
Education and Livelihood (Inclusiveness) Impact Assessment Report

Prepared For



Kotak Mahindra Bank

Prepared By



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited (KMBL) undertook a project in Jaipur as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) intervention in Education and Livelihood to provide an alternative learning space to children with learning disabilities. The need for such a platform had arisen due to the fact that learning disabilities are often hidden disabilities, and such children are underserved when they are clubbed with children with severe physical and intellectual disabilities. The project aimed to provide a dedicated learning space for remediation and therapy with the aim of mainstreaming the children and building a pool of special educators trained in managing learning disabilities.

The research study adopted a qualitative approach to gain insights into the impact of the learning platform of the dedicated learning centre. The construction of an additional floor to the already existing two-storey building, 'Disha - Centre for Special Education', was undertaken for the financial year 2020-2021. A descriptive research design was used for this study, and the respondents were selected through the purposive sampling method.

Major findings of the study:

- Despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic, the construction of the third floor was completed by leveraging learning-disability-focused design principles.
- 12 children were enrolled in the centre after it was opened. This group of children regularly attended the centre to pursue regular academics as well as specialised remediation targeted at addressing their learning disabilities.
- In addition, the project engaged a total of 17 staff members, including special educators, physiotherapists, Aero Bay teachers, art teachers, occupational therapists, and psychologists, among others. The centre was fully operational, with all rooms and equipment being used for learning purposes.
- 38 B. Ed. students worked on Learning Disabilities during a 25-day program at the centre, which focused on facilitating the holistic development of children with learning disabilities through remediation and therapy. They worked actively with the students and received adequate guidance from senior teachers, leading to their satisfaction with the program.
- Moreover, Disha organised various events, such as seminars for stakeholders, workshops on wildlife photography, and robotic camps. Parents expressed satisfaction with the services provided and reported that their children were doing well.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research is a systematic search for new and useful information on a particular subject matter. Social science research follows scientific principles and methods to minimize bias and subjectivity, ensuring the reliability, testability, and transparency of its findings. The starting point of research is the identification of a problem, which is then defined and refined through literature review and expert consultations. Each research problem has multiple perspectives and dimensions, and a single study cannot cover them all. Thus, researchers delimit the problem into measurable issues and formulate objectives, decide on research design, sample, instruments, and data analysis procedures.

Use of Methodology for Maximum Insights

The research problem in this case was to understand the impact of KMBL and Disha: Centre for Special Education-supported initiatives to facilitate alternative education for children with learning disabilities. Qualitative research was used to gain maximal insight, as it can reveal enriched and hidden information not evident at the surface level. Quantitative research techniques were also used for better accuracy and to cover a larger sample population. Interviews with key stakeholders and community members were conducted as part of qualitative research, while quantitative research focused on collecting numerical data through surveys and tests.

Study Tools

Before conducting surveys, semi-structured questionnaires were developed to review the project details for each focus area, with pre-defined indicators. Additionally, one-on-one discussions were conducted with key stakeholders.

Ensuring Triangulation

Triangulation was used to increase the credibility and validity of the research findings. It involved verifying the findings of one research method with insights gained from another research method. In this case, the results of quantitative research were verified with the insights from qualitative research. The report was structured to reflect this point, ensuring the trustworthiness of the research process.

Commitment to Research Ethics

A strict commitment to research ethics was followed to ensure the protection of the rights and welfare of research participants. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained, and the results were revealed only in an aggregate form to prevent the identification of any individual respondent. The study also ensured non-maleficence, ensuring that the participants were not harmed in any way. The study aimed to benefit individuals, groups, and communities, and their well-being was enhanced through the findings. Justice was also upheld, ensuring fair treatment of all research subjects without any biases or prejudices. The commitment to research ethics in this study ensured the trust and cooperation of the participants and maintained the integrity and validity of the research findings.

