

Meeting Special Needs in School

A Manual



MEETING SPECIAL NEEDS IN SCHOOLS

A Manual

ANITA JULKA



राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
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FOREWORD

The National Curriculum Framework, 2005 reaffirms the commitment to the concept of equality, within the landscape of cultural and socio-economic diversity from which children enter into the portals of the school. It also recognises the importance of including and retaining all children in school through a programme that reaffirms the value of each child and enables all children to experience dignity and the confidence to learn. It also states that the attempt to improve the quality of education will succeed only if it goes hand in hand with steps to promote equality and social justice.

The Position Paper of the National Focus Group on Education of Children with Special Needs, NCERT, 2006, points out that despite the efforts of governmental and non-governmental organisations, there is still a significant need to facilitate access of disabled children to educational institutions and to education in general. The first and foremost strategy for any country, especially India, must be, therefore, to increase the access to education for learners with SEN. The Indian Government has recently ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability, (1 October 2007). The Convention highlights the importance of education in Article 24 and states that:

1. State Parties recognise the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realising this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and life long learning directed to:
 - (a) Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;
 - (b) Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;

- (c) Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;
- (d) Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;
- (e) Effective individualised support measures are provided in environments that maximise academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

Realising the need to reconceptualise the field of special needs education as requiring school reforms and improved pedagogy, this manual provides information and sets guidelines for all who may already have or would like to include children and youth with disabilities in regular education. It reflects the shifts in the field of education of children with special needs. These shifts occurred with the realisation that in spite of all the efforts by the governmental and non-governmental organisations, many children with special needs are still out of the school system and even if they are enrolled in schools they may not be fully included in the education process. Therefore, this manual highlights the special needs of children providing practical guidance regarding how to meet these special needs at different levels of regular education. It also suggests what educational resources that are necessary and the teaching strategies required to maximise learning of all students. Specifically the manual would give information regarding how to meet learning needs of students with disabilities in an inclusive school and contribute to making school practices more inclusive. Would be useful for all those who are making efforts to effectively include children and youth with disabilities in general education.

KRISHNA KUMAR
Director

New Delhi
October 2007

National Council of Educational
Research and Training

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Chapter 1

Introduction

“Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equaliser of the conditions of men – the balance-wheel of the social machinery.” – Horace Mann

Education is the core of equality and empowerment. Though the right to education and to equality of educational opportunities is guaranteed by the Constitution of India, it is disturbing to find that more than half of the population of children and youth with disability are denied these rights and do not receive adequate schooling in an appropriate environment. Most of these out of school children with disability are those who are refused admission in the neighbourhood schools where all other children of their village go to study. Usually, the major reasons for not granting admission to these children in mainstream schools are that “we do not have enough resources for these children” or “they should be going to only special schools specially made for these *type* of children”. The message from the school system is loud and clear. The society assumes that the future of children with disability is worth less than that of other children.

In addition, many parents of children with disability, not being aware of the developments in this field lose hope for the future of their children. They prefer to sit back and accept their fate without pushing matters any further. We all know that receiving good education gives way to opportunities to achieve. While education is important for all, for the children with disability getting a good education can be a matter of survival.

Equal access to education is a matter of right and not a privilege.

High quality education for all children is only possible if the system is able to provide meaningful curriculum, effective teaching by trained teachers and adequate support for each student. Too many children with disability have fallen victims to an education

system that is rigid and not able to meet their individual needs. If we firmly believe that all children can learn and most of them can be included in regular education, we need to create a regular class environment that nurtures acceptance of diversity and promotes friendships based on reciprocity and mutual respect. In spite of having a physical reality, disability in many ways is socially constructed. Considering these children as having some deviant attributes and ignoring both their existence and potential may result in their exclusion from society.

Audience

This manual is useful for all those who are making efforts to effectively include children and youth with disability in general education. It would be specially relevant for local government offices, both government and private schools, voluntary organisations, teacher education institutions etc. Since this manual would touch upon a number of aspects, the information written in the manual can be made use of by school principals, headmasters, teachers, teacher-educators, educational administrators at various levels, parents of children with disability and by all those who are striving to effectively meet the individual needs of all children.

Scope

This manual

- recognises that every child is unique and capable of learning and developing in divergent ways and at different rates. In order to respond to the needs of each learner including those with disability, it emphasises, developmentally appropriate practices and culturally responsive teaching-learning environment using child-centred rather than curriculum-centred learning approaches. Instead of a child adapting or fitting to the system it recommends the system adapting to the needs of the individual child. The core message conveyed by this manual is that regular education can include most of the learners who may have particular learning needs due to developmental delay or impairment. It provides information and sets guidelines for all who may already have or would like to include children and youth with disability in regular education.

- ❑ underscores the importance of inclusive education. Making school environments more accessible and responsive is not only crucial for learners with disability but also results in improving the quality of education for all children. For example, a well-lit classroom is particularly important for children with visual impairments but would also benefit all other children in the class.
- ❑ will trace developments in the area of education of disability and throw light on the important milestones specially in India. Over the years, there has been shift in approaches that suggest changes in the way disability has been understood. The two major discourses treat disability either as an individual pathology or as a social pathology. Within these two broad overriding paradigms, a number of changes in the field of education of persons with disability have taken place. The manual will explore the major changes and the rationale and philosophy behind these.
- ❑ will also focus upon the prevailing perceptions and attitudes towards children with disability that often present the biggest obstacle to them for accessing mainstream education. While providing practical guidance regarding how to include children and youth with disability at different levels of regular education, it will suggest what educational resources are necessary and what are the teaching strategies required to maximise learning of all students. The manual specifically gives information regarding how to meet learning needs of students with disability in an inclusive school and contribute to make school practices more inclusive.
- ❑ will focus mainly on schools, it can be also relevant to readers working in out-of-school situations. Developing inclusive education is not an easy process but may set challenges and demands on schools, teachers, educational administrators. However, in order to include all children from the community in the education process, capacity needs to be developed at different levels. This would happen only if the educators challenge their own assumptions and are willing to let this happen.

How to use this manual

The manual is divided into five chapters and all these chapters outline a different but relevant aspect of including children and youth with disability into regular education.

In order to include children with disability in the education process it is important to have a common vocabulary. The second chapter of the manual, therefore outlines important philosophical and conceptual distinctions between various terms, the relevant legislations and policy frameworks. It outlines the key issues that have to be understood before including children and youth with disability in general education. It highlights the legal and educational context for these.

Chapter third provides general information on diverse learning needs and the ways in which provision can be made to meet these at various levels of school education.

Chapter fourth gives practical and technical information for teachers in the general education system. The brief guidance will help in not only creating awareness regarding the strengths of children with disability while negating false beliefs, but also would suggest accommodations that will enhance students' access to the broad and balanced curriculum.

Finally, Chapter fifth of the manual contains some case studies and some excerpts from the *National Curriculum Framework-2005*, supporting inclusion and suggested readings and resources.



Chapter 2

Conceptual Policy and Legal Frameworks

In this chapter, the concept of inclusive education and how it applies to children and youth with disability is discussed. While explaining inclusive education we will differentiate it from special and integrated education. Since, we are concerned particularly with children and youth with disability here, we will critically state the various approaches undertaken to define disability. We will finally give the important national and international level policy and legislative frameworks supporting the inclusion of children and youth with disability in education.

Inclusive Education

Over the years, the term 'inclusive education' has come to replace the term 'integrated education'. Many people working in the field of education in our country consider these two terms to be meaning the same thing. They understand it as only a change in terminology and nothing else. In their words inclusive education means "including children with disability in regular classrooms that have been designed for children without disability".

Inclusion is not confined to the disabled. It also means non-exclusion (NCF-2005)

We must understand that the term inclusive education means much more than this. It refers to an education system that accommodates all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. The range of challenges confronting the school system while including children with diverse abilities and from diverse backgrounds have to be met by creating a child-centred pedagogy capable of successfully educating all children. An inclusive class may have amongst others, children with disability or gifted children, street or working children, children from remote or nomadic populations,

Inclusive education is about embracing all (NCF-2005)

children belonging to ethnic, linguistic or cultural minorities or children from other disadvantaged or marginalised groups.¹

Inclusive Education is about restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in their locality. It has the following characteristics:

Inclusive Education

- ❑ acknowledges that all children can learn;
- ❑ acknowledges and respects differences in children: age, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, HIV and TB status etc.;
- ❑ enables education structures, systems and methodologies to meet the needs of all children;
- ❑ is part of a wider strategy to promote an inclusive society; and
- ❑ is a dynamic process that is constantly evolving².



¹ UNESCO (1994). *The Salamanca Statement Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*, Paris: UNESCO.

² Lessons from the South: Making a difference *International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) Seminar on Inclusive Education*, 1-7 March 1998, Agra. Website: www.eenet.org.uk/theory-practice/agra/agra.shtml

Inclusion in Education

- Inclusion in education involves the process of increasing the participating of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula and communities of local schools.
- Inclusion involves restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in their locality.
- Inclusion is concerned with the learning and participation of all students vulnerable to exclusionary pressures not only those with impairments or those who are categorised 'having special educational needs'.
- Inclusion is concerned with improving schools for staff as well as for students.
- A concern with overcoming barriers to the access and participation of particular students may reveal gaps in the attempts of a school to respond to diversity more generally.
- All students have a right to an education in their locality. Diversity is not viewed as a problem to be overcome, but as a rich resource to support the learning for all.
- Inclusion is concerned with fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and communities.
- Inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society.

Index for Inclusion³

Inclusive education is about all children learning together even if they differ from each other in styles and pace of learning. It is a dynamic process because it addresses all aspects of child development – emotional, physical, intellectual, creative, social etc. It is about celebrating diversity and

“All children and young people of the world, with their individual strengths and weaknesses, with their hopes and expectations, have the right to education. It is not our education system that have a right to certain type of children. Therefore, it is the school system of a country that must be adjusted to meet the needs of all children.”

B. Lindqvist
UN-Rapporteur, 1994

³Booth, T., Ainscow, M., Black-Hawkins, K., Vaughan, M. and Shaw L. (2000). *Index for Inclusion: Developing, Learning and Participation in Schools*. Centre of Studies on Inclusive Education, UK.

changing the rigid school system in order to meet the needs of all children. In an inclusive class all children are happy and participating.

