Inclusive Education is Boon or Bane for Multiple Disabilities Children

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ABSTRACT: Children with severe and multiple disabilities pose unique challenges to educators. Such children need more individual support and care than the normal child. The services for such children are gaining focus and importance in the country with the recognition need of this disability under the national Trust ACT (1999). For this purpose the new millennium is marching ahead with new hopes and expectation. In this context, modern technology plays inevitable roles in our lives. Most of the children with special needs are being rehabilitated/empowered with the technological advancement of the past two decades.

Inclusive Education

The history of education of persons with disabilities is a progression from segregation to integration, and now inclusion. The education of the children with disabilities with disabilities in India is more than hundred years old, but our services are far from adequate. The last two decades have witnessed the mushrooming of inclusive education programmes. The dictionary meaning of ‘inclusion’ is to take in, or consider as part, or member of or to embrace. Inclusion is about membership and belonging to a community. In context to education, it is restructuring schools as communities where all children can learn. Teachers provide for more options for children as ways to learn. But there is no standardized procedure or recipe to make teachers and schools inclusive. The general philosophy of inclusive education provides for good teaching practices, healthy relationship between teacher and students, to improve the quality of education for all children in a classroom and help development of all children in a different ways. All children can do well when the regular classroom environment is adjusted to meet their individual needs. The education system has to be reengineered to respond to the pupils’ diversity. The foremost goal is to provide an accommodating, personalized education for all students, within the context a general educational classroom. Thus providing equitable opportunities to student/children with and without disabilities together, so that they receive effective educational services, with required supplementary aids and support services in age-appropriate classes in their neighborhood schools is called “Inclusive Education”.

The Context and Concept

The impetus for both integration and inclusion comes largely from a concern for the rights of children and young people with special educational needs. It is paradoxical that the moment we think of providing resources for equal access, it inevitably results in identification leading to segregation of those children who are different and have special educational needs. The concept of inclusion has emerged from the ideas of providing equal opportunities to ‘all’ children. Providing equal opportunities does not mean providing ‘similar’ things to all children. It means providing equal opportunities keeping in mind the diverse nature of their individual needs. The meaningful inclusion cannot be accomplished by special education teachers working alone. It requires administrators, teachers and parents not only value diversity, but also question the traditional ways we segregated students who are difficult.

Principles of Inclusive Education

- Sharing of responsibilities of functionaries working at different levels
- Providing additional support to children
- Development of a collaborative framework to meet the additional needs and interests of children
Implications for various types of disabilities
Knowledge about family and social environment of children
Modifications in Teaching-Learning strategies/modalities
Improving professional competencies of teachers
Ensuring community support and support of other functionaries working at different level.

Multiple Disabilities

The term multiple disabilities stands for the disabilities multiple in nature i.e. existence of more than one disability at a time (e.g. cerebral palsy and visual or hearing impairment). Caring for multiply and severely disabled children is never easy and they need an enormous amount of time, patience and love. The services for children with multiple disabilities are provided by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India under “National Trust for the Welfare of Person with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities” Act (Act 44 of 1999).

According to the act “Multiple Disabilities” means a combination of two or more disabilities as defined in clause (i) of section 2 of the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Right and Full Participation) Act, 1995 (1 of 1996). These disabilities are Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities.

Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), USA

Multiple disabilities are those “with concomitant impairment (e.g. mental retardation-blindness), mental retardation-orthopedic impairment), the combination of which, causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in the special education programmes solely for one of the impairment” (CRF Chapter III, Section 3000.7(c)(7).

Characteristics of Children with Multiple Disabilities

The children with multiple disabilities constitute a widely accepted heterogeneous group of all disabled children. The members of this group like deaf-blind, blind-mentally retarded; deaf-mentally retarded; blind or deaf-cerebral palsy, etc. may be found to differ widely in terms of their disability, characteristics, capability educational and adjustment needs. However, most of these children may be frequently observed to demonstrate at least two of the following types of deficits and deficiencies in their behavior.

- Deficits in self-help skills
- Deficits and difficulties in terms of learning behavior
- Deficits in terms of communication behavior
- Deficits in terms of physical and motor behavior
- Deficits and deficiencies in terms of social skills
- Presence of inappropriate behavior and emotional disturbance

Curriculum consideration for the Children with Multiple Disabilities

Keeping in view the conditions of multiple disabled children, it is essential to make a decision about the type of experiences to be given to these children in an inclusive set-up of the normal classrooms and regular school. Wehmeyer, et al (2001) have pointed out some or all of the following options for this purpose.

