

EXAMINE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING DISTRIBUTION OF PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED STUDENTS IN WEST BENGAL

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ABSTRACT

A physically challenged child may be defined as a child who has a disability of locomotor and neurological origin which constitutes disadvantages or restrictions in one or more aspects of daily living activities. It may be physical, cognitive, mental, sensory and emotional type. The disability may be congenital or acquired. Teachers view fellow professionals as those who abet the planning process. They identified budgetary factors, accountability factors, access to equipment and materials, and physical environment in the classroom and school as barriers in managing physically challenged students. Present study was conducted to examine distribution of disabled students between age group 6-14 years in West Bengal. Students of 6-14 year age group were interviewed or examined to diagnose disability. Disabilities in males were higher than that of females. Most of them had physical followed by locomotive, multiple and speech & hearing disability and mental retardation.

KEYWORDS: Elementary education, Handicapped student, urban localities.

INTRODUCTION

Students in the school which included peers with disabilities generally indicated the more positive attitudes. Impairments in young children need to be reviewed in the initial phase of the disability process, which if not addressed properly, leads to add secondary disabilities and so many other complexes as the child grows. Planning of rehabilitation of such type of child at local level should consider quality and quantity and care required accordingly for different types of disabilities. The purpose of this survey was to examine and create a clear-cut picture of the distribution of physically challenged students between age group 6 and 14 years in West Bengal (India). The outcomes of the study may facilitate the general education teachers' perceptions and feelings about planning for physically challenged students as well as their planning practices.

The findings of the research work are presented in figure. It can be revealed on the basis of observations that disabilities in male students in comparison that in females remained higher. Most of the students were physically disabled followed by locomotive, multiple and speech and hearing disability. Mental retardation was observed to be lowest in comparison to other types of disabilities. Padmamohan et al. (2009) reported almost similar patterns of disabilities in the state of Kerala. Ahmad, (2012) explored that the majority of children with disabilities in developing countries are currently out of school, while many of those enrolled are not learning. The major barriers that confront with inclusion of children with special needs for adequate learning are as barriers Related to Time and Skills, physical Barriers, attitudinal Barriers, curricular Barriers and communication Barriers. The findings of the study indicated that the physically disabled children needed for planning for instituting easily accessible learning programmes, incorporating existing social welfare and health service. There is a burning need of development of infrastructural facilities for children with disability and creating community awareness regarding childhood disability. There was also a requirement for proper utilization of rehabilitation plans necessary for increasing the utilization of schemes available. Planning at the local level should consider the difference in quality and quantity of care required for different types of disability in such type of children. The physically challenged students under research work were requiring special schools as per their particular disability problem but those were continuing their study in the similar schools; therefore they were feeling serious difficulties in learning. Englert et al., (2009) has revealed that the students with disabilities have more difficulties in using the learning-to-learn strategies as they read, study, and write expository texts, although neither group is judged to be highly proficient. However, from the educational point of view, not all the pupils with physical disabilities required special school provisions. There may be variations in duration or severity among physical disabilities.

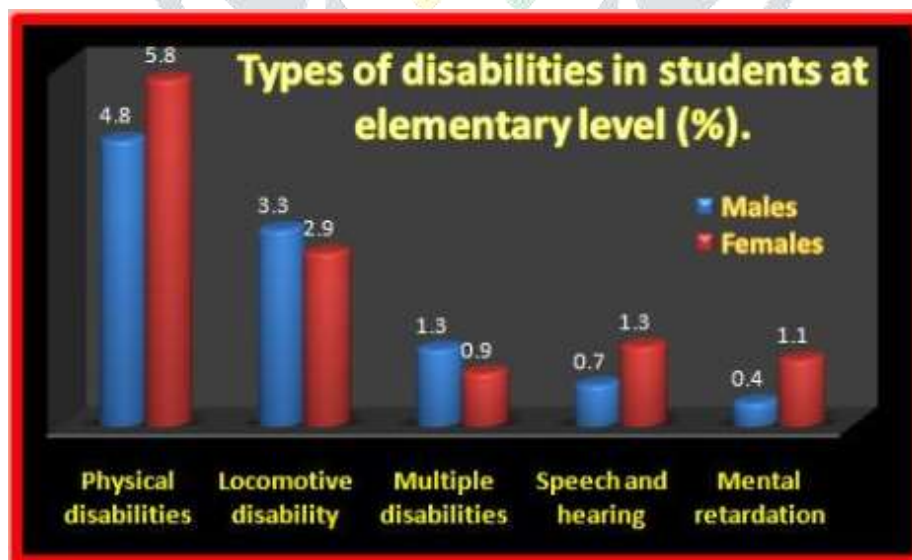


Fig 1: Disabilities in students at elementary level

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Findings from the research done by Hayward (2008) on inclusive learning and teaching suggest that many university lecturers have limited awareness of the diverse qualification backgrounds of their students and lack knowledge of the particular needs of students. According to the study done by Hockings (2008), teachers of higher education need to develop pedagogic practices and curricula that takes into account of the diverse interests and needs of students in each class. The study also suggests that pedagogies that are student centered, inclusive of individual differences, and relevant in the context of the subject are likely to extend opportunities for academic engagement to a wider range of students. The study results of Fuller et al. (2008) show that disabled students were particularly likely to be studying creative arts and design subjects and to be under

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The study results of Fuller et al. (2008) show that disabled students were particularly likely to be studying creative arts and design subjects and to be underrepresented in vocational courses such as medicine, teaching and nursing, where professional bodies impose fitness to practice standards and disabled students' degree outcomes were generally poorer than those of non-disabled students.

