
NEED AND PROVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN INDIA

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Abstract

Special education is designed specifically for students with special needs, remedial education can be designed for any students, with or without special needs; the defining trait is simply that they have reached a point of unpreparedness, regardless of why. Special education (also known as special needs education, aided education, exceptional education or Special Ed) is the practice of educating students with special educational needs in a way that addresses their individual differences and needs. Ideally, this process involves the individually planned and systematically monitored arrangement of teaching procedures, adapted equipment and materials, and accessible settings. These interventions are designed to help individuals with special needs achieve a higher level of personal self-sufficiency and success in school and in their community, that may not be available if the student were only given access to a typical classroom education. Common special needs include learning disabilities (such as dyslexia), communication disorders, emotional and behavioral disorders (such as ADHD and ADD), physical disabilities (such as Brittle Bone Disease, Cerebral Palsy, Muscular Dystrophy, Spinal Bifida, and Frederich's Ataxia), and developmental disabilities (such as autism spectrum disorders and intellectual disability). Students with these kinds of special needs are likely to benefit from additional educational services such as different approaches to teaching, the use of technology, a specifically adapted teaching area, or a resource room. Intellectual giftedness is a difference in learning and can also benefit from specialised teaching techniques or different educational programs, but the term "special education" is generally used to specifically indicate instruction of students with disabilities. Gifted education is handled separately. For example, even people of high intelligence can be under prepared if their education was disrupted, for example, by internal displacement during civil disorder or a war.

Key Words-- *Special education, Remedial education, Provision, Disorders and intellectual disability.*

In most developed countries, educators modify teaching methods and environments so that the maximum number of students are served in general education environments. Therefore, special education in developed countries is often regarded as a service rather than a place. Integration can reduce social stigmas and improve academic achievement for many students. The opposite of special education is *general education*. General education is the standard curriculum presented without special teaching methods or supports.

Identifying students or learners with special needs

Some children are easily identified as candidates for special needs due to their medical history. They may have been diagnosed with a genetic condition that is associated with intellectual disability, may have various forms of brain damage, may have a developmental

disorder, may have visual or hearing disabilities, or other disabilities. For students with less obvious disabilities, such as those who have learning difficulties, two primary methods have been used for identifying them: the *discrepancy model* and the *response to intervention model*. The discrepancy model depends on the teacher noticing that the students' achievements are noticeably below what is expected. The response to intervention model advocates earlier intervention. In the discrepancy model, a student receives special education services for a specific learning difficulty (SLD) if the student has at least normal intelligence and the student's academic achievement is below what is expected of a student with his or her IQ. Although the discrepancy model has dominated the school system for many years, there has been substantial criticism of this approach (e.g., Aaron, 1995, Flanagan and Mascolo, 2005) among researchers. One reason for criticism is that diagnosing SLDs on the basis of the discrepancy between achievement and IQ does not predict the effectiveness of treatment. Low academic achievers who also have low IQ appear to benefit from treatment just as much as low academic achievers who have normal or high intelligence. The alternative approach, response to intervention, identifies children who are having difficulties in school in their first or second year after starting school. They then receive additional assistance such as participating in a reading remediation program. The response of the children to this intervention then determines whether they are designated as having a learning disability. Those few who still have trouble may then receive designation and further assistance. Sternberg (1999) has argued that early remediation can greatly reduce the number of children meeting diagnostic criteria for learning disabilities. He has also suggested that the focus on learning disabilities and the provision of accommodations in school fails to acknowledge that people have a range of strengths and weaknesses and places undue emphasis on academics by insisting that students should be supported in this arena and not in music or sports.

Individual needs

A special education program should be customised to address each individual student's unique needs. Special educators provide a continuum of services, in which students with special needs receives varying degrees of support based on their individual needs. Special education programs need to be individualised so that they address the unique combination of needs in a given student. In the United States, Canada, and the UK, educational professionals use a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). "The IEP is meant to address each child's unique learning issues and include specific educational goals. It is a legally binding document. The school must provide everything it promises in the IEP." For children who are not yet 3, an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) contains information on the child's present level of development in all areas; outcomes for the child and family; and services the child and family will receive to help them achieve the outcomes.

