wife of Mr Peter Gibson
12. Ms Shagufa Kapadia, HOD, Department of Human Development and Family Studies
13. Ms Jamila Firdauz, Head counselor, Navrachana School
14. Ms Preetha Nair, Counselor, Navrachana School
15. Ms Nirmala Mahanat, Educationist, Vadodara
16. Ms Monaz Kathawala, CEO, Osmosis Play Centre
17. Ms Manisha Bhatt, Special educator
18. Ms Jayshree Panchamiya, Parent of a Child with Disability (CwD)
19. Mr Bharat Vaya, Principal, Samaj Suraksha Sankul
20. Mr Mukesh Modi, Project Manager, Samaj Suraksha Sankul
21. Mr Maitreya Shah, Disability rights activist, Gujarat National Law University (GNLU)
22. Mr Abhishek Vyas, RTE Activist, Gujarat National Law University (GNLU)
23. Mr Chetan Sagar, Visually impaired computer instructor and businessman
24. Mrs Prakriti Sagar, Physically Challenged tutor, Vadodara
25. Ms Lamiya Shums, Managing Director, Anand Niketan School, Surat
26. Ms Piyuri Machchar, Counselor, Anand Niketan Schools
27. Ms Sanghamitra Prabhakar, Educational consultant
28. Ms Sharmila Divatia, Founder, Lac Vardaan Association
29. Ms Yamini Pareikh, Counselor, Navrachana Vidyani Vidyalaya
30. Ms Falguni Shah, Counselor, Navrachana Vidyani Vidyalaya
31. Ms Aruna Patel, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)
32. Ms Vaishali Chauhan, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)
33. Ms Nivisha Shah, Educational consultant
34. Ms Promila Zalpuri, Secretariat incharge, Consortium for Inclusive Education
35. Ms Shubhra Agnihotri, Project Associate, Consortium for Inclusive Education



Consortium for Inclusive Education is a joint state level initiative of Deepak Foundation and Gujarat CSR Authority with a mission of supporting regular schools in integrating children with special needs and ensuring that they continue to receive an equal and high-quality education.

Objective: A diverse group of experts, professionals, and Persons with Disabilities to come together to share perspectives and path of action for making Inclusive Education a reality and making Gujarat a model state in this regard. The outcomes from the discussions will be submitted as recommendations for Draft National Education Policy 2019 to Education Secretary, Govt. of Gujarat, Gandhinagar.

The participants were divided into 2 groups, each group having a representative from the following categories:

- School management/principal
- Counsellors
- Teachers
- PwD
- NGOs
- Policy makers and Govt. officials (GCERT and Samagrah Shiksha Abhiyan)
- Parents of CwD
- Legal sector
- Infrastructure and digital accessibility experts

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted in two groups on “Inclusive education for social transformation”

The purpose of conducting the discussion was to share and brainstorm all the possible perspectives of inclusive education and come up with recommendations to break the social stigma, identify gaps in the system and challenges of inclusion, and improve the existing systems.

Each FGD had a moderator, presentation/documentation person, and presenters of the findings.

The groups were given the pointers for the discussion in advance. The pointers are as follows:

a) Purpose and models of Inclusive Education

- Benefits of inclusion for CwD and their peers
- Challenges and ease of inclusion for various disabilities

b) Education provisions for children with special needs

- Preparing for inclusion- early intervention and preschool programmes for CwD
- Planning and managing an inclusive curriculum in schools
- Teaching practices- assessment and evaluation
- Access to resources and teaching learning material
- Accessible infrastructure in schools

c) Legislative framework

- Roles and responsibilities of Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), Persons with Disabilities (PwD) Act, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Department of Education, and National/state Council of Education, Research, and Training.

d) Changing role of special schools

Pragmatic placement principle- “Learners with disabilities who can be educated in general schools should be educated in regular schools and those studying in special schools should be transferred to regular schools when they are ready to make the shift.”

- How can a special school or a NGO support regular schools?

e) Recommendations and tasks ahead

The recommendations pertaining to the legal, social and accessibility issues and the tasks ahead to address them at every level

Presentation outcomes from FGD 1 and 2

Presentations were made by both groups by their representative participants to an audience of 35 people.

