FIRST STEPS

Action Research in Implementing Inclusive Education

Action for Ability Development and Inclusion
October 2004 to September 2007

Foreword

If inclusion is a "cohesive sense of community, acceptance of differences and responsiveness to individual needs"(Stainback and Stainback :1990), can there be any question that this is what good education is?

In most academic circles, the debate around inclusive education is no longer about the philosophy or the necessity of it, but about finding the most efficient way to make it happen. However, practitioners are at different levels of conviction both about the necessity as well as the practicality of it. Radical changes are needed both in the mindsets of professionals as well as in the organization of education to ensure that **every** child receives the life-changing benefits of quality education. This is possible only if we raise the bar--- when the quality of teaching-learning imparted is equally good in all schools. Even in more developed countries, it is a struggle to provide quality education for **all** children— children with disability, children of foreign origin, poor children, children from minority communities and children from remote rural areas. Decisions in Education should be taken considering **all children** as belonging to one group rather than one 'majority normal group' and 'others' whose inclusion is a problem.

Great deal of research is needed to arrive at best practices for implementing inclusive education. The TIE Project is an effort to find some directions towards the goal of achieving quality education in schools where children with diverse backgrounds can study together. Through this Project, an effort is made to study the process of working in five government schools to help them improve in acceptance of individual differences and respond to them. On the other side of the spectrum was the conversion of one special school into an inclusive school. Through three short years of working there have been innumerable questions, changes, successes and failures. In Government schools the overriding need was to first convince the schools about the need to bring about changes in education and then to explore the practicality of it. In AADI school, where prior to the Project, many years of deliberation and experiences had convinced the team about the need for inclusive education, it was possible to work towards developing a blueprint. The process and the learning's have been presented in this report.

The Project has been a big challenge. What sustained the effort was the belief that these changes are crucial to ensure equal rights. The present difficulties and struggles are helping us find answers for our future work.

Dr. Divya Jalan
Chairperson
AADI

The Team

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Technical support was provided by Gowri Arundathi while Harpreet Mehta, Gurdeep Kaur and Seema Ghosh comprised the hardworking secretarial support.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Education plays an important role in an individual's journey toward realization of their potential. Due to its importance in human development and progress it has been considered as a fundamental right, which is essential and indispensable for the exercise of all other human rights. The fulfillment of this right leads to the exercise of other human rights, while its non fulfillment excludes a person from the enjoyment of most, if not all, other rights. Hence education systems must be designed and organized to meet the varying needs of individual learners, to provide an appropriate education and fulfil the right to education of each child.

The Government of India proclaimed its intent to provide 'Education for All' by the year 2010 and launched innovative legislations and policies in the past three decades to attain this goal. Even though considerable progress has been made in enrolling children into schools, still India continues to face a situation where high numbers[1] of children who remain out of school. The Government of India's objective of providing education for all can only be realized when *all* children including the teeming population of children with disabilities are provided educational services, as children with disabilities represent an especially vulnerable section among the millions of children deprived of their right to education.

In the past children with disabilities were perceived as 'different' and therefore either isolated from their peers within the confines of their home, or accommodated within a few special schools that were located in metropolitan cities of India. Today, terms like *integration and inclusion* have increasingly entered into the field of education. These terms reflect changing ideologies and perceptions over a span of time and provide a basis for generating action. The common element between inclusion and integration is that they work towards transferring students to less segregated settings. The similarity though ends here, since each term defines an educational process, which is different in its approach.

The term *integration* is used to describe the process of placement of students with disabilities within regular school settings. Thus, a child with cerebral palsy, who may be attending a resource unit within a regular school, is integrated, since she is in an environment, which offers her more opportunities to interact with her peer group vis-à-vis a special school. Often the underlying philosophy is similar to the "medical model" whereby the problem is understood to be located in the child.

The term *inclusion* as defined by Booth[2], (Booth 1996: 22-3) states inclusion to be a process of increasing participation and reducing exclusion within schools. For the purpose of this study, inclusive education (IE) means that all students in a school are full

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[1] In India 1.67 million children are out-of-school, Accessed on 1/9/13
http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/167-m-children-in-india-still-outofschool-unesco/article4800039.ece
[2] Booth, T. 1996. *A perspective on inclusion from England.* Cambridge Journal of Education. 26 (1) 87 - 99

members of that school community and each student participates equitably in the opportunities and responsibilities of the general education environment. Those involved in inclusion efforts understand that classrooms are becoming more and more diverse and that the teachers need to change instructional strategies accordingly.

In recent times the term inclusion has been broadened from merely addressing exclusion of children with disabilities from general education, by expanding its mandate to challenge exclusionary policies and practices within the education system. Thus inclusion not only refers to students with disabilities, but is relevant for all excluded groups of learners affected by issues such as poverty, war, neglect or social stratification.

Education is the right of all children, and inclusive education aims to ensure that all children have access to an appropriate, relevant, affordable and effective education within their community. This education starts in the home with the family, and includes formal, non-formal and all types of community-based education initiatives. Within schools inclusive education is an approach developed keeping the child in the central focus and acknowledges that all children are individuals with different learning needs and speeds.

As a catalyst for change IE provides not only school improvement but an increased awareness of human rights which leads to reduction of discrimination. By finding local answers to complex problems it empowers communities and can lead to wider community development. IE addresses a real need; it is a readily understandable concept and requires no new major resources. It primarily involves changes of attitudes and behaviour. It has the potential to be a very effective starting point for addressing the rights of the child in a range of cultures and contexts. E.g. open school needs to be viewed with similar respect as other National Boards, and students pursuing the former must be given equal respect. Issues of identity and discrimination of disadvantaged students need to be addressed as part of an IE strategy.

Towards Inclusive Education (TIE) Project: Rationale and objectives

Inclusion is a very attractive philosophy. While virtually every professional in the field of education agrees in principle, the practice of this philosophy differs substantially from school to school and indeed from teacher to teacher. Even though there may be no "one plan fits all" there are certain teaching strategies that meet the unique educational, social and instructional needs of all students within general education classes. These strategies are necessary so that inclusion proceeds from an ideological and value laden stance to classroom practice. Significant educational improvement of schooling, not mere tinkering, requires that we focus on entire school, not just teachers or principals or curricula or organization of school-community relations but all of these and more. We might begin with one or several of these, but it is essential to realize that all are interconnected and that changing any one element ultimately affects the others. Consequently, it is advisable to focus on one place where all of the elements come together. This is the individual school.

AADI with its past experience and learnings, recognizing disability as a rights issue and based on the emerging new paradigm of educational services addressing the concerns such as access, equity and quality which are closely associated with the educational services, undertook the TIE Project (October 2004 to September 2007), funded by REACH India(USAID), wherein it got an opportunity to begin implementing its ideological beliefs about inclusion. The focus of the Project was not only addressing the needs of children with disabilities but rather focusing on diverse needs of ALL children in classrooms.

The project was an attempt to initiate a collaborative process towards providing accessible, equitable and quality educational opportunities to all children with a specific focus on children with disabilities, particularly the girl child. The four project objectives were:

- o Promoting inclusive practices and culture in identified demonstration schools in Delhi through a whole school development approach.

- o Influencing existing policies at a micro (school) level to support inclusion of all children within the identified demonstration schools.

- o Evolving appropriate and replicable service delivery model/s, which address specific educational and social needs of children with disabilities (mild/moderate/severe) both within and outside the educational system.

- o Collating and disseminate empirical evidence generated during the project towards the ultimate aim of impacting macro level policies.

Based on these four objectives the project's four essential components became the:

1. Five Mainstream Demonstration Schools to be developed across the districts of Delhi, comprising Government Schools, through a "whole school development" approach.
2. AADI School to emerge as a model wherein children with disabilities and able-bodied children will be provided meaningful learning opportunities in an inclusive paradigm.
3. Alternate Education Services to provide educational services for "out of school" children with disabilities in a creative manner (mild/moderate/severe)
4. Research and Documentation to be a critical component of the Project. A qualitative research design provided the empirical evidence during the project period.

Overview of the chapters

It is vital that the learning's that AADI gathered through the TIE Project is shared with significant others, in the education field. We believe that the Project must only be seen as a humble beginning in the quest to explore reality-based 'inclusive models' of learning that stand out as winners against the touchstone of equity, participation and access to learning for all children. This report is a honest documentation of the trials and successes faced by all those involved in the project and attempts to highlight the processes that we believe are so crucial for anyone attempting to build 'inclusive learning environments'.

There is much we have learnt, particularly through the adoption of the 'action research cycles' that were adopted in some of the project components. This report will provide the reader a birds eye view of the project. The second chapter explains the planning stage, the third explains the implementation of the plans section wise for each component. The fourth chapter discusses the changes and the challenges and the last chapter attempts to draw conclusion from the experience of the project for implementing inclusive education

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND AND THE PLAN

AADI adopted an action research methodology for the TIE (Towards Inclusive Education) project as it would help in achieving the dual aims of increasing the understanding about implementing inclusive education, while bringing about sustainable changes in practice through reflection and evolving learning process by avoiding the top down approach. Besides, the action research would allow all the stake holders to participate in the research process; increases the possibility of collaboration between researchers and practitioners, for the creation of practical knowledge, leading to changes in practices.

The processes identified for action research were, transformation of a special school (AADI school) into an inclusive school; to influence government schools (Mainstream Demonstration Schools (MDS) to move towards inclusive education; and to assess the viability of the service delivery models in the alternative educational services (AES) located in AADI and in the community. Hence these three sites have become the core components of the project. The overall objectives of the project were inclusion of vulnerable children in education and service delivery in three streams as depicted in the diagram given below.
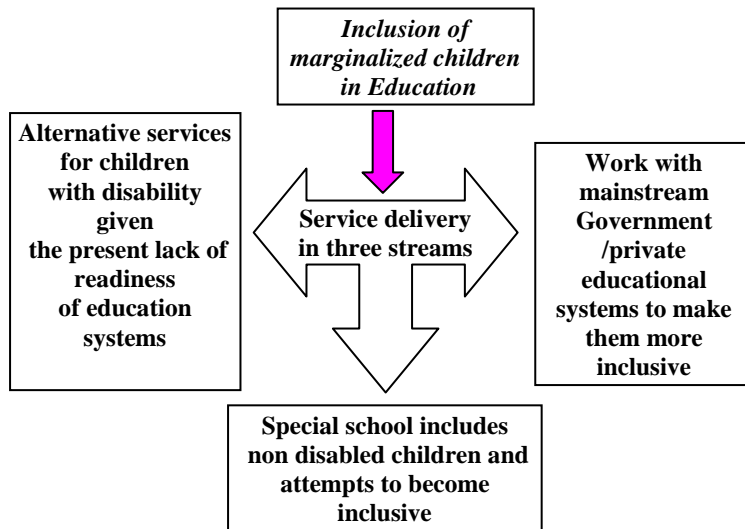
The Action Research team comprised of one director, two managers of the education program, two researchers, ten special educators, six general educators, six therapists belonging to the three different components. In AADI School though, the reflection meetings involved the entire team of sixteen people

In the initial phase of the project, trainings were held to orient teams to action research and meetings were held to build a consensus for participation in this process. After receiving the team's consensus on participating in the action research, strategic planning meetings were organised to address the issues identified in the initial reflection. Strategic planning meetings were organised for all the three components, where the teams reflected and debated about the nature of inclusive systems and services. After conceptualizing the aims the teams prepared their mission statements, objectives and work plans. The mission statements were translated into how to do statements, which then became the research questions for the teams. The initial plans included inbuilt methods of data collection methods and process documentation[3] within each of the components. Monthly reflection and review meetings were organized for each of the components. Besides this a school situational analysis[4] for the six schools was planned for at the beginning and at the end of each project year, to help the teams review and plan further. Tools for assessing changes in the AES component were developed as well. These exercises helped the team to envision in detail the practical goals to be achieved by the end of the project.

A meeting with external experts in the field of education was also organized with the objective of obtaining inputs on the plans and research strategies for each of the components.[5] Plans were modified based on the suggestions given by the expert participants.

Initial planning - Component wise

AADI School

A two day reflection and planning workshop was organised to envisage the methodologies to be followed in terms of attitudes, environment, grouping of children and teaching methodologies in order to introduce inclusive education in AADI School. Though there was no drastic review required as far as the school values and beliefs were concerned, but the school had to expand its vision to include all marginalized children. AADI School restated and reformulated, some of its stated values such as –
- Everyone belonged to a family of humanity;
- To accept and appreciate differences;
- To work in collaboration;
- Value everybody's contribution;
- Create a trusting and supportive environment and practice a participative/consultative approach to decision making in every sphere of work.

Thus inclusion was a dominant characteristic of its mission statement. The mission of ADDI School was to join families and community in providing an enabling environment in AADI School that was inclusive for all, safe and free from fear; to ensure every child's holistic development of values, concepts and skills in social, behavioural, emotional,

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[3] See Annexure 1 for details
[4] See Annexure 2 for details
[5] The consultants present were Prof. Poonam Batra, Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi; Dr Vineeta Bhargav, Department of Child Development, Lady Irwin College; Prof. Geetna B. Nambissan, Associate Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University and Dr. Bindu Prasad, Clinical Psychologist.

cognitive, physical and personal areas; to develop policies that fostered inclusion and to work in collaboration with staff, students, families and community.

To achieve these objectives the school would attempt to build communities amongst and across its stakeholders. It would make an effort to build a community of professionals, students in the school, develop partnerships with parents and establish linkages with the community. There was an emphasis on working in collaboration with different stakeholders. Practices in the school would be based on the philosophy of constructivism[6]. The team decided to develop practices for school with the aim of ensuring each child's holistic development of values, concepts and skills in social, behavioural, emotional, cognitive, physical and personal areas. The school policies would be designed to foster and support inclusive culture and practices.

Mainstream Demonstration School (MDS)

The objectives of this component was to promote inclusive culture and practices in schools and to influence existing policies at school level to support inclusion in five government schools. The initial plan was that after selecting the team, there would be an orientation and capacity building phase. Simultaneously efforts would be made to acquire sanction for working in the five government schools[7]. After identifying the schools the teams would begin a dialogue with the schools and based on the needs identified through situational analysis, the teams would design interventions training modules. After initial trainings the teams would provide ongoing support to teachers in the schools. Thus for each school a customized module would be developed. In the class the purpose was to facilitate teachers to reach and ensure each child's learning. It was believed that the suggested practices would slowly lead to changes in the culture of the class and overtime the culture of the school itself. These plans would be implemented and then reviewed by the team internally but also by the coordinating groups within the schools. A staggered entry into the schools was planned so the team entered school 5 and school 1 in the first year.
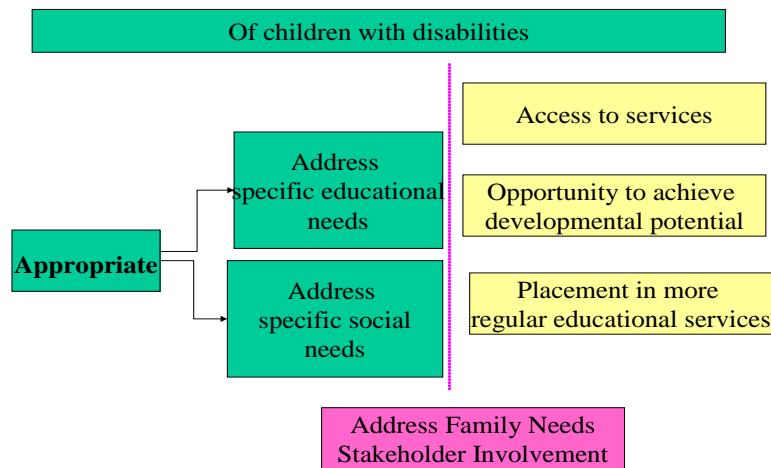
Alternative Educational Services (AES)

A two day reflection and planning workshop was held to develop a common understanding of the project. The team brainstormed on the objective of AES and reached a consensus to adapt the following three criteria namely it should provide access to education which would lead to the children achieving their developmental potential; provide services on a regular basis in set ups where peer interaction was an essential feature; and the services would address the family needs and would to collaborate to ensure the fulfillment of the rights of children and families to assess the appropriateness of service models.

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[6] As it seemed more in alignment with the concept of inclusion

[7] To implement the second process of influencing the government schools to move towards inclusive education, AADI project team approached the Directorate of education, Delhi in October 2004 to allocate five schools which can involved in the project. It took over seven months and more than seven meetings with different offices of the Directorate of Education for the sanctioning of the five government schools and finally the schools were allocated in the month of May 2005. The five schools allocated to AADI were operating in five different districts of Delhi namely the South, North East district, North District, North West B district, and the central district. These schools here after referred to as School 1, School 2, School 3, School 4 and School 5 respectively.

Of children with disabilities

Appropriate

- Address specific educational needs
- Address specific social needs

Access to services

Opportunity to achieve developmental potential

Placement in more regular educational services

Address Family Needs Stakeholder Involvement

It was agreed that the nature of service delivery would be collaborative and family centered. To achieve this, involvement and participation of parents and children was considered essential at all levels and in all areas-during evaluation, in sessions, and programming. Teams agreed that parents and professional should work as a team and have an open relationship. Sharing of assessments and other information with parents would happen frequently. To encourage ownership of the program by parent's they would be involved in the management of the program by seeking regular feedback about the program. Parents would be a part of all the decisions regarding their children and teams would make goals with parents and review those goals every six months. After initial assessments teams would prepare short and long term goals to impart focused and comprehensive services to children. The team would create a child friendly environment through appropriate use of materials and restructuring of the rooms. During sessions, child centered and play way methods would be utilized. Regular school and home visits would be essential, while placement of children would have to be pursued aggressively.

Transitions and transfer systems would be developed to reduce stress of children and parents due to changes in teams or programs. This could be addressed by ensuring an introduction of the old team to the new team. Documentation would be pursued rigorously to facilitate an effective transfer of information. The system of key worker would be continued wherein one of the team members would become the key worker and would be responsible for keeping in touch, calling, following and tying up with families. Information resources would be developed for referrals. The beneficiaries were grouped according to the geographical zones they belonged to. Teams were also assigned different zones (based on the Municipal Corporation of Delhi zones). To support the staff in addressing issues team meetings would be held regularly. All staff would practice self-evaluation. Peer-discussion of the program would be encouraged.

Chapter 3

IMPLEMENTATION AND REFLECTION

Policies, practices and cultures followed by the schools will have a direct relationship on community's access to school, admission process and procedures of the school, and facilitating the involvement of parents in school management etc. For inclusive education to happen change must happen both at policy level and at the practice and culture level. The inclusive education project undertaken by AADI attempted to bring such changes both in Main Stream Demonstration Schools (MDS) as well as in AADI, the special school. This chapter describes in detail the policies, practices and culture that were in practice in these schools at the time of TIE project implementation and the interventions introduced in policies, practices and culture during the project in MDS and in the special school and their impact on inclusive education.

With the objective of influencing existing policies at a school (micro) level to support inclusion of all children within the school several strategies were adopted to attempt to increase access to school, increasing access to information about admission process and policies, addressing gaps in implementation of the admission policy and facilitating involvement of parents. To promote inclusive practices and culture in the schools the strategies such as facilitating a supportive environment; facilitating more sensitivity and patience and facilitating inclusion in learning were adopted. The last strategy included further sub strategies such as direct work with children to facilitate inclusion of all children in learning , facilitating knowledge and skill building to address diversity in classes , facilitating active learning/maximizations of learning by active learning/maximizing learning by active, facilitating lesson planning for addressing diversity/lesson planning for addressing diversity, facilitating collaborative learning /collaborative learning , facilitating joyous learning /making learning fun /making learning fun/playground , facilitating encouraging self discipline/encouraging self discipline, and raising awareness about diversity.

Section – 1: Main Stream Demonstration Schools

POLICIES:

Access to School

Based on the understanding that inclusive education also meant that each and every child should be able to access quality education, attempts were made to ensure that no child was left out of school within the catchment areas of the school. The survey conducted in the catchment areas of the five selected MDS schools confirmed that many children remained out of school. The survey roughly covered an area of about ten kilometers and covered forty three thousand five hundred and fifty six households. A total of one thousand seven hundred and twenty eight out of school children were identified. Among these surveyed out of school children, two hundred twelve out of school children approximately twelve percent of the total out of school children were found to be having disabilities.

However admitting children in large numbers in the age group of above six in Sarvodaya School was difficult. The identified children would have to appear for exams those were conducted by the Sarvodaya schools to admit children from class two onwards and the children identified did not have enough inputs to clear these exams. To overcome these hurdles younger children were admitted into MCD schools. Many parents were not happy with the solution as these MCD schools were not of good standard. Nevertheless they were persuaded to admit their children in these schools. Among the older group children the survey revealed that most of the older children were school drop-outs, either dropped out of the school, because they had no interest in going to school though their parents still wanted them to study or the school authorities would strike their names off the enrollment list, because they were absent from the school for more than six months, as they would go to their villages for long duration.

Access to information about admission process and policies

Lack of information and lack of awareness about admission processes and procedures among the community people would adversely affect the admission of a child in the school. During the school survey parents had shared that they usually did not have enough information about the admission process and procedures. Parents often fail to produce numerous documents required by the school authorities for giving admission to children. If children were not enrolled at the correct age it becomes difficult to get admission at a later age.

To disseminate information about the admission processes and procedures in the community, the research team organized many admission drives during the month of March for the years 2005, 2006 and 2007, in the community living around all the five schools. Pamphlets in Hindi and Urdu (for school three) containing information about admission dates and papers required for registration and other provisions like reservations in schools were distributed. Door to door visits were made to inform people about

admissions and also to groups of people gathered together, by using a megaphone. The information was disseminated to other potential resource persons like the Aanganwadi worker and the *pradhans* of various camps as well. In the third year of the project the school also participated in the admission drive by the principal's initiative by taking a rally out.

Addressing gaps in implementation of the admission policy

Parents were supported individually during registrations and admissions. Clarifications were frequently sought for parents from the principal and visits were made to the DDE for ensuring implementation of the stated policy by the school principal, with success. Towards the third year the schools were approached with greater aggression to implement policies as stated. Still many parents went back from school feeling helpless and disappointed at being unable to secure admission for their children.

Facilitating involvement of Parents

The team's intervention focused on facilitating involvement of parents by encouraging a dialogue between the two stakeholders. The team suggested that many of the problems faced by the school authorities would get resolved through regular parent teacher meetings. It was suggested that monthly parent, teacher meetings should be organized to discuss various issues with parents. These meetings were supposed to be held according to the stated policy but were not being organized at the school level. The meetings would be held with an objective to create space and time for parents to listen to the teachers and discuss their own concerns and issues. Although teachers in all the schools agreed to organize parent, teacher meetings some teachers however raised doubts about the ability of illiterate parents in helping their own children in their studies. While some other teachers felt that no parent would turn up for these meetings.

The team also raised the issue of fixing the most appropriate time for holding PTMs, in order to ensure maximum participation from parents and changed the timings of PTMs based on the suggestions given by teachers. The team also changed the method of informing parents about the parent teacher meeting by requesting the teachers to write about PTMs in the children's diaries instead of just giving verbal instruction to children. In one of the schools as two teachers did not want to write in the children's diaries for informing parents, the team prepared a printed circular to distribute it among the school children. The team also visited the houses of the children in Primary classes to meet the parents as well as to inform them about the PTM.

The attendance in all the five schools was much more than the teachers were expecting. The project team also attended these PTMs along with teachers. In the initial stages, the project staff did the introductions and then teachers took over and raised various issues in all the schools. In three of the schools the principals addressed the parents of primary class students and gave them information about the school facilities and their rights. The principal encouraged parents to share their issues and concerns. In school four the principal also encouraged them to participate more in the school activities. A first step

had been taken and there was a need for continued interaction among the school and the parents. In School one the principal was over whelmed with the number of parents who had attended and wanted these meetings to continue. He also wanted to hold such meetings with parents of children belonging to sixth standard to address disciplinary issues. The parents met the teachers as a group as well as met the class teachers individually. The teacher shared the performance of the students with the parents.

There were certain instances, where teachers were not happy with the PTMs. In school two in one of the PTMs, the teachers questioned the need for such a meeting in front of the parents. In another school initially the teachers refused to address the parents till the team persuaded them to do so. In another school teachers took a very casual attitude to the meeting. In the initial meetings parents and teachers kept blaming each other for the problems being faced. Parents felt teachers made unreasonable demand on children and did not teach well. The team felt that teachers did not show good listening skills and argued with parents. Teachers became defensive when parents raised any issue. Teachers seemed to have found it a harrowing experience, as parents had earlier never been given that equal status and opportunity to express. But parents were quite forthcoming with issues and suggestions. Parents seemed co-operative and offered to help the school with their suggestions.

Teachers during the PTMs raised issues about cleanliness, regularity, timings of the last working day and punctuality to be followed by children etc. Teachers suggested that parents could meet the teachers in the morning or afternoon when they come to drop or pickup their wards from the school, instead of trying to meet teachers during school hours and there disturbing the whole class. Teachers also requested the parents to check their ward's dairy daily and to help the children in doing their homework; ensuring that children bring text books and notebooks as per the time table; to revise the work done by the children in the class on daily basis at home. They also requested the parents to provide stationery to their children.

On their part parents raised issues like holding PTMs at least once a month, preferably on the last Saturday, some parents also asked for it to be held twice a month. Teachers were asked to give equal attention to all students through turn taking or other means. Homework and other instructions must be written in the diary. Parents insisted on giving homework on regular basis, because a child is more likely to follow the teacher's orders than the parents. Students should have extra curricular activities. The notebooks should be checked regularly- at least once a week. They demanded that a peon should stand at the gate so that parents may forward messages to the teacher, since they are not allowed to come in, at times and also that clean drinking water should be provided to children. Parents complained that students were not treated well by the teachers and even monitors bullied other children and their conduct should be checked. They also complained about teachers being absent frequently and the shortage of teachers. Some issues were very specific to certain school for instance in school three parents demanded that the entire class should have books in the same language. Since it was an English medium school, the books should be in English; they also wanted a principal to be appointed and stated that Primary classes should be shifted to the ground floor as children have to climb three

floors carrying heavy bags. Some complained about the cleanliness of the school. In school five the parents were worried about the fact that some of the classes did not have teachers. The Principal asked parents to volunteer till such a time that teachers were appointed and five parents gave their names. The principal had finally selected two parent volunteers after conducting interviews with them.

PRACTICES AND CULTURE: To promote inclusive practices and culture in the main stream demonstration schools

Facilitating a supportive environment

Attempts were made to create a space for dialogue and discussions between teachers and principal-towards building more positive relations. Principals were involved in meetings where teachers were encouraged to share their problems. For instance after the teachers shared with the principal about their need for a room, the principal assured them that they would get a room. In school two the principal also began to take rounds of the primary section as a result of the sharing that happened between teachers and the principal.

