**Semester II: Module 4**

**Exceptional Learners**

* 1. **Concept**

Special groups of children or exceptional children consist of all those who depart from the average set. The gifted and creative on the one hand and the backward retarded and delinquent on the other represent some of the most usually known groups of such children. Since they have a special need and problems their education must be provided for on a special footing.

**4.2. Different Types of Exceptional Learners**

I. **Gifted Children:** The 57th year Book of the National Society for the study of Education (1958) defined giftedness as follows: “A talented or gifted child is one who shows consistently remarkable performance in any worthwhile line of endeavor. Thus we shall include not only the intellectually gifted but also those who promise in music the graphic arts, creative writing, dramatics, mechanical skills and social leadership.”

How to Identify Gifted Children: The various methods of finding out gifted children can be put under two heads:

1. Informal methods using observation of teachers, parent peers and neighbours.

2. Formal methods using individual or group tests of intelligence and achievement test batteries.

3. Special talents can be spotted out by means of aptitude tests. Interest inventory, anecdotal records, opinions and reports of friends and teachers of ten help in exploring the talents. Overall behavioural assessment through personality tests and sociometric techniques also reveal the special abilities of a child. Some children show their talents when they provided opportunities for self-expression and encouragement.

Education of the gifted children: There are 3 approaches usually advocated in respect of providing education to such categories of the children. They are:

a) Acceleration approach: It implies any one of the following:

1. Admitting gifted children to kindergarten or first grate according to mental age.

2. Skipping grades such as double promotion.

3. Early admissions to secondary schools or colleges will be necessary where the above 3 methods have been followed.

b) Enrichment Approach: The enrichment approach implies the opportunity for undertaking special projects and investigations. Various procedures of providing enrichment are reported.

1. Encouraging teachers in the regular grades to challenge the gifted child with additional readings, extra assignments and an opportunity to participate in other than.

2. Grouping children in a class, so that the few gifted children are in a group by themselves, and challenging their interests and abilities with problems requiring independent research and thought rather than memory processes.

3. Offering additional learning such as the study of a foreign language or typewriting in the elementary school.

4. Employing a special teacher for the gifted in a school system.

c) Special Group Approach: This approach implies placement of gifted children to either special schools or self-contained special classes within the regular schools. Various types of grouping are:

1. Grouping of children within a regular class in the elementary school.

2. Organizing special sections in the subject matters in the High Schools or Secondary Schools.

3. Offering advanced courses for superior students in secondary schools.

4. Offering honours courses for superior students in colleges.

II. **Academically Backward Children:** A backward child is thought to be one who is not able to exploit fully his innate capacities and does not register of show up educational success commensurate with his abilities. Schonell called a backward pupil as “one who compared with other pupils of the same chronological age shows marked educational deficiency.” Accordingly a backward child would not perform as well as the children of his age would normally perform in relation to a subject or subjects prescribed within a school system. Burt (1966) defined “the backward child as one who would in the middle of his school career, be unable to do the work even of the class next below that which is normal for his age.”

Types of backward children: Schonell classifies backward pupils under the following 3 headings:

1. The dull pupils whose backwardness is due primarily to intellectual deficiency.

2. The generally backward pupils who are not dull. These pupils are backward in most subjects but their backwardness is due to not to intellectual weakness but to acquired to extrinsic conditions.

3. The specifically backward pupils: Who are markedly below normal in only one or at most two subjects or backward in arithmetic but up to standard in other subjects, or backward in spelling and reading but making normal progress in other subjects.

Causes of Backwardness:

(a) Factors lying within the child:

1. Physiological or physical factors affect the educational attainment of the child.

2. Intellectual factors: Defective intelligence or lower I.Q has been found to be the sole cause of the backwardness.

b. Environmental factors:

1. Home influences:

(a) In poor families educational facilities and the most essential necessities of life are denied to the children. They have to perform many household activities. So they become tired with the tiresome work and are not able to pay proper attention to their studies.

(b) Besides poverty the intellectual inferiority and illiteracy of the parents also contribute

(c) The family relationships and the behaviour of family members also contribute much in the direction.

2. School influence:

Improper school atmosphere and the unfavorable conditions also contribute to the problem of backwardness.