Research Design

- **Name of the project** : Construction of an additional 3rd floor at Disha : Centre for Special Education
- **Implementation Agency** : Disha: Centre for Special Education
- **Research Design used** : Descriptive Research Design
- **Qualitative Methods used** : Testimonials and case studies

Key Stakeholders



Children with Learning Disabilities

Coordinators

Teachers

Parents

B.Ed. Students

Therapists



3rd Floor of DISHA - outside view

CHAPTER 3: NEED AND CONCEPTION OF A DEDICATED SPACE FOR CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Children with learning disabilities constitute a separate and often unseen subset of those with disabilities. The nature of their impairment is such that it is concealed, and requires specialised expertise to identify, resulting in these children often being overlooked and their needs unmet. This lack of knowledge and awareness regarding learning disabilities also creates significant academic obstacles for affected children.

Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited broached this issue by channelling its CSR in Education and Livelihood (Inclusiveness) to provide financial assistance to Disha: Centre for Special Education (**henceforth, referred to as Disha in the report**) for the construction of a third floor in the existing building, which was specifically designed to cater to the needs of students with learning disabilities. Disha had been providing services to children with special needs through various centres in Jaipur for several years and the team was deemed to have possessed a nuanced understanding of the needs of the learning disabled.

This chapter presents the qualitative information gathered during the study, which outlines the reasoning behind constructing an additional facility dedicated to children with learning disabilities, the profiles of beneficiaries and their coverage, the profiles of recruited special educators, the design principles employed during construction, the various purposes that the 3rd floor serves, including training B.Ed. students, and the challenges faced. By providing this comprehensive overview, this chapter seeks to offer a deeper understanding of the facility's utility and its impact.

Beneficiary Profile and Coverage

In order to broach the stigma attached with severe physical and mental disabilities and to encourage parents to shun their inhibitions, the 3rd Floor and its facilities solely cater to children with learning disabilities. Thus, centre housed in this floor of Disha admits children with learning disabilities with an IQ of 75-100. Presently, 12 children are enrolled in the centre for learning disabilities. The details of the children under different categories are given below:

Gender	Academic level	Diagnosis
Female	Sr	ID-Borderline Intellect
Male	A	ID-Borderline Intellect, Dyslexia
Male	C	ASD
Male	C	Conduct, written expression, retention
Male	Sr	LD/ASD/Speech Issue
Male	B	ID-Borderline Intellect, Dyspraxia
Male	Sr	LD, ID-Borderline intellect
Male	Sr	LD
Female	A	LD - Dyslexia
Female	C	LD - Dyslexia
Male	Remedial	LD
Female	Remedial	CP, ID

LD- Learning Disability
ID - Intellectual Disability

Academic Level A (Up to Grade 3)
Academic Level B (Up to Grade 5)
Academic Level C (Up to Grade 8)
Secondary (Grade 9,10)

Profile of the Educational Experts Recruited

Learning disabilities are multifaceted and intricate, encompassing a range of complexities that can be accompanied by behavioural disorders and hyperactivity. Supporting children with such disabilities and implementing specialised pedagogies to facilitate their learning is a challenging task that cannot be accomplished merely by acknowledging the difficulties they face.

Thus, to effectively address their diverse needs, Disha recruited a team of specialised professionals, such as special educators, psychologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and other specialists, that worked in tandem to create a comprehensive support system. The exhibit below shows the details of the professionals recruited to facilitate the learning of students in the school:

Designation	Qualification
Psychologist	M.Sc. (Psychology)
Special Educator	B. Ed. in Special Education
Coordinator	Ph.D.
Special Educator	M.A., B.Ed.
Special Educator	Ph.D.
Art Teacher	M.V.A.
Aero Bay Trainer	B.Tech. in Aerospace
Physiotherapist	D.P.T. & B.P.T
Occupational Therapist	M.O.T.

Thus, the multi-specialist team was able to orchestrate a variety of learning experiences for the learning-disabled children to facilitate their developmental and educational journey in a holistic manner, accounting for all aspects of their well-being.

Inspiring Confidence among Parents

Parental buy-in and conviction are critical in identifying and screening children with learning disabilities and providing them with the required inputs and support for their optimal development. Furthermore, the principal elaborated that there is a social stigma attached to extreme disabilities in general, which can discourage families from enrolling their children in special schools intended for a heterogeneous group of children with severe physical and intellectual disabilities.

