

By;

Dr. Suchitra Devi

Associate Prof.

Education Deptt.

N.A.S College

M.Ed III Semester

Paper OC12A

Unit III

Problems, Challenges and Strategies in the education for Disadvantaged and Disabled Children

Education is a powerful instrument of social change, and often initiates upward movement in the social structure, thereby helping to bridge the gap between the different sections of society. The educational scene in the country has undergone major change over the years, resulting in better provision of education and better educational practices. In 1944, the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) published a comprehensive report called the Sergeant Report on the post-war educational development of the country. As per the report, provisions for the education of the handicapped, were to form an essential part of the national system of education, which was to be administered by the Education Department. According to this report, handicapped children were to be sent to special schools only when the nature and extent of their defects made this necessary. The Kothari Commission (1964–66), the first education commission of independent India, observed: “the education of the handicapped children should be an inseparable part of the education system.” The commission recommended experimentation with integrated programmes in order to bring as many children as possible into these programmes

Who are Children with special needs?

LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) In India a learner with SEN is defined variously in different documents. For example, a child with SEN in a District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) document is defined as a child with disability, namely, visual, hearing, locomotor, and intellectual (DPEP, 2001). However, the country report in the NCERT/UNESCO regional workshop report titled Assessment of needs for Inclusive Education: Report of the First Regional Workshop for SAARC Countries (2000) states that SEN goes beyond physical disability. It also refers to, ... the large proportion of children—in the school age—belonging to the groups of child labour are, street children, victims of natural catastrophes and social conflicts, and those in extreme social and economic deprivation. These children constitute the bulk of dropouts from the school system (pg.58). The SSA Framework for Implementation covers children with Special Needs (SN) under the section on Special Focus Groups. While separating children with disabilities from other groups like girls, Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and urban deprived children, it makes provisions for these children under the section on SEN. The Department of Education of Groups with SN in the NCERT itself, initiates programmes for meeting the learning needs of the disabled and the socially disadvantaged and marginalised, such as the SCs, STs, and minorities. According to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-97) (UNESCO, 1997), the term Special Needs Education (SNE) means educational intervention and support designed to address SEN. The term “SNE” has come into use as a replacement for the term “Special Education”. The earlier term was mainly understood to

refer to the education of children with disabilities that takes place in special schools or institutions distinct from, and outside of, the institutions of the regular school and university system. In many countries today a large proportion of disabled children are in fact educated in institutions under the regular system. Moreover, the concept of children with SEN extends beyond those who may be included in handicapped categories to cover those who are failing in school, for a wide variety of reasons that are known to be likely impediments to a child's optimal progress. Whether or not this more broadly defined group of children is in need of additional support, depends on the extent to which schools need to adapt their curriculum, teaching, and organisation and/or to provide additional human or material resources so as to stimulate efficient and effective learning for these pupils. However, only in a few instances and documents, across the various States of the country, has SEN been accepted in its broad perspective. On the whole, the focus has remained on learners with specific disabilities. This view is supported by the fact that the draft 3 Inclusive Education Scheme (MHRD, 2003), available on the website of the Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD), www.education.nic.in/html_web/iedc_sch_draft.htm (accessed on February 15, 2001), which addresses the needs of learners with disabilities, focuses on the following categories of disability: visual disabilities (blind and low vision), speech and hearing disabilities, locomotor disabilities, and neuromusculoskeletal and neuro-developmental disorders, including cerebral palsy, autism, mental retardation, multiple disability, and learning disabilities. Keeping this reality in mind the main focus of this position paper is on learners with such disabilities.

