



UNIT 9 EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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9.0 INTRODUCTION

As a teacher, you have been teaching children with varying abilities. You would have also taught children having special needs. Some children have special needs due to disabilities that are visible such as limbs affected as in the case of birth



defects, poliomyelitis or due to accidents, some may be having blindness or low vision and some with hearing loss. There are some children with disabilities that are invisible such as intellectual disability (earlier known as mental retardation) and some with specific learning disabilities. You are aware that Education is the fundamental right of all children in our country. In addition, in our country, there is legislation for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities known as Persons with disabilities (equal opportunities, protection of rights and full participation) Act (P.D Act, 1995). Currently, the Act is being revised. The Act further emphasizes the Right to Education. Children with special needs (CWSN), as noted in SarvaSikshaAbhiyan (SSA) include all these children with disabilities to provide appropriate education to them. In this Unit we will see the learning characteristics of such children, curricular adaptations and teaching learning materials, role of Information and communication technology (ICT) and various provisions made for inclusion of children with special needs. Despite all these arrangements, there may be children with severe disabilities who may not be able to reach the schools. As education is their right, it is only appropriate that the education reaches their door step. Therefore, we will also discuss the arrangements made under home based instructions for such children in this unit.

9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- Narrate the learning characteristics of CWSN
- Discuss the educational system and its implications on CWSN
- Demonstrate skills in adapting curriculum to meet the needs of CWSN
- Narrate the facilities in school, cluster, block, district and state levels
- Prepare and /or use suitable teaching learning material (TLM) and manage classes having CWSN
- Demonstrate understanding of home based education/instruction

9.2 EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

As a teacher, you will be used to a class having over 35 children and you transact the lesson with considerable ease. This is because the children of a given age and class generally have ability levels and potentials within a certain range. When you have a CWSN in your class, he/she is likely to have certain needs that have to be addressed. The needs will vary from child to child depending on the disability he has. For example, a child with hearing impairment may need to have sufficient light to see the board or visuals and the teacher should talk clearly allowing him



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to look at her face so that he can lip read. On the other hand, a blind child will need along with verbal instructions, tactile material that he can touch and learn when the teacher uses visuals. A child with mental retardation will need concrete material and repeated instructions to understand a concept. A child with motor disabilities will need physical support depending on the need. We will now see how you will identify and address the individual needs of such children in your class.

9.2.1 LEARNING CHARACTERISTICS OF CWSN

All children are not alike and there can be varied strengths and needs among children. Such an understanding is a step towards helping others as well as seeking help in an inclusive class room. This is a necessary skill for adult living, as human beings are interdependent and yet independent. Such an understanding early in life promotes values to be a good citizen. This leads to positive interdependence.

A child with motor disability involving his hands and legs/feet will learn like any other child in the class room. He will have difficulty in writing and manipulation of objects if hands are affected, difficulty in moving if legs are affected. Such children will need suitable support with the aids and appliances to compensate for their disability.

A child with hearing impairment tends to learn predominantly using his vision and to some extent, his tactile/kinesthetic sense. Remember that the child with hearing impairment is like other students in the class except that he has just the faculty of hearing affected in him. He does not speak because he does not hear. Helping the child look at the face of the person who is talking help them lip read. Use of chalk board and charts and other visuals to teach help them learn in the regular class room. Encourage the child to wear the prescribed hearing aid all the time. If he does not have one, insist on getting assessed by the team that certifies and provides the aid free of cost. This is a provision of the government and it is our duty to ensure that every child has his hearing tested and the necessary support provided.

Legally, visual impairment includes blindness and low vision. A child who is totally blind learns using his hearing and tactile/kinesthetic senses. He also uses the sense of smell more than a sighted person does. For instance, if you enter the class, he will know your presence before you speak, by the perfume you wear every day! A child with low vision wears specially prescribed glasses and reads using his available vision. However, he will need large print and contrast background. Assessing the child's needs and suitably making arrangements in the class will lead to inclusion of the child.