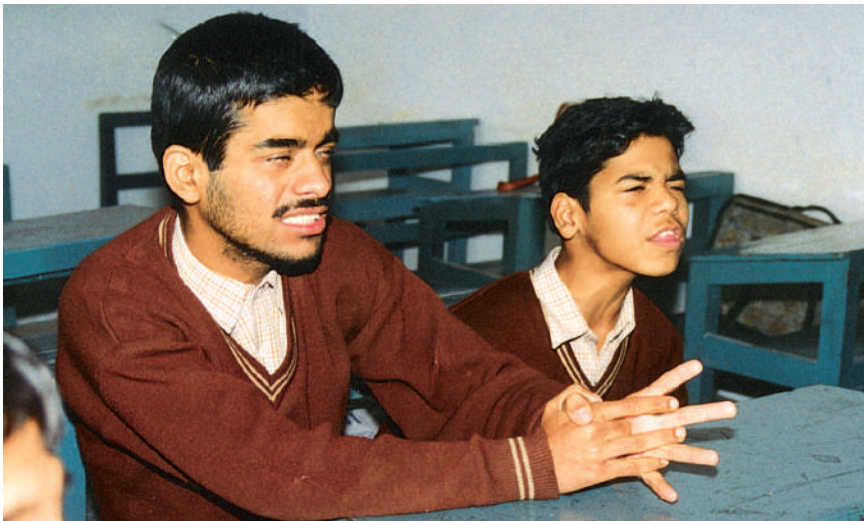
Benefits of inclusive education are as following:

Inclusive Education:

- ▶ can help break the cycle of poverty and exclusion;
- ▶ enables disabled children to stay with their families and communities;
- ▶ can improve the quality of education for all;
- ▶ can help overcome discrimination; and
- ▶ promotes wider inclusion.⁴

Special Education

Children with disability study either in a special school or in a regular mainstream school. It is possible for these children to cross over from a special to a regular mainstream school if and when they want to. Special Education as a separate system of education for disabled children outside the mainstream education evolved way back in the 1880s in India. It was based on the assumption that children with disability had some special needs that could not be met in mainstream



⁴Save the children (2002). *Schools for all: Including Disabled Children in Education*. London, UK

schools and therefore, they need to study in a separate school with other children having similar needs. Special schools exist all over the world in the form of day or residential schools, and also special classes are attached to the mainstream schools. In 1947, India had a total of 32 schools for the blind, 30 for the deaf and 3 for mentally retarded (Disability in India: www.ccdisabilities.nic.in/Disability%20in%20india.html). The number of schools rose to around 3000 by the year 2000 (Department of Education, 2000).

The special schools are generally organised according to different disability categories. We have schools for children with visual impairments, for the intellectually challenged and for those with hearing impairments. The major disadvantages of separate education in a separate environment are that, the children staying away from families may find it hard to readjust to their families, peers and communities, and children usually have to leave their families and communities to stay in a residential setting because these schools are usually not available in their immediate environment. In some cases, especially in the case of girls with disability, many times they are left on their own without seeing their parents ever again.

The special schools however, have some advantages like they can play an active role in giving resource support for the mainstream schools by providing specialised services. Also since the children are taught by a specialist having expertise on specific impairments, their needs may sometimes be understood better. In a special school children grow up with their disability peers and develop a common culture.

In spite of the benefits of inclusive education, if a child with disability is not getting the required resource support in the mainstream school and is not developing up to her/his potential a special school remains a viable option.

Integrated Education

We already know that integrated education is not the same as inclusive education. There is a vast difference between the two approaches. Integrated education emphasises placement of children with disability in mainstream school. The major thrust is on attendance. The school system remains rigid and as a result very few children with disability are able to cope with the demands of such a rigid system. This is a system that does not accept many of our children with disability on the basis of not being prepared enough.

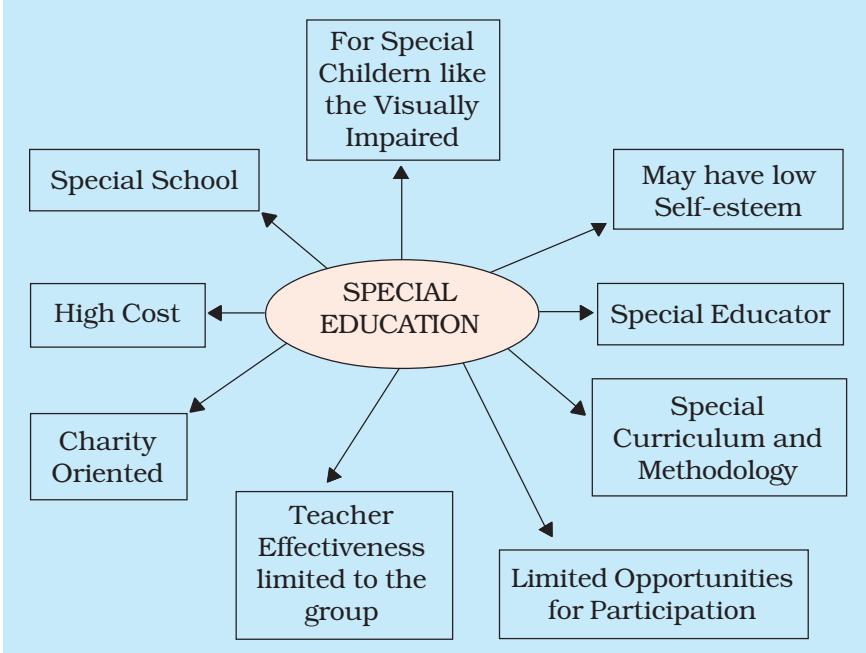
In other words, in integrated education, the child is seen as a problem and not the system. S/he is considered to be different from others and if s/he cannot learn it is her/his problem. Hence, integrated education is based on the medical model of disability and views a child with disability with clinical blinders needing remedy. Inclusive education, on the other hand, is all about effective learning by all children including children with disability. It is based on the social model of disability and considers that if the child is not learning then the system needs to be blamed. Inclusive education emphasises quality of education and not mere placement in education. Integrated education can be a stepping stone for inclusive education. Broadly one can say:

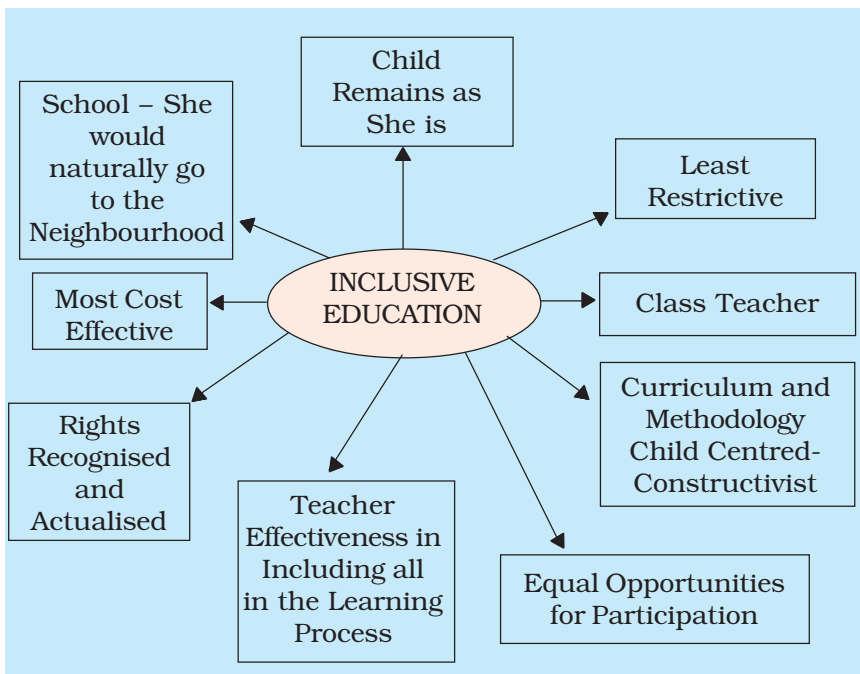
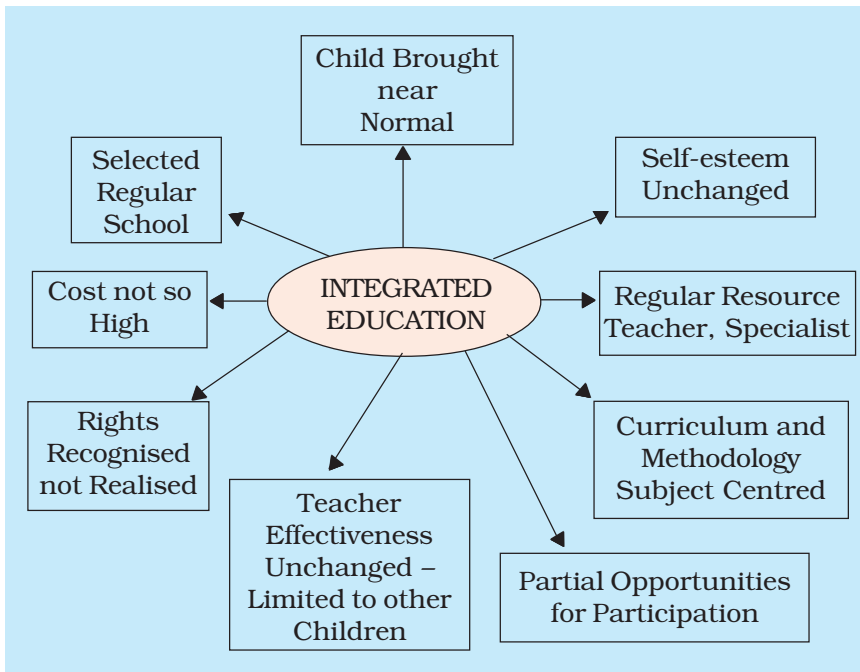
Child is a Problem
in
INTEGRATED
EDUCATION

System is a Problem
in
INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION

Differences between Special, Integrated and Inclusive Education

The difference between the three approaches is given below in the form of diagrams:





Before we discuss any further, we would like to define what is meant by disability especially in the Indian context.

Defining Disability

There is no single agreed upon definition of disability. There are different conceptual models of disability that suggest significant changes in the way disability is understood and explained. These models, programmes, and the rights instruments reflect two primary approaches or discourses: disability as an individual pathology (defect) or a social pathology. In other words, these approaches can be expressed in a dialect of “medical model” versus “social model”. The medical model views disability as a problem of the individual requiring medical care. This is to be provided to the individual as a treatment by professionals. In other words, it considers disability as an individual defect that needs to be corrected. The implication is that to be normal like others, persons with disability need to be cured by miracles or medicine. This has led people to believe that persons with disability are not capable, not educable and not fit to study especially in mainstream schools. They are to be kept safely away in special schools amongst their own kinds.

This exclusion from the mainstream schools and from society on the basis of disability is a striking example of inequality.



On the other hand, the social model of disability views disability, as a socially created problem. For example, if the child with disability is having problem in gaining access to the school and participate in the classroom it is not because of her disability *per se* but because of the school system that has failed to fulfil its obligation to be accessible to children with disability. According to International Classification of Functioning, Disability

and Health (ICF, 2001⁵), disability under the social model is not an attribute of an individual, but rather a complex collection of conditions, many of which are created by the social environment.

The principle of respect for difference and acceptance of disability as part of human diversity and humanity is important, as disability is a universal feature of diversity.

Hence, the management of the problem requires social action, and it is the collective responsibility of the society at large to make environmental modifications necessary for the full participation of people with disability in all areas of social life. The issue is therefore

Handicap is a social construct

an attitudinal or ideological one requiring social change, which at the political level becomes a question of human rights.

The Persons with Disability Act, 1995 considers Disability as an individual pathology. According to the Act, “Disability” means–

- (i) Blindness
- (ii) Low vision
- (iii) Leprosy cured
- (iv) Hearing impairment
- (v) Locomotor disability
- (vi) Mental retardation
- (vii) Mental illness

Further, the different categories given are defined in the following ways:

Blindness refers to a condition where a person suffers from any of the following conditions, namely:

- (i) Total absence of sight; or
- (ii) Visual acuity not exceeding 6/160 or 20/1200 (snellen) in the better eye with correcting lenses; or
- (iii) Limitation of the field of vision subtending an angle of 20 degree or worse.

Person with low vision means a person with impairment of visual functioning even after treatment or standard refractive correction but who uses or is potentially capable of using vision for the planning or execution of a task with appropriate assistive device.

⁵ World Health Organisation (2001). *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health*, Geneva.

