

## **IS Existing Curriculum of Special School in Bangladesh Suits Employment Opportunities?’**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Students with disabilities face a lot of problems receiving an education because of their unique educational needs. The researcher intended to explore the key components of the curriculum that is being used in special schools in Bangladesh. The general provisions, key elements and intervention design in the curriculum were the main focus while reviewing the curriculum in special schools. The study was qualitative in nature and data was collected from special schools selected purposively from Dhaka city. Data had been collected through classroom observation, key informant interview and discussion with the focus group. The selected respondents for the study were class teachers, head teachers or principals of the schools, parents, District Education Officer, District Social Welfare Officers, officials from the Ministries of Education and social welfare and experts in the field of special education. Respondents were selected purposively. Findings from the study are presented using a thematic analysis approach. Some of the themes are instructional objectives in the curriculum, use of teaching-learning materials, assessment procedures, arrangement of recreational activities for students, teaching skills such as motor skills, communication skills, daily living skills, arrangement for transitional skills etc. In special schools, the teachers use individualized education program (IEP) while teaching students with special needs. The IEPs are prepared by a multidisciplinary team of professionals including therapists, special educators, psychologists and parents.*

**Keyword: Curriculum; Learning; Special School; Employment; Bangladesh**

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### **I. INTRODUCTION:**

Children's distinctive features, preferences and behaviors and diversity in learning styles enable differential instructional approaches to be used to promote learning by a teacher in the classroom. There is a need to establish a single special curriculum to meet the diversity. It also stresses the need for a program to ensure an awareness of the diversity of learners. A particular program seeks to provide quality education that will enable all special children to learn successfully and participate equally in the classroom (David, 2004-2006). It also provides kids with the dignity and trust to understand. The curriculum being developed by the States must be versatile and specific in nature and unified. States should also ensure that the same program is pursued in all special schools in the nation for children with special needs. Learners with special needs, for instance, have the right to a special learning environment. In traditional curriculum models, this calls for proper adjustment. Flexible techniques are required in order to promote entry and retention for learners with special needs.

When any child with special needs in the classroom is given the opportunity to learn the best according to their academic ability, the process of changing, expanding or adjusting the curriculum according to the various skill levels of the students in one class is to make a difference in the curriculum. Small improvements in learning content, learning-friendly environment, effective learning approach, adaptation in learning assistance and assessment should be made to keep children with disabilities in mind when changing the curriculum. If the program is therefore designed and adapted in this manner to all special children in the schools, so for all children with disabilities, learning will be maximized.

### **II. LITERATURE REVIEW:**

Munir&Zaman, (2009)The gross enrolment rates in the formal primary system have risen to 97.5 per cent in 2001. Efforts to bring girls to school have been very fruitful and the enrolment rate of girls is actually similar to that of boys (boys 80 per cent and girls 82 per cent). The overall net enrolment ratio is about 80 per cent. But at the same time, the education system creates barriers to effective learning for many children. Children with disabilities and special educational needs are part of this group,

Eskey&Oboegbulem, (2019)There are learners who have different learning styles. But all of them should have equal opportunities for Education according to their own way of learning. The education system cannot be successful for all learners, especially for learners with special educational needs unless there is a

proper education system which can fulfil the requirements for all learners from diversified groups. A wide-scale of awareness and initiative about the Education is required for children with disabilities in Bangladesh. It is necessary to arrange for individualized program, participatory or collaborative approach, coordinated and accountable initiatives for the children with special educational needs for their better education and improved life. Therefore, needs a specialized curriculum.

Finch & Crunkilton, (1999) The curriculum of a school consists of all that fosters the academic, personal, social and physical growth of learners. It involves instruction, learning and evaluation methods, the consistency of relationships within the school, and the ideals reflected in the way the school operates, lessons, as well as extracurricular activities. The special education program provides specially tailored training, as well as all educational and related resources for students classified as having a disability. Curriculum for improved education is a prime necessity. The program is a training range and series. It should concentrate on developing the whole individual. The curriculum can be described as the sum of the learning activities and experiences of a student under the sponsorship or guidance of the school. Basically, the program is what tells you what to teach and when to teach it. It's a collection of skills, often based on developmental norms, often related to, and sometimes not, national norms or core values. Often it takes the tools and methods to teach the potential and sometimes it doesn't. Generally, general educators do not have to worry much about what curriculum they can use because they are expected to teach national standards and the school system.

### **III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

- ❖ To review the existing provision in the curriculum (according to the stated definition of the special education curriculum) for the education and programs for special needs students in school.
- ❖ To describe the interventions designed to facilitate employment opportunities and transition plan for students with special educational needs after receiving Education.

