



Strategies of Curriculum Building for Special Needs Students

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Abstract:

This study aims to develop strategies to build curriculum for people with special needs to rear them on their community in a sound form. Researchers adopted a theoretical descriptive approach which is based on the analysis of the strategies of constructing special needs with special needs curriculum and the requirements of its use in education. Learning through sporting activities for people with special needs can serve all the other subjects in their curriculum. It helps revive it from the rigidity of the written symbols and turn it into vivid images embodied by the student as a participant (performer), and as a spectator (recipient). It responds to their needs and desires and satisfies them. It serves all learners whether ordinary or with special needs.

Keywords: Strategies of Curriculum, Special Needs Students.

1.1 Introduction and importance of study

The process of updating curriculum makes use of many aspects of the educational systems, but the change on a large scale is rare to happen in most educational systems. This type of change requires an agreement between officials and teachers. It also requires an adequate funding for materials and teacher training. However, this does not mean that the process of change is impossible. On the contrary, the teacher may take the initiative in the process of changing on a limited scale. S/he reviews and amends the contents and administrative procedures from time to time in order to adapt them in accordance with what s/he sees as appropriate at the school situation. Yet, it is rare that experts, headmasters, educational supervisors get convinced about the amendments done by teachers on the curriculum. They try to encourage the continuation of change on a large scale in the curriculum and in the procedural structures in schools.

One of the most important rights of people with special needs is the right to express their own inner feelings through imagination and interacting with the ordinary. These rights have been unknown and neglected for a long time. The cutting-edge curriculum should meet their needs, stimulate imaginative abilities, and develop and evoke the physical effort in order to increase their abilities and sensitize them of the importance of their rights. This is one of the main pillars for the success of special education programs.

The importance of the study lies in the need to urge special education curriculum designers to adopt strategies to build their own curriculum that takes into account the diversity of the abilities of the learner's classes, and includes topics and activities that achieve equal advancement. This is due to the fact that curriculum plays a great role in the success of their education and provide them with educational, cultural, social and technical expertise to grow comprehensively, and to modify their behavior through a range of information, facts, concepts and provisions which they study and learn. This dictates that the curriculum should be relevant to their requirements and needs, through adopting modern strategies to build these approaches, and the application of methods and means compatible with their characteristics and conditions because their education depends on the sensory experiences that compensate for their lost senses.

Most of the current curricula on all levels in educational institutes of people with special needs are isolated from reality and do not take into account future requirements and challenges related to accommodation of students and their imagination that makes learning fun for them. They are focusing on the cognitive aspects and on the collection of information from the textbook only, without taking into account their skills, emotional aspects, or individual differences among them.

This requires teachers to strengthen their abilities to find solutions to the students' problems through special ways and methods in teaching them and in their understanding of the subjects. Moreover, the goals of teaching should not only be directed to gain knowledge but to include directing students to use their potential by using the thinking and learning processes and autonomy in science with the help of modern teaching aids. These aids help the teacher take into account individual differences, and adopting them in their lessons provides the ability to attract the attention of students for a long time. This, in turn, helps in absorbing information and understanding by using visual and audio devices, which cultivate new experiences working on the reorganization of the previous experience. It is the basis for the understanding of the subjects.

The special education curriculum is one of the main pillars that meets their needs and increases their abilities. If these approaches have been prepared in an appropriate manner and studied in ways and methods consistent with the type and degree of disability for each student, then those may achieve a remarkable educational progress.

This study aims to develop strategies to build curriculum for people with special needs to rear them on their community in a sound form.

Activating the use of audio- visual is one of the main pillars for the success of the special education curriculum.

Choosing materials that are compatible with their interests, abilities and needs.

2.1 Special education curricula

Special education curricula are often not prepared in advance by the competent committees to fit certain age and study stage as with general curriculum, but are prepared to fit into a child or a certain individual in the light of the results of measuring the current level of his/her performance in terms of strengths and weaknesses. There is no general curriculum for students with special needs in special education curriculum, but there are general goals and outlines of what could be called the content of the curriculum. These are derived from the educational objectives that form the basis of an individual curriculum for each special needs student separately. But in spite of that, we can see that the curriculum in special education is no different

in substance from the general curriculum prepared for students without disabilities, because it includes, in the final analysis, the same basic elements of the curriculum which are: objectives, content, methods, means, and evaluation (Yousef Saleh, 2000).

Their own curricula must not be isolated from the society since they are living in a society with values, ideals, customs, traditions and trends. Therefore, the responsibility for the curriculum is to function as a window to rear them on their community in a pure sound form and be an instrument for social change. In addition, it should connect the institutions to the society and its circumstances and problems. The construction of the curriculum should be based on the selection of materials that are compatible with tendencies of special needs students and their abilities and fits their needs. It is a well-known fact that the approach that does not take care of them is not considered an effective curriculum.

2.2 Dimensions of curriculum updating

Updating or changing a curriculum requires an understanding of authoritarian structures, and the values that facilitate or impede change. These structures lead either to the introduction and implementation of modern driveways or lead to powerful installation factors within the school situation which undertake the change.