In an effort to alleviate such concerns, the school's third floor was equipped with a separate entrance. This dedicated entrance provided a distinct and secure space for children with learning disabilities to receive specialised education and support while preventing the risk of being stigmatised. This approach aimed to ensure that these children received the education and care they needed while also addressing the parents' concerns regarding their child's well-being.

Use of Research-Backed Design Principles

During interactions with the Disha team, it was discovered that the in-house team conducted a thorough research to determine the facility's requirements and consulted with a renowned therapeutic infrastructure designer. They discussed specific needs such as a separate entrance, reception, seating arrangements, eye-level board setup, sound reverberation, colour palate, and theme of each classroom corner. The existing centre, shaped like a semi-circle, was constructed in a disability-friendly manner to ensure ample ventilation, sunlight, and airflow.

Thus, the design principles were specifically tailored to meet the unique needs of children with learning disabilities, ensuring that they receive the best possible environment to learn and grow. The infrastructure was designed to provide a comfortable and stimulating space with elements such as optimal lighting, sound management, and colour scheme, which aimed to enhance the learning experience for these children.

Utilization of the 3rd Floor for Training Special Educators

The study found that the third floor and its well-equipped facilities were also utilized to develop a cadre of skilled professionals through a focused B.Ed. course. This course was designed to introduce aspiring educators to the vast spectrum of challenges that children with learning disabilities could face. Additionally, it emphasised the use of research-backed pedagogies to effectively cater to the unique learning needs of these children. The aim of this course was to bridge the gap in the availability of specialised training programs that are necessary to gain a more nuanced understanding of learning disabilities. By leveraging the resources of the school's third floor, the B.Ed. course was able to provide a comprehensive learning experience that equipped the trainees with the tools needed to help students with learning disabilities reach their full potential.

Pandemic-Induced Challenges

The Disha management recounted the challenges faced in the completion of the 3rd-floor extension of the school building, including the complexity of retrofitting a new structure onto an existing building while the school was running, the COVID-19 lockdown that halted construction for three months, difficulty finding labour and issues with existing contractors. Despite the delays, the team was able to maintain the quality and specification of the construction work within the allotted budget, incorporating innovative ideas from architects and consultants.

CHAPTER 4: THE NATURE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

The design and infrastructure of a learning environment can greatly impact the learning process, particularly for children with learning disabilities. The quality of facilities, resources, and design principles all play a significant role in determining the effectiveness of the educational inputs for these students. Thus, the study examined the qualitative information collected on the third floor of the Disha centre, which was specifically designed to cater to the needs of such children. The study delved into the various spaces and processes that were utilised to enhance learning outcomes for these students.

Additionally, the study explored the resource centre on the third floor, which was utilised to provide training to B.Ed. students, create awareness within the community, educate teachers from other schools, and engage with medical professionals to establish a knowledge base for facilitating the growth of children with learning-disabilities.

Classrooms

The research team noted that the classrooms at the Disha centre were well-designed, with ample natural light and spacious interiors. To ensure personalised attention, each classroom could accommodate a maximum of eight children as per the curriculum requirements. The classrooms also provided a child-friendly environment with cushioned seating corners to facilitate quiet time for hyperactive or attention-deficit children.

Further, the classrooms were equipped with other modern teaching aids such as whiteboards, digital projectors, and green boards for children to express themselves. The teachers shared that these arrangements were based on the Disha team's experience and aimed to maximise learning benefits for children with learning disabilities.

Infrastructure	Total nos.
Classrooms	4
Digital reading materials/ digital screening board/ interactive screen	3
Library	1
Discovery Lab	1
Robotic Stem Lab	1
Auditorium	1
Remediation space	1 (3 seatings)
Art & Craft Therapy	1
Counselling room	1
Medical /first Aid room	1
Music room	1
Staff room	1

Digital Reading Material

The centre's curriculum adopts a multi-sensory teaching approach, using traditional methods, outdoor activities, and technology. Digital reading facilities are a crucial element of this approach. Each classroom had a digital screening board, similar to a TV, that adjusts to the students' individual reading pace, allowing them to click on words for definitions. Electronic worksheets were also used to help students find answers if they struggle with writing or forming solutions.