3. Neighbourhood and other social agencies like press, radio, cinema, clubs, religions and social places etc. contribute

Some of the commonly used procedures for identifying backward children are

(1) Teacher observation, (2) Intelligence testing, (3) Achievement testing,   
(4) Diagnostic testing, (5) Personality testing, (6) Case study

Education of Backward children:

1. Arrange regular medical check-up and necessary treatment

2. Readjustment in the home and the school.

3. Provision of special schools or special classes

4. Provision of special curriculum methods of teaching and special teachers.

5. Special coaching and proper individual attention.

6. Checking truancy and nonattendance.

7. Provision of co-curricular activities, rich experiences and diversified courses.

8. Maintenance of proper progress record.

9. Rendering guidance services.

10. Controlling negative environmental factors

11. Taking help of experienced educational psychologists.

**III. Mentally challenged:** The mentally challenged individual is one who shows significantly sub normal general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behaviour, and manifested during the development period. According to Page, mental deficiency is a condition of sub normal mental development , present at birth or early childhood and characterized mainly by limited intelligence and social inadequacy.

Characteristics of M R Children

* They are dependent and feel difficulty in managing themselves.
* They feel difficulty in shifting from one type of activity to another.
* They are very poor at following general verbal instruction.
* They are socially and emotionally maladjusted personalities.

Intelligence quotient (IQ)has been taken as the criterion for the classification of mentally challenged individuals. On the basis of their performance on some standardized intelligence test , they are classified as follows: Individuals having I.Q below 90 are known as sub-normal or mentally retarded.

1. Idiots - below 20 I.Q

2. Imbeciles - from 20-40 I.Q

3. Morons - from 40 - 70 I.Q

4. Border line and Feeble minded - from 70 - 75 I.Q

5. Dull and Backward - from 75 - 90 I.Q

Important causes of mental retardation: Genetic factors like chromosomal abnormalities , presence of defective genes in the chromosomes of parents etc. Head injuries that the child receives when mechanical devices are used during delivery. Deficient intra-uterine environment , abnormal emotional and mental conditions of the mother during pregnancy, severe illness and chronic infections of the mother , malnutrition of the mother during pregnancy etc.

The education of mentally retarded children is to be planned and organized in terms of the special needs of the child. It is called as Special Education. One of the fundamentals of the educational principles controlling the developments of special programmes is the provision of individualisation. In a number of educational arrangements for the mentally retarded children programmed instructional materials have been frequently used. There is individualisation. It also allows for adequate motivation. There is also a provision of self spacing, minimal error and active responding. Remedial courses tailored to the needs of such children have also been designed and implemented. Such courses aims at developing vocational competence and forging communication skills such as oral communication, written communication, listening and reading. Education of mentally retarded children should focus on the following.

(a) Development of social competence

(b) Promoting personal adequacy

(c) Achieving occupational competence

A special curriculum, a special material, a special instruction and a special organization underlying the educational programme of such children are a must.

There are Educable Mentally Retarded (EMR) with the IQ 0f 52-67. About 85% of the mentally retarded individuals are found to belong to this category. Intellectually they are equal to a 10 year old child. They show signs of delayed development early life, exhibit immature behaviour, have poor control over their impulses, lack judgement .They are considered to be educable.

Trainable Mentally Retarded (TMR) with Moderate retardation of IQ 36-51.

About 10% of the mentally retardates belong to this category. Intellectually these people are equal to an average 6 year old child. They are not educable; But trainable. Physically they appear clumsy and suffer from motor in coordination.

Custodial Mentally Retarded (CMR): About 3.5% of all retarded individuals belong to this category. They are referred to as dependent retarded. They may attain an intellectual level comparable to that of a 4 year old child. They are neither educable nor trainable. Education programmes are then planed for each category.

The following points should be taken in to consideration for planning the educational programme for mentally challenged children:

The schools should provide the environment essential for maximum development of the abilities and capacities of all mental retardates. Curriculum, methods of teaching and tools for evaluation should be adjusted according to their individual’s needs. Greater emphasis should be placed on their emotional and social adjustment, imbibing moral virtues and desirable personal habits. The learning task should be brief and uncomplicated They should be sequentially presented so that learner proceeds in a sequence of small steps, each one built up on previously learned task. Over learning must be built in to the lesson. Learning task should be applied to objects, problems and situations in the learner’s life environment.