Project team encouraged children to follow appropriate behavior like talking more about themselves and complaining less about other children, rather than laughing at weaker children who were unable to understand helping them in their studies. Shy children were encouraged to make friends with other children by asking their classmates to have lunch with them or play with them. Children were discouraged from teasing and laughing at children who had disabilities by creating sensitivity about the issue amongst the class during class intervention. The team also tried to discourage teachers commenting about children and pointing at the weaknesses of children.

Facilitating sensitivity and patience

Teachers set the culture in the class and the nature of teacher student interaction was considered crucial in creating a supportive environment for children's effective learning and growth. Various efforts were made to make teachers realize that children are sensitive and need to be respected as individuals. The team had shared with the teachers the importance of feeling- touch and feeling-tone. Support was provided to individual children who were facing difficulties in the classrooms.

Teachers were encouraged to provide a welcoming environment for class first students in order to make the first day in the school a pleasant experience. It was felt that the children coming to class first did not receive a welcoming environment on their first day in any of the schools. For many of them, it was first day in any school. Presence of large number of other students in it, presence of a number of unfamiliar adults makes it an overwhelming and threatening experience for many of them. Project team suggested that teachers work on building relationships with the children, to make them comfortable in the class environment. After discussions with the teachers who were going to be the teachers of class first, it was planned that, there will be an introduction and then an orientation of school premises, so that children would know about the surroundings (toilet, drinking

water, play ground etc). Some instructions, time table and books would be given to parents. The team suggested to have some introductory games, poems and story telling on the first day of the school. The team also suggested to encourage children to draw something on a piece of paper, teachers then would display those drawings along with the name of the child on the notice board or on the wall.

Facilitating sensitivity in teachers

"A little girl in Class first would keep crying and refuse to go to her class. She was left like that outside her classroom. She was going to the class before the school was closed for Dusherra holidays. However, after that she did not want to go to the class. She did not want a male class teacher (As reported by the parents). Instead, she would go and sit in the fifth class, as this teacher had once spoken to her sweetly and given her sweets. The parents scolded and hit her, even tied her feet with a rope, and threatened her that if she would not sit in the class they would put the class V teacher in jail. To this, the girl said that if they did anything to her teacher, she would kill them. The facilitator spoke to her and told her that her mother would sit with her in the class. She agreed and slowly became involved in the classroom activities. Thus, gradually she adjusted and enjoyed sitting and participating in the classroom activities. Yet another girl was also going to emotional upheaval. The class teacher adopted the same strategy independently and happily got the child inside the class".

Teachers agreed to create an environment so that children would feel comfortable. In schools where teachers cooperated in this program, the class atmosphere became absolutely light and children were comfortable in their new environments. In school three the teacher agreed to do an introduction activity with the children as suggested by the facilitator and was surprised to see how children enjoyed telling other's names. Most teachers expressed their inability to implement the program by citing various reasons.

Facilitating inclusion in learning

Confirming exclusion from learning

Diagnostic tests were conducted to assess the degree of exclusion faced by the children from the teaching process. A total of 1094 children from the sixth standard took the test and the result of the diagnostic test in the five schools was dismal. Only 0.2% (two children) was found to be at class five levels in Maths, while 1.8% (twenty children) was at the class five levels in Hindi.

Inclusion of all children in learning

The project team began work with two classes each in the first two schools to influence the teachers to adopt inclusive teaching practices. The teachers sought help from the project team to work with those children, whom the teachers considered as weak.

The team began working with the children identified by teachers and helped excluded children in class to catch up. The team visited the school every week and worked with the teachers and assessed the children who were facing problems. The team used to regularly check their performance levels, give them homework and work out strategies to include them within the class. The team asked the class teachers to make a list of students who were at the letter recognition level and then they would observe the children and work with them. Similarly the team also identified students whose concepts were not clear and was regularly made observations and worked with them. Sometimes project members taught the class and realized that half of the class did not understand the concept.

While teaching concepts in Hindi and Maths, worked on pre writing abilities, pre number concepts, number recognition of the children using flash cards. Children were engaged in activities like joining dots, tracing and copying to improve their handwriting and attention building exercises, drawing activities were taken up with children to motivate them to be more creative. Teams also made interventions in the areas of hygiene, for instance the teams asked children to clip their nails and explained to them the importance of maintaining hygiene.

Assessments and observations about children's levels of learning were made to further work with individual children; concepts were explained directly to children, through individual instructions, children who had difficulty in reading were given help during the classes. Different seating arrangements were suggested to encourage the weaker children sit in the front two rows of the class, allowing the teacher to pay more attention to these children. Weaker children were asked to come to the blackboard and gave them an opportunity to answer in the class.

Children who were weaker were encouraged to take on tasks which they found difficult. Besides helping the weaker children to learn by themselves, other children were also encouraged to help them. Children were encouraged to ask questions to their teachers and do self-evaluation by encouraging children to correct mistakes of each group. Children often came to the team members asking to explain something they didn't understand.

In 2007, a foundation course was organized in School four after conducting the diagnostic test in class sixth. The Principal proposed to use the assembly time for the foundation course. The team prepared a list of students who were functioning at lower levels than the desired fifth class level. However after two sessions the course had to be stopped as the time of the year (January) was not appropriate to do the foundation course. Teachers were under pressure to finish the syllabus. The outcomes of this intervention have been too little to have any impact on children.

In the year 2007 during the month of May, a summer camp (for sixth class students) was organized in school one in response to the concern expressed by the Principal of School about the poor results of that year and the fact that teachers were being issued memos for poor performance of children at the end of class six. Permission for conducting the summer camp was taken from the Directorate. During the first week of the summer camp, the team did activities such as theatre, art & craft and used language experience approach

for reading. The theatre was introduced for fun & creative thinking but the students did not appreciate it. They stated that they wanted more of academics in the camp. Based on this feedback in the second week the team focused on academics and that too only on Hindi and Maths. In Hindi, the team worked on word formation [without maatras], later on students were introduced to maatras and taught to form words using maatras. Comprehension skills were also worked upon. The facilitator did story writing, poems, paragraph writing etc with the class. The team also worked on the creative thinking by encouraging them to make stories using words that were learnt during the day. In Maths the team started with number concept and place value, then went on to introduce addition and multiplication tables. The facilitators focused on teaching the four basic operations like addition, subtraction, multiplication and division and also application of these four operations.

At the end of summer camp, feedback was sought from all the students about the camp, about the facilitators and their method of teaching. After a little hesitation, children gave their feedback. On the last day of the camp, the diagnostic test was repeated with the students so as to see if there was any improvement in their levels. The format of the test was similar to the one given at the beginning of the camp. The students were given participation certificates to encourage them to attend more of such workshops

Facilitating knowledge and skill building to address diversity in classes

Teachers' Training: Teachers were introduced to the concepts and teaching methodologies such as activity based teaching, planning, phases of learning, diversity, learning styles, collaborative learning, ground rules, learning styles and the learning pyramid etc, during the training sessions, the team discussed the advantages of collaborative learning and disadvantages of individual learning. Team held meetings and trainings using strategies which they would later recommend for children[8]. The five days training modules were organized for assistants and the upper primary teachers of the five schools. The modules were based on the needs expressed as well as elicited from the teachers during various meetings and daily interventions. The topics covered under the modules emphasized the fundamental concept and methodologies which were required for making a class inclusive. The 'Anekta mein Ekta' trainings conducted for teachers reflected on evaluating the effectiveness of their teaching and whether they were able to reach out to each child. The focus was on what children were learning or would learn

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[8] The team narrates the details of one such meeting "The Primary and Upper primary teachers gathered in the room. The principal introduced the AADI team to the teachers and also about their work. After this, in order to know each other better, an introduction activity was done. In this activity, the members present had to introduce themselves and their colleagues would describe a quality about them. The activity went quite well and everybody seemed to be relaxed. Then one of the members of AADI shared the purpose of our work in detail. After this, another activity was done in which the group was divided into four teams and were asked to assume the roles of different stakeholders, i.e. Parents, Students, Teachers and the Administration (Principal and the Directorate). The groups were told to first discuss the strengths and challenges of each stakeholder and list them down. Each group then had to give a presentation in the larger group".

rather than just teaching. Life skills were also covered in the training. These training sessions were repeated to cover all the teachers, who were absent from earlier training sessions. In all seventy six teachers finally attended the trainings. The principals came only for sometime during the first and the last day of the training. The strategy of supporting teachers in classes was expressed that they had attended a number of trainings in their career but nobody had taught them how those should be implemented. Teachers thus demanded for demonstration of theory shared by team; they wanted to see the team teaching in their classroom with over seventy children.

During the training the teachers seemed very reluctant, initially there were apprehensions among teachers about the usefulness and need for attending these trainings. On the very first day a teacher commented that "pehle wahan (Yuva Training) bhugat kar aaye hain, ab yahan bhugten ge". (First we suffered there, now we would suffer here). Some teachers only came on the last day. However, the teachers who attended the training sessions from the beginning gave positive feedback and stated that they realized the importance of the affective domain and making learning a fun.

Demonstrations: Besides organizing five day training modules, teachers were also provided ongoing class support which included demonstration and modeling of strategies such as collaborative work, learning management activities, implementation of a lesson plan, to create an open and supportive climate in the class, questioning skills that the teachers can use to generate interest amongst children activity- based teaching activities to facilitate their reading skills, activities enhance the language skills.

In School three, the demonstration was organized by first asking teachers to choose the class, choose the subject and lesson which they wanted to be taught. In school one after the group trainings the team used the teachers need for a hobby room as an opportunity to demonstrate inclusive practices. They invited the teachers along with all the children of their classes individually to the hobby room. For each class the activities, material and instructions planned for the session was shared with the class teacher and they were requested to participate by conducting the activity. The introduction, energizing activities, making the ground rules and grouping of the children was done by the AADI facilitator.

In all, three teachers participated actively and conducted the activities well. Others remained present in the class, observed the facilitators and some of them went to the groups and guided the children. One of the class teachers sat on the durries with her head down on her knees and did not participate at all. When the teachers were asked to take over the plan, the teacher requested the team to continue. The team felt that the children had really enjoyed being with the team in the hobby room and the doing activities given to them.

Ongoing Support in Class: This was done by giving them ideas and suggestions in different areas of intervention, clarifying doubts, reinforcing and explaining concepts discussed during trainings, sharing teaching strategies for different concept. Considering the fact that each class has diverse learners, they would take different time at each phase.

It was equally important to relate teaching objectives with the learning outcomes of the children. It would also be beneficial to integrate the subjects with each other. The team brought the mistakes made by the teachers into their notice. Assistance was given to teachers in explaining the concepts to children. Some teachers felt that they needed support in teaching language, two other teachers wanted help in teaching fractional numbers.

Facilitating active learning

To maximize students' learning, teaching methodologies such as learning by doing and activity-based learning were encouraged. teachers were suggested to take up activities like quizzes, building a word ladder, making a English to Hindi dictionary, etc. Similar activities were suggested for maths, and social studies also. On Children's Day, two Bal Sabhas were organized by combining Class first, second and third and Class fourth and fifth. Children sang songs, recited poems and shared jokes among themselves.

To encourage teachers to practice activity based teaching, sometimes learning materials worksheets were prepared and given to teachers on the spot to explain the concepts.

The teachers revised the syllabus in the same way that they had taught. The AADI facilitators tried to do the revision task done by the teacher in different ways to be able to reach each and every child. Teachers could notice changes in the responses of the students and also their increased participation.

Facilitating Lesson planning for addressing diversity

Attempts were made to plan lessons with teachers as it was emphasized that in an inclusive class pre planning was essential to reach out to every child. Initially teachers were asked to prepare their plans for the day. Teachers would respond by asking the team to do the suggested activities with the children.

This strategy was not conducive to developing a smooth relationship and after realizing that they needed to plan before the teachers enter the class and that would be the most comfortable situation for teachers. Teachers were asked about their plans for the following week. But teachers would not share these.

In School five teachers had expressed a need to do class-wise planning. Teams planned with class II teachers of this school for classroom transaction. The team was happy to see that the teacher had decorated her classroom as suggested by the team. When the team asked the teachers how they were planning to do lessons for instance on fractions teachers would ask the team for suggestions. The team would suggest activities and sometimes the teaching methods also. Teachers did not really cooperate in planning the activities. The teachers prepared the lesson plans based only on the first introduction phase of learning.

Facilitating Collaborative Learning

It was generally observed that students were made to work mostly alone and eighty two percent of the children stated they sat separately and did their own work. During interventions there was an emphasis on learning together in classrooms. Teacher was made aware about group processes and its related aspects, wherein ultimately students would take on the responsibility of their group members. This would instill values of collaboration, participation and helping each other. Suggestions like making weaker and brighter children sitting together and making partners among children who would support each other in studying at home also were given to teachers.

Collaborative Learning

It is reported "The class was arranged in groups of six students each. The team distributed one card per group, which contained some mathematics problems on one side and word/meaning in jumbled form on the other side. Each group was asked to solve all the problems on their card in their note books. Students were excited and started solving the problems as a group task. All the groups could solve their respective set of problems. Team invited the groups one by one to blackboard after all of them finished their task. Each group member came up and talked about the card. They were then asked to recite the poems of their choice as a group. Students participated in this activity whole heartedly. Children liked sitting in groups. The team observed that the children spoke freely in small groups but many were too shy to speak in the larger group. Some of the children were feeling very shy might be that happened first time and they did not have such kind of exposure."

Space became a major hurdle in the intervention strategy regarding groups. Teachers complained that the space in the classrooms was not enough to form groups in the classrooms. There was not much moving space in the class room when the desks were arranged differently. The teacher would have difficulty to move around in the classroom. The class size was too small to form groups and change the sitting arrangements. As it was sometimes difficult to change the seating arrangement groups were made based on rows. Teachers also complained that in-group students were not able to see the black board. Most children are not familiar in working with groups and there seem to be utter chaos when the children were asked to do group work. They still tended to do their work individually. Children were not familiar in working in groups and the team states that sharing ideas, space and material was alien to them.

The children were not used to work in the groups and made a lot of noise which irritated the teachers but by October 2006, within the groups children were helping each other making much less noise.

Facilitating joyous learning

Intervention activities also focused on modeling strategies and activities for making learning enjoyable to children. Thus drawing, singing songs, poems, playing Antakshri and story telling activities were conduced frequently. Action poems like Chidiya Ghar, Hara Samundar and games like Boogie-Woogie, Pepsi clap, Tomorrow Holiday Ek ke peechhe ek kala chor, racing, Pepsi fizz, and Pepsi clap were some of the favorites of the children and they would often ask the team to repeat them. Games which helped children have fun and learn concepts as well word-building exercise, concept of circles, left and right directions, were often played. Fun activities like stories, poems, and songs were often used to bring order to the class. Playing these games with teachers allowed them to model a less authoritative role of a teacher.

Encouraging self discipline

The team modeled many classroom management activities. Class management strategies were often combined with teaching strategies to settle the class if a story was being told, it would include words which they had studied in the lesson. To control the noise in the class, group captains were appointed and groups were given marks for maintaining silence and discipline.

Benches were rearranged to make more space in the classroom and were organized in such a manner that the teacher could approach all the students. Ground rules were formulated such as they had to make sure to visit the toilet and for drinking water during the break and before coming to class. However in case of emergency, they were permitted to visit toilet even during the class hours. Children would always quickly make a line to leave the class and would fight to stand in the front. To counter this after letting them make a line the team would ask the last child to go first which shocked the children. Attempts were made to maintain certain level of cleanliness by asking children to use dustbins to put their papers.

Initially it was difficult to maintain discipline in the class in the absence of teacher and the team also ended up shouting at the children in the similar manner as the teacher used to shout to keep children quiet. When the team was alone in the class, they reported that they had to raise their voice often as they faced difficulties in making children settle down. They too resorted to punish children who were hitting each other by making them stand for five minutes and thereafter they sat quietly.

Raising awareness about diversity

The team used various opportunities besides the group trainings to increase awareness about diversity. For instance the team realized it was a good opportunity to explain about the wheelchair during a lesson related to a girl who used wheelchair (pahiyon wali kursi) and was unable to go to garden to play with her friends, because she got stuck on those steps. Team explained to students briefly about wheelchair and its user and put questions to the students like if a child in your school would come in a wheelchair what would be

their feelings about that child and how will they help the child? Students responded that they would be happy to see such a child in their class. Some students asked whether such children also go to school? Students then said that they would help him/her in coming and going out to classroom but at their school's toilet there are steps, he / she would have a problem. The team also invited the teachers to participate in the career development forum. Six teachers from school one and two came for the visit. They shared that the visit had been a good learning experience for them. One of the Teachers shared that she was happy to have come as she had realized that persons with disabilities would also have some abilities as well.

Section 2: Journey of a special school transforming into an inclusive school

AADI SCHOOL

A twenty-seven year old special school was propelled to undertake a journey of transforming itself into an inclusive school because of changes in its approach to education, a new perspective about the education of children with disability, a deeper understanding of the rights of children with disabilities and the feedback of its former students. The school was constantly engaged in rethinking, but the changes incurred during this process amounted to paradigm shifts. The main impetus and anchoring factor in this process was the school's belief in inclusion of the people with disabilities in all walks of life in the society at large.

The direction that the school was considered irrevocable but three years was not enough for all the questions to have been answered, which were raised in the beginning and later throughout this journey. This report deals with some of the answers that were found to the question of transforming a special school into an inclusive school.

In an attempt to transform itself into an inclusive school, AADI school has made changes in its policies, practices and culture which would facilitate inclusion of all children in the school. Some such changes are
- change in infrastructure/physical environment,
- welcomed diversity in its school population by admitting diverse children,
- school fee was made affordable,
- school uniform was introduced,
- safe and secure environment was ensured,
- easy access to information on school policies,
- support to staff for inclusion, nurturing leadership and form a new relationship with the community etc,
- Providing a structured and stimulating environment,
- Grouping children according to age rather than abilities,
- Flexibility in seating in the class, choices and dialogues or classroom management,
- Designing and developing a new curriculum to address diverse needs,
- Addressing diversity in physical development/physical education vs. therapy,
- Planning for differentiation, delivery or instruction for addressing diversity,
- Participatory evaluation of learning, unresolved questions, teachers learning and changing, involvement of all stakeholders, basic necessities/practicing basic humane norms/practicing inclusive behavioural norms/reinforcing norms for treating individuals in an open environment etc.

POLICIES

Appropriate infrastructure/physical environment

The very first changes needed in the new inclusive set up were to create an accessible environment, by altering the infrastructure of the school. There was a need for much

bigger classrooms to accommodate up to twenty-five children and that meant making adaptations in the existing physical infrastructure, because the school was originally designed for a special school with small classrooms. Building alterations were planned and the changes took place during the summer vacations.

The school already had many accessible features but it needed further changes to accommodate all types of disabilities. Thus an access audit was undertaken following which the school has implemented seventy six percent of its recommendations. Fully accessible play equipment was also installed in the school lawns.

Welcoming diversity in its school population

Shifting from its earlier focus of only working with children with cerebral palsy and other neurological conditions AADI, chose to adopt an admission policy which deliberately sought diversity in its population. It opened its doors to non disabled children and children across disabilities. It also included children marginalized due to gender and economic factors.

The policy aimed to enrol at least fifty percent girls, and took a decision to have a maximum of 25% children with different types of disabilities in each class. It was decided that seventy five percent of the student population would belong to a lower income group, while the rest would be from any income group but preference would be given to children with severe disabilities who would be denied admission elsewhere. Another exception to the income criterion was for families having two children with disabilities. The earlier division based on severity and type of disability was later dropped and the only new criteria were age and residence, because the school would now cater to children residing within a five- to- seven- kilometre radius around the school. A new detailed admission form was worked out that reflected the new policies.

Earlier being a special school, catering to the needs of a certain type of disability (cerebral palsy and neurological), the school now admitted only forty to fifty students at a time, who fitted into this category. In April 2007, AADI School had one hundred and seven children with diverse needs, on rolls, as compared to fifty two children in its last year as a special school.

In March 2006, the admission policy was reviewed and based on the survey results, it was realised that the number of non-disabled out of school children was much higher than children in the area from which students were admitted with disability. They therefore decided to reduce the radius of the area for admission from five to four kilometres. It was also decided to screen out children whose medical condition may not allow them to cope with the daily routine of the school.

Seeking children

To ensure admission of a diverse population the school had to proactively seek children. Earlier, the school had never advertised for school admissions and there was a waiting list

of children who were admitted in the months of March as there were always fewer seats available for students. In the inclusive school, first an attempt was made to enrol children with different disabilities. Different agencies[9] providing services to young children with disabilities were encouraged to refer children with various disabilities for admission in Nursery, KG and class I. In October 2004, twenty one children with various disabilities[10] were admitted but the majority of the children admitted were children with Cerebral Palsy. In the second year the response of children with disabilities was not so encouraging and only three children with disability were admitted, while in the third year, five children with disabilities were admitted. Therefore the ratio between disabled and non-disabled students kept varying every year. The team made an attempt to maintain a certain proportion of children with disabilities in each class which would not have been less than if it were still running a special school. They have managed to do this in all the years and classes except the nursery of 2006.

There was a progressive increase in the number of non disabled children getting enrolled over the three years. In April 2005, twenty- one children were enrolled, in the second year, the response from the non- disabled children was better than the previous year. In April 2007 thirty six children were enrolled and for the first time, all the seats in nursery were full and the number of non-disabled children seeking admission had also increased as community people were get to know about the school.

The school decided to conduct an advertising and publicity campaign for seeking admission of non-disabled children. A cable advertising campaign was organised for one month. Many parents were sent letters informing them about vacancies in the school and thus on the whole, the admission process was relatively easy for all parents. Research team also made some visits to individual households in the community to identify the target areas as well as to understand the common concerns of the parents such as school fees, transport and medium of instruction.

AADI team decided to organise a street play to raise awareness about the meaning of good holistic education and to collaborate with AADI to realize the dream of providing holistic education to all the children in its neighbourhood.

Admitting children

The school also attempted to ensure the admission procedures were easily accessible and user - friendly. Selection of children based on the 'distance from school" criterion created some frustration among families living beyond 6-7 km radius of AADI because of inadequate services available for children with disabilities. Many parents offered to pay donations so that their child would get admissions. Others were ready to move their residences to fit into their admission criteria, to get their children with disabilities admitted.

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[9] NIPCCD and SAF, NAB, AIIMS, Ali Yavar Jung

[10] One visually challenged child was sent by Jeevan Jyoti, there were some 'severely' mentally challenged children, some children with epilepsy/fits, some hearing impaired children, and for the first time there was a child with Autism.

Many parents of non disabled children after realising that their children would be studying with children with disability did not come back. Many parents preferred of pulling out their wards, even after paying the admission fees. On the other hand some parents chose to admit their children into the school because their disabled or non disabled siblings were a part of the school. In all, there were fourteen such pairs. There are four children who have siblings with disabilities in the school and ten children who have non -disabled siblings in the school. They chose to admit them in the same school so that it would be convenient for parents to pick up and drop their children to school. However, many parents who were open to idea of disabled and non disabled children studying together, preferred not to get their children admitted because of the fact that the school is a Hindi medium school.

Making it affordable/School fees

To ensure access to the school, attempts were made to make the school fee affordable for all. In the special school, the fees consisted of mainly transport and development charges and ranged from three to eight hundred rupees. With the changes in the school, it was decided that children belonging to families with a monthly income of five thousand or below would be given a free ship but make a one time payment of hundred to two fifty rupees. The admission fee was later fixed at hundred rupees for all. Families belonging to an income group of rupees five thousand to ten thousand would have to pay rupees three hundred for development charges and three hundred for transport charges monthly. This was later changed to three hundred rupees. Families belonging to the income category of above Rs. 10, 000/- would have to pay Rs. 800/- per month which comprises three hundred for transport and five hundred for development charges. This was later changed to five hundred rupees. Children who were not able to pay were sponsored. In April 2006, in line with the Delhi Govt. norms, it was decided to follow free ship for students coming from families whose monthly income is below Rs 5000/-. However the team decided it would charge Rs 100/- for those who were using school transport.

Reaffirming school Identity/School Uniform

To reiterate that all children belonged to the same school, by visibly emphasising the school identity over the other identities of the child, the team took a decision to introduce a school uniform for the first time. Earlier in the special school, children didn't wear any uniform.

Managing the Drop-out Children

As a special school AADI never faced the problem of managing the school dropouts. As a special school, ever since it began, there was a long list of parents with children with disabilities, waiting for admission. Thus there was never any concern about children not continuing in the school. However the situation changed drastically in the inclusive school setup. Till date over fifteen non - disabled and seven disabled children have made a decision not to continue coming to AADI School or have been shifted out to basic services. The reasons for not continuing in school range from parents having problems with the Hindi medium of the school, that their children were being neglected in the school and finally their dissatisfaction with the teaching methodology adopted by the school. Thus eleven non disabled children out of fifteen admitted have shifted to other schools while four others have reportedly shifted out of the city. Out of the nine disabled children three have been shifted to alternative basic services because of medical reasons as children were falling sick and they were not able to cope up with class activities. One child left due to medical reasons, another child couldn't continue because of his/her mother's health, while another two were not satisfied with the quality of services.

AADI School has evolved a policy of following up and trying to find out the reasons for children dropping out. If the school is unable to contact the parents on the phone, they usually send a letter stating that the seat is being given to another child. In case of children being shifted out to another service, usually meetings have been called and at first, the number of days the child was coming to school have been reduced. Then, later, if the child was observed to be still not being able to adjust, the option of shifting the child was considered and the decision was shared with the parents.

A safe and secure environment

The need for a safe and secure environment emerged as a policy area. Earlier the school never faced anxiety about children who would wander out of the school or run around the school at free will. The safety and security policy was designed which emphasised the physical safety and the psycho social security of the children. Security of the premises and safety during travel and transfers was also ensured.

To ensure safety identity cards were issued to all students, strict rules for dropping and picking up children have been put in place; increased vigilance at the beginning and end of the day and free play, first aid training was given to the transport staff. Attention was paid to use safe teaching material in the class rooms e.g. to use blunt knives/ safety

scissors and safer options for putting up charts on cork board. Sanitized toys and teaching aids were used in classes.

Easy access to information on school policies

The school provided all students at the time of admission with diaries which have compiled school rules and regulations printed in it. Information about policies was being included in the diary and a prospectus. Towards the end of the project, an administrative manual for an inclusive school was also complied which contained all the policies of the school.

