

## Special children and education

Krishan Kumar

Assist. Prof., National College of Education Sirsa, V.P.O. Balasar, Rania, Sirsa, Haryana, India

### Abstract

The scheme provides one special teacher for every eight children with disabilities, community involvement, and a resource room in a cluster of eight to 10 schools. A number of voluntary organisations are implementing the scheme in the various States. Special Education programs are designed for those students who are mentally, physically, socially and/or emotionally delayed. This aspect of “delay,” broadly categorized as a developmental delay, signifies an aspect of the child's overall development (physical, cognitive, scholastic skills) which places him behind his peers. Due to these special requirements, students’ needs cannot be met within the traditional classroom environment. Special Education programs.

**Keywords:** emotionally delayed, traditional classroom, special education, specific necessities

### Introduction

Special Education programs are designed for those students who are mentally, physically, socially and/or emotionally delayed. This aspect of “delay,” broadly categorized as a developmental delay, signifies an aspect of the child's overall development (physical, cognitive, scholastic skills) which places him behind his peers. Due to these special requirements, students’ needs cannot be met within the traditional classroom environment. Special Education programs and services adapt content, teaching methodology and delivery instruction to meet the appropriate needs of each child and are available to children until they reach 21 years of age.

**Meaning of Children with Special Needs:** A special needs child is child who has been determined to require special attention and specific necessities that other children do not. The state decides upon this status and offers benefits that follow a special needs child because it is believed the child will not be adopted if assistance is not provided.

**According to Merriam Webster Dictionary:** any of various difficulties (such as a physical, emotional, behavioral, or learning disability or impairment) that causes an individual to require additional or specialized services or accommodations (such as in education or recreation).

**Categories of Special Children:** There are 13 categories of special education as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In order to qualify for special education, the IEP team must determine that a child has one of the following:

- Autism
- Blindness
- Deafness
- Emotional Disturbance
- Hearing Impairment

- Intellectual Disability
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impaired
- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment

### Educational provisions for children with special needs:

**Integrated Education:** In the 1970s, the government launched the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC). The scheme aimed at providing educational opportunities to learners with disabilities in regular schools, and to facilitate their achievement and retention. The objective was to integrate children with disabilities in the general community at all levels as equal partners to prepare them for normal development and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence. A cardinal feature of the scheme was the liaison between regular and special schools to reinforce the integration process. Meanwhile, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) joined hands with UNICEF and launched Project Integrated Education for Disabled Children (PIED) in the year 1987, to strengthen the integration of learners with disabilities into regular schools. An external evaluation of this project in 1994 showed that not only did the enrollment of learners with disabilities increase considerably, but the retention rate among disabled children was also much higher than the other children in the same blocks. In 1997 IEDC was amalgamated with other major basic education projects like the DPEP (Chadha, 2002) <sup>[5]</sup> and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) (Department of Elementary Education, 2000).

The IEDC scheme provides for a wide range of incentives and interventions for the education of children with disabilities. These include preschool training, counselling for parents,

allowances for books and stationery, uniforms, transport, readers and escorts, hostel facilities, and other assistive devices. The scheme provides one special teacher for every eight children with disabilities, community involvement, and a resource room in a cluster of eight to 10 schools. A number of voluntary organisations are implementing the scheme in the various States.

**Legislation:** The right of every child to education is proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and was strongly reaffirmed by the Jometien World Declaration of Education for All (1990). Furthermore, the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) was an important resolution to improve the educational conditions of persons with disabilities. This had major implications for the Indian situation in the form of three legislative Acts—The Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992 (RCI Act), the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 (PWD Act), and the National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999. While the RCI Act was solely concerned with manpower development for the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, the PWD Act comprises 14 chapters and is a significant endeavour to empower persons with disabilities and promote their equality and participation by eliminating discrimination of all kinds. It emphasises the need to prepare a comprehensive education scheme that will make various provisions for transport facilities, removal of architectural barriers, supply of books, uniforms, and other materials, the grant of scholarships, suitable modification of the examination system, restructuring of curriculum, providing amanuensis to blind and low vision students, and setting up of appropriate fora for the redressal of grievances. The National Trust Act aims at providing total care to persons with mental retardation and cerebral palsy and also manages the properties bequeathed to the trust.

**Barriers in Special Education in India:** Inclusive education is a binding and priority for government of India. However, a wide gap in policy and practice exists in the country with respect to inclusive education. There are a number of barriers that hinder proper practice of inclusive education in our country. Based on the literature and personal experiences, the authors believe these barriers to include the following:

1. The inefficiency of teachers to develop and use instructional materials for inclusion students.
2. Attitudes towards inclusion and disability among teachers, administrators and policy planners
3. Attitudes of parents of children without disabilities
4. Lack of awareness about children with disabilities among general teachers.
5. Improper curriculum adaptation
6. School environment
7. School management
8. Support services
9. Family collaboration

10. Insufficient and improper pre-service teacher education
11. Negative self-perceptions of children with disabilities
12. Negative attitudes of normal peers
13. ICT availability and related competencies
14. Improper policy planning and lack-luster implementation
15. Difficulties in physical access
16. Expenses involved

**Emerging Issues and Curricular Concerns:** The following curricular issues and concerns have emerged within the Focus Group as a result of in-depth discussion and analysis of the existing scenario.

- Making all options of education, such as, open schools, regular schools, special schools, non-formal and alternative education systems, available to all children including children with disabilities.
- Developing strategies for meeting the educational needs of learners with disabilities in large classrooms.
- Developing national support systems.
- Understanding the significance of early identification and intervention.
- Emphasising good teaching–learning practices.
- Making the curriculum flexible and accessible.
- Utilising technology and assistive devices.
- Developing appropriate assessment and evaluation procedures.
- Capacity building and empowering teachers and stakeholders.
- Providing vocational education.
- Identifying suitable sports and other co-curricular activities for optimal development of learners with SEN.
- Barrier-free intervention/educational environment (including attitudinal barriers).

