

PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS AWARENESS ON PWD ACT 1995 AND INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to examine the level of awareness regarding the disability act among primary school teachers of Haryana toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream settings. The sample consisted of 80 primary school teachers working in different primary schools in Northern Haryana. The results reveal that most of the teachers do not aware of the disability act and there is a need of in-service training to the teachers to proper implementation of the government schemes and RTE Act 2010 for the mainstreaming of the children with special needs.

INTRODUCTION

India is one country which has a National policy for Persons with Disabilities to cater to the requirements of 2.9 crore persons with disabilities (Census of India, 2001) who constitute 2.3 per cent of the total population. A large number (75 per cent) of them live in rural areas, 49 percent of disabled population is literate and only 34 per cent are employed. The Government of India has enacted three legislations for persons with disabilities viz. Persons with Disabilities (Equal opportunities, Protection of Rights and full Participation) Act, 1995, National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disability Act, 1999 and Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992 (Dhankar , 2007).

The constitution of India applies uniformly to all citizens of India whether or not they are healthy and normal or disabled (Physically or Mentally) and irrespective of their religion, caste, gender, creed etc. The only requirement is that the people to whom the constitution will apply have Indian citizenship. The Constitution of India applies uniformly to every legal citizen of India, whether they are healthy or disabled in any way (Physically or mentally) and guarantees a right of Justice, liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship and equality of status and of opportunity and for the promotion of fraternity. To safeguard the interests of the disadvantaged sections of the society, the Constitution of India guarantees that no person will be denied 'equality' before the Law. Relevant Articles in Indian Constitution providing constitutional guarantees to all including disabled are:

Article 21: Every person including the disabled has his life and liberty guaranteed. Article 25: guarantees to every citizen (including the disabled) have the freedom of conscience to practice and propagate his religion subject to proper order, morality and health. Article 32: Every

disabled person can move the Supreme Court of India to enforce his fundamental rights and the rights to move the Supreme Court.

Right of the disabled: Disability is a human rights issue and it must be looked into in that context. People