In July 2005 some (36%) parents stated that they had read school policies written in the student diaries. Others (36%) generally said they are aware of policies regarding leave holiday but some (28%) said that they don't know much about school policies. Some said they didn't know what are activities or timetable of the school. While in July 2007, 86 percent of the parents interviewed stated they were familiar with the school policies and only 7% each, stated they knew some of the policies or didn't know much about the policies.

Support to staff for inclusion

Being a special school AADI had only special educators, but with the changed set up there was a need for the skills of general educators in the team. Thus general educators even if they had no previous experience of teaching children with disabilities were included as new team members. Initiatives were taken to welcome new members. New staff was given an orientation by introducing them to various programs in the organization on the visitor's day.

The new school required intensive planning and reflection from the teachers. For teachers a weekday would begin at 8:30 a.m. with the transfer of children from the van to the classrooms and ended at to 2:30 in the afternoon. They also worked for two days in a week till 4:00pm and on two Saturdays. This time was not adequate for planning so to provide more time for these activities, it was decided to keep the last working day of every month closed for the children so that teachers could get more time for planning, documentation and monthly reflection meetings. It was also decided that children would also leave fifteen minutes early every day to give time to staff for daily reflection.

To assist teachers in planning and addressing children's needs, a resource room was organised. The resource room had teaching material and educational aids which were reviewed and systematized for ease of issuing. Teachers appreciated the resource room, teaching aids and books available for teaching

To address the issues that came up in the new school, teachers were provided training for upgrading and learning the new skills. Training was provided on enhancing communication skills and for addressing needs of children with Autism and speech impairments. As a part of training, teachers visited other organizations like BODH. NTT

teachers were provided with opportunities to attend lectures about different types of disabilities and for addressing diversity in their classes.

In the new setup, initially teachers were feared of chaos caused by children running around but later on, teachers stated that they faced problems in classroom management only when there was a shortage of volunteers, as it required them to take out time for children who needed one to one attention. They said they felt helpless when there was no physical support in the class as many children with disabilities need individual attention. This support was provided by assigning helpers in each class. Eight to ten children were assigned to one teacher and there was one therapist for fifteen children. Volunteers are an integral part of the classes and have been an invaluable support.

Nurturing leadership

To resolve the issues that come up due to inclusive education class conferences were organised by the school, where all team members are able to discuss issues, resolve confusions and develop a common understanding within the team. Some of the issues which were discussed were about grouping, physical layout of classes, feedback on the adaptations made in the toilets, TLMs, play equipment etc. The frequency of these meetings depended on the teacher's needs.

Team also got inputs on weekly basis when they submitted their planning registers to the headmistress who would then give comments and feedback. The supervisors also undertook observation of classes to assist in resolving issues though there was no set frequency. Besides this team members were encouraged to talk to the headmistress in her office whenever there was a need to do so. This arrangement made the relations with seniors very informal and working in the organization a pleasant experience.

The process of staff appraisals also changed in the new setup, it became more participatory. AADI School also developed its own staff appraisal forms with the participation of all staff members. Each person rated four people- self, the program manager, and two other members that they work closely with. Each person's ratings were then shared individually followed by a discussion on their strengths and weaknesses. The team reports that "It was a useful exercise as there was a positive feedback from most staff members. Most were very forth coming in discussing their weak areas. There were remarkable changes noticed in a few people after the appraisal session".

A new relationship with the community

The relationship of the school and the community also changed in the new setup. Besides addressing educational needs of all children, the school also attempted to identify new partners and redefine its relations with other schools. In the earlier setup children from nearby schools (Spring Dales, St. Mary's and Sardar Patel) would often visit the school but mainly because it was a special school. Children from AADI School were invited for painting competitions and annual functions to other schools. Due to linkages with other schools, children got an opportunity to participate in competitions and interact with other children and learn more social skills.

The relationships with other schools had changed considerably. The first step in this direction was establishing linkages with two schools keeping in mind future transitions of children in these schools. Efforts were also made to create a sense of togetherness amongst children by providing and creating opportunities for interaction with other school children. For instance Children's day and Christmas celebrations were organised along with students of Father Agnel School. Children from Nursery and KG classes participated in the centenary celebration of Montessori Schools at Mira Nursery in February 07. This was the first time that they performed outside the school premises in unfamiliar surroundings, for an unfamiliar audience. Similar interactive activities were held with the children of Indian School also.

It continued seeking volunteers from the community, as in the special school and the three inclusive classes initially were extensively supported by ten volunteers. The schools organised meetings with volunteers to elicit needs and meetings once in two months. The teachers shared with the volunteers the objectives and plans for the class in each term and also explained their roles to enhance their involvement. It began celebrating volunteer's Day to acknowledge their support.

The school was a recognised as a special school by the government but the changes in the school made the management initiate a process of recognition from the Directorate of Education rather than the earlier ministry it was working with. The changes in the school meant a change in the category of the school in the government classification system and it aims to be recognised as a primary school and to place itself in the general education system.

PRACTICES AND CULTURE: To promote inclusive practices and culture in AADI School

Teaching Practice in the inclusive school was initially stated to be influenced by constructivist perspective. The aim was that teachers become facilitators and help children learn in a non competitive environment. Towards the end of the project, the team came to believe that rather than following dogmatically / rigidly any one approach, what was required was child - centred practices and an amalgamation of approaches could be applied to reach each child. Everything seemed to be moving towards children taking a more active part in their learning or towards child - centred practices and the teacher becoming a facilitator.

Structured stimulating environment

Teachers in their attempts to address diverse children in their class decided to create a play corner in each of the classes for independent play and a cosy reading corner in the library. Teachers mentioned that the attached courtyard ensures not only space for play but also provide opportunities for quick nature related activities or kinaesthetic experience of teaching concepts without too much of movement or wastage of time. Less of clutter, removal of unnecessary furniture, justified use of walls, side racks and keeping the working area obstacle free enhances smooth transitions. Having theme boards, stringed and board for displaying children's work makes the class attractive and

informative for students". Along with these changes, teachers also created a 'non stimulation' room for individual sessions with very distractible students. Another stimulation room for visual and tactile stimulation was also set up for those at variance from majority of students in the class. This is a dark room with a variety of light fitted on the walls at different levels for different purposes for e.g. to develop visual fixation and tracking. Mats of different texture have also been placed to provide tactile stimulation[11].

Grouping children according to age rather than abilities

In the new inclusive set up in August 2006 there were nineteen to twenty five children (with disabilities) in classes in comparison to the maximum of four to five children with disabilities in a class, in the special school setup, who were taught very intensively. Children were divided into small groups and there were no classes as such. This was because one child was studying Hindi of first class, Maths of second class and English of third class.

In the new inclusive setup classes have been organised age wise. The Nursery age group was between three plus and four plus and the KG age group was between four plus and five plus. The children in class one were between five plus and six plus. Initially teachers organized their class children into groups of up to five children based on the curriculum they followed in a practice similar to the earlier practice of grouping children according to their cognitive abilities. In class one four students were in academic group and two were in the sensory group. Children followed activities according to the groups they were in. Thus children who are in academics attend the main assembly and the other two attend the nursery –KG assembly. The Nursery class had three groups. Two groups consisted of seven children with two children with disabilities whose level of disability was stated to be 'mild'. The other five children were subdivided in three groups and belong to the 'severe to profound' categories of disabilities. In KG, children were divided into two groups. One group comprised of children with mild disabilities and non disabled children and the other group of three children belonging to the 'severe to profound' category. Suggestion to address the entire class as a single group, and organise heterogeneous groups while adapting activities and accommodating individual needs led to some changes in these arrangements, especially while doing collaborative work.

Flexibility in seating in the class

The team had previous experience in designing furniture to suit the needs of children with cerebral palsy but for the new setup it surveyed classroom furniture in several schools before arriving at the final design about the type of furniture to be used in the new classrooms. It finally decided to build trapezoid shaped tables that could be used for groups of two, three, six or twelve children as per the need. This was decided keeping in mind that the design would promote peer interaction and support as well as the fact that

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[11] The team also consulted Dr. Suchu Rajshekharan, a specialist in low vision rehabilitation from Shroff Charitable Eye Hospital.

the furniture would be easy for the children to move themselves for different types of activities (individual, paired, small groups).

Choices and Dialogues or Classroom management

Discipline was an issue in the new set up. Teachers shared that children had become very comfortable and free as teachers gave them freedom because of the objective of creating a fearless environment, but maintaining discipline became difficult. Teachers were expected not to punish children and were expected to explain things to children in a positive manner. When teachers took students for functions in other schools, they noticed that as other school children would sit and listen while they had to run around after their children. Teams also questioned whether too much liberty was being given to children, which was not happening in other schools. Teams also faced difficulties in communicating with non-verbal children as the children responded depending on their moods and would keep shouting in class.

Over time, things have improved and there was a considerable increase in the participation of students. Teachers have become more aware about the children's right to have a say in the activities they were doing. Teachers have learnt to give choices to children and ask for students' suggestions about the activities and games they would like to play. In instances where a child wanted to do sand play instead of what the teacher might be doing with the whole class, the teacher learnt not to force the children and tried doing the activity with them the next day. Previously, there was the need to control the class as is the conventional practice but now a teacher states "I let go and give children more freedom and independence to discipline themselves. More choices are given to children even if that means making changes in planned activity." Interactions with students have become more of dialogue than direct commands. Children were able to raise their voices, and shared opinions freely. Children have been given more opportunities to make decisions about themselves and while working in a group. Teachers have consciously offered children choices to increase their participation in daily activities and this has also led to an increase in their confidence.

Teams have learnt to make rules in consultation with children rather than imposing rules on them. A teacher stated that class rules are framed by the students and their participation is valued. The team shared that once when there was no physical help in the class, then the children were asked how they would manage and they said they would take care of themselves and take care of others also. Teachers thus encouraged self-discipline amongst children. Teachers attempted to build a rapport with students first to succeed in building confidence among children. Teachers also used the strategy of appointing children as monitors of the class who then helped during lunchtime. In this way the teachers made children responsible for cleanliness and discipline.

At the end of two years, teachers felt it was evident by the children's behaviour that they were learning in a fearless environment. Teachers felt that a fearless environment is a well practiced reality that encourages children to express themselves spontaneously. Some students have become quite independent not only in doing their own work but also

working within small groups and pairs. The acceptance levels of teachers by children with severe disability and their interaction levels had gone up. Children feel free to speak their minds in front of the teachers and therapist.

Majority of the teachers (86%) felt that their relationship with children had changed over the past two years. Teachers made an effort to build a rapport with children and presented a friendly, easy going and easy to approach demeanour. Children feel free to ask questions teachers, related to class or any other things. Teachers felt children were fond of them and sometime they didn't want to go home.

A new curriculum to address diverse needs

Previously AADI being a special school, a non-formal curriculum, a grade level curriculum as in the private schools and an open school curriculum was followed in the school. The non formal curriculum comprises a list of concepts and varying levels within the concepts which had to be followed. Teachers were following the course which was developed for a group of children, according to their needs. Teaching aids, worksheets for each and every child are made while keeping in mind his/ her needs and level of understanding/level. In formal school, children were studying in classes II, IV, V, VII and CBSE curriculum was followed. For them there were fixed timetables and evaluation system was followed same as of CBSE (unit tests, two midterms).

The syllabus included value education that provided the scope to discuss values, gender differences and cleanliness. Some of the topics which were also covered were shopping skills, use of calculator, sight words(toilet, etc.), bank operations, social skills, themes like Delhi (which includes making children participate in utilising services available, visiting historical places etc. and other activities like paintings and participating in project Tiger.

In the inclusive setting, there was a need for a new curriculum framework which made it possible to address the diverse needs of all children in the school. To understand and increase the preparedness level of staff for formal education, an orientation to philosophy of education was held. Curricula of different organizations like Bodh Shiksha, NCERT, pre-primary curriculum etc. have been reviewed. Various desirable elements which could be incorporated into the curriculum were identified and incorporated. The exercise involved all the teachers and later on a working group was organised, to take it forward. This involvement also helped the staff to focus on the critical issues related to child development and addressing the learning of diverse learners. After searching many avenues for an already existing suitable curriculum, the team decided to formulate their own curriculum for the Nursery, KG and Class I.

The new curriculum had adopted the constructivist approach, emphasising on aspects lie holistic education, contextual learning, active learning, recognising developmental levels, flexibility in the curriculum and the importance of play. The developmental stages it adopted were socio emotional, language, cognitive and physical development. It is a vertical and a horizontal progression in each area. The horizontal progression represents

the developmental progress across ages, whereas vertical progression represents the sub area as well as the different aspects within it. Early sensory and physical milestones have been especially included in the curriculum keeping in mind the diversity within the group. Similarly alternate communication has been included within expressive language. Different aspects of perceptual motor development (figure ground, form perception, spatial relations, vestibular and proprioceptive)   formed the basis of all learning and therefore have not been mentioned separately. Attention, memory and thinking skills have been included in the cognitive area but since they are the primary processes necessary for all areas of development they are reflected in every aspect. These cognitive processes can only be understood through their observable manifestations like making a choice after using reasoning.

Based on this curriculum the team developed rubrics for every item. The team also felt it would be useful to split the curriculum and the rubrics into three sub sections that is, pre-nursery, nursery and KG. As the classes progressed the team thinking about the primary sections, decided to use SCERT books being used in government schools at primary level as they felt they are well conceptualised in Hindi and yet low cost.

Teachers felt the curriculum was very good and elaborate. They felt that in comparison to other school there was lot of freedom and flexibility in following the curriculum. Teachers preferred the activity based method being followed in the school.

Addressing diversity in physical development

Therapy had to change and adapt itself a great deal in the new set up. Initially, the therapist felt that it was impossible to work with children with disabilities and non disabled children together at the same time. Physical activities like running which were appropriate for non-disabled children had no relevance for children with disabilities. The therapist also felt that quality was deteriorating and some children needed to be taken out of the class, as they needed specific therapeutic inputs.

From gross motor focused on therapeutic inputs, it became physical education and about games and having fun. Earlier, therapy used to be conducted separately, so the class used to get disturbed but now, therapists work in the class, so it is helpful for both teachers and students as the child is not disturbed and teachers get help from therapist. Teachers and therapists began planning and evaluating children together, which also made a difference. Sometimes, the therapist felt that the professional lines between therapists and educators were blurring. Planning for physical education required a lot of creativity and thinking on the part of teachers and therapists. To assist in the planning for diverse groups of children including all therapeutic objectives in physical education classes, a framework of physical education was prepared. The therapist gave more freedom to serve children than before, while still ensuring safety.

The team frequently questioned as to what was the meaning of the concept of inclusive therapy and the issue still remains a challenge for the team as the qualifying courses do not equip the therapists to work in inclusive settings. Teams shared that some children's

goals would not be achieved only through physical education. And severely physically disabled children need intensive therapy for which there was a need to work out alternatives.

Planning for differentiation

In the special school set up the special educators had to plan for only five to six children. In the inclusive school, teachers had to do a lot of planning and teams felt that they needed to set goals for each day. Prior planning was essential to address the diverse needs of children and the time needed for planning increased because of the number of children and the diversity in the class including different types of disabilities.

Teachers started planning at three levels. In the beginning of the year, they plan for six months and divide the syllabus into months and weeks. Then they plan for a week in advance on a weekly basis where they design daily lessons plans. They maintain a record of their daily plans, topics covered, methods utilized and evaluation of the lessons and children's responses. Teachers felt a need to break up and organise the syllabus into manageable sections to facilitate short term planning and they worked in small groups for a month to write samples which were shared with the larger groups. Teachers also commented that rigidity in planning was not possible as many things changed based on children's views of what they wanted to do.

While planning daily lessons, the teacher focused not only on content, methodology and materials but also on individual needs (aids, extra support, adaptations and accommodations) within the group processes. During content planning there is a variation of simple and concrete concepts relevant for some students and complex and abstract concepts for others. During planning teachers organized resources according to the topics they were teaching, as they preferred to provide children with concrete examples even though it wasn't always easy. They spent a lot of time searching for different materials to make the lesson plans easier for children and sometimes prepare charts at home for their lessons.

In the second year of the new inclusive setup, the team reviewed the old lesson planning format and devised a new format in which the planning section had been divided into three sub sections – introduction, main activity and closure. Likewise the evaluation section had also been divided into three sub section – child specific, group process and teachers learning/ outcome. A draft format was made and tried out by all teachers for two weeks and changes were made based on feedback received. Teachers felt that too much time was spent in writing the format every time so they decided to print lesson plan books for the school. Mock sessions were held to practice the use of new format and also to resolve the difficulties faced by some teachers in using it. In the inclusive school set up, teachers have begun co-planning, while in the earlier scenario special educators / teachers were planning and thinking in isolation.

Delivery or Instruction for addressing diversity

In the inclusive school a major change in the role of the teacher was that she became a facilitator of children's learning. For them teaching now meant gaining, an insight into skills, understanding relationships, trying new ideas and bringing about changes. Their role was to ensure that each child learnt whatever they were teaching and they all seemed very earnest about their work. Teachers became aware and conscious that directive teaching strategies led to an authoritarian teaching style. While the constructivist approach advocated that teachers should attempt to create an environment where they are facilitators of children's learning. Thus teaching style was a result of the orientation and philosophy about teaching and children. Teachers became more open to different teaching styles.

There was a general acceptance amongst teachers of the fact that children had diverse learning needs which required modifications in their teaching strategies. Teachers shared that they used "strategies which address diverse learning styles like combination of visuals, auditory mode of communication with tactile / kinaesthetic component.

Each and every child was given importance in the class and teachers made extensive efforts at understanding the children's diverse needs. Teachers shared their process of trying to understand each child with other teachers. Initially, educators did not pay equal attention to all children. Teachers gradually learnt to do this over a period of one year and gave same kind of attention to children with disabilities and non-disabled children.

In the inclusive school the teachers have adopted strategies for experiential learning and children were given more opportunities for self exploration there is an emphasis on the belief that learning comes from action. The class environment had changed from blackboard teaching, to activity based teaching, one to one sessions and dependency on volunteers to group work. Some things have remained the same like a sequential introduction of concepts at concrete level, followed by semi concrete and abstract levels.

To make teaching activity-based, teachers used teaching aids extensively. The team created a lot of charts and worksheets for teaching early concepts, stories and rhymes. The team also decided to compile worksheets used during the year in the form of workbooks for each child which could be shared with parents who valued the record of the children's performance during the year. These compiled workbooks were used in the next year also for the next batch of the children with new editions and changes wherever required. The workbooks have been organised in a sequence of increasing order of difficulty in concepts. In the last year, these workbooks have been printed for children's use even though it was difficult to prepare these worksheets as some levels would require one-word answers, while another would require lengthy answers and another would require multiple answers.

There was an emphasis on teaching being meaningful or purposeful and an understanding that it would become so only if teaching was contextual. Thus the school felt that the family context was important and staff was required to make home visits to understand

children's environment. Teachers made home visits for all children. This ensured that children became open and also helped in understanding the context or the social background of students. Non verbal children also shared news by bringing written news from their homes. Teachers also attempted to make teaching meaningful by explaining the objective or purpose of the activities to children. They chose topics according to the prevailing seasons etc. Teachers also attempted to make children learn more about their neighbouring community by organising visits and outings in these areas, for instance a visit to a local vegetable shop or the milk booth or Gurudwara. These visits while helping the children to know about their community also created awareness in the community about inclusive education.

In the special school, there was an emphasis on individual sessions with fewer group activities but in the new set up there was great emphasis laid on collaborative learning. Working in small groups eased the task of instruction delivery, addressing every student and also enhanced their social skills. The quieter ones felt more at ease in smaller groups and gradually opened out to express their views or relate experiences. Smaller groups also were more tolerant and sensitive to the needs of their disabled peer. They took an earnest interest and shared and helped the disabled child to share his experiences in the small group.

At times, the formation of groups was done by the teachers and at other times children formed their own groups. Teachers made subgroups which were given names based on the current theme to develop an identity and belongingness. To ensure familiarity among students, teachers frequently changed the seating arrangement. AAC, physical, verbal prompts, gestures, visual representation of concepts are used to ensure equal level of participation of non verbal students. Peer facilitators are assigned to help students who have difficulties. however implementing these changes was not easy. For instance, a few among the disabled children were so used to one-on-ones that getting them accustomed to group seating itself was a milestone. There were trying times when a child would howl & holler continuously disrupting group activities and one had to pull out the child within minutes of group seating. But persistence and consistency in including the child regularly and increasing the time duration of group seating gradually paid off. Similarly getting such a child to participate in the group activity again was a Herculean task or so it seemed at the onset. So getting the child to make eye contact with his peer group, pass on or accept a toy from his immediate partner or make a reciprocatory gesture were one of the first successful strides into participative group activity. Also a child that was so used to one-on-one interactions could simply not concentrate on the group activity. The child would get continuously distracted by sounds & actions of his peer group & getting line to focus on the actual activity was difficult task. These often culminated in failed group participation or in a dormant participation. After many counselling/ admonishing sessions, did the child concentrate on the group activity and participate in it too."

Initially, collaborative work through the formation of groups in class was a matter of some concern for teachers. It was felt that children were not able to function independently in groups. There were some children who would not sit. Teachers didn't have duplicate material and children fought for material. Children would see their own

work and would not bother about others. Difficulty was felt in making groups also because children would get distracted and begin fighting amongst themselves. Children who were quiet got left out while in larger group teachers felt they could facilitate the discussion and have activities which have outcomes.

Teaches had also raised the issue of children feeling left out when their peers work much faster or finishing the work themselves. This issue got resolved when students were made into small groups. It was also realized that the task has to be appropriate and children may take time to develop a familiarity or comfort to work in groups and may be initially they needed to do activities like story telling, which involved more dialogue and less material and where children learnt to listen to others. Teachers felt that children had become familiar with working in groups and group presentations were handled with ease. Children were observed to be working quietly in their groups. In groups if they fight, they lose stars so now children have learnt how to solve their own problems.

Peer facilitation was a common strategy adopted in all classroom, play, extracurricular activities. Earlier peer facilitation was an alien practice. Small groupings and the inclusion of the disabled in the group seating sowed the seeds of peer facilitation. Earlier a child who was quick at finishing his work used to be busy in distracting one and all in his classroom, but now the same child will be busy in helping and facilitating his peer partner in completing an activity or project. This child also then takes on the facilitator's role in coaxing and reactivating a shier, quieter child to share his thoughts or express himself. Peer facilitation now is the main stay. Peer facilitation also helped in addressing the student's at extreme levels like by involving the brightest student in helping other peer or taking a revision class with peers (acting as a teacher). Teachers felt that the class environment had changed due to inclusion of all children who read, played, and ate together.

The initial reaction of the special educators to the change in school was, to try and address the needs of all children as they did in the special education or school setup. The same approach would be applied to a larger number of children. Special educators knew how to address any child's need but believed they were more effective in individual sessions. Being the dominant group they continued to plan accordingly and the general educator were kept busy getting to learn what special educators knew. Thus they kept reporting what they learnt about conditions etc. The NTT were a very small group amongst the dominant special educator's stronghold.

But with continuous dialogue between special educators and NTT, both started seeing each other's strength, and began to work together. Whole class began to be seen as one group of children whom the teachers needed to address together. Not only therapists and teachers were inter-linking, but class's domestic support was also taken as a resource. Activities were shared with them, given in Hindi (written) and they were told how to carry on individual sessions or how they can assist during group/ collaborative activities.

Emphasis on collaboration in teaching increased in the inclusive set up. There was a lot of sharing which led to a feeling of bonding and togetherness amongst the team and

people did not feel alone while taking this journey. The positive professional relationships also filtered into the personal domain and it helped people perform better. They also realized the extent of diversity among the staff. Within the program some people experienced the journey more directly and some people were seemingly outside of this journey. Though initially this led to feelings of the first group being more important, over a period of time the processes filtered through the entire school.

Participatory Evaluation of learning

In the special school set-up evaluation used to be twice a year in terms of goal planning and review. Teachers made make six monthly goals and there were no formal exams and only class tests were held. Evaluation was subjective i.e. if a child failed in understanding any concept then the teacher used to take that concept again. They had case conferences in which goals were set. They called parents and along with them teachers, principles, therapist and social workers discussed the condition of the child and teachers updated them with the learning of their child and shared other information with them. In the new set up also case conferences continue to be held for children with disability. A teacher stated that she had completed five case conferences of six children with her. In special school for formal stream they had fixed timetables and evaluation system which followed the CBSE pattern (unit tests, two midterms).Children's progress-Earlier formal exams were held once a terms. Lately half yearly exams are held. Till class five there were no formal exams. Class tests were held and class assessments were also conducted. Open school exams were held according to their schedule.

As in the special school, in the new inclusive school teachers build in assessment and evaluation in their daily teaching and try to assess how much has each child listened and understood the concept they were teaching. Thus ongoing assessment also is an integral part of evaluating children's performance. At the end of the week based on the evaluation, teachers revised on what they have taught. Students were evaluated in a group or in small groups, rather than individually. Regarding evaluation, the teams shared that observation is not comprehensive so at the end of group work ask children to present so they get a chance to evaluate. The team felt there was a need to have a blend of all types of work. So if the teacher knows that a child does not respond in a larger group, then the teacher should make it a point to take some time out and then asks questions separately. The team has designed rubrics which have assisted them in redesigning the nature of assessments. Teachers also continue to use worksheets, activities like quiz competition and evaluate orally through questions and discussions. They were expected to record on a daily basis their plans and evaluation of each child.

In the new inclusive setup, the students' evaluation saw many changes. The team developed rubrics for every component (excepting physical) of Nursery KG curriculum. Besides this a comprehensive students progress reports ware designed. The team also reviewed and methods of recording individual child progress at class room level which resulted in a monthly grid to chart the progress of every child in different areas of development.

The report card had a personal development component written in Hindi. AADI School also ensured that progress of children was shared with parents through these written reports for increased parent participation in the process of monitoring their child's progress. The team designed a grid related to child's progress in different domains and decided to call each parent to fill the grid along with the teacher. This exercise brought in a lot of information related to the child, which was not known earlier to both the teacher and parent.

Teachers were reasonably satisfied with the progress made by their children and agreed that the learning outcomes for children had improved. They defined the improvement was not just in academic terms but viewed the outcomes more holistically. Teachers also felt that children were learning more effectively in the inclusive set up as they were learning from each other, from the environment and from teachers. Children were also becoming more empathic towards each other's needs.

