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National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (NIEPMD) - A Case Study on the Model School

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Article History:	Abstract	
Received on: 15 Jan 2025 Revised on: 20 Mar 2025 Accepted on: 18 Apr 2025	The case study on the model school functioning at the National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (NIEPMD) highlights its significant role in supporting students with multiple disabilities within an inclusive setup. The model school encompasses various specialized units, including the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Unit, Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Unit, Severe and Profound Multiple Disabilities (SPMD) Unit, Cerebral Palsy (CP) Unit, Deaf and Blind (DB) Unit, and the Transition Unit. These units provide training, rehabilitation, early intervention, and skill development initiatives for children with multiple disabilities. NIEPMD, a national-level organization under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, focuses on empowering individuals with disabilities through education and career opportunities. This case study emphasizes NIEPMD's multidisciplinary approach to inclusive education, its collaboration with national institutions, and its efforts to enhance inclusivity and accessibility. It underscores the transformative impact of NIEPMD's work and the importance of continuous policy support and community engagement for long-term inclusion.	
Keywords: NIEPMD, Model School, Multiple Disability, Inclusive education.		

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INTRODUCTION

In 2005, NIEPMD (the National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities) was established. The Institute is located on the outskirts of Chennai, 35 km from the Central Railway Station on East Coast Road (ECR), Muttukadu, Chennai, Tamil Nadu. In addition to cottage and extension services, services are available for people with disabilities, including those with single and multiple disabilities. NIEPMD provides service to outpatients using a multidisciplinary team model since the program's inception in 2005. A national organization under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment of the Government of India, the National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (NIEPMD) offers high-quality services, research, and human resource development for people with multiple disabilities.

NIEPMED overview

Over 2.5 lakh people have received services from NIEPMD in 2022–2023, including early interventions, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and medical consultations. It created transdisciplinary care models and carried out much research. Thousands benefited from the institute's expanded training, professional courses, and educational initiatives, including short-term seminars and long-term courses. Initiatives for employment and skill development included job fairs and vocational training, which helped more than 150 people to register for jobs. As part of the ADIP (Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids/Appliances) program, 7250 aids and appliances were distributed, and a 3D printing technology lab for assistive devices was established as part of community outreach activities. Numerous awareness campaigns were held, including the International Day of Persons with Disabilities



The Supervisor Dr.T.Sangeetha and Ph.D Scholar Ajay Kumar having Discussion with Dr. Vijayalakshmi and Special Educators of NIEPMD

and World Autism Awareness Day. More than 18,245 people have used the NIEPMD library, which has 48 million digital books and articles available. The institute is committed to accessibility and inclusivity, ensuring that people with disabilities have equal chances to live autonomous and satisfying lives.

Objectives

To explore the National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (NIEPMD)

To study the model school functioning for Multiple disabilities and its implications

To find the policy perspectives supporting the students in the National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities

NIEPMD (National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities)

A VISIT TO NIEPMD FOR A CASE STUDY

The Supervisor of the scholar works in special and inclusive Education. The scholar is interested in doing his Ph.D in Specific Learning Disabilities. He wanted to explore various institutions with inclusive schools as part of his research. A field visit related to the research area is planned to gain in-depth knowledge and insights into the research.

The researcher contacted the authorities by mail and got permission to visit the institute and undergo a short one-week internship programme. The permission was granted along with a schedule to visit the institute. The researcher and the supervisor had an opportunity to see and explore NIEPMD. Nine autonomous National Institutes are all over India, established under the Societies Registration Act of 1860.

These institutes primarily engage in different types of disability by conducting various

courses and providing rehabilitation services in the field of disability. NIEPMD is one of them, located outside Chennai on the old Mahabalipuram Road in Muttukadu, Chennai. There are transport facilities, both public transport and NIEPMD Transport.

The researcher observed the entry of adults and students with various disabilities inside the Institute on the day of the visit. People with more than one disability are empowered in this institute. The working hours of NIEPMD are 9.30 AM to 5.30 PM.

