

# Comparative Study of Special Education and General Education

Emmanuel Hans

**Abstract—** Education means an all-round development of body, mind and spirit. Education can either be an academic or an experiential outcome; but helps in the overall growth of personality of an individual. Education helps one to understand a situation, take the challenge and explore the means to achieve the goals. Special education is a broad term used to by the law to describe specially designed instruction that meets the unique needs of a child who has a disability. Special education is in place to provide additional services, support, programs, specialized placements or environments to ensure that all students' educational needs are provided for.

**Index Terms—** Education, Academic, Special Education, Disability.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Education is a term which is more easily understood than defined. It has been derived from the Latin word "educatum" which means the act of teaching or training. According to some, it has also come from another Latin term "educare" which means "to bring up", "to raise". Some also believe that it has been originated from the Latin word "educere" which means "to lead forth" or "to come out".

Education is regarded as "a process of drawing out from within". That is why, Gandhi Ji meant "By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man, body, mind and spirit". Education is thus a process of self-expression. An individual expresses himself through education. These innate powers and potentialities are developed and drawn out through education. It is a means of adjustment of an individual with the society. It is a process by which he is brought into proper relationship with the ideas and Meals, customs and traditions of the society.

The child is weak, helpless and ignorant at birth. But he gradually grows and develops. He acquires knowledge and skills. He realizes thoughts into actions and satisfies his needs. He changes his behavior according to his environment. Such changes, growth and development of the individual are his education. This is the result of his learning and maturation.

Learning is living. Learning is the modification of behavior. Thus education is the process by which the knowledge, character and behavior of an individual are formed and modified. One's conduct and behavior are changed and

refined according to the desired standard of the society. This is the result of education

Education means an all-round development of body, mind and spirit. Education can either be an academic or an experiential outcome; but helps in the overall growth of personality of an individual. Education is an ongoing process, of knowing our own ignorance. Literacy is one of the means of education and it is not a start or end to education. Education helps one to understand a situation, take the challenge and explore the means to achieve the goals. Not knowing the directions and no supervision, does not pave our way in the direction of our destination. An educated person with the knowledge of action will definitely have a clear idea of his goals and the means to achieve them. We learn something and the purpose behind it, is its usage but not merely locking our knowledge without any advantage. Education makes an empty brain into an open mind. Right from our birth, a person is under the gradual process of education. We learn to respect our parents, elders, how to move in the society, sharing our thoughts, working on the goals through the process of knowing and implementing - education. Coming to a classroom, it is a place where introduction to the outside world is given. We are exposed to different varied subjects like math, social sciences, economics, humanities, literature etc. Are we not using the knowledge, gained in the classroom? Definitely yes, that knowledge pushes us forward in our interventions with the outside world. An academic knowledge with experience of how and when to use it, gives a person his recognition in the society. Having all knowledge and not using does not make any sense of having memory of them. A developed mind will always search for the opportunities to show its knowledge, indeed the educational facts it learned and not memorized. So, education means to develop an open mind. Education is an important human activity. It was born with the birth of the human race and shall continue to function as long as the human race lives.

## II. THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

### 1. An essential human virtue

Education is an essential human virtue. Man becomes 'man' through education. He is what education makes him. It has been rightly said that without education, man is a splendid slave, reasoning savage.

### 2. A necessity for society

Education is necessary for society. Education fashions and models man for society. Man cannot be conceived merely in

terms of his biological existence. Education brings into focus the social aspect of man. Education signifies man's supreme position in society.

### **3. Important for the integration of separate entities**

An individual is made up of different entities. Education brings about the integration of these separate entities.

### **4. Gives significance of life**

Education teaches what man lives and struggles for. It cultivates an integrated life. By so doing, it gives significance of life.

### **5. Educated men are superior**

Education is a sign of superiority. Aristotle wrote, "Educated men are as much superior to uneducated as the living are to the dead."

### **6. Sign of freedom**

Education is a sign of freedom. Epictetus had declared, "Only the educated are free."

