UNIT 15 CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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15.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous units you have learnt about the principles of growth and development. You have to acquire necessary information and skills to understand the student as a unique individual in terms of individual differences in learning levels. These differences among individuals may be attributed to a number of factors. These factors force us to understand the learning process in the broader context rather than as an isolated phenomenon or process. One of these contexts is the 'characteristics' of the students themselves. This unit is directed towards understanding these characteristics of the students and their impact on the learning as well as on planning and managing the learning process. Here we shall talk about the nature of special needs of students and also discuss the various groups of students with special learning needs.

15.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- define students with special educational needs,
- explain the special needs in relation to the conditions within or outside the student,
- discuss the social, psychological and educational adjustment of children with special needs,
- work out future educational programmes for children with special needs, and
- describe the teacher's role in meeting the educational, social and psychological needs of students.
15.3 CLASSIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Students with special needs can be classified into five categories:

- Physical impairment
- Visual impairment
- Hearing and speech impairment
- Low mental ability
- Learning disability

Besides, there are gifted/talented students who need special treatment in the classroom. Female students also have special needs. We shall discuss these categories of students in the subsequent sections.

Let us discuss each of these categories in detail.

15.3.1 Physical Impairment: Students with Locomotor Disability

Children with physical disabilities may have locomotor problems. Locomotor problems are related to muscles and joints of the body which affect mobility of limbs and extremities. The students with such impairment may find difficulty in attempting those learning activities which need physical movement. Though they possess learning capability similar to other children, they may have some specific problems in learning. For example, a student with rigidity in the finger muscles may have writing problems. Such students may also have postural problems, which bring in fatigue and limit their performance in certain learning activities. Such students develop adjustment problems because of non-acceptance or ridiculed by their peers.

Identification of physical impairment is easier as the disability is usually observable. You can identify physical disability with the help of the following check-list:

Table 15.1: Identification of Physical Disability

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong></td>
<td>The student has deformity in Neck.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fingers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Waist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong></td>
<td>Has difficulty in sitting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>standing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>walking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong></td>
<td>Has difficulty in picking up holding objects, putting them at the appropriate Place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.</strong></td>
<td>Frequently complains of pain in joints.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.</strong></td>
<td>Has difficulty in holding the pen to write.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6.</strong></td>
<td>Walks with jerks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.</strong></td>
<td>Involuntary movements of limbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8.</strong></td>
<td>Has amputated limbs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You can play an important role in helping students to overcome physical impairment. Parents' support can be sought in this regard. In case of severe disability, the students can be referred to District Rehabilitation Centres or Primary Health Centres (PHCs).

According to the type of disability, suitable seating arrangements should made in the classroom. For example, students with crutches and wheelchairs should be provided a seat on the right front space in the classroom, so that the movement of the other students is not blocked/hindered. This placement can also provide space for keeping crutches against the wall. The arrangement should be such that it allows independent movement of the students.

It has been observed that because of their disability, recreational needs of these students are ignored in the school. You should ensure that they get adequate opportunities to participate in physical and recreational activities in the class and the school. Other students should be encouraged to join them in such activities.

Students with rigidity in limb movement need a lot of practice. For example, while writing, the use of adjustment aids has an impact on the quality of work attempted. Thus, this disability needs to be taken into consideration while grading their papers. If they have difficulty in writing, they may be provided with extra time and, if possible audio cassettes. For example, in a history paper where spelling mistakes are not accounted for, the answers can be recorded on an audio cassette. Wherever available, they may be provided with the facilities of a word processor.

**Check Your Progress 1**

**Notes**

a) Write your answer in the space given below.

b) Compare your answer with those given at the end of the unit.

If you come across some students with locomotor disability. Describe how you will adjust your teaching and classroom arrangement for:

i) Students with problems of movements from one place to another.

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ii) Students with problems of posture arising out of muscular disabilities.

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iii) Students with problems of rigidity interfering with their academic learning/skills.

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**15.3.2 Students with Visual Impairment**

There are children who have visual disability. They cannot read the usual text and may need some learning aids, such as braille in case of blindness. Then there are partially sighted students. The vision of some of the students can be corrected. But some students can read only large print, say for example, 14 point and above; some require magnifying glasses to read. Some children have restricted field of vision. The teachers should identify such students and provide them special help in their study. Identification of visual impairment results in several learning problems. Such students can identified by observing their behaviour as follows:
Table 15.2: Identification of Visual Disability

- Observable deformity in the eye(s)
- Rubs eyes frequently
- Frequent reddening of eyes
- Covers one eye and tilts the head forward
- Holds objects including the book close to his eyes
- Asks other students for help when taking notes from the blackboard
- Blinks frequently-squints eyelids together
- Watery eyes
- Complains of headaches
- Bumps into people or objects

If you observe that the child displays any of these types of behaviour, you may refer him to the PHC/hospital for eye check-up.

