

Special needs education in india



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Special Education or special needs education refers to the education of physically or mentally challenged students whose learning needs cannot be met by a standard school curriculum. Special instructional methodology, techniques, materials are provided. But because is education, it helps students reach a superior level of personal self-sufficiency.

It is not easy to find reliable data about the number of children with disabilities in India. The lack of data available reflects the poor policies implemented by the Indian government for those children with disabilities and their families as well. Moreover, some families hide their disable children for fear of shame. Thus, this report relies on the projected figures made by surveys.

Estimations show that about 40 million children in India, from the age of 4-16 years old, are disabled. India measures disability in five categories: hearing, sight, speech, locomotors and mental- excluding others such as autism.

Taking this measure into account, surveys rely that 35 million children are physically challenged and 5 million are mentally ones. But what is worst is that 90 percent out of those 40 million are out of school- majority of them living in rural areas- which means that 9/10 children are not provided with education. And this is what the government should look at.

The educational facilities provided to children with disabilities have grown gradually in the past years. These ones range from special schools to Inclusive education.

Special Schools are apart from the General Education System. In early times, special schools in India were a voluntary program. By 1950s, there were

around 10 special schools in India. In the year 1960s, the government began awarding grants to NGOs for the creation and upkeep of special schools. By this year, 39 special schools were created. Thirty years later, in the 1990s, there was an incredible growth. Around 1100 special schools were created and spread all around the country. This growth was mainly due to the creation of Acts (e. g. Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation, 1995), policies and the availability of more number of professionals trained to teach in special schools.

It is hard to estimate the exact number as some NGOs who created such schools haven't been included in directories. Moreover, most of them are registered as Societies or Trust. Therefore, there is no recognition of such special schools due to poor documentation. Moreover, in the past years, many parent organizations in India established special schools for children with intellectual disabilities in different parts of the country- this reflects the involvement of parents. Latest surveys estimate that there are more than 3000 special schools in India but only few of them, those in urban areas, have the needed resources, or trained teachers. Now, where is the money for special schools in rural areas?.

Until the 1970s, the policy encouraged segregation. It was believed by educators that children with intellectual and physical disabilities couldn't take part in activities of common schools because they were "different". Over the time, this policy of segregation was dissolute. They started to believe that if the child was ready to make a shift, this one should be transferred to a general school. And here is when the idea of inclusive education was introduced.

In the year 1974, the government implemented the first program “Integrated Education for Disabled Children” (IEDC). But the government didn’t work alone. Some NGOs partner and participated in the implementation of it (e. g. SYSS). These provided the training for teachers to practise inclusion, ensure that children with disabilities enrol in common schools and provided with the resources and materials needed.

Inclusive Education is a part of the General Education System. The program aimed to integrate the children with disabilities in the general schools and so in the community. By doing this, they create an inclusive culture. Disabled children will be now ready for a normal development and able to face life with self-confidence.

There are two kinds of Inclusive Education: part time and full time.

Part time education refers to disable students attending general classes for less than half a day. They generally attend the less difficult subjects with children without disabilities and the others with students who are facing similar disabilities.

Full time education refers to disable students attending general classes along with students without special needs. These students are more likely to have mild disabilities.

I conclude by saying that in a country so big like India, which the world’s second largest population (1. 22 billion) and with the second largest education system, there is large number of children with disabilities and a big number of them who are out of school. And the major responsibility of

any government is to provide basic education. This one is a powerful instrument of social change.

There is definitely a strong link between poverty and disability in the country. Most of the people with disabilities are seen as part of a 'fifth caste'-below all others- reinforcing their marginalisation from society. As a result these are discouraged to go to school and end up being vagabonds. But what is even sadder is that in some cases families make their children disable somehow by cutting arms, legs, others so that they can beg for money in the streets.

The government needs to understand that these children are highly productive and contributing citizens. So their education cannot be ignored. Despite the efforts of the NGOs and the government, it is clear that the national objective "Education for all" has not being achieved yet. Clear examples are the private schools in some urban areas of India, which have voluntarily implemented special education. This doesn't show anything more than the geographically inequalities in the country... where are the schools that offer special education in rural areas? Additionally, because they are private schools require the payment of fees, making it not accessible for all.

There is an important need to make easier the access of disable children to education. Because of the size and diversity of the country, the government should take the responsibility of implementing a central policy and have as priorities improve the educational system and therefore improve the children's quality life. Networking with NGOs across the country is essential because of their proximity to people and the innovation into educational

programmes. The government should provide grants in aid. Despite, there is a factor to take in consideration- Corruption. India is a very corrupted country. The government gives grants and you never know where it goes. So, when the grants are given to the NGOs, these ones should use it for the implementation and development of educational programmes and the provision of the necessarily resources- such as the infrastructural facilities, educational materials and equipments, training teachers to practise inclusion and respect disabilities, others. To measure the right use of it, a third body should control what is done. Moreover, the government together with the NGOs should adopt strategies and improve the accessibility for educating children with disabilities, primarily I believe through the Inclusive Education System. Why not through special schools? I believe special schools are medical interventions which promote somehow isolation, segregation and social exclusion. Thus, by integrating disable children into normal classrooms, a culture of inclusion will be created; a model of desegregation will be built, benefiting all children, achieving equality in education and so contributing in the long-term goal of “ Education for all”. But not leaving special schools aside. A bridge should be built between both practices.

“ Classrooms should be representative of the society in which we live.

There is no society without people with disabilities.

Therefore, why shouldn't classrooms include disable students to reflect the society?”.