



## **“Special Edition” for International Day of Persons with Disabilities”**

### **Editorial**

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#### **Revisiting Pedagogical Processes for Learners with Disabilities: COVID19 and Beyond**

In the training of an educator and more so in the development of a special educator there are major four aspects that are required. Firstly of all a teacher, a facilitator, an educator needs to understand oneself and gain insight into ones abilities, capabilities, aspirations, skill sets present and the possible skill sets to develop, the background baggage that I the special educator bring with me because of my socialisation and cultural background. The special educator also needs to have a good understanding of one’s limitations as well as biases. For if I do not understand my biases, how will I be able to work towards removing them or even limiting the affect of my biases when I am trying to teaching the young learners with special needs in my care. Secondly as a special educator or any other rehabilitation professional, before one can began the learning-teaching processes , one needs to understand ones students special needs. The special needs/ disability of the learner do not stand alone, they are further impacted by the psycho-social-cultural-economic background of the child and hence as a professional attempting to elicit the best for the child with disability, one needs to a constant learner and must keep updating ones knowledge of disability, special needs and all related issues. One may have a very good understanding about one’s self and also of the learners with special needs, but however may not have a good understanding of the pedagogical skills of teaching and facilitating learning in the child. Further it is not only having the good understanding of the pedagogical skills but also the skill of being able to use them in the learning-teaching process of eliciting the best from the child with disability. Above all a special educator as well as other rehabilitation professionals need to creative and reflective in their approach to the instructional processes in the education system. As all effective rehabilitation professionals are lifelong learners, they are agents of change. Those Special educators and other rehabilitation professionals who continuously update have shown to be able to get the best out of their students.

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The school and higher education system may not be able to remove the impairment which causes the disability in the learner; however it does work towards removing or atleast limiting the handicapping conditions and situations which cause the disability. For example not being able to reach from place to another independently due to physical disability is the handicapping situation, but having an accessible architecture and transport system reduces the handicapping situation. Similarly have a different way of communication and output such as a scribe or recording of the answers or using variety of assessment process rather than only be examined by writing an examination, reduces the handicapping situation and conditions. So as part of the education system, the emphasis is to be to provide learning in such a way that which is best for the child.

The policies of the country have indicated the importance of inclusive education. NEP2020 has also emphasised that all children have the right to study together, in a mainstream inclusive setup. However as a trained special educator, it becomes imperative for them to facilitate the education system to understand that different children with disabilities have different characterises and that different learners have different ways of learning. Hence as a special educator, we know that a child with SLD who has average or above average intelligence and is a pictorial learner learns better when the same information is presented in a number of different ways. This child does not like repetition tasks and tends to get bored or frustrated and may do activities which are distracting or irritating for the teacher and the class. While a child with intellectual disabilities learns better when a detailed task analysis is done and this child prefers repetitive activities. While a child with characteristics of Autism and who is on the Autism Spectrum finds it comfortable to learn when information is provided in clear, structured formats. Hence it is not only important to know the characteristics of each individual learner with disability and special needs but also educational strategies and implications. For a teacher to be able to apply those educational strategies it also important that there is clear understanding of why a particular strategy works better for a particular child with a particular disability and special needs.

As special educator and rehabilitation professional, especially if working in an mainstream inclusive setup, it becomes important to be able to disseminate to the regular classroom teachers and the school administration that the instructional adaptations of each and every child with special needs, need not always be in the form of modifications. They may also be in the form of accommodations as well. In fact with the exception of learners with ID or few of the learners with Autism and also having lower IQs, majority of the learners with disabilities have average or above average intelligence. Hence the question which arises is as to why the level of learning should be lowered for them. If we are doing modification of the subject content then we are lowering the level of subject content and instructional levels as well as the assessment levels of the teaching learning processes. In other words modification is being done.

However if we as teachers in particular and the education system in general are just using other pedagogical learner centred and learner centric methods to teach the same subject content and using a variety of different methods for assessments of the learning then we are not focusing on lowering

the levels instructions, teaching and assessment. In this case curricular adaptation is being done in the form of accommodation.

Hence adaptations may be done either by modification or by accommodation. In modification form of curricular adaptation the level of conceptual **clarity** with relation to the curriculum content which has been considered as standard for that peer level is lowered for this child. The appropriate assessment is done but of the lower level of learning that has been provided or possible for this child. Yet learning has taken place in the student, but of a lower level of conceptual clarity as compared to the rest of the peer group.

While in the case of accommodation as a form of curricular adaptation the level of conceptual **clarity** with relation to the curriculum content which has been considered as standard for that peer level is remains the same for this child also. Only the pedagogical means of developing that conceptual clarity will vary.