Specific learning disability (SLD) is a condition, though not covered by the P.D. Act, in which children exhibit poor academic performance though they do not



have any intellectual or other disabilities. Children with SLD have difficulty in processing information due to a neurological condition and exhibit symptoms such as difficulty in reading (dyslexia), difficulty in writing (dysgraphia) and difficulty in doing mathematical calculations (dyscalculia). Some exhibit problems related to attention, memory, reasoning and organizing themselves. Careful assessment and programme planning help them overcome their learning problems to a great extent.

A child with developmental disabilities such as intellectual disability (mental retardation), autism, cerebral palsy or multiple disabilities will have specific learning characteristics. Children with intellectual disability will be slow to learn and will have limited capacity to absorb what is taught. They will have difficulty in understanding abstract concepts. A child with cerebral palsy will be able to learn but may have difficulty in coordination, mobility and speech. If he has intellectual disability also, he may exhibit the learning characteristics of that also. Children with Autism will have difficulty in social relationship and communicating with others. They also are likely to have restricted interests and need to be taught with proper understanding. Some of them are likely to have intellectual disability also which further compounds the challenge. Multiple disabilities as the name indicates, is a combination of two or more disabilities and need individually planned educational programmes.

9.2.2 EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND THE NEEDS OF CWSN

As a teacher you are aware of our educational systems. You may be working in a school having affiliation to Central Board or respective State Board of education. Whichever is the system followed, children have to learn a set number of subjects up to class ten. Usually children learn three languages, one of them being the medium of instruction. We have the formative and summative evaluations in schools. Formative evaluations are done every quarter in addition to class tests and summative evaluation is done at the end of the year. In early years, these evaluations had a major role in deciding on promotion of children to the next class. As you are aware, currently the system of ‘automatic promotion’ and no retention policy is in place. Activity based learning and Continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE) are exercised in most schools, especially the schools governed by the Central Board of secondary Education (CBSE).

In this given situation, many a time children with disabilities, especially those having mild intellectual disability or specific learning disability tend to go unnoticed. For instance, you may find such children attending class VIII but having the performance of class II or III in some subjects. It is important to identify them early and provide the right support early in their lives so that the problem does not get further compounded. You will agree that low self esteem due to disability, lack of peer approval or sometimes even the teacher ignoring the child leaves him with a permanent scar in his mind thus damaging his



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personality forever. You as a teacher, have a significant role to play in identifying the child's problem and providing his such support by which the class mates also show understanding and support to him.

Appropriate aids and appliances such as Braille for students with blindness, hearing aids for those with hearing impairment and mobility aids (such as walker, crutches, wheel chair, calipers) and writing aid (such as adapted pencils and note books) for those with motor and physical disabilities are provided to meet the challenges.

Further, to meet the challenges, government at Central and state levels have introduced certain benefits and concessions to children with disabilities. Some examples include, a child with blindness or learning disability can have a person assigned to write exam for him as he/she verbally says the answer. They are also given additional time of 30 minutes in the three hour examinations. A child with hearing loss may not do the second/third language and the subject is substituted with another subject.

**Check your progress 1**

1. Name any four disabilities that you are likely to come across in your class?

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2. Narrate the challenges in our educational system that compounds the problem of CWSN.

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9.3 CURRICULAR ADAPTATIONS

A good curriculum should provide knowledge, skills and values that impacts the students at National and International levels of understanding. When we talk of Special Education, it is time to look beyond just ensuring access to education as an end point, and focus on improving the quality of education. A good curriculum is the key to achieving quality in education. Educational reforms is not just the concern of the teacher alone, but also the policy makers, media and the citizens as such, because education makes us the kind of citizens that we are. Curriculum decisions are founded on the beliefs and values regarding the purpose of education



and the benefits of its outcome. Every curriculum aims at realizing the fullest potentials of the students and helping them become productive and contributing members of the society. When we look at children with disabilities, their abilities and needs are varied, demanding adaptation in curriculum content and transaction without compromising on the objectives and learning outcomes.