Leprosy cured person means any person who has been cured of leprosy but is suffering from:

- (i) Loss of sensation in hands or feet as well as loss of sensation and paresis in the eye and eye-lid but with no manifest deformity;
- (ii) Manifest deformity and paresis, but having sufficient mobility in their hands and feet to enable them to engage in normal economic activity;
- (iii) Extreme physical deformity as well as advanced age which prevents him from undertaking any gainful occupation, and the expression “leprosy cured” shall be construed accordingly.

Hearing impairment means loss of sixty decibels or more in the better ear in the conversational range of frequencies.

Locomotor disability means disability of the bones and joints muscles leading to substantial restriction of the movement of the limbs or any form of cerebral palsy.

Mental illness means any mental disorder other than mental retardation.

Mental retardation means a condition of arrested or incomplete development of mind of a person which is specially characterised by sub normality of intelligence.

The use of medical definitions of disability as given in the Act, 1995 have been defended on the grounds of being useful in procuring resources. Although identifying children by labelling or classifying them is a custom in India for the sake of providing them appropriate provisions but in the long run labelling does segregate students with disability from their classmates without disability. It may also result in lowering the expectations of the teachers. For example, how will a teacher look at a boy named Ravi, if she knew nothing about him except that he suffers from some form of mental retardation.

This label of mental retardation given to Ravi may result in her assuming that he will be having a number of problems in functioning. She may believe that he will not be able to read, and would require life-long assistance and support and that he should be in a special school because his disability may interfere in the functioning of the class. The other children in the class may avoid Ravi because of the label given to him. Alternatively think of a situation where Ravi or any child is given an esteemed label like ‘strong’ or ‘competent, s/he may get positive reactions from her/

his peers. Similarly, if one views children with disability in terms of their strengths and not their weaknesses, their chances of being included and finding friendships in their class increase manifold.

Examples of Model of Functioning and Disability

One may:

- have impairment without capacity limitation (e.g. a disfigurement in leprosy may have no effect on a person's capacity);
- have performance problems and capacity limitations without evident impairments (e.g. reduced performance in daily activities associated with many diseases);
- have performance problems without impairments or capacity limitations (e.g. an HIV-Positive individual or ex-patient recovered from mental illness, facing stigmatisation or discrimination in interpersonal relations or work);
- have capacity limitations without assistance, and no performance problems in the current environment (e.g. an individual with mobility limitations may be provided by society with assistive technology to move around); and
- experience a degree of influence in a reverse direction (e.g. lack of use of limbs can cause muscle atrophy: institutionalisation may result in loss of social skills.

ICF, 2001

Disability has also been defined in the ICF, 2001. The definitions are based on a biopsychosocial approach that has resulted from the combination of both medical and social models. The approach adopted by the ICF provides a coherent view of different perspectives of health from a biological, individual and social perspective. According to ICF, 2001: "an individual's functioning in a specific domain is an interaction or complex relationship between the health conditions and contextual factors (i.e. environment and personal factors). There is a dynamic interaction among these entities: intervention in one entity has the potential to modify one or more of the other entities".

Policy and Legislative Frameworks

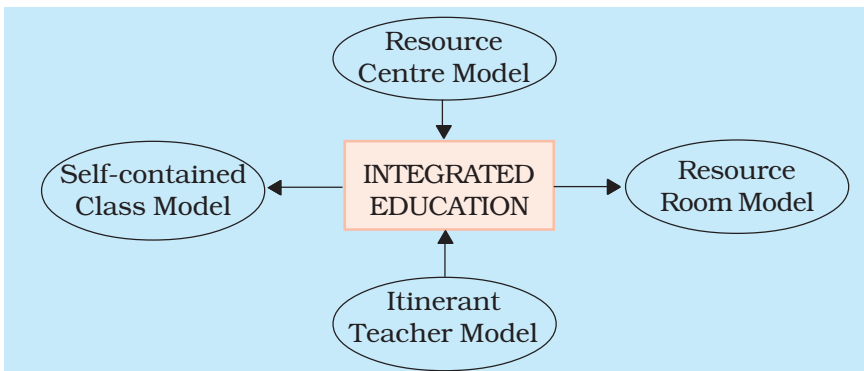
In this section the main international and national level policy frameworks and legislations are explained that are relevant to education and to children with disability.

The Constitution of India (26 November 1949) clearly states in the Preamble that everyone has the right to equality of status and of opportunity. The Article 41 of the Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution supports the right to work, to education and to public assistance in certain cases including disablement. Further, Article 45 commits to the provision of free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years. Based on this, the Constitution (86th Amendment) Act, 2002, has been enacted by the Parliament making education a fundamental right of all children in the age group of 6-14 years.

The National Policy on Education, 1986 (NPE, 1986), and the Programme of Action (1992) stresses the need for integrating children with disability with other groups. The objective to be achieved as stated in the NPE, 1986 is “to integrate the physically and mentally handicapped with general community as equal partners, to prepare them for normal growth and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence”.

Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC), In the 1970s, the government launched the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of IEDC. The scheme aimed to provide educational opportunities to learners with disability in regular schools and to facilitate their achievement and retention. Under the scheme, hundred per cent financial assistance is provided for setting up resource centres, surveys and assessment of children with disability, purchase and production of instruction materials and training and orientation of teachers. The scheme is currently being revised to reflect the paradigm shift towards inclusive education.

The followings are some of the popular service delivery models of Integrated Education practiced in India:



The right of every child to an education is proclaimed in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** and was strongly reaffirmed by the **World Declaration on Education for All**. The philosophy agreed upon at the Jomtien World Declaration included the following statements:

- Every person – child, youth and adult – shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs.
- The learning needs of the disabled demand special attention. Steps need to be taken to provide equal access to education to every category of disabled persons as an integral part of the education system.

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Disability Education (1994) emerged as a result of deliberations held by more than 300 participants representing 92 governments including India and 25 international organisations in June 1994. For furthering the objectives of education for all, it considered the fundamental policy shifts required to promote inclusive education. It emphasises that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. The term ‘Special Educational Needs’ refers to all those children and youth whose needs arise from disability or learning difficulties. The statement affirms, *“Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs”*.

Furthermore, the **Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disability** (1993) was an important resolution for improving the educational conditions of persons with disability. This had major implications for the Indian situation in the form of

three legislative Acts – **The Rehabilitation Council of**

Learn human rights... conquer human wrongs (NCF-2005)

India Act, 1992 (RCI,1992). The Persons with Disability (Equal Opportunities, Protections of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 (PWD Act, 1995), and The National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disability Act, 1999. While the RCI Act was solely concerned with manpower development for the rehabilitation of persons with disability, the National Trust Act aims to provide total care to persons with autism, mental



retardation and cerebral palsy and also manage the properties bequeathed to the Trust.

The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protections of Right and Full Participation) Act, 1995 stresses the need to provide free of cost education to all children in an appropriate environment till they are 18 years old and further emphasise their right to measures like :

- (a) Transport facilities to students with disability or alternative financial incentives to the parents or guardians to enable their children with disability to attend schools;
- (b) Removal of architectural barriers from schools, colleges or other institutions imparting vocational and professional training;
- (c) Supply of books, uniforms and other materials to students with disability attending school;
- (d) Grant of scholarship to the students with disability;
- (e) Setting up of appropriate fora for the redressal of grievances of parents regarding the placement of their children with disability;
- (f) Suitable modification in the examination system to eliminate purely mathematical questions for the benefit of blind students and students with low vision;
- (g) Restructuring of curriculum for the benefit of students with disability; and
- (h) Restructuring the curriculum for the benefit of students with hearing impairment to facilitate them to take only one language as part of their curriculum.

The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002–2007) aimed to provide Universal Elementary Education by the end of the Plan. It also aimed to provide basic education for the un-reached segments and special

groups. The special interventions and strategies like pedagogic improvement and adoption of child-centred practices are focused on groups like girls, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, working children, children with disability, urban deprived children, children from minority groups, children below the poverty line, migratory children and in the hardest-to-reach groups.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was launched to achieve the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education. This adopts a ZERO rejection policy and uses an approach of converging various existing schemes and programmes.

It covers the following components under education for children with disability–

- Early detection and identification
- Functional and formal assessment
- Educational placement
- Aids and appliances
- Support services
- Teacher training
- Resource support
- Individual Educational Plan (IEP)
- Parental training and community mobilisation
- Planning and management
- Strengthening of special schools
- Removal of architectural barriers
- Research
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Girls with disability.

Comprehensive Action Plan

In order to provide education through mainstream schools to children with disabilities in accordance with the provisions of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995, a Comprehensive Action Plan for including children and youth with disabilities has been formulated. The different sectors to be covered in the plan are

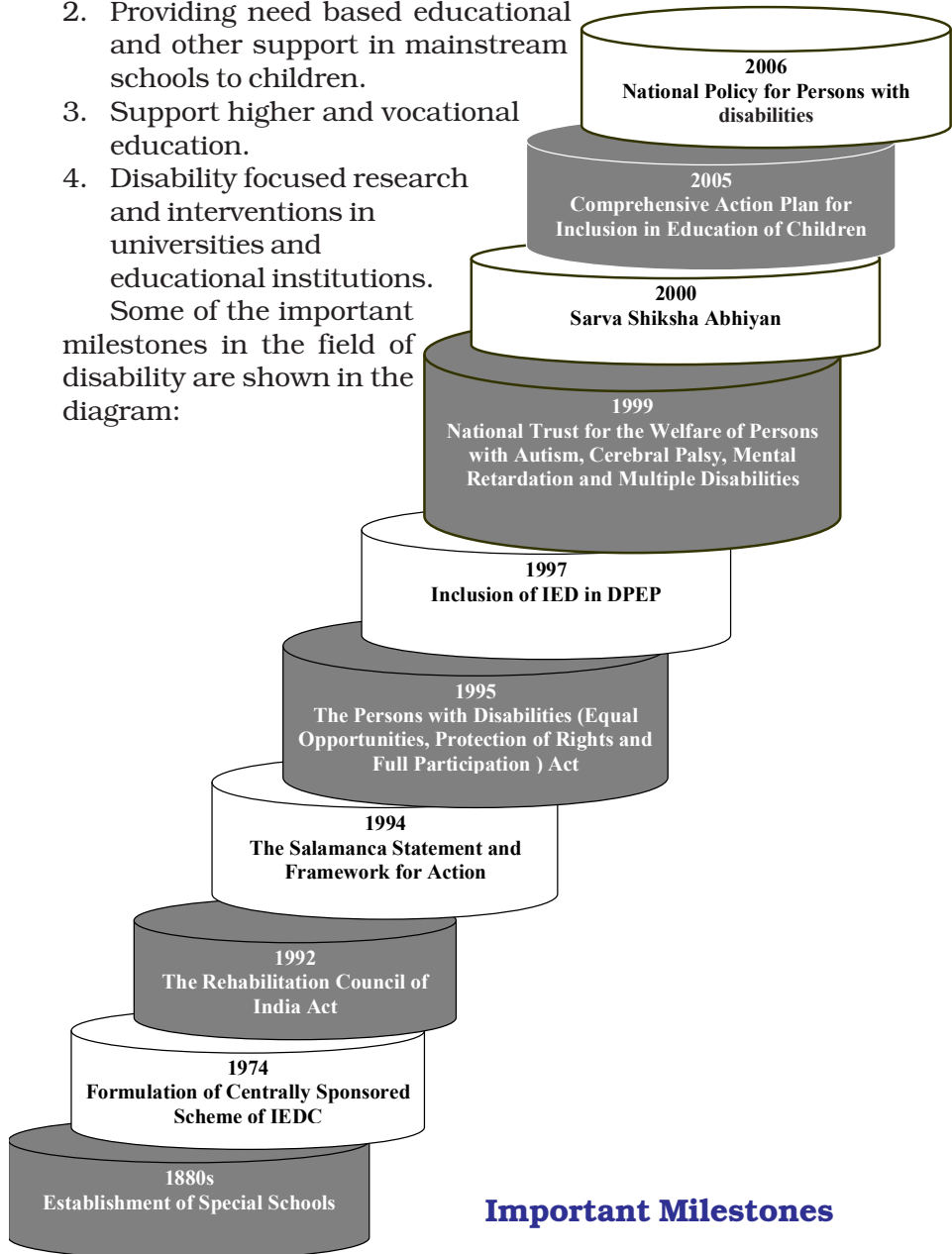
- (1) Early Childhood Care and Education
- (2) Elementary Education
- (3) Secondary Education
- (4) Higher and Technical Education
- (5) Vocational Education.