COVID19 has created unforeseen situations, the influence of some of these is here to stay for a very long time or may become a part of the, 'new normal', for all time to come. One of the biggest learning and development during this time has been the use of technology in all spears of life and also in the area of education. One does understand the disadvantages of digital learning, however the digital platform has also taken us into the homes of our learners with disabilities and special needs and the education system and its teachers have been able to form better networking with the parents and families of these children. The education system and the families have in many places been able to work as an unit to facilitate learning of the children with special needs in particular and the other children in general. Very many creative & innovative use of e-learning has been done even for children with special needs. Having said that, one does know that there are limitations to using elearning and certain things cannot be done even where the families are very responsive. However, as experts in the field of disability, it is important that we are able to retain the best strategies that one found and developed skill of using to teach through e-learning. During these difficult times, there has been a lot of e-resources access that effective learning centers, schools, colleges and universities across the globe have made available without any cost. If these materials are chosen effectively, they can become an advantage to the teacher and to the taught.

Following are some of the statistics from different documents and researches:

- Persons with disabilities are more likely to be out of school or to leave school before completing primary or secondary education.
- 35% to 40% among children with mild or moderate impairments are out of school in India. (Global Education Monitoring, Report UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016).

- 28.23% children with special needs aged 6-13 years, are out of school (National Sample Survey of Estimation of Out-of-School Children in the Age 6-13 in India, EdCIL(India) Limited supported by MHRD, GOI, 2014).
- The All India Survey of Higher Education 2016-17 revealed that the representation of students with disabilities in higher education institutions is only 0.002%. Out of this 0.002% there were only 23.7% girl students. (National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People, 2005).
- 27% children with disabilities never attended any educational institution as opposed to the overall figure of 17%. (UNESCO State of the Education Report for India: Children with Disabilities, 2019)
- A fair proportion of the population of persons with disabilities have been deprived of the right to elementary education. Only 13% complete secondary education and nearly 8.5% among the disabled literates are graduates. (Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, 2016).

Often the education and family system are unable to co-ordinate together for the education and life skill learning of the child with disabilities. The various factors which prevent the education of the child with disability and special needs are well documented. One also understands that even simple digital devices are not present in large percentages of the homes. However, technology does facilitate the best professionals to reach out to a very large percentage of other professionals and family members of the child with special needs. Through CBR and other initiatives, it is for the professionals to work imaginatively and use technology for sensitization, awareness creation, motivation, skill development at all levels.

We as professionals in the field of disability and rehabilitation also are faced with challenge of demystification of terminology and the strategies. Often the family members of the child, professionals from allied fields are unable to lend support to us the professional from the field of disability because the terms and processes of our instructional strategies and others are mystified. Somewhere is also the unwarranted fear of that too much of simplification of the strategies that we have learnt will lead to a reduction in our position as special educators and other rehabilitation professionals. It is actually a means of delegation of some of our 'easier' work to other professionals and family members so we can work at a higher level of educational and other instructional spaces.

We as professionals are also faced with the issue and concern of the inappropriate use of terminology. As we move towards the new normal, it is important that we become agents of change for the appropriate usage of the correct terminologies.

<b>Not to be use now</b>	Appropriate to use	Reason
Crippled, handicapped, disabled person	People with disabilities	The person is more important than the disability
Deaf and mute, deaf and dumb	Person with deafness, person who is hard of hearing	The person is more important than the disability
Mentally retarded, mentally subnormal, moron, invalid, idiot, cretin	Person with intellectual disability Person with developmental disability Person with specific learning disability	
Wheelchair bond, wheelchair confined, wheelchair restricted, wheel chair	Person who uses a wheelchair	
dependent		
Paraplegic	Person with paraplegia	
The blind	Person who is blind Person with blindness Person with visual Impairment	
Autistic child	Child with Autism	
Mentally ill, insane, lunatic, mad, mental patient	Person with mental illness	
Dwarf, Midget	Person with short stature	
Has a Birth defect	Person with congenital disability	
Slow learner	Person with intellectual disability Person with learning difficulties Person with Specific learning disabilities	Is the person learning slowly always or the strategies used for learning-teaching process are incorrect??? The system can also be "slow/inappropriate" in its strategies.

Ultimately why are the Acts and Policies gradually moving towards inclusion? Some of the major reasons include the following

1. India as signatory to International Agreements and treaties
2. There is an international movement towards climate of human rights against discrimination and appreciation of diversity
3. Increased recognition of the shift in paradigm from welfare to rights perspectives of persons with disabilities.
4. With increasing contribution of persons with disabilities has increased the richness of the social fabric.
5. Constitution of Indian domestic laws subsequent to UNCRPD
6. Development of Indian Acts and policies such as RPWD Act 2016, NEP2020
7. It leads to reduction in isolation and prejudice and increasing empathy and understanding 8. Morally correct to provide equitable opportunities to all
9. Leads to improved international image of a nation.

In this special issue of the “Special Edition” for International Day of Persons with Disabilities” ‘INTERNATIONAL E-JOURNAL OF DISABILITY STUDIES, SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATION’

We have attempted to compile together researches from the time of the pandemic.

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