According to the study done by Hasanuzzaman and Khan (2011), higher bureaucratized system with multiple controls and regulations by Central and State Government and statutory bodies, outdated programmes with inflexible structure, inadequate infrastructural facilities, lack of trained manpower, funds, training facilities, techniques and research for the disabled and high unit cost of higher education, particularly of professional education are the causes for the limited accessibility of higher education for individuals with disabilities.

Mistry (2012) reported in his study that the students with disabilities did not have easy accessibility to classrooms, libraries, and academic and administrative buildings in their respective universities. They were also not provided with any kind of learning resources including assistive technology.

Though there were definite signs of progress in provision of higher education to students with disability taking place within a demanding context, much more development is needed and in particular, barriers to accessing the curriculum needs to be addressed (Bhuvanewari&Swarnakumari, 2013).

The results of the study by Ganapathy (2014) indicates that students with disabilities invested more time to meet the demands of their studies, participated in fewer social and extra-curricular activities, and used computers and information technology less often.

HIGHER EDUCATION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN INDIA

Education for students with disabilities has long been an issue of concern in India, as well as in abroad. An individual with a disability studying in mainstream educational institutions experiences many difficulties in navigating through the critical course of the Indian educational system. Higher education has seen a paradigm shift in India since the mid-1980s. There has been a massive expansion in student numbers with reduced funding over a decade. It is a global scenario that only limited attention has been placed on addressing the issues of access, retention, progression and participation of students with disabilities within higher education institutions. Within this demanding context, pressure has also been applied to educational institutions to improve accessibility for disabled people, most recently after India became the signatory to United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), in September, 2007. Though there are many policies and acts in India favouring the education of students with disabilities, it is found that not much has been done in the field of disability and higher education.

CHALLENGES FACED BY STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AT HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTES

Students with disabilities face particular challenges in higher education not only in terms of gaining physical access to buildings, but also in relation to much wider access issues concerning the curriculum adaptation and accommodation, teaching, learning and assessment. These reasons become the eligibility criteria to scrutinize the ability of higher education to include a diverse range of learners. This has led to the emphasis on initiatives to widen access to higher education to individuals with disabilities. The study done by Chataika (2010) revealed that the students with disabilities in higher education continue to face attitudinal, physical and institutional barriers but they also have the ability to develop coping mechanisms that help them reach their educational goals. A positive attitude and self-advocacy skills were seen as the most important factors in determining the success of students with disabilities in higher education.

Physical Inaccessibility:

Students with disabilities continue to encounter physical barriers to educational services, such as a lack of ramps and/or elevators in multi-level buildings, heavy doors, inaccessible washrooms, and/or inaccessible transportation to and from institution.

Accommodation Process:

Students with disabilities often encounter delays at many stages of the accommodation process. They have difficulties in the processing of claims for scholarships and concessions. Many of the times professional assessments are not carried out on time. Delay in the provision of special education programs and services are also observed.

Lack of Individualization:

Some funding schemes rely on pre-set categories and labels, and emphasize student "weakness" rather than strength. Suspension and expulsion policies are at times rigidly applied and do not take into account a student's individual circumstances. At all levels of education, there needs to be a greater recognition of the context in which discrimination occurs.

Negative Attitudes and Stereotypes:

Students with disabilities continue to face negative attitudes and stereotypes in the education system. Lack of knowledge about and sensitivity to disability issues on the part of some educators, staff and students can make it difficult for students with disabilities to access educational services equally. The other challenges include: ÿ

- Moving away from home ÿ Understanding and working through the transfer process ÿ
- Securing financial support ÿ
- Meeting the admissions requirements for specific degree programs such as Engineering, Textiles, etc., ÿ
- Adjusting to differences in disability documentation requirements. For instance a person with severely low vision may be using the disability documentation of legally blind for availing government scholarships. ÿ
- Adjusting to differences in the disabled student services offered as many of the higher educational institutions do not have relevant support services pertaining to specific disabilities.

Based on the most conservative estimate for the disabled youth population in the country (NSSO, 2003), just 1.2% of the 3.6 lack disabled youth are in the Universities and Colleges. It brings the stark reality into an established truth that India's higher educational system is not accessible to 98.8% of its disabled youth.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded on the basis of present investigation that disabilities in male students in comparison that in females remained higher in the West Bengal (India). Most of the physically challenged children were physical followed by locomotive, multiple and speech and hearing disability. Mental retardation was observed to be lowest in comparison to other types of disabilities. Not all the pupils with physical disabilities were requiring special education programmes but some of them needed same provisions. The requirement was dependent on the

variations in duration or severity among physical disabilities. As the higher education institutes become more digitized nowadays, accessibility of online educational sites should be given priority to help individuals with print and vision impairment to improve their independence. The provision of digitized reading materials, access to computers with assistive devices, choice of examination methods, promoting open access and open educational resources will go a long way in furthering higher education amongst students who have disabilities. Institutions could explore new models of imparting education which are proving successful in other parts of the world. Furthermore, existing sources of information and knowledge, such as information in the public domain and knowledge imparted through distance education should be made accessible to a wider audience. Though the Government of India has implemented a scheme of Higher Education for Persons with Special Needs (HEPSN) through the University Grants Commission (UGC), a remarkable gap is perceived between policy and practice. Analysis of various literature reviews and case studies of persons with disabilities shows that significant barriers remain in participation of disabled students in higher education. Areas needing particular attention were teaching and learning, monitoring and evaluation as well as support services like assistive technology. Appropriate funding mechanisms should be evolved to financially assist universities and higher education institutions to enable them to promote disability inclusion through accommodating and including students with disabilities.

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