The Plan will be implemented through various departments at the Central and State level agencies, NGOs, Parents groups etc.

The outputs of the plan would include:

1. Enrolment and retention of all children with disabilities in the mainstream education system.
2. Providing need based educational and other support in mainstream schools to children.
3. Support higher and vocational education.
4. Disability focused research and interventions in universities and educational institutions.

Some of the important milestones in the field of disability are shown in the diagram:



Important Milestones



Chapter 3

Meeting Special Needs in Schools

In this chapter, we will talk about the range of special needs that may have to be addressed in an inclusive school for enabling students to learn and develop up to their potential. Adopting a more flexible and adaptive system capable of meeting diverse needs of students

Make Provisions not Restrictions; Adjust to the Needs of the Child (NCF-2005).

would result in educational success for all. Nevertheless, the description of learning needs given is not exhaustive. Students may exhibit a wide range of special needs in schools and meeting all these special needs is not the only change the schools require to become inclusive schools. This is only a part of the wider educational reform needs to improve the quality and relevance of learning experiences for all learners.

Special Needs of Children

While taking view of the special needs of children our main consideration should be their health, enjoyment, achievement, positive contributions, safety and success. Sometimes, the special



needs of a few students may be in conflict with the learning process of other students. For example, a child may turn violent, disrupt the class and beat other children. In such a situation, it would be more feasible to provide this child an opportunity of special provisions that can cater to her/his specific needs. Once s/he have developed some control over her/his disrupting behaviour, s/he may join back the mainstream Class if s/he and her/his parents desire to do so.

A child has special educational needs if s/he has difficulty in learning. This may require special educational provision to be made for her/him. A child may have learning difficulty because of a disability which hinders him/her from making use of the existing educational facilities provided for all other children of him/her class. A child may have learning difficulty because of some other reasons too.

It is important to safeguard interests of all children so that meeting the needs of one group does not put any other on a disadvantage.

In this chapter the following broad areas of special needs would be addressed:

- ❑ Cognition and Learning
- ❑ Behavioural and Emotional Development
- ❑ Sensory and Physical

Cognition and Learning

In India, specific learning difficulties are sometimes referred to as learning disabilities and include all types of learning difficulties children may experience in school. There is no typical profile associated with specific learning difficulties. The range and severity of special needs may vary from one student to another. The associated special needs are not easy to assess in the initial years as they are not visible and may go unnoticed. As the child grows older, a careful teacher, sensitive to the unique needs of different children in the class may be able to assess the level of these difficulties by constant observation in different settings. Most of these children study in regular mainstream schools. The provisions required would depend upon the nature of the special needs.

By and large, students having learning difficulties may have a specific problems in learning to read, write and spell (dyslexia) or in manipulating numbers (dyscalculia) or have poor physical

coordination (dyspraxia). The performance of these children may be below others in these particular areas. Sometimes, these children may exhibit problems in their short-term memory or in organisational skills.

The following table illustrates the some special needs of these students at various stages of schooling.

Specific Learning Difficulties at Different Levels

<i>Specific Learning Difficulties</i>	<i>Different Levels</i>
Difficulties in Reading (dyslexia) and Writing or both	Pre-primary level-difficulties in spoken language. School level-recognising words, poor spellings, comprehension, difficulties in structuring a sentence, reading in a halting manner, forgetting where one is reading, poor handwriting, etc.
Difficulties with Mathematics (dyscalculia)	School level-difficulties in spatially discriminating numbers and copying shapes, recalling maths facts, writing numbers legibly, difficulties in using math vocabalury, solving word problems, maths calculations etc.
Other Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems with short-term memory and even in long-term memory for tasks requiring semantic processing. • Problems in developing strategies for acquiring, storing and processing information (metacognition). • Restlessness, inability to sit still in one place for long periods. • Difficulties in social interactions and mobility. • Difficulties in mobility, coordination, communication and perception. • Students having severe learning difficulties may also have sensory impairments.

Provisions at the School Level

Students with specific learning difficulties may require resource support for meeting their individual needs. This support can be provided in their classroom after school hours or if possible, in another small room during school hours. The support can be provided on a one-to-one basis or in a small group.

Some students may require resource support on a timetable basis. That is, in the school timetable such provisions need to be made for these students. In case, the school does not have expertise to take care of the special needs of these students, such expertise, if possible, can be mobilised from other sources like the nearby voluntary organisations. Provisions for meeting special needs of students with specific learning difficulties would include – making accommodations in the curriculum, providing adequate space in the classroom for keeping learning aids etc. In case the school can afford a computer for ICT, it would be beneficial for these students. The need for specialist support would depend upon the nature and severity of needs. The support requirements may also vary according to the different stages of school.

Early Intervention and Pre-school Years – Early assessment of needs and interventions would help in minimising the learning problems of children at risk for learning difficulties. Instead of just labelling children, it would be better for the Anganwadi or *Balwadi* workers or teachers to observe the child carefully and continuously so that any variations in the language pattern, specifically delays in receptive and expressive language, variations in attention patterns, auditory and spatial perception can be assessed and interventions planned with the support of a specialist before major academic difficulties emerge. The curriculum at the pre-school stage can be structured around areas like attending and listening, perception, language development, creative expression, mathematics and physical education.

Elementary Years – The specific learning difficulties of most children are easily identifiable at this stage. In an inclusive set up, these children experience the same curriculum as others with modifications and adaptations if necessary. The main focus should be on promoting success by making use of appropriate tasks that can be accomplished by these children. Examples of these accommodations are – providing a study guide for a subject like social studies, giving extra time for tests, taking shorter tests,

learning spellings of different words than their peers. The students may require resource support in language, mathematics and for teaching them learning strategies on weekly basis. The skills of these children can improve significantly with appropriate interventions.

Secondary School Years – During these years the emphasis is on learning content and the students facing learning difficulties may fall behind their peers in different subjects. These students can be assisted in developing cognitive strategies for negotiating different content areas. For this, they may need study guides, visual and graphic depiction of content areas for better understanding, mnemonic devices (memory aids) for better remembering of content.

To summarise, the provisions required are:

- ▶ adequate indoor and outdoor space for providing resource support;
- ▶ learning aids: talking books, supplementary material, study guides, pictures, graphic depictions for content enrichment, mnemonic devices;
- ▶ teacher training in special instructional strategies; and
- ▶ specialist support-Itinerant or school based Computers for ICT.

Behavioural and Emotional

Behavioural and Emotional Problems in students are not given their due importance in our classrooms. Any student exhibiting



behavioural problems is considered to be in need of proper discipline. Students may exhibit behavioural problems that can be dealt with appropriate disciplinary practices. On the other hand, you also see students who are having serious behavioural disturbances and emotional problems that interfere with their learning process and social interactions. Consider the following story:

A girl called Sita

Sita is a thirteen year old girl studying in Class VIII. She does not like to talk much to anyone, has no friends, never asks questions in the class and stays aloof from everyone. She had managed to remain an invisible child till one day when she was noticed by her teacher climbing the stairs to the roof of her school building. The teacher who saw her going up found it quite an unusual behaviour and some instinct made her hurriedly follow Sita right to the top of the two storied school. She reached up just in time to prevent Sita from jumping from the roof and ending her miserable life. The teacher shaken by the whole episode tried to find out why Sita had decided to take such a drastic step. In her interaction with the teacher and the school principal Sita revealed that she remained emotionally disturbed because of her family circumstances. Her father was an alcoholic and would spend all his earnings in buying alcohol. Her mother who had to feed two more mouths of Sita's younger brother and sister was having constant fights with her husband over his drinking habit to the extent that many times she would be physically abused in front of the children. The environment of her house and the constant physical and verbal abuse of her mother made her miserable and led her to depression. She gradually started withdrawing from others around her and did not feel like doing anything. The feeling of hopelessness increased to an extent that one fateful day she decided to end her own life.

Childhood is generally considered a carefree time of life. In difficult times when we are feeling tired of responsibilities of daily living, we may, remember our childhood and wish we were young again. Though, every child may face emotional difficulties while growing up at some point of her/his life, the story of Sita clearly illustrates that in some children and adolescents these emotional problems may take a serious turn. If the problems a child is experiencing are seen as fairly severe, and are unresponsive to interventions at school, in the community or at home, an assessment by a competent mental health professional is probably in order.

As mentioned earlier, emotional and behavioural problems may manifest themselves in a number of ways. The child or youth may be destructive, show outbursts of temper, be abusive, obstinate, refuse to follow any directions, may lie, steal or else indulge in alcohol or drug abuse. Alternatively children and youth may also be emotionally disturbed if they are socially withdrawn, anxious, fearful or depressed like Sita. The special needs of these children can be classified in the following way:

Individualised curricular and academic needs – Students may benefit from adaptations to the curriculum, alteration in the pace of delivery, improvements to the instructional and organisational ecology, by providing instructional feedback, continually assessing the students' learning and understanding, and instruction in learning and study skills.

Social Needs – Children and youth having emotional and behavioural problems may sometimes exhibit problems in interpersonal behaviours that hamper their successful interaction with others. This may result in difficulties in their being socially accepted by other children. Training them in social skills, pairing them with other students and providing cooperative goals, opportunities for playing games, telling-stories, or singing songs together encourage interaction.

Management of Behaviour – Effective strategies to support the development of effective behaviour may be required from time-to-time. If a child throws tantrums and disrupts the class s/he needs to be exposed to opportunities for developing alternative behaviours.

Counselling Needs – Some students may require professional support of a counsellor to overcome their behavioural and emotional problems.

Provisions

The assessment of the special needs of a child with behavioural and emotional problems is the first step that needs to be taken. For this purpose information can be gathered from multiple sources like family members, neighbours and peers etc.

The school may also engage services of a psychologist or a counsellor. In case the school does not have a counsellor on a regular basis, it may need to mobilise the services of a counsellor from some other institution. Many times services rendered by a social worker are also of great advantage.

The school may also provide opportunities for team work and social interactions in multiple situations. Provisions for this can be inbuilt in the timetable or in the learning strategies children are exposed to. For example, teachers can use group work as one of the learning strategy in the classroom.

Early Intervention and Pre-school Years – The students may exhibit behavioural problems at this stage that can be appropriately changed by timely interventions. Some students may exhibit low self-esteem that needs to be developed and there would be others who would benefit from opportunities for safe exploration, language development activities like story-telling, acting or role-playing. Students must be helped to express themselves and socially interact with each other to maintain good mental health. Participating in art, music and dance also has therapeutic effects. Meanwhile academic skills of reading and writing need to be successfully developed.