1.) Outcomes of FGD1

- The roles of special educators should change from being an educator for CwD to being a trainer for regular teachers so that they can teach CwD in an inclusive setting.
- “Special Education” should be moved from under Dept. of Social Justice to Dept. of Education.
- A circular should be shared to all schools by the district DEO to remind the schools that it is unlawful to refuse admission to CwD under PwD and RTE Act.
- The employment model of special educators is very flawed. There is a huge disparity between the salaries of special educators and regular school teachers. This gap in salary needs to be lessened so that the special educators feel valued and respected. Moreover, govt. contract is only for 11months for special educators, which does not give them any job security.
- A working committee should be formed to collate FAQs for Inclusive Education. Consortium for Inclusive Education should publish this book.
- There is no dearth of resources for educating children with special needs. The challenge is the proper utilization of it. The resources of the special organisation build on the needs of CwD should be available to the regular teachers of the mainstream schools to educate CwD.
- Cross disability training should be provided to the special educators. It will equip them better to identify and adopt appropriate teaching and learning material for CwD.
- In order to streamline the approach of implementing inclusive education in schools, there should be a citizen charter prepared by them which includes the policies for CwD under the RTE Act.

2.) Outcomes of FGD2

- Inclusion is diversity and we as a society must embrace diversity in education.
- Terminology for disability must change and we must adopt what is internationally accepted. For example, Children with Special Needs should be replaced by “Children with Disabilities”. We must put people before the disability. For example, “Autistic child” should be replaced by “Children with Autism”.
- FGD2 suggested that all special educators that deal with CwD should be certified by Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI). The audience discussed whether it is absolutely essential to have RCI certification. There are special educators that are trained,



experienced and good with CwD but are not certified by RCI.

- Inclusive Pedagogy must be a part of Bed programs in colleges.
- According to PwD Act 2016, all govt. and private infrastructure must be accessible.
- There is a shortage of special educators and one (Kashiba hospital) of the 5 RCI trainingcentres in Gujarat is closed down because they are not able to recruit enough candidates. Deepak Foundation, along with Disha Charitable Trust should consider starting a RCI diploma in special education in order to address the shortage of special educators.
- Visually impaired students always struggle to find writers for their exams or if they do find writers, they are often not competent enough. These candidates should be allowed to give their exam on computer or through braille.
- CwD should have curriculum adapted to their needs and assessment to be done accordingly. A database of appropriate amendments and curriculum adaptations should be made.
- FGD 2 suggested that early intervention by trained teachers is necessary at pre-school level to identify children with disabilities and provide necessary and suitable interventions. For example, a noisy recess can be replaced by placing the child in another activity such as music or art.

We hereby invite all stakeholders to submit recommendations for Draft National Education Policy Chapter 6.8.

Annexure:

1. Agenda
2. Photos
3. Feedback



Agenda

Date: 5th July 2019

Venue: Deepak Foundation, Vadodara

Organising team: Dr Ruchi Mehta, Strategy Lead, Deepak Foundation

Ms Promila Zalpuri, Secretariat Incharge, Consortium for Inclusive Education

Ms Shubhra Agnihotri, Project Associate, Consortium for Inclusive Education

Time	Particulars
10:00-10:30	Registration and tea/coffee
10:30-11:00	Introduction to Consortium for Inclusive Education and participants
11:00-13:30	Focus Group Discussion (FGD)
13:30-14:30	Lunch
14:30-14:50	FGD 1 Presentation
14:50-15:10	FGD 2 Presentation
15:10-16:00	Discussion and interaction
16:00-16:30	Tea/Coffee Vote of thanks

Photos









Feedback

Excellent sharing - useful
need further action & inter
action

Comments: This discussions helped a lot in gaining
knowledge about RCP and ^{many} other things.)

Comments: Great initiative. A lot of brainstorming happened
for the way ahead. Glad to be a part of the
Consortium. Aka Sait.

Comments: Very good initiative. Time is right for inclusion to
become part of every organisations priority.

