

Chairman's Speech

'National Conference on Examination Reforms for Inclusive Education'

23 August , 2016

1. It gives me immense pleasure to extend a warm welcome to the distinguished guests, speakers and all participating educationists to this two day 'National Conference on Examination Reforms for Inclusive Education' organized by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).

2. The Constitution of India guarantees 'free and compulsory education' to all the children between 6 to 14 years of age. The Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2012 allows the children with special needs to pursue the mainstream education, but most of them have to go to special schools, away from their peers who attend regular schools. However, there is a need that all students, irrespective of their impairment, should be educated in mainstream schools. Inclusive education addresses this issue.

3- Inclusive education is an approach to educate the students with special educational needs with other

students. Inclusion rejects the use of special schools or classrooms to segregate the differently abled children from other students. Generally, the schools use the inclusion model for selected students with mild to moderate special needs. Fully inclusive schools do not separate 'general education' and 'special education' curriculum ; instead, the education curriculum is restructured in such a way that all students learn together.

4- In this model, emphasis is given to full participation by differently abled students in all activities along with other students and respect for their social, civil, and educational rights. Students with special needs are educated in the regular classes and are treated like a full member. However, they occasionally leave the regular classroom to attend smaller, more intensive instructional sessions in a resource-room to receive specific services like speech and language therapy.

5- Anti-discriminatory climate has resulted into change in policy and statute both nationally and internationally which mainly include :

- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 which mandates children's rights in respect of freedom from discrimination.
- The Convention against Discrimination in Education of UNESCO which prohibits discrimination, exclusion or segregation in education.
- The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006 which calls on member countries to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels.
- In India, Section 26 of 'The Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995' mandates the provision of free and compulsory education to be offered to all children with disabilities up to minimum age of 18 years.

6. Inclusive Education is not a recent phenomenon in India. If we look at our ancient scriptures, we can find several instances on this approach.

Here, I would like to quote from अथर्ववेद :

सं जानी ध्वं सं प्रच्य ध्वं सं वो मनोसि जानताम् ।

देवा भागं यथा पूर्वे संजानाने उपासते ॥ (अथर्व 6-64-1)

(तुम समा न ज्ञान प्राप्त करो, शिक्षापद्धति में भेदभाव न हो, क्योंकि शिक्षार्थी ज्ञान तो अपनी योग्यता और क्षमता से प्राप्त करेंगे । समानता से एक दूसरे के साथ संबंध जोड़ो । तुम्हारे मन समान संस्कारों से युक्त हों । कभी एक दूसरे के प्रति हीनता का भाव न रखो । जैसे प्राचीन काल के ज्ञानी अपना कर्तव्य पालन करते रहे, वैसे तुम भी अपना कर्तव्य पूरा करो)

समानो मंत्रः समिति समानी समानं व्रतं सहचित्तमेषाम ।

समानेन वो हविषा जुहोमि समानं चेतो अभि संविश्वम् । ।

(अथर्व 6-64-2)

(तुम्हारे लक्ष्य समा न हों । उन्हें प्राप्त करने के लिये विचार भी एक समा न हों । तुम्हारी सभा समा न हो, अर्थात् सभा में किसी के साथ पक्षपात न हो । सबको यथा योग्य सम्मान प्राप्त हो । तुम्हारा संकल्प समा न हो । तुम्हारा चित्त समा न-भाव से भरा हो । एक विचार होकर कार्य में एक मन से लगे । इसीलिए तुम सबको समा न मौलिक शक्ति मिली है)

It shows the importance and relevance of Inclusivity in the field of learning together in ancient India.

7. As per the Census 2011, there are 2.67 crore persons with disabilities in India who constitute 2.21 % of total population. The census data shows that 70% of them live in the rural areas. Therefore, it is the duty of all Educationists and Policy Makers like us to offer all kind of assistance and care to the physically challenged children for better education opportunities.

8. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) aims at equity and equality in policy, support and facilities for providing quality education to all the children. The Board has taken several initiatives for promoting inclusive education :

- The Board has made it compulsory for schools to appoint Special Educator and Counsellors so that the learning needs of the Children with special needs are addressed appropriately.
- Affiliation bye-laws of the Board insists on making the school barrier-free, provisioning for ramps, lifts etc. and directs that every school shall promote inclusion of student with disabilities/ special needs

in the normal school as per provisions of the 'Persons with Disabilities Act,1995' and in conformity with the National Policy on Education.

- The Board also permits flexibility in the curriculum and permits these students to choose subjects as per their ability and capabilities.
- Several exemptions and relaxations are offered to these students towards examinations like extra time, permission to scribe, choice to have examination paper in Braille language for visually impaired students.
- A separate cell was set up in 2014 to promote inclusive practices in the schools to offer quality education to differently abled children.
- Teachers' training programmes are organized to teach innovative techniques and research in education of differently abled children.

9. There are several instances of deprived and under privileged people who achieved great heights after getting proper educational environment. Theoretical-physicist and Nobel-laureate Stephen

Hawkins is probably the most famous genius of modern age. Despite suffering from neurological diseases, Hawkins received Lucasian (ल्युसेजियन) Professor of Mathematics Award at the age of 35 and propagated the theory of 'Big Bang' for evolution of the universe. In India too, we have several such instances. Sudha Chandran who despite amputation of her one leg, has become the most talented and acclaimed classical dancers of India. The students with special needs are doing miracles in their career. There is a shining example of 'Ira Singhal', the topper of Civil Services Examination 2015, who 'stands tall amongst all' overcoming all the odds. There are total 46 candidates from PH category who cleared Civil Services Exam in 2015.

10. We draw the inspiration from these examples to take care of all differently abled children in the schools and offer them all possible assistance so that they are able to show their full potential. I am sure they can do wonders in every walks of life as 'Every Child is a Special Child'.