### **7. A controlling grace**

Diogenes felt that "Education is a controlling grace to the young, consolation to the old wealth to the poor and ornament to the rich."

### **8. Basis of good life**

Education is an essential basis of good life. A man becomes a human being in the real sense when he is transformed from primarily an animal being into a human being.

In short, education is an essential concomitant of all human societies. "What sculpture is to a block of marble, education is to the soul", says Addison. Education is important because it trains the human mind, opens people to the rest of the world, and helps people find solutions to many of the world's problems. Education trains the human mind to make the right decisions. From learning about past decisions and mistakes, we can figure out what the best path to take is in certain situations. Education helps people make the right decisions because it encourages them to be thinkers. An educated person can think of the positive and negative effects of every decision that they make and, more likely than not, they will make better decisions than an uneducated person who does not know how to reason would. All humans have some reasoning ability, but only the educated can reason and make decisions in the most efficient way. This is because their reasoning skills have been fine tuned. For example, an educated person may use his or her knowledge of science to fix a chair or to determine why their metal baseball bat is rusting. For another problem, an educated person might draw on their knowledge of English and logic to help them form an argument. For an educated person, these tasks would be very simple. But, for an uneducated person, these tasks would prove very difficult. An uneducated person will have many difficulties in his or her life because he or she does not possess the ability to reason as well as educated people can. The training of the human mind is one of the most important values of education. Education opens our minds to the outside world. It allows us

to gain knowledge of other cultures and to learn more about our own culture. An uneducated person is shut off from the outside world. Because he or she cannot read or write, the uneducated person cannot gain wisdom or insight from books, magazines, or other mediums. Someone who is uneducated will not have knowledge of current events and will become isolated. On the other hand, an educated person will gain knowledge of the outside world and will be able to apply this knowledge to events in his or her own life.

Education helps to solve many of the world's problems. It is a simple fact that countries with higher literacy rates generally have higher standards of living. Why is this so? It is because the countries with higher literacy rates have citizens who are better educated than the countries with lower literacy rates. One of the greatest sayings dealing with education is this, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." This quote can be applied to education. For example, if we make small donations to troubled countries, then in reality we are really not helping them out very much. But, if we help to establish a strong education system, then the citizens will gain reasoning skills, be opened to the rest of the world, and ultimately will have a higher standard of living. Educated people can help society in many different ways. An educated people will be able to communicate ideas with each other better because they will know how to read and write. Also, the knowledge gained from education will help everyone in their careers because they will better understand what they are doing. Furthermore, education helps society because an educated people will be able to help improve the society they currently live in by applying their knowledge to the problems that they encounter. Education is necessary to increase the economic, political, and social development of any country.

### **III. SPECIAL EDUCATION OR SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION**

Special education or special needs education is the education of students with special needs in a way that addresses the students' individual differences and needs. Ideally, this process involves the individually planned and systematically monitored arrangement of teaching procedures, adapted equipment and materials, accessible settings, and other interventions designed to help learners with special needs achieve a higher level of personal self-sufficiency and success in school and community than would be available if the student were only given access to a typical classroom education.

Common special needs include challenges with learning, communication challenges, emotional and behavioral disorders, physical disabilities, and developmental disorders. Students with these kinds of special needs are likely to benefit from additional educational services such as different approaches to teaching, use of technology, a specifically adapted teaching area, or resource room.

Intellectual giftedness is a difference in learning and can also benefit from specialized teaching techniques or different educational programs, but the term "special education" is generally used to specifically indicate instruction of students whose special needs reduce their ability to learn independently or in an ordinary classroom, and gifted education is handled separately.

In most developed countries, educators are modifying teaching methods and environments so that the maximum number of students are served in general education environments. Special education in developed countries is often regarded less as a "place" and more as "a range of services, available in every school." Integration can reduce social stigmas and improve academic achievement for many students.