9.3.1 NEED FOR CURRICULAR ADAPTATION

“Curriculum development is the deliberate process whereby an individual or a team identifies educational aims and objectives for particular learners, designs an appropriate curriculum, implements curriculum with the learners and improves it in the light of an evaluation of its effects and effectiveness”

- A dictionary of Education (1981)

(source:<http://www.library.ualberta.ca/subject/education>)

The key points noted in the definition are:

- learner group
- the curriculum developers
- aim towards ‘appropriate’ curriculum
- implementation
- evaluation
- improvement of the curriculum

It reflects that curriculum development is an ongoing process requiring improvement based on effects/effectiveness with the changes in trends. Curriculum development is modified with the aim to provide ‘the best’ to the students.

Students have limited interest in learning things that they do not understand or that the content seems irrelevant for them. This creates not only lack of motivation in students but also challenging behaviours due to boredom or frustration. If the teacher makes the content more meaningful to the student his interest level will increase and the frustration will reduce. To do this the curriculum and the teaching method need to be modified. Another challenge the teacher faces in the inclusive set up is to prepare the child for examinations which follow a rigid pattern. Adaptations in curriculum and evaluation system are essential for successful inclusion of children with disabilities in regular schools.

9.3.2 ADAPTATION OF CURRICULUM TO MEET THE NEEDS OF CWSN

Content adaptation: Generally adaptation includes *accommodations* and *modifications*.



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Accommodations refer to changes in input and output processes in teaching and learning. It does not change the task content or the evaluation system. Accommodation may include for example alternative teaching modes such as learning by doing, video tape, talking book, Braille and so on while the other children learn from the conventional teaching.

Modifications refer to changes in the content or standards itself. For example, modification may mean less content to learn, substitution of content with another, different objectives to achieve or different evaluation pattern. A student who is deaf and is allowed to substitute second language with another work experience or a different course is a modification in curriculum.

Curricular Adaptation - omission, substitution, expansion:

We have discussed that curricular adaptation demands accommodation and modification. This involves various sub steps including modification, substitution or omission of content depending on the need. Let us see this in detail.

Omission refers to removal of certain content areas from the curriculum. For example, the boards of education in central and state levels have made concessions for students with disabilities. As we have the three language policy in education in our country which includes the medium of instruction, second language and third language in the curriculum, students with hearing impairment and those with specific learning disabilities have difficulty learning all the three languages. The Boards of secondary education has permitted them to drop a language. Such children need not do the third language.

There are also lessons within the curriculum which are omitted such as colour concepts for blind children or music for deaf children.

Substitution of content area is carried out when one content area is replaced by another. In the example under omission we saw that second language is omitted for deaf children. In some boards of education, it is replaced by a subject involving computer application, work experience and so on. This is substitution of the content.

For children with motor disabilities, physical education is substituted by physiotherapy or any other suitable co curricular activity like music.

Expansion is elaborating the curriculum content to help the child understand the concept. Let us consider teaching the content area in math that involves money concept to a child with mental retardation. While all other children in the class may do the sum written in their note book, the child with mental retardation may need concrete examples with real money and shopping experience to understand the concept better. Here, the teacher expands the content to give him the real life experience and then follow up with the work sheets involving sums on money concept.



Flexibility in time for learning

Another important aspect of adaptation is the time. The curriculum for each academic year is programmed so strictly that the conduct of the classes and the formative and summative evaluation are planned well ahead of time, in fact, even before the academic year begins and the schedule is meticulously followed. In an inclusive class room where there are children with varying abilities and needs, time allocation for activities also need to be considered for modification. Some children with intellectual disabilities need extra time to learn as they learn at their own pace. Some children with disabilities such as visual impairment and Specific learning disabilities need additional time to do the examination. As mentioned earlier, the Board of education for class X and class XII provide additional 30 minutes during examination for such children.