**Recommendations and suggestions for Special Education:** The following are the major recommendations of this Focus Group.

- Make all early education and care programmes (from 0–6 years) sensitive and responsive to the special needs of children, including training of Anganwadi workers in identification of needs of the children with disabilities, use of age-appropriate play and learning materials and the counselling of parents.
- Make all schools inclusive by:
- Enforcing without exception the neighbourhood school policy ✓ Removing physical barriers
- Reviewing barriers created by admission procedures (screening, identification, parental interaction, selection and evaluation), this should include private schools
- Building the capacity of teachers to function in an inclusive setting
- Making the curriculum flexible and appropriate to accommodate the diversity of school children including those with disability in both cognitive and non-cognitive areas
- Making support services available in the form of technology (including ICT), teaching–learning materials and specialists

- Involving parents, family, and the community at all stages of education
- Gear all teacher education programmes (both pre-service and in-service) to developing the pedagogical skills required in inclusive classrooms.
- Correlate the style of teaching to the learning styles of all children.
- Mobilise special schools as resource centres that provide support to inclusive schools.
- Develop partnerships with institutions of higher learning, governmental organisations, and NGOs to promote participation of children with disabilities in all aspects of education.
- Reduce class size to a maximum of 30 students and a maximum of 20 in case the class includes children with SEN.
- Make the class teacher responsible for all the children in the class. In case special support is required on account of SEN, this should be in the form of assistance to the class teacher.
- Regard all special teachers in a given school as full-fledged members of the school community.
- Make all curriculum-related policies and programmes inclusive in nature to effectively address issues related to the education of children with SEN.
- Develop perspective and skills in all administrators, including school principals, for planning and executing programmes based on the philosophy of inclusion.
- Develop strengths and abilities of all children rather than highlighting limitations.
- Recognising diversity among learners, the medium of instruction should include sign language for children with hearing impairment, and Braille for children with visual impairment. At the same time as an optional subject/third language, learning of sign language, Braille, finger Braille, etc. should be introduced for all children.
- To promote self-reliance and enable children to acquire coping skills, the emphasis of inclusive education must be on inculcating independent living skills, critical thinking, decision making and problem-solving skills, and articulation of their concerns.
- To facilitate the acquisition of integrated knowledge in children the single teacher class system up to Class V should be adopted.
- For effective delivery of education in the inclusive mode, all teacher education (inservice and pre-service) must be restructured.
- Education must aim at developing a system by which abstract concepts are effectively communicated to children with varying learning styles, including those using sign language, Braille, etc.
- To inculcate respect for diversity and the concept of an inclusive society the teacher education programmes and the curriculum framework should incorporate a component of human rights education.
- To nurture all aspects of the personality, viz., cognitive, affective, and connotative—games, dance, drama, music, and art and craft must be given equal importance and value.
- Admission, retention, and full participation of children in all aspects of education, must not be subject to any criteria based on assessment tests and judgment by professionals and experts, including psycho-medical certificates.
- No child with disabilities should be asked to produce certificates either for admission, examination, getting support facilities/ scholarships, etc.
- Reject the policy of failing student's vis-à-vis enabling each child to overcome perceived difficulties
- Make sign language the medium of instruction for the hearing impaired and Braille for the visually impaired in view of the diversities.
- Introduce sign language, Braille, and finger Braille as a third language for all children.
- Inculcate among students with SEN, critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving and other coping or life skills in order to promote their self-reliance and independent living capabilities.
- Interpret SEN more broadly and do not restrict its interpretation to the definitions given in the PWD Act.
- Incorporate a component of human rights education in teacher education programmes to inculcate respect for diversity and the concept of an inclusive society.
- Do not subject the admission, retention, getting support facilities, scholarships, and full participation of children in all aspects of education, to any criteria based on assessment tests, judgment by professionals and experts, including psycho-medical certificates

## References

1. Advani L. Education: A Fundamental Right of Every Child Regardless of His/Her Special Needs. *Journal of Indian Education; Special Issue on Education of Learners with Special Needs*. New Delhi: NCERT, 2002.
2. Alur M. Special Needs Policy in India, in S. Hegarty and M. Alue (eds), *Education and Children with Special Needs: From Segregation to Inclusion*. New Delhi: Sage, 2002.
3. Borah JR. An In-depth Study into the Problems of Education of the Mentally Retarded Children in Assam. Ph.D thesis, Guwahati University, 2003.
4. Bose K. Studying the Effectiveness of Computer Programmes as Remedial Strategies for Overcoming Specific Learning Disabilities. Ph.d. thesis, Jamia Millia Islamia, 1996.
5. Chadha A. Inclusive Education in DPEP. *Journal of Indian Education. Special issue on Education of Learners with Special Needs*, 2002.
6. Department of Education. *National Policy on Education*, New Delhi: MHRD, GOI, 1986.
7. Department of Education. *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan: A Programme for Universal Elementary Education*. New Delhi: MHRD, GOI, 2000.
8. Sharma K. Attitudinal Changes—Breaking the Psycho-social Barriers. *Journal of Indian Education*. 2002; 27(4):85-89.
9. Subrahmanian R. Right to Education: Opportunities and

Challenges, *Education Dialogue*, 2003; 1(1):76-96.

10. UNESCO. *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*. Paris: UNESCO, 1994.
11. UNESCO. *Inclusion in Education: The Participation of Disabled Learners*. World Education Forum: Education for All Assessment. Paris: UNESCO, 2000.