Unresolved questions

Inclusive education although has got many advantages, yet there are certain issues like involving children, who were totally disinterested in taking part in planned activities, decreased pace of teaching, which leads to the feeling of low accomplishment among teachers etc. Another major concern was inclusion of children with severe disabilities in various class room activities remained unresolved. Children with severe disability are curtailed of participating in main activities of the class or were made to participate passively or would get neglected. They still remain segregated within the class as separate activities and individual sessions have been taken to address their needs. Teachers believed that cognitive inclusion was not happening though social interaction and other kinds of inclusion may be happening. Teachers felt that these children might have learnt more if given individual focus for them. With this belief teachers had organized a stimulation room for some children. Others felt that this provision was better even though it was segregated because the child was getting inputs and it was better than sitting at home. Even though their needs are different but children have learnt from peer interaction, their environment and physical help. The issue is difficult and there are no readymade answers available. On the other hand the team also analysing, whether they were achieving the potential academics levels of all children, whether they could satisfy the needs of the non-disabled children. Balancing both the levels was a challenging task and children were gaining but there was a dilemma as teachers felt that children could learn much more.

Teachers learning and changing

However on the whole all the teachers felt that their skills as teachers have increased during the project duration. They gained greater confidence of addressing the diverse needs of children in their class, there is an increased comfort level in an inclusive class, there is reportedly an increase in the ability to build open relationships with young children, an increased ability to try new things and experiment and ability to games and activities. Special educators also developed the ability to address larger classrooms.

Teachers' readiness to use technology has improved. Teachers learnt to acknowledge each child's needs; they were able to communicate better and were able to take feedback constructively. Teachers' ability in analytical thinking and problem solving has improved.

Reflection meetings, class conferences and reading new books have helped in improving teachers' knowledge of teaching methods. General educators reported an increased ability to address needs of children with disabilities

The project has helped teachers to understand the concept of inclusive education. Earlier, inclusion meant having assembly/ circle time together or having lunch and outings together. But now inclusion ranges from sharing the same classroom table top activities, executing the same activity collaboratively, having a say and giving one's opinion freely with and among all children and adults to being a group leader/ class monitor/ peer facilitator and getting into fist fights and quarrels with the peer group. For example, a rather disruptive disabled child today works together in a collaborative group wherein his disruptiveness is harnessed by his peer group. The peer group helps a child to do an activity like colouring their drawings / sticking or pasting or learning paper into bits for a collage. The child in turn learns to listen to his peer group's instructions and also gets to have all the attention that he so craves for from one-to-one sessions. He also fulfils all his objectives of his goal plans. So a collaborative activity in a class room takes care of all round development of a child be it cognitive, physical or social development and boosts an add on – aesthetic development too.

Parents' Perceptions

 In August 2005, forty seven percent of the parents appreciated teaching in the school because of the therapy inputs, the method of teaching which didn't put too much stress on the children and made children happy, the schools focus on social skills and values, the play way method, the excursions and games, the student teacher interaction and the individual attention.

Others (53%) were not so satisfied and while some said they didn't know much about what has happened with the child at school, a few parents stated that not much was happening with their child and their child only played with some toys, slept and came back home. Some parents felt the pace of teaching was very slow. Others stated that there were no studies happening and children were only told stories and made to play. Many were not satisfied with the Hindi medium of the school and other complained about the lack of attention to therapy. In July 2007 the opinions were very different and seventy three percent of the parents interviewed appreciated teaching of the school and mainly cited improvements in their children's learning and teacher student interaction as the reasons for feeling so.

Three parents of children with disabilities stated that their child had benefited a lot from being in the school. Specifically a parent said that their child could now walk with support. Another said there were changes in the child and they followed the exercises and

the suggestions about diet regularly. Another parent stated that their child's pronunciation became clearer and another child was communicating more. Another said that their child would recites poems at home and tells them what he had learnt and done at school.

One parent stated that they are not satisfied with the activities done in the school. They had shared their dissatisfaction with the headmistress who had tried to convince the parents. One parent stated that the level of achievement of children in AADI School was comparatively low when compared with other schools. For instance, they stated that their younger child was able to recite the school phone numbers with their sibling in AADI School couldn't do the same though the child was older.

Some parents stated that goals were not reviewed and there was usually no improvement. They rationalised that this may be due to the child's 'mental level', which may be low. Another parent also felt that the teachers were good but their child had limitations. They stated that the child had not picked up anything in speech development areas also. One parent said that the child who had been in AADI School for some time had not learnt any manners. They stated that this was not the fault of the staff but it was the responsibility of the parents and staff to whatever faults a child had. Some said that if AADI School had taught my child even a little, they would have preferred to keep their child in this school but they didn't teach her anything. Another reason given for pulling out the child is that the child had begun behaving in certain manner, which angered the parents very much.

Involvement of all stakeholders

Inclusion could not be limited to just children as it was applicable to all stakeholders thus the school attempted in the new set up to increase involvement of all stakeholders in the school. Parents were considered an important part of the school and various efforts were made to increase their participation in the school in activities ranging from evaluation of children to management of the school in an attempt to make them partners. In July 2005, all the parents had stated that they liked coming to school which was a testimony of the welcoming nature of the school. Parents felt welcomed and all the parents interviewed stated that they were comfortable talking to teachers. All parents mentioned that the staff was friendly, co-operative and behaved very well with them. Most teachers recognized whose parents they were and they were given importance, appreciated and respected in the school. Others felt that staff understood their issues, problems, difficulties and sorrows. Many also liked the fact that they were explained things in a language they understood. One parent stated that all parents were treated as equals by the school.

Involvement in the special school though had been limited to parents meetings which were held once in six months. Many parents used to come to leave and pick up their children and during that time they talked about their problems and concerns with the teachers. The school policy also required that parents of new children initially should accompany their children for some time.

In the beginning there was a very limited participation and in July 2005 parents (77%) didn't feel that the school encouraged them to get involved. During these interviews

teachers had stated that parents were updated about children's progress through report cards. Some parents (37%) agreed with this and also said that they received daily information about activities in the school through children's diary. Others said exercises were written and given to them and one mentioned that there were six monthly meetings where the therapist, speech therapists meet but now all the staff had changed.

Some found a difference amongst teachers and felt one teacher was sharing while others were not sharing. Another parent stated that they had met the class teacher but she was new and did not know anything about the children. Parents stated that the improvement that the child makes was not being shared. They were hesitant to go and watch the children in class and they felt the work was not reviewed as much as they would like.

After this feedback, the school involved parents considerably in assessments and evaluation of children's learning to make them more comprehensive and objective. The team decided to do this by filling up of the individual student grid together with parents. Parents' familiarity with the grid made the report card much more meaningful and it reduced the teacher's anxiety about report cards. Teachers included parent's ideas, which came up during the discussions over the grid, in planning activities. Parents started participating more earnestly in their child's all round progress at home, a common link was built between the classroom curriculum and real life experiences shared between parent and child. Parents have become more aware about child's present level of performance & what next is to be worked on". In a major turnaround almost 95% of the parents interviewed during July 2007, stated that they had discussed child's /children's performance and 95% of them also stated that they did this on a monthly basis.

Based on parents' feedback about the lack of information about classroom activities, parents were invited on different days to observe in the classroom. For the first time parents of non-disabled children could observe their children interacting with children with disabilities in the classroom. Most of them had questions about the children with disability and were happy that their children were studying with them. Some of them said that they liked the activity based teaching. Some even appreciated that Hindi language was being used in the class so parents find it easy to follow the work at home.

Another step towards increasing parent participation was to share monthly syllabus with parents at the beginning of the month. This helped them to be aware of the concepts the child is learning and also reinforce them at home. The parents were also happy to receive worksheet to do at home over the weekend.   The section - wise syllabus was shared with parents and it has increased some parent's interest and participation.

The frequency of parents meetings also changed when the school became an inclusive school and meetings were held on a monthly basis. The team always tried to ensure that parents were informed about activities and changes in AADI School. The team tried to create a sense of group feeling amongst parents by organising frequent meetings to provide opportunities for bonding amongst parents. Teachers held one to one sessions and larger issues were addressed in larger meetings. Earlier in the meetings discussions were around children only but now there were activities and some parents were more

satisfied with these. Most parents state that the meetings were useful and one parent said that it helps parents to share their feeling & experiences.

AADI School organised meetings for new parents in the beginning of the year so that old and new parents would become familiar with each other, to share the history, the present activities of the organisation, for an introduction to philosophy of AADI inclusive schools and its rules and regulations.

Parents were informed about meetings through their children's diary or letters. Majority of the parents attended the PTM regularly. Though attendance in meetings was never hundred percent100%, but they were conscious of the importance of these meetings and the attendance was felt to be fair. They tried to schedule meetings according to the suitability of school and parents. In cases where the parents had difficulties in coming at the exact time the school has accommodated parents need to come late.

Most of the parents who couldn't attend were felt to have genuine problems in coming. One teacher felt that mostly non - disabled children's parents came. In between, they communicated with parents through phone and diaries. Some parents stated that the PTM time should be shorter and there should be more time for personal interaction. Others felt that the group meetings should be thrice or once in a month if it was for institutional benefit, but if it is for children's benefit, it should be more frequent. Many parents stated the paucity of time or the unsuitability of the meeting time or an inability to get off from their work as the reason for not attending PTMs regularly.

The team also conducted needs elicitation exercises and in response to stated needs, they organised workshops. For instance, it was found that there was a feeling among parents that children only played in the school and there was no reading or writing work happening. The team organised the workshop and used similar activities as practiced in the class like sand play, water play with parents. Afterwards, parents reflected on these experiences to see whether learning was possible in these or not. Most parents realised how useful the activities were for various aspects of children's development and children could have a lot of fun also. This was followed up by workshops on familiarizing parents with the present curriculum. Another workshop organised was for parents of children with disabilities who had only one disabled child and had reservations about having another child. A positive impact of the genetic counselling workshop was that one of the parents actually decided to have another child.

Parents also participated during the admission drive in 2007. They helped in disseminating information about the school and also in distributing pamphlets. Parents have become an integral part of the individual development plans which are the goals set for children for a specific period. A few parents volunteered to make props for the Children's Day Function.

The ultimate goal of participatory process is that stakeholders should become partners and decision makers. The headmistress stated that parents were involved in administration and organizing transport systems in the special school but were not a part of the management. Parents accepted responsibility if helpers didn't come and paid the helpers in the vans. They were also involved in reviewing the transport issues. This involvement though became much less because as parents found it difficult to carry on and later helped in emergencies only.

At the onset of the project, parents (66%) were not clear about whether their opinions mattered to the school. While some responded positively others felt that they had had no opportunities to assess this as they were new. Many parents said they felt comfortable or free in stating their opinions and sharing problems. Most said that decisions were shared and the school asked for suggestions in meetings for instance they were told that non-disabled children would be admitted in school before this process began. The headmistress stated that parent's suggestions are always welcomed but there is no monitoring by them.

While almost all parents felt the school shared decisions and asked for suggestions in meetings but none (100%) of them felt they had been involved in the decision making process of the school. Parents said that the school generally took decisions on their own

and informed them, though they did ask for suggestions in the meetings. There was a unanimous no to any knowledge of the presence of an SMC in the school.

In terms of making a difference in the school many parents stated they felt they could but the school and the teachers were very nice so there was no need to change anything (3%). Some (14%) again felt they had not been associated with the school long enough. Some (25%) felt if they wanted they could bring about a change while others (57%) felt they couldn't bring about any changes.

Since becoming an inclusive school, the scenario has changed considerably. AADI School has taken initial steps to make parents part of their management. Four parents were invited for discussion while developing AADI strategic plans and they were very vocal in expressing their expectations from the organisation. Parents also gave feedback on various policies drafted e.g. safety and security policy. To encourage 'fresh and unbiased insights' into various school processes by parents, four committees (admission, transport, safety, security and facilities) formed in which parents volunteered to become a part. Educated, uneducated parents, parents of non-disabled and with children with disabled parents with different economic backgrounds; all were members of the committee and expressed their view openly. The admission committee which has two parents' as members began to function first. It was suggested by the parents to have age grace for children with disabilities and children who were three plus and five plus should be put on a waiting list, which was accepted by the committee. One of the parents said "it was a very good and a new experience. This step to include the parents in the school functioning is very much appreciated. We are thankful to the school authorities because they thought we are capable of assisting them in the functioning of school."

A teacher shared that "Empowering them to give their views, speak out, giving them informed choice has facilitated the process of making parent's more participative than before…..Over the period of time, we have been able to motivate parents to volunteer self for different committees like – admissions, transport….. As a stakeholder, the parents are part of the school administrative policies and as parents together they form the community; thereby the community is again a stakeholder in the school. The forming of parent committees not only allows the parent to have a say in child related and other school policies, it in turn builds their own probably dormant skills of being a team worker/ leader, thereby fostering tolerance, sensitivity to disability issues, diversity and communality".

The relationship with parents has changed considerably and home - school relations are very different now. Parents have become spokespersons in meetings which address concerns of new parents joining into the school. Parents themselves were able to answer queries of new parents about whether their children would adversely affected by studying with children with disabilities.

The changes in the school - parent relationship are well summarized by a teacher "PTMs have evolved from sessions, preaches and lectures to interactive workshops, activities and social meets. Today generally one sees good attendance during these interactive meets as

compared to the reluctant, miniscule attendance earlier when mostly it was the more educated disabled child's parent who regularly attended the PTMs. Parents who earlier appeared ill-at –ease during school interactions today are confident, comfortable, secure and interactive. School meets and PTMs have today also become an arena for social interactions. Those shy, self – conscious smiles and whispers of young mothers have today transformed into gossipy, wide smiles and cheeky 'gupshup'. The parents from the marginalised society today are seen airing their views openly in an interactive session which was not the case initially. It did require a lot of informal facilitation, rapport building between the staff and parent and the singular pivotal efforts of an absolutely persistent, understated and easy-to-approach demeanour of the management to accomplish this. But the efforts are paying off".

Teachers also felt they had "better rapport, understanding, acceptance of parents, and their social environment". Teachers have developed a relationship with parents where they felt comfortable, lack of any fear and are able to share thoughts & feeling mutually and even personal problems. Teachers were conscious about giving parents space to express themselves.

With these changes, by the time the project got over ninety eight percent of the parents said in response to a question, whether parents were given a chance to discuss their concerns with the school authorities, that they were given a chance. similarly 51% stated they had got an opportunity which is a tremendous change from the 100% negative response initially.

The headmistress felt that staff already participated in management activities unlike other schools. Yearly operational plans were made after discussions were held amongst the program staff. There was an Administrative Management Committee and the managers met once a week and staff meetings were held once a week, which were attended by all the staff and in which information regarding activities in AADI and forthcoming changes were shared. Some teachers stated that suggestions in administrative matters were not asked for in the meetings. In terms of getting a chance to speak, teachers stated that earlier during the meetings usually the principal used to speak. However in the new setup due to more involvement of teachers especially about matters regarding the teaching practices and the new curriculum was designed in consultation with teachers.

There was an effort to provide space for helpers to express their views and issues by organising monthly meetings with domestic staff. The meetings provided a space to develop a better understanding and Working of both becomes more mutual + automatic rather than a need to remind. Even, domestic staff gets an opportunity to share their point of views. It strengthens the emotional bond. Helpers are being included in storytelling and other classroom activities and are heard suggestions about games that children can play.

To build a sense of togetherness in the entire school, the team organised many celebrations and picnics for students, parents and staff. The school celebrated festivals like Durga Puja, Dusshera and Diwali and also Children's Day and Christmas. These

were celebrations filled with games and music and the team reports that parents were also a part of these school functions like Independence Day and Children's Day function, making many parents very happy their wards perform on stage. To encourage and strengthen bonding staff parent picnics were also organised where they all played, games, sang, danced and ate together. The feeling of belonging to a group increased and even though it might not be very cohesive group it is in a better situation than before. Parent's Picnic – A teacher shares "it was really a good way of interacting & knowing more about each other. Parents got the space to leave behind all household activities & devote some healthy time for each other. Get – togethers before vacations – includes all teaching & non-teaching staff. It also lays the basis for better rapport & understanding between all. Everyone gets a sense of acknowledgement."

Reinforcing norms for treating individuals in an open environment

Values like treating each person with respect and dignity, recognizing each person's achievements and contributions, treating people fairly without any discrimination, and to resolve conflicts through dialogue and discussion, were considered crucial for any environment to be inclusive. The School already had a stated inclination towards these beliefs and staff was conscious about practicing these beliefs. These norms were practiced was evident by the stakeholders responses. Teachers very strongly felt that people were treated with respect in the school (approx 84%). Appreciation was expressed for the staff's work by following a process where teams share their activities in the program meetings. All children also with one exception (95.5%) stated that teachers appreciated when they did something well. One of the teachers felt that because of these norms the atmosphere in the school is characterised by freedom for both children and teachers which was not so in other schools. Another teacher stated that children have "no fear as such because we don't stop them." Children's interviews also corroborated this fact. All children liked coming to school. The things that most of them liked were playing (70%), studying (11%), the physical environment (37.5%), the food (24.5%) and teachers (35.5%). Some children (18%) stated that though their teachers were nice to them too but they liked children with disabilities much more.

Thus, even though people were respected inadvertently there were some issues. Some teachers felt that there was a tendency to form groups when one studied and worked in the same organization. It was not done consciously, but it was happening and they felt an 'outsider insider' divide. Problems and conflicts are resolved through dialogue and discussion: The headmistress said that they followed a participatory process and the rules were the same for management, managers and staff. In terms of problem solving if there were general issues they were discussed in the program meeting. If there were individual issues then they were discussed separately with the concerned person. She felt a chance for changing was always given to people. There is also a sense of groupism among the educators and therapists. A certain sense of unhappiness was also expressed by staff members about roles and responsibilities delegated.

Amongst the peers teachers observed that sometimes children teased children with disabilities or pushed their wheel chairs around. There was a child who stammered and

the children without disabilities would laugh at him. During such instances the teachers would try to stop them. Nineteen out of the twenty two children (86.4%) stated that children in their class were helpful to each other. Children said they helped by helping each other in their work, in distributing things, by pushing wheelchairs and helping some children in eating biscuits.

While teachers stated that children are very young, they fight amongst themselves but they don't snatch things or push each other around. Almost 36.4% of the children stated that children did fight amongst themselves, while 59% stated they didn't. Some children especially girls, complained about boys hitting them.

Parents, almost unanimously (87.5 percent), agreed that children were treated well by the school. They described being treated well in terms of behaviour, which they judged this on the basis of children being happy in the school and expressing happiness to come to school. Parents also stated that teachers play with children and speak very agreeably to them. Teachers gave a personal touch to everything they did and it was felt that was the culture of the school. Nobody says anything unpleasant or complains about the children in the school. Another stated that the school had concern and took care of each child, including their toilets needs. Parents had observed that each teacher knew each child's name, irrespective of the fact that whether he/she was the class teacher or not. The school encouraged children to speak respectfully to everyone; children didn't cry in school and the children studying or whatever the teachers taught them. Some parents observed that teachers were not strict and children don't fear them at all, unlike in other schools. Teachers also encouraged parents to respect children's wishes. For instance, they discussed & suggested parents should ask children if they want to eat or not and give them food only if they want to eat at that time. In all, it was felt the teachers in the school could be trusted.

While 43.75% of the parents interviewed felt that the school did support them in speech therapy, therapist, medical help and transport to address children's needs. They work hard with the children and take care of their needs including food and toilet. While some merely said the children were given toffees and chocolates sometimes, some others said they received many things like they received twenty five rupees for making a file, books, colour. Others said they received free transport and books. Others said they took care of each individual child's needs. For instance a child who needed to be alone was taken to stimulation. In terms of support in material things the parents stated that the school had provided them with mobility aids. Some parents stated that teachers are sensitive towards not only the children's problems but also their needs and problems. Some parents said they were in private jobs and the school supported them when they couldn't attend the meetings. Another parent stated that they try to understand our needs.

Parents who didn't feel supported (46.87 %) expressed unhappiness over addressing their child's needs by the school. One parent said that they trained their child for toileting at home but this was missing in school. They said there was negligence in terms of food, water and changing diapers. Another said that at times, the child remained with wet panties. They rationalised that this may be due to the fact that there were so many

children. Some parents found transport to be an issue and they found it difficult to get the child to school. Another found that though there was transport but they had to pick up the child from a great distance. Some stated that the school was very hot for the children and they became very red due to the heat. They stated that children should be provided with comfort in extreme weathers and the buses should be air conditioned. One parent felt that special requests regarding medicines should be looked after by the teacher. One parent stated that no volunteers training had been organized till date. Only the class teacher had helped her to understand the needs of the children and they had learnt some things by observing teachers and helpers. This shows a lack of support to volunteers.

Some parents complained that they had requested the teacher to administer some homeopathic medicine at regular intervals which had not happened and he was very concerned about this. When the parent shared his concern with the teacher, he was told there were many children in the class and so the teacher could remember about the medicine sometimes and sometimes she forgot. Another parent stated that during meetings, more emphasis was laid on the issues of children with disability. He felt that non-disabled children were side lined. They were being taught very slowly.

Belief in Inclusion

Staff belief in inclusion: By early 2005 the entire staff had accepted the idea of an inclusive school and even the new teachers stated that they felt positive about inclusion. These new Nursery trained teachers had no earlier experience of teaching children with disabilities. They shared that they were not aware at all and never paid attention to education of children with disabilities as it was felt to be the domain of special educators. Within a short time though they felt that they had learnt a lot, were more aware now and knew a lot about various conditions. General educators felt they had managed to build a relationship with children with disabilities also and they didn't hesitate to ask their help. Another teacher stated that that she enjoyed teaching children, both disabled and non disabled. While another cautioned that inclusive schools would be successful if the number of children and teachers were in the correct ratio. Inclusion in AADI School meant a ratio of fifty is to fifty and a teacher stated that this ratio was not possible in other schools as in regular schools there could only be a few disabled children in a class.

This belief in inclusion amongst the staff is also reflected in their commitment to do their best for each child. Teachers had gone that extra mile to be more effective teachers. A teacher stated, she felt she was a part of the school but she wanted to do much more than what she was doing at present. Teachers love for children is clearly reflected in the attention paid to each and every child's learning and development.

There is also a sense amongst AADI School Staff of being part of a larger purpose and they felt that their roles were much larger than that just that of a teacher or a therapist. Besides working for student's progress, they were also contributing and working towards providing justice and services to marginalized groups. Another teacher stated that the school was providing a better opportunity for children who otherwise would have gone to a government school. One of the teachers felt that if the school was successful, it would

be beneficial for parents, would lead to a good social atmosphere and would change the nature of society. The school was providing opportunities for interaction between the disabled and non-disabled, which was not always possible outside the school, in the community. She felt the interaction was beneficial for both sets/categories of children as children with disability learn from non disabled children and non disabled children were learning to help.

After the change was initiated over the next two years the teams frequently questioned what it meant to be inclusive. A teacher stated that there was ambiguity about what was an inclusive school; she was concerned about the degree to which the school would be able to practice inclusion. At another point, the team said there was a need to have another look at where and to which extent inclusion was possible. They questioned what was expected of them and felt that they could not practice inclusion either because they didn't know what it meant or maybe they didn't have the skills. Another member felt that AADI School would have to decide what quality meant for them as inclusion had led to deterioration in the quality of work with children with disability. Inclusion of other marginalized groups faced a challenge by the protective attitude of the staff to children with disabilities. The focus had to shift to all children which took time and happened only towards the end of the first year. Teams stated that for academics, minimum cognitive level is must. If we are excluding severely disabled children, then that is not inclusion. Especially during teaching time, they are separated and if they are in the class, they get distracted. On a more positive note another member stated that children are learning from other's mistakes.

A teacher stated that "As I experienced inclusion does work in a healthy manner, to some extent. It works because different abilities come together, all (children & adults) try to learn & adapt each other and learning (as a person) which has happened is learning for a lifetime. On the other side of it at times, it is still a challenge where diversity is at one of the extremes". Another shared "My experience has been only in the primary level (Nursery / KG) and even there have been times when individual sessions have had to be taken, so I do think that as educational concepts become more and more abstract and complex, it would be very difficult to bring all the children together (especially the severe children) all the time. But yes definitely the children who are mildly disabled and moderately disabled can study together (until much later in some cases e.g. M.R) if certain factors are kept in mind e.g. commitment and positive attitude of teachers, a good technical base, regular planning, follow up, support (in terms of volunteers), availability and access to materials to cater to individual differences, good team work (which is also support.)".

After two years of the project passed, the fear of inclusive processes lessened amongst the team. Earlier the team would only see problems but later they were more confident after experiencing the process of inclusion themselves for two years. This was so because earlier they had superficial knowledge of inclusion and had not practiced it. At present, their understanding of inclusion is based on personal experiences, which was not so earlier. In the third year the team is feeling more confident also because they feel they

have created important and new knowledge of inclusive environments amongst and by themselves.

The team belief in inclusion has also become stronger because they have seen the growth of each child. The children with disability felt much more confident now than earlier because earlier they felt there were disabled so they were separated. They now feel that they are different rather than disabled. Children have developed because of peer interaction, they have learned to make friends and work together. Teachers have realized that the children are the biggest resource in inclusive classrooms.

Disabled and non – disabled children learn from each other, and get to know about the ability of each other. Over all development (Physical, social emotion & cognitive) is better in an inclusive school. The teaching strategies and methodology which are helpful for disabled are equally helpful for non-disabled. Many children, whom we think are non-disabled, often have lags in their learning. Thus, inclusion is good for all students.

Finally, though the team concluded that inclusion is a process, it's more of an attitude, it never reaches a perfect stage and in each setting, inclusion is different. It's a notion and when you actually reflect on it, one realizes that inclusion and exclusion occur in every sphere of life. It was understood that one would only have small achievements to show and teams observed that the progress was slow. At the end of each year, there was a need to review how far one had reached and for this it would be beneficial to define some parameters, as otherwise it would be very frustrating. Parameters for inclusion would need to be defined in terms of children's experiences of inclusive environment.

At the end of two years of experience in an inclusive school, 58 % of the teachers had an unqualified belief in inclusion and the rest said inclusion would work only if appropriate supports were available. Supports were in terms of physical support, support in terms of materials and also in solving problems faced by the team.

Children's reaction to inclusion: Social inclusion through peer interaction has been one of the most heartening results of the entire process. There is reportedly a high degree of comfort and ease of interaction among children with disability and without disabled. Some children with disability who had initial problems in settling down to the routine now seem to be settled. Some who were very shy and reserved have now opened up. Pairing students has really helped to facilitate children vocalising their needs more demandingly.

Initial observations by teachers suggest that children did not find it difficult to stay and study together, though they had to remind and tell children to be careful. Earlier, they felt left out but now feel accepted.

A teacher felt children without disabilities were very helpful because they know the limitation of children with disabilities. The teacher did not have to remind them to provide assistance to children with disabilities. Non - disabled children did not push them or behave in a forcible manner. Another teacher said children with disabilities are learning and improving from children without disabilities. In July 2005 nineteen of the

twenty two children (86.4%) interviewed also stated that they liked the children of their class while twenty of them said they had friends (90.9%) they could play with. Children gave specific names of their friends and many children mentioned children with disability and vice versa as their friends.