Elementary Level – At this level of education the child may be given full opportunity to take advantage of natural surroundings. There may be need for specialist support and behavioural interventions specially because the other young children in the class would be unable to defend themselves in the face of any aggressive behaviour. Counselling and advocacy of the parents is important and they can be trained to provide resource support. The major provision at this stage is integration of mental health services in school provisions.

Secondary School Level – Management of behavioural problems becomes more and more difficult as the child grows older. Therefore, in-service training for teachers is important at this stage for handling complex behavioural and emotional problems. In addition to academic support, providing opportunities for participation in games and other activities helps. If any student disrupts the class the teacher can give an option to the child for either behaving herself/himself and staying in or altogether leaving the class. The power of making a choice would come by providing these options. Also pairing with other student who can support the needs of the student helps at this stage. The main strategy to be used is to solve the problem when it occurs.

To summarise, the provisions required are:

- Observant Teachers
- Services of Counsellor/Psychologist
- Opportunities for team work and social interactions
- Opportunities for participating in art related activities for their therapeutic effect.

Sensory and/or Physical

Special needs of Children with Hearing Impairment

A child has hearing impairment if s/he requires hearing aids, specific adaptations in the environment and/or particular teaching-learning strategies in order to access the concepts and language of the curriculum. The definition of hearing impairment as per the PWD Act, 1995 has already been given in the earlier chapter.

*Blindness separates people from things.
But deafness separates people from people.*
–Helen Keller

If you happen to visit a regular school especially in a village you may not see any children with hearing impairment studying in that school. That is because a child with hearing impairment, inspite of being as intelligent as any other child, has major problems



The most appropriate educational setting for children with special needs is the regular school with inclusive orientation. In case there are difficulties in exercising this option then the next best setting is the Special School. In case there is no Special School in the vicinity of the child then s/he can join the Open School. Home based schooling should be the last option for any child as it provides no opportunities for interactions with peers.

in language acquisition and is unable to understand what is going on in the class if her/his special needs are not adequately addressed.

The special needs of students with hearing impairments may differ for each child, and may depend upon a number of factors like the degree of hearing loss,

timely interventions, parental support, specialist support etc. Let us first understand the nature of special needs a child with hearing impairment may experience on a normal school day with the help of the following description:

A day in the life of Gaurav

Gaurav wakes his mother Kamla early in the morning by tapping his small hands on her shoulder. It is 6 a.m. and he needs to go to the bathroom. "Come on" he beckons and his mother looks in the eyes of her four year old who is hard of hearing. Gaurav wants his breakfast now and he tries to convey this through gestures. Kamla is still tired from the earlier day as she had a number of guests. She prepares some *Poha* while Gaurav pounds on the table indicating that he is really hungry and devours his food in a flash.

Once satisfied he starts playing. Kamla helps him put his shirt on but he takes care of the rest. When he is ready Kamla drops him to a pre-school nearby. When they reach the pre-school he waves her "bye-bye" and she looks at him in wonder. Earlier he used to cry everyday when she would drop him there. Seeing his willingness she is pleased that he likes his school now. In the school Gaurav sits with other children. He helps his teacher to check the hearing aid and while she is doing it the other children crowd around him and watch them. He then plays with the building blocks and stuffed toys. The teacher then tell them a story and along with it she signs for Gaurav. The signs she uses are the local signs used by Gaurav's mother to communicate with her son. These signs have also been used by an older boy who is studying in Class 4th of the primary school. After some more group activities, there is recess and everyone eat some snack. Gaurav then interacts with a speech pathologist who comes from a nearby special school. Gaurav is picked up after pre-school by his mother. After coming home he sits in front of the television and watches

the cricket test match. He shouts and claps whenever the Indian batsman hits four or six runs. He enjoys clapping with the audience. Later he goes out to play with the other boys and girls in the neighbourhood.

Kamla then cooks dinner and waits for her husband Krishna to come from work. Krishna returns home by six in the evening and Gaurav rushes into his arms. Krishna picks him on his shoulder and plays for a while and then watches news on television. When dinner is ready Gaurav calls Krishna for dinner. It is then time to sleep and Gaurav is getting ready for bed. “Your numbers” Kamla prompts with her voice and sign language. Gaurav signs one to three and stops at ten. “Good boy” and Kamla claps and puts Gaurav to sleep.

Students with hearing impairments may have special needs in the following areas:

Communication

Picture yourself in a situation when you are not able to communicate or share information with your fellow beings because you cannot understand the language s/he speaks. This is the major frustration children and youth with hearing loss face in their daily lives. They may use different approaches or combination of these approaches to communicate with other people. These include oral (speech reading)/aural (remaining residual hearing), sign language and total communication which in addition to the above may include images and informal gestures.

Sign Language is also a language

Social Relations

Imagine if you were viewing this world more through your eyes than through your ears. Would there be any difference in your behaviour as compared to others?

Certain behavioural differences do occur like a person with hearing loss may have to look closely at the face of the other individual to read her/his lips, tap on the shoulder for drawing attention, use body or hands to communicate. This may sometimes be considered as a rude behaviour by others specially if they are not aware of the special needs of persons with hearing impairments. This is why in mainstream schools children with hearing impairments are usually seen communicating only with one

another and not with their other peers though it will be of great advantage for them to interact with other children too. The *National Curriculum Framework-2005* (NCERT), offers sign language as an option for all children with or without hearing loss that would result in better communication amongst children. Opportunities to participate in games and other activities together helps in better socialisation for all children.

Education

Children with hearing loss have problems in language acquisition and that results in their becoming under-achievers in subjects like reading. With early interventions they are able to pick up language, read and gain information about their surroundings. Following is the summary of special needs of students with hearing impairments at different stages of schooling.

<i>Special Needs</i>	<i>School Level</i>	<i>Provisions</i>
Communication Needs	Early and Pre-school level: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Language Development- tapping into child's natural language ability ● Development of residual hearing ● Working with families to help them communicate with their children 	Specialist Support: Special educator, speech / language therapist (find out about the child's ability to make herself/himself intelligible to others), audiologist (testing hearing and indicating the hearing levels, functioning of hearing aids and the kind of sounds the child can hear better) Hearing Aids
	Primary, Elementary and Secondary Level: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development of universal and consistent language: All who communicate to child with hearing impairments using the same language ● Development of social skills and peer relations ● Parent involvement 	Specialist Support/Sign Language Interpreters Acoustic-absorbent surfaces for ceilings, floors etc. Clear signage of routes and visual signals

<p>Social Needs</p>	<p>Early and Pre-school level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with other children through play activities <p>Primary, Elementary and Secondary Level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing social skills and peer relations with hearing students • Facilitating friendships 	<p>Specialist support</p> <p>Signing by other students Specialist support and assistive devices</p> <p>Developing communication strategies (teaching communication strategies to children without hearing impairments so that they can get into the styles of students with hearing impairments and formulation of clubs, core groups that include both hearing and non-hearing students as members)</p>
<p>Education</p>	<p>Early and Pre-school level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language Development • Pre teaching • Concept Formation <p>Primary, Elementary and Secondary Level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarity with concepts, vocabulary they encounter • Language development • Curriculum adaptations (develop cognitive skills like problem solving, acquisition of concepts, and give wide range of practical experiences related to cognitive 	<p>Specialist support teaching-learning materials-pictures, posters etc.</p> <p>Teacher training</p> <p>Close collaboration with Specialists Use of visual aids and teaching learning materials-pictures, posters etc. Classroom management – Good quality lighting in the</p>

	training) Reading instruction • Overcoming academic challenges and providing successes, • Extra-curricular opportunities	Classrooms, Appropriate amplification, Good acoustics for speech intelligibility and sound insulation to ensure low background noise.
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- To summarise, hearing impairment in a child necessitates**
- Early intervention
 - Development of sign language/total communication
 - Specialist support
 - Assistive devices
 - Teaching learning materials
 - Classroom management for good acoustics and lip reading

Special Needs of Children with Visual Impairments

Any child can have problems in seeing and may require spectacles to improve her/his vision. Sometimes, you may have seen people who are not able to see at all. You may also notice that in some



of them, one or both eyes may not appear to have a normal appearance. In simple words, visual impairment has been defined as the diminishment of the ability to see (Nielsen, 2002)⁶. The terms partially sighted, legally blind, low vision, and totally blind are

commonly used to describe visual impairments. The National Programme for Control of Blindness in India has given a simple definition of blindness describing it as the inability of a person to

⁶ Nielsen, L.B.(2002). *Brief Reference of Student Disabilities : With Strategies for the classroom*: Corwin Press, California.

count fingers from a distance of 6 meters or 20 feet. The PWD Act, 1995 divides the inability to see under two categories—Blindness and Low Vision – that have already been defined in the last chapter.

The population of students with visual impairments is very heterogeneous. They may differ from each other on a number of factors like visual functioning, socio-economic status, parents' support, cultural background, age of onset of visual impairment, their cognitive abilities and the variety of experiences they have been exposed to. Some of them may even have more than one disability. However, one important characteristic common among all is the limited ability to learn incidentally from the environment. For example, a young child who can see properly is exposed to the alphabets incidentally before he starts to read. These letters appear on boxes, on toys, on newspapers delivered everyday at home or on street signs at various places. Such incidental opportunities need to be created for children who have problems in seeing.

There are other characteristics common to children with visual impairments. These are:

Limitation in the range and variety of experiences – Since the child with visual impairment cannot perceive objects in the environment beyond her/his grasp including those that are too large, too small or are moving. Because of this early concept development is particularly influenced .

Limitation in the Ability to Get Around – Restriction in movement due to limited spontaneous ability to move may influence a child's early motor development and early explorations of the world. This limited ability to move may result in reducing the opportunities for intellectual and social development of the child.

The following table illustrates the unique needs of children with visual impairments at different stages of schooling along with the provisions required. Although there is no clear cut demarcation between developments from one stage and another because of the diverse population of students with visual impairments, these children benefit from developing skills in three major areas—skills that are learned incidentally by students who can see properly, skills that help in gaining access to academic curriculum, and skills specific to students with visual impairments like learning Braille, orientation and mobility. As you see in the Table given on page 36, some of these skills may overlap in areas like learning Braille is important for communication and also for academics. Also, the same provision may sometimes be required at different stages like an orientation and mobility instructor may be required at all stages of school.