### **IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following questions can be stated to assist in Curriculum assessment for students with special educational needs:

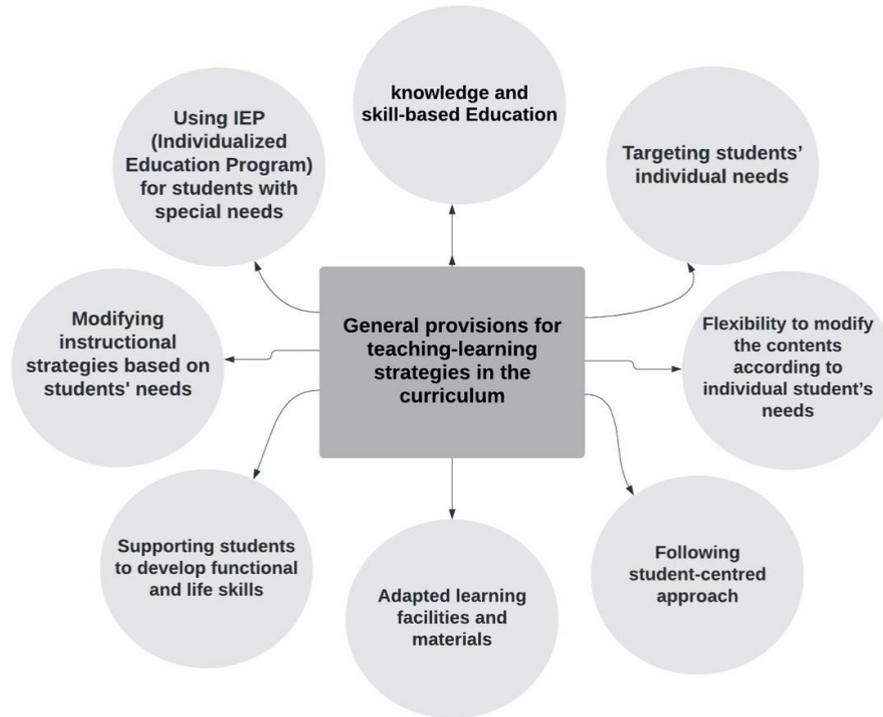
1. Does the curriculum provide specific instructional steps or sequences for determining to what extent the student presently exhibit the skill or training deficiency in question?
2. Does the curriculum make provisions for determining what an acceptable criterion performance would be for the identified need area?
3. Does the curriculum make provision for determining specific intervention has concluded and criterion performance has been documented for employment opportunity?

### **V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A well-designed methodology section of an empirical study can provide a good understanding of the methods used in the study. Morrison and Scott (2006) considered methodology as a theory or set of concepts about establishing correlation among aspects of how the researcher achieve knowledge in research context. The goal of this research was to examine the provision of education for students with special educational needs in the curriculum. The investigator concentrated on parental engagement, cooperative learning methods that facilitate the regular interaction of students with peers for improved learning and socialization. The study also focused on teachers' knowledge and skills, and involvement of professionals other than teachers in the special schools. The study also intended to explore the key components of the curriculum focusing on curriculum objectives, key learning areas within the curriculum guidelines, teaching and learning methods, the use of age-appropriate and ability-appropriate materials and the design for measuring and reviewing the success and achievement of students. The purpose of the researcher was to identify the interventions aimed at promoting job opportunities after obtaining education for students with specific educational needs. The researcher looked for evidence of the involvement of Students with different organizations. There was a special focus on investigating the factors or barriers to getting jobs or other works.

### **VI. FINDING OF THE STUDY**

The class teachers follow instructions in the curriculum for teaching-learning strategies. They also focus on the individual needs of students. Accordingly, they apply different teaching strategies that best fit the needs of the students in the classroom. The teachers mentioned that the instructions for an activity base on the understanding levels of students. Again, one instruction may not work for all the students in the classroom. Focusing on the individual needs of students, the teachers modify instructional strategies when necessary. Besides instructional strategies, the teaching-learning methods and techniques also need modification for many students. Many students cannot cover all the topics which are prescribed according to the National Curriculum and the textbooks. For those students, the teachers become flexible to modify the contents in the curriculum based on the student's educational level, skills and interest.

