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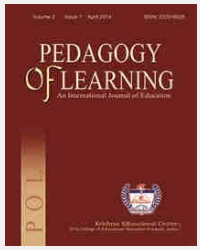

Inclusion of Students with Intellectual Disability at Elementary Schools: Policy Developments and Activities Undertaken

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Abstract

The paper is conceptual in nature and is based on some thematic areas of inclusive practices required for students with intellectual disability; and is based on discussion of some challenges and policy implementations. Inclusive education enables the school to be accessible by all learners despite their individual special needs. The learners with special needs need maximum benefit from education to full fill their human potential. Different learners have different abilities in performing various learning tasks. Inclusion will enhance their capabilities and learning opportunities. An effective inclusion needs fruitful communication, positive attitude of teachers and peer learners, learning

environment and need based policies. Many policies are framed for inclusion but the attitudinal barriers become stumbling blocks for successful inclusion. Teachers need to work for the whole class, make small groups, and give individual attention to each and every learner. However, this paper intends to describe, the requirements of inclusive education, difference between integrated and inclusive approach, policies framed so far for the purpose, and priority areas of intervention for inclusive education.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Intellectual Disability, Attitude, Special Needs, Challenges, intervention areas.

Introduction

Every child is a unique and different from others in learning of different skills like reading, writing, personal and social skills etc. In our day to day life education plays vital role to full fill the need of human being. In the primitive society the primary needs of man comprised food, clothing and shelter. With the progress of society and civilization, the primary needs have been multiplied and one of the most important needs for any individual today is the need to be educated.

Education is regarded as a potential instrument of development as well as social uplift. It enables an individual to be aware of their rights and responsibilities. Those who have remained backward over the year can be empowered by education. Education is also a powerful means of removing disparities and discrimination in the society. Education is the rights of an individual.

In this regard so many international and national declaration, schemes and policies are made, in 1946 UNESCO entrusted promoting quality education throughout the world. In 1948 Universal Declaration of Human rights includes the right to education. Everyone has a right to education. Education shall be free at elementary level and this education shall be compulsory.

The constitution of India clearly states in the Preamble that everyone has the right to equality of status and of opportunity. The Article 41 of the Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution supports the right to work, to education and to public assistance in certain cases including disablement. The Article 45 had the provision of free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years. Based on this, the Constitution (86th Amendment) Act, 2002, has been enacted by the Parliament making education a fundamental right of all children in the age group of 6-14 years under Article 21A.The National Policy on Education, 1986 (NPE, 1986), and the Programme of Action (1992) stresses the need for integrating children with disability with other groups. The objective to be achieved as stated in the NPE, 1986 is "to integrate the physically and mentally handicapped with general community as equal partners, to prepare them for normal growth and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence". The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Disable Education (1994) emerged as a result of deliberations held by more than 300 participants representing 92 governments including India and 25 international organizations in June 1994. For furthering the objectives of education for all, it considered the fundamental policy shifts required to promote inclusive education. It emphasizes that schools should

accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. The term 'Special Educational Needs' refers to all those children and youth whose needs arise from disability or learning difficulties. The statement affirms, "Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within child centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs".

The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protections of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 (PWD Act, 1995), and the National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disability Act, 1999. Stresses the need to provide free of cost education to all children in an appropriate environment till they are 18 years old and further emphasize their right to measures like : (a) Transport facilities to students with disability or alternative financial incentives to the parents or guardians to enable their children with disability to attend schools; (b) Removal of architectural barriers from schools, colleges or other institutions imparting vocational and professional training: (c) Supply of books, uniforms and other materials to students with disability attending school;(d) Grant of scholarship to the students with disability: (e) Setting up of appropriate for the redressal of grievances of parents regarding the placement of their children with disability: (f) Suitable modification in the examination system to eliminate purely mathematical questions for the benefit of blind students and students with low vision: (g) Restructuring of curriculum for the benefit of students with disability: and (h) Restructuring the curriculum for the benefit of students with hearing impairment to facilitate them to take only one language as part of their curriculum. The RTE, Act, 2009, in section 3(1) entitle all children in the 6-14 years age group has right to free and compulsory elementary education in a neighbourhood school. All children means including children with disabilities.