Teachers continued to make positive observations about peer interactions through the two years, about how children seemed to helping each other, about sharing and about how they were learning to communicate with each other. They stated that the conversations between disabled and non-disabled children reflected empathy. They seem to recognize each other's strengths and weaknesses. Interaction between disabled and non-disabled had increased and they mingled with each other freely. They attempted to device explanations of the differences among themselves for instance one child said that a child with disability was like a baby so she did not understand many things. Children wanted to experience and explore the aids used by disabled children for instance W/C. Teams stated that children have made adjustment with disabled children's behaviour. Teachers shared now children suggest their friends' names for participating in functions. Sometimes though, children with disabilities in wheelchairs were observed to be left out during free play.

A teacher writes "Earlier, communication and interaction between the disabled and non-disabled meant the existence of speech or written words. Children earlier were wary and reluctant to interact with a disabled child more because they were unable to establish a communication link with a child whose speech was severely limited. Now when they have to constantly work and understand each others' points of view when together in a group set-up children by way of rapport building have picked up on the little quirks, gestures, gesticulations and eye movements of their disabled peer/ friend and are the most spontaneous one's to express their friend's needs and moods. Also they enthuse themselves to share their friend's communication board and today the communication board is not just that but also a pictorial aid that the facilitator may sometimes use as a TLM. Communication is the link that holds the diverse group together be it through gestures, sound vocalizations, eye-pointing, facial connotation or the communication board".

The teams stated that inclusion is helping kids. By observing other children, they learnt to attend to a task to sit and to look. By participating in group activities, they picked up social skills. After seeing non-disabled children, disabled children try to imitate them and try to walk. They copy non-disabled children. For instance, one child started eating on his own. Fits have been reduced and eye contact has increased and also he is initiating to communicate. Some specific children show improvement in behaviour and speech. The restless anxiety had now given way to a more relaxed feeling that given time disabled and non- disabled children will happily mingle with each other. Earlier, disabled children were used to their demands being met immediately as the teachers were only for them but now, their attention is diverted towards non – disabled children as well. These observations were supported by the fact at the end of two years in response to the question should all children study together, 98% of the children interviewed said yes while 2% said they didn't know.

Parent's belief in inclusion :The majority of the parents (71.87%) interviewed in July 2005 seemed to believe in the approach of the school and stated that children should study together and they had no issues if they belonged to any social group or were of different abilities. Others said that the upbringing of regular children was different but in the school everybody was the same. Parents of non disabled children reasoned that even children with disabilities were children first. If Children with disabilities had disabilities then they were not responsible for their conditions. Other said any child or person could become disabled thus they should be separated. Another said people with disabilities couldn't do anything about the way they were, thus they should be discriminated against. If children go to school they will study together and this was what made parent's happy. Some said that children without disabilities were not really affected by children with disabilities in any negative manner. Some said that even at home children play with their sibling which was really good, so they could also study together. Others felt that these kinds of changes should be encouraged in the school and it should continue to take in regular children.

Some parents (18.75%) did have issues and concerns. Parents felt including non- disabled children in educational settings meant that children with disability got less attention and didn't get daily inputs. Some parents expressed the concern that if we include non-disabled children, teachers will not be able to get individual attention and they will be neglected. They felt children could be together for activities like story- telling only. One parent said that in terms of exchanging food, children could do this but they should not eat each other's "jootha" as they could get sick. During the meetings, a parent of non-disabled child raised a concern that due to the presence of disabled children, their child will be neglected.

Parent's belief in inclusion seems to have strengthened at the end of the project and the support for inclusion seems to have increased with 93% parents supporting the usefulness of inclusion and only 5% feeling it was not useful for their child while 2% were not very sure. The parents, who felt inclusion was not a good idea, were parents of children with disabilities and they felt that because of inclusion the amount of attention given to their children had reduced. Six parents of children with disabilities also pulled their children out of the school over a period of two years while two were shifted out to alternative services because of low attendance.

Section 3: Alternative Education Services- INTERVENTIONS

Accessed Services

A total of five hundred and sixty three children staying in different districts of Delhi accessed the services; out of which one hundred and sixty five were girls and three hundred and ninety eight were boys belonging to different socio economic sections of the society (37 schedule caste, 2 schedule tribe, 37 minority,19 other backward caste, 9 others and 459 general category). Children with different disabilities[12]/impairments came to avail the services and for the first time the organisation worked with children with HIV. Under the home based service delivery model till date eleven children are registered in the West and East of Delhi and over twenty six sessions have been held for these children. A total of thirty five children accessed cluster services.

Opportunity to achieve developmental potential

To keep work focused for children coming to alternative educational services, individual comprehensive plans were made. Goal setting and achievement were taken as indicators of the quality of services being provided in alternative educational services. Goals are targets to be achieved while working with children and families in different areas of development, which include therapy, life skills, communication, literacy (functional or age-appropriate), social emotional development and recreation, following a holistic approach to education. A major goal area was the placement of children in schools and other services that are able to provide children with inputs for development on a more regular basis. The team made these goals after detailed assessments in different areas.

The goals were made in accordance to the needs and priorities of the child and the family and after discussion amongst the team including parents and children. During these meetings the team, the parents, the child and the manager, co-coordinator held in-depth discussions and teams shared the details about the child's assessments. The areas of work are prioritized and goals are jointly finalised in this meeting. Individual comprehensive plans were then charted out for individual children with short term and long-term goals that were made for a period of three and six months.

If children moved from individual comprehensive plan to the cluster services, activities were planned towards achieving the goals stated in the child's individual comprehensive plan. A cumulative bi-monthly plan is made on the basis of individual comprehensive plan, which was further divided into monthly plans and daily activities are based, on this monthly plan. The team has developed a grid in which they write in short about each child's goals and its time frame.

For three years in basic services for two hundred and nineteen children, two thousand four hundred and ninety four goals were made and one thousand one hundred and eighty six goals were achieved (47.55%) and in cluster services for three years nine hundred

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[12] Children with Cerebral Palsy, Mentally challenged, Autism, Visual impairment, Duchenne's Muscular Dystrophy, Gaucher's disease, Wilson's disease

and eight goals were made for fifty four children and four hundred and ninety four goals were achieved (54.40%). Goal achievements have increased every year in cluster service in comparison to AES services where the achievement level has decreased from first year to second year, still the percentage of goals achieved in cluster service is also not very high if one compares the time allocation between the two services. Over the three years an average of fifty eight percent parents stated they had been involved in setting goals. Over fifty six percent parents felt they were able to include the goals they wanted to set for their child and almost forty seven percent felt that goals were achieved.

Some of the difficulties in goal setting that the teams faced were that they could not make goals for all the children due to the shifting and high turnover of staff. The teams took time to become familiar with children and organize their work. The parents became perturbed by the frequent changes in staff and came irregularly thus making it difficult to complete assessments and set goals.

Placement in more regular educational services

There was a great need for community resource mapping and networking so as to make different services available in neighbourhoods. Teams visited the neighbourhood community to map the available community resources and also to network with different organizations, regular schools, special schools and activity centres to find appropriate placements. In all fifty six resources were identified in the community.

Admission in AADI School or in any other equivalent special school is the main expectation of almost all parents coming to basic services. AADI School did not have the resources to admit all children. Team explained this to the parents and gave them options of other special schools if there were any nearer to their residence. However many parents were not ready accept these services either because, parents are not satisfied with their standard of work. Sometimes they cannot avail these because of financial constraints as the fee in these schools is usually high while some schools don't have transport facility. Even so in all seventy five children were placed from AES to special schools, formal school and in cluster services, over the three years. In all eight children were placed from cluster services, to main stream and special schools.

Stakeholder Involvement

Parent Collaboration

The team had envisaged collaboration processes to be an integral part of the service delivery in all the models. Collaboration was understood to mean that teams relate to parents as partners to meet the objective of providing education to the child. Services would be family centred keeping the family needs as a priority and in the context of the family.

The team was able to work with families as partners in the session but they couldn't involve parents in the decision making aspects of running the basic service program. In

the cluster services collaboration with parents in activities and in administration of the program was pursued with greater focus.

Parents' Collaboration

One of the issues that came up was that in the south cluster the teams came forward and shared with parents that they were finding it difficult to run the cluster on all five days. In turn parents suggested that if AADI supported them by giving them the space they would run the cluster the other two days. The team was open to the idea and stated that it would support parents including in children's planning. A parent's roster was made in collaboration with the parents and they became actively involved in the running of the cluster. This helped to boost up the confidence of the parents and also allowed them to interact with and help each other more often. In January, though a few children left the cluster as parents were transferred out and one child was unwell. After this the two days on which the parents were running the cluster, collapsed as no other parent was able to support the cluster. Other parents discussed and decided that they would try to come on certain days and accordingly a new parent roster was made. The parents jointly decided that they would try out this arrangement for the next three weeks and if it was not working out they agreed that the parent cluster days (two days) would be temporarily suspended. The new arrangement was not successful as parents who had agreed to come were unable to come because of various reasons and a joint decision was taken to temporarily suspend the parent cluster. The cluster there after had been running for three days a week.

Staff Involvement

All the AES staff used to meet on a weekly basis in which administrative issues, communication issues, and other issues related to program such as dress code for the staff, working hours were discussed and resolved. Sharing of information about different components used to be done in the project meetings. AES team use to meet with their co-ordinators for detailed discussions (team meetings) about the needs of children and families and the challenges which they face in addressing them. In all seventy three team meetings were held.

Initially, for reflective meetings the team used to meet on monthly basis wherein they shared achievements, issues, challenges and attempted to find solutions for them. Later on these meetings became very irregular. Teams were requested to write reflective diaries on a daily basis but they were unable to do this due to time constraint. Some of the issues shared in these meetings were a concern about the number of drop outs from the west zone, goal making, changes in team members and transition of children within programs. Teams also expressed a need of skill building for facilitating parents group, in handling issues like sexual and personal hygiene and transfer of skills to parents.

Assessing Collaboration in Basic Services: Parent feedback

To assess the collaboration with parents in basic services a parent feedback was designed covering four areas of organisation and administrative of service delivery, processes followed during sessions, the purpose of the session and the impact of services. In the first year the total percentage of positive response from the parent's feedback was seventy seven, in second year it was sixty seven percent and in third year it was sixty five.

Parents' feedback on collaboration in basic services

The criteria for selecting the parents for feedback was that they should have attended at least four to five sessions with their child. Feed was taken at the organisation or at their residence. It was envisaged that the same parents would be asked for feedback over three years but only seven gave feedback for all three years, forty nine gave feedback for two years and hundred and six gave feed back once a year. The same parents could not be asked for feedback because they either stopped coming regularly to AADI or their addresses changed and the team could not trace them as phone numbers also changed, a few of them has shifted out of the city and some were placed in cluster, special schools or formal schools and their needs were met. This led the team to analyse the attendance and it was found that eighty percent of the parents became irregular or completely stopped coming after four sessions.

In the domain related to **processes followed during sessions,** an average of seventy nine percent parents gave positive response over the three years.

In the domain related to **the aim/purpose of the session** is fulfilled, an average of sixty four percent parents gave positive responses over the three years. In this domain some of the questions asked were about whether parents felt if the team understood their feelings and problems, if they were given useful information and if the team informed them about provisions available to them as parents of a child with disability for example concessions, schemes etc.

Parents shared that teams didn't visit the schools their children were placed in on a regular basis. Some other parents shared that School visit was done by the team members and the school had not co-operated. Parents also suggested that guidance for admission into vocational training and clarity about whether to continue in regular streams or not should be provided by the team.

A parent suggested that teams should help in making Disability Certificate and they should be informed about the facilities available under law for future of children with disability. Another shared that goals were never shared and sometimes teams suggested unpractical solutions. A parent commented that after putting in a lot of effort to come from a long distance they often felt that the session was of no use.

The average percentage of positive responses over the three years, in domain of **organisation and administrative of service delivery,** was sixty seven percent.

Some of the suggestions shared by parents under this domain were that sessions should be held in the summer break, in the evenings and on Saturdays too, especially for school going children. Another parent wanted a greater frequency in appointments as usually there were long gaps between appointments and children would forget what they had learnt.

Parents who are staying far from AADI suggested more branches should open and transport facility should be provided to those parents who don't have conveyance facility. One parent requested that more detailed and longer home programme should be given so that parents who can't come regularly can continue to work with the child at home.

Parents also suggested that vocational skills should be taught to children and vocational course like computer etc should be organised. Other parent suggested that the teams should work on building confidence of children and learning life skills. Some other suggestions were that new techniques in therapy should be shared with parents. Others stated that education assessments should be age appropriate and teams should pay greater attention towards studies and education of the child. They also complained that teams took a long time to finish assessments.

Parents also requested that the organisation should make greater attempts to retain their staff as it was difficult to form a rapport with teams, in case of frequent changes. A parent stated that if you pay peanuts you will only get monkeys.

Another parent complained about the technical competence of the team in therapy. Stating that they had come for over five sessions but the teams was still not clear about the program which should be given to the child. They also complained that the teams did not provide them inputs in the areas of communication. Parents also shared that if goals were set the teams should be able to tell them the time period in which these goals should or would be achieved by the child. Parents also complained about the poor coordination between the educators and the speech therapists and appointments were frequently cancelled.

Parent also suggested that team should work with all schools in Delhi to train their teachers so that they will address the needs of children with disabilities sensitively and also the only thing that children may need was a little more attention. Another parent suggested that the teams should develop facilities like hostels,

A parents suggested that the teams should organise group activities for both parents and children, like get together with other parents should be organized once in six months, extra co-curricular activities which the child can come and participate in (painting, dancing, etc.) should be arranged, workshop for parents should be organized so that they are trained in addressing the needs of their child and make children self-dependent.

In the domain related to **the impact of services,** an average of sixty eight percent parents gave positive responses over the three years. In this section the parents were asked if they felt that the team listened to them and gave importance to their views, if they were learning ways of managing their child and if the team was able to address or answer their child's needs and issues.

Some parents shared that they felt positive and confident that their child would improve after their visit. Others stated that staff was helpful, their needs were fulfilled, they were happy with the services and counselling facilities. They stated they were motivated after coming to AADI and AADI was like a life line for them.

While another parent felt that the teams had not given much input to their child. Another stated that earlier there had been improvements in their child but later on there was no improvement thus they had stopped coming. While another stated that in spite of spending money there was no improvement in the child. Another stated that a child should be improving after teams programming but this had not happened. One parent was very upset because they even after coming for over six sessions the teams were not able to address their child's needs. Sometimes teams were also unable to address parent's needs and the remarks of a highly stressed mother reflect her lack of support shared that such children (her child is severely disabled) should not be there and further asked if the government allowed mercy killing of children.

Parents also wanted to see something happening towards answering their stated needs after filling up the feedback forms and questioned that if the feedback was being really used to bring about improvements. They also suggested that the frequency of taking feedback should be increased and periodic feedback from same person should be taken.

Assessing Collaboration in Cluster Services: Cluster parent participation tool

The tool that was developed focused on the management of the services and was not focused on teaching learning processes of the services. The areas included in the tool were parent's participation in development of a vision, planning and reviewing of progress. It also asked questions about support and conflict resolution among the group. Some of the other areas were leadership and transfer of skills amongst the team. Based on observations, minutes of the meetings held and interviews with nine parents the percentage achieved in September 2006 was 26 per cent. In August 2007 this percent had increased to approximately 49 percent.

The lack of access to quality services for their children makes parents think of the cluster service as a fortunate opening for their child. During interviews with the parents all of them had only one suggestion that the cluster services should run for five days a week. All of them said that the AADI team always asked parents to share any problems they were facing in meetings issues. There was no perception of being part of a group, which took decisions on how the cluster services should be run.

Parents also shared that through their involvement in cluster services they began working with other children which had given them a different perspective of the needs of others. During the cluster parents were able to bond within themselves and were often seen suggesting strategies for addressing each other children needs, leading to a support system within the cluster among the parents. Parents were comfortable and became very open with the team. The close interaction between the team and parents lead to an increase in the transfer of skills.

The cluster services were envisioned to be developed in collaboration with parents to break out of the present mode of service delivery where the professionals are perceived as the dominant bearers of knowledge. This is a fairly new concept and till date the role of professionals as the providers of technical knowledge for the child's development is still very dominant in cluster services. Parents are rarely able to perceive themselves, as empowered individuals capable of being equal partners in any form of service delivery concerning their child.

Chapter 4

CHANGES AND CHALLENGES

The three year project led to the development of various insights about the challenges involved in implementing inclusive education. Each of the components led to different learnings. This chapter discusses these learnings from this process.

Learnings from AADI SCHOOL

One of the hallmarks of action research is that it brings about a change in people who undertake it. All the teachers interviewed agreed that they had observed changes in themselves in terms of their skill levels in addressing the diverse needs of children with disabilities, their perspectives and attitudes. Teachers felt that they become better people, they were open to feedback much more than before, worked in a more participatory and collaborative manner, they were able to accept differences not only in the school environment but also in the family, they were more patient and most of this had become possible due to an increase in self reflection. They had begun taking more risks and trying out new ideas or become more experimental. They felt they had a more practical and positive attitude towards inclusion, had developed a good insight into inclusive practices and felt more confident about inclusion.

Developing inclusive teaching practice and policies has been an important aspect of this journey. There were no readymade examples available which could have been followed. Thus teachers tried to think of new methods and in hindsight felt it was better to have started with unknown / blank slate as they have learnt a lot and developed individually. The knowledge they have created is born from their own experiences. Everything they have learnt they learnt through designing and implementing new strategies. Their experiences of this forward journey were reflected in their reactions which they shared a year later. In contrast to the panic, excitement, and being out of control the teachers were relaxed, knew what to expect, were predicting children's reactions and appeared savvy and in control. Collaborative teaching and learning, which were difficult to follow earlier, are familiar processes now. A new curriculum was drafted. Planning now meant thinking of strategies for achievement of all children. Activities were designed so that children worked on their own as the tasks given were engrossing. Most teachers stated that there was still a lot to be learnt and some teachers have made further learning targets for themselves.

The schools culture had moved a great deal towards participation of stakeholders. Teams felt that relations were more equal. Opportunities and spaces have been created for different voices to be heard. Freedom was given to children to express their opinions. Teacher's value children speaking up and they stated that children have increased personal sharing with teachers. There had been efforts to develop more personal knowledge about support staff to understand them and also to involve them in class activities. Teams have started self reflection and are able to identify gaps in their work. They are accepting changes in the working place but also keep questioning. Teams have

learnt to explore potentials and the slower pace of an individual is accepted. They are more critical of the schools that their children are going to because of their experience of an inclusive school. There has been an increase in a concern about the education sector as a whole.

There is a sense of collective leadership amongst the school members. Teachers gave choices to children and asked them for feedback about themselves. Older students became independent and started taking responsibility of themselves. They started speaking up a lot more about their rights, what they like and don't like. Children are more critical of adults and take a lot more initiative than before. Children are setting ground rules for themselves. During assembly, children were encouraged to speak up. Many of the teacher's assumptions have changed especially about 'severe' children. Teachers try to ensure children talk to non verbal children using alternate augmentative communication tools and it is often used as a teaching learning material. Teams shared that they learnt to include children in regular activities and exploring potentials rather than on limiting abilities. They felt that children were being provided a fearless environment at school.

In a meeting held on the 30th March 2007 to learn the experiences of the journey of the past two years towards inclusive education, the teams stated that it had been a journey from something unknown to known, an adventure full of anxiety, curiosity, hope, evolution, surprises, enthusiasm and excitement. The journey required discourse about new things; it required leaving the comfort zones and questioning assumptions about themselves and personal growth. The journey required continuous planning, thinking, reflecting and documenting. In this journey people have become comfortable with experimentation, continuous planning, failing and trying again. The teams have asked numerous questions and found some answers while many remained unanswered. The following figure represents a summary of the changes in AADI School while moving towards inclusive education in this brief period.

Even at AADI where the project team had total control of the project the sailing was never easy. Here the issues were about shedding a role which people have been trained for and have practiced for years; about learning to see all children as part of a diverse group rather than focussing only on children with disabilities. The teams initially were extra protective towards children with disabilities. The entire focus of introduction of normal children in to this environment was on the implication of inclusive education on children with disabilities. Initially the sharing in all the reflection meetings was about peer interaction and whether it was in favour or not for children with disabilities. After some time though it seemed that there were no attitudinal problems as both teachers were teaching children from both categories. One of the disadvantages of turning into an inclusive school was that the concentration of disabled children was much higher than in any other school. The teams did not want to reduce the number they were already catering to so as not to feel that any children with disabilities would be at a disadvantage because of the change. They were maintaining the same number of children with disabilities in each class as they would be if it was a special school.

The teachers initially made ability groupings especially for what they called concept teaching sessions and prepared checklists which would be followed by volunteers in the class for the 'severe' children at the same time. For other activities they included all children and thus restored order in their classes. A concern for teachers is that they need time to complete the syllabus, and if they focus their attention on addressing needs of 'severe' children an imbalance tends to occur which they have not been able to resolve. The School still needs to learn to have high expectations for all children.

Initially collaborative teaching required clarity about roles and role re-definition as special education teachers may feel threatened that their places were being taken over so there was a need to address the dynamics especially as the special educators group was the dominant group in special schools. As the two systems met there were apprehensions on both the sides. Overtime though these boundaries dissolved as working together made them realize each other's strengths. For instance special educators could not teach for bigger groups of children except six or seven children with disability at a time.

Another concern that came up was about the quality of work with children with disabilities. The earlier way of working involved rigorous goal setting, reviewing and assessments. With the inclusion of non disabled the focus was diffused to the extent one could not make IEPs for all children. Teachers were concerned about leaving needs of children with disabilities unaddressed especially the severe children. They felt mild and moderate children could easily be accommodated in class activities as they were cognitively at par with other non disabled children. But the whole effort required to answer the needs of non disabled children made them neglect the needs of severe children whom they felt needed one to one 'sessions' and would show progress only when this happened. The shift in thinking about the role of the therapist appeared even greater and at times insurmountable. The conceptual shift in sessions like from gross motor and individual sessions to physical education was easy on paper but practicing it in reality is still something the team continues to struggle with.

The time period was not enough for the parents and students to really take on a decisive role in the school's governing body. Likewise it will take much longer for the community to own the service provided by an organization and fully participate in its processes.

The organization from being a special school with total control had transformed itself into an inclusive school. AADI managed to move further from where it started, sustained by its belief in inclusive education. A belief has emerged that inclusion will need to happen in every sphere of a school for it to be truly inclusive. Finally, the comments made by a six - year - old child with disability who had experienced both the special and the inclusive school which were shared by his mother, seem to say it all. She said earlier her child would feel that he was different, that's why he did not go to a school where all the other children went and he felt upset about this. Now he feels that even though he is different he studies alongside all other children. He can play with all the other children and tells other children when they want to run and play with him, that you go and run, I can't run. He realizes that he is different, accepts it but now he does not feel hurt, as he knows how to interact with children without disabilities and they all study together. In an inclusive school your disability does not make you lesser than anybody else even though you may be different. Thus AADI School will continue on its journey and this poem by a team member[13] represents the feeling of the team on this ongoing journey

प्रथम वर्श में थी उलझन
द्वितीय वर्श में सुलझी कुछ उलझन
तृतीय वर्श में   है उमंग
वर्श प्रति वर्श बढ़ायेंगे कदम
एक समावेषित जहाँ बनायेंगे हम ।

Learnings from working with the government general education system

Mainstream government schools were one of the three important components of the "Towards Inclusive Education" Project. The goals and achievements envisaged for this component in the project can broadly be categorised in to two categories namely policies adopted by the schools at micro level and classroom instructions and learning. Working with the selected government schools, has proved to be a tough challenge as there were many issues totally out of control of the project team. Yet the three years of work has managed to influence the micro level policies adopted by the participating schools and achieve certain project objectives. In terms of polices there have been improvements in infrastructure, more effective implementation of admission policies and polices regarding parents involvement in the school.

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[13] Arpita Yadav

Changes and achievements in government school policies

Improvements in infrastructure: The Directorate responded by sending letters to the concerned schools when infrastructure issues being faced by the schools were shared by the team. Besides this in School two, a pathway was built to prevent drain water from flooding the school grounds (It was surrounded by an uncovered drain which would flood the school during the monsoon) and electricity facilities also improved in this school. In school three through the Vidyalaya Kalyan Samiti (VKS) the water tanks were cleaned.

School Admission Policy: In all the team facilitated the admission of two hundred fifty four children into schools or were linked up with resources in the community during the project period. Of these, two hundred forty eight children were retained in their placements. Teams were able to provide support to parents during the admission process in the schools.

There were only a small number of children with disabilities already enrolled in schools and the team was unable to facilitate admission of more children with disabilities in the two-years. This was not possible mainly due to the lack of identified children in the younger age groups and the majority of the identified children were above fourteen. These children needed to have been prepared for tests and the team was unable to identify resources to do so.

Parent involvement policies: The team's interventions in organizing parent teacher meetings resulted in some teachers taking the initiative to call more such meetings. After the initial meetings in one of the schools three teachers on their own initiative called two more meetings. Parents started voicing their opinions to teachers and teachers also started listening to parents' views and opinions. For instance, many parents urged the school to start an English medium section in the sixth class. To resolve this, the team facilitated parents to organize themselves and write to the vice principal, which they did. Within a few days the decision to start an English medium section in the sixth standard was conveyed to the parents by the vice principal. The VKS was an active body in this school and that also made a difference. The team's strategy of encouraging parents to organize themselves and present their issues to the school seemed to have worked in these cases.

The success of these meetings is apparent in the responses of the parents of all the five schools. The team reports that in one of the schools "the teachers remarked many times that the parents had become assertive because of AADI team. Whereas, the team believed that earlier also the parents were assertive but they would do it in a confrontational manner which infuriated the teachers and the issues never got addressed." In another school a parent shared that he felt that "for the first time he had become part of his daughter's education" while another mother said "Never before she got such a positive response from the teachers". The change seen in the teacher's attitude towards parents was that the teachers now seemed confident about addressing and working with parents and tell the team to work on other issues. After the meeting one of the parents met the AADI team members and offered his help wherever required and also appreciated the work done by AADI team. Thus the team succeeded in beginning a dialogue between

parents and the school even though effective participation in decision making about the school may still seem a long way away.

Changes and achievements in school culture and practice

Children: Children enjoyed and had fun doing the activities such as storytelling. Some teachers continued these activities for sometime even after the project got over. The team wrote that the teacher adopted team's stories but did it without actions so the children started acting it out. Then one child got his Hindi book and told the teacher to tell a poem on rail. She read it from the book. The children made engine and train and started pushing each other, falling on each other as children had learnt to act out their poems. Children often recited action poems that had been taught by the team. The team was able to develop for some time a room for primary children where they can practice dance, songs, activities etc.