For the EMR: Formal reading and writing instruction must be started preferably at the age of 9 or 10.The schools curricular as well as co-curricular activities should lay experience than on abstraction. TMR may be helped to acquire self-managing skills like independent eating dressing toileting, washing and combing hair. The curriculum should then include activities for teaching unskilled occupational jobs. Necessary training should also be provided for the development of motor skills and improvement of sensory discrimination. For the CMR individuals strong emphasis on self help skills like feeding , toilet training , washing and cleaning ,of their body parts and dressing up etc. must be provided. They must be taught to protect themselves from health and weather hazards harmful insects, animals , fires ,etc.

**IV. Delinquent child**

The terms delinquent and anti-social are used almost synonymously. Such children or people are regarded as socially maladjusted and are found to be indulging in behaviours which are in conflict with the law. A delinquent person is one who violates the prescribed laws of the society. Those who are under eighteen are known as juvenile delinquent. Juvenile delinquency is defined as the phenomenon by which a punishable and criminal social offence normally committed by an adult is continuously repeated by a young person below the age of 18.

Types of delinquent Acts:

(1) Acquisitive tendency (stealing), (2) Forgery, (3) Aggressive tendencies like damaging school property bullying and mockery, torturing of dumb animals, and committing suicide, (4) The sex delinquency like homosexuality, hetero sexuality, corrupting by talks, obscene drawings and writings, prostitution, abducting and raping, exhibitions making sexual suggestions and masturbation, (5) Tendency to escape from realities like truancy from school and running from house.

**Causes:**

1. Heredity

2. Environmental factors

(a) Effect of physical surroundings broken hone

(b) Broken home

(c) Marital adjustment between parents

(d) Employed parents

(e) Poverty

(f) Disability of parents

(g) Defective discipline at home

(h) Lack of affection

(i) Partiality of parents

(j) Lack of recreation at home

(k) Crowded home

(l) Company of servants

(m) Lack of facilities

(n) Lack of guidance

(o) Defective curriculum and examination system

Treatment:

The treatment of delinquent children can be done by applying psychotherapy. They used the following methods.

(1) Re-education (2) Abreaction (3) Persuation (4) Suggestion and Counselling   
(5) Environmental treatment (6) Modern techniques of behaviour modification.

Schools can do a great lot to prevent delinquency by providing the following faculties:

1. Atmosphere of the school should be free from emotional tensions.

2. Organize co-curricular activities

3. Teacher’s behaviour must be sympathetic

4. Curriculum facilities

5. Developing good reading habits.

**V. Creative children**

Creativity implies the production of a totally or partially novel identity. Keen observation, creative perception, curiosity and sensitivity to problems, capacity for divergent thinking, capacity to evaluate and judge etc. are the factors of creativity. Personality traits like sensitivity, openness to experience, independent thinking, non-conformity, courage, liking for complexity, flexibility in thinking, doing etc. spontaneity, perseverance etc. are seen. The creative process consists of the four steps. (1) Preparation, (2) Incubation, (3) Illumination,(4) Revision.

Promotion of creativity

1. Brainstorming

2. Encourage self-expression

3. Encourage originality and flexibility

4. Provide self initiated non authoritarian learning

5. Promote intellectual flexibility

6. Make use of questioning technique

7. Use of synetics - bringing together of unrelated elements

8. Provide for active class period

**VI. Learning Disabled Children**

Learning disabilities (L.D) is a general term for a diverse group of disorders characterized by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or computing. This is due to some dysfunction of the brain or central nervous system. The L.D are

* Dyslexia - a severely impaired ability to read
* Dysgraphia - an impaired ability to write
* Dyscalculia - an impaired ability to lean mathematic
* Dyspraxia - difficulties with motor skills
* Dysphasia - language and speech disorders

Their characteristics are

1. Normal intelligence or even giftedness

2. Discrepancy between intelligence and performance

3. Delays in achievement

4. Attention deficit

5. Hyperactivity

6. Poor motor co-ordination

7. Difficulty in solving problems

8. Specific disorders of memory, thinking and language

9. Low self-esteem

10. Immature social skills.

Teaching strategies for L.D

1. Emphasize prevention

2. Teach learning to learn skills

3. Give frequent feedback

4. Engage students actively in lessons

5. Use effective classroom management methods

6. Provide supplementary services like small group tutorials, resource room, one to one tutoring etc.

**VII. Physically Disabled/ Handicapped children**

* Visually handicapped or blind

Visual impairment is a condition in which a students vision is deficient to such a degree that it significantly affects his school functioning. They can be classified into various categories. Clinical assessment is done by Snellen chart. The educational provision is special schools for visually handicapped. They are residential schools in which specially trained teachers using Braille teach the same curriculum meant for normal children. Another alternative is integrated education alongwith partially sighted with resource room facilities.