Intellectual Disability

Intellectual Disability is known for centuries. Professional workers have used different terms to refer to individuals having this condition. Early in the twentieth century, the terms moron (mild), imbecile (moderate), and idiot (severe) referred to three levels of Intellectual disability. The term feeble-minded was used until about 1940. Other terms are used include mental retardation, mental sub-normality, developmental disability, mentally challenged and now the term 'Intellectual Disability' mostly used by professional.

The pattern of change in the treatment of the persons with intellectual disability continued over the years. In some instances, these individuals were treated like innocent children, whereas, in other instances they were treated as agents of the devil and were persecuted often to the point of death.

Special Education

The concept child with special educational needs is of British origin the provision to make on the basis of specific disability. It is a branch of education, which studies about individuals who have problems or special talents in thinking, seeing, hearing and understanding etc.

A major aim of special education to enable special children to live in the most independent way possible. Special education is individually framed as per students need and it focuses special techniques, teaching learning material and methods. Special education can different from general education by its use of specialized materials and methods.

As per stated by Jangira (1986), Special education is the process of making educational provision to meet special needs of children, which cannot be satisfied by the present arrangements available in ordinary schools. The main features of special education are to provide educational needs of each child as per child's current level of functioning. Developing teaching strategies that enable students with severe disability to learn skills in other settings. Applying advanced technology to reduce the disabilities, improving the behaviour and attitudes of other people towards disability. Opening up more opportunities for individuals with disability to participate in full in their environment and preventing the causes that effect learning development in school. The latest shift in the field of special education is the integrated education towards their inclusion. The students with disabilities are placed in regular school which provide resource supports and services to all.

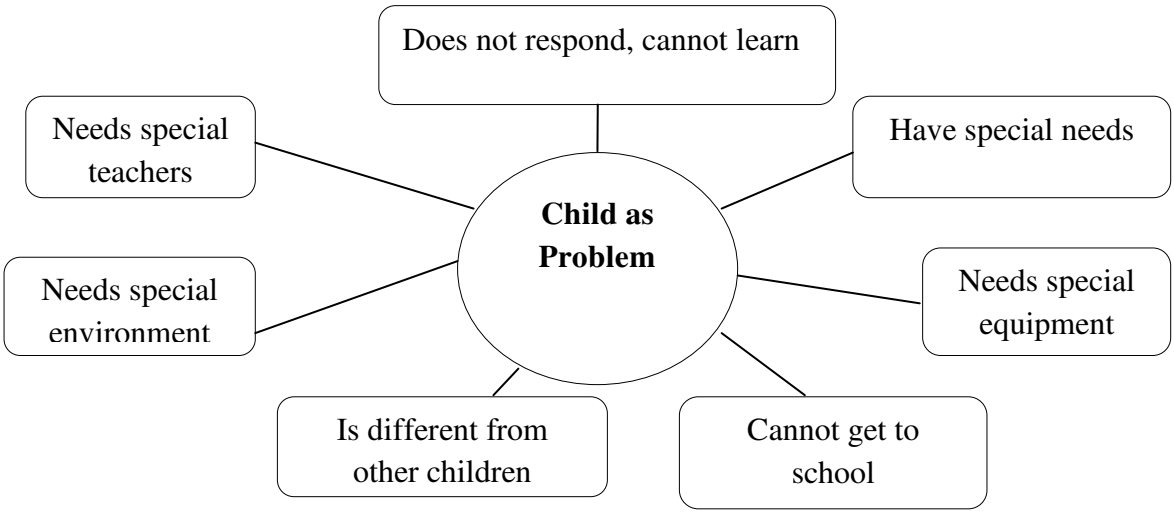
Integrated education

Integration is the process of including students with disabilities in to regular school with other students either a part or full time basis. It is placed disabled students in ordinary schools with some specialized educational services.

Kauffman, et al. (1975) stated mainstreaming refers to the temporal, instructional and social integration of eligible exceptional children with normal peers. (p.4). It determines educational needs, assessment requiring classification and responsibility for planning and coordinating by regular and special education personnel.

