

Educational Challenges and Voices of Visually Impaired Children

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Abstract

The study is based on the voices of visually impaired children with respect to their educational challenges. It was concluded that theoretically there are all sort of provisions made by government of India and also at global level for person with disabilities. Visually challenged children come under the category of person with disabilities and many types of educational provisions are made for them too. PWD act comes into existence in the year 1995 and RPWD Act comes into existence in the year 2016. In these ACT for person with benchmark disabilities the various kinds of provisions were made as their right. It becomes very difficult for visually challenged children to know about their right and avail their rights. Present paper is the show case of the actual inclusion of the visually impaired children in the mainstream.

Keywords: Visually Impaired Children, Educational Challenges, RPWD act 2016.

Introduction

In this world there are various kinds of people who lives in one or another form of scarcity. There are meaning kinds of scarcity like material scarcity and physical movement scarcity. Here we are talking about the differently abled children. According to our RPWD act 2016 the 21 kinds of disabilities are mentioned. One of it is visual impairment. Visual impairment refers to a kind of person having low vision even after the person make use of corrective lenses. Eye disease is one of the reason or causes for the reduction of low vision. It may be the cause of eye disease, accident, or from by birth.

It is an interesting phenomenon that visual impairment tends to evoke more awkwardness from us the any other disability. Why are we so uncomfortable aware of blindness? For one thing, blindness is visible. The blind person is usually not one who can easily weave himself into the fabric of a crowd, unlike any other exceptional people he stands out. We often don't realize a person has impaired hearing until we talk to him. Likewise. The vast variety of mentally retarded individuals is indistinguishable from others on the basis of physical appearance. The visually impaired person, however, has a variety of symbols-cane, thick or darkened glasses, a guide dog etc. Who are the visually impaired children? There are two prevailing ways of describing visual impairment the legal definition and the educational definition. The legal definition is usually subscribed to by lay and those in the medical profession. The educational definition is most often exposed by educators.

Classification of Visually Impairment Children

The visually impaired children have been classified medically which are shown in the following table:

Table 1: Visual Impairment Categories

Visual Impairment Categories			
Category/ Level	Better Eye	Worse Eye	% Impairment
Level D	6/9-618	6/24 to 36	20%
Category I	6/18-6/36	6/60 to nil	40%
Category II	6/60-4/60or Field of Vision 100-20	3/60 to nil	75%
Category III	3/60 to 1/60 or Field of Vision 100	F.C. at6 1. Ft. To nil	100%
Category IV	F.C. at 1 ft. To Nil or Field of Vision 100	Field of Vision 100	

The method of evaluation shall be the same as recommended in the handbook of medical examination. There are two major categories of visually impaired children.

1. The partially sighted are those who required large print or magnified print materials. Their visual acuity is very low (20/70 in the better eye). This means that the child sees at 20 ft what a normal child sees at 70 ft. Their eyesight may be weak due to short-sightedness, long sightedness, astigmatism, glaucoma or muscle detachment.
2. The blind is those who need to be taught through Braille or through aural methods their visual acuity may fall to 2/200. Such children must be prepared in pre academic skill like Braille reading and use of cane for mobility before integration.

Problems of Visually Impaired

The visually handicapped children have many problem like behaviour problems, problems of learning, problems of their placement in society or problems of social adjustment. Some problems are disused below.

1. Poor Intelligence: research analyses reveal that visually impaired children have a poor I.Q. Since they have impairments in the exploration of their environments, they have impairments also in concept formation resulting in their poor performance in intelligence tests. Some intelligence tests are measured by degrees of information knowledge or experience. But for blind child, this pattern of scoring is reduced to a very low level.
2. Academic retardation: These children have poor academic achievements even if they use large types or Braille. They are noted to be retarded by at least one to two years and are found to be underachievers. Visual impairment is the main factor for slower acquisition of information by observation. These children have a slower reading rate and lack concreteness in instructional procedures.
3. Slower speech development: Totally blind children cannot learn the art of speech by imitation. They can only learn through what they hear and from occasional touch observation. Progress in speech development is not significant in comparison with normal children due to significant in comparison with normal children due to the above reason. Due to his handicap, he is more likely to experience nervous strain and the feeling of insecurity and frustration are common with them.
4. Problems in social adjustment: Normally these children are looked down on and ridiculed by normal children every now and then. They face both personal and social adjustment problems. Because of this, they feel inferior and ultimately this leads to maladjustment. There is a controversy among psychologists regarding the adjustment problems of these children. Some research workers feel that the blind children are maladjusted in school, but others refute it completely.