In the United States, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law that requires that every school system in the nation must provide a free and appropriate public education for every child, ages 3 to 22, regardless of how or how seriously that child may be disabled. To ensure that this federal law is obeyed, the government requires every school system provide this type of education to each student in order to receive federal funding.

Students with special needs are assessed to determine their specific strengths and weaknesses. Placement, resources, and goals are determined on the basis of the student's

needs. Accommodations and Modifications to the regular program may include changes in the curriculum, supplementary aides or equipment, and the provision of specialized physical adaptations that allow students to participate in the educational environment as much as possible. Students may need this help to access subject matter, physically gain access to the school, or meet their emotional needs. For example, if the assessment determines that the student cannot write by hand because of a physical disability, then the school might provide a computer for typing assignments, or allow the student to answer questions verbally instead. If the school determines that the student is severely distracted by the normal activities in a large, busy classroom, then the student might be placed in a smaller classroom such as a resource room.

Parent of students with a learning disability must know what type of disability their child has, so they can get accommodations such as speech therapy, occupational therapy and adaptive physical education. For example, if a student takes an academic test and it indicates that the student struggles with reading comprehension, parents can request speech and language support or classroom accommodations, such as extra time to complete reading and writing tasks.

Methods of provision

Schools use different approaches to providing special education services to students. These approaches can be broadly grouped into four categories, according to how much contact the student with special needs has with non-disabled students (using North American terminology):

- **Inclusion:** In this approach, students with special needs spend all, or most of the school day with students who do not have special needs. Because inclusion can require substantial modification of the general curriculum, most schools use it only for selected students with mild to moderate special needs, which is accepted as a best practice. Specialised services may be provided inside or outside the regular classroom, depending on the type of service. Students may occasionally leave the regular classroom to attend smaller, more intensive instructional sessions in a resource room, or to receive other related services that might require specialised equipment or might be disruptive to the rest of the class, such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, rehabilitation counseling. They might also leave the regular classroom for services that require privacy, such as counseling sessions with a social worker.
- **Mainstreaming** refers to the practice of educating students with special needs in classes with non-disabled students during specific time periods based on their skills. Students with special needs are segregated in separate classes exclusively for students with special needs for the rest of the school day.
- **Segregation** in a separate classroom or special school for students with special needs: In this model, students with special needs do not attend classes with non-disabled students. Segregated students may attend the same school where regular classes are provided, but spend all instructional time exclusively in a separate classroom for students with special needs. If their special class is located in an ordinary school, they may be provided opportunities for social integration outside the classroom,

such as by eating meals with non-disabled students. Alternatively, these students may attend a special school.

- **Exclusion:** A student who does not receive instruction in any school is excluded from school. In the past, most students with special needs have been excluded from school. Such exclusion still affects about 23 million disabled children worldwide, particularly in poor, rural areas of developing countries. It may also occur when a student is in hospital, housebound, or detained by the criminal justice system. These students may receive one-on-one instruction or group instruction. Students who have been suspended or expelled are not considered excluded in this sense.

Effective Instruction for students with disabilities

- **Goal Directed:** Each child must have an individualised Education Program (IEP) that distinguishes his/her particular needs. The child must get the services that are designed for him/her. These services will allow him/her to reach his/her annual goals which will be assessed at the end of each term along with short-term goals that will be assessed every few months.
- **Research-Based Methods-** There has been a lot of research done about students with disabilities and the best way to teach them. Testing, IQs, interviews, the discrepancy model, etc. should all be used to determine where to place the child. Once that is determined, the next step is the best way for the child to learn. There are plenty of different programs such as the Wilson Reading Program and Direct Instruction
- **Guided by student performance-** While the IEP goals may be assessed every few months to a year, constant informal assessments must take place. These assessments will guide instruction for the teacher. The teacher will be able to determine if the material is too difficult or too easy.