Integration means: providing special services within regular school, supporting regular teacher, involving students with special needs in as many academic and non academic activities, encouraging and helping students, provide appropriate individual programme.

Integrated Education



(Source: Integration education in India images from Google)

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education means welcoming all children, without discrimination and degree of severity in to regular school. It refers to the process of educating all children in their neighbourhood school, regardless of the nature of their disabilities.

Inclusion provides the appropriate support for everyone involved in the inclusion process. A full inclusion program needs support of different level including teacher, peers, parents and government level.

- Teach students that all people are equal
- Create an atmosphere that students can meet their needs as per their ability not disability
- Empower students
- Empower teacher to expand their skills
- Encourage parents to become partners with the school
- Create positive attitude among peers towards students with disabilities
- See the abilities not disabilities

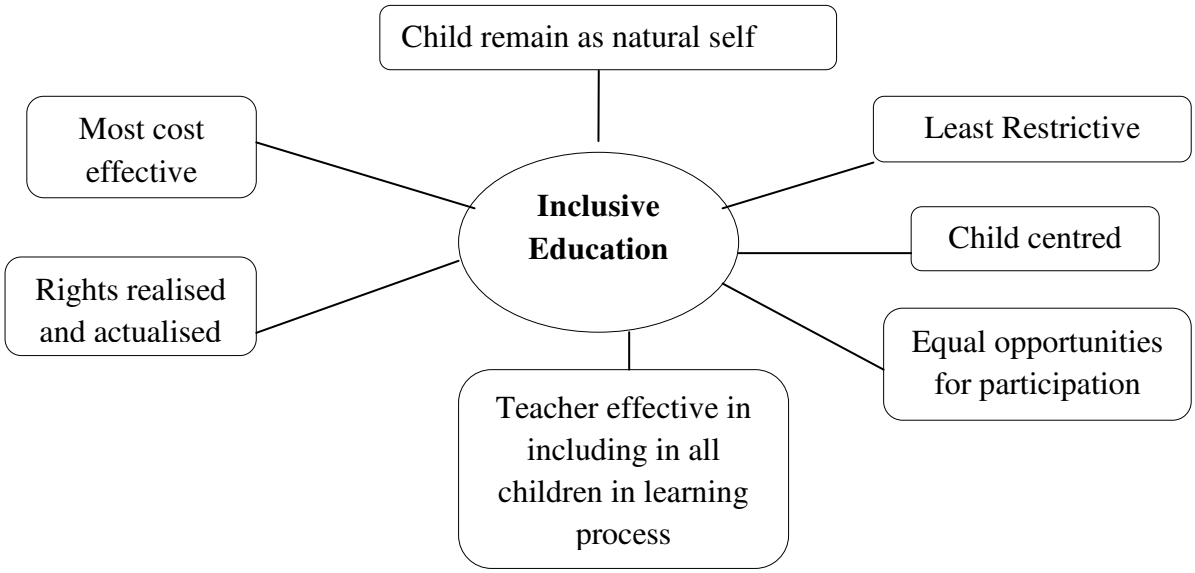
Inclusion is a concept that sees the children with disabilities as fulltime participants and as members of their neighbourhood schools and communities **(**Knight, 1999). Inclusion is the fulltime placement of all children including children with mild, moderate, severe and profound disabilities in regular classrooms (Staub and Peck, 1995). Inclusive education means including children with disabilities in regular classrooms that have been designed for children without disabilities (Kugelmass, 2004). It refers to an education system that accommodates all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and linguistic or other conditions. The effectiveness of inclusion depends on the readiness of general education system. Inclusion requires commitment, creative thinking, and effective classroom strategies that can make children with diverse needs capable to succeed in classrooms and schools. The success of inclusion lies in the hands of the class teacher who is the ultimate key to educational

change and school improvement. By taking into account the varied needs of these children, It is imperative that teachers accept, recognize and celebrate diverse learners in the classroom i.e. they must promote equity through accepting differences. Effective teaching in an inclusive classroom therefore demands teaching strategies that can accommodate a variety of learners with different backgrounds, needs and strengths.