As a result of the summer camp the performance of the students had increased which was very visible. Many children had improved their writing skills as well as comprehension. These observations were supported by the final analysis of the diagnostic assessment. Twenty children took the test on the final day thus only those children's results are being shared. In math's there was ten percent decrease of children at level zero, there was twenty percent drop of children at level one, there was ten percent increase of children at levels two, three and four. In Hindi there was a similar trend. There was a twenty five percent drop in children at level zero, there was ten percent drop in children at level one, and ten percent rise in children at level two, four and five. There was a five percent rise in children at level three. Some of the students were creative as well which was recognized during the camp. This camp also gave the students an opportunity to express their anxieties and fears related to the school.

As a result of the direct work with the children the confidence level of a child increased as was seen in the fact that the child had begun taking interest in class activities and would come up to the blackboard to copy his work. Students responded very well to team's teaching and began giving correct answers. The team observed that "Initially students were confused but later on they have understood the concept very well". The team reported some progress of children with whom they have been working with. For instance the team succeeded in teaching children to blend letters to read words. Another child who was not able to blend all the words while reading felt very happy when the teacher with team's help encouraged him to read and finish his writing work. The team also reported about another child that the child had learnt the number concept from one to ten so there was improvement since the team began working with him. One of the children whom the teacher said was hyperactive also completed her work and got it checked. Another child that the team worked in began recognizing three, four and five and writing from one to five which made the team very happy.

The team brought a change in a child who kept hitting other children and scared them away. The team kept encouraging her by praising her efforts. Another child who would never participate in the class started repeating and doing whatever the team was asking

the children to do which really surprised her. The team also intervened to encourage children to keep the surroundings clean by putting the waste in the dustbins which they did enthusiastically. A few ground rules in the class were made to increase the participation of the students, whom a majority of the students happily followed.

Children who used to be quite in the class began to recite poems in class. Children, who would never do their work in class, began copying from the black board and began recognizing some letters. Children began taking responsibility for the learning by telling the team that they would do their homework. There was an increase in their confidence levels as the child said that she would soon learn to write also.

One child who was always shabbily dressed came wearing a new uniform and began concentrating on his work which really surprised his teacher. The team brought this to the teacher's notice who then praised him. The same child started taking responsibility in the class, for instance the team reported that he began cleaning the blackboard on his own which made the teacher very happy. Children who were always crying in class began to sit in the class. The children with whom the team worked at individual level were seemed to have benefited from their input. Many children over the next few days began to trim their nails.

Teachers: There appeared to be a more positive relation amongst teachers and students in the class. This observation was substantiated by the results of the survey conducted at the end of the project in July 2007. Fifty percent of the teachers stated that there had been a change in their relationship with the children. Teachers said they were trying to be friendly along with being strict. They were also trying to be more open, their interaction had increased because they started discussing things with students now and they tried to understand their backgrounds by talking to parents. The team noticed several changes in the behavior and attitude of teachers', they used to restrain themselves from hitting the children. Teachers began using the activities introduced by the team as incentives to make children complete their work. Initially teachers used to complain about littering in the class later on those same teachers told the facilitator that littering has reduced in their classes.

Team also noticed that teachers began paying attention to weaker students. The team's intervention was successful i.e. they were able to influence the teacher to change their teaching strategy. For instance a teacher named David began to go to each child to make them understand the concept he was explaining, when he saw that the team was trying to help all the children who were not able to understand what was taught in the class. The team felt that the teachers were trying to accept the techniques and strategies used by the team for children who were falling behind as the teachers used similar strategies for helping the weaker children.

The teachers could develop an deeper understanding about problem creating children and they could appreciate the changes seen in those children. Once a teacher was very surprised at children's response to an activity suggested by the team. One of the teachers also reported that she had seen a lot of improvement in children's behavior. Children who

would never listen, had started listening and responding to teachers. Another teacher praised one of the students with whom the team had worked with and said she had begun doing her work well.

Teachers became aware of the diverse needs of children in the class and started discussing the same with the team. One of the teachers ensured that children who were falling behind were dealt with in an appropriate manner. The teacher had asked some of the weak children to sit in the front rows, whom she felt needed more attention. She made sure to call the shy and weak students so that they could perform like other students. This teacher by constant questioning also ensured that each child had understood the lessons taught in the class and also made groups in her class.

Some teachers tried to make lessons contextual by giving real life situations and examples to children to explain concepts. Teachers took on the activity based teaching themselves. They were doing the activities as done by the team. Some teachers used peer tutoring to help the weak students. Some were trying to explain each and every thing related to lesson while revising.

The team reported that over time teachers paid more attention to teaching. In the project end interviews, approximately sixty one percent of the teachers stated they had observed changes in themselves, sixty one percent also stated their understanding of diversity had changed, seventy six percent stated their knowledge of teaching methods had increased, seventy four percent stated that their practice had changed. Approximately fifty eight percent stated that children's learning had improved and sixty one percent felt that they were able to address the needs of children in their classes more effectively.

The transfer of skills to teachers envisaged during the foundation course and the summer camp was negligible as teachers present remained mere observers or didn't turn up but a teacher who showed interest asked the facilitator if this exercise could be done in the class. The facilitator then shared the advantages of group teaching here and handed over the cards and chart to the teacher and asked him to give suggestions wherever needed.

The relationships between teachers and the principal also showed some positive changes. The team was able to provide a forum where the principal and teachers could have a discussion about teaching learning practices in the school. One of the principals observed that the teachers who used to come late, had started coming on time. The principals had accepted that teaching would become more effective in groups, children would understand better and peer tutoring will also take place. In the project end interviews approximately forty six percent of the teachers interviewed stated that their relationship with the principal had improved and all the rest felt there had been no need for a change. One principal felt that because of AADI's intervention, the Directorate had taken a greater interest in the school.

The biggest change in the schools had been the awareness about diversity and the dialogue about diversity. Change may take a while but a dialogue and discussion over issues of inclusion in government schools has begun, and this happened more easily.

During the project end interviews, ninety five percent of the teachers interviewed said that they knew the team members, while forty one percent felt that they had a good relationship with the team. Approximately forty eight percent stated they did find their suggestions useful and practical and thirty eight percent felt that their knowledge base as trainers was also of a good standard. The majority (eighty six percent) stated they would like to continue working with the team.

The work with the government schools in the areas of culture policy and practices maybe summarized in the following diagram.
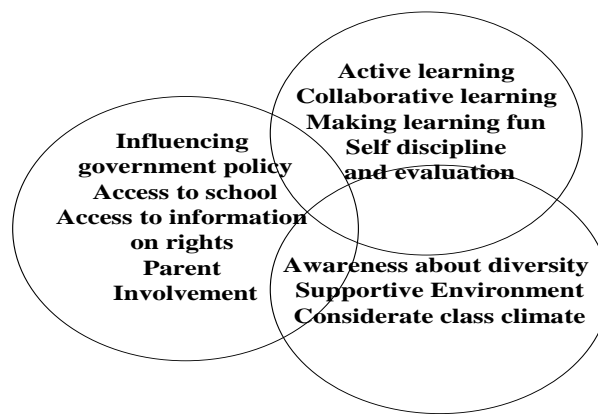
Learnings from Alternative Education Services

Basic Minimum Services: The strengths of the basic minimum services model are that it is an easily replicable model of service delivery. It requires a team of a therapist, a special educator and a part time social worker and an appropriate space in the community. It has the potential to reach many children and they are provided individual attention and guidance. It is an initial information sharing and support service which provides guidance to parents about disability issues.

The drawbacks are that starting the service in the community may be a challenge because finding appropriate places takes time. Teams had to struggle to start their community service in the East Delhi area. They were not able to develop services in the west zone as no suitable infrastructure could be identified. Some other drawbacks are that it places a great deal of expectations and demand on the parents. Parents are burdened with following educational and therapeutic programs at home. They have to commute on a daily basis especially in inaccessible public transport while carrying their children which becomes difficult over a long period of time. The team found that the drop out of children from far off areas was very high. Other reasons for dropping out besides difficulty in travelling were family problems or loss of interest in continuing with the services as it failed in securing admission or placement in a regular school. At times the team is unable to elicit the exact need of the parent and child. Another gap that was realized during the

last three years was that there were no facilities for the children between fourteen to eighteen years in the form of pre-vocation or vocational education and the majority of children needed these services.

The service does not provide an effective environment for children to achieve their development potential and their social needs remain unmet. Thus even though it can reach many children it may not be a very appropriate service to answer children's educational and social needs.

Home Based Services: In home based services model instead of parents bringing their children to AADI the onus of reaching the child lay with the team. To some extent the main need -the ADL management is best looked at the home background. So to some extent this model is appropriate. The drawbacks that the teams have found out are that for any orthotic & postural aid, the parents still have to come to AADI. Also children's social needs are not being met through this model. It may require linking up with community resources to fulfil these needs to make the model more appropriate.

Cluster services: The cluster services require many more resources, and reach out a fewer children but it allows children a real opportunity to realise their developmental potential. Children's educational, therapeutic and social needs would be met in this model and parents also find it satisfactory. It is easily replicable if community resources are available but it does increase the load of administrative duties on the teams in the community. For these services to be really effective teams may need to simultaneously work on developing resources in the community which allow children to access those services and thus allow access to cluster services in larger number.

In the initial stages of cluster development the teams may need extensive support for planning and structuring interventions for children as a group, due to the level of diversity among children. The collapse of the parent cluster points to the fact that parents cannot be expected to volunteer on a regular basis, as it places an extra burden on them. Not many parents in regular schools are expected to go and volunteer in their children's schools on a weekly basis.

All the service delivery models remained outside the ambit of the formal educational systems. Services would attempt to increase access of children to these existing educational systems by placing children in the system and provide support to them, to stay within the system. These models were envisaged in recognition of the fact that even though two other components of the project were attempting to make schools inclusive, it was a long term process and the magnitude of the need for services would not be met by just six schools, thus they brought a touch of reality in the face of the other two idealistic components. Overall the team's dominant focus remained addressing individual children needs rather than on models of service delivery including the management.

In the planning phases of the project, discussions had been held whether the program should concern itself with all out of school children within its geographical radius or should it confine itself to addressing the needs of children with disabilities. Resource constraints at the time of project implementation had dictated that the objectives be confined only to children with disabilities. But the experiences of the other two

components have strengthened the belief that programs need to address all out of school children together as this is more in keeping with the principle of inclusion and will in the long run be more effective, as it would allow the same resources to be tapped to meet the needs of a larger number of children.

Chapter 5

IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Implementing Inclusive Education is more likely to be a successful process if the following steps are followed.

Step 1: Design programs at the system level
Step 2: Create support for and belief in Inclusion
Step 3: Build an understanding of diversity
Step 4: Build an understanding of universal design including in learning
Step 5: Dialogue about quality of education inclusive pedagogy
Step 6: Ensure availability of resources
Step 7: Establish Collaboration
Step 8: Facilitate participation of all stakeholders
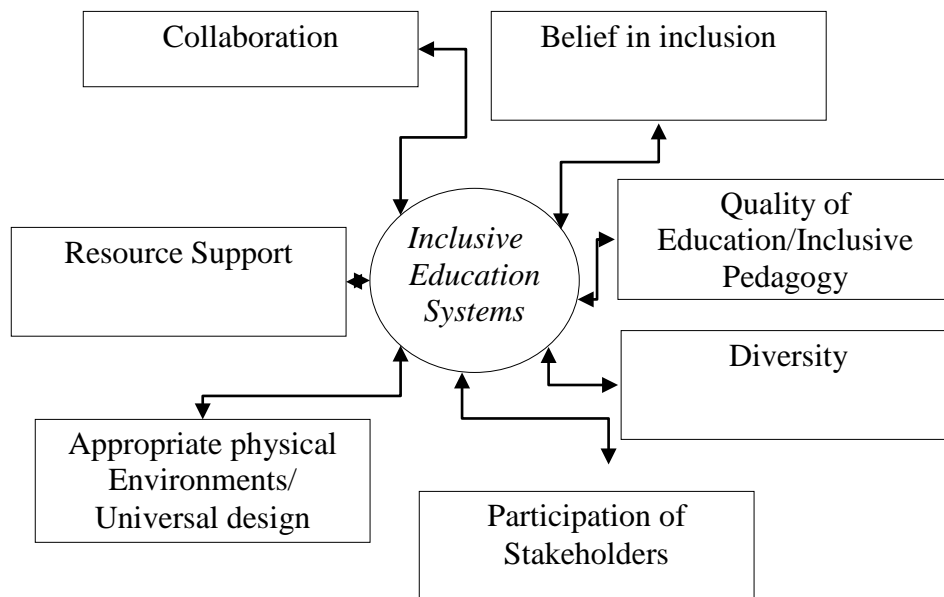
Design programs at the system level

Design programs at the system level, which address systemic barriers to inclusion and ensure availability of a spectrum of services. If at the design stage systems are thought about with all persons in mind including persons with disabilities, inclusion becomes an in built process. This requires an awareness of the diversity of needs of people who may access a system.

Create support for and belief in Inclusion/Belief in inclusion

The main conversion that is required in moving towards inclusive education is a change in values and attitudes which is a difficult task for any individual and even more

cumbersome for organizations. Very few organizations will change their values at the behest of others and it is crucial that the leadership in an organisation becomes committed to inclusion for it to be successfully implemented. Everybody will agree in principle with the values that inclusive education heralds, however it proves to be difficult to bring it in to practice especially when it requires to bring in a change in oneself. Hence there will be obstacles which need to be addressed.

Belief in inclusion may be viewed from two different perspectives. One is rights based perspective, while the other is a pedagogical perspective which advocates that differences in children are inherent and pedagogy needs to address these differences. Depending on these perspectives different roads to inclusion can be adopted. According to one path inclusion is meant to include regular children in the special school meant for children with disability. In other path it means children with disability moving into the world of 'regular' children. Whichever road or perspective one may adopt a belief in inclusion is imperative for successful implementation of inclusive education.

Build an understanding of diversity /Diversity

Implementing inclusion involves a dialogue about diversity rather than disability. Diversity "encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences"[14] (Sweetman 2004: 8). These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. Diversity allows "the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual" (Sweetman 2004: 8).

The concept that disability is an aspect of human diversity is inherent in the way inclusion has been defined in the TIE project of AADI. The initial understanding of inclusive education as being about academic inclusion was challenged during the project period and the belief that inclusion was not about children with disability only but all marginalized children, has gained a stronghold. In their dialogue about the concept of inclusive education teachers in government schools identified poverty, lack of exposure and lack of resources as barriers to inclusion. Inclusive education principally and due to its practical implications cannot be just about children with disabilities.

The present school environments are designed and cater to perceived averages and are organized around a uniform conceptualization and understanding of the human population. This interpretation of inclusive education requires one to move two steps ahead of today's actuality. First is to assume that the system is completely open to disability i.e. children with disabilities have complete access to schools or educational systems, and thereafter to assume that all people/children who are experiencing marginalization due to socio-economic causes like poverty, caste, religion and gender agree to unite as one. They agree and express in one voice that their experiences are

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[14] Sweetman, Caroline. 2004. Gender Development and Diversity. Oxfam

similar and the onus is on the school to address their diverse needs. School systems recognise this fact and acknowledge the rights of all children to be there and expect pedagogy to address learning needs.

However this understanding is hardly shared in the larger context in which the work has been done, let alone in the disability sector itself. Some may even state that the work in the five government schools cannot be assigned under the purview of inclusive education as it didn't include children with disabilities in any significant numbers.

Build an understanding of universal design including in learning/Universal Design

Physical environments and materials may have to be designed in the future keeping in mind the principles of universal design. The aim of universal design is "to design products and environments usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design"[15]. Efforts will have to be made and financial resources will be needed to make environments accessible. Accessibility will not simply mean ramps in a school. Universal design principles are being applied for designing instruction also which will reduce the number of adaptations required for addressing diverse needs.

Dialogue about Inclusive Pedagogy or Quality Education

Implementing inclusive education involves concern for the quality of education as access without quality becomes meaningless and only quality of education will ensure access to learning for all children. "Effective teaching in an inclusive classroom therefore demands teaching strategies that can accommodate a variety of learners with different backgrounds, needs and strengths. These strategies in my view address three crucial areas within the classroom:-the context of learning; the content of learning; and teaching learning processes"[16]

Educational practices in inclusive settings will require some major shifts in thinking, so much so that at times one would be tempted to call the entire process as pedagogical reforms. The founding premise of the project in terms of practices was that special education was built up around a medical model and teaching here was practiced based on the behaviourist method, which needed to change. All the pedagogical practices followed in the project are well known good practices in teaching. The amalgamation of these as practiced in the project though emerged from the unique history of the organization and its people. The project challenged the belief of parents and teachers that children's learning completely depend on their efforts and abilities. This belief is a major attitudinal barrier to inclusion. The project propounded that children don't fail to learn but teachers fail to teach all children. The move from the concept of "teacher knows it all and is the bearer of knowledge" to a position that the teacher, is as much a learner as the child was questioned extensively by teachers who have settled into teacher directed practices for decades.

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[15] Ron Mace at http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/about_ud/about_ud.htm
[16] See Annexure 4 for details

Ensure availability of resources

Inclusive education will require resources even as it leads to a better utilization of existing resources for all children. One of the main resource challenges faced during the project was human resources for implementing inclusion. In AADI School this issue was resolved by the concept of collaborative teaching, where a special educator and a general educator were responsible for the class together. The availability of human resource with the right knowledge base and skill level for working with the other schools was a major problem, as there were no training courses for people working in inclusive environments or implementing inclusive education. Initial capacity building and orientation to inclusive education thus was crucial in all the components. The whole school development team had to undertake facilitation of change in other schools and required a great deal of preparation, as most of the planned activities were new. Most people were trained to be special educators and had the task of changing practices of general educators in the regular education system. Thus there was an inherent conflict there itself.

The situation was not helped at all by the frequent resignation of the people from this team. A testimony to the difficulties faced in human resources may be seen in the fact that since the beginning of the project 34 people out of the total forty had left till July 31st. In the MDS component with a team of six including the manager, ten people joined and left over the period of three years. At times there were only three persons to do the job of six. The original team had been initially trained for the kind of work they were required to do but this team changed and capacity building had to be again taken on, in the implementation phase. The project objectives were ambitious but did not match the skill level of the people who were expected to implement it. This led to a lot of confusion amongst the team about what was expected of them. A major issue that came up was that the manager of the MDS component left at a crucial period and the new manager did not get enough time to prepare for the role. The capacity building could not be repeated luxuriously with the new team. The project introduced many new aspects, which the teams were not always able to assimilate, and had to plunge in the work with a minimal understanding. They were learning about concepts and skills, which they themselves were asking teachers to practice. To counter turnover and reduce regression of progress made, effective orientation modules will need to be designed.

There has been a tremendous learning about the government school system, their functioning, the issues they face, its teachers, students and to some extent their families and communities, which was crucial. Initially the majority of the team was unfamiliar with government schools and their functioning Thus they themselves took time to adjust to the reality of the government schools and viewed them from their worldview, which was very different with how the schools viewed themselves. Teams would constantly complain about almost everything in the school and teachers, especially their attitudes. Discovering dedicated teachers in the government schools was initially always a surprise. The team realized their own lack of knowledge of the contexts of the children they were working with. A team member writes, "When responses were elicited, the teacher as well as the facilitator was surprised to realize that they knew so little about the children's context."

Inclusion also requires resources like physical help, as non-availability of physical help is an administrative barrier to inclusion. For instance in the government schools there is apparently only one helper for the entire primary staff which creates innumerable problems for young children. AADI School teachers also insisted that physical help is an essential requirement for practicing inclusion as well as support in problem solving issues arising from implementing inclusive education.

Establish Collaboration

The ability and skills to establish collaborative relationships, where two or more parties work together, for jointly achieving common goals is also crucial for successful functioning of inclusive environments, as well for facilitating inclusive environments. In AADI School different professionals were able to function as multidisciplinary team. Such a relationship with the government school teachers could not be established and teams acted as consultants. Teachers had problems with the practices the team suggested, they frequently wanted to use the team as substitute teachers and they felt they were being observed and monitored by the team. Teams felt that the teacher's were doing things because they were asked to do something and not because they wanted to do them. A lack of understanding of steps in the change process made them adopt strategies, which were not effective. A built up of the frustration levels led to insistence about adopting certain practices and this made some teachers resist the team. It seemed that there was hardly any collaboration here and the understanding that was required for a collaborative relationship seemed to be between the Directorate and AADI rather than AADI and the government schools.

Facilitate participation of all stakeholders

To transform a school into an inclusive school, participation of all its stakeholders (Parents, teachers, students, staff and community) in school activities including in decision-making is an essential factor. Meaningful involvement of parents and local community is imperative to enhance learning for all students. A community of learners (including teachers and students) is created, so that mentoring, connectedness, trust and atmosphere fostering creativity and risk-taking– also lays the groundwork for powerful personal growth of all involved.

Participation leads to the sense of belonging, which is the hallmark of an inclusive environment. Relationships need to be open, where people feel comfortable and are able to share their feelings and views even if they may be not in agreements with the majority. While working with other schools parent and community involvement are a crucial resource, which needs to be mobilized, to ensure inclusive policies and practices are implemented. Increasing parents' participation in schools is also easy to accomplish as the majority of the parents are interested in their children's learning.

One may need to guard against becoming confined to working with a single stakeholder as in the case of working with the government schools the teams were not able to involve the leadership and children in any significant manner in their processes. To bring about a

change in the culture, practices and policies of the school the team became confined to attempting to influence teachers to address each child needs in the class.

Conclusion

The combination of appropriate steps along with the process will lead to bringing about desired changes successfully.

The move towards inclusive education may be a road with major hurdles but it is a not a road which cannot be travelled. The sustaining factor in this entire journey has been the beliefs and values with which the journey began. Inclusive education may take on different meanings for the different schools. Inclusion in schools will appear chaotic and only a deeper observation and understanding of the processes in the class or school may lead to a sense of order behind the chaos. In an inclusive school diversity and differences become a part of everyday life of the school. It will be about each and every child and thus about children first and will require collaborative efforts between agencies that at present might be working separately or in isolation.

Leadership of schools becomes a much more complex undertaking than a regimented and routine role that it may play otherwise in school environments. This may be extremely difficult for most people in authoritative positions and for many who believe that complete order and obedience are the hallmarks of good leadership. Inclusion redefines two elements in a traditional school. First the right to be included in the class and school and the second is about defining the concept of achievement. There may not be a clear centralized authority as decentralization of existing authority is an automatic outcome of practicing inclusion. There is an increased sense of togetherness and community when one begins to practice inclusion. It is essential to nurture this sense of togetherness because this group will sustain the practice of inclusion, create norms, which are enduring and induct new members. Each stakeholders practice and behaviour becomes crucial element of the whole and even if one element or part is dysfunctional it will affect the whole group's value base. Thus leadership has to be extremely aware of resolving conflicts in an acceptable manner for all.

To change or transform or initiate the movement of schools to become inclusive schools one may have to engage in a dialogue about quality of education. There will be a need to raise awareness about diversity amongst children and addressing the needs rather than just addressing disability. As the team noted in their work with the government schools they rarely ever used the word inclusion or inclusive education. Schools will have to become ready for increasing involvement of all stakeholders including children in all its spheres of functioning. Thus there may be a need to share information with all stakeholders about their rights and responsibilities. There has to be an emphasis on collaborative processes in the schools in different spheres. The school will need to be provided support through this process of change for instance in terms of problem solving. It may have to re-examine its policies of resources allocation, as resource support will be required for inclusion. Our common agenda should be quality (including equitable) education for all.

This leads us to the fact that if one decided to work with the concept of inclusive education it requires one to broaden their spectrum of understanding not only about children and practices but also of the entire process one may have to adopt to facilitate such a change. Thus there is a great need to debate, critique and examine one's own self to determine the extent of inclusion it reflects.

The understanding of inclusion will be different amongst team members, which also makes a great deal of difference. In the project time this understanding has not completely filtered through and the team still talks a language, which they may have imbibed but it has not evolved, on their own. Thus they are reflective but have not reached a point where they can give directions to self and may need future guidance to evolve pedagogy for inclusive school. Thus even where there is a strong belief in inclusion changing values irrevocably will take time and abilities of self-reflection, which may need to be developed for the majority of professionals.

Basic services and cluster services, the models followed in AADI School and for the alternative education are replicable at a macro level if proper infrastructure is made available in the community with the requisite human resources. Transforming special schools will require a paradigm shift in education and is a doable task. This model can easily be replicated as it would only require hiring of additional general educators and that would be the only added cost to the present cost of services. The availability of a knowledge base about pedagogy for inclusion and the commitment and belief in inclusion education are crucial. The whole school development approach and action research processes will make it possible to function at the system level rather than in a piecemeal manner.

While working with government schools one needs to be ready to persevere and remember the fact that a great deal of effort may produce very small results. The initial process of meeting teachers and identifying strengths and challenges of their schools is fundamentally very strong. This is so because when two parties meet for the first time, there is a moment in the first meeting when there is openness and an opportunity where a strong basis for collaboration can be established. One would need facilitation skills to do this effectively. If collaborative and participatory strategies are adopted even a small group of facilitators can reach many schools. The concept that was supposed to be tried in this project could never be really tried because the required understanding among staff was never completely in place (MDS and AES). Thus one cannot say which model works and which doesn't. Maybe the conclusion is that one will never be able to get that required skill thus the model is a failure. So only one person has the required skills and these apparently cannot be transferred to anyone else then or have not been transferred to anyone in two years then it's not practically possible to implement it. One may pump in more resources and continue with a more highly paid staff who will be held accountable for changes in one school each, but then it is not scalable. One needs to look at ways and means to enhance quality in state level programs and redesign this component. Training is an essential aspect for transforming the schools thus capacity building skills are crucial for changes to happen successfully.

In controlled environments just planned for it and it got done, but we are still learning about how to change others which is crucial learning for the organization as it seeks to work in a broader environment than before.

May be working with, one school at a time a good idea, for people taking on this process, for the very first time. It may be fruitful to adopt the strategy of one person to one school, to increase accountability and not to be seen as substitutes. Changes in teachers will not come about easily in a government set up because they don't get rewards for it. But the teacher's motivation is and everybody else's is very important for improvement. We have to build our strategies around that. And the school will cooperate and the teachers will change when they see it works as children's performance improves and they get more credit. This would help to mobilize children as well as parents. MDS failed completely to show the relevance of its strategies.

