

EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE: - A RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS A CASE STUDY OF IRA GURUKUL EDUCATIONAL TRUST

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Abstract: - This case study was done to know more about a small NGO run in Mumbai which imparts educational assistance to the people with special needs specially children. IRA gurukul educational trust was the vision of two women who took up to the cause of educating the children with special needs in a customized way. Both the Founders has years of experience in the mental health department and are well read on the various aspects of therapies and other expertise required to handle different categories of special needs. They have a team of passionate professionals who work with them shoulder to shoulder. They started in 2004 and are slowly and steadily growing organically, though the last two years of pandemic has definitely pulled them a bit slow but still they are trying their best to reach out their enrolled members via various online mode.

Keywords: - NGO, NIOS, autism, ADHD, intellectual disability, learning disorder.

INTRODUCTION

Ira gurukul educational trust is an NGO, NIOS under the government of India that works for kids with special needs. It's a multidisciplinary center for children, adolescents and adults that provide supportive and therapeutic therapies to deal with the daily life hiccups faced by these children. They aim to help kids with special needs to achieve their highest potential as per their special abilities.

It's an inclusive school providing A, B, C levels X and XII exams for the students with NIOS [national institute of open schooling] along with all therapies developing individualized education programmes [IEPS], training for NIOS, advanced training in computers & graphics, curriculum designing and monitoring etc.

The trust has further expanded its horizons in the form of Vishesh child development centre to provide a continuum of preventive, diagnostic, early intervention and treatment services in consultation with their families, doctors and educators.

Inclusive centre of education is a regd. Trust under the charitable trust act Mumbai, 1950. The centre was started in 2004 to enable deserving and differently abled children towards academic and social development.

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AIM: - They aims to change the destiny of children with disabilities. They equip them with individualised educational programmes, accessible equipment to face the world with confidence and courage.

MISSION: - Making life a little easier for the children with special needs.

VISION - To nurture the strengths and work on the weaknesses of each individual to bring out the best in him or her.

INCLUSION - To integrate the individual into his or her family, school, and community in order to promote healthy relationships and better quality of life.

SUPPORT - To provide support services that cater to individual needs as well as those of the community as a whole.

HOLISTIC - To utilise a holistic approach for each individual to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the individual and to encourage overall mental, emotional, social, and physical development.

Empower - To empower individuals and their families to be agents of positive change; to educate families and communities who will

embrace and respect individual differences.

Self-sufficient - To make the individual self-sufficient so that he can take care of himself and views himself as worthy of contributing in a positive manner to the development of society.

Health - To provide health care services and maintain a system of high quality, accessible services.

FOUNDERS

1. Dr Swapna Kamath is a psychiatrist counsellor, art based therapist and a life skill coach. She is the director of Ira Gurukul Educational Trust and Visesh Child Development Centre in Mumbai working with children with learning difficulties development disorders, autism and other behavioural difficulties. Dr. Swapna Kamath is a psychiatrist and practicing homoeopath. She has completed her BHMS from the YMT homoeopathic medical college and her MD in homoeopathy with special subject psychiatry from the Dr. M. L. Dhawale memorial homoeopathic institute. She is a trained counsellor and psychotherapist. Dr. Swapna has a background of training and working with one of the finest homoeopathic institutions in the country. During her MD and her stint as a medical officer at the Palghar Rural Homoeopathic Hospital, she has worked in both general psychiatry and child mental health. She was the co-creator and research officer of the 'school mental health project' that is currently being implemented the rural homoeopathic hospital, Palghar. She has also worked in the psychiatric clinics and in-patient departments where she has handled a variety of cases, all treated with homoeopathy. Her chief projects at present involves developing training modules and programmes for various mental health needs. She conducts workshops for students, teachers and parents on various topics including mental health awareness, stress management, life skills training and disorders like ADHD, autism, learning disabilities and dealing with physical illnesses. She has also incorporated play as a form of therapy while working with children.

Her goal is to use her knowledge and experience of mental health for improving the health of the individual and thereby of the community. She aims to create an ideal environment for an individual through disseminating knowledge and creating awareness.

2. Smita Nair is a special educator, yoga teacher and evaluator. She is the trustee at IRA Gurukul Educational Trust and inclusive centre of education. A multidisciplinary centre in Mumbai working with children with learning difficulties development disorders, autism and other behavioural difficulties. Smita Nair has done her BA in psychology from National College In Bandra and then did her diploma in special education from Dilkush Special School in the year 1991, there after she started actively working with children having different problems like autism, dyslexia, down syndrome etc. She was attached to Institute Of Genetics in Hyderabad over 2 years where she was a remedial educator and dealt with children having different mental disabilities. She also conducted summer camps for them in Hyderabad. Thus with her rich experience in this field she is the strong spine for the foundation.

THEIR BELIEF

Each one of us is different, each one of us is special. Our personalities, our life experiences and our ways of solving problems, are all unique. We are so busy in our hurried life that we forget to appreciate our uniqueness. Even the way we develop from childhood to adulthood is unique for every individual.

Development is an ongoing process from childhood to adulthood and beyond. We aim to support, empower and enable every individual to achieve their highest potential. We promote respect, acceptance and inclusion in a conducive environment to all the individuals with special need.

SERVICES OFFERED: -

Rehabilitative & Therapeutic Measures Offered are:

- remedial education
- occupational therapy
- physical therapy
- play therapy and group therapy
- individual and family counselling
- vocational guidance and career counselling
- anger and stress management
- homeopathic consultations and treatment
- nutrition and weight management
- hypnotherapy

CHALLENGES: -

Thus, Ira Gurukul Educational Trust focuses on overall development of the individuals with special need, right from basic education to X & XII, also providing them courses based on individual potentials so that they can be as independent as possible. The future plans aim at creating vocational training and employment opportunities for those who are bought to them and help them have a sustainable and dignified living.

In the month of May 2021 they ran a donation campaign on a wide scale to support the families of their students who were affected because of the Pandemic. They also conducted an online Yoga camp on account of International Day of Yoga on 21st June, just to make sure that the children and their families are kept connected to each other in some way or the other.

They keep conducting online recreational activities and therapies as far as possible for the people with special needs. But a lot of activities that need physical approach are getting affected due to the continuous lockdown back-to-back. Another big challenge is that not many have access to sophisticated gadgets or are tech savvy to connect via online medium, the team is constantly in search to find various methods to make sure the regular children, especially those studying via open school doesn't loose on academic skills due to above said blockages.

CONCLUSION: -

The above discussion has made it clear that development is possible when a human being is developed. Just like Mr. Shiv Khera had said in his famous book *You Can Win* that "if the vision is eternity grow mankind". A human being can only be developed when his/her hidden qualities are nurtured looking beyond his incapability. It is the priorities we set that can give a positive or negative stimulus to any effort. The study has also highlighted the contribution of IRA education foundation in the field of addressing the educational needs of differently abled. To improve the social, economic, physical condition of a human being the entire team works in a holistic way. During conversation, the founder Smita Nair addressed the strenuous effort taken by the NGO for the promotion of their members through the utilization of their own assets during these dark days of pandemic. As a result, an individual could realize his/her unexplored potentials and get motivated to utilize these potentials in a more productive way.