Successful inclusion requires

- I – Infrastructure
- N – National policy
- C – Changing attitude / Capacity building
- L – Leadership / Legislation
- U – Understanding
- S – Sensitization
- I – Initiative / involvement of all parents
- O – Optimism
- N – Networking with different organization

Practicing Inclusive Education



(Source: Inclusive education in India images from Google)

Policy developments: Historical Review and Current Trends

Analysis of various government reports and policy documents clearly suggests that international mandates and policy frameworks have provided a significant impetus to efforts undertaken at the national level. The UN General Assembly's declaration of 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons; proclamation of 1983-1992 as the Decade of the Disabled by UN; followed by the UNESCAP Decade of the Disabled Persons from 1993-2002; and subsequently the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca in June 1994, have all played an important role in bringing the spotlight on to people with disabilities, especially on education as a vehicle for integration and empowerment. Not surprisingly, many of these mandates have shaped new national

legislations and policies. Here the following four legislations have had a significant impact on the government and the NGO sector, of these the first three are specific to people with disabilities:

Rehabilitation Council of India Act (1992): states that CWSN will be taught by a trained teacher.

- Persons with Disabilities Act (1995): educational entitlement for all CWSN up to 18 years in an appropriate environment.
- National Trust Act (1999): provide services and support to severely disabled children.
- The 86th Constitutional Amendment (2007): free and compulsory education to children, up to 14 years.

These legal mandates have also helped shape the comprehensive National Action Plan for Inclusion in Education of the Children and Persons with Disabilities (MHRD, 2005), and the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities in 2006 (an MSJE initiative). While some have argued that India has one of the most progressive disability policy frameworks amongst the developing economies, I would note that there remains a huge challenge in operationalising this vision, which is in itself marked by contradictory and conflicting messages. Thus, there is a need to critically re-examine some of the assumptions that have underpinned these frameworks. For example, while the PWD Act makes an attempt at purporting a rights-based approach, the guidance in achieving the vision it offers is very weak, and there remain too many caveats. Additionally, the Act lacks any strong enforcement mechanisms.

Singal (2006a: 357) undertaking an analysis of two Government reports, nearly two decades apart—the Sargent Report produced in 1944 and written prior to independence (Central Advisory Board of Education, 1944), and the Kothari Commission (Education Commission, 1966)—highlights the government's approach towards the education of children with disabilities. Both these reports recommended the adoption of a "dual approach" to meet the educational needs of these children. These reports suggested that children with disabilities should not be segregated from normal children; rather, integrated education should be adopted. The Kothari Commission observed that "many handicapped children find it psychologically disturbing to be placed in an ordinary school" (Education Commission, 1966, p. 109) and in such cases they should be sent to special schools. The Sargent Report also endorsed similar recommendations. Thus both these reports stressed the need to expand special and integrated facilities. This dual approach continued for the next 20 years and was reaffirmed in the National Policy of Education, 1986. Section IV of the National Policy of Education entitled "Education for Equality" states that "where feasible children with motor handicaps and other mild handicaps will be educated with others, while severely handicapped children will be provided for in special residential schools" (MHRD, 1986: 6). A similar focus is articulated in the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 (Ministry of Law and Justice, 1996), which notes that, "it [the Act] endeavours to promote the integration of students with disabilities in the normal schools" (p. 12) and also promotes the "establishment and availability of special schools across the nation" (p. 12) in both Government and private sectors.

Over the years, the government has launched various programmes and schemes to meet its commitments towards the education of children with disabilities. Among the first of these efforts was the Project Integrated Education of the Disabled Children (PIED) launched in 1987 in collaboration with UNICEF, in 10 blocks in 10 States and Union Territories across the nation. Taking note of the outcomes and recommendations of the PIED, the Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) scheme, which was initially launched in 1974, was subsequently revised in 1992. This scheme was shifted from the Ministry of Welfare to the Department of Education and greater assistance was provided to children with disabilities in mainstream schools. The IEDC is currently operative and offers financial assistance towards the salary of teachers, assessment and provision of aids and appliances, training of special teachers, removal of architectural barriers, provision of instructional materials, community mobilization, early detection and resource support (MHRD, 1992). It covers 15,000 schools and has enrolled a total of 60,000 children (RCI, 2000). With India becoming signatory to the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), the 1990s saw the rapid incorporation of the term 'inclusive education' in various official documents, reports published by institutions such as the NCERT and media. The background paper of a workshop organised by the RCI stated: while special education began in India with the establishment of special schools, it was in 1960s–1970s that integrated education began to be advocated; however, after 1994, inclusive education is strongly recommended (RCI, 2001: 2).