You, as a teacher, should pay special attention to the students with visual disability. You should allow such students to sit in the front rows so that they can read the blackboard with ease. They should be encouraged to glance out of the window now and then while reading from the blackboard. You should write in bold letters which are legible. You should read aloud when you write on the blackboard. Books with bold letters (14 point or more) should be available in the library to cater to the needs of these students. The District Rehabilitation Centres and hospitals may be approached for hand lens, magnifying glasses, etc. for students whose disability is beyond the spectacle lens.

In order to reduce the reading load on the students with visual problems, we can train them in listening skills. They may be provided audio cassettes and audio tape recorder-cum-radio and encouraged to learn from audio medium. Audio cassettes will be very useful for such students. Institutions such as the State Institutes of Educational Technology, State Institutes of Education/State Councils of Educational Research and Training, the Central Institutes of Educational Technology, etc., can be approached for audio cassettes in different curriculum areas.

The teacher should not accept different standards of behaviour from these children. They should be expected to clean up the work area just like other children. When they acquire mobility, they should be sent on errands like their peers. Remind them gently to correct mannerisms as soon as you notice any abnormality in their behaviour. Provide them opportunities for participation in physical education programmes. A bookstand may be arranged for the partially sighted child.

15.4.3 Students with Hearing and Speech Impairment

Listening plays a significant role in academic communication and learning. Hearing problems interfere with learning and performance. Hearing problems may also cause speech problems. It is, therefore, desirable to identify such students and take steps to meet their educational needs.

Identification of hearing disability: The level of hearing is measured by audiometers in terms of decibels (db). Mild loss is within the range of 20-30 db., marginal 30-40 db., moderate 40-60 db., severe 60-75 db. and profound loss is above 75 db. Some students have mild hearing loss. Some may develop the impairment during school years and go undetected. Normally students with severe and profound hearing loss from birth do not develop speech unless their speech is developed through speech therapy.

The students with hearing problems can be easily identified by observing their behaviour. See Table 15.3.
Table 15.3: Identification of Hearing Impairment

- Has observable deformity in the ear(s)
- Frequent discharge from the ear(s)
- Complain of pain in ears frequently
- Scratches ear(s) frequently
- Turns head on one side to hear better
- Frequently requests teacher to repeat directions and questions
- Makes many errors in taking dictation
- While listening to the teacher watches his face carefully
- Displays speech difficulty

The student displaying any of these behaviours may be referred for a medical check-up. It is important to get the help of the professionals to identify the degree of loss and suitability of the hearing aid. The parents also need to be informed.

**Education of disabled students**: Students with hearing problems should be asked to sit near the teacher for improved listening. You should use a reasonable level of pitch (voice) while speaking. Avoid mumbling and speaking too fast. While reading from the textbook, your lips should be visible to the students so that they are able to supplement listening by lip-reading. Similarly, while speaking or writing on the blackboard, you should face the students.

Peers may be encouraged to interact with these students and help them in learning. Three-dimensional models of teaching aids, may be used to supplement general teaching points.

In case students are using hearing aids, they should be persuaded to use the aids all the time in the school as well as at home.

Speech defects arising out of hearing problems can be corrected through speech training, using reinforced drill and practice. If speech disorder is due to an organic defect in the speech mechanism, medical help is required.

### 15.3.4 Students with Low Mental Ability

The performance of the student with low mental ability is less than the performance of normal students. They may not have any physical problem but they are poorly adjusted in the classroom. Some observable behaviour for identifying such students is as follows.

Table 15.4: Identification of Students with Low Mental Ability

The low mental ability student:
- displays poor academic achievement
- forgets what s/he has learnt after a short time
- is inattentive and distracted
- shows too much reliance on presentation of concrete objects
- seeks immediate reward
- displays fear of failure
- has poor self-image
- lacks self-confidence
- has restricted communication
- has poor muscular coordination
- has difficulty in doing things for himself like eating, dressing, bathing and grooming
- has problem in following what he has been told
- learns at a slow pace
- seeks more repetition and practice as compared to other students
- avoids active participation in classroom activities
- shows too much dependence on concrete examples
Facilitating Learning and Development

Teaching students with low mental ability: You have to provide concrete experience to such students. They require repetition and more practice than the normal students. Learning tasks should be presented in small steps. Their attention is to be drawn to important points of the learning tasks. Simple questions may be asked to give them a feeling of success. Immediate feedback or reward should be the watchword for such students.