Library

The centre had a well-organised library with appropriate seating arrangements and furniture. The books for the children were placed appropriately. A green grass mat was intentionally placed to provide sensory therapy. Additionally, computers were available to show digital content.

Discovery Lab

The study team found that the discovery lab served as a cognitive development and learning activity centre where children learned through interactive means such as puzzles. The children participated in activities such as fitting parts into their respective locations and completing pictures of body parts, among others. The in-house psychologist explained that these sensory activities facilitated the cognitive growth of children with learning disabilities.

Robotics STEM Lab

The Disha centre had a dedicated STEM learning facility for children, where they learn through hands-on activities. The facilitator in-charge of the lab proudly showcased the models built by the children during the visit. There was also an audio-video classroom with interactive features like a talking tree and digital mat that make learning fun for the children.

Auditorium

The centre boasted a large multipurpose auditorium that was extensively used for various activities for the children. It had ample space and was used for conducting parents' meetings, where they could exchange their experiences and learn from one another. Additionally, the auditorium served as a venue for different celebrations and functions. The project coordinator mentioned that they had recently organised a seminar for parents, teachers from other schools, and medical professionals in the auditorium.

Remediation Space

The centre also had a dedicated remediation space for children who needed additional attention. The teachers explained the room was situated away from the main classrooms and designed in a way that the child faced the wall to minimize external distractions. This approach ensured that the child could focus entirely on their studies without any hindrance.

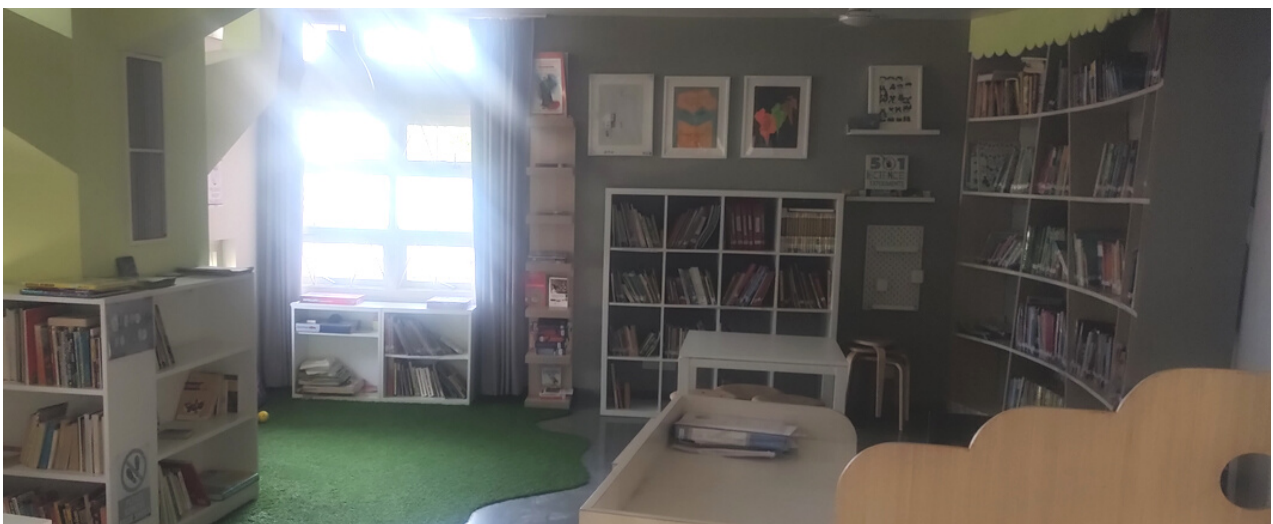
Art and Craft Therapy

The study team observed that the centre provided art and craft therapy, involving activities such as drawing, sketching, pottery-making, and handicrafts. They also found that music and dance classes were integral to the learning process. During their interaction, the teachers explained that these activities helped the children explore their creativity and provided sensory therapy. A special educator, further added that dance provides a platform for children with learning disabilities to develop social skills, such as understanding synchrony and building a sense of community.

In conclusion, the Disha centre's high-quality infrastructure and resources for children with learning disabilities were based on a pedagogical premise that emphasized personalised attention, multi-sensory teaching approaches, and modern technology. Well-designed classrooms with modern teaching aids, digital reading material, a well-organised library, a discovery lab, and a robotics STEM lab were all leveraged to enhance learning outcomes. Additionally, the centre had a large multipurpose auditorium that was used for art and craft therapy, music, and dance classes, all of which were geared towards providing sensory therapy and helping children develop social skills. The infrastructure and resources were specifically designed to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for children with learning disabilities.



Classroom



Library

CHAPTER 5: KEY STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS

This chapter presents the overall perspectives of key stakeholders regarding the infrastructure and services provided by Disha for children with learning disabilities.

Perceptions of the Parents

The research team interviewed parents and found that they were impressed with the facilities on the third floor, which were designed according to the children's needs and equipped with scientific technologies. The parents observed each activity before enrolling their children and were satisfied with the infrastructure, which was unlike anything they had experienced before. They reported observing their children's holistic improvement after enrolling them in Disha.

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The parents gave specific examples of their children's progress, such as a parent, who praised the spacious and well-equipped rooms, while another was pleased with her daughter's newfound confidence and love for Aero Bay classes. The parents of three children enrolled in the school noted their children's enjoyment of various classes and improved communication with their teachers.

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Perceptions of the Special Educators

The special educators noted that the children were getting a chance to express themselves in a non-judgmental environment, which boosted their confidence and improved their performance. They also mentioned that the children were adopting new technologies and responding well to the system.

The principal emphasised that there was no other institution in the city offering 360-degree services for children with learning disabilities. She explained that the centre was constructed to provide specialised education using diverse approaches and strategies to handle multiple issues faced by these children. The centre also aimed to develop a skilled workforce and offer training to teachers from other schools. She concluded that the centre was evolving into a pioneer resource centre in the city for learning disabilities.

Perceptions of the B.Ed. Students

According to the B.Ed. students who were interviewed by the research team, they were highly satisfied with the infrastructure and facilities provided by Disha. They praised the systematic and scientific facilities for children with learning disabilities, which they said were the best in Jaipur. The students appreciated the opportunity to observe the children's progress in reading, writing, and understanding through the use of digital boards, interactive TV, and robotic classes. They also noted that the senior teachers were very helpful in guiding them in handling the children, and that they were able to observe the children's progress in individual remediation classes.

The B.Ed. students were excited to work with the children in various contexts and said that they had ample opportunities to be actively involved in the activities. They also appreciated the practical internship program at the centre, which they found highly effective for their practical classes. They expressed that the internship allowed them to deal with the children directly and gain experience in various processes such as sensory therapy, supporting them in digital learning, and library classes.

Two B.Ed. students in their third semester who were interviewed, were highly motivated by the practical classes and expressed their desire to continue their careers as special educators. One of them said that she would like to explore her career in the autism spectrum later, while the other said that there is vast scope for working in this sector. According to her, children with learning disabilities suffer due to inadequate information, services, awareness, and acceptance of service providers, parents, teachers, and medical professionals. She believes that the gap could only be addressed through multi-dimensional approaches, and that there is a need for more professionals in this sector.

Overall, the B.Ed. students expressed their satisfaction with the exposure they received at the centre and their eagerness to continue in this field.

In conclusion, the key stakeholders, including parents, special educators, and B.Ed. students expressed their satisfaction with the infrastructure and services provided by Disha for children with learning disabilities. The parents were impressed with the facilities and reported observing their children's holistic improvement after enrolling them at the centre. The special educators noted that the children were getting a chance to express themselves in a non-judgmental environment, which boosted their confidence and improved their performance. The B.Ed. students appreciated the opportunity to work with the children through various activities and gain practical experience. Overall, the stakeholders' positive feedback highlights the success of the project in addressing the needs of children with learning disabilities and its potential to become a pioneer resource centre in the city.



Trainer & Staff

CHAPTER 6: EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

The findings of the study provide ample evidence to indicate the positive perceptions of parents, special educators, and B.Ed. students for the project and to highlight its effectiveness for learning-disabled children. This chapter attempts to thoroughly assess the impact of the intervention using the OECD evaluation framework along the dimensions of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

RELEVANCE

RATING ● ● ● ● ●

Learning disabilities are almost invisible in the spectrum of disabilities and thus are often overlooked. Children with learning disabilities struggle in mainstream schools and are unable to achieve optimal educational outcomes and are written off as slow learners as their needs are not met. The project is very relevant as it provides a dedicated space for such children to aid their academic as well as psycho-social development and their subsequent mainstreaming. Additionally, through its B.Ed. program, it aids in creating a cadre of trained professionals with a nuanced understanding of children with learning disabilities.

COHERENCE

RATING ● ● ● ● ●

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): The project aligns with several SDGs, including Goal 4: Quality Education, Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities, and Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals.



National Policy on Education (NPE): The project aligns with the NPE's goal of providing equal opportunities for education to all children, irrespective of their disabilities.

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD): The project aligns with the RPWD's objective of providing equal opportunities and non-discriminatory access to education for persons with disabilities.

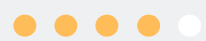
EFFECTIVENESS

RATING ● ● ● ● ●

The project has met its primary objective of providing a space that was instrumental in boosting the children's confidence, sorting their behavioural issues through therapy and counselling, and providing an appealing and equipped learning environment for them, reasonably well. Further, it was able to inculcate a deep understanding and interest among the B.Ed. trainees about learning disabilities and was able to equip them with a tool-kit to facilitate the development of such children. Thus, the project is effective as it has largely met its objectives, achieved expected results, and reached the right target groups.

EFFICIENCY

RATING



The funds provided for infrastructure development to create an exclusive alternative learning centre for the children to improve educational attainments have been adequately utilized within the stipulated time. Further, the design of the project includes coordinating and collaborating with different educational institutions, both public and private, and also with hospitals and individual medical professionals. Therefore, the project is quite efficient in nature.

IMPACT

RATING



The project is trying hard to establish the importance of alternative learning centres for children with learning disabilities and to change the approach and acceptance of parents, teachers, and medical professionals' towards learning disabilities. It has managed to shine the spotlight on learning disabilities and kickstart a dialogue with key stakeholders. However, its outreach is yet very small and is expected to grow over time and show enduring impacts more tangibly.

SUSTAINABILITY

RATING



The project has a few elements of sustainability as it engages with educational institutions, hospitals, and medical practitioners to identify and aid children with learning disabilities. Further, it has managed to bring trainee teachers in its ambit, thus, sensitising them to learning disabilities and creating a cadre of trained professionals who could potentially influence mainstream school ecosystems. However, it is currently limited in terms of outreach and scale. It has to incorporate a higher beneficiary coverage and closer collaboration with the public delivery system in its design to establish the efficacy and replicability of this model at scale.

CONCLUSION

Disha has constructed a dedicated space that caters to a spectrum of learning disabilities, fulfilling the emergent learning needs of children with learning disabilities while dispelling the taboos associated with them. The Centre focuses on providing an unconventional pathway to education and life skills development, with a strong emphasis on students' psychological, physical, cognitive, and social well-being. The positive perceptions of parents, special educators, and B.Ed. students highlight the project's effectiveness for learning-disabled children.

The success of the project has the potential to create a cadre of trained professionals who can bring their expertise to other schools and educational institutions, ultimately influencing the public education system to acknowledge and provide specialised support for the needs of children with learning disabilities. This could lead to a more inclusive and equitable education system for all.

However, to maximise the impact and long-term sustainability of the project, it should include a larger number of beneficiaries. Scaling the project could enable more children with learning disabilities to benefit from the unique intervention, and this could create a ripple effect by increasing awareness and acceptance of learning disabilities in the wider community.