



Role Of Open Universities To Develop Human Resources In Field Of Special Education

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Abstract

The term education is familiar to all of us. But, 'special education' is a term that refers to educational provisions for children with special needs, emerging due to physical, mental and emotional challenges. As a human resource, special education is the means of rehabilitation of children or the people with physical impairment. New Education policy 2020 focuses on education of children with special needs. The mandate given to RCI is to regulate and monitor services given to persons with disability to standardize syllabi and to maintain a Central Rehabilitation Register of all qualified professionals and personnel working in the field of Rehabilitation and Special Education. Open universities cater to people who are unable to pursue regular courses due to various reasons. Through ODL mode institutions trained special educators can be developed as human resources in field of special education.

Full Paper

Education is the wise, hopeful and respectful cultivation of learning and change undertaken in the belief that we all should have the chance to share in life. When talking about education people often confuse it with schooling. Many think of places like schools or colleges when seeing or hearing the word.

Education, as we understand it here, is a process of inviting truth and possibility, of encouraging and giving time to discovery. It is, as John Dewey (1916) put it, a social process – 'a process of living and not a preparation for future living'. In this view educators look to learning and being with others rather than acting upon them. Their task is to *educere* (related to the Greek notion of *educere*), to bring out or develop potential both in themselves and others.

The term education is familiar to all of us. But, 'special education' may be a new expression for some of you. It is a term that refers to educational provisions for children with special needs, emerging due to physical, mental and emotional challenges. Therefore, they have Special Educational Needs (SEN). Thus Special Education means specially designed instruction for children with above mentioned challenges in all settings such as classroom, home, workplace, public places, the street and the rehabilitation homes, etc.

Education is the process of learning and changing as a result of schooling and other experiences. Special education is instruction designed for students with disabilities or gifts and talents who also have special learning needs. Some of these students have difficulty in learning in regular classrooms; they need special education to function in school. Others generally do well in regular classrooms, but they need special education to help them master certain skills to reach their full potential in school.

The process of educating and the modification of the behavior of children with disabilities or the differently able children with special needs have been termed as special education. As a human resource, special education is the means of rehabilitation of children or the people with physical impairment.

The disability sector in India has been neglected for a long time. No serious effort was made by the Government of India for Special educator development for inclusive education for education of divyangjan. In fact, there were only a few teacher training colleges for development of teachers for the disabled children and most of them were located in urban areas. Serious efforts were made in this direction from the International Year for Disabled Persons in 1981.

According to Encyclopedia of special education of Cecil R. Reynolds (2007) Special education subsumes educational services basically rendered to the children with visual impairment, hearing impairment, orthopedically impaired, mentally retarded, the exceptional children and the children with learning disabilities.

Special Education in India In pre-independence India, the country had a few special schools for children with intellectual impairment run by non-Government organizations, a few mentally retarded persons admitted to mental hospitals and many stayed at home. India has come a long way since Independence in the area of disability rehabilitation. There has been a shift in the lifestyle of people with disabilities from charity to right. It is no more the wish and choice of the giver to provide education, vocational training and rehabilitation, but the RIGHT of the person with disability to receive the support. The Government of India has set up four national level institutes to effectively implement government schemes for persons with disabilities, to develop human resources to deal with disabilities, to develop service models, to conduct research and to document and disseminate information. These are: National Institute of the Visually Handicapped, National institute for Hearing Handicapped, National Institute for orthopedically handicapped and National Institute for the Mentally Handicapped. The Institute for Physically Handicapped and National Institute of Rehabilitation, Training and Research are two more national level institutes of rehabilitation. In addition, the District Rehabilitation Centre (DRC) scheme has been initiated in 10 States aiming at preventive measures and comprehensive rehabilitation. To train manpower for DRCs, four Regional Rehabilitation Training Centers have been established.

Based on the recommendations on the National Education Policy 1986; the Rehabilitation Council of India was formed as a statutory body under the RCI Act 1992 (w.e.f. 1993) passed in the Parliament after which manpower development and training programmes came straightway to the grip of RCI. At present the capacity of teacher education programs to Inclusive education is a new approach towards educating the children with disability and learning difficulties with that of normal ones within the same roof.