These students need training in communication skills. You should plan learning activities in a way that these students participate along with their peers.

The curriculum has to be transacted through simple and interesting learning experiences. Special efforts have to be made to help students absorb as much as they can. As they have a short span of attention, activities have to be varied in order to sustain their attention.

15.3.5 Students with Learning Disability

Some students may have specific learning problems such as in reading, writing, spelling or arithmetic. For example, you might have observed that some students always read and write ‘b’ as ‘d’, ‘was’ as ‘saw’, ‘21’ as ‘12’. Such problems are due to impairment of their psychological processes, like perception and memory. These students are said to have a learning disability which arises out of the problems in psychological processes. These students should be provided special help in learning.

Identification of disability: The following are some of the observable behaviours for identification of learning disability.

Table 15.5: Identification of Learning Disability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does not read well although his oral answers are intelligent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes mistakes in spellings, especially omits letter in words or changes place e.g. ‘pat’ instead of ‘tap’, or ‘felt’, as ‘left’, ‘rember’ in place of ‘remember’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writes numbers wrong e.g., ‘12’ as ‘21’ or write ‘69’ when asked to write ‘79’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is distractible and cannot remember his time-table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is always untidy and late in submitting homework and coming to class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not perform well in examinations although he is clever and has no physical disability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is so excited that he is unable to complete any task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omits words or lines in reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads individual letters in the words but has difficulty in putting the sounds of the letters together. For example, he may say the sound b/eig and say ‘Bad’ or sound f/o/g but say ‘frog’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education of students with disability: Such students need help in areas of their disability such as reading, arithmetic, etc., as the case may be. You should adopt suitable teaching strategies to support their learning. You should not criticise the student unnecessarily. Corrective feedback is most important at this stage.

Check Your Progress 2

Notes: a) Write your answer in the space given below.

b) Compare your answer with one given at the end of the unit.

Do you feel confident to cater to the special needs of children with disabilities/impairment in the regular classrooms? If yes, how?
15.4 UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

You, as a teacher, might have come across a large number of students. Some of them we remember; others we forget over a period of time. If you try to remember students of, say last one or two years, there is a great chance that you would remember only those children who have some special characteristics. These characteristics may be those of appearance, mannerism, performance or even of your special relationship triggered off by some important incident. You may like to refer to them by some grouping nouns. Try to recollect some such characteristics and use one word/phrase to explain some of these groupings.

I remember students who can be referred to as:
- Gifted
- Handicapped
- Slow learners
- Intelligent

Now you will see that students are characterised by some speciality. This 'special' characteristics calls for considerations from you so that these children may be able to learn without any strain. In other words, if you consider education to be a process of developing every individual to the best of his/her capability, you need to facilitate the process of capability building in each child, more so in those who need such consideration because of special characteristics. For example, a student with short height needs to be seated in the first row. The student with hearing problem needs to be nearer to the teacher. The differences in students are much more complex than what generally seem to be, on the surface. Special needs refer to reflecting the special requirements of a student calling for specific adjustment in the regular education programme.

These adjustments may be in terms of the size of the letters, height of the furniture, lighting arrangement in the classroom or quality of communication.

Special needs may arise out of a child's body/physique, mental level at which a child operates, attitudes or any disadvantage which may affect the student.

15.5 GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

So far we have discussed special characteristics of students that make them different from other students in the classrooms or in our experiences as teachers over a period of time. Sometimes the special needs of students arise not the so-called deficits either in their personality behaviour or performance but from their high mental level.

Gifted children are those who show consistently remarkable performance in educational endeavours. They possess superior intellectual ability within the range of the upper two to three percent of the population. According to some psychologists, academically gifted students are those who are within the top 15% to 20% in the schools.