There are three views about the process of change. Alternative ideas are given to participation roles involved in the renewal of education, in each of them, the power and values of the various participants are determined within the school structure and, thus, leading to different ideas about the updating process:

1. Technical perspective

The technical perspective to modernize curricula comes from experienced and knowledgeable groups who carefully provide developed curriculum projects as a result of careful research to be distributed to schools. It is assumed that teachers follow specific guidelines for these projects. This perspective focuses on the content or knowledge as a product of the process of updating the curriculum. Thereby, it determines the most valuable types of knowledge for students and for the community and is organized with the gradual progress so that the students can finely do.

2. The environmental perspective

The environmental perspective to modernize the curriculum focuses on the complexity of the teaching environment as a source for both installation and change. Teachers within this perspective participate actively in the systematic decision-making process and are the initiators of change. On the other hand, the teachers do not work in isolation; they have to respond to a range of influencing factors (such as scheduling, differences between students and terms length). These factors limit their ability to control their curriculum and teaching decisions so that the teacher responds to environmental stance.

3. The cultural perspective

Proponents of this perspective focus on the impact of the change on the teacher as a fundamental participant in the educational process. The cultural perspective focuses on the process of changing the curriculum within a common culture of shared meanings and understandings, to form a school situation that facilitates the learning process.

Curriculum updating and change can begin from several different views within the educational situation. Renovations from top to base led by experts outside the school and the administrative authorities are responsible for providing teacher training and financial support to carry out the renovations.

Renovations from base to top are designed by teachers in their classrooms and then spread to other classes and schools. Each method has its advantages and disadvantages. The most effective innovations are those that are welcomed by authoritarian levels and classroom levels, and make use of the administrative funding and practical tasks designed by teachers and from the teaching strategies necessary for change on the long-term.

2.3 Teacher's tasks in the process of curriculum updating

The curriculum decisions for special education teachers are practical decisions targeted toward solving a specific problem or addressed to the needs of pupils. In each case, teachers should decide how to invest time and energy to bring about fundamental changes. Teachers introduce renovations in their programs through changes in:

1. Content

The special education teacher determines the content of the subject, which he understands, of the school. The teacher seeks to learn how to design and implement curricula to meet the needs of pupils and the school. He has to determine the contributions that he believes to contribute to the achievement of the curriculum content.

2. Capabilities

Change that aims to develop new capabilities or access to modern tools requires a great deal of mental and physical energy, and takes a long time. The teacher should realize the shortcomings of these capabilities and use them economically to ensure the renovations that are believed to be useful to the largest number of pupils.

3. Expertise or Tasks

Most experiences or assignments that are used in lessons and units of special education were used many times before. The development of modules or subjects takes a lot of time, thinking and reorganization. Some innovations require new duties such as solving problems or making decisions that lead pupils towards the correct answer instead of informing them how to perform. The quality renovations take a long time to prepare. Teachers often do not have the expertise to invent or choose these tasks, or to organize them in the form of advanced effective sequences in order to let pupils get maximum learning.

4. Assembling students and scheduling

Teachers can choose to assemble students in homogeneous groups according to ability or learning style, or any other characteristics affecting the success of the assignment. Each form of assembly has its advantages and disadvantages. The teacher should understand the specific activities and characteristics in each assembly in order to restructure the right environment that lead to good learning.

5. Using time and place

Changes in the use of time and space require cooperation with other teachers and negotiating about effective arrangements to teach. This may

require the teacher to give up things of high priority, place or time for some time in order to serve better teaching situations.

3. Study Methodology

3.1 Methodology

Researchers adopted a theoretical descriptive approach which is based on the analysis of the strategies of constructing special needs with special needs curriculum and the requirements of its use in education.

3.2 Study Plan

The researchers relied in their study plan for this topic on:

1. The concept of special education and its modern trends
2. The steps of building special education curriculum
3. The strategies used in the education of students with special needs
4. The requirements of the application of the special education curriculum and the factors influencing it
5. The suitability of the curriculum for students with special needs
6. Teachers and staff roles in special education institutions in the process of curriculum updating
7. Future scenarios for the development of the curriculum of students with special needs

4. Study Topics

4.1 Strategies of special needs curriculum building

Curriculum plays a great role in the success of special needs education because they provide them with educational, cultural, social and technical expertise to grow in a comprehensive manner and modify their behavior through a series of information, facts, concepts and provisions which they study and learn. This dictates that the curriculum be closely relevant to their requirements and needs, through the adoption of strategies to build this curriculum. The model presented by Wehman (1981) is considered one of the approved models in the area of special education. It is of five stages or steps, namely:

First, identifying the internal behavior

Constructing children with special needs curriculum is based on our knowledge of the characteristics of these children. Children with severe intellectual disabilities differ in their needs from children with medium or simple intellectual disabilities. Moreover, children with slow learning differ in their needs from people with learning difficulties, and so on. Therefore, from the beginning, we need preliminary information about the category we are dealing with in general, so we can move forward in the construction of the curriculum (Yousef Saleh, 2002).