Material adaptation: As you are aware, a wide variety of materials are used in schools which include print material such as books, work sheets and note books and non print material such as globes, science lab apparatus, models and videos. Depending on the type and extent of disability, the decision on adaptations is to be made. Keeping the standardized curriculum as the index the adaptation may be done in terms of content substitution or content enhancement to suit the need of children with specific disabilities in the class. Substitution refers to omitting a content area and adding another content area in its place. Enhancement refers to use of material and strategies to increase comprehension and retention of learnt content over time. Both of these help in optimum learning in the student with disability.

9.3.3 ADAPTATION OF EVALUATION METHODS FOR CWSN

Testing and evaluation need to be adapted to suit the child with disability. These adaptation may be in the test construction (objective/subjective), test administration time (extra time if needed), method of response (oral /written, provision of a scribe to write the exam), seating arrangement during testing (to have enough light for a child with low vision), grading procedures and so on.

Assessment is part and parcel of teaching learning process. The assessment methods do not differ substantially as students are assessed on the content that is meaningful to them as per the prescribed curriculum. However, in the rigid general educational environment the student is assessed on what he achieves independently under testing conditions (such as prescribed tests and examinations). Though it is a standard practice, for children with disabilities objective assessment is best done under instructional conditions as well as in natural environment. Information so gathered, helps the teacher to make informed decision on what needs to be adapted for the child for optimum learning. Determining difficulty levels is best done when the child is continuously assessed



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in and out of class room by varied assessment methods. Formal test may be one part of assessment. Criterion based assessment, ecological assessment, observation, anecdotal records, parent appraisal and self evaluation by the student can all contribute to decision making on determining difficulty levels. Consistency in the correct or incorrect responses from the student is a major clue to the teacher on deciding on adaptation. Curriculum based assessment/measurement is popular in deciding placement and curriculum adaptation for students with disabilities.

9.4 FACILITIES TO CATER TO LEARNING NEEDS OF CWSN

As mentioned earlier, government has made provision to meet the learning needs of children which includes, establishment of special and inclusive schools, home based instructions, curricular and instructional adaptation, examination provisions and above all suitable human resources to meet the educational challenges of CWSN.

9.4.1 AT SCHOOL, CLUSTER, BLOCK, DISTRICT, STATE AND NATIONAL

LEVELS,

The eleventh five year plan (2007 – 2012) of government has the following objectives for education of all children which include CWSN:

- Reduce dropout rates of children from elementary school from 52.2% in 2003-04 to 20% by 2011-12
- Develop minimum standards of educational attainment in elementary school, and by regular testing monitor effectiveness of education to ensure quality
- Increase literacy rate for persons of age 7 years or above to 85%
- Lower gender gap in literacy to 10 percentage point
- Increase the percentage of each cohort going to higher education from the present 10% to 15% by the end of the plan.

To realize the objectives, programmes are developed to be carried out at school, block, district, state and national levels. This very course under NIOS is one such effort to prepare teachers to include children with disabilities in regular schools. Sarvasikshaabhiyan (SSA), a centrally sponsored scheme implemented by all states is another mega project of the Government of India which aims to ensure education to all children in the country. The SSA focuses on education of CWSN by engaging a large number of special educators and training them to be effective teachers. Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) which regulates and



ensures standard and quality of rehabilitation professionals generates human resources in special education through organizations/universities through out the country. Such teachers are engaged by SSA to reach CWSN in schools at villages, with systematic monitoring at block, district and state levels. Block resource centers (BRCs) are established in some states to provide resource materials and professional support to the needed schools in the block. The resource teachers reach a number of schools periodically through itinerant model of training and teach the children by coordinating with the teachers in the schools. It is expected that such a system will result in reaching CWSN with education all over the country.