In your teaching career, you might have seen some students who were gifted or talented. Such students are different from average students. Gifted students may have the following characteristics:
- Learning commensurates with that expected of older students, often reading at an earlier than average age
- Knowing about things of which other students are unaware
- High ability for abstract and symbolic thinking
- Curiosity indicated by asking serious questions
- Large vocabulary and mature expressive ability
- Requiring limited exposure and fewer repetitions to learn
Facilitating Learning and Development

- Extra-ordinary memory
- Ability to apply knowledge to unfamiliar situations.
- Good problem-solving ability
- Attention span long for age
- Dislike of rigid time schedule
- Annoyance with details
- Intense interest in one area
- Spontaneous and diverse interests
- High energy level (physical and intellectual)
- Unusually high standards and goals
- Often thinking faster than they write (can result in sloppy work), or
- Poor study habits that may result in careless work.

Those students who show some or many of the characteristics mentioned above either in academic tasks or in informal settings are referred to by many adjectives such as gifted, talented, genius, etc. It may also be mentioned here that such types of behaviours need to be observed in a variety of settings rather than being limited to the classroom situation only.

15.5.1 Defining the Key Terms

You need to understand the terms generally used with reference to gifted or talented behaviour of students.

*Intellectual giftedness*: Intellectual giftedness can be described as an unusual ability to deal with abstract and symbolic learning. Individuals with intellectual superiority are able to relate facts and ideas about numbers, time, and space in unusual ways. Students with intellectual superiority may or may not do well in school.

*Academic giftedness*: Academic giftedness involves the skills and abilities necessary to perform well in school-related tasks. Among these skills and abilities are memory, logical reasoning, and ability to make meaningful associations of facts and ideas. Facility in convergent thinking is the characteristic of this group of students.

*Creativity*: Creative children are those who exhibit creativity. Creativity is the ability to adopt an innovative approach to solving a problem, to cope with ideas that are both relevant and unusual, to go beyond the immediate situation to redefine the problem. Creativity can be referred to as unique or original production of ideas or products. Creative thought process results in responses that are unexpected and may be regarded as novel or peculiar. Ideational fluency, flexibility of thinking, originality, and elaboration are elements of creativity. Ideational fluency involves being able to generate a flow of ideas, while flexibility means the ability to modify the flow of information. Originality is the ability to come up with unique findings or new uses for products. Divergent thinking is associated with creativity.

*Talent*: Talent can be defined as an unusually high aptitude, ability, or level of performance in a particular field. The most commonly mentioned talents are artistic, musical, physical, mechanical, social and leadership. The great masters provide examples of the artistically and musically talented, while professional and Olympic athletics exemplify the physically talented. Mechanical talent is illustrated by youngsters who have expert problem-solving abilities in tackling mechanical problems. The socially talented are those who have instructive sense of appropriate behaviour in varied personal interactions. Charismatic qualities are evident in those with leadership talents. They have a trick for influencing followers.

Most of these terms specially 'intellectual giftedness', 'academic giftedness' and 'talent' are used interchangeably. There is often a controversy on the relationship between creativity and intellectual giftedness. For example, talent involves a specific ability while intellectual giftedness and creativity are more global. A student can have all the characteristics of being talented, intellectually gifted and creative. All such students have strong as well as weak areas. It is very
uncommon that they may be superior in all the areas. At times some of these characteristics lead
to under-achievement or these students are ignored because they may be 'problem students'.
The areas in which these students need your support and counselling are discussed in Sub-
section 15.5.2.

15.5.2 Areas for Teachers’ Intervention

The following are the major areas where your intervention will prove useful for gifted students.

Removing the feeling of isolation: Since these students are different in physical, social and
mental developments, they may feel left out. At times the feelings of superiority works against
their personality adjustment.

Self-criticism: Many gifted students have high goals and become self-critical. They may also
be communicated expectation on the part of teachers, parents as well as peers. Teachers may
expect them to always give the correct answer or be outstanding in class. This induces anxiety
and stress in students.

Convergent vs divergent thinking: Mostly school work is evaluated on conformity to one
right answer. Such evaluation rewards convergent thinking but can be harmful for divergent
thinking, where different answers of a problem are possible.

Moral and social issues: At times we do not expect students to be concerned about moral and
social issues. It is not unusual to find students with superior abilities to have very strong opin-
ions on moral and social issues.

Self-concept: Self-concept refers to one’s impression about oneself. Students who generate or
express unusual ideas are sometimes criticised in the group. This may result in poor self-con-
cept.

Emotional problems: Students with superior abilities are subject to same type of emotional
problems. Their unusual abilities and other characteristics may lead to emotional problems.