DIRECTORS VOICE

The Researcher and his supervisor met the Director, Dr.Nachiketa Rout. A brief introduction stated that we are from the Central University of Rajasthan, Department of Education, about our field visit and interest in the research area. He discussed the model school and various facilities in the institute. He enthusiastically explained the Hydrotherapy pool, which started at the NIEPMD Institute, for the speedy rehabilitation of persons with Multiple Disabilities, was quite interesting and informative. He further explained that the water temperature is normal, i.e., 32 Degrees Celsius to 40 degrees Celsius. This therapy helps children with multiple disabilities with pain relief and treatment of PwD. He stated that when disabled children get into water, they can do many things easily that are difficult for them to do on land. Children with cerebral palsy encounter challenges when they walk on land and experience pain and difficulties. Hydrotherapy is the best intervention to reduce this pain and difficulty. In the Hydrotherapy pool, many exercises are provided by the instructor to strengthen the shoulder muscle using a kickboard, strengthen the abdominal muscle using Noodles, lower back strengthening exercise, rotational grip activity using a Ball, Lower limb strengthening exercise, trunk stabilization,

and hand-eye coordination exercise. The discussion was very informative and interesting,

MODEL SCHOOL - CASE STUDY SCHEDULE

The researcher met the Head of the department, Sri.P.Kamaraj. The head assigned a coordinator, Smt.I.G Anusuya, to know more details about the campus in general and to visit the Model school in specific. The coordinator gave the researcher a detailed schedule, which the researcher could follow for a week from 18.11.2024 to 22.11.2024., and a report was to be prepared and submitted. The researcher had the opportunity to have a week's visit to know and learn more about the multiple disabilities and how the institute will cater to the needs of disabled persons. The supervisor and the researcher visited the IPU unit on the first day of the visit. The researcher had to visit each

unit at the prescribed time and observe the classes. The researcher also discussed various disabilities with special education teachers for more information.

Table 1 Schedule of the visit

Time Slot	Time Slot
9.30 AM to 1.00 PM	2.00 PM to 5.00 PM
ASD Unit	CP Unit
ECSE Unit	Transition Unit
SPMD Unit	Db Unit

IPU UNIT (INDIVIDUALIZED PROGRAM) UNIT

The child found to have certain learning problems from 2 to 4 years is first taken in the IPU unit, where personalised teaching is given to monitor and give remedial measures. If the child has improved in IPU and is found to cope with normal education, they are sent to an inclusive school for further education.