Curriculum adaptation

The students can participate in the general education curriculum, but may need modifications in the presentation of instruction, expected performance, response modes, and changes in materials.

- Teaching Strategies for Children with MD
- Independence is the goal
- Teach skills that are functional and meaningful
- Teach skill in natural setting
- Provide assistance as needed
• Take advantage of the teachable moment
• Provide repeated opportunities to practice
• Use real objects
• Develop routines
• Multi-sensory approach
• Plan inclusive activities
• Make use of resource persons from the community

**Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)**

Supporting meaningful communication in individuals with multiple sensory, cognitive, and physical impairments has been a central concern for special education and rehabilitation professionals for many years. Sign language is the most obvious choice of communicative skills that can aid communication and can be very effective in developmentally capable individuals with dual sensory impairments. However, in individuals with multiple disabilities and additional cognitive issues, sign language can sometimes be a limiting communication strategy. Gestural communication alone often restricts social interaction in this population to the immediate present, to items or things that can be touched at that particular moment. In addition, many individuals with coexisting physical impairments are unable to effectively use gestural communication of any kind due to limitations in their fine motor skills. Materials and tools designed to augment communication for students with multiple disabilities can be used to bridge this gap and provide these individuals with the means to communicate and make purposeful choices in their lives. Augmentative and alternative communication can be defined as any instructional technique, device, or system that serves to support and bolster communication in individuals with multiple sensory, physical, and cognitive impairments. This can include tangible and tactile symbol systems, choice boards, object prompts and symbols, physical modeling and prompting, and any number of techniques reliant on computer or microswitch technology. Microswitches are typically used with those students with the most limited physical range of motion; these devices control for fatigue by allowing the manipulation of technology with the least expenditure of energy. The ultimate goal of augmentative and alternative communication devices and systems is to provide the student with the means to communicate effectively with others, sharing in the countless emotional and social benefits that can come from a reciprocal interaction with another person.

**Education Aspects**

Children with multiple disabilities will receive tremendous support though the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and related service through Sarva Shikah Abhiyan (SSA) and Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IED-SS). viz, audiology services, counseling services, early identification and assessment of disabilities in children, medical services, occupational therapy, orientation and mobility services, parent counseling and training, physical therapy, psychological services, recreation, rehabilitation, school health services, social work services in schools, speech-language pathology services and transportation. In order to achieve the aims and objective of SSA & IED-SS, we must follow the holistic approach of inclusive education which is closely related with school environment, school culture, educational policies and practices. The following supports are providing to rehabilitate the children with multiple disabilities:

- **Educational Placement:** Each and every child special needs is being placed in regular schools, with need and support services.
- **Aids and Appliances:** Through convergence with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, State Welfare Departments, National institutions or NGO’s. mobility aids are being provided like Scooters, Caster cart, Aeroplane mobility device, Mobile stander, Parallel bars, Walkers, Crutches, Wheel Chair, Callipers, Ankle-Foot Orthosis (AFO), Knee-Ankle-Foot Orthosis (KAFO), Hip-Knee-Ankle-Foot Orthosis (HKAFO), Splints, Tricycle etc.
• **Support Services:** Physical access, resource rooms at cluster level, special equipment, reading material, special educational techniques, remedial teaching, curricular adaptation or adapted teaching strategies are being provided.

• **Teacher Training:** Intensive teacher training is being undertaken to sensitize regular teachers on effective classroom management of children with special needs.

• **Resource Support:** Resource support is being given by teachers working in special schools, where necessary, specially trained resource teachers are being appointed, particularly for teaching special skills to children with special needs.

• **Individual Educational Plan:** IDEA requires that schools create an individual Educational Program (IEP) for each student who is found to be eligible under both the federal and state eligibility/disability standards.

**Conclusion**

To conclude we can say that inclusive education is not only the new concept of education and need to be studied at the micro and macro levels both in rural and urban setting so that the models thus developed could be replicated in varied situations. Conscious efforts are required to bring in attitudinal changes in the teachers, managers, non-disabled students and the community through the use of multi-media. With reference to the above cited it can be said that inclusive education proved to be boon for the children with special needs not only in any special area but also in their all round development.

**References**


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