Check Your Progress 3

Notes: a) Write your answer in the space given below.
     b) Discuss your answer with your counsellor and peer group at the Study
        Centre or in the Workshop.

Now you know about the characteristics of the children with superior abilities and the
problems that may arise because of the superiority. Can you make a list of activities
which may provide opportunities for developing talent in students? List three activities
and specify your role in nurturing talent/creativity/giftedness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Teacher’s Role</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>ii)</td>
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<tr>
<td>iii)</td>
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15.6 SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED

Besides the special needs arising out of the factors working at the individual level, there are
factors which work at the level of society. These factors generate special needs amongst stu-
dents. Even though our Constitution is committed to equal educational opportunity, this oppor-
tunity is not available to all the children of school age. Measures like increasing the access of
schools to children either by opening new schools, providing residential facilities to them or
opting for open learning systems (open school, non-formal education centres) may be used for
the socially disadvantaged children. Inspite of these measures, economic poverty can still be a
constraint in the educational development of educationally backward sections of Indian soci-
ety. Factors such as social and psychological limitations, lack of motivation in parents and
children towards education, low self-concept of the parents, inadequate educational facilities
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and the low expectations by the teachers from children from backward communities are responsible for anxiety or personality problems among socially disadvantaged group of students. Such students need acceptance and recognition by their teachers, besides accessibility to educational opportunities.

15.7 EDUCATION OF GIRLS

Though the Constitution of India has provided for equalisation of opportunities across gender, girls continue to be a disadvantaged group of the society. Society continues to discriminate between boys and girls. The National Policy on Education, 1986, recommended that provisions should be made for equal educational opportunities for girls with a view to removing disparities and attending to their specific needs. Let us discuss factors that contribute to a negative attitude towards the education of girls in our society.

- Women by and large are still considered incapable of competing with men, specially in areas of leadership, initiative and boldness.
- It is considered that women cannot be independent and are not capable of taking their own decisions.
- There are certain stigmas attached to women because of the discriminating perception of the society. For example a widow, a spinster, an issueless woman and a working woman are treated differently from a man with the similar characteristics.
- There are many social evils such as dowry system, bride price, prostitution, child marriage, etc., in the society which contribute to lowering the self-concept of the girls. Due to these evils, society view women as a burden.
- Based on the role expectations boys and girls are discriminated. For example, girls are identified more with house-based functions, at times even younger girls are expected to substitute for 'women' in the home. In the economically poor families with working women, young girls look after households and take care of younger children. This results missing opportunities for education.

All these factors contribute to certain biases in the society which are unfortunately reflected in the school curriculum, textbooks and even in our behaviour with the students in classroom, irrespective of our being a male or a female teacher.

You, as a teacher, deal with children in a classroom situation. You may like to reflect on the areas of discrimination between boys and girls in textual materials. Have you noticed any discrimination in the textual material that you are using?

The following are the three areas of discrimination in textual content.

Thematic content : You might have seen more topics dealing with men and their heroic efforts than women. The treatment of a particular theme may even lead to providing an inferior and stereotyped image of women.

Linguistic content : In language textbooks the elements of language are the main point and the theme serves just as the means. Some of these expressions degenerate the status of women, for example "do you cry like a girl". The thematic content also reflect social stigmas and taboos attached to girls.

Teacher behaviour : Sometimes through very subtle behaviour we also contribute to the misconceptions. For example, we may tell in a co-education class or boys' class that they should not behave like girls or in a girls' class we may remark that it does not suit a girl to be a 'tomboy'. By doing so we also contribute to stereotyped behaviour of discrimination between girls and boys.

As a teacher you may like to reflect on the following to contribute to conveying a positive image of girls.

- Highlight the capabilities of girls
- Encourage them to be self-reliant and provide opportunities for preserving and fighting for self-respect
- Encourage healthy competition
There is nothing like 'men's work' or 'women's work'.
Girls are not a burden, bridegrooms need not be bought and brides sold.
There are exemplary tips. More can be added in view of your own perceptions and commitments. As a teacher you need to (a) sensitize yourselves so that you do not promote discrimination, (b) be aware of education-school related factors that contribute to discrimination, and (c) to advocate the cause of girls' education so that they are not discriminated against in society.

Check Your Progress 4

Notes: a) Write your answer in the space given below.
    b) Compare your answer with one given at the end of the unit.

Do you find any difference in the method of meeting the special needs of female students vis-a-vis those of male students? How would you, as a teacher, explain these differences and work towards creating a positive image of girls?