Special schools

A *special school* is a school catering for students who have special educational needs due to severe learning difficulties, physical disabilities or behavioural problems. Special schools may be specifically designed, staffed and resourced to provide appropriate special education for children with additional needs. Students attending special schools generally do not attend any classes in mainstream schools.

Special schools provide individualised education, addressing specific needs. Student to teacher ratios are kept low, often 6:1 or lower depending upon the needs of the children. Special schools will also have other facilities for children with special needs, such as soft play areas, sensory rooms, or swimming pools, which are necessary for treating students with certain conditions. A Montessori is another type of special school but is a different approach to teaching in the classroom, as compared to a mainstream school. A Montessori approach is to let the child be enticed into educational activities by their own interests and own time. This approach helps children with learning difficulties go at their own pace. This approach has increased in popularity with just over 300 in Australia.

In recent times, places available in special schools are declining as more children with special needs are educated in mainstream schools. However, there will always be some children, whose learning needs cannot be appropriately met in a regular classroom setting and will require specialised education and resources to provide the level of support they

require. An example of a disability that may require a student to attend a special school is intellectual disability. However, this practice is often frowned upon by school districts in the USA in the light of Least Restrictive Environment as mandated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

An alternative is a special unit or special classroom, also called a self-contained classroom, which is a separate room or rooms dedicated solely to the education of students with special needs within a larger school that also provides general education. These classrooms are typically staffed by specially trained teachers, who provide specific, individualised instruction to individuals and small groups of students with special needs. Self-contained classrooms, because they are located in a general education school, may have students who remain in the self-contained classroom full-time, or students who are included in certain general education classes. In the United States a part-time alternative that is appropriate for some students is sometimes called a resource room.

History of special schools

One of the first special schools in the world was the Institut National des Jeunes Aveugles in Paris, which was founded in 1784. It was the first school in the world to teach blind students. The first school in U.K, for the Deaf was established 1760 in Edinburgh by Thomas Braidwood, with education for visually impaired people beginning in the Edinburgh and Bristol in 1765.

In the 19th Century, people with disabilities and the inhumane conditions where they were supposedly housed and educated were addressed in the literature of Charles Dickens. Dickens characterized people with severe disabilities as having the same, if not more, compassion and insight in Bleak House and Little Dorrit.

Such attention to the downtrodden conditions of people with disabilities brought resulted in reforms in Europe including the re-evaluation of special schools. In the United States reform came more slowly. Throughout the mid half of the 20th century, special schools, termed institutions, were not only accepted, but encouraged. Students with disabilities were housed with people with mental illnesses, and they were not educated much, if at all.

Deinstitutionalization proceeded in the US beginning in the 1970s following the exposes of the institutions, and it has taken sometime before the Education for All Handicapped Children's Act of 1974, to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and then Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act (IDEIA) have come into fruition. School integration was supported as early as the 1970s, and teacher preparation programs in higher education have carefully taught and instructed graduates on inclusion at the classroom, individual, school, and district levels for decades resulting in dual certification of "regular teachers".

With the Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997, school districts in the United States began to slowly integrate students with moderate and severe special needs into regular school systems. This changed the form and function of special education services in many school districts and special schools subsequently saw a steady decrease in enrollment as districts weighed the cost per student. It also posed general funding dilemmas to certain local schools and districts, changed how schools view assessments, and formally introduced the concept of inclusion to many educators, students and parents.

Instructional strategies

The student can be taught in either a classroom or outside environment. Both environments can be interactive for the student to engage better with the subject. Different instructional techniques are used for some students with special educational needs. Instructional strategies are classified as being either *accommodations* or *modifications*.