Second, measuring the current level of performance

The curriculum of student with special educational needs is done after identifying the current performance of the student. The current level of performance measurement is considered the cornerstone of special education. This process aims to identify strengths and weaknesses or needs in student performance using one scale or more which measure the different behavioral skills in each dimension of the different dimensions contained in the curriculum content for students with special educational needs.

Third, setting up individual educational plan

Individual education plan preparation process starts after completing the measurement of current performance level, which is considered as a special curriculum for children with special needs. It is designed in a special manner for a particular child in order to correspond to his/her educational needs, so as to include all expected goals to be achieved according to certain criteria in a period of specific time (Farouk Al Rosan and Haron, 2001).

Fourth, the individual educational plan

Individual educational plan constitutes the operational aspect of the individual educational plan. The individual learning plan is written after preparing the educational plan, which includes only one goal of the educational goals set forth in the individual educational plan for the education of children with special needs.

We should develop an independent individual learning plan for each learning objective in the individual educational plan (Farouk Al Rosan, 1999).

4.2 Strategies used in the education of students with special needs

There are many strategies based on theories of learning and psychological and developmental principles for children with special educational needs during their educational process. The most important of these strategies are:

1. Training based on analyzing and simplifying the task

It means the direct training on specific skills necessary to perform a more important task. Supporters of the use of this strategy presuppose that there is no defect or developmental deficits in children and that their suffering is limited to a lack of training and experience in the job itself. These complex tasks are being simplified which helps to master its components in an acceptable way by setting the goal of learning the skill, and fragmenting it into small units or functions that can be performed by the child. The teacher should start teaching the sub-skill mastered by the child within the sub-sequent skills of learning skill.

2. Training based on psychological operations

Proponents of this strategy suppose a specific defect or developmental deficits in children. If it is not dealt with, it is possible that the deficit will continue to rein in the learning process of the child.

3. Training based on analyzing the task and psychological operations

This strategy focuses on training people with special needs to integrate the basic concepts of both the style of task analysis and the style based on psychological operations. Thus, the psychological operations are not seen as separate abilities, but a series of learning processes and a set of conditional responses that relate to a specific task.

4. Training based on multimedia senses

It means that the teacher and the trainer focus on all the senses of the child in his training skills.

5. Psychological-educational training

It includes training on the integrated program for children with special needs to address the potential shortcomings they have. The therapeutic package prepared by Vallet is one of the most effective therapeutic packages and the most commonly used in the classes of those with special needs. It includes six programs, (Iman and Hana - 2009-145), namely:

- a. large motor development.
- b. kinesthetic sensory integration.
- c. cognitive motor skills.
- d. language development.
- e. conceptual skills.
- f. social skills.

6. Cognitive behavior modification strategy

This strategy is based on in the treatment of behavioral problems that impede the child's academic progress through organizing or reorganizing current environmental conditions and variables related to behavior, especially those that occur after the behavior. The most important methods of behavior modification are:

- a. Self-learning style
- b. Self-control style

4.3 Selection of activities for people with special needs

The selection of activities and events appropriate for people with special needs and determining the methods and techniques that are used during the implementation of these activities will be the best way to follow and to achieve the goal that aspires workers in this important area. This is because their use means the transfer of knowledge and its methods to the mind of the learner in the most convenient way through thorough preparation for the necessary steps. This is done by organizing the teaching and learning materials and using them in order to reach the set targets by motivating the learner and his/her interest.

Therefore, the teacher has to determine the way through the rediscovery of the rules and methods acquired by smart experienced teachers over the years. Each generation of teachers utilized very little of the innovations of their predecessors and the wisdom of education professionals to increase their expertise and what teaching requires of tools and the potential abilities. Thus, teachers should pay attention to the progress of teaching, as well as responding to situations that appear at work at the appropriate time and capacity (Al-Rubaie, 2006: 47).

When selecting activities or actions for people with special needs, we should note:

1. Activities fit the set targets.
2. Identifying the activities, making them increasingly difficult in performance in accordance with progress in education.

There are many activities that suit every type of disability (mental disability, poor learning, deaf, etc.) including balance incentives, the development of the reaction, the optical relay, flexibility, etc.

The selection of the appropriate sporting activities for people with special needs to be used in their curriculum is more important than many respects because they are the most modern methods in education as a means to assist in the education and learning of the child. This turns the playing field into a place where learners enjoy and

the learning process shifts from the traditional form to an interesting image breaking the boredom learners have.

The various sporting activities are used as a successful educational means in teaching a lot of subjects, or as a teaching method. They display the curriculum items or the idea for learners in an attractive, interesting and entertaining way through sporting activities aiming at enriching the minds of the learners with information, or conveying and simplifying the information to them indirectly in the way they enjoy.

Learning through sporting activities for people with special needs can serve all the other subjects in their curriculum. It helps revive it from the rigidity of the written symbols and turn it into vivid images embodied by the student as a participant (performer), and as a spectator (recipient). It responds to their needs and desires and satisfies them. It serves all learners whether ordinary or with special needs.

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