The History of Special Education

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**Introduction**

Every human being has been blessed with something special; some people have physical strength, while others have intellectual intelligence. Some individuals have a really good sense of smell while others can listen to things very sharply. Where these people are blessed with special abilities, there are some individuals who are not that much lucky. They are known as Specially-Abled People or people with Special Needs. These individuals especially are also provided with special education, which is different from the educational programs of other children. This kind of education is known as Special Needs Education and refers to the education of the children with disabilities, in consideration of their individual educational needs, which is aimed at the development of their capabilities and their independence. These educational programs are also intended to allow special children to participate in social activities.

A teacher or the educator should provide a special education according to the needs of the child. He or she should focus on the disability that the child is facing and then design a program according to that would suit that special need of the child. Most of the times, children are suffering from four basic types of needs, which have been elaborated below (Schalock, et. al., 2010):

* **Physical –** This kind of special need or disability is caused due to some physical disability or ailment like muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, chronic asthma, epilepsy, etc.
* **Developmental –** This kind of special need is caused due to some deficiency in the developmental process in the fetus, even before the birth of the child. These include Down syndrome, Dyslexia, Autism, and Processing Disorders.
* **Behavioural Emotional –** This kind of special need arouses due to some emotional or behavioural deficiency like Bi-polar Disorder, Oppositional Defiance Disorder, ADD, etc.
* **Sensory Impaired –** These children suffer from special needs due to some clear physical disabilities like vision impairment, being deaf, limited hearing, etc.

The history of special education in the world, especially Australia is not much old but very interesting and worth knowing.

**Discussion**

The history of Special Education or Special Needs Education dos not stretch to much far back but it comprises an interesting span of time. There are some much meaningful techniques that have been devised and developed to educate children with special needs. Even the Australian Government takes much interest in the educating the specially-abled kids and youth and keeps introducing such laws and regulation that can be helpful for the children with special needs, their parents and the teachers working in this field as well.

**History of Special Education All Over the World**

One of the initial projects in the form of a special school for children with extraordinary needs was Institute National des Jeunes Aveugles, which was established in 1784 in Paris. It was established for imparting education to the blind. Moreover, the first special education school in the United Kingdom was established in 1760, which was initially started to teach deaf children but then moved on to educating visually impaired children as well in 1965 (Winzer, 1993).

**History of Special Education in Australia**

The history of special education in Australia dates back to when the first school for children with special needs was opened. This school especially provided education and training skills to the children who were deaf or blind. In the decade of 1920s schools were started for children with other disabilities as well. In the start of the 20th century, these schools were mostly run by volunteer organizations and charity but with the advent of 1970, the state government also started taking interest in the special education of children and even setup special education units in the regular schools. (Campbell, & Proctor, 2014).

**Legal implications related to Special Education in Australia**

Just like the United States of America, Australia does not have ant distinct rules and regulations like Idea to support the special education plans for specially-abled children. One of the most meaningful acts or laws established by the Australian Government to protect the rights of special children and educate them is the Commonwealth Disability Discriminatory Act (DDA) of 1992 (Osborne Jr, & Russo, 2014). In addition, there are specific anti-discriminatory laws and equal opportunity legislation for each state and territory.

**Process of Enrollment of Children for Special Education in Australia** The enrollment process of a special needs child in a special school is done with the coordination between both the management of the school and the parents of the kid. The principal or management of the school first meets the child and makes an assessment that what kind of disability he or she is suffering from. The parents should provide the complete medical records to the school about the disability of the child and the school also has therapist present who examines the child for these disabilities and confirms that the kid really needs such kind of education.

**Least Restrictive Environment**

Least Restrictive Environment or LRE is a part of the federal law or more specifically IDEA. This concept lays the foundation for the providence of special education to the disabled people in unique ways. The law states that the special child, to the maximum possible extent, should receive the education in the company of their non-disable peers. They should be educated in a normal classroom set up and not in separate units specially designed for them.

**Assessment**

There are various sorts of assessment methods that are used by the teachers and instructors in the fields of special education to check and analyze the needs and abilities of the students with special needs. All these assessment methods involve collecting data and then analyzing them with the help of various tests and analysis methods for the purpose of making decisions.

**Internal Assessment**

Internal assessment is one of the most crucial elements of not only the special education but also every kind of education where the teacher or instructor is intending to check the progress of the student other than the conventional means of examination or assignments. This is a very effective method used by both teachers and parents to evaluate the progress of a special child with comparison to the benchmarks set for him or her.

**Education of Children with Intellectual disabilities**

A teacher or instructor has to be extra careful while handling a student with special needs, as such a student require more attention and extra care. Children with special needs or physical or intellectual disabilities may become cranky or stubborn at times, and it may become difficult for a teacher to handle them, but with the right kind of strategies and skills, it can be done in a perfect manner.

**Education of Children with Autism**

Educating a child with special needs like Autism also requires special training and experience. A teacher dealing with a child with Autism should have enough training, experience, and exposure to handle the situations that could arise while teaching such a child (Matson, & Shoemaker, 2009). Moreover, he or she should have enough implicit and explicit support from the side of the institution.

**Conclusion**

Hence, in short, it can be clearly understood that the special education or special needs education is the education program specifically designed for people with certain physical or mental disabilities. These programs are specifically designed in order to help students with disabilities in coping up with the challenges of life and making them independent so that they can participate in the race of life. The special education in Australia started in 1920 with many reforms and the end result is the current special educational system.

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