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# Making of an inclusive school

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Here in this article, I will share an inspiring story of an inclusive school, ZaibaAapa Institute of Inclusive Education, working for the empowerment and welfare of persons with disabilities. The story of ZaibaAapa Institute reminds us in general that no effort is poor if started with the noble intention for the greater good; the eternal power decided and facilitates its direction.

On a serene midnight in March 1997, a boy with bachelor's in sciences was staying in his uncle`s home and suddenly some unidentified gunman barged in for having his cousin killed. The boy pleaded them for mercy and with no time they pumped bullets into his body, damaging his spleen and the many other parts of the body.

Miraculously, the boy survived but remained crippled for the rest of his life. After two years of recovery, he elected to continue his studies and joined the master`s program in social work at University of Kashmir. The events of the past and the struggles in present take this man to do something special for the future of the society. It was with this hope the journey of lifetime for the disabled activist started.

This noble person was Javed Ahmad Taq, who founded a non-governmental organization named Humanity Welfare Organization in 2000 that aims at providing welfare and assistance to the children with special needs and their families.

Over the years, this worked purely on volunteer basis and tried to facilitate the condition of disabled children according to their needs. Eventually, this inspiring man realized the educational problems of this population and turned himself into a full time educator after laying the foundation of ZebaAapa Institute of Inclusive Education in Bijbehara, a town in

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Anantnag district. He named this school after his grandmother ZaibaBanoo, whose selfless service towards the community welfare inspired him to become this selfless towards children

with disabilities.

ZaibaAapa, as the people would call her, used to be a community worker. She has worked all her life to bring hope, optimism and empowerment in the lives of hopeless people. She used to have visited the nearby forests and make homemade medicines from the medicinal herbs in order to help victims of burns to cure their wound.

Moreover, her touching nature towards the miseries of others, attitude towards poor people and voluntary services to the needy is the only reason she became a lighthouse, inspired many others voyaging through this sea of social activism.

The Zaiba Aapa institute, which started as a special education school initially take into account children with visual impairments. In the beginning, only three students were enrolled in this school. Later on with the passage of time and because of parental enforcement this has grown into an inclusive school, including all children regardless of any disability towards a common framework and curriculum.

Through early intervention services, a team of experts started working with children identified at risk of developing a special need. Earlier, students were introduced to Braille that facilitates their learning and helped in minimizing severity of special need.

Among the institutes for disabled children, ZaibaAapa institute is providing academic, therapeutic and training services to children with different disabilities, for example, intellectual impairment, autism, cerebral palsy, visual impairment, deaf and dumb and multiple disabilities. It aims at providing the appropriate education to each child by utilizing the full school resources and monitoring equal opportunities.

Monitoring the learning needs of every child, the school uses different teaching methods to address the challenges of students with disabilities and promote their development in educational, social, behavioral and physical settings. It is inspiring to see children with



special needs treated as a single unit under one roof, despite their socioeconomic and physical background.

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A wise man once said, “Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime”.

Whenever, people try to understand the shades of prevailing perspectives regarding different weaker sections of society, they usually come up with charity paradigm, trying to design a structure where everyone is accepted and equality is valued.

Interestingly, the ZaibaAapa institute was started with the thought of “making children with disabilities self-reliant and equal members of society”.

It is with this agenda, this school is trying to develop a sense of self-esteem and self –worth among its students by providing training of career development and supporting them in becoming economically productive for mainstream employment.

Over the years, ZaibaAapa institute has provided many success stories. Academically, the school is none less than the other. Most of the students have excelled in state level exams. Some ex-students have joined state level cultural academies and are struggling for their future horizon.

Admiring the work done by this school, both local and national support groups are helping by raising funds and conducting advocacy programs for the rights of children with special needs. Today, ZaibaAapa institute has got a reputable place in promotion of inclusive education in Jammu and Kashmir.

Abida Parveen, a known Pakistani Sufi singer once said, “the approval and acceptance of your actions by Allah the Almighty reflects in love and appreciation of the creation of Allah”. One can see the appearance of this thought in the life of the founder of ZaibaAppa Institute of Inclusive Education. Javed Ahmad Taq not only received recognition from the general public but was honored by several national and state institutions working for the upliftment



of minorities. On the honor of his dedication towards the service of educating children with

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# View Point

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Although, the culture we live in sees disabled people through the lens of exclusion and think about them in terms of charity and pity, yet there are stories that represent the optimistic side of disability. Here in this article, I will share an inspiring story of an inclusive school, ZaibaAapa Institute of Inclusive Education, working for the empowerment and welfare of persons with disabilities. The story of ZaibaAapa Institute reminds us in general that no effort is poor if started with the noble intention for the greater good; the eternal power decided and facilitates its direction.

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