Rational of the Study

The study is based on the voices of visually impaired children with respect to their educational challenges. The researcher has seen that theoretically there are all sorts of provisions made by government of India and also at global level for person with disabilities. Visually challenged children come under the category of person with disabilities and much type of educational provisions is made for them too. PWD act comes into existence in the year 1995 and RPWD Act comes into existence in the year 2016.

In these ACT for person with benchmark disabilities the various kinds of provisions were made as their right. It becomes very difficult for visually challenged children to know about their right and avail their rights. They are completely dependent on their parents or guardian. It has also been seen that the child who is visually challenged and belongs to Low social economic background becomes unwanted child in the family. Family do not support for their education. There may be two reasons behind it. The first reason is the attitude of family and the second reason is availability of required resources. Awareness of required resources is also not there.

Therefore the policies of government fails and many of the needy people are not able to access or avail these facilities. Policymakers much time do not understand the ground realities and challenges faced by visually impaired children. Parents also want all type of facilities from the government in the name of disability but they do not like to provide proper education to them. Therefore, it becomes necessary to understand the actual problems of visually impaired children to get their education on time. And so, the researcher has collected the voices of visually impaired children and find out the reason of their lacking in getting education.

Research Questions

1. What is the perception of visually impaired children towards education
2. Do visually impaired children get family support
3. Do visually impaired children face any kind of discrimination in their school
4. What is the perception of visually impaired children towards higher education ?
5. What is the problem faced by visually impaired children for getting education?
6. What kind of changes does visually impaired children I would like to make in education system?

Visual impairment:

"The definition of visual impairment is reduced vision not corrected by glasses or contact lenses. The World Health Organization uses the following classifications of visual impairment. When the vision in the better eye with best possible glasses correction is:

1. 20/30 to 20/60: is considered mild vision loss, or near-normal vision
2. 20/70 to 20/160: is considered moderate visual impairment, or moderate low vision
3. 20/200 to 20/400: is considered severe visual impairment, or severe low vision
4. 20/500 to 20/1,000: is considered profound visual impairment, or profound low vision

5. More than 20/1,000: is considered near-total visual impairment, or near total blindness
6. No light perception (NLP): is considered total visual impairment or total blindness”.

Blindness is defined by the World Health Organization as “vision in a person's best eye with best correction of less than 20/500 or a visual field of less than 10 degrees.This definition was set in 1972, and there is ongoing discussion as to whether it should be altered to officially include uncorrected refractive errors”1.

Educational Challenges

The educational challenges are here for Visually Impaired children, “general lack of training in the use of Braille instruction, lack of Braille machines and their materials, slow in writing during lectures and during exams and problems in their mobility around the university”.

Voices of Visually Impaired Children

Listening the voices of visually impaired children is the idea to know the actual grass root challenges faced by them. Here voices mean the direct interaction with the children and their educational challenges. Since the study is conducted on University/ college going students and so they can tell the problems they faced in their past for get education. These children can also share their present challenges too.

Objectives

1. To understand the perception of visually impaired children towards education.
2. To understand the problem faced by visually impaired children for getting education.
3. To understand the type of family support getting by visually impaired children.
4. To understand the kind of discrimination in their school faced by visually impaired children.
5. To understand the perception of visually impaired children towards higher education.
6. To collect the voices of visually impaired children and the changes they would like to make in education system and in their university.

Research Gap

The researcher has studied many researches, thesis, dissertation, research article, books and general articles. It was found after the deep study of all the above-mentioned literature that that these workshave been done to know the historical perspective of visually challenged children, the different kinds of educational institution setup in our country, various methods to teach in the classroom to make teaching learning process effective, remedial classes, development of individual education program, development of audio books and many more.

Some of the researches were based on the development of understanding of self-esteem and other related variables like attitude attributes through standardized test. Nowhere it was found that the voices of visually challenged children recorded one to one to know their actual problem facing after getting all type of facilities from the side of the government.