<i>Special Needs</i>	<i>School Level</i>	<i>Provisions</i>
Orientation and Mobility	<p>Early and Pre-school Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition of body image and spatial concepts • Ability to develop appropriate posture, balance, strength and movement • Use of cane <p>Elementary School Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing knowledge of Environment <p>Secondary School Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mastering difficult travel situations (kachcha roads, buses, uneven terrain etc.) 	<p>Orientation and Mobility Instructors, assistive devices like canes, visual contrasts, tactile trails and cues for finding path etc.</p> <p>Orientation and mobility instructors and assistive devices</p> <p>Visual contrasts, tactile trails and cues for finding path etc</p>
Communication Skills	<p>Early and Pre-school Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and Writing Braille <p>Primary/Elementary School Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social skills–learning to face the person speaking to, appropriate postures, eliminating mannerisms 	<p>Specialist support, Braille slates and Stylus, Braille paper etc.</p> <p>Specialist support</p>
Sensory Motor Skills	<p>Early and Pre-school Years:</p> <p>Spatial and Orientation Skills: developing other senses like sense of smell, touch, hearing, taste and kinesthetic awareness, language, visual training etc.</p>	<p>Specialist support and required assistive devices like models, toys etc.</p>

Daily Living Skills	<p>Early and Pre-school Years:</p> <p>Hygiene including toilet training, eating food without spilling, maintaining proper posture in school, tying shoelaces, buttoning shirts, wearing clothes, identifying money, identifying clothes, knowing time, drinking hot and cold liquids etc.</p> <p>Elementary/ Secondary School Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Self Help and Household management Skills- cooking, laundry, first aid, stitching buttons, mending clothes, techniques of shaving for boys, nail cutting, currency identification, keeping money safely, proper handling of school bags, books and stationery, etc. ● Playing games like chess, playing cards, memorising poems, songs and lessons etc. ● Knowledge of sexuality ● Development of advocacy skills 	<p>Special Educator, Special assistive and adaptive devices like talking clocks, alarm clocks, tape recorders, games and puzzles, rattles bells, audible ball etc.</p> <p>Specialist support, kitchen equipment and personal devices etc.</p>
Academic Skills	<p>Early and Pre-school Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development of language and reading skills ● Teaching arithmetic orally ● Teaching of shapes 	<p>Learning devices like talking books, geometric shapes and solids, puzzles, toys, building blocks, models, real objects and three dimensional learning aids</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Concepts (touch, talk, residual vision, concrete experiences) <p>Elementary School Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional support 	<p>Use of raised diagrams and tactile graphics</p> <p>Reinforcing concepts presented in the class – tactual experience with real objects, transforming all material used in the class like map, graph into large print, Braille or tactile display, books in large print, Braille and talking books</p> <p>Learning aids – Arithmetic and braille writing slate, taylor Arithmetic frame abacus, primary mathematics kit, Spur wheel, tape recorders, computers, geography devices, science devices etc.</p>
Physical Fitness and Recreation	<p>Secondary School Years: Student needs support in various subjects specially maths and science</p> <p>Early and Pre-School Year: Games, sports</p> <p>Primary/Elementary/Secondary School Years: Games–chess, playing cards, squabble etc. Sports–cricket, football, swimming, athletics, etc.</p>	<p>Subject teacher support specially in maths and science, Learning aids according to the subjects.</p> <p>Adaptive sports devices like audible ball</p>
Vocational Skills	<p>Elementary Level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of career awareness skills <p>Secondary School Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intense career exploration 	<p>Resource support to sports teacher Adaptive sports devices adaptive play Grounds</p> <p>Specialist support,</p>

When there is a student with visual impairment in the class, the teacher needs to make assessment of her/his special needs in order to create favourable situations so that s/he is able to participate in all the learning experiences to the best of her/his ability. Normally, a number of students may be able to cope up with the mainstream education without any resource provision. Others may require resource support depending on their age and range of needs.

To summarise, the provisions required are:

- specialist support for developing various skills;
- assistive devices;
- classroom organisation;
- adaptive playgrounds;
- teaching learning materials; and
- colour contrasts.

Special Needs of Students with Locomotor Disability

There are a number of medical conditions associated with Locomotor disability which may affect the mobility of the child. These include cerebral palsy, spina bifida, hydrocephalus and muscular dystrophy. A few of these learners may be mobile but have significant fine-motor difficulties. Some of them may also have sensory impairments, neurological problems or learning difficulties. Others may require augmentative or alternative communication aids. In the sense, students having locomotor problems exhibit a wide range of special needs. Many are able to access the curriculum without any additional educational provision because even if they have a disability they do not have a special educational need. For others the impact on their



I was once asked a question by my peer while I was eating my tiffin: Are you going to die young? Why do people act stupidly with me? Is it because I am different from them?

(A girl with physical disability who cannot speak properly)

education may be severe. The definition of locomotor disability in the PWD Act is given in the earlier chapter.

These children may have special needs in areas like education, mobility, communication, seating, personal care and daily living. The special needs can be addressed by different interventions at different levels of schooling.

Early Intervention and Pre-school Years

The child may be having problems with mobility and may require special physical care. It is also possible that her/his speech may not be clear or s/he is not able to speak at all. Instead of excluding her/him from class activities or treating her/him as invisible, it would be better to use alternative communication modes and take specialist help to improve her/him mobility skills. Her/his fellow students can also be involved in providing the required support. The specialist can assist both the teachers and parents to adapt various things like toys, crayons, to use varied mobility devices, and to supplement natural acquired speech, and in augmentative and alternative modes of communication.

Elementary School Years

The necessary provisions would vary with the nature and severity of the special needs. The physical environment for these children must be accessible and they would benefit from studying in the neighbourhood school. While travelling to the school, they may require accessible transport.

Inclusions of children with locomotor problems in education would necessitate the removal of architectural barriers and making school

Provisions Required

Medical Provisions

Physiotherapist

Speech pathologist

Proper toilet and assistance with toileting

Mobility devices

Adapted furniture

Accessible ramps and handrails

Accessible play equipment.

buildings accessible with simple ramps, handrails, wide doorways, proper toilet arrangements and also seating arrangements since it is difficult for some of these students to sit in one place without changing position. Removal of architectural barriers will help these



students to be more independent. Modification in the assessment procedures, identification of required assistive technology, assistance from peers for managing their books and school materials and support of a physiotherapist to improve the mobility, posture and efficient movement are some of the special needs associated with locomotor disability at this stage.

Secondary Years

At this stage the emphasis would be more on building self-esteem, leadership and involving the community to provide these students opportunities to interact more and more with other teenagers. Focus of all endeavours is to assist students in gaining both personal and academic independence.

Other Special Needs

Now and then you may also see a student engaging in distracting behaviour such as loud laughter or hugging a peer who does not want to be hugged. You may notice that s/he lacks interest in class activities and appears to be helpless with new activities. You may also come across children exhibiting limitation in adaptive skills like

To include does not mean to exclude from special supports.

communication, self care, social skills, functional academic skills etc. and need support to go on with their life.

You may be tempted to stop a child's distracting behaviour, scold her/him or excluding her/him from classroom activity. Instead of doing so, you can assist this child in identifying an alternative acceptable behaviour by using techniques of role-play, maintain high expectations from her/him but modify the curriculum in accordance with her/his special needs and give her/him a chance to participate in activities which s/he can successfully accomplish.

Also, providing opportunities for leadership can result in changing attitudes in the classroom. Acceptance, assistance and tutoring by peers help the child with intellectual challenges to grow with others to the best of her/his ability.

The following description of special needs would help in bringing the required changes in the school system.

Prabhu is an eight year old boy who goes to the neighbourhood school with his elder sister Meena. Everyday in the morning his sister puts on the radio for waking him up. After getting up he asks her, "Do we have school today"? Meena assures him, "Yes there is school today" and Prabhu looks happy. He gets up and gets ready but makes a lot of fuss about eating anything before going to school. Finally both Prabhu and Meena leave for school walking and Prabhu runs ahead because he knows the way and is quite proud of it. After reaching school, both of them go to their respective classes. In his class Prabhu hangs out with his classmates.

In the beginning Prabhu had no friends. Making friends and learning appropriate social interactions has been a struggle. He would just hug his peers who would keep discouraging him from doing so. Gradually he learned that this was not welcome behaviour and he stopped doing it. Now, even if he finds their conversation difficult to



Referring to a child as mentally retarded is dehumanising

understand, he is happy staying close to them and playing whenever possible. In his language class his goals are modified. While others can read stories he listens to them and looks at the pictures. Gradually he has started reading a few words with the help of his friends and would sometimes tell the same story to his nephew who is just three years old. This makes him feel very proud and grown up. There are other activities in the language class which are quite a lot of fun. The teacher gives commands like “Put your hands on top of your head”, “Put your finger on your knees”. It is fun to do all this in class and learn concepts like “top”, “over”, “bottom”, “under” etc. After a while when other children are doing some written assignment his teacher calls Prabhu and tries to teach him money concepts. Prabhu recognises different coins and how many of them make a rupee. Maths is a difficult subject for Prabhu but his teacher Malini does not hear the words “I can’t”. She has high expectations from all her students and believes that there is no failure but only learning. This encourages all students and Prabhu also counts the coins with little help from his peers. After returning from school Prabhu plays cricket with children from his neighbourhood and enjoys this game. He loves to throw ball and feels happy when he gets success in this game and all the other children praise him.

The above description clearly points out that diversities in the classroom make learning interesting. It is important to emphasise a life skills curriculum at an earlier stage to help the students to succeed in the environments they encounter everyday. The provision of a special educator intermittently may be important while developing classroom plans and learning strategies.

Finally, there may also be children in the classroom having problems:

- ❑ with understanding and using non-verbal, verbal and social cues;
- ❑ in social interactions;
- ❑ in thinking flexibly and playing imaginatively;
- ❑ in behaviour patterns and may exhibit extremely rigid and repetitive patterns of unusual behaviours like flapping hands or rocking or jumping; and
- ❑ in eye contact and may not respond when called.

These are the children within spectrum of autism and would exhibit a wide range of special needs. Some may appear to be

quiet and withdrawn while others may be hyperactive. No one type of intervention may be helpful in meeting these special needs and what works at an earlier stage may not work at a later stage. However, early intervention and mediation for language facilitation are quite helpful. Resource may be required for supporting accommodations in the curriculum delivery. Collaborating with a psychologist and a special educator would be advantageous to understand what is the best intervention at different stages of development.





Chapter 4

Teaching in Inclusive Classrooms

Pooja is a teacher in primary school in a village. She has undergone some training but finds it difficult to teach in a large class having children, from different grades. Though she likes children she finds teaching in such circumstances very challenging. There are also a few children with disabilities in her class. There are so many things that she has to think and plan about: What to teach? What materials to use? Where to get these materials from? How to make curriculum accessible to all children? How can a single teacher do so much?

In any rural setting there may be just one or two teachers in a primary school. These teachers may find their work extremely challenging. To be a good teacher means reacting to the interests of different children and building teaching on what the children already know, which may sometimes prove to be difficult. This chapter will give you some ideas about how to plan teaching and



learning in inclusive classrooms that comprise of children with diverse abilities and from varied backgrounds.

As mentioned earlier, inclusion basically is an attitude of acceptance of diversities. For teaching in an inclusive classroom, a teacher needs to possess competencies that help her/him to plan and implement strategies that provide students wider access to regular curriculum. Research says that the teachers in an inclusive classroom should have the:

- ❑ ability to problem-solve, to be able to informally assess the skills a student needs (rather than relying solely on standardised curriculum);
- ❑ ability to take advantage of children's individual interests and use their internal motivation for developing required skills;
- ❑ ability to set high but alternative expectations that are suitable for the students. This means developing alternative assessments;
- ❑ ability to make appropriate expectations for each student, regardless of the student's capabilities. If teachers can do this, it allows all students to be included in a class and school; and
- ❑ ability to learn how to value all kinds of skills that students bring to a class, not just the academic skills. In doing this, teachers will make it explicit that in their classrooms they value all skills (Chadha, A. 2001)⁷.

