Educational Management of Children with Special Needs in the Context of Right to Education

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Abstract

According to a United Nations’ estimate, approximately 10 percent of the world’s population – i.e. nearly 650 million people live with some or the other forms of disability. 90 percent of children with disability worldwide do not attend schools. In the conflict areas, for every one child that is killed, three are injured and are permanently disabled. Children with disabilities are at 1.7 times greater risk of being subjected to some form of violence.

The issue of integrating persons with disability or special needs in the mainstream, in the social processes, has been a matter of concern in India, as well as in the whole world, from the time immemorial. In the context of education, this issue has always remained as a challenge for the policy makers, for the implementers, and for the all stakeholders. Govt. of India has put in various efforts to address the issue of mainstreaming education of children with special needs. However, the tremendous challenges of educational management for children with special needs in terms of strategies and its implementation in the school system are major concern despite all such efforts. This paper delineates the statutory provisions that the govt. gas put in place and then discusses the nuances of the various issues and concerns regarding educational management of children with special needs.

Keywords: children with Special Need, NPE 1986, Plan of Action – 1992, Rehabilitation Council of India, Integrated Education in India.

Introduction

The issue of integrating persons with disability or special needs in the mainstream, in the social processes, has been a matter of concern in India, as well as in the whole world, from the time immemorial. In the context of education, this issue has always remained as a challenge for the policy makers, for the implementers, and for the all stakeholders.

The National Policy on Education (N.P.E. 1986) brought the fundamental issue of equality centre-stage. The objective, as envisaged, was to integrate physically and mentally disabled people with the general community as equal partners, to prepare them for normal growth and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence.

The following measures were formulated to be taken in this regard:

a) Wherever possible, the education of children with motor handicaps and other mild handicaps would be common with that of others.
b) Special schools with hostels would be provided, as far as possible at district headquarters, for severely handicapped children.
c) Adequate arrangements would be made to give vocational training to disabled students.
d) Teachers’ training programmes would be reoriented, in particular for teachers of primary classes, to deal with the special difficulties of the handicapped children.
e) Voluntary effort for the education of children with disability would be encouraged in every possible manner.

Plan of Action 1992

The N.P.E. was followed by Plan of Action (P.O.A.) in 1992. The P.O.A. suggested a pragmatic placement principle for children with special needs. It was postulated that a child with disability could be educated in a general school only and not in special school. Even those children, who were admitted to special schools for training in plus curriculum skills, were recommended to be transferred to general schools once they acquired daily living skills.

Enabling Legislations

Some enabling legislations in this regard were enacted such as: Rehabilitation Council of India Act (R.C.I. Act), Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995, and National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Retardation and Multiple Disability, 1999.

This particular Act was a landmark legislation for the welfare of persons with autism, cerebral retardation and multiple disability. This Act sought to protect and promote the rights of persons who, within the disability sector, have been even more marginalised than others. Though the National Trust Act of 1999 does not directly deal with education of children with special needs, one of its thrust areas is to promote programmes that foster
inclusion and independence by creating a barrier-free environment, developing functional skills of the disabled and promoting self help groups.

Major Schemes
There are several schemes in place by the Govt. of India that deal with children with special needs (CWSN). These can be categorized into educational and supplementary schemes. The former includes the Integrated Education of Disabled Children (I.E.D.C.) and the latter includes the Scholarship as well as the Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/fitting of aids and appliances (A.D.I.P.).

Integrated Education of Disabled Children (I.E.D.C.)
This scheme provides educational opportunities for disabled children in common schools, to facilitate their retention in the school system and also to place in common schools, such children already placed in special schools after they acquire the communication and daily living skills at the functional level. The scheme provides for the following:

a) Actual expense on books and stationery up to Rs 400 per annum.
b) Actual expenses on uniforms up to Rs 200 per annum; transport allowance up to Rs 50 per month. If a disabled child resides in the school hostel within the school premises, no transportation charges would be admissible.
c) Reader allowance of Rs 50 per month in case of blind children up to Class V.
d) Escort allowance for severely disabled children with lower extremity disability at the rate of Rs 75 per month.
e) Actual cost of equipment subject to a maximum of Rs 2,000 per month for five years.

Besides these, it also provides for teachers’ salaries, facilities to students in terms of board and lodging allowance, readers allowance, transport allowance, escort allowance, cost of equipment, cost of uniform, cost of removal of architectural barriers, and provision of resource room, etc.

Supplementary Schemes
This includes Assistance to Disabled Persons for purchase/fitting of aids and appliances (A.D.I.P.) Scheme.

Initial attempts towards integrated education in India
Early attempts to include C.W.S.N. in regular schools were through Project Integrated Education (P.I.E.D.) and District Primary Programme (D.P.E.P.).

Project Integrated Education for the Disabled (P.I.E.D.)
This was the first pilot project on integrated education in India. Launched in 1987, P.I.E.D. was a joint venture of the Ministry of Human Resource Development and UNICEF. This project was implemented in one administrative block in each in M.P., Maharashtra, Nagaland, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Mizoram, Delhi Municipal Corporation and Baroda Municipal Corporation. In these 10 blocks, 6,000 children with special needs were integrated in regular schools.