You have already studied about gender issues in Unit 7 of Block 2 of this course.

15.8 UNDERSTANDING SPECIAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN FROM THE DEPRIVED SECTIONS OF THE SOCIETY

Another group of children with special needs belongs to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. At times both these are grouped together. But in this unit we shall discuss their educational needs separately because the historical, political and economical reasons for their educational backwardness are different. Though the manifestation of deprivation may have some similarities, it is important to understand the following, specific points in order to appreciate the special educational needs of children of these two groups:

- Reasons for educational backwardness amongst Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes
- Reasons for inequality in educational development as a result of social deprivation and poverty during the pre-Independence period
- Behavioural discrimination towards this section of students in and outside the classrooms leading to a negative self-image, and low achievement
- Role of teachers in building a congenial social and educational environment inside and outside school
- Need for sensitisation of children, parents, and community as regards special incentive schemes for such students to promote literacy and provide vocation.
Though the special needs of students from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are being discussed separately, some measures would be applicable to both the situations.

15.8.1 Students from Scheduled Castes

The Scheduled Castes represents one of the most traditionally downtrodden and socially and educationally backward sections of Indian society. The Constitution of India has sought to rectify this by providing for positive action for their upliftment in “The Directive Principles of State Policy”. Scheduled castes is a term given to those castes in India which were untouchables, mainly because they were involved in petty, ‘unclean’ occupations like cleaning, sweeping, scavenging, shoe making, etc. They were considered to be outcastes and were earlier referred to as Antyajas, Pariahs, Adisuras and the likes.

They are engaged in occupations which other (upper) castes abhorred. Further they were not permitted to use public amenities, tanks, wells, rivers and were prohibited from going to temples and the worst of all they were denied any kind of education. This led to further deterioration of their condition as regards opportunities for social mobility by acquiring other job skills other than the traditional work meant for them. This resulted in this community becoming backward in all spheres of life.

Education in India is a state responsibility. In accordance with the social mobility of the scheduled castes, various welfare and developmental schemes such as free tuition, scholarships, books, hostel facilities, etc., have been provided. Through education and related measures the state can provide requisite facilities and opportunities for the betterment of the deprived sections of our society.

The term scheduled castes is an expression standardised in the Constitution of India which provides a schedule for listing the castes deprived of social and economic justice and charges the state with an obligation to take special measures for these castes to help them get rid of their backwardness. The concept of equality finds a place in various documents on education such as the National Policy on Education, 1986 (revised in 1992), the Programme of Action (POA-92), the school curricular framework for teachers, etc. With the advent of the National Policy of Education, 1986, it is envisaged that provisions will be made for equal educational opportunities to SCs, STs and other backward sections with a view to removing disparities and attending to their specific needs.

The POA-1992 states that the “the drop-out rate among the SC and ST students continues to be very high at all levels of education”. The POA has detailed various strategies for assessing the rate of enrolment and retention of most sections of the society. It also states that, despite the policy imperatives, the implementation of various schemes has not been commensurate with the goals set out for each scheme.

The document speaks of various centrally sponsored schemes for the SCs, STs and other backward sections. It proposes strategies as regards with access, enrolment, participation, and achievement in elementary education. Incentives which includes free books, scholarships, free coaching and training and the like have been recommended in the document. It also recommends the need to raise educational standards of SC/ST persons and to inculcate an understanding among teachers and students about the richness of their culture and their contribution to culture and economy.

There are three identifiable stages in the spread of education of the scheduled castes:

- opening of separate schools for SCs,
- struggle for equality in joint schools, and
- introduction of special incentives for education of the SCs.

Education plays an important role by preparing the individual for occupations/vocations and thereby creating a self-confidence in earning ones’ own living and secondly giving a better standard of living to the disadvantaged groups.

An individual’s upward mobility in society may be hindered by various factors, of which personality is one of the most important.
It has been observed that students from the upper castes are motivated by their family and friends to do well in their studies and try to be high or at least average achievers. Scheduled castes children, on the other hand, are made to feel that education is not for them and their upward mobility is not possible, even though they are bright. They are discouraged and as a result they either drop-out of school or show poor results. Various studies support the observation that students belonging to upper castes or classes have high achievement motivation. They are more likely to endorse items showing an activistic, future-oriented, individualistic (i.e. self-centeredness) point of view, which facilitate achievement and also social mobility. It is also proven that the youth from upper strata of society may not need strong personal motivation for mobility. The students live in an environment where high aspiration is encouraged. This is not so in the case of students from lower castes or economic strata. We need to change this perception and shoulder more responsibility towards this section of society.