Also the teachers must be able to:

- ❑ recognise and respond to the diversity of students in their classrooms;
- ❑ accommodate to students' different learning styles and rates of learning by employing a range of teaching methods, including cooperative group learning, peer tutoring, team teaching and individualised instruction;
- ❑ be aware of the rights of students with education support needs
- ❑ locate appropriate material, equipment or specialists; and
- ❑ identify and overcome barriers to learn.
- ❑ consult with and develop partnerships with parents/caregivers and colleagues;
- ❑ use appropriate forms of assessment;
- ❑ adapt their instruction to the prior knowledge and beliefs of students;

⁷ Chadha, A. (2001). Teaching Competencies in Inclusive Education. In Julka, A. (eds.) *Inclusive Education: Orientation Package for Teacher-educators*. Unpublished manuscript, National Council of Educational Research and Training.

- ❑ create an inclusive community that extends beyond the walls of the school; and
- ❑ seek to enhance the self-esteem of all students (Quinn, S. and Ryba, K. 2000)⁸.

Teaching Strategies

The last section described some of the teaching competencies required to teach in an inclusive classroom. On one hand, the teacher in an inclusive classroom has to accommodate the different learning styles and rates of learning. On the other hand, s/he has to ensure that equitable educational opportunities are provided to all students. Therefore, the first step is to ensure that effective and inclusive teaching practices are in place. The following are the two major strategies that are commonly used in inclusive classrooms:

- (a) Cooperative Learning
- (b) Peer Tutoring

(a) Cooperative Learning

While using cooperative learning methods, the class has to be divided into mixed ability groups to achieve a goal. To use this



⁸ Quinn, S. and Ryba, K. (2000). *Linking Inclusive Policies with Best Teaching Practices*. In Deborah Fraser, Roger Moltzen and Ken Ryba (eds.) *Learners with Special Needs in Aotearoa*. New Zealand. Dunmore Press.

you will require a large room or an open space where you can form groups. The following factors may have to be taken into consideration while using this strategy.

- Students in a group may have same or different goals to achieve.
- Students may be assigned different roles.
- Students accept ideas from others.
- Students help each other to learn.
- Students interact with each other to solve problems.

Techniques of Cooperative Learning

You can plan the technique you are going to use for grouping from your own experiences. However, some examples are given below:

- ❑ Students may be assigned to groups. The aim of each group is to study what the teacher has taught and help each group member to achieve the highest level possible.
- ❑ Students may start with a partner and end in a group. The students convey their knowledge about a topic to a partner and both may reach an agreement finally sharing this information with other group members or with the whole class.
- ❑ Students may form groups. The teacher may provide each group member a piece of information related to a topic. The group members can put their pieces of together to present to the class.
- ❑ Students may form groups to research on various topics and bring together the facts learned to present to the class. This clarifies the topic in detail and all students participate in the teaching-learning process.



Examples of Teaching Strategies

- Observe carefully and plan interventions for students at risk
- Let the light fall on your face and not behind you. This would be helpful in lip reading
- Audio visual presentations are helpful for all students
- Signing helps in communicating with children who cannot understand the language of instruction well
- Adapt curriculum materials when required to suit the needs of different students
- Use hands-on approach that maximises the use of all senses
- Expose students to real objects and meaningful experiences in natural environments at naturally occurring times of the day
- Let all students experience success
- Collaborate with experts to teach learning strategies and study skills to students
- Provide extra time if required to complete assignments
- Provide small group tutoring or individual tutoring in or outside the class
- Maintain high expectations for all
- Provide leadership opportunities
- Teach appropriate social skills
- Use a pleasant tone of voice
- Never make fun of any child
- Provide opportunities to use language
- Promote positive interdependence in the class
- Teach life skills
- Keep directions brief and clear
- Give examples
- Have interclass and within class groupings
- Provide reinforcements
- Ensure success for all

Classroom Design Modifications

- *Students who are able to lip read or not able to see should be placed in front rows*
- *Classroom should be well lit without shadows and glares*
- *Make children with disabilities sit with a competent peer*
- *Remove sources of excessive noise from the classroom*
- *Speak and write on the blackboard simultaneously*
- *Put posters and displays in the classroom at eye level of students*
- *Provide adequate furniture for meeting the special needs of children*
- *Eliminate sharp objects from the wall*
- *Assist the visually impaired with good colour schemes*
- *Provide flexible group learning areas*
- *Have flexible time schedules*
- *Personally meet the needs of all students*

(b) Peer Tutoring

A peer is defined as the individual of the same social gathering. In an inclusive classroom peer means a fellow student. Peer tutoring, thus, means students teaching each other on one-to-one basis. So when a student from same age or class provides instruction to another student of the same age or class the technique is called peer-tutoring. This tutoring is within the class.

It is also possible in some situations that an older student may tutor younger students. This is called *cross-age tutoring*. Sometimes, peer-tutoring may prove to be quite effective and both the tutor and the student receiving instructions, the tutee, may gain from the process. However, it is not necessary that students with special needs should always play the role of a tutee.



According to M. Dash⁸ (2001) in peer tutoring the tutor should perform four acts, such as:

- Monitoring means supervision and regulation of the performance of a tutee;
- Reinforcing means providing appropriate contingencies for approved behaviour. S/he may praise the tutee if s/he has completed the work to a required standard;
- Modelling means the demonstration of a particular activity or behaviour by the peer tutor; and

⁸ Dash, M.M. (2001). Classroom for All. In Julka, A. (eds.) *Inclusive Education: Orientation Package for Teacher Educators*. Unpublished manuscript, National Council of Educational Research and Training.

- Explaining means exposing the relationships on a topic and providing appropriate examples to clarify doubts.

Some Examples of Curricular Modifications

Following are some examples of curricular modifications that will help in addressing the special needs of different children:

1. *Multi Level Curriculum Instructions* refers to teach a diverse group of learners within a shared activity in which students have individually appropriate learning outcomes within the same curricular area (Giangreco, Cloninger and Salce Iverson, 1998⁹). For example, in a science class while majority of students may be working on what makes objects float or sink students with special needs may be understanding the concept of sinking and floating and the difference between them.
2. *Curriculum overlapping* happens when students have individually appropriate learning outcomes from different curricular areas but work on these in a shared activity. For example, when students are working in groups some may be achieving the learning outcomes for social studies while students with special needs may be working on development of communication skills.
3. *Students with Physical Disabilities*– may require adaptations to the physical environment of the school like ramps, proper toilets etc.
4. *Students with severe visual impairments*–may require adaptations in the equipment and the materials like reading material in Braille.
5. *Students with intellectual challenges*–may require modification in the curricular content to provide less complex information and learning of functional and vocational skills.

Theatre is the most inclusive subject as it challenges both disabled and non-disabled. The stereotype of success and ability enforced through schools and colleges lead to a scuttling of learning through expression of human face, body and sound, says veteran theatre personality Steve Clorfeine.

Source: Disability News and Information Service National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People
<http://www.dnis.org/>

⁹ Giangreco, M., Cloninger, C., and Salce Iverson, V. (1998). *Choosing outcomes and accommodations for children* (2nd edition). Baltimore: Paul H. Brooks.

6. *Students with hearing impairments* may require the teacher to use short sentences, look at the student often while talking and ask the peers to help as much as possible.
7. Finally, Johnson (1993)¹⁰ has suggested to explore the following alternatives in relation to content, teaching materials, responses expected from the child and methods of assessment:
 - *modification*; for example, computer responses instead of oral responses;
 - *substitution*; for example, Braille for written materials;
 - *omission*; for example, omitting very complex work for children with intellectual disabilities; and
 - *compensation*; for example, self care skills, vocational skills.

What a teacher can do for children with disabilities to increase their access to school and learning potential:

1. Children with disabilities sometimes find it difficult to get to school. Try to organise transportation to school and make school accessible by ramps, and other resources that respond to specific needs.
2. When a child with a disability first comes to your school, talk with the family member who is with the child. Find out what the child's disabilities are and what she or he can do despite the disability. Ask about any problems and difficulties that the child may have.
3. When the child starts school, visit the parents from time to time to discuss with them what they are doing to facilitate the child's learning. Ask about plans for the child's future. Find out how you can best work with the family.
4. Ask if the child needs to take any medicines while in school.
5. If you do not have enough time to give the child all the attention she or he needs, ask the school or community to find a helper for you. The helper could give the children the extra help needed during school hours.
6. Make sure that the children can see and hear you when you teach. Write clearly so that they can read what you are saying. Also, let a child with a disability sit in front of the classroom so, they can see and hear better.
7. Find out if the child and the parents have problems about schooling. Ask if the family thinks that other school children are helpful to the child and whether the child gets on well at school.

UNICEF <http://www.unicef.org/teachers/protection/access.htm>

¹⁰Johnson, T. (1993). *Toward an Inclusive School*, Geneva: UNDP.

CBSE Relaxation for Disabled Children

The facilities extended by the Board to the disabled candidates (Dyslexic, Blind, Spastic and candidate with Visual Impairment) are as under:

1. The persons with disabilities (Dyslexic, Blind, Spastic and Candidate with Visual Impairment) have the option of studying one compulsory language as against two. The language opted by them should be in consonance with the overall spirit of the Three Language Formula prescribed by the Board. Besides one language they can offer any four of the following subjects – Mathematics, Science and Technology, Social Science, Another Language, Music, Painting, Home Science and Introductory Information Technology.
2. From the 2002 Examination, alternate questions in lieu of questions requiring special skills based on visual inputs have been provided in Mathematics and Science for Secondary School Examination (Class X).
3. Blind, Physically Handicapped and Dyslexic students are permitted to use amanuensis. The amanuensis must be a student of a class lower than the one for which the candidate is taking the examination.
4. The visually handicapped students appearing from Delhi were provided questions papers with enlarged print for 2003 Examination;
5. Disabled candidates are allowed additional one hour (60 minutes) for each paper of external examination.
6. Board does not give relaxation in minimum marks prescribed by it.
7. Exemption from Examination in the Third Language.
8. The Board considers the Physiotherapeutic exercises as equivalent to Physical and Health Education course of the Board.
9. Centre Superintendents have been instructed to make arrangements for the conduct of the examination of such candidates on the ground floor as far as possible.
10. Physically challenged children will specifically indicate their category and also state whether they have been provided with a Writer in the columns provided in the main answer book.
11. Answer books of such candidates are evaluated by the Regional Officers at one Nodal Centre.

12. The Centre Superintendents have been requested to send the answer books of such candidates in a separate envelope to the Regional Officer concerned.
13. Separate question papers in Science and Mathematics at Secondary (Class X) level have been provided for blind students w.e.f. 2003 Examinations.
14. Assistant Superintendents for the blinds are teachers from the schools where the blinds are studying. As far as possible, teachers of the same subject are not allowed to be appointed on the day of examination. One invigilator is from outside the school.
15. Assistant Superintendents supervising the physically challenged children who have been granted 60 minutes extra time are paid remuneration @ Rs 50 + 20.
16. Amanuensis are paid @ Rs 100/- per day/paper daily by the Centre. Superintendent from the centre charges the amount.

Children studying in mainstream schools are first the responsibility of general education teachers. Collaboration with specialists may be sort only if the teachers are unable to meet some special needs of these children.



Chapter 5

Overcoming Barriers

In spite of all the efforts taken at various levels to include children with disabilities in the learning process, there are a number of factors that still hamper their progress and leave them to fend for themselves. Many times persons with disabilities are still not accepted by society as equals and have to make great effort to realise even their most basic rights. The obstacles in the path of development are overcome by struggles and hard work on the part of the disabled themselves and by others who advocate on their behalf.

This chapter will outline some of the endeavours on the part of persons with disabilities and society at large to facilitate the process of inclusion in society.

Ignorance is not the same as innocence

Consider the following case that depicts how a student with visual impairments overcame the restrictions in accessing education. He struggled hard to invent technology that benefited not only him but in future would assist all those children who face similar problems.