District Primary Education Programme (D.P.E.P.)
The success of P.I.E.D. led to the inclusion of Integrated Education of the Disabled (I.E.D.) under the D.P.E.P. This was a scheme launched by the Government of India for the development of elementary education. At present, I.E.D. (in D.P.E.P.) is in existence in 242 districts in 18 states. In these states approximately 6.21 lakh children with special needs have been supposedly enrolled in regular schools with adequate support services.

The draft of “The Rights of Persons with Disability Bills 2012”, delineates the “Duty of Educational Institutions to Provide Inclusive Education to Students with Disabilities” as the following:

Appropriate governments and local authorities shall ensure that all educational institutions funded or recognized by them, provide inclusive education, and towards that end, inter alia:-

a) admit students with disabilities without discrimination and provide them education as also opportunities for sports, recreation and leisure activities on an equal basis with others,

b) make their building, campus and various facilities accessible to students with disabilities,

c) provide reasonable accommodation of the individual’s requirements,

d) provide necessary support – individualised and otherwise - in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion,

e) ensure that education to persons who are blind, deaf or deafblind is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual,

f) specific learning disabilities in children are detected at the earliest, and suitable pedagogical and other measures are taken to enable the children to overcome them, and

g) monitor participation, progress in terms of attainment levels, and completion of education, in respect of every student with disability.
The aforesaid draft further delineates the “Duty of Appropriate Governments and Local Authorities, to Promote and Facilitate Inclusive Education”, as the following:

In order to ensure inclusive education of students with disabilities, and to enable educational institutions funded or recognized by them to comply with the provisions of Section 21, appropriate governments and local authorities shall, *inter alia*, take the following measures:-

a) in surveys of children of school-going age, provide especially for identifying children with disabilities, and ascertaining their special needs and the extent to which these are being met,

b) establish an adequate no. of teacher training institutions, so that teachers equipped to teach students with various kinds of disabilities are available in adequate number,

c) train and employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and Braille,

d) train professionals and staff to support education of persons with disabilities at all levels,

e) establish an adequate no. of resource centres at appropriate locations to support educational institutions in their vicinity, by way of special teachers, teacher trainers, educational aids, equipment and material etc.

f) promote the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, including Braille and Sign Language,

g) promote the use of educational techniques and materials to support the education of persons with disabilities,

h) provide to students with benchmark disabilities, books, other learning material and appropriate assistive devices, free of cost, up to the age of 18 years, and either free or at affordable cost, thereafter,

i) provide transport facilities or transport allowance, and scholarships, in appropriate cases, to students with benchmark disabilities,

j) make suitable modifications in the curriculum and examination system to meet the needs of students with disabilities e.g. extra time for completion of examination paper, facility of scribe/amanuensis, exemption from second and third language courses, etc., and

k) promote research aimed at improvement of learning by students with disabilities and equalising educational opportunities for them.

**Status of Education of Children with Special Needs – A Survey**

A study undertaken to take stock of the status of education of children with special needs in district Gautam Buddha Nagar of Uttar Pradesh, revealed the following along with the data presented as the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Enrolment of children with disability</th>
<th>Total Primary</th>
<th>Total Upper primary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gautam Buddha Nagar</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Grade I: 68</td>
<td>Grade II: 78</td>
<td>Grade III: 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Grade I: 38</td>
<td>Grade II: 49</td>
<td>Grade III: 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Grade I: 6710</td>
<td>Grade II: 7337</td>
<td>Grade III: 8023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Grade I: 4762</td>
<td>Grade II: 5399</td>
<td>Grade III: 6146</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* DISE Data (2010-11), NUEPA, New Delhi

The status that emerged out of the survey of the schools in Gautam Buddha Nagar district of Uttar Pradesh, are as the following:

a) **Awareness of Teachers regarding CWSN:** Teachers in the schools were almost indifferent towards the education of children with special needs.

b) **Gap between enrolment and attendance:** The enrolment data obtained from the NUEPA document is different from what the actual number of students is there in the class.

**c) Lack of CWSN friendly facilities in schools:** Most of the schools, except a few, had no specific facility that would encourage children with special needs to attend their classes regularly.

d) **Lack of specific curriculum:** In There may be policy for designing specific curriculum for children with special needs, but at least the school environment has this element missing.

e) **Lack of proper teacher training system in place with respect to CWSN:** The present teacher training system is in such a position that there is no due emphasis on training future teachers for children with special needs.
f) Gap between policy and practices: Our policy makers keep on coming with brilliant policies, but when it comes to execution, everything gets diluted. Therefore, in the light of the new bill on Rights of Children with special needs to education 2012, the most important aspect of it would be to monitor how honestly and effectively the act is implemented. Otherwise, the issue will meet the same fate as has been happening in the past and the inclusion of children with special needs in the mainstream and their empowerment for a better life will remain a dream only.

References