Unlike a general perception about the rigidity of the bureaucratic system it would appear that flexible policies which allow for humane interpretations at school levels will allow inclusive education to be practiced in its true sense. So if orders are appropriate the government school teachers will do what they are asked to do as it is a policy. For instance they may crib about the books but they can't change it easily. In government if appropriate policies are made then teachers have to follow them. Intervention has to be pitched accordingly based on the analysis of, whether the gap is in the policy or in the implementation. From this perspective in the bureaucratic systems, change is easy to introduce, as once the authorities agree and make a policy people are bound to follow those. This is not so easy in the private sector. It is just that policies hardly ever get implemented. The SSA in principle states there is zero rejection but in reality it is hardly implemented and there is underlying shared belief that in the instance of children with disabilities only mild to moderate children will be accepted into schools.

There is a need to work at changing the government understanding of pedagogical achievement /monitoring requirements as only then will teachers change practice. The present emphasis of measuring teaching outcomes based on results is easily circumvented by the teachers at the primary level, which are the crucial learning years of children. One of the things that will need to change, are the norms by which teachers and teaching is evaluated and monitored by the government. Undue emphasis on checking copies and judging on the basis of written work what has been done by the teacher has an unfortunate backlash. Even though one can understand the concern that prompted the government to adopt this strategy in effect what it leads to, defeats the very purpose of the strategy. Children simply end up writing pages after pages, written by teachers on the blackboard. In each period a pattern of teaching for ten minutes and thereafter asking children to copy from the blackboard what has been written by the teacher is prevalent. Whether children understand or not seems to be a concern, which is not very high on the teachers list of priorities. The five government schools need to have more children with disabilities than there are at present for us to provide suggestions and recommendations for the kind of policies that would be required for the school to be an inclusive school.

Many problems are administrative in nature. A smoother functioning from the directorate may make a huge difference to the schools life at least from a teacher's perspective

Some of the areas, which were not covered in the project, even though they were planned but may be useful to work with, were working more with children and principals. Though teams weren't able to prevent discrimination, it was an inherent idea. Thus in none of the programs nor AADI School or in the government school were there any significant steps taken to directly ensure that discrimination did not occur or to take direct action against any occurrence of discrimination.

The most important, sustainable outcome of the project is a dialogue about inclusion has begun. AADI School has moved far along the road when compared to the government schools but even in those schools given the contexts in which they are situated the awareness has seeped in that a school is about multi-stakeholders who may be as important as any teacher. One has just begun the journey towards inclusive education. Many questions still remain unanswered and one of the major questions is the issue of accommodating and adapting teaching to the different paces of learning in classes. A disturbing question is that are practices as of today in these schools being fair to children who could learn faster. This could be applicable for children on both ends of the spectrum including gifted children. These will be answered only after further investigation or action research into effective pedagogy for inclusive environments, which will help in identifying teaching strategies which can address the entire spectrum of learning needs in a class. Learning outcomes/teaching outcomes will need to be tracked also with tracking children as only then one can be absolutely sure that children are learning to their potential or getting best opportunities to learn. It may require another year of work to come to more definitive conclusions about the emergent models and their different aspects. Teaching practices have been introduced and the teams and the teachers are familiar with these but to provide more conclusive evidence about their effect in creating more inclusive classrooms one needs to now gather more evidence for each of the strategies adopted which is not just limited to the idiosyncrasies of one teacher's observation and which can be generalized. Thus further rigorous action research will be required on teaching children through inclusive pedagogy, which the team may do so for the next few years.

ANNEXURES

Annexure No 1: DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Review and reflection meetings

The primary objective of review and reflection was to review the progress made in achieving the goals set in the mission statement of each of the components, namely AADI School, five MDSs and AES. These meetings acted as forums for discussing about the emerging issues and the success and failures of the strategies used. Members would meet once in a month and share their experiences and identify the problems or issues they were facing. They would debate on strategies which would help them to solve these issues and revise their plans. These revised would then be implemented over a month and again reviewed in the next meetings along with the learning's. The meeting would be facilitated by the manager and the researchers of the project and would involve all the team members. The Director during the meetings provided technical inputs and solutions to the issues which the teams raised. Various strategies like working in groups were utilized for facilitating the identification of issues.

Initially it was not very successful but by January 2006 there was a semblance of regularity in these meetings. In the first review meeting for AADI School the group decided to call, itself 'AKS- the Reflectors' to reflect the purpose of the forum. It also laid down some rules for the group. During the entire three year project period there were forty six review meetings held with the different components (AS-21; AES-18; MDS-7).

During the beginning of the project maintaining reflection diaries was suggested for practitioners, to record their experiences on a daily basis. This would encourage reflection and also help the teams in collecting the data, which was not recorded in the lesson plan registers. The managers were also maintaining dairies which were later shared with the researchers. Very soon due to increased pressure of other organisational activities the teams were unable to maintain personal journals and after a lot of discussions they decided to share reflections in a group towards the end of the day for fifteen to twenty minutes as they felt this method would be better than writing individual journals. This was done on a daily basis in AADI School and was done less frequently in other two components. Whatever the teams shared was recorded and collated on regular basis. Later the AADI School team decided to structure their reflections under the categories of excited moments, difficult moments, and learning's. The meetings, which began in February, have continued everyday since then[17].

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[17] The dominant thoughts throughout have been about children, their achievements and challenges. Other thoughts that are filtering through are colleagues giving compliments and people feeling good about them or their own achievements, in the category of excited moments. Learning's are also about appropriate behaviour and personal motivations, which keeps the staff going. Difficult moments are faced when children do not respond, when staff feel the children's demands are not met, or concerns about safety issues. They are also about physical tiredness, role clarity, stress, classroom management issues, lack of volunteers and sometimes-naughty children.

Data collection through process documentation

In addition to the data collected through regular review and reflection meetings, research team relied heavily on process documentation by the teams, which had been emphasised over and over again. Teams have extensively been recording their work in the entire project, with the objective of providing empirical evidence for action research. The team began documentation of all meetings, events and discussions, ranging from daily recording of teams intervention, to recording minutes of weekly project meetings and share it with the researchers on a regular basis. AADI School maintained detailed lesson planning registers, minutes and attendance of parent teachers meetings, and minutes of their project meetings where decisions were taken and discussions about issues were held. In the MDS component teams maintained daily records of their work, the meetings they held with parents and teachers and visits they made. Approximately, the team wrote over three hundred and forty daily, meetings and training reports of their work. In the AES component the teams also maintained goal sheets and records of case conferences held. They collated data about goal achievements on an annual basis, maintained records of students accessing services, team meetings held, and home visits made. The teams in the cluster maintained their daily activities record along with evaluation of children's learning's and records of meetings held with the parents in the both the clusters. Teams took some time to get used to it but have consistently made audio visual recordings of their work.

Annexure No 2: SIX SCHOOL SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

School Situational Analysis

The conceptual framework of surveying all the schools was built into the project framework. The school survey was divided into three analytical categories of school culture, policies and practices. Culture was the sum total of stated and un-stated values and norms that the schools organized itself and its relationships around. Policies were the stated /written rules and regulation of the school as an organisation and practices was the sum of all that actually happened/done in the school including the teaching learning processes in the school[18]. The situational analysis would give an insight into the culture, practices and policies within the school and Later on this would provide a reference to assess the changes that would occur in the school.

The design laid more emphasis on collecting more qualitative data. However to meet the monitoring and evaluation requirements, later on it was decided to collect quantitative baseline data. Thus the baseline survey involved not only interviews, focus group discussions of teachers, students and parents of the Schools but also filling up of the quality checklist and culture tools. Observation data was collected from all the three classes in AADI School. To understand the history annual reports and grant files were also analysed. Through this triangulation the team hoped to arrive at an authentic description of the school. To collect the baseline information the team finally conducted 907 interviews in all the six schools. Permission was sought from relevant authorities to conduct interviews. All information was kept confidential. Even while sharing information on issues identified, the identity of the individuals/groups who raised those issues was not revealed.

The research team designed the necessary tools for the survey, and the actual data collection was done by all members of the team.

In AADI School all the parents, students and teachers concerned with the three classes were interviewed. Children with disability were interviewed with the help of educators, volunteers and parents of children with 'severe' disabilities were asked for assistance in judging the children's responses.

In the government schools the selective sampling method was used. In all the five schools the team went and met the class teachers of the primary and upper primary sections. From the teacher's register children's name were taken along with their addresses. Every tenth child was taken from one section. The sample had a mixed group of achievers and non achievers from each section, though the teachers were forcing the team to take only those students who were good according to them. The students were from similar socio economic background.

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[18] There was a discomfort felt with these categories but it was already too late to change them as it would have meant changing the project objectives.

Initially the base line started in two schools namely school 1 and the school 2. Ten students from each class were taken as sample size in these schools as the primary schools have two sections of each class. Thus five students were taken from each section and a total of 50 students were interviewed. In upper primary there are more than two sections in each class so the sample required wads distributed based on the number of sections. In all 30 students were from upper primary classes were interviewed. In the rest of the three schools (School 3, school 4 and in school 5) the sample size was reduced as it was found that a lot of time was spent in conducting interviews. In these schools only two children from each section were taken for interviews. But to maintain the same sample size it was decided to organise FGDs in these schools which saved a lot of time.

FGDs in these schools which saved a lot of time.

Table 1 Total number of Stakeholders interviewed to collect baseline data				
Schools	Teachers	Parents	Students	Principals
AADI School	6	31	25	1
School two	24	80	80	1
School one	21	80	80	1
School four	10	43	61	1
School three	19	75	94	1
School five	25	59	88	1

Sample size for Base line									
Stake holders	AADI School	School two	School one	School four		School three		School five	
		Interview	Interview	Interview	FGD	Interview	FGD	Interview	FGD
Parents	29	77	80	24	19	34	41	38	21
Students		80	80	24	37	34	60	38	50
teachers	8	24	21	10		19		25	
Principals	1	1	1	1		1		1	

Mode of conducting the Survey

The interviews were conducted with principal's permission. Teachers and children interviews were conducted in the school premises where as to interview the parents teams went in to the community. In School 2, the entire team pitched in for conducting the parent's interview. For conducting student's interview in school 1 and in school 2 Sr.S students pitched in. But in school 4, school 3 and in school 5, MDS team along with

research team conducted the interview. In AADI School Sr.S students and MDS team pitched in for conducting parent's interview. Most of the parents were interviewed when they came for PTM and the teams visited the homes of only the few who were left out.

This exercise at the end of the second year involved collecting data only from the teachers using the quality and culture tools, due to lack of requisite resources to do the entire exercise. A similar exercise was held at the end of the project and a total of 956 stakeholders were interviewed in all the six schools, from March 2007 onwards, when the academic session ended. The teams finished the project end data collection within a month. In all the schools only interviews were conducted as it was felt that parents are more comfortable in individual interviews rather than FGD. In school 4 in primary section there are only three classes so in this school the sample size was 60 in comparison to other school where the sample size was 80. The two sample sizes were different as the teams were not able to reach the identified stakeholders in the baseline survey. In the second round the teams were instructed to take substitutes in cases where the identified stakeholders were not available so the envisaged samples were completed.

As at the beginning of the project in AADI School all the parents of KG, first and second classes were interviewed. Children with disability were interviewed with the help of educators, volunteers and parents of children with 'severe' disabilities were asked to help interviewers in judging their responses.

Total number of Stakeholders interviewed for collecting project end evaluation data				
Schools	Teachers	Parents	Students	Principals
AADI School	7	41	43	1
School two	25	80	80	1
School one	24	80	80	1
School four	11	60	60	1
School three	14	80	80	1
School five	25	80	80	1

Problems encountered during the survey

While conducting the interviews the teams had faced problems in locating the addresses in the community. The address list had been taken from the class teachers and it was found that many of them were wrong addresses. Many parents could not be reached as they were working and would leave home early and come late in the evening. Thus parents who were found in the community were interviewed randomly and only those children were finally interviewed.

While conducting the survey at the end of the project, although the team had a list of students who were interviewed during baseline the team faced the same problems. Addresses had changed and neighbours were not able to tell where they have shifted to; children had stopped going to school and left the place. Class VIII students were now in IX class so they were not interviewed and a new batch of students of class first were taken in place of them. When the interviews were conducted some of the old students had gone to visit their native places so substitutes were taken. In AADI School all the parents of class KG, first and second were interviewed but those children who left the school were not contacted as their addresses had changed. The data was analysed to seek answers about which strategies were proving successful in bringing about changes to make the schools more inclusive, whether there were changes occurring, what were the changes occurring and what was the nature of changes.

Findings of the school situational analysis in government schools

To begin working with the government schools, it was felt that it would be crucial to build an understanding of the schools and their contexts. The school situational results led the team to develop the following understanding of the schools.

The Directorate of Education has a vision of providing quality schooling for all children and its mission is to provide child centred education to facilitate learning and thinking for all round personality development of the child.

The five schools allocated by the Directorate of Education were governed by the same bureaucracy but the dynamics, the culture and practices were unique to each school[19]. The schools belong to a category called the Sarvodaya Schools which were opened with objective of providing quality education to children from class one to twelve under one roof as it was being provided in the private public schools. These schools only have two classes each in the primary sections and the rest of the children's population in the area is catered to by the MCD School, as primary education is the responsibility of municipal bodies as well. There is a sense of hierarchy amongst the two school types as the Sarvodaya schools are considered superior to the MCD schools.

Location

The five schools allocated to AADI were operating in five different districts of Delhi namely the South, North East district, North District, North West B district, and the central district. All the five schools were located in different community surroundings. While school 1 was located in a government colony with many slums in its vicinity, school 4 was located next to a commercial complex with jhuggis and other private schools in its vicinity. It was surrounded by rickshaw and auto stands. School 2 was located near the Delhi border and surrounded by rehabilitation colonies. The school wall which was very high appeared like a fortress wall from the colony. School 5, was located in a private colony, with neat and clean surroundings. School 3 was located in the middle

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[19] This was kept in mind even during the planning of the project as it was felt that unless one knew the schools one could plan for them.

of Chawri Bazar and would suddenly appear after entering a narrow lane with a 'masala' factory at the right side of the entrance of the school. Lanes that connected the school to the main road and exit doors were very narrow and would be a cause of concern during emergencies. It was located in the palace of a former queen and children had eerie stories to tell about ghosts in the school.

Infrastructure

All the schools have multi-storey brick buildings, are spacious, have sufficient grounds for children to play and stages for conducting extra curricular activities. Two of the schools even have well maintained gardens. The exceptions were school five which has a tin roof, school 1 which has an auditorium instead of a stage and school 3 which is located in a prime area, and was so small that it had hardly any space for children to play. Class rooms were sufficient in the primary sections of four schools but in school 3, two sections of each class sat together in dingy rooms that are too small to accommodate sixty three students. The window panes were broken and the rooms became dusty during the day.

Basic facilities like electricity, water and toilets are adequate, except in two of the schools. In School 3 toilets are not well maintained. There is a problem in the water supply as the water tanks are not cleaned thus children don't use the toilets. In the primary section of School 2 there are no functioning toilets and no water supply either. Children were seen relieving themselves in the open or in an empty classroom which was observed, to being used as a classroom later. The staff toilets are always kept locked. There are no fans and lights in the primary section and when the class environment becomes unbearable due to the heat teachers take the class in the corridor.

There was sufficient furniture in the primary sections of schools except school 2 and 3. In these schools children either sat on durries, shared tables and chairs that were chipped or broken. Though the primary section of school 1 had adequate furniture and the younger children had colourful plastic chairs to sit on, however teachers complained that the class became extremely disorderly with the plastic furniture.

In school 1 in the upper primary sections the number of desks was so inadequate that even after a large absenteeism; at most of the desks, three students could be seen sitting again with bags on top of the table. It was observed that "the height of the desk was too high for students. They had kept their bags on the tables since there was no free space on the sides or at the back and to do copying work they would stand, as they could not sit and write. Three to four students were sitting on the single desk."

Administration

There are detailed policies for all aspects of work in the school and these are frequently updated and changed through the circulars that are sent on a regular basis by the Directorate. Security was well maintained in four of the schools in the sense that the main gates were kept closed and keys were only with the helper. In school 2 during lunch time

students from senior classes took responsibility to monitor the main gate and students were not allowed to buy things from out side. In school 1, no body could enter the school during working hours as the gate keeper sat at the entrance of the school though the main gate was open and any body could walk in. The gatekeeper was there to prevent children from running away during lunch time as students tended to go out and buy things from hawkers and run off from there. In school 3 students are not allowed to go out but outsiders can come in. There is only a single gate which it is very small and not safe. School 5 has a camera to observe the student's activities which is said to help in maintaining discipline in the school.

Four of the schools are Hindi medium schools but the primary school has one section of each class in English medium. Only in school 3 the medium of study is Urdu and they have an English medium section. Mid day meal is irregular in this school but meals were available in sufficient quantities whenever given. The mid day meal is given regularly in all the other schools but in this case the quantity given to children seemed insufficient.

School Population

The mission of the Sarva Sikhsa Abhiyan aims for education for all and propagates a zero rejection policy. The stated admission policies appeared to be welcoming and open to all, and eighty nine percent of the parent's interviewed stated that they had not faced any difficulty during admissions, but the team reported that implementation of the admission policy left much to be desired. Even though there was a uniform policy it was interpreted differently in each school and the schools did not seem to be welcoming parents. In one school the Principal openly expressed the opinion that the school did not want children from any of the surrounding 'jhuggi jhopri' clusters. There was a lack of transparency about various rules and regulation and considerable confusion about the exact documentation required. Each school asked for different documents for residence and age proofs. The rigidity about the age criterion caused innumerable problems. For instance a few parents complained that last year they were told that their child was small, and would be admitted next year but next year they were told that the child was overage.

There is also a great deal of emphasis laid on numbers by the administrations, number of children in a school, the number of drop outs etc., and this data is collated at a regular basis at state and central levels of the government. Administrators always attempt to ensure they have a full strength of children in the school.

In the year 2006-2007 in the school population of the primary and upper primary section of the school varied. (Table below gives the details of school population in the five selected schools)

Schools	Students	Teachers	Principal	Vice Principal	Gender	Social group	Disability
School 1	1252	32	1	-	B-1093 G-159	Gen-1092 SC-147 St-12 OBC-1	3
School 2	1129	39	-	1	Girls school-1129	Gen-641 Minority-144 SC-342 OBC-2	3
School 3	621	21	-	1	Girls school-621	Minorty-621	N/A
School 4	587	19	1	1	G-7 B-571	Gen-411 Sc-157 Obc-10	N/A
School 5	1304	47	1	1	G-581 B-723	Gen-1236 Sc-67 St-1	N/A

Parents expressed their apprehension in sending children of five to six years of age to Sarvodaya School four as they would have to cross a busy main road. In another they didn't want to send children to the school because they were not satisfied with the quality of education being imparted and also because of the high failure rate. There was a strong opinion of a particular community against one school and they wanted to send children to schools, which were not Muslim dominant even if it was far away. Thus parents didn't access school due to many more reasons which were sometimes out the school's control and thus children are denied a chance to education.

School Parent Relationship

Participation of stakeholders is a very important aspect of an inclusive environment but participation of parents in the school was not a characteristic of these schools. This was in spite of the fact that the Directorate policies on parent's participation in school reflects an emphasis on participation of various stakeholders, by providing formalized spaces for parents and community to express their views and concerns. There are provision in the policies of the government for formation of PTA and VKS in each school. These bodies are supposed to meet regularly, have decision making powers and budgetary allocations.

These policies reflect a very different perspective than the one found in the different schools, where the relationship between school and parents does not appear to be very supportive. Most of the responses that parents gave in the initial baseline surveys seemed

to reflect that they didn't feel they were a part let alone an important part of the school. After the admission process their involvement in the school became negligible. All parents (ninety nine percent) stated that they had never been encouraged by the school to get involved in the school in any way. Usually a prominent parent became a member of the PTA who was supposed to be selected but most parents had not heard of this person or this provision. Not surprisingly then all parents (hundred percent) stated they have never been involved in any decision making process in the school and 86.4% felt that their opinions and views about their child and the school did not matter to the school. Even more dishearteningly almost ninety three percent stated that parents could not make a difference in the way the school functioned. The gaps in the stated policy for parent's teachers associations were also shared by the teachers. The teachers in the schools informed that there was no PTA as the PTA elections had not been held. In one of the school where the PTA existed the present PTA members were parents of those children who have passed out a very long time ago.

Most parents (sixty three percent) visited the school on their own initiative and were called by the school only to collect money; collect report card once in a year or to complain about the children. Almost sixty one percent stated that they did not feel that the school provided them with adequate support, materially or otherwise. In the focus group discussions also parents brought up the point that they would like a lot more support from the school financially as they found it difficult to support their children's education.

The government policy clearly states that PTA is to ensure that children's learning performance is to be shared regularly but only thirty three percent of the parents stated that they had at some points discussed the performance of their child in the school with their teachers, clearly signifying that this was not happening regularly. Almost ninety four percent parents stated that teachers had not given them any guidance on how to help the children's learning at home.

Teacher also complained about the lack of cooperation and interest of parents and only thirty nine percent stated parents come regularly. Over seventy percent of the teachers felt parents did not support teachers in their work. Teachers shared that in majority of the families parents are daily wage earners and both of the parents are working. As a result they are not able to give time to their children. Teachers felt that the parents don't come for PTMs, but if money was to be distributed they would stand in line for the whole day. Teachers also had problems with parents coming in at different times to talk to them. They said that parents came to discuss the child throughout the day to the class and would disturb the whole class. A teacher shared that one of the parents came much earlier to make her daughter sit in the front row and stay in the classroom till all the children came and would sometimes even clean the classroom. The teacher stated that children whose parents help in studies were much better off but the children who were first generation learners really found difficult to cope with the studies.

Teachers would berate parents in front of children and team often narrates incidences where they report that parents appeared to be afraid of teachers. The team narrates that

the 'teacher was paying attention to the concerned parents, and when parents asked the teacher to show them their children's answer sheets, teacher had showed it to them. But it was observed that parents did not ask the teacher anything and it seemed they were afraid of the teacher. And whatever had teacher said they nodded their head in yes'. But this was not so in all the schools as the team also reports that some teachers were very polite and patient with parents.

Even the principal did not seem to have a very high opinion about parents. Once when the team suggested to the principal to form a parent group one principal said that it would not be effective as most parents were illiterate. Another principal also complained about the lack of cooperation from parents and shared with the team that the parents were interested in written work and would complain if no work was done in the copies. She said children did not want to study and parents did not help the children. They were illiterate, had a careless attitude towards their children's studies and did not bother. Thus there did not seem to be an acknowledgment of the fact that parents were also stakeholders in the school.

Relationship between administration and teachers

While relationships between stakeholders of the same hierarchy were found to be generally supportive relationships amongst stakeholders across a hierarchy were not always felt to be very supportive, as has already been seen in the case of relations between parents and teachers. The sense of being governed and monitored by higher authorities is very strong amongst the school administrative staff and teaching staff. Everything is controlled by the Directorate's circulars and orders, which are now sent online. Thus, there is a very strong sense of being monitored and to do as the Directorate orders. This is reinforced by the inspection visits by the Directorate which are held frequently and are usually unannounced. The inspectors take action against individual teachers by issuing memos and writing remarks in the teacher's diary.

Thus not surprisingly relationships between teachers and the Directorate did not seem very supportive. Teachers complained that the directorate needed to address the issue of over crowded class rooms, distribution of books in time (girls getting books and boys don't) and start vocational training courses. The teachers complained that they hardly get holidays for two months as they are asked to attend seminars/trainings in May/June. Teachers also shared an instance where the higher authorities exhibited a double policy with double meaning i.e. while checking the copies or papers they were instructed not to be lenient. But when the students failed they were asked to make another easier test paper which affected the good students. Due to this re-examination they would have to make the result all over again and after all this the higher authorities think that the teachers only come to school to have fun.

Teachers constantly complained about the extra administrative work assigned to them. Teachers would complain that the principal had given them a lot of responsibilities and would really get angry about the official work assigned to them. At times the team also sympathized with the teachers about their load of administrative work. Team stated "one

teacher teaches well (good ideas) she had so much of extra work to do because of which she was unable to spend enough time with the children.

Another issue that came to light was that most of the administrative work with the Directorate was done online like attendance, admissions and answers to circulars. But the person in charge complained that the server was usually down during the day and start working only after seven in the evening. Thus he had to come on Sundays to work. There was also inadequate administrative staff to keep the school clean. There was one sweeper assigned to a school. They were usually rude and would walk into the class and ask the children to vacate it. It was observed that when an accident occurred, there was no water to clean the child and instead of being helpful the helpers were rude to the child.

Still the majority of the teachers (seventy five percent) had stated in the baseline interviews that relationships with the principals or vice principals were very supportive. In one school they didn't have a principal or vice principal and in the other two the teachers felt principal/vice principals were not supportive. In School 2 there was a general lack of communication between the teachers and the principal and this caused a lot of confusion in scheduling meetings with teachers as the principal would fail to inform the teachers about the meetings. In this school itself, some teachers stated that they lost interest in their work because of the principal's interference in changing the classes. They shared that the principal changed the teachers in the classes every year and it took up two to three months to get to know the new class. However the principal said that, all the teachers knew this and did not put any hard work with the children. A teacher, who earlier used to be in her class throughout, stayed out of it now and stated that she didn't felt like teaching any more. The teacher shared that she was here only to complete the course and the higher authority wanted the teachers to do only the required and nothing beyond it. Teachers also complained that the principal did not give any importance to the teachers of the primary section and was not at all considerate about them even if they worked sincerely. In school 5 a similar situation existed and the Principal criticized the teachers openly and in front of the outsiders.

Relationship amongst teachers

Sixty six percent teachers felt that relations among teachers within the same section were supportive. Teachers would help each other in both professional and personal matters. For instance a teacher who had prepared the mental math's questions in the previous year helped the teacher who was finding it difficult to prepare a similar test for the current year. In another instance one of the teachers appreciated the drawings of another teacher. Except in one school, the primary and upper primary sections were not very close. Fifty four percent of teachers stated that they were helpful towards each other. Attempts were made through scheduling monthly meetings to build a sense of community of learners, however these meetings could not be organized regularly. Thus the strong personal relationships between teachers continued and remained dominant.

Relationship amongst students

Students appeared to be very supportive towards each other and ninety one percent of the children interviewed stated they helped each other. Children generally showed caring feelings towards other children and were observed helping each other. They would try and prevent each other from getting slapped, they would share food and those children who had finished their work would help the students who needed help in completing their work. The support was extended mainly to friends who ninety five percent of them stated to have.