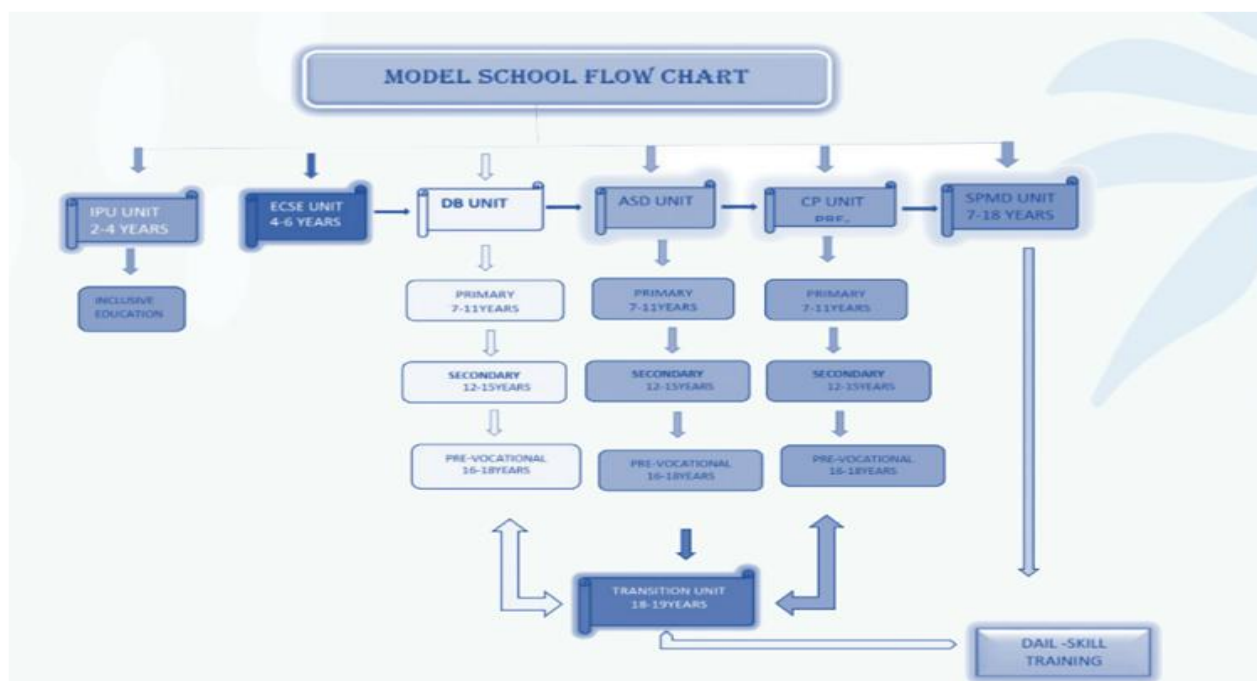


Figure 1 Flow Chart of Model School

Various Units of the Model School

Source – <https://niepmd.nic.in/> (NIEPMD Annual Report 2023-2024)

The researcher explored and experienced various units of the Model School

ECSE (EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION) UNIT

This unit serves children aged 4-6 years old and manages a diverse group of children with multiple disabilities as part of their preschool education curriculum. The preschool education program is being delivered in the unit through specialists who prepare the child for school as part of the school readiness program. After successfully completing the program, the unit suggests that the child study in a conventional school, i.e., an inclusive education setting.

DB (DEAFBLIND) UNIT

The DB Unit is divided into primary (7 to 11 years), secondary (12 to 15), and pre-vocational (15 to 18) sections. In this unit, the researcher experienced one new thing: a Tag for every child for identification. The Deafblind Unit's activities are special because every kid with Deaf blindness is different based on the extent of their visual and auditory impairment, which causes various related issues and impedes their growth and development. The main focus areas are communication, information access, mobility and orientation, functional academics, transition, and vocational activities. Communication is developed through unique techniques, including physical symbols and cooperative signing. In addition to residual sensory talents, tactile modes facilitate exploration and learning from classroom activities. In early education, concepts are developed via real-world experiences and actual objects. Additionally, the specially created tactile garden is expected to be visited by the Deaf-Blind children just outside the DB unit.

ASD (AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER) UNIT

The ASD unit is divided into primary (7 to 11 years), secondary (12 to 15), and pre-vocational (15 to 18) sections. Children

admitted to this unit are assessed using the Childhood Autism Scale Rating (CARS), Psycho Educated Profile (PEP), and Functional Assessment Checklist for Programming (FACP) tools to determine their current level of functioning and then plan and implement the Individualized Educational Program. Using the PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) method, the children were trained in both verbal and nonverbal modes of communication in this unit. Based on the assessment results, the children were given a structured classroom teaching setup with appropriate teaching-learning materials (TLM) and visual strategies to enhance their learning.

CP (CEREBRAL PALSY) UNIT

This unit is also separated based on their age range into three levels or classes: Prevocational (15–18 years), Secondary (12–14 years), and Primary (7–11 years). For training in mobility, communication, feeding, self-help, and academic abilities, a transdisciplinary approach is used in conjunction with a cerebral palsy-specific intervention, modified aids, and assistive technologies. The Special educator used standardized evaluation instruments to evaluate the children's performance. The Student Functional Assessment Profile (SFAP) is used in the baseline evaluation.

For evaluating their particular issues, functional assessment tools are utilized, such as the Carolina Curriculum for Preschoolers with Special Needs for academic skills, the Eating Drinking Functional Classification System for feeding skills, the Communication Functions Classification System for communication skills, the Gross Motor Functions Classification System for gross and fine motor skills, and the Handling Object Classification Systems for handling skills.

The Development Assessment of Young Children and the Adapted Functional

Assessment Checklist for Programming (FACP) were used to evaluate the overall development. Through CSR(Corporate Social Responsibility) activities of Private-Public Partnerships, Inner Strength Trust donated an adapted sports lab and a dedicated assistive technology lab to the unit, which serves children with cerebral palsy. These checklists gauge children's progress and are shared with parents during IEP meetings.

SPMD (SEVERE AND PROFOUND MULTIPLE DISABILITIES) UNIT

The majority of the children are classified as severely and profoundly impaired children since they have been diagnosed with cerebral palsy along with other disabilities like intellectual disabilities, seizures, and limited vision. Upon admission, these kids were evaluated using a severe-profound program



Figure 2 Research scholar having hands on experience working with the special educator and Adaptive Materials used in daily life



Figure 3 SPMD Unit Special Chair and Visual Schedule

evaluation checklist to determine their functioning level. This was followed by the formulation and execution of both short- and long-term objectives. Functional communication files were given to the kids. A home program was given to parents to help them with their children's mobility, self-help skills, positioning, lifting, communication development, and functional academics. This Unit also uses a special chair to help children without falling down.