This focus on inclusive education is evident in the approach adopted by the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP). At a national workshop organised to discuss the role of inclusive education, the Director of Elementary Education and Literacy argued:
Zero rejection policy had to be adopted as every disabled child had to be educated. But multiple options could be used … [these] include inclusive education, distance education, home-based education, itinerant model and even alternative schooling. (DPEP, 2001: 3)

The Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, SSA (into which DPEP was incorporated) thus extends the dual approach historically adopted towards the education of children with disabilities, by propagating a "multi-optional delivery system". It categorically brings the concerns of children with disabilities, or those it terms as "children with special needs (CWSN)3" under the framework of "inclusive education" (IE):

SSA will ensure that every child with special needs, irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability, is provided education in an appropriate environment. SSA will adopt 'zero rejection' policy so that no child is left out of the education system. (SSA, 2007:1)

SSA further extends the range of options from special and mainstream/ 'regular' schools to Education Guarantee Scheme/Alternative and Innovative Education (EGS/AIE) and Home Based Education (HBE). Therefore the implicit assumption that inclusion should strengthen or enable mainstream educational participation of children with disabilities does not necessarily hold true in the model proposed by SSA. Rather it seems to advocate a stance that education should be imparted in an environment that is most suited to the child's needs and there should be flexibility in planning. While the SSA objectives are expressed nationally, it is expected that various states and districts will

endeavour to achieve universalisation in their own respective contexts and by 2010. It therefore offers each district flexibility to plan for activities aimed at educating CWSN, depending on the number of children identified and the resources available to effectively implement the IE programme. While such flexibility might be regarded as a positive step, it is not surprising that this has resulted in many different models of inclusive education operative across the country- raising concerns about the quality and effectiveness of provision.

This is particularly pertinent for the Indian scenario as the popularity of 'inclusive education', like in many other developing countries, can be attributed largely to Northern influences. Vislie (2003) states that since Salamanca 'inclusion' has become a global descriptor, and the international community, by signing the declaration has adopted its usage; however, there is no formally fixed and stable use of terminology. Indeed, whilst inclusive education is not a given, it cannot be overlooked that this concept "has acquired increasing international currency, which poses the danger that wishful thinking about the way it is used or applied may distract people from exploring the realities of practice" (Booth and Ainscow, 1998: 3). Thomas and O'Hanlon (2001) vii) are even more critical in their reflections and note that the term is often used 'merely (as) a filler in the conversation' and 'people can talk about "inclusion" without really thinking about what they mean'. These concerns resonate with the observations made by Kalyanpur (2007: 5) in her exploration of inclusive practices in India. She states that the usage of inclusive education highlights "a tendency to be 'politically correct' by taking on current trends in the west without a real or common understanding of their meaning, resulting in dilution of service quality". While the terminology has changed, the principles and practices underpinning it have remained fixed. SSA and its focus on children with special needs (CWSN)

The SSA lists 8 priority areas of intervention for inclusive education:

i. Survey for identification of CSWN
ii. Assessment of CWSN
iii. Providing assistive devices
iv. Networking with NGOs/Government schemes
v. Barrier free access
vi. Training of teachers on IE
vii. Appointment of resource teachers
viii. Curricula adaptation/textbooks/appropriate TLM

Here it is noteworthy that of the priorities listed, majority on these focus on issues of access, and only the last three are associated with classroom based 'processes', which in essence are vital in determining the quality of the educational experience. Each of these priority areas has received varied degree of emphasis in planning, and in most cases there is significant lack of information to evaluate the worthiness and success of these initiatives. In the following sections I cluster these eight priority areas under the broad sub-headings of 'access' (incorporating the first 5 points) and 'processes' (incorporating

the last 3 areas) to critically examine the focus of government efforts and where possible, reflect on the realities of practice. It is important to stress here that the lack of empirical evidence in the field makes it very difficult to make any strong claims, however it is an opportunity to critically examine the underlying principles shaping these efforts.