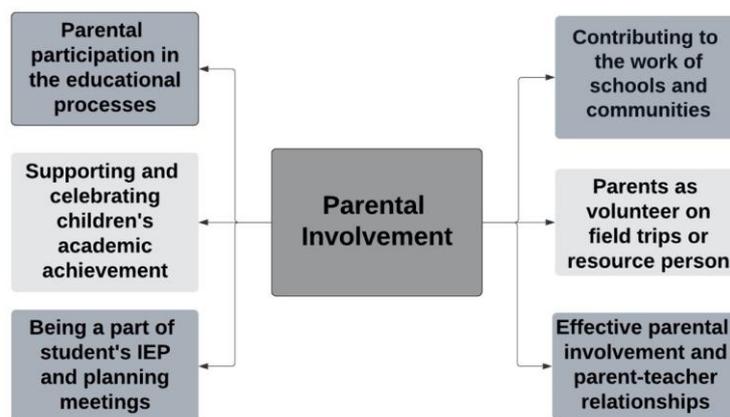


Some provisions in the curriculum used in special schools

**PARENT’S INVOLVEMENT**

The parents are always invited to support the teachers and if they want they can also participate and contribute as a volunteer service provider in the special schools. Parents are also an integral part of the individualized education plans (IEP) of the student who has special educational needs. Before preparing the IEP for a student, teachers have a meeting with parents to know different information about the child’s present situation and progress. Teachers also want to know parents’ expectations for their child before setting academic goals and goals for developing other skill areas.

Parent-teacher collaboration is important for monitoring the student’s progress, preparing IEPs, curriculum modifications, counselling services, therapies and other accommodations. The researcher also presents some expected areas of parental support for successfully continuing children's special education program and those are shown in a figure below:



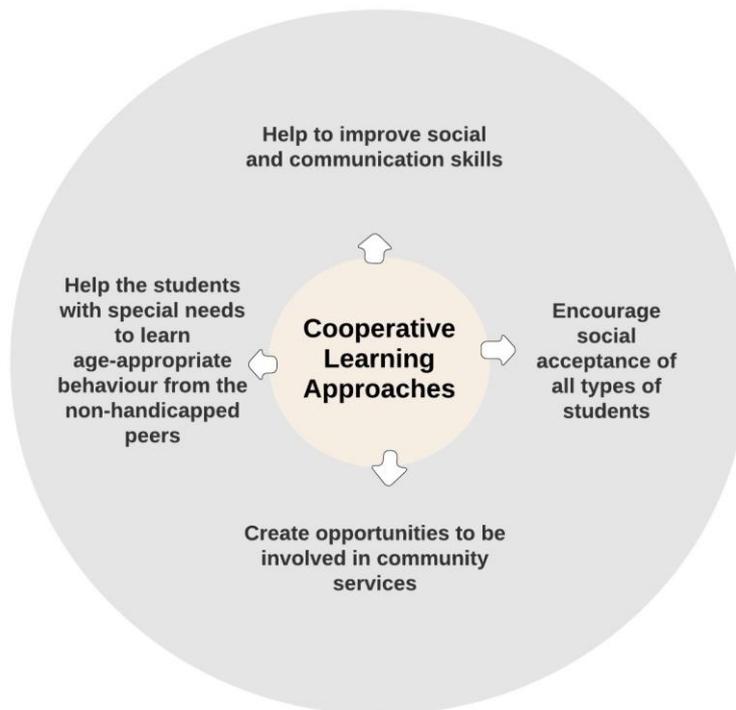
Importance and practices of parental involvement in special education program

**Cooperative Learning Approaches:**

Cooperative learning methods also encourage the regular contact of students with disabilities with other non-disabled peers. It helps to increase learning opportunities for students with disabilities. So, the authority in special schools organizes multiple services in schools so that students with special educational needs can communicate with students without special needs to provide them with the opportunities to learn age-appropriate attitude from the non-handicapped peers.

When students without disabilities work with students with disabilities, they need to possess positive behavior towards them. So, the school authority arranges counselling sessions for them focusing on how to cooperate with children with disabilities. Counselling sessions help them to be supportive and develop a positive attitude towards the students with SENs. Some of the teachers shared that to create more opportunities, whenever possible, the teachers make pairs of students with and without disabilities to work together in different activities or in community services. Thus the school authority and the teachers take initiatives to promote cooperative learning approaches among all the students in the classroom.

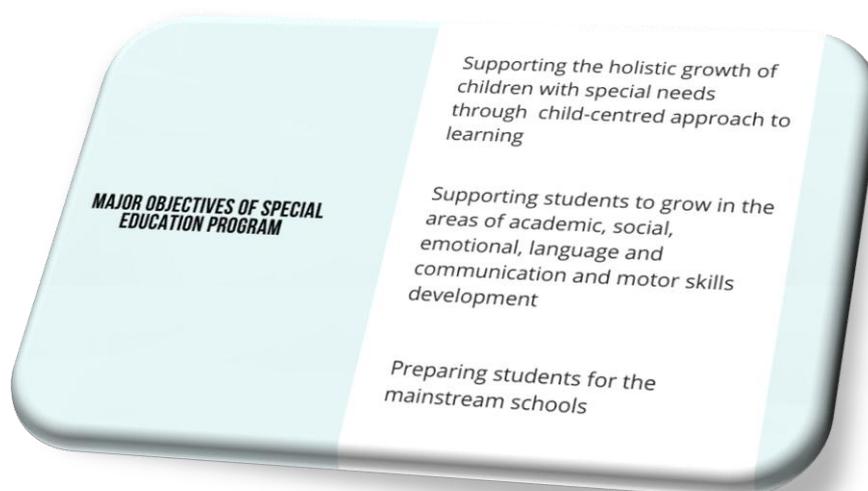
Some aspects of cooperative learning approaches are shown in the following figure:



Cooperative learning approaches for students with disabilities

**MAJOR OBJECTIVES OF THE CURRICULUM IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN BANGLADESH**

Depending on the educational level and the skills of students, the key learning areas are determined for them. The overall goal for the students with special needs is to enhance their knowledge and develop their skills in different areas, such as social, mental, cognitive and everyday living abilities. The teachers in the special schools shared their expectations from the students with different types of disabilities. If these students can receive education based on their levels and develop daily living skills, they can live a better life in society. The targets for educational achievements are determined according to students' cognitive level and areas of interests. The goal and objectives for each student are written in the IEP. There are specific objectives for a student in the areas of academic, social and communication. Both the teachers and the class teachers described their initiatives to prepare the students for mainstream schools if possible. They use an individually focused teaching-learning approach that helps the students to learn and grow in different areas. The major objectives in the curriculum are presented in the figure below:



#### **FACTORS CREATING BARRIERS FOR EMPLOYMENT OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS**

While interviews with special educators, classroom teachers and govt. officials, they mentioned many factors that are creating barriers for employment, such as

- ❖ Lack of disability friendly work environment
- ❖ Lack of awareness and social prejudice among employers
- ❖ Lack of awareness of employers about students' strength, skills and interest
- ❖ Opportunities for appropriate job
- ❖ Lack of policy and implementation practice
- ❖ Lack of appropriate communication, socialization skill, life skill and motor skills
- ❖ Proper Curriculum for training in job skills

To be prepared for employment, a student with special needs or disabilities needs a proper transition plan. They must develop related skills to be eligible for a special job. For many jobs, the candidates need to pass at least the S.S.C examination. But many of the students with SENs cannot pass S.S.C exams and thus they go behind.

Besides, if a student has a problem in some areas, such as communication, interpersonal skills and decision-making abilities, he or she struggles to show the efficiencies to get a job. Experts' opinions suggest that the teachers introduce the strategies to develop these skills from earlier in their school life so that gradually they can master some necessary skills when they go to adulthood.

#### **V. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

In the national curriculum and teacher's guide, there are instructions on the teaching-learning strategies while conducting the classes. But, the teachers who teach students with special educational needs use many other additional strategies to make the students engaged in the classroom activities. They also use structured teaching-learning strategies but in flexible ways. Many of the special needs students need extra support and reinforcement to continue educational or other skill development activities. Again, some other students need a break, in the middle of their work. Thus, in a special classroom, different students may have different learning needs. As the teachers need to address their different needs, they have to use multiple strategies to focus on those learners in the classroom. Special Education experts suggested many additional ways to make the students with special needs more engaged in the classroom activities.

Many teachers have very negative attitudes towards learners with special educational requirements. The quality of teachers' training needs to be improved so that teachers can be motivated in such a way that they can work with students from diverse groups. They need to be open-minded, motivated enough and should possess a positive attitude toward the students with special educational needs. They should respect diversity. The Bangladesh government should think critically about the welfare of students with special educational needs and what methods should be used to improve them. Curriculum experts should think that which content may be appropriate for these students. They should not be imposed with so many subjects with large contents. Only the necessary contents in each subject may be selected for SENs according to their ability and interests.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The study was conducted to review the curriculum that are being used in the special schools in Bangladesh. In this report, one of the key goals was to review the program requirements to provide special needs students with education and other additional resources. The research also investigated the key components of the curriculum which can describe the teaching-learning activities in the classroom. The study also intended to explore the intervention design that can prepare students for employment. Before conducting the study, the researcher reviewed literature that focused on the key components of the curriculum in special schools in different other countries of the world. In addition, several action plans that are being used around the world to promote jobs and empowerment for students with special needs have been reviewed. The goal of the research was to provide a guide for teachers and other issues in or outside the classroom, as well as for parents of special needs students. Major results from the research will help to use efficient and consistent methods to meet the needs of students with special needs using an acceptable curriculum in the classroom while teaching and learning.

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