TRANSITION UNIT

This unit is developed for the children to help them transition, check the current functioning level of the child, and set goals according to their needs. To determine their current functioning level of vocational abilities, admitted students are evaluated using the VAPS (Vocational Assessment Programming System) Assessment checklist. The assessment was used to determine the long- and short-term objectives, which were then incorporated into lesson plans and appropriate teaching-learning resources in the classroom. The transition program prepares individuals with impairments to adjust to a different work setting from the classroom. The educational program provides people with impairments a progressive introduction to the vocational curriculum. The development of those carrying out the designated vocational tasks is tracked. To maximize each person's potential, the unit focuses on determining their area of interest and potential career paths and skills to attain occupational independence. Children with numerous disabilities were admitted to the facility in various combinations. They were exposed to extracurricular activities in addition to the curriculum. The pupils competed in a variety of categories, including athletics and culture. Different Teaching Strategies are used, like Shaping, Chaining, Modeling, Prompting, and Fading. Teaching

principles like Known to unknown, Simple to complex, Whole to part, and Concrete to abstract are used in this Unit, and different types of prompts are also used, like Physical prompts, Verbal, modeling, Gestural prompts, and Clueing.

TOY LIBRARY

The toy library was opened on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December 2020). Children with multiple disabilities can access and draw toys that combine 3D and 2D technology online. The idea behind sending relevant toys home is also to give them a sense of ownership. The special teachers at the school would show parents how to use the toys to meet each child's learning target, and after two weeks, the toys could be returned, cleaned, and given to another child.

Policy perspectives

The RPwD Act 2016 is central to defining the policy perspective. It increased the number of recognized disabilities from 7 to 21 and emphasized the rights of persons with disabilities to education, employment, healthcare, accessibility, and social inclusion. The National Institutes are expected to align their work with this Act by promoting equality, dignity, and participation of disabled persons in all aspects of life. They do this through service delivery, research, training, and policy advocacy.

Each National Institute is designed to be a center of excellence in its specialized area—intellectual disability, visual impairment, hearing and speech disability, locomotor disability, mental health, or multiple disabilities. Their policy perspective includes both service delivery and systemic change. This means they help individuals and support changes in public systems (like schools,

hospitals, and workplaces) to become more inclusive and accessible.

A key policy focus is on inclusive education and skill development. Institutes like NIEPMD train special educators and develop inclusive teaching materials to support mainstreaming children with disabilities. Similarly, job-oriented skill training programs are aligned with national programs like Skill India and the National Action Plan for Skill Development of Persons with Disabilities, which aim to improve the employability of persons with disabilities.

Furthermore, the institutes play a vital role in policy feedback and development. Through research, data collection, pilot projects, and public awareness campaigns, they provide valuable insights to policymakers at the state and national levels. They also collaborate with NGOs, universities, and international organizations to adopt best practices.

The policy perspective of the National Institutes for Disability is deeply rooted in the principles of equality, inclusion, and empowerment. They support individuals and act as drivers of systemic reform and social change. By aligning with national and international disability rights frameworks, these institutes play a crucial role in building a more inclusive and accessible society. The Various National Institute for Special Children stands in line with the National Educational Policy 2020 to cater to the needs of children with special needs in an inclusive classroom.

Conclusion

The researchers found that the NIEPMD institute works on multiple disabilities; the model school managed by the institution provides many facilities to children with multiple disabilities. The researchers got a lot of insights from the institute regarding different types of disabilities, which will help

them in their future research. The institute has to be made more visible, and the public should maximize utilization since the services are free of cost. This institute is a boon to the socio-economically backward people. The institute's vision and mission are to help the needy and bring a happy and healthy society.

Ethical Approval

No ethical approval was necessary for this study.

Author Contribution

All authors made substantial contributions to the conception, design, acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work. They were involved in drafting the manuscript or revising it critically for important intellectual content. All authors gave final approval of the version to be published and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work, ensuring its accuracy and integrity.

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