

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN IN ASSAM, NORTH EAST INDIA

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Abstract : Historically, the education for students with disabilities has been progressed from negligence to institutional, residential schooling, other isolated schools and classes. The vocational courses and training, in such school, can help in ascertaining the development of the student. Vocational courses should encompass comprehensive experiences through which students could learn to prepare for productive engagement in future work. In this study, an attempt has been made to find out the followed curricular content, recreational & leisure skills and vocational skills of visually impaired children in Assam, North East India. A descriptive survey method has been used, and a total of five special schools for visually impaired children have been selected by applying a simple random sampling technique. The present sample at the time of visiting has been considered as a sample of the study under incidental sampling technique with a total number of 100 teachers, including the headmaster and the present students. As per as the dimension is concerned, Curriculum Content of all five Visually impaired Special School comes under the Board of Secondary Education (SEBA) where music is considered to be an elective subject. It has been found that all the five special schools for visually impaired provides vocational courses for the students, i.e. spoken English, computer, craft and yoga. It has also been observed that the main methods of teaching were delivered with 'learning by doing' practice, 'learning by feeling and listening', 'demonstration method' and individual instruction of each child.

Index Terms - Vocational Education, Visually impaired, disabilities, skills.

I. INTRODUCTION

We are living in a universe that is full of diversities. Every form of living and non-living being is unique and different from each other. Some are fortunate enough to have extraordinary abilities or captives, while others are average or even suffer from some deficits and deficiencies from birth. This disparity between the children's abilities and captives related to their learning, adaptation and development can be encountered in their nourishment and education. As a consequence, the terms such as impairments, disabilities and handicapped are emerging.

According to WHO guidelines - Impairment in its simple sense signifies or represents a sort of abnormality in the structure and functioning of body systems including psyche. Ysseldyke and Algozzine (1990) proposed that a special education system helps in recognizing the needs of the students and serve as an alternative to a regular school curriculum to accommodate the needs of these students.

Historically, education for students with disabilities has changed from negligence to institutions, residential schooling and other isolated schools and classes, vocational courses and training to pullout programs and mainstreaming, finally, with complete equality for all students with disabilities.

Article 41 of the Indian constitution, under the directive principles of state policy, directs the state to make adequate provision for the security of the right to work, the education and public assistance in the event of unwarranted wishes.

As per Census 2011, over 2.68 Cr people in India have a different type of disabilities, equivalent to 2.2% of the total population. Among the five types of disability, the disability in seeing emerges as 18.8% which is the third-highest category among other disabilities. In the State Assam, there are 4,80,065 disabled people, of whom 80553 are visually impaired, which is equivalent to 16.78% of the total disabled population in the state and this is the second most common disability among those with disabilities found in Assam (Census on India .2011. Data on Disability).

From the statistical data, it is found that the literacy rate among people with visually impaired disabilities is low as 48%, where 44% of the total literacy rate is from the rural area, and 4% is from the urban area. Almost 86% of Assam's population resides in rural areas, where there is a higher concentration of the blind population.

The most common impairment in sight or visually impaired disability has emerged as the topmost prominent disability among the other disabilities in both India and the state of Assam. From the Survey report of Disabled Persons, under National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) 1991, Assam was considered to be the most vulnerable state in terms of coverage of visually impaired or born with a visually impaired population than any other States in India.

Special education, in its simple meaning, is a somewhat specific and special form of education intended for special children. Therefore, the primary goal of special education for students with visual disabilities is to minimize as much as possible the vision-related handicaps they experience [Topor, Rosenblum, & Hatton, (2004)]. It requires a remedial basic skills program

that can help to learn various introductory information about the settings and different modes of service delivered by teachers. Such skill acquisition training involves vocational training, orientation, mobility with day-to-day living skills which are indispensable for independent functioning and socialization for the students with visually impaired. Career or vocational courses should be confined to comprehensive experiences through which students can learn how to prepare for productive engagement in future work. By doing so, our country would not only be free from social obligations but would also be investing in a promising future for visually disabled individuals and society as a whole.

II. OBJECTIVE:

- To find out the curricular content followed for visually impaired children with special reference to Assam, North East.
- To find out the Recreational & Leisure skills of visually impaired children with special reference to Assam, North East.
- To find out the vocational education of visually impaired children with special reference to Assam, North East.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the study descriptive survey method has been used.

3.1 Population and Sample

In this study, a total of five visually impaired special schools such as Ghilamara Andha Vidyalaya, Guwahati blind High school, Moran Janamangal Adarsha Blind School, Srimanta Sankar Mission Blind school, and Assam Sishu Andha Vidyalaya have been selected with the help of simple random sampling technique. Incidental sampling technique has been used to select the total number of 100 teachers, including the headmaster of the school.