9.4.2 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY

In many schools in rural and urban areas, children with mild disabilities do get admission to the school but tend to drop out/get rejected as the teachers find him not learning like the other children. The teachers in the regular schools are not trained to include such children and therefore, they tend to inform the parents to refer the child for special supports. In some occasions, the children stay in regular school, but are rejected from elementary classes as the academic content of the curriculum increases. In some places, the regular schools have trained teachers who understand disabilities and the rejection rate is relatively less. But such schools are predominantly private schools. The results of current effort of SSA as mentioned above is likely bring positive change and more CWSN included in schools. Children with severe/profound disabilities usually require therapeutic and/or medical support in early years. Home based instruction is generally found viable for such children.



Check your progress 2

3. Narrate the types of adaptations you can make in the curriculum

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4. What are the difficulties children with special needs face in inclusive education setup?

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9.5 INCLUSIVE CLASS ROOMS

Systematically done, it is possible to include the children in regular classes. The earlier the efforts are taken towards inclusion, the better the results will be. It is ideal to have resource rooms in every elementary school with a competent resource teacher. If organising a resource room is difficult, you can think of including the CWSN with the available resources. There are a few key points to be considered for successful inclusion. This includes having updated profile of the child with special needs, concern of the class teacher about the child's learning abilities parental concerns and competencies of the teacher.

9.5.1 CLASS ROOM ADJUSTMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Some of the points to consider for class room adjustment and management include

- Planning for teaching
- Coordination between the class teacher and parents, resource teacher and others depending on the needs of the child
- Teaching based on individual needs
- Teaching in groups
- Material requirement
- documentation systems

One of the best resources you have as a teacher is the huge human resource in the form of students in class. Use them effectively by adopting peer tutoring and cooperative learning techniques.

Kagan (1994) defines cooperative learning as a type of structured peer interaction emphasizing positive human relationships, collaboration between peers, active learning, academic achievement, equal participation, and equal status of students in the classroom. It can be used to teach any subjects in the curriculum

Peer tutoring is a strategy that can be used with students with a wide range of disabilities and at all grade levels. However, successful implementation necessitates training all students in the process and roles of peer tutoring. Children with disabilities, especially those with mental retardation require individualized educational programming and teaching. In a regular class, the teacher is empowered with a great number of human resources in the form of students. A smart teacher will effectively use them as peer tutors in helping students with disabilities learn. By this, not only her work load is reduced, but also the children with and without disabilities benefit. A sense of responsibility towards weaker students is developed in children without disabilities and seeking help and respecting the class mate for helping them develops in children with disabilities.



9.5.2 USE OF SUITABLE TEACHING LEARNING MATERIAL (TLM) AND INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

When we work with children with disabilities, selection and use of TLM needs special care and consideration as we as teachers have to compensate for their disability by use of the aids and appliance as well as transact the curriculum using the material in such a manner that they learn the concepts well. The selection of teaching materials is an important component of the teaching process. After procedures and techniques of teaching programme have been determined, it is necessary to either select, adapt or construct the teaching materials that will be used to teach a task.

Points to consider while selecting TLM

- **Age appropriate** – For example, a child with intellectual disability aged 10 years with a mental ability matching that of 5 year old children, should have material suitable to his age rather than toys meant for five year olds.
- **Active participation** –the student should be able to use the material, explore and learn.
- **Creative use** – should be versatile, allowing for varied usage creatively
- **Availability** - should be easily available, affordable and /or accessible if the student has to buy the material for extended home training
- **Level appropriate** – the material should suit the level of functioning of the child with MR so that the learning is meaningful to him
- **Transfer of training** – use of the material should allow the child to easily generalize the concept learnt to other contexts and situations

Information and communication technology:

You will agree that children of present generation is technology savvy as compared to the older generation. Communication with any one anywhere any time is now easy because of the technological advances. At the touch of a button many things are accomplished. Use of aids and appliances for CWSN and teaching using technology is also in vogue now. Many schools have computer labs with adaptations for CWSN. Talking books and computers for children who are blind, sophisticated wheel chairs and educational soft wares are on the increase in recent days.