* Hearing handicapped (Auditory)

Deafness or impairment in hearing capacity is defined in terms of degree of hearing loss. UNESCO defines ‘deaf’ are those children whose spontaneous speech and language development have been very much retarded or is completely absent due to their severe hearing impairment combined with a lack of training and/or technical amplification. They can be classified into various categories and their needs vary accordingly

Home based programmes, special schools, special classes & Regular class combination, Integrated Class rooms, vocational placement, least Restrictive Environment setting, Sign language, Lip reading, etc are various educational provisions.

* Orthopaedically handicapped children :

Orthopaedically handicapped is a severe orthopaedic empairment that adversely affects a childs educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by a congenital anomaly eg. club foot, absence of some organs, impairments caused by disease (Polio) bone tuberculosis and impairments caused from other causes e.g. cerebral palsy, amputations, and other fractures or burns. Educational provisions are (1) special schools (2) Integrated Education.

* Speech & language Handicapped Children :

Speech disorders or impairment include respiration disorders, voice disorders articulation disorders & stuttering, stammering cluttering & disorders in paralinginstic mechanism. A Resource Teacher cum Speech Therapist, Regular classroom Teacher, Integrated School, The Special School etc. are various strategies.

**VIII. Slow Learners**

Children who have 1. Q above 70, but learn at a reduced rate compared to peers, are referred to as slow learners, or as borderline children. They differ in the rate and degree of development. They often appear immature compared to their agemates. They lack confidence & have low self-esteem. The inability to generalize, short memory & attention span, concentrate only one aspect of a learning situation & retarded language development are the intellectual characteristics.

Education for slow learners

1. Give them tasks which they are capable of doing successfully.

2. Encourage them to develop self-confidence leading to self esteem.

3. Provide only simple tasks

4. Give a series of brief & graded lessons that can be completed in short periods of time.

5. Give provision for the overlearning of the lesson

6. Programmed Instruction can be given.

**IX. Socially and Culturally Disadvantaged Children**

Students from poor homes, whose progress is a matter of deep concern to educators, are the ones who are described as socially disadvantaged or culturally deprived. Since the culture of their environment differs from the culture that has molded the school and educational techniques and theory, they fail to produce what the school demands. Among these children from under privileged environments, there is a high proportion of school failure, school dropouts, reading and learning disabilities as well as life adjustment problems. They show signs of indiscipline, juvenile delinquency etc.

A disadvantaged child is one who is reared in a preschool environment which fails to develop entering behaviour, necessary for beginning his formal education in the public school. He is from lower socio-economic status, under privileged and socially & culturally deprived. He has a distinct value system and modes of behaviour. Motivational variables such as anxiety, educational aspiration, self-concept etc. are lacking in him. These deficiencies in entering behaviour are accompanied by poverty, racial and ethnic minority status, and inferior Socio-Economic status. We can change the child’s I.Q by changing his environment in the preschool year. Establishment of Ashram schools or Residential schools are the best solution for this problem.

The educational programme given to disadvantaged children is known as compensatory education. Several compensatory educational projects were initiated both in the U.K. and U.S.A to find the most effective ways of improving the education of children from deprived areas and impoverished home conditions.

1. Project Head Start: It was an antipoverty pre-school programme created in the U.S.A. This was designed to improve children’s health, help their emotional and social development.

2. Early Education: This is based on the assumption that the failure of the disadvantaged children can be prevented through properly designed experiences in the Kindergarten and pre-kindergarten. There are 2 such projects (1) The Early Child-hood project to overcome language difficulties (2) The Early Training project to develop attitudes to function as effective learners in the schools and to succeed in later life.

3. Specialization or Remedial Programmes: Here the child’s learning difficulty is specified and corrected by educational specialists.

4. The More Effective school Programme (MES): Here the class size is reduced and staff number is increased to meet various kinds of curricular and remedial specialists.

5. The Mental Health or Aggregation Model: This model emphasizes motivational and effective factors in the class room environment.

6. The Three tiered Model: Here tier - I represents the school’s mission to develop skills and knowledge, tier-II to develop personal talents and vocational skills, tier - III to develop personal and social skills