Children also made it clear that not every thing was fine. Fifty eight percent stated they liked most of the children, almost forty percent stated that they liked only a few children of their classes. There seemed to be clearly some children who were feeling left out in classes and schools. This was supported by observations especially regarding children who were labeled as being 'weaker'. Usually children would laugh at other children who did not know how to do their work. Almost forty seven percent stated there was a lot of fighting among children and seventeen percent stated that only a few children fought. This was supported by frequent observations of children fighting amongst themselves. Boys in the break would fight among themselves and some children stayed in the class and would talk among themselves only. Children of different sections also did not interact with each other.

Teacher student interaction

Interviews with children generally elicited very positive responses from amongst the children. Teacher student relations appeared to be very supportive with over eighty one percent children stating teachers were concerned about their learning, seventy nine percent stating they listened to children, seventy nine percent stating teachers helped them and sixty seven percent feeling that teachers respected them[20].

On the other hand approximately sixty six percent children also stated that they were afraid of someone in the school which was generally the teacher or older children. An element of fear in teacher student interaction was easily observed in the schools. The dominant expectation in the teacher student relationship was that children should obey their teachers and keep quiet all the time in the class unless when spoken to by the teachers. The children would automatically sit in their places when the teacher entered a class out of fear of being scolded or getting slapped.

Many teachers frequently hit children (thirty percent of the primary section teachers had been observed hitting and two principals had also been observed hitting children). Almost all teachers at sometime used abusive, sarcastic and derogatory language even with very young children. Punishment was a frequent form of disciplining children. Children get hit

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[20] One would have to keep in mind the fact that children were interviewed within the school premises and teachers were aware of which students were being interviewed and sometimes insisted that certain children should be interviewed.

or scolded for various reasons like not listening to teachers, for not doing what the teacher said, for not getting pencils, or copies, having incorrect answers, doing dirty work, not paying attention, or if their copies were torn, if they didn't do well in their tests, or hadn't covered their copies, on not getting their copies and a teacher threatened that she would tear up those copies of the children which were not covered. It was observed that when one student did better than teacher's expectations, instead of encouraging the student, she angrily accused him of cheating in the test. The teachers showed little respect for children's individuality.

The teachers who generally hit children held an attitude towards children that seemed to reflect an understanding that some children could not be changed or taught and they didn't want to study. A teacher shared with the team on how important and useful it was for teachers to hit children. Another stated that it is said teachers should not hit children, but they couldn't do so, because hitting children was their only resort as some children could only be controlled if they were hit. Teachers complained that they did not know what to do with the disturbing elements of the class so they screamed and hit them. Teachers have clear favorites and generally they are the children who do very well academically and were generally not strict with these children. Teachers seemed to be aware of the discrimination they may face at home like gender discrimination.

Teachers' behavior reinforced the belief that the teacher is always right and has complete authority over a child including the ability to harm them unless they obey. A teacher would threaten children that even their parents would not be able to protect them from teachers. Sometimes the harassment of children seems to be with parents consent as parents would ask the teachers to hit children if they did not listen. Though in one school the teacher didn't slap the children because of the fear of parents as the children would complain to their parents who would in turn come and fight.

An outsider's presence sometimes was not a deterrent at all but sometimes teachers stopped as seen in this instance "There was a lot of noise, children were busy playing games in groups, and some were fighting. She called the child who was fighting, raised her hand to slap but looked at me and stopped. She asked him to raise hands and stand. Then she went and slapped two children who were fighting." Usually the teacher's behaviour was upsetting but at one time a team member writes that "she could understand at times teachers became frustrated as children were undisciplined".

There were many sensitive teachers also in these very schools. Some teachers were very polite with the children and were fair to all children. A teacher reported that some children were so close to her that they came and met her even they have moved to senior sections. In one class a bond was observed between the teacher and the children. A teacher would encourage students by saying that "you should try at least, unless you try how you will learn". Another shared that children always want to do better if they were encouraged. Sharing the example of Navodaya entrance exam which the children had filled, the teacher said that the students were all very excited and had started preparation. One teacher shared with the team that she allowed her class to go earlier for lunch as they

were young; another teacher always addressed children by their names. The team noted that a teacher was attentive to the needs of each and every child in her class

Observed exclusion from learning process

Teaching

All teachers and children interviewed mentioned teacher directed instructional strategies being followed in the school or what is generally termed as 'chalk and talk' method. The facilitators also observed that only teacher directed instructions were taking place. A typical class, of these five government schools followed a teaching pattern in which, the teacher would come into the class, would tell the children to open their books, write something on the blackboard, ask children to copy whatever was written on the black board, while the children were busy copying the contents from the blackboard, the teacher sat and checked the copies. Traditional teaching excluded children from learning because teachers "teach" in a certain manner which is contradictory to good pedagogical practices. There appeared to be more stress/focus on completing the syllabus rather than ensuring children's learning. The curriculum seems to be mainly focused on academics. When children were asked whether they participate in extra curricular activities, only thirty eight percent gave a positive response. This may also be interpreted to mean that only a few students are included in extracurricular activities. Around fifty five percent of the teachers faced different kinds of problems in teaching and these problems were all related to children like children not paying attention.

Teachers used oral and written tests, for evaluation of learning and almost forty nine percent of them were not happy with the achievement levels among children. They felt there was a lot of pressure on teachers to make children pass but children were at times not interested, children learning level during their primary years was not well established and only children who could grasp what was happening in class managed to pass. One teacher even remarked that there should be an 'IQ assessment' before admitting children as some students simply didn't understand what was taught. One teacher shared that in twelfth Grade only a few children were left (promoted children from eighth Grade) and even tenth (not very clear) Grade student didn't know how to write an application. Teachers spent the maximum amount of time checking copies in class. Copying was rampant during examinations. Teachers felt that in comparison to children in government schools children going to private school were from good families so they were more competitive. Teachers expected children to learn themselves and if they didn't then they only had themselves to blame.

Teachers would often blame parents for poor learning. They said that the children "were weak in study and their parents also did not pay attention towards their study" or their parents were careless. Parents also knew their children were not learning and blamed it on their children inabilities or on the teacher's inabilities but said they could hardly do anything about it. When students were asked to remark on the performance of students in their exams, thirteen percent felt that some didn't do well while forty percent felt most of the children didn't do well so either failed or got very less marks.

Level of Commitment

Generally the teacher's level of commitment is low and the team felt that "the casual attitude of the teachers towards their work is a major contributor in wasting precious time of the students." The team observed that teachers were often found absent from their classrooms. According to the research team "The class teacher stayed in the class only till lunch and after lunch other teacher took their class. The teacher who takes the second half was on leave most of the time hence the class is free for half of the day". The team observed that the teacher's mobile was on the ringing mode and was attending continuously to the calls and messages. The teacher seems to put in a minimal effort. The teacher hardly moved around to see what the children are doing. She then called children one by one to come and recite any poem and the rest were to repeat. Then she told them that she was doing some important work and every one would keep the head down and sleep for sometime. Teams observed that the teacher had explained the sums to the children but in a hurry. Being a teacher of grade one the teacher should be active and enthusiastic but in this class, activities were done by rote and on board. Teachers were never observed using teaching / learning materials but sometimes they didn't have pens to write on whiteboards provided by the school administration and this lack of materials led to a lot of frustrations amongst them. Some classes were well decorated in School 1, School 5 and School 3.

Teaching for Test and examinations

Teachers were observed teaching to the test and were clearly heard telling the children that this would be coming in the exams. In between they would remind students "sun lo yeh paper mein aayega" and the team reports seeing similar questions being given in the papers which had been done in the class. They did not put any efforts to improve the student's performance. A teacher shared that in the beginning she had put in a lot of efforts to improve the performance of her class and she had seen results also but she was shifted out of the class. She had complained to the principal but nothing had happened till date.

Emphasis on Copying from the Black Board

Teachers are very diligent about writing things on the blackboard for children to do or to copy. Children even in the first standard were reported to be copying from the blackboard all day or would keep writing something or the other given by the teacher. There was an emphasis on written work because of fear of parents' complaints and demand for evidence of teachers work by the Directorate. The teacher did not pay much attention to the students who did not write in the class. Some teachers did not even try to find out whether the students understood what they were writing. At times when there was no electricity and total class was in total darkness, even though children complained that they could not see the black board, still the teacher continued to use the blackboard. Thus writing keeps children busy. Either children keep writing or they just keep reciting something. Children are expected to perform and are tested constantly.

Hurrying over lessons

The team reported that, sometimes teachers were found teaching concepts wrongly. The team observed that the teacher was telling a story in Hindi in English class. The team was also disturbed about the fact that the teacher himself stated that it would take ten days for children to understand the *matras* but then he went on to introduce two *matras* within a week and he had full knowledge that many children would not understand. The team reflected that sometimes, the teacher had introduced a lesson, whose level was much higher than what most children would understand. The team felt that they didn't know how to react to the situation when the teacher was unable to answer any questions. In another instance a teacher himself did not know the answers to the questions and asked the children to read it from the guide.

Ambiguity in giving instructions

Teachers didn't provide clear instructions and when children didn't do the task appropriately, teachers were heard yelling at the children. The teacher did not explain the children what she had written on the blackboard. Children were unable to get teacher's attention as the teachers were outside the class most of the time. Generally children's engagement was not of the very high standards as half the class would not pay attention to what the teacher was doing and was busy in fighting, playing or talking. The teacher could not involve the whole class in the discussions. The teacher pointed at the children, which they (the children) didn't felt good about.

Lack of discipline in the classroom

Classes were observed to be unruly and children were very restless. The younger children would hit each other a lot in class. Children who were quicker at learning usually ended up making a lot of noise because they did not pay attention to the things which were being taught. Another issue was that in order to escape from the class, children would keep asking repeatedly to either go to the toilet or to drink water every five-ten minutes. In another class the writing on the blackboard was not visible to the children sitting on the periphery so they would generally come in front of the blackboard and copy the work which added to the chaos in the class. To manage the class the teachers would frequently shout at the children throughout the day and then later complained that "gala dukh jataa hai cheekh cheekh kar"(Their throats become soar by screaming all the time).

Learning

Almost thirty nine percent of the student said they liked the teaching of the school but parents did not seem to have a very high opinion about the quality of the teaching in the school and only twelve percent of them stated that it was of the good quality but most could not afford the fees of private schools thus didn't have an option but to send their children to government schools. While eighty eight percent stated that they enjoyed

learning in the school there was no response form eight percent of the children and seventeen percent stated that they did not enjoy learning from their teachers.

Even though eighty eight percent children stated they enjoyed learning, the team observations led them to conclude that the majority of the children were excluded from the learning process in the class. Learning seemed to be mechanical and rote and the majority did not understand what was being taught. Most of the children were not able to do the task which the teacher assigned and didn't understand what was happening in the class. Only a few children would answer questions. Children would simply repeat what the teacher would say what a teacher was reading in a chapter; they didn't even know where she was reading as they were unable to read.

Students did not understand what they were writing but they kept on copying without understanding the meaning of the words. The team states, "For them the letters written on the board were a part of the picture itself. When facilitator asked meaning of moon, sun and earth, some children told meaning of sun, but could not tell meaning of moon and earth". The team had observed that many children were unable to write sentences and made grammatical errors. They also observed that only a few students could solve problems, whereas in spite of knowing the answer, most of the students could not write due to inadequate knowledge of English language. The team observed that all children had a language problem in Hindi and English.

The team reported that students were not clear about their basic concepts. They felt that there was huge discrepancy amongst the level of the children of the same class as not all the children were learning at the same pace. The team states they felt that some children were at such a lower level in the class that even team's inputs would not help them to reach the academic level of the class. Team identifies possible visual problems in a child, one slow learner and felt a few children in the class needed to be assessed (hard of hearing, hyperactive).

Teachers were well aware of the problems faced by the children and frequently complained about them. They automatically excluded children who may /were not achieving academically and these children faced a lot of verbal harassment. Teachers kept listing out the children's flaws in front of the class. Teachers would get angry if children admitted they had not understood something. The team observed that children would say that they had understood something when the teacher asked them but thereafter they would start calling the team members to explain what the teacher had taught. The team narrated that "In this class the students were posing questions repeatedly to the teacher who got irritated and scolded the students. The teacher asked the children in the class to stand up those who didn't understand. Slowly one child stood up that too when the teacher had asked for the fourth time. On seeing him, half of the class stood up. The teacher got angry and said "tum sab bhi us ke deemag se kam karte ho, vo uthega to uthegen, meri bhasha samash nahin aa rahi thi kya". Then the teacher asked about the children about the simple place value. Only two children knew and the teacher got very angry on the children she said "jab puchti hun to yes mam, yes mam karte ho tabhi nahin bola jata kee samash nahin aaya mam ek bar aur bata do, ab jab sab khatm karva deeya to

khadhe ho rahe hai kee kuch nahin samash aaya, sara dubara pathana shuru keeya to veer aage ka course keise khatm hoga". The children who were not able to answer were slapped by the teacher.

According to teachers there were some children for whom nothing could be done. They felt that children who were weaker should be stopped only in first standard and not be promoted. The teacher said "ab batao pachvi me aa gaye hai phir bhi ek- ek chij batani padegi inhe". Many teachers felt that the children who are "kamzor" / "weak" should be put in a separate section but as there were no extra teachers this was not possible. Another teacher complained that her class was the 'dull class.' There were few children who she said don't know anything. They just come here to abuse me and eat food. One of them was even repeating class first. She pointed to few children and said "inhein kuchh bhi nahin aata. Bas uth kar aa jaate hain. Copy nikalne ko bolo to gali daite hain." Four boys were sitting in front and doing their work (near the blackboard). They didn't even have their lunch because their could not complete their work. The teacher said "sara din bhi baithe rahenge tab bhi kaam khatam nahin hoga." The teachers knew children's gaps in learning. The team narrated that after checking children's work a teacher commented that, "kuchh bhi kar lo yeh to aise hi rahenge".

In another instance the teacher had divided children in to rows. She paid more attention to three rows on her right than to the students sitting in two rows on her left. The children sitting in the two rows on teacher's left side seemed to be unable to answer her questions. The team stated that there was clear discrimination in the sitting arrangements. She had organized a class into four categories of good, average, below average and poor students. She openly pointed out to the children in the class whom she was finding it difficult to cope with. She shared with the team that some children were at class one level and even below. Another teacher had grouped students according to their previous experience of schooling. Children who were never been to school were put in one group and another set of children who were coming to the school for the first time were in another group and the teacher was given them the work according to their levels. The children had low levels of confidence and the team narrated that once when the team asked one of the 'weaker students' to read in front of the class and teacher, the child was very scared, he stood up and though moving his lips there was no voice coming out.

An exception was a teacher in school four who was reported to be very different and the team narrated the way she addressed a child who didn't understand something she had taught. She said "Pehle doosre school mein tha, abhi isse theek se nahin aata, ise time lagega. She asked him to sit down and told him" tun thodi dair baad mera paas aana, mein tumhe samjhaungi". Some teachers seemed to be motivated mainly due to their own personal attitudes. A teacher had been observed to tell children that they should keep their classes clean, as keeping them dirty is bad thing. She also told children not to eat from outside. But once in a while the team stated "Children seemed to be engaged in their task as they were attentive and were taking part in the classroom activity". Another teacher was reported to be doing light physical activities to quieten the children, which the children enjoyed. The teacher was very patient while explaining the sums. The teacher involved the whole class in the discussions. The teacher individually went to all

the students to check their note books; as a result the class remained by and large attentive and undisturbed. She went around and gave homework to those who had done their work and got it checked. A few teachers took pains to explain new words. The team wrote "the teacher then asked the students to open the Hindi books and take out the chapter "kisaan ki hoshiyari." She gave a lot of stress on the word hoshiyari and asked children its meaning. Many answered from their context. Some said padayi mein hoshiyaar. Some said khel mein and so on. The she read the chapter and told the meanings of all the difficult words in the lesson. Some teachers did explain meanings of new words to children and discuss question answers before asking children to write. One teacher in school 1 did ask a lot of questions from children about whether they have understood what was being taught or not

There was some kind of monitoring of teaching by the principals as they were responsible for checking notebooks of two classes i.e. work of two teachers every week and would stamp on the notebooks after checking it. They also reviewed teacher's diaries on a regular basis but the team's reports seemed to be clearly stating that teacher's were not doing their job well.

Results of school situational analysis: AADI School

The situational analysis of AADI School led to the following picture of the school.

In 1978, a special school for children with cerebral palsy, called the Center for Special Education (CSE), was started by a group of dedicated women, in a three- bedroom flat in New Delhi. Its objective was to ensure access to quality educational services for children with Cerebral Palsy, as there were no schools available in Delhi that would address their educational needs. It was established at a time when awareness of disability and special education in India were at its embryonic stage. At that time the philosophy, design and approach of the school were based on the prevailing medical model of rehabilitation of people with disabilities. This model, also called the deficit model, is based on the belief that people with disabilities require assistance to overcome or minimize the effects of functioning limitations.

The school provided services for children with multiple disabilities in the field of education, therapy, speech therapy, and counseling. The school was organized so as to have academic, sensory stimulation and therapy sections. Children were grouped into classes according to their ages, the ability to follow an academic curriculum (formal or sensory) based on the success level of the therapy and educational levels of achievement. CSE provided not only classroom-based educational services but also individualized remedial work. There was a focus on individual sessions and spending quality time on areas that required special attention in teaching children to their full potential, including use of AAC devises and teaching aids. In the school, education was never only about academics. It included personal, social and spiritual value development. Students were taught to know their rights and to take responsibilities for themselves and others. Much needed support was also provided to families of the children with disabilities.

Since its inception, the school has continually adapted itself and taken steps to address the needs of children and families. New ways of structuring programmes, different methods of recording, review and redefining of admission policies, organisation of different groups, developing new curricula, designing appropriate technologies, including assistive aids and appliances, trying new ideas and new methods of assessing achievements to address the gaps have been attempted. Structural changes were also made in the school when needed for instance when some children found it difficult to cope with the curriculum; the school opted for NIOS thus starting a new stream. The concern for what would happen after school to children led to a formation of a pre vocation centre for vocational training.

Mainstreaming of children began when they had to appear for the class tenth board examination. As the school was not recognised, the school tied up with regular schools to fulfil this purpose. Some of the first batch students to pass out, who were sent to regular schools, later on, secured admission in prestigious Delhi University colleges. Thereafter, mainstreaming was attempted in the primary sections of various schools as well. According to the children's feed back, the special school had indeed given them education but had not prepared them to cope with the challengers of the outside world, which became an impetus for the organisation to take another look at its approach to education. By the late 1990s the approach, focus and efforts of the school shifted towards inclusive education. The school debated about the concept of inclusion and inclusive schooling for over six years and finally took the decision in 2004 to turn itself into an inclusive school and CSE was renamed AADI School.

In AADI School the entire process began much earlier with extensive discussions about inclusion itself not only amongst the staff but all stakeholders, because the support for and belief in inclusion in the school was considered crucial for the success of an inclusive school. This support was build up over time amongst the staff, students and parents. In preparation, before changing the set up from a special school to an inclusive school there were meetings held with all the staff, students and parents of the school. Even the school staff took time to be convinced and oriented to the idea of an inclusive school. The concerns of student with disabilities were also addressed. The process of sensitization started in their personal development, hobby classes and the morning assemblies through role plays, games and activities followed by discussions, wherein they tried to show the different dimensions and tried to make them understand how the group would have a variety of needs and differences or difficulties. Meetings were also held with parents of children of the existing students with disabilities over a period of three to four months to obtain their views on inclusion. The reaction ranged from people being very happy to people expressing concerns and fears. Some felt that the time to their children would be reduced and it would influence their children's education in a negative manner. Though after sharing the long-term impact of the concept and making them realize that if they wanted equal rights with children with disabilities in mainstream schools then there was need to do the same in special schools also and most parents (the team felt) were able to understand. It took a long time for parents to be convinced about the idea of inclusion but gradually they accepted it. Similarly sharing with the domestic staff was also considered necessary. There was a need to address their difficulties separately as teachers had been

involved in earlier discussions and so were more aware about the changes than the domestic staff. The new concept was shared with volunteers who also had a lot of concerns. In August 2004 the decision about the movement, the concept of the school and the plans were shared with all of AADI staff, children and parents. At this point in time the concept of inclusive education was understood to mean all children learning together irrespective of differences and participation of all.

Annexure No. 3: DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENTS IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

Confirming exclusion from learning

The diagnostic assessments conducted clearly substantiated the degree of exclusion from the teaching process that children were facing. The results for the five schools simply confirmed the numerous observations made by the team regarding the problems children were facing in learning in classrooms. A total of 1094 children from the sixth standard took the test and the result of the diagnostic test in the five schools was dismal. Only 0.2% (two children) was found to be at class five levels in maths, while 1.8% (twenty children) was at the class five levels in Hindi. There was a difference between the levels attained by children from MCD schools and Sarvodaya schools but it was not of such a great significant difference as imagined by the teachers. In the case of Hindi MCD children scored at par even with class five level children.

This assessment had been conducted in response to the issue raised in all the meetings with the upper primary sections teachers about the low standards of children from MCD schools. The teachers stated that children were unable to cope with the sixth class syllabus and concepts, as they were unclear about the basic concepts and many didn't know how to read or write. These children were most likely to drop out later on. Some felt the results of their schools would be much better if only the MCD students were not coming to them in the sixth class. According to them, their teaching practices were quite good; there was no discrepancy in the levels of the Sarvodaya students. Their results would be hundred percent if only the MCD students were not coming to them in class sixth. To further investigate this issue and in an attempt to reduce the stigmatization of students from the MCD schools, the team suggested the possibility of a diagnostic assessment to substantiate the teacher's observations. The teachers of all five schools agreed for such an assessment and the team designed a tool based on the SCERT curriculum being followed in schools. It chose to examine students in two subjects, Maths and Hindi.

Levels	Final levels achieved			
	Math's		**Hindi**	
	Number of students from MCD Schools	Number of students from same Sarvodaya School	Number of students from MCD Schools	Number of students from same Sarvodaya School
Pre School	145	35	307	63
Class 1 level	390	101	191	57
Class 2 level	135	30	101	39
Class 3 level	25	22	83	25
Class 4 level	24	19	25	20
Class 5 level	0	1	12	4
Totals	719	208	719	208

The aim of inclusive education is autonomy, independent learners with dispositions for life-long learning and good citizenry. In a community of learners, the model is learner-centered; knowledge is co-constructed with teachers weaving the connections between themselves, the subject, and their students. The community, then, is a place built on fairness, freedom of expression, and responsibility where learning is meaningful and relevant to the children's lives and experiences. All voices are heard, respected, and as integral part of the fabric of learning. Community is about connectedness and relationships; it is where one learns to value and sincerely appreciate diversity in a multitude of forms. Inclusive teaching practices are the embodiment of democratic practice. In his book, *Experience and Education*, Dewey describes democracy as a social construct establishing shared social control, by the membership, to the benefit of the majority. He added "that in order for education to benefit both the learner and society, it must be based on actual life experience of the learner" (1997, p. 89).

Education should exemplify the framework of society; or rather model a healthy version of a democratic society. One learns to appreciate democracy in an environment established to introduce and give opportunity to interact with diverse others; an environment that provides a safe setting in which to exchange ideas, share talents, and collaborate with diverse ability of others who are able to contribute through a variety of experiences. A democratic environment functions as one that values equally the contributions of all its members. Democratic education takes place in an environment established with regard for the individual student's abilities and conducive to student choice. Student choice refers to collaborative negotiating of teachers and students, not about the concept to be learnt, but the manner by which the student may learn the concept. When individuals with diverse learning needs and talents are appreciated and each is given the opportunity to contribute in a group setting, a pattern of social interaction develops that sets a precedent for future adult behaviors.

Effective teaching requires awareness of the individual needs of each student in the classroom. The ways in which, learning can be made relevant to each student in class entails, ways to meet the unique needs of each member of a dynamic group of learners. As educators recognize human development as unique to each individual and the mission of education as one of facilitating student growth – cognitive, social, emotional, and physical – so that each student is prepared to reach her or his potential in a democratic society.

The teacher establishes the actual classroom environment. Once the bell rings to begin the school day and the classroom door closes, regardless of the school's written policy or the program description, the curriculum and its delivery are determined and influenced by the classroom teacher's core values and belief based on his/her educational philosophy.

An inclusive classroom, in Alfie Kohn's (1999)phraseology a 'working with' classroom, provides a climate that fosters students' deep understanding, promotes students' excitement about learning, and presents opportunity for social, as well as, intellectual,

growth. Learners' interests drive much of the curriculum in an environment that supports their desire to learn through the process of discovery. Noise, the din generated by student movement and dialogue in concert with the sounds of students involved in their own learning, is characteristic of inclusion. Inquiry, with emphasis on thorough, thoughtful student discussion of complicated issues, is generated by the interests of the students and the questions that they ask. Assessment is on-going and creative, both of student learning and of the teacher's own professional practice, for the specific purpose of meeting the learning needs of each student. Inclusive classrooms resemble each other only by merit of student investment in inquiry and discovery learning

A traditional classroom, again in Kohn's (1999) words, a 'doing to' classroom is one in which the adults make all decisions concerning lessons, the teaching activities by which the students are expected to learn, the assessments which tend to focus on paper and pencil tasks that are quick and easy to evaluate, and most importantly emphasize compliance. Often the format is teacher lecture or student worksheets. The common metaphor for this type of classroom is that of the students as vessels that the teacher is to 'fill' with necessary knowledge. The voice most often heard in a traditional teaching environment is that of the teacher; lecturing, explaining, persuading. Students compete with each other to have the correct answer for the teacher sooner than classmates.

Teachers believe their teaching actualizes their philosophy. A traditionalist has strong feelings about the benefits of a specific curriculum targeting the capabilities of a group of similar ability students who, they believe, learn approximately the same breadth and depth of a concept and at the same pace. A proponent of inclusion supports tailoring the curriculum to the ability of individual students, who within a classroom composed of diverse students, will then engage in a healthy exchange sharing different perspectives of the same concept.

Classroom practice matters for authentic, successful inclusion. The ideal classroom climate is one that promotes deep understanding, excitement about learning, and social as well as intellectual growth. Some of the characteristic Inclusive Practices can be summed up as:
  o Diversity is expected, valued and addressed through accommodations and adaptations in teaching and learning. Individual and group diversity contributes positively to classroom climate, learning outcomes, and community quality.
  o Education should encourage the formation and expression of informed views, lifelong learning, an active search for solutions to serious societal problems, caring for others,   and constructive community participation. Knowledge and competence are purposely constructed in a variety of ways in enriched and stimulating contexts. Classrooms are places where challenging, practical, and relevant experiences take place and where authentic important questions are asked.
  o Teachers who are inclusive are consistently moving away from rigid, textbook – and basal-driven frontal teaching toward cooperative learning, whole language, thematic and creative instruction, critical thinking, problem solving, and authentic assessment"

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