At present, In India there are different institutions which are providing different types of courses at different levels. Post graduate and graduate courses are offered by the respective universities. Diploma and certificates level courses were conducted by National institutes few years back. For all level of courses curricula and content are approved by RCI.

The Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) was set up as a registered society in 1986. On September, 1992 the RCI Act was enacted by Parliament and it became a Statutory Body on 22 June 1993. The Act was amended by Parliament in 2000 to make it more broad based. The mandate given to RCI is to regulate and monitor services given to persons with disability to standardize syllabi and to maintain a Central Rehabilitation Register of all qualified professionals and personnel working in the field of Rehabilitation and Special Education. The Act also prescribes punitive action against unqualified persons delivering services to persons with disability. Today there are about 37 diploma programs in the field of special education and about 3 offering the B.Ed. degree in regular mode. The Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), a statutory body under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, regulates these courses for the education, training and management of persons with disabilities.

New Education Policy 2020 vision includes one of the key changes to the current system Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system is a system wherein teachers and learners need not necessarily be present either at same place or same time and is flexible in regard to modalities and timing of teaching and learning as also the admission criteria without compromising necessary quality considerations. There are at present 14 State Open Universities and 1 Central Open University set up by the respective state grants (as per details below), are single mode institutions, which means they provide education only in the distance mode. These universities cater to people who are unable to pursue regular courses due to various reasons. These Universities are also instrumental in shaping the career growth of learners who are already employed.

Specific training needs of special educator to develop them as a human resource in field of special education through distance education is more challenging than conventional education system.

The National Knowledge Commission has brought out valuable documents outlining the critical role of higher education. In this context, the role of Open and Distance Learning System (ODL) becomes significant and unique. The experience across the globe substantiates that ODL system is an effective tool for educationally empowering the different sections of society who, for one reason or the other, had missed the formal 'face-to-face' education. These days, distance education provides many vocational, professional and technical courses, including specialized programmes oriented towards the higher end of technology usage. It also has the potential to reach the unreached, marginalized and excluded people residing in distant places and difficult terrain.

Different Open Universities run this course in local languages because learners are familiar with local languages and there is no language barrier for parents of PwDs to take training or practical. There is an urgent need for additional special educators for certain areas of school education. Some examples of such specialist requirements include subject teaching for children with disabilities/Divyang children at the Middle and Secondary school level, including teaching for specific learning disabilities. Such teachers would require not only subject-teaching knowledge and understanding of subject-related aims of education, but also the relevant skills for understanding of special requirements of children. Therefore, such areas could be developed as secondary specializations for subject teachers or generalist teachers, during or after pre-service teacher preparation. They will be offered as certificate courses, in the pre-service as well as in-service mode, either full time or as part-time/blended courses - again, necessarily, at multidisciplinary colleges or universities. This can be done only by open and distance education Schools/school complexes will be provided resources for the integration of children with disabilities, recruitment of special educators with cross-disability training, and for the establishment of resource centers, wherever needed, especially for children with severe or multiple disabilities. Barrier free access for all children with disabilities will be enabled as per the RPWD Act. Through ODL mode institutions trained special educators can be developed as human resources in field of special education.

There are 15 state Universities viz. 11 State Open universities and 4 regular mode universities in where RCI signed a MOU with them to run Special education courses viz. B.Ed. Spl.Edu. Programs in Intellectual disability, Learning disability, Visual Impaired, Hearing Impaired and certificate program on Foundation course in special education through ODL mode to develop human resources in special education field. But only 8 State Open universities viz. MP Bhoj Open University Bhopal, UPRTOU Allahabad, NSOU Kolkata, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University Ahmadabad, TNOU Chennai, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University Telangana, YCMOU Nasik and Uttarakhand Open University Haldwani are running these courses. As per signed MOU between RCI and Open Universities there are total 500 seats allocated to each university to run B.Ed. Special Education Programs. University run this course in different approved centers of RCI and own campuses. ODL mode is best for in-service, parents and Person with disability who wants to do this course. Learner can become trained special educator in field of special education through distance education. A lot of numbers of human resources in form of special educator has developed by ODL Universities.

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