

## **Teacher development for working with children with special needs & strategies for community involvement**

Dr. Shanti Auluck , Director (hon.)/President. Muskaan: Parents Association for the empowerment of persons with intellectual disability & families

Inclusive school is the demand of the situation. There is no way India can provide education to all children with disability unless it opens the door of all schools for children with disability. It is not an easy task. It is very important to recognize the complexity of the challenge it brings with it. It demands attitude shift in teachers and school management. It requires child centric approach in teaching / learning and stress on capacity building of every child rather than simply transaction of education curriculum. Child centric approach will help not only a child with disability but also all children with diverse temperament, inclinations and socio-economic and cultural background. It has the potential of providing tremendous growth opportunity to the teachers.

This requires important change in the system of teacher training. The two stream of teacher training i.e. B.Ed. (general) and B.Ed. (Sp. Ed.) will not work. All teachers need to know how learning and cognitive development including emotional issues involved in it takes place. One or two courses/papers have to provide knowledge and understanding about how motor, sensory and cognitive impairments create challenges for a child and such papers have to be essential part of the teacher training curriculum. If properly sensitized it would enhance their capacity and skills of teaching all children with or without disability. Those who are already in teaching, they can be given short term training to prepare them to respond to children with disability in their classrooms. It should include all teachers as well as school management. My experience has shown that there are enough well meaning people in the community who are eager to get involved in the education process but we have to plan strategies for a meaningful involvement. Parents' involvement and peer support is very important process. Transparency and honest work always attracts community participation.

It will be a slow process as it requires revolutionary changes in the mindset of teachers and those involved in educational management. We should have a realistic time frame to bring such changes and phase-wise plan so that we are able to address the current needs as well as preparation for the future. It does not require huge expenditure but it definitely requires courage and conviction.