An *accommodation* is a reasonable adjustment to teaching practices so that the student learns the same material, but in a format that is more accessible to the student. Accommodations may be classified by whether they change the presentation, response, setting, or scheduling of lessons. For example, the school may accommodate a student with visual impairments by providing a large-print textbook. This is a presentation accommodation. A *modification* changes or adapts the material to make it simpler. Modifications may change what is learned, how difficult the material is, what level of mastery the student is expected to achieve, whether or how the student is assessed, or any other aspect of the curriculum. For example, the school may modify a reading assignment for a student with reading difficulties by substituting a shorter, easier book. A student may receive both accommodations and modification.

Examples of modifications

- Skipping subjects: Students may be taught less information than typical students, skipping over material that the school deems inappropriate for the student's abilities or less important than other subjects. For example, students with poor fine motor skills may be taught to print block letters, but not cursive handwriting.
- Simplified assignments: Students may read the same literature as their peers but have a simpler version, such as Shakespeare with both the original text and a modern paraphrase available.
- Shorter assignments: Students may do shorter homework assignments or take shorter, more concentrated tests.
- Extra aids: If students have deficiencies in working memory, a list of vocabulary words, called a *word bank*, can be provided during tests, to reduce lack of recall and increase chances of comprehension. Students might use a calculator when other students do not.
- Extended time: Students with a slower processing speed may benefit from extended time for assignments and/or tests in order to have more time to comprehend questions, recall information, and synthesize knowledge.
- Students can be offered a flexible setting in which to take tests. These settings can be a new location to provide for minimal distractions.

Examples of accommodations

- Response accommodations: Typing homework assignments rather than handwriting them (considered a modification if the subject is learning to write by hand). Having someone else write down answers given verbally.
- Presentation accommodations: Examples include listening to audio books rather than reading printed books. These may be used as substitutes for the text, or as

supplements intended to improve the students' reading fluency and phonetic skills. Similar options include designating a person to read to the student, or providing text to speech software. This is considered a modification if the purpose of the assignment is reading skills acquisition. Other presentation accommodations may include designating a person to take notes during lectures or using a talking calculator rather than one with only a visual display.

- **Setting accommodations:** Taking a test in a quieter room. Moving the class to a room that is physically accessible, e.g., on the first floor of a building or near an elevator. Arranging seating assignments to benefit the student, e.g., by sitting at the front of the classroom.
- **Scheduling accommodations:** Students may be given rest breaks or extended time on tests (may be considered a modification, if speed is a factor in the test). Use a timer to help with time management.

All developed countries permit or require some degree of accommodation for students with special needs, and special provisions are usually made in examinations which take place at the end of formal schooling. In addition to how the student is taught the academic curriculum, schools may provide non-academic services to the student. These are intended ultimately to increase the student's personal and academic abilities. Related services include developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist a student with special needs and includes speech and language pathology, audiology, psychological services, physical therapy, occupational therapy, counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling, orientation and mobility services, medical services as defined by regulations, parent counseling and training, school health services, school social work, assistive technology services, other appropriate developmental or corrective support services, appropriate access to recreation and other appropriate support services. In some countries, most related services are provided by the schools; in others, they are provided by the normal healthcare and social services systems.

As an example, students who have autistic spectrum disorders, poor impulse control, or other behavioral challenges may learn self-management techniques, be kept closely on a comfortably predictable schedule, or given extra cues to signal activities.

A university field, termed *severe disabilities*, also is taught throughout the US university sector in schools of education. Advanced instruction is based upon community-referenced instruction, and alignment with transition to adulthood and progressive community practices.

Rehabilitation counseling personnel are often associated with supported employment services, and typically with "transition to adulthood" in which multi-decade recommendations for better coordination between the school and the community service sectors have been made at the federal and university levels.