INITIATIVES OF GOVERNMENT OF INDIA TO PROMOTE INCLUSIVE SCHOOL EDUCATION OF DISABLED CHILDREN

1. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

The key objective of SSA is Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE), three important aspects of which are access, enrolment and retention of all children in 6-14 years of age. SSA ensures that every child with special needs, irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability, is provided meaningful and quality education. Hence, SSA has adopted a zero rejection policy. The goal of UEE, has further been strengthened by the enactment of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 making free and compulsory elementary education a Fundamental Right for all the children in the age group of 6-14 years. This Amendment has given a new thrust to the education of Children with Special Needs (CWSN), including autism, as without their inclusion, the objective of UEE cannot be achieved.

2. Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS)

The Scheme of Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) was launched in 1974 by the then Department of Social Welfare and was later transferred to the Department of Education in 1982-83. The scheme was revised in 1992 and provided educational opportunities for disabled children in common schools to facilitate their integration and ultimate retention in the general school system.

This has now been replaced by IEDSS, launched in April 2009. It provides assistance for the inclusive education of disabled children of Classes IX – XII having blindness, low vision, leprosy cured, hearing impairment, locomotor disabilities, mental retardation, mental illness, autism and cerebral palsy.

Funds are provided for activities such as identification and assessment, assistive devices, allowance for transport, escorts, readers, uniforms, books and stationary, stipend for girls, etc. Besides, there is provision for engagement of special teachers, creation of barrier free environment, teachers' training, orientation of communities, parents, educational administrators, etc.

3. Making Schools Barrier Free

All States have been directed to ensure that all primary and secondary schools are made disabled friendly, in a prescribed time bound manner, taking into account the needs of different categories of disabled children. Each district will also have a model inclusive school.

4. Capacity Building of Special Teachers

a) Course curriculum has been developed and standardized by the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) for

i) Diploma in Special Education (Autistic Spectrum Disorders), introduced in July 2003, and is operational in 11 institutions registered with RCI, producing 20-25 teachers every year per institute

ii) B.Ed. Special Education (Autistic Spectrum Disorders) will become operational from the session beginning in July 2010 at 4 institutions across the country

b) Some other organisations imparting diploma in special education (ASD) include Spastics Society of Karnataka, Bangalore; School of Hope, Delhi; Action For Autism, Delhi

c) State Nodal Agency Centre (SNAC) and State Nodal Agency Partners (SNAP) of the National Trust have conducted trainings on

i. Inclusive Education for Private School Teachers to handle the special needs of students with National Trust disabilities in inclusive classrooms. In the Govt. Schools, this is being done under the SSA Program. 38 programs were conducted during 2008-09.

ii. Special School Teachers Training - National Trust has specially focused on Early Intervention and Autism. This program was conducted in 15 States during 2008-09. For Early Intervention, the National Trust has a partnership with Voice & Vision (A unit of Hilton / Perkins, U.S.A.), Mumbai for training one Special Teacher in the Aspiration Programme.

5. The National Award to Teachers, conferred to teachers from across the country by the President of India, has a dedicated category for disabled teachers/special teachers doing yeoman's service for the education of disabled children

SUPPORT FOR DISADVANTAGED & DISABLED CHILDREN

1. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has made several changes in the examination bye laws in February 2009 to facilitate the disabled children, including those with autism, giving the Board (public) examinations of Class X and XII
 - a) Use an amanuensis and be allowed an additional time ranging from 30 – 60 minutes depending on the duration of the paper.
 - b) Option of studying one compulsory language as against two within the overall spirit of the Three Language Formula prescribed by the Board.
2. A government sponsored health insurance plan “Nirmaya” for people with autism, mental disorders and multiple disabilities was launched in 2008 to provide affordable Health Insurance to persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation & Multiple Disabilities. This has been a breakthrough, since earlier Health Insurance products did not include people with developmental disabilities.
3. Gyan Prabha - a Scholarship Scheme for People with Developmental Disabilities, enables them to pursue any employment oriented vocational training, professional course or higher studies (post schooling) from any recognized institution, leading to an economic activity.
4. The amendment of the Income Tax Act, 1961 by Finance Act, 2007, tax benefits have become available to families of children with autism. A 75% concession in railway tickets for the child and an escort is also available if it is noted in the disability certificate that the child will need an escort every time he or she travels.
5. It has become easier for persons with disabilities like autism and cerebral palsy to open and operate bank accounts, by the directive of the Reserve Bank of India asking banks to accept guardianship certificates issued by local level committees set up under the National Trust Act or those issued by the district court under the Mental Health Act.
6. National awards for empowerment of persons with disabilities are conferred by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, in various categories which includes autism also