Special education is a broad term used to by the law to describe specially designed instruction that meets the unique needs of a child who has a disability. These services are provided by the public school system and are free of charge. Services can include instruction in the classroom, at home, in hospitals and institutions. Learning disabilities cover a wide spectrum of disorders ranging from mild to severe. They can include mental, physical, behavioral and emotional disabilities.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states, that everyone has a right to education. Education is worldwide noticed as an aim of, but also as a solution to, national development. Education systems are constantly being developed and expanded. Still, equal educational opportunities are not available for all and in particular the development of special education has lagged behind in many countries. However, international guidelines out of which the most relevant are the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All (1990) followed by the Dakar Framework for Action (2000), the Standard Rules for the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1994) and the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994), outline rights and purposes for the education of all children.

There are different definitions of the concept of special educational needs (special needs). In this study it is purposeful to refer to the British definition by the Warnock Report (DES 1978, reprinted 1982) and the definition by Brennan (1982) that both correspond to this study. Brennan defines special educational needs as those which require more than the skill of the classroom 14teacher. That is to say there is a need for supporting the teacher or creating an alternative learning situation for the pupil. In the Warnock Report special educational needs are defined to as requiring:

The provision of special means of access to the curriculum through special equipment, facilities or resources, modification of the physical environment or special learning techniques;

The provision of special or modified curriculum;

Particular attention to the social structure and emotional climate in which education takes place. (Warnock Report, reprinted 1982, p.41)

Brennan argues that the definition of the Warnock Report is educational for it centers on the curriculum. In addition it was fairly advanced for it emphasized on the facilities required (Brennan 1982). Furthermore defines pupils with special educational needs as differing from others in mental, physical or social characteristics to such extend that, for the full development of inherent potential, modification of school provision or practice or special educational services are needed (MOE 1996). However, many current definitions reject the distinction between "normal" learners and those with special educational needs.

Booth (1998) refers on the social model where the difficulty in learning arises out of a relationship between students, curricula, teachers and other resources available for learning. Mengeshna (2000) furthermore notes that there has been a shift from the narrow scope of "special education for the disabled" to "the education of all children with diverse needs". For the purposes of this study, however, these definitions would be too broad. Hence special educational needs are defined special education can be defined as by Brennan (1985). The combination of curriculum, teaching, support and learning conditions necessary in order to meet the pupil's special educational needs in an appropriate and effective manner. It may form all or part of the pupil's curriculum, may be delivered individually or in association with others, and may form all or part of his school career. (Brennan 1985 pp.30-31)

Kasonde and Moberg (2001) define special education simply as an individually planned, systematically implemented and carefully evaluated instruction to help learners who need extra support in learning.

**A. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA),** Special Education is defined as: "Specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability."

Special education is in place to provide additional services, support, programs, specialized placements or environments to ensure that all students' educational needs are provided for. Special education is provided to qualifying students at no cost to the parents. There are many students who have special learning needs and these needs are addressed through special education. The range of special education support will vary based on need and educational jurisdictions. Each country, state or educational jurisdiction will have different policies, rules, regulations and legislation that governs what special education is. In the US, the governing law is: **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** Typically, the types of exceptionalities/disabilities will be clearly identified in the jurisdiction's law surrounding special education. Students qualifying for special education support have needs that will

often require support that goes beyond what is normally offered or received in the regular school/classroom setting. There are 13 categories of special education as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

<u>Autism</u>	
Blindness	Orthopedic Impairment
Deafness	Other Health Impaired
Emotional Disturbance	Specific Learning Disability
Hearing Impairment	Speech or Language Impairment
Mental Retardation	Traumatic Brain Injury
Multiple Disabilities	Visual Impairment

In order for the IEP team to QUALIFY a child for services, they must be found to have one of the 13 categories of special education and it must adversely affect their educational performance.

**B. Identifying students with special needs**

Some children are easily identified as candidates for special needs from their medical history. They may have been diagnosed with a genetic condition that is associated with mental retardation, may have various forms of brain damage, may have a developmental disorder, may have visual or hearing disabilities, or other disabilities.