Check Your Progress 5

Notes:

a) Write your answer in the space given below.

b) Compare your answer with those given at the end of the unit.

i) Have you, as a teacher, ever experienced any form of discrimination against scheduled castes students in and outside school. If yes, describe in 25 words as to how you dealt with such a situation.

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ii) What roles are you expected to play to ensure a congenial, non-discriminatory environment in and outside school? List them.

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15.8.2 Students from Scheduled Tribes

Scheduled tribes in India generally live inaccessible areas in small and scattered villages or Dhanis. As a result, providing facilities such as food, clothing, shelter and education to these tribes is difficult.

There are various factors to be kept in mind while teaching the tribal students. Article 350 A lays down that it shall be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the State to use the mother-tongue as the medium of instruction for students at the primary education level. Due to one or the other reason, the children belonging to scheduled tribes have not yet been able to avail educational facilities. The following are the main factors responsible for poor educational status among scheduled tribe children.

- Textbooks should have local specific examples from their local environment and not the examples which the children find difficult to relate to. It is the responsibility of the teacher to transact the lessons in such a manner that there is no communication gap between the students and the teacher. Teaching should be based on the local environment so that students are motivated in their study. They should be able to link teaching-learning activities with their environment. Unfortunately our schools are not able to provide the type of education tribal students are interested in.
Facilitating Learning and Development

- Low enrolment ratio, sparsity (thinly scattered) of educational institutions serving tribal habitations, high wastage and stagnation, absence of teachers from the schools are a few of the educational problems in the tribal areas. It is therefore imperative that the teacher should become responsible for the developmental activities both educational and social in the tribal areas. Considerable improvement in education among tribals is possible if the teachers are appointed from and located within that region.

- The backwardness in education of the scheduled tribes is due to their apathetic and indifferent attitude towards education and lack of motivation in them. There may be two main reasons for this. First, the formal education system being alien, is not adjusted to their socio-economic and cultural needs. Secondly, tribals have prejudices and suspicions towards the sincerity of non-tribals.

- Studies have revealed that there is a social distance between the teachers and students in tribal areas. They should be taught by teachers from amongst themselves (as in Shiksha Karmi Scheme in Rajasthan).

- Findings from studies reiterate that education of the tribals should be need-based so that students are able to see the relevance of what they are taught as this may be the main reason for tribal students being interested in studies.

- Tribal students are more interested in working in the open environment and close to nature and not in a classroom situation. Have you ever held classes outside the classroom, under a tree, etc.? If yes, was there a difference or improvement in the students' behaviour, attitude and learning?

- Tribal children remain absent from the school because they are required to help their parents in the household work and in agriculture operations. This reason is correlated to increased absenteeism among tribal students during the periods when agriculture operations are at the peak.

- These children come from poor families. They use local dialects for communication. Their usage and vocabulary of the standard language may be poor. It is therefore important that teachers provide and ensure a non-discriminatory attitude and environment in class and school. In this way teachers' behaviour would be the most powerful tool to build a congenial atmosphere in the classroom.

- A teacher has a major role in motivating parents and the community for sending their children to school and they should be informed from time to time about special schemes and incentives available for them.

Since these children have come from a very different environment and most of them are first generation learners (children whose parents/grand-parents or elder siblings have never been to school), they have special needs which have to be catered to. For example they might be deficient in scholastic areas which would require extra compensatory tuitions or remedial education programmes on a short or a long term basis.

Check Your Progress 6

Notes: a) Write your answer in the space given below.
   b) Compare your answer with those given at the end of the unit.
   i) What role do you perceive for yourself as a teacher for educating the first generation learners of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes? Discuss in brief.

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ii) What type of an instructional plan would you prepare for these students so as to enable them to develop a healthy and a positive self-concept and image?

iii) How would you teach your subject so as to enable the students in a mixed class to have an unbiased attitude towards the underprivileged sections of society? (You may take an example from the textbook of your class).

You may be wondering whether all these interventions for meeting special educational needs are applicable and possible in a normal school. The answer is yes. The policy decision is in favour of mainstreaming policy integration. However resource support has been envisaged to facilitate the integration for children with disabilities. Navodaya Vidyalayas are an attempt to facilitate education of talented children from rural areas. Similarly, children from SC/ST population are provided with a number of incentives: monetary as well as in terms of opportunities (e.g. special classes) for developing skills at par with other. Special schools are also advocated for children with severe disabilities.