9.6 HOME BASED EDUCATION

As we mentioned earlier, some of the children with severe/multiple disabilities may have difficulties will have difficulty in reaching the school. As education is



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a fundamental right of every child in our country, appropriate education should reach these children also. Hence, these children are educated at home.

9.6.1 CONCEPT

Though the educational facilities are on the increase, education of CWSN pose many challenges. Some children have such severe disabilities with complex conditions that they cannot reach the school to learn. In remote rural, tribal or mountain terrains of our country a CWSN reaching a school may not be possible. In some remote places schools may be too far for the CWSN to access. In such situations, education has to reach the child. Training the family members to teach the child is one way of ensuring education to these children. Hence home based education is one of the methods to educate children who are unable to reach the school.

9.6.2 PROCEDURE FOR HOME BASED EDUCATION

A special educator, also known as itinerant teacher, generally visits the home of the student and appraises the child and the environment in which he lives. The family and the teacher decide on the periodicity of the visit of the teacher and the suitable time. After a detailed assessment, an educational plan is developed with suitable goals and objectives. Teaching strategies are taught through demonstration by the teacher to the family member who is identified as a trainer in the family. Systematic records are maintained by the teacher. Some children will require therapy for speech and motor aspects and it will be coordinated by the itinerant teacher. As the child improves, next level programme is planned.



Check your progress 3

5. What are the points to consider while selecting TLM?

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6. Home based education is suitable for whom?

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9.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed the educational needs and challenges of children



with special needs, particularly those with disabilities. Children with disabilities have specific needs based on the type and severity of disabilities. Children with vision impairment, hearing impairment, locomotor disabilities, mental retardation or specific learning disabilities have to be addressed by the teacher in an inclusive class room based on their needs. Educational arrangements at national, state, district, Block and school levels are made by the government to include children with disabilities.

The curriculum in our country is regulated by Central and State boards of education with built in evaluation systems. However, no retention policy helps children get promoted to next level without ensuring competency in a given level. This is true with CWSN also. To do justice to CWSN the teacher needs to adapt the curriculum, instructional methods, use appropriate teaching learning material and be aware and use the evaluation provisions made by the government to specific disabilities. The adaptations include addition, deletion, modification and expansion of curriculum based on the need of the child. Teachers can use the peer groups effectively for helping children.

Children who cannot reach the school due to severe disabilities or living in remote regions are provided home based education. In this system the teacher reaches the home of the child and provides appropriate education.

9.8 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Blindness, low vision, hearing impairment, locomotor disabilities, intellectual disability, developmental disability including autism, cerebral palsy, specific learning disability (any four)
2. no retention policy, three language policy, large number of children in each class, (add more from your experience)
3. accommodation, modification, omission, substitution, expansion
4. children get admission to the school but tend to drop out/get rejected as the teachers find him not learning like the other children. The teachers in the regular schools are not trained to include such children and therefore, they tend to inform the parents to refer the child for special supports. The children stay in regular school, but are rejected from elementary classes as the academic content of the curriculum increases.
5. Age appropriate, Active participation ,Creative use, Availability, Level appropriate, Transfer of training.
6. Children with severe/multiple disabilities and those who have no access to schools.



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9.9 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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9.10 UNIT END EXERCISES

1. Select a lesson from the text book of the subject you teach in your school. Adapt the lesson to teach students who have the following special needs - blindness, hearing impairment, intellectual disability.
2. Compile the provisions made for CWSN by the government educational board to which your school belongs.
3. Prepare a game using which you can have all children in your class including the CWSN can be involved in playing
4. Plan a project and use cooperative learning to carry out the project.