Inclusive Education

The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) (2000), brought out by the NCERT, recommended inclusive schools for all without specific reference to pupils with SEN as a way of providing quality education to all learners According to NCFSE: Segregation or isolation is good neither for learners with disabilities nor for general learners without disabilities. Societal requirement is that learners with special needs should be educated along with other learners in inclusive schools, which are cost effective and have sound pedagogical practices (NCERT, 2000)

The NCFSE also recommended definitive action at the level of curriculum makers, teachers, writers of teaching–learning materials, and evaluation experts for the success of this strategy. This precipitated a revision of the IEDC scheme. This revision is in progress and has, to a certain extent, gained ground in the country. Internationally, until the end of 1980s, integration remained the main issue whenever discussions were held regarding the rights of disabled persons to an appropriate education. Whereas, in India, integration was a major reform of the 1970s, the need for inclusive education became evident from the fact that despite complete financial support under the IEDC scheme, for integrating learners with special needs into the educational system, only 2–3% of the total population of these learners was actually integrated into the regular schools. Dissatisfaction with the progress towards integration, consideration of costs involved, and the advantages of an inclusive environment in bringing about increased acceptance of learners with SEN, led to demands for more radical change.

This re-conceptualisation at the both the international and national level helped in the emergence of an orientation towards inclusive education. In the 1990s, inclusion captured the field after the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca in 1994, with the adoption of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. This statement, which was adopted by the representatives of 92 governments and 11 25 international organisations in June 1994, has definitely set the policy agenda for inclusive education on a global basis (UNESCO, 1994).

To quote from the Salamanca Statement: “We the delegates of the World Conference on Special Needs Education...hereby reaffirm our commitment to Education for All, recognising the necessity and urgency of providing education to children, youth, and adults with SEN within the regular education system, and further hereby endorse the Framework for Action on SNE, that governments and organisations may be guided by the spirit of its provisions and recommendations” (UNESCO, 1994: 8)

The benefits of inclusion for students with SEN are as follows:

- Spending the school day alongside classmates who do not have disabilities provides many opportunities for social interaction that would not be available in segregated settings.
- Children with SEN have appropriate models of behaviour. They can observe and imitate the socially acceptable behaviour of the students without SEN.
- Teachers often develop higher standards of performance for students with SEN.
- Both general and special educators in inclusive settings expect appropriate conduct from all students.
- Students with SEN are taught age-appropriate, functional components of academic content, which may never be part of the curriculum in segregated settings (for example, the sciences, social studies, etc.).

- Attending inclusive schools increases the probability that students with SEN will continue to participate in a variety of integrated settings throughout their lives (Ryndak and Alper, 1996).
- Spending the school day alongside classmates who do not have disabilities provides many opportunities for social interaction that would not be available in segregated settings.
- Children with SEN have appropriate models of behaviour. They can observe and imitate the socially acceptable behaviour of the students without SEN.
- Teachers often develop higher standards of performance for students with SEN.
- Both general and special educators in inclusive settings expect appropriate conduct from all students.
- Students with SEN are taught age-appropriate, functional components of academic content, which may never be part of the curriculum in segregated settings (for example, the sciences, social studies, etc.).
- Attending inclusive schools increases the probability that students with SEN will continue to participate in a variety of integrated settings throughout their lives (Ryndak and Alper, 1996).

SOURCES;

- Wikipedia
- Reference books
- Educational websites
- Other sources