3.2 Data and Sources of Data

In order to collect the primary data, the interview schedules for the headmaster and teachers were organized, and for the secondary data, the official record of student's achievement was collected.

3.3 Statistical tools

In the present study, both qualitative and quantitative analysis has been done for analysis. Simple percentage method has been applied to convert the data towards inferences.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Curriculum Content:

It has been found that the curriculum of a student of visually impaired special schools comes under the Board of Secondary Education Assam (SEBA) where music is considered to be an elective subject. Whereas vocational subjects, i.e., computers, crafts, yoga, subjects do not fall under SEBA board. It has the same curriculum followed by regular students with a minor modification in subjects, i.e. mathematics and science. However, provision is made not to participate in the geometry section of the syllabus, as the visually impaired students are incapable of drawing the geometry objects and face difficulties in understanding the concept of specific portion, i.e. idea of a sphere, cone, rectangle and square etc. From the primary section, the students learn how to use abacus for mathematics from multiplication to subtraction, the basic concepts of cone geometry, triangle, rectangle and square etc. Sometimes, the clay model is also used to help students understand mathematics as a whole.

In the case of an elective subject, 90 out of 200 students from all five schools pursues music (vocal and instrumental) as an elective subject. The music as an instrumental includes classes on tabla and harmonium, and the vocal music includes classes on singing and classical music learning with the use of harmonium. It was found that the tabla classes were held in most of the school for five days a week.

4.2 Recreational & Leisure skills:

Every student has their own goal and hobbies, but some similarities have been found in their hobbies that maximum student's hobby was music and they wanted to be trained on it. Some of the students took part in a different competition organized by their school and even outside the schools. One of the students called Sahid Afridi from Guwahati Blind High School won the award for best singer in the "Aakax Subor Mon" show hosted by the DY365 news channel. Some of the students from all five schools also participated in various competitions, such as debate competition, quiz competition, singing, performing instrumental music, drama and playing football and cricket etc. In the "blind cricket championship 2017" tournament held in Assam, the students of Guwahati Blind High School defeated the students of Jorhat Blind High School and became champions.

4.3 Vocational education:

Vocational education or curriculum courses are included for all-around students development. The courses taught to develop vocational skills in such visually impaired schools were as follows:

In all five school academies, students were provided spoken English classes specifically for the Secondary level students, which lasted five days in a week.

In the school curriculum, different classes were assigned to special skills, along with regular subjects. In order to develop the student's self-confidence and self-esteem, craft classes were also included in the course. Some of the school craft classes were split into different days for boys and girls. Some of the schools offered special bamboo craft classes for boys were taught making the different bamboo chair, pen stand, flower vase and basket etc. Similarly, handicraft classes were taught for girls making of flowers, weaving, doll making and woollen works etc.

Apart from this, in all the five schools, class VI –X students were also taught the fundamentals of the computer through the use of assistive technology. The basic course includes booting a computer, logging off a computer and typing. At most schools, the classes were offered for between 1 to 2 days per week. It has been found that, of all 200 students, only 140 (70%) of students know how to use a computer.

It was also found that in all schools, the importance was given to all-round development of children's yoga practice. As per the recommendation of the Assam government, the state is expected to have a day of yoga class in a week for six months. But it was found that, of all 200 students, only 102 (51%) of students were interested in learning yoga.

V. CONCLUSION

In today's society, every child, as a citizen of the country, has their own unique value and needs ample educational opportunities for full growth and development. Education in the form and style of special education can meet the special needs of the children. Special education, in its basic sense, is a very unique and special form of education meant for special children.

Therefore, the role of special schools is significant for these impaired children. Their insight and skills will not be fed until and unless they have full-time classes, activities with care, academic support, training on music, co-curricular activities, vocational & mobility training etc. These would be successful with the assistance of compensatory curriculum including braille, equipment's use, orientation and mobility skills, social skills, day to day living skills and sensory stimulation (tactile preparation) in special residential schools.

The findings show that the principle strategies of educating were conveyed with 'learning by doing' activity, 'learning by feeling and listening', 'demonstration method' and individual instruction in the classroom. After that, vocational classes covered the computer class, yoga class, spoken English class, and craft class were conducted on week after week premise.

These students with special learning needs in areas that allow the functional use of vision in their everyday lives to be aimed at special schools. Furthermore, these schools have focused in particular on improving vocational skills. Aside from this, the school assessment team of a special school should consist of a school psychologist, an orientation and mobility specialist and more trained teachers for visually impaired students. Most likely, there is also a need for cooperation from the community and govt. of Assam, North East India.

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