15.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have studied that:

- It is important for a teacher to understand the special needs of the child in relation to his/her appearance, mannerism, performance, etc.
- Special needs can be categorised as physical impairment, visual impairment, hearing or speech impairment, low mental ability and learning disability. Specific remedial action should be taken by the teacher for each of these categories.
- Gifted students have a specific set of characteristics that are useful in identifying them. Giftedness can be in the field of intellectual capabilities, academic excellence, creativity, talent, etc.
- Teacher's intervention is essential to realise the potential of each learner. Therefore, the teacher should take an active interest in meeting the demands of every personality type.
- The teacher should be alert to the special educational needs of the socially disadvantaged groups: education of girls and other sensitive sections of the society. The textual content must be clear about thematic content and linguistic content.

Teacher's behaviour with the students should be free of bias and the interaction amongst the students should be normal.
In this unit, you have been provided with information and opportunities for consolidating your experience on the following aspects of teaching:

- It is important to understand the learning process in the context of characteristics of learners.
- Special educational needs reflect the special requirements of a learner calling for specific adjustment in regular education programmes.
- The special needs can arise from physiological, intellectual, social and economical reasons.
- The learner should be given importance as an 'individual' rather than as a disabled, a girl or a scheduled caste or tribe learner.
- Educational adjustment can be in terms of curriculum related decisions, classroom management, special teaching aids, etc.
- Most important is the teacher’s sensitiveness and attitude. The training in addition to these characteristics can facilitate learning of children with special needs.

### 15.10 UNIT-END EXERCISES

1. Take a case of a student with special needs as observed by you. Describe the methods you could adopt to meet the special social, psychological and educational needs of this special child.

2. Critically discuss the existing educational programmes for students with special needs.

3. Discuss your role as a teacher to bring the special child psychologically at level with a normal child.

### 15.11 SUGGESTED READINGS


### 15.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. There cannot be a standard answer. However, you are moving in the right direction if you are able to think of adjustments and adaptations in the Curriculum Materials, your own teaching style, your attitude, sitting arrangements, etc. to facilitate the learning of children with special needs. At the very beginning point is your sensitiveness to such needs. You will discover it to be ‘continuous learning experience’ as teacher of children with special needs.

2. This answer is also going to be quite varied, you are progressing well if your answer is on the following lines.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Teacher’s Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i)</td>
<td>Organising independent study projects</td>
<td>Facilitator for identifying the topic locating resources to carry out the study determining the end products of the study. evaluating achievements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>As Facilitator:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii)</td>
<td>Literature: “Think of Possible Endings to this story”</td>
<td>Reading the story to a critical point and then providing it as an exercise to be done individually or in groups:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(You can think of subject specific as well as general activities like brain-storming session on current issues, word games, puzzles, quizzes, etc.)

3. The following are the differences between male and female students:

- Females are still considered incapable of competing with males specially in the areas of leadership, initiative and boldness.
- Females cannot be independent and are not capable of taking their own decisions.
- Females are identified more with house-based functions.

As a teacher you may treat female and male students equally in classroom situations. This reflects the positive attitude towards girls.

- Encourage them to be self-reliant and provide opportunities for pressuring and fighting for self-respect.
- There should be fair representation of women’s image and role.

4. First part is a matter of individual experience.

Role of teacher:

- Increasing confidence: Highlight capabilities, give more opportunities for participation.
- Increasing motivation: Expressing expectations, being sensitive to attendance, performance and paying individual attention.
- Facilitating development: Providing enough opportunities but not as ‘Sympathy’ or ‘Pity’.
- Beware of providing negative signals – ‘The poor child’, ‘Let’s help because he comes from not so good background’.

(You can think more on these lines.)

5. i) Having a close link with parents to ensure regular attendance. Increasing awareness of available facilities and schemes and encouraging ‘education’ for its own sake rather than immediate material ends.

Watching out for deficit areas in knowledge and skills which can later on have cumulative effect on achievement e.g. vocabulary, confidence, etc.

ii) May be group activities facilitating development of individual capabilities can help develop self-concept and positive image.

iii) Being cautious about using ‘right’ and ‘unbiased’ language and adopting positive attitude.

- Supplementing text material with additional information to provide the background of issues e.g. ‘Right to Education’ and incentives by way of scholarships or ‘reservations’.

Children with Special Needs