Support to CWSN inside the Classroom Mainly through resource teachers and teachers imparted 45/90 day training Support provided in the form of:

- Appropriate seating arrangements
- Peer group participation
- Training to teachers on simple teaching techniques for CWSN
- Appropriate TLMs and evaluation techniques
- Use and maintenance of aids and appliances

Evaluation guidelines developed at the national level and circulated to the States. These guidelines to be incorporated in the IE teacher training. Teacher training modules, handbooks, posters, brochures, leaflets, pamphlets developed Emphasis on training teachers on classroom practices and teaching methods, with an inclusive approach.

Inclusive education in elementary school

Inclusive Education refers to the education imparted to all types of the Disabled children in general schools with adaption catering to the needs of the children. To provide quality education each child is not only provided with the needed aids and appliances but also suitable teaching learning materials. Inclusive Education forms an integral component of the overall educational system.

Prior to Inclusive Education, Integrated Education for the Disabled Children (IED) was included in District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in the year 1998 and started working in one Block in each of Bolangir, Baragarh, Dhenkanal Gajapati, Keonjhar, Kalahandi, Rayagada and Sambalpur Districts. One District Resource Coordinator, IED with training in Special Education was engaged at District level to look after the education of the children with disabilities. Three special teachers, one trained in Visual Impairment, one in Hearing Impairment and one in Mental Retardation were engaged in each Block to provide resource support to the children with disabilities at school level.

Different activities such as Identification of disabled children, Medical Assessment camps, Distribution of Aids and Appliances, Training of Teachers, Parents and the persons related to them Speech Therapy for HI children, Theme based camp etc. were conducted at Block level during DPEP.

In the year 2001 the Integrated Education for the Disabled children programme was extended to all the Blocks of the DPEP districts and in the same year this programme was also extended in other 8 DPEP districts such as Koraput, Kandhamal, Boudh, Subarnapur, Nabarangpur, Mayurbhanj, Nuapada and Malhangiri districts in phase –ll.

Activities Undertaken For CWSN under Inclusive Education

- The Identification and Enrolment of CWSN.
- Medical Assessment camp for CWSN at Block level.

- Assistive Devices for O.I, V.I, H.I, and C.P children.
- Braille Books for V.I children.
- Surgical correction of cataract, cleft palate, cleft lip, ear drum and O.I child.
- Theme based camps for CWSN at Block level.
- Speech Therapy camp for H.I children.
- Physiotherapy camp for C.P children.
- Braille Training camp for severely V.I children.
- Pre-vocational Training camp for M.R children.
- Sports and Cultural Meet for CWSN at Block and District level.
- Escort Allowance for severe O.I, C.P, T.B and M.R children.
- Exposure Visit programme for CWSN.
- Observation of International day for the Disabled at Block and District level.
- Skill development camp for CWSN at Block level.
- Personality Development camp.
- Engagement of Block Resource Teacher and IE Volunteers.
- Training of Block Resource Teachers and IE Volunteer
- Training of Regular School Teachers, Parents, SMC members and PEI members.
- Foundation course training to teachers (90 days in distance mode).
- Summer camp for the CWSN.
- Resource centres for the CWSN at District and block level.
- Construction of Ramps and handrails, disabled friendly toilets at school point

Conclusion

The evolution of education has been long and tortuous, from the verbal transfer of cultural necessities to more specialised learning. It was only in the last two centuries that education, as we know it today, began to take shape. Learning theories were enunciated when psychologists began to make their contributions. Greater awareness resulted in stating educational aims for all persons. The education of persons with special education needs took on a greater impetus from the second decade of the last century and several methods have since been developed. Newer and more innovative methods are constantly evolving, which augurs well for the future. It is hoped that the model proposed in this paper can be field tested and thus add another fruitful dimension to the education of students with special education needs.

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