

# **Education for the Challenged Children : Trends and Innovation in East Khasi Hills District of Meghalaya**

DR SUMANA PAUL

## **Introduction**

The whole world is progressing towards globalisation and India is no exception to it. However, we still neglect the core issues of our country; the children with disability and their inclusion in the normal school curriculum. When significant progress has been made in many countries like USA, UK towards the issue concerned, we cannot afford to be left behind.

In every democratic society like India, every child has the right to education, the right to receive help in learning, to the limits of the capacity whether it is great or small. All children are given equal opportunity to learn whether they are average, bright, dull, retarded, blind, crippled, etc. Equality of opportunity denotes two things—equality of access to school education and equality of success in school. In every classroom there are some individuals who by virtue of their disabilities require more relevant or appropriate instruction. A domain of education has been constructed to satisfy learning requirements. The foremost goal of special education is finding and capitalising the children's special abilities. The National Policy on Education 1986 has made a significant contribution towards developing educational opportunity for the disabled children.

Raising a mentally handicapped child in a family involves many difficulties and problems to the parents and other family members. Because of these difficulties and problems, the family functioning in such families gets affected.

Education of disabled children has basic concepts and goals in common with the education of all children. The children with visual impairment, hearing impairment, mentally retarded and orthopedically handicapped have feelings, drives, emotions and motives common to normal children in general. Along with those common characteristics there are specific characteristics that warrant special services in their educational programmes. It can be

provided either in regular classroom or special classes within the regular school and in special schools to strengthen their abilities and grow according to their potentialities. Such special services or special education may vary depending upon the type of disabilities.

Thus, different categories of disabled children require different types of educational modifications. A teacher with multi-talents will provide well-designed educational programme based on the nature, type and degree of disability to circumvent their disabilities and capitalise their abilities.

The international move towards inclusion of special needs children into mainstreaming classrooms rather than educating them in an isolated environment has been a main concern raising, issues and interest for educators, policy-makers and researchers in recent times. The role of teachers in the successful implementation of inclusive education cannot be emphasised enough.

Therefore, the present study was conducted to understand the different aspects pertaining to children with disability as well as the views of the teachers and parents concerning the same.

After careful scrutiny of the relevant literature available a need was felt for the development of relevant tools for the study of causative factors of disability, problems faced by children with disability, existing facilities for them in special schools and the views of teachers and parents on inclusive education.

Necessary information was collected using all the tools mentioned earlier. The data thus collected was summarised and analysed with the help of means and then subjected to suitable statistical techniques.

Studies of this nature are of great help in planning intervention programmes and need based parent education programmes. The policy makers can also make use of the results of the present study while developing support systems.

### **Implication of the Study**

The present study sheds some light on the problems faced by children with disabilities in different walks of life. The research also concentrated on the facilities available for the education of children with disabilities in special schools. It has also identified awareness, attitude and competencies of special and normal school teachers to deal with children with disability. Finally, the study was an attempt to throw light on the views of the parents and teachers of both disabled and non-disabled children on inclusive education.

It offers hope to those schools ready to implement inclusive education. The study would also encourage the school authorities and the educational bodies to take initiatives in establishing schools providing inclusive education. The role of teachers is seen as being central to the successful implementation of inclusive education.

It is also expected that the study would lead the readers to value and respect the roles and responsibilities of teachers, parents and other stakeholders in the field of education and maintain a positive attitude towards special children and inclusion. For the teachers too this study would create awareness in them of the challenging task facing them. They must understand the most common types of learning and physical disabilities and the typical symptoms of manifestation. They must also understand that there are individual differences among students with learning disabilities. The teachers must understand how to implement inclusive practices, by teaching techniques such as hands-on activities, group work, and computer based learning for all students. They must also understand the process of collaboration and team teaching with other teacher.

On the whole, the present study gives better insight for policy planning, development and implementation of educational programmes for the disabled. It is a daunting task but a hopeful one for all the children who have a right to education.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Keeping the above discussions in mind, the statement of the problem is given as follows.

“Education for the challenged children: Trends and Innovation in East Khasi Hills District of Meghalaya”

### **Objective of the study**

The present study was conducted with objectives to study the causative factors of disabilities, to study the general problems of challenged children as well as to know about the existing educational facilities for challenged children. The study also aimed to understand the attitude of parents and teachers towards inclusive education.

### **Methodology**

The methodology followed in the study comprised construction of research tools, sampling procedures, data collection and statistical techniques used in the study.

### **Sample of the study**

The area of the study comprised Shillong and for the purpose of the study, the investigator selected randomly five special schools providing services to children with disability.

Some of these schools were very cooperative and provided their support towards the study by providing necessary information as per the requirement.

The study covered a total number of 305 special children between the age-group 5 and 18 years where the ratio of male is higher compared to female. Also, most of the children in the sample happened to belong to middle class families and very few children sampled are from high economic profile families.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

The data was analysed based on an innovative mixed approach of combining both quantitative and qualitative analysis of available data.

The data collected from teachers and parents were analysed with the help of Mean, SD and 'CR' test techniques of statistics. The tables exhibit Mean value, SD and CR of each of the variable of the respondents towards inclusive education.

### **Findings of the study**

With regards to the causative factor of disability, it is found that disease is one of the major causes of disability among the children followed by accidents. It reveals that there are more chances of disability to occur in the children in their infancy and childhood stage. Besides, it is found that disability among new born babies is due to pregnancy problems, falls or disease during pregnancy, immature birth, malnourished mothers, etc. The study shows that most of the sampled children are affected with mental retardation.

On the other hand pertaining to the existing educational facilities for the challenged children, it is found that most of the sampled schools have a Centre for Special and Inclusive Education as well as have facilities of vocational training services, adult leisure and learning unit, community based rehabilitation, awareness programme and Referral Services (Consultancy), life skill education and in-house training for the staff besides other services.

The present study also revealed that children suffer from more than one disability and the common problems faced by special children are mobility, hand function, personal care, incontinence,

communication, learning, hearing, vision, behaviour, consciousness, etc. While in the school, the major difficulties faced by the special children are difficulty in reading/writing and learning, taking part in games and sports, taking part in extracurricular activities, getting along with other children, food habits, etc.

Further with respect to the attitude of Parents and Teachers towards Inclusive Education is found unfavourable. However, when compared between teachers and parents of normal children and special children, it is found that the attitude of the parents and teachers of the special children is more positive towards inclusive setup.

### **Suggestions for further research**

1. Education for the Challenged Children: Trends and Innovation in Garo Hills District of Meghalaya.
2. Education and Care of the Mentally Challenged with special reference to Meghalaya
3. Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs—Duties and Responsibilities of the Teachers
4. What Is the Role of Special Education Teachers in the Classroom?
5. Integrating Technology into Instruction in an Inclusive Classroom for Diverse Learners
6. The role of teachers in the successful implementation of inclusive education in the schools of Meghalaya.
7. The importance of having the right set of attitudes in teachers who are involved in inclusive education—an analytical approach.
8. An analysis of the course content or syllabi prescribed for the B.Ed. and other training courses in various colleges and institutes of the state of Meghalaya with particular attention being paid to special education.
9. A study of the government policies and laws concerning the promotion of inclusive education in schools and the initiatives taken to train teachers for inclusion.
10. The organisational structure, professional interactions, motivational climate and the working of the teachers in different types of special schools located in rural and urban set up in Meghalaya—A study.
11. A comparative study of special schools with healthy practices and characteristics in Meghalaya and West Bengal.
12. Indispensability of the change in attitude of the community towards disability—A Study.