Student develops 'Braille Face' for the visually impaired

Seventeen-year-old Satvir Singh, a student from J.P.M. Senior Secondary School, has developed a new software called Braille Face, which has given a ray of hope to thousands of visually impaired students. The software translates the Braille command into the Devnagri script. He is the first student who have written his C.B.S.E. Class X exam in Hindi using a computer.

Being dependent on writers for exams, Singh found that he was not always lucky to get a good one. And cross checking what the writer had written was impossible. This difficulty is what made this young boy develop his own software. Right after his exam he found people who were willing to assist him improvise the software. He intends to release the updated version of the software, which he plans to call Jetsoft Striker. Later, the software will also be made available in other languages such as Marathi, Kannada and so on. He also has plans to develop software to serve the needs of disabled people irrespective of their disabilities.

D.N.I.S. News Network

Children with disabilities face a number of challenges in the process of their growth and development. These challenges are bound by issues like negative attitudes, educational attainment, social relationships, abuse and neglect (physical, emotional, sexual etc.), adolescent problems, physical access, gender discrimination etc. All the students including those with disabilities are affected by these issues.

Girls with Disabilities

Girls with disabilities face double discrimination on account of being a girl and on top of that a girl having disability. They are also more vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse at home or at school. They are not able to move as independently as boys. They generally complain of lack of privacy for example, while using toilet or changing clothes. Girls having visual impairments generally complain about not being able to travel alone or being eve-teased and feeling helpless to do anything about it. Consider the following description:



Pooja Sharma, a bright disabled student from Meerut, with a score of 71 per cent in Class XII exams, aspires to be a lawyer. She had applied in various Law colleges and with great difficulty, got admission in Symbiosis Law College, Pune. Now, the college refuses to provide accessible accommodation, putting Pooja and her parents in a fix. They have been running from pillar to post for the past few weeks. But in a show of negative attitude, the authorities are refusing to provide the student a single room and also refusing to accommodate an aide to help her.

(Disability News and Information Services Volume 4 Issue 12, June 15, 2006 National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People <http://www.dnis.org/>)

On the other hand, there are girls who have struggled against all odds and managed to do well for themselves. In their efforts they have been helped by their parents and give all the credit to the support they got from them. The following two news items are examples of girls' with disabilities efforts to outshine others.

Sightless girl shows the way

By Abantika Ghosh/TNN

New Delhi: Rashmi Taneja is fairly pleased with her overall performance — 88.2% in the commerce stream — but mildly rueful about a 77% in economics, which prevented her from getting 90% “Maybe I lost out on the diagrams,” she shrugs. One of many bright students who sat for the Class XII boards? Yes, with one difference: Rashmi is blind since birth.

Her marks alone would make Rashmi’s a remarkable story of the human spirit overcoming formidable odds. But there’s one more difference: She did not use a typewriter. She did not want to “ask somebody else to write for me. You never know who the person is writing,” she says. So she used a typewriter.

Rashmi was entering an hour’s extra time, but she did not use it for anything other than accounts. Why? Because “it should be a level-playing field”.

More on the Web
www.hindustantimes.com

Failing eyes sight rare school success

With 2% vision, Soma pulls off 92% at Boards

SANJEEV K. AHUJA
Gurgaon, May 29

SOMA PATNAIK was seldom able to figure out what her teacher would scribble on the blackboard. With barely two per cent vision in both eyes, studying meant poring over textbooks with a chunky magnifying glass. Many would have given up midway. But this DAV Public School girl from Gurgaon’s sector 14 scored 92.6 per cent in the class 10 exam.

Suffering from what doctors call Retinitis Pigmentosa, Patnaik could go totally blind by the time she is 30, says Shuvendu Patnaik, her father.

“There is no cure, really. Both her retinas are damaged and cannot be replaced. We detected her problem when she was two. The doctors had advised us to get her admitted into the blind school at R.K. Puram,” the father said. But the principal of the blind school advised the man to take her little girl to a normal school as she had about 5 per cent vision at that time.

Soma took it all in her stride, scoring 463 out of 500, with 92 in English, 97 in SST, 95 in maths, 93 in science and 86 in Sanskrit.

According to principal of DAV Public School, Anita Makkar, Soma is a “brilliant student”.

Asked how she managed studies, Soma told the *Hindustan Times*: “I know I am heading towards 100 per cent blindness. But I am mentally prepared and have decided on my future course. I have started learning the Brail system.”

In the class, Soma solely relied on her hearing. “At home, my mother helps in studies and reads out textbooks. I cannot read for long. My eyes get strained and start watering if I read for more than an hour,” said Soma.

The girl was recently knocked down by a car as she was crossing a colony street.

Soma’s mother, Sushma, who is a lecturer in geology, is her only tutor.

“My score could have crossed 95 per cent mark had I not lost some marks in the Sanskrit paper. I would generally get 99 in that subject. I scored less as I failed to read a few questions correctly. Now, I have gone for humanities even though I love science. I cannot opt for science subjects as I would not be able to perform practicals,” Soma said. She wants to be a writer. But her story is already the stuff of racy novels.

GIRL UNINTERRUPTED



Soma (left) with her mother.

SANJEEV VERMA/H/T

I know I am heading towards 100 per cent blindness. But I am mentally prepared and have decided on my future course. I have started learning the Brail system. At home, my mother helps in studies and reads out textbooks. I cannot read for long. My eyes get strained and start watering if I read for more than an hour

Society may also hold some prejudices and stereotypes that may come in way of children’s progress. Some examples are given below.

Myths	Facts
People who are visually impaired acquire a “sixth sense”	No, they do not have a “sixth sense” but most of them develop their remaining senses more fully.
People with disabilities always need help.	Many people with disabilities are independent and capable of giving help. Some of them may need help and it is better to find out whether they need help before offering it to them.
Do not use the word ‘see’ with persons having visual impairment.	There is no problem with using the word ‘see’ in normal conversation. You must behave normally with them.
Curious children should never ask people about their disabilities.	Many children have a natural curiosity and may ask questions that some adults consider embarrassing. But rebuking curious children may make them think having a disability is “wrong” or “bad.” Most people with disabilities won’t mind answering a child’s questions.
All persons with hearing impairments can read lips	Lip-reading skills vary among people who use them.
Children with disabilities are more comfortable with “their own kind.”	This is a misconception and is constantly being reinforced because of segregated settings like special schools where these children are generally placed. Today more and more children are joining mainstream schools and are comfortable with any setting.
People with disabilities have different goals than people without disabilities.	Because people with disabilities also have cultural, social, and economic variations, their goals can be as different as any two persons’ goals are.
People with disabilities need to be protected from failing.	People with disabilities have a right to participate in the full range of human experiences including success and failure.

Class Sizes

Large class size is considered to be a major barrier to inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in education. In our country, the teacher–pupil ratio may range from 1:30 to 1:200, while classes sizes of 50–100 would be a norm. Small class sizes with adequate resource support are more desirable than large size classrooms. However, the size of the classroom is not a significant factor for inclusion when attitudes are positive and rights of all children are considered to be on an equal footing.

Partnerships with Parents

Parents need to play a supportive role in their child's development and for overcoming the barriers faced by their children with disabilities. They are the first teachers at home and can teach all the required daily living and other skills to their child. They can also provide relevant information to school teachers for planning appropriate interventions for the children with disabilities. The parents can act as advisors, decision-makers and advocates for their child. They can form pressure groups so that their children can enjoy the basic rights and develop up to her/his potential.



The National Curriculum Framework–2005

The National Curriculum Framework, NCERT, 2005 is an excellent example of an Inclusive Curriculum. Some of the excerpts that facilitate inclusion of children with disabilities are the following:

The curriculum must provide appropriate challenges and create enabling opportunities for students to experience success in learning and achievement to the best of their potential. Teaching and learning processes in the classroom should be planned to respond to the diverse needs of students. Teachers can explore positive strategies for providing education to all children, including those perceived as having disabilities. This can be achieved in all collaboration with fellow teachers or with organisations outside the school.

The learning plans therefore must respond to physical, cultural and social preferences within the wide diversity of characteristics and needs.

Activities could enable teachers to give individualised attention to children, and to make alterations in a task depending on their requirements and variations in the level of interest. In fact, teachers could also consider involving children and older learners in planning the class work, such variety would bring tremendous richness to the classroom processes. It would also allow teachers to respond to the special needs of some children without making it seem as if it is an obvious exception.

Schools need to become centres that prepare children for life and ensure that all children, especially the differently able, children from marginalised sections, and children in difficult circumstances get the maximum benefit of this critical area of education.

Simple adaptation of playgrounds, equipment and rules can make activities and games accessible to all children in the school.

National Curriculum Framework 2005

Children learn in a variety of ways-through experience, making and doing things, experimentation, reading, discussion, asking, listening, thinking and reflecting, and expressing oneself in speech, movement or writing – both individually and with others. They require opportunities of all these kinds in the course of their development.

While many of the differently abled learners may pick basic language skills through normal social interactions, they could additionally be provided with especially designed materials that would assist and enhance their growth and development. Studying sign language and Braille could be included as options for learners without disabilities.

We need to reaffirm our commitment to the concept of equality, within the landscape of cultural and socio-economic diversity from which children enter into the portals of the school.

Curriculum design must reflect the commitment to UEE not only in representing cultural diversity, but also by ensuring that children from different social and economic backgrounds with variations in physical, psychological and intellectual characteristics.

The effort should be to enable the learner to appreciate beauty in its several forms. However, we must ensure that we do not promote stereotypes of beauty and forms of entertainment, that might constitute an affront to women and persons with disabilities.

The constructive perspective provides strategies for promoting learning by all.

A pedagogy that is sensitive to gender, class, caste and global inequalities is one that does not merely affirm different individual and collective experiences but also locates these within larger structures of power and raises questions such as, who is allowed to speak for whom? In particular, for girls and children from under-privileged social groups, social and classrooms should be spaces for discussing processes of decision making, for questioning the basis of their decisions, and for making informed choices.

The attempt to improve the quality of education will succeed only if it goes hand in hand with steps to promote equality and social justice.

To conclude, including children with disabilities in education is a challenging task. It involves providing appropriate responses to a wide spectrum of learning needs in both formal and non-formal settings. The following table will illustrate the nature of inclusion by highlighting a few fundamentals.

<i>Inclusion is about</i>	<i>Inclusion is not about</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making provisions for all children and not excluding any • welcoming and celebrating diversity • improving quality of education for all • enabling all children dignity and confidence to learn • making all realise their basic right to education • selecting inclusive learning tasks and pedagogical practices • non exclusion • removing physical, social, attitudinal barriers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> about providing for some about considering diversities as a burden improving quality of education for some ridiculing children and having low expectations denying some groups this right to education selecting learning tasks and pedagogies not accessible to all only inclusion of disabled considering some children to be inferior to others and not capable of learning

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Important Websites

- <http://www.disabilityindia.org/instvis.cfm> (Disability India network)
- <http://www.nivh.org/>
- <http://www.nimhindia.org/>
- <http://www.nrcissi.org/events/nsdialogue/nsd.html>
- <http://ayjnihh.nic.in/>
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- <http://www.education.nic.in/>
- <http://education.nic.in/schsec.asp#iedc>
- www.disabilityindia.org/INSTORTH.cfm

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<http://www.ccdisabilities.nic.in/>
<http://www.niohonline.org/>
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