Among students whose identification is less obvious, such as students with learning difficulties, two primary methods have been used for identifying them: the discrepancy model and the response to intervention model. The discrepancy model depends on the teacher noticing that the students' achievements are noticeably below what is expected. The response to intervention model advocates earlier intervention. In the discrepancy model, a student receives special educational services for a specific learning difficulty (SLD) if and only if the student has at least normal intelligence and the student's academic achievement is below what is expected of a student with his or her IQ. Although the discrepancy model has dominated the school system for many years, there has been substantial criticism of this approach (e.g., Aaron, 1995, Flanagan and Mascolo, 2005) among researchers. One reason for criticism is that diagnosing SLDs on the basis of the discrepancy between achievement and IQ does not predict the effectiveness of treatment. Low academic achievers who also have low IQ appear to benefit from treatment just as much as low academic achievers who have normal or high intelligence.

The alternative approach, response to intervention, identifies children who are having difficulties in school in their first or second year after starting school. They then receive additional assistance such as participating in a reading remediation program. The response of the children to this intervention then determines whether they are designated as having a learning disability. Those few who still have trouble may then receive designation and further assistance. Sternberg (1999) has argued that early remediation can greatly reduce the number of children meeting diagnostic criteria for learning disabilities. He has also suggested that the focus on learning disabilities and the provision of accommodations in school fails to acknowledge that people have a range of strengths and weaknesses and places undue emphasis on academics by insisting that people should be propped up.

**111. How Special Education Differs from General Education?**

The following are broad conclusions drawn from descriptive studies of classroom conditions and from surveys of teacher attitudes and practices. However, many classrooms and teachers may differ because of local conditions and practices.

**General Education**

**Class size:** Average class size is larger (24 elementary, 21 high school) than in special education (15).

**Teacher training:** Teachers' pre-service training is likely to focus either on content (for example, history or math) or on a developmental stage (for example, kindergarten). General educators may have received an introductory course describing children with special needs, resulting in limited information about and limited opportunity to practice teaching techniques effective in meeting special needs. Such courses have been called "inherently superficial" by the National Association of State Boards of Education Study Group on Special Education. a

**Accountability:** Teachers are working in a climate of higher standards and raised expectations. They are expected to cover a set curriculum over the course of the year, raise student test scores, and maintain order in the classroom.

**Classroom practices:** Common practices are those which support average learners. Large-group instruction is the norm, although individual and small-group assignments also occur. Monitoring of students involves brief informal checking on what students are doing (as opposed to extended observations and data collection), with limited direct feedback to students (as opposed to extended, frequent one-on-one feedback about student progress).

When surveyed, teachers report lack of training to adapt the curriculum to individual students' special needs. They may be reluctant to adjust scoring and grading criteria for individual students.

Disruptive student behavior is a major concern of teachers (many would prefer to have disruptive students removed from the class). Further, when observed, teachers demonstrate a limited range of techniques to modify disruptive behavior.

Students do not generally receive instruction to help them acquire appropriate behaviors or social skills.

Teachers who have the greatest success at raising the academic achievement of the whole class may also have the least tolerance for students with impaired skills or with maladaptive behavior.

#### Special Education

Class size: Average class size (15) is smaller than in general education.

Teacher training: Teachers are somewhat more likely to have advanced degrees. However, because of personnel shortages nationwide, about 10% of special education personnel are not certified for the position they hold. b

Accountability: Each student in special education has an individualized education program (IEP), and teachers are expected to help each student advance toward his or her individual goals.

Classroom practices: A minority of studies have found few differences between general and special education in terms of instructional practices. However, the majority of studies have found differences, summarized below.

Special education teachers are likely to use a wider variety of teaching strategies. Special education teachers are also more likely to monitor student behavior frequently, praise students, and provide answers to their own questions if student response is inadequate. Special education teachers collect more data to monitor student progress and are more knowledgeable about individual students. Materials are covered at a slower pace. Teachers have a wider repertoire of responses to manage students' disruptive behavior or inattention.

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