Issues

At-risk students (those with educational needs that are not associated with a disability) are often placed in classes with students who have disabilities. Critics assert that placing at-risk students in the same classes as students with disabilities may impede the educational progress of people with disabilities. Some special education classes have been criticized for a

watered-down curriculum. The practice of inclusion (in mainstream classrooms) has been criticized by advocates and some parents of children with special needs because some of these students require instructional methods that differ dramatically from typical classroom methods. Critics assert that it is not possible to deliver effectively two or more very different instructional methods in the same classroom. As a result, the educational progress of students who depend on different instructional methods to learn often fall even further behind their peers.

Parents of typically developing children sometimes fear that the special needs of a single "fully included" student will take critical levels of attention and energy away from the rest of the class and thereby impair the academic achievements of all students.

Linked to this, there is debate about the extent to which students with special needs, whether in mainstream or special settings, should have a specific pedagogy, based on the scientific study of particular diagnostic categories, or whether general instructional techniques are relevant to all students including those with special needs.

Some parents, advocates, and students have concerns about the eligibility criteria and their application. In some cases, parents and students protest the students' placement into special education programs. For example, a student may be placed into the special education programs due to a mental health condition such as obsessive compulsive disorder, depression, anxiety, panic attacks or ADHD, while the student and his parents believe that the condition is adequately managed through medication and outside therapy. In other cases, students whose parents believe they require the additional support of special education services are denied participation in the program based on the eligibility criteria.

Whether it is useful and appropriate to attempt to educate the most severely disabled children, such as children who are in a persistent vegetative state, is debated. While many severely disabled children can learn simple tasks, such as pushing a buzzer when they want attention, some children may be incapable of learning. Some parents and advocates say that these children would be better served by substituting improved physical care for any academic program. In other cases, they question whether teaching such non-academic subjects, such as pushing a buzzer, is properly the job of the school system, rather than the health care system.

Another large issue is the lack of resources enabling individuals with special needs to receive an education in the developing world. As a consequence, 98 percent of children with special needs in developing countries do not have access to education.^[48]

Another issue would be budget cuts. Cuts can affect special education students who don't have access to proper equipment or education. The National Coalition for Personal Shortages did a survey and almost 100% of the teachers said that they are not able to give the proper rights to children with disabilities. Teachers are getting cut off from work due to the budget cuts.

There is a financial debate that covers the use and allotment of special education government funding. The three views on this topic are that we spend too much money on it, there there is not enough money put into it or that the money that is given isn't being spent properly. The argument for the first is that the amount of money spent on one special needs child is enough to cover a large group of general education students, and sometimes even causes several students to suffer budget cuts on general programs to support one child. The

evidence for special education not having enough money is the lack of teachers, burnt out teachers and a limited variety of teaching tools for each student. The argument to spend the money differently states that there is a lot of money set aside, but that it is being wasted by spending too much time on paperwork, inefficient IEP meetings or spending money on things that don't actually benefit the child.

Global issues

Children with disabilities are often denied their right to education. However, little is known about their school attendance patterns. The collection of data on children with disabilities is not straightforward, but data are vital to ensure that policies are in place to address the constraints these children face.

By one estimate, 93 million children under age 14, or 5.1% of the world's children, were living with a 'moderate or severe disability' in 2004. According to the World Health Survey, in 14 of 15 low and middle income countries, people of working age with disabilities were about one-third less likely to have completed primary school. For example, in Bangladesh, 30% of people with disabilities had completed primary school, compared with 48% of those with no disabilities. The corresponding shares were 43% and 57% in Zambia; 56% and 72% in Paraguay.

It has been shown that children with a higher risk of disability are far more likely to be denied a chance to go to school. In Bangladesh, Bhutan and Iraq, children with mental impairments were most likely to be denied this right. In Iraq, for instance, 10% of 6- to 9-year-olds with no risk of disability had never been to school in 2006, but 19% of those at risk of having a hearing impairment and 51% of those who were at higher risk of mental disability had never been to school. In Thailand, almost all 6- to 9-year-olds who had no disability had been to school in 2005/06, and yet 34% of those with walking or moving impairments had never been to school.

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