Attitude of Special Educators towards Electronic Learning (Sharma, S & Das, A.K. 2019),

Inclusion Practices of School Management Committees (SMCs) In Secondary School for Students with Learning Difficulties (Sharma, S & Sarkar, B. 2019), Vocational Training on Behavioural Skills in Mild Intellectually Disabled Person: An Empirical Study (Sharma, S & Das, A.K. 2017), Effect of Spiritual Attitude of Parents of Mentally Challenged Children (Sharma, S & Das, A.K. 2017), Accessible technological devices for people with disabilities: Divyangjan (Sharma, S & Kumar, S. 2017), Use of CAI in Special Education: An Approach Towards children With Mental Retardation (Sharma, S & Kumar, S. 2016), Children with Special Needs and their Educational Aspirations (Sharma, S & Dilbag. 2015) are the various references which describes in one or another way.

Therefore researcher has decided to take a small group of visually challenged children of Jammu district to talk to them, collect and record there one to one challenges faced by them and also the support they are getting by their family, and institutions.

Table 2: Category of sample schools

Sample Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Jammu, Jammu • Cluster University, Jammu • Government College for Womens, Parade, Jammu • IGNOU Learners
Category of Sample	Purposive Sampling
Total Sample	Twenty

Result and Discussion upon Major findings

Visually impaired children and the challenges faced by them forgetting education was studied by the researcher. The study was based on Jammu district. The purposive sampling was taken and visually impaired children were interviewed. In total the sample was twenty. The researcher has prepared an interview schedule where the voices of visually impaired children studying in higher education were recorded. The following observations were made during the research:

1. The learning environment provided by Institute is good. There is a provision of reservation for physically challenged students in every Institute. Accordingly, institutes are taking admission.
2. Various challenges faced by visually impaired children are related to to infrastructure. In the earlier time when the building was constructed there was no provision of making Ramp and lift. Therefore, wherever the building is very old the provision of ramp and installation of lift it is difficult.
3. The new institutional buildings are having provision of ramp and lift. There the students are not feeling difficulty in moving within the building.
4. There is a big problem of transportation. Two kinds of problems were observed with regards to transportation. The first one is commuting from residence to University. Crossing the road is a challenge. The second one is transportation from university Gate to department.
5. The department is very far from University Gate. At some places the departmental library is merged

- in central library. For that also moving from department to Central library is a concern.
6. There is a problem of separate differently abled friendly toilets. Cleanliness of the toilets and at drinking water place is a major concern.
 7. There is a proper sitting arrangement in the classroom. Teachers are cooperative and fellow students are supportive.
 8. Teacher teach in the class very well without thinking and concerning that visually impaired child is in the class. Teacher just teaches in the class for the normal students and completes her lecture. There is no discussion every time with visually impaired children that whether they are understood the concept taught or not. Even if they ask their teachers then teachers do not reply in an effective manner.
 9. There is no individualised teaching model for visually impaired children.
 10. There is a lack of books in the library. Braille books are not available. Now in some subjects e books are available. Audio book are also not available.
 11. When we talk of inclusive education then it means every Institute is to be inclusive in nature. The teachers, who are working with visually impaired students need to plan the environmental conditions based upon the following factors: (Mwakyeja, 2013).
 12. Learning environment is very essential to maintain because it easily enhance the learning. The resources related to learning material needs to be well organised which was not seen in this study. Most of the students were telling that teachers were using traditional method of teaching and not using the change to model of teaching. The supportive learning environment always helps teachers as well as learning to learn and understand the concept in a very effective manner. The use of Technology and assistive devices are not there in the classroom. Therefore there is any to consider reformation in education system to enable the visually impaired children learn better.
 13. At the end of the semester assessment process starts. This assessment needs to be redefined and there must be a systematic procedure of assessment for visually impaired children. Assessment need to define the academic ability, learning style and approach towards the concept taught.
 14. It was also observed that the curriculum is not differently abled friendly. There is no individualized education plan for visually impaired children. Parents and teacher needs to sit together and work for preparing the individual education program. This individual education program is seen in special schools but the same has to implement in in inclusive setup in a redefined manner.
 15. Collaborative teaching is an important concept which can be used in inclusive education to meet the needs of differently abled children. This collaborative teaching help visually impaired

children to learn better and to participate better in the classroom. A specialised teacher can be invited to teach and support visually impaired children and also guide teachers for the assistive devices and preparation of teaching learning material with the provision of congenial learning environment. Teachers may learn the reading and writing skills of braille.

16. Collaoration with parents during parents teacher is not seen from the the voices of the visually impaired children. Parents must know the progress of their children. Parents and teachers can jointly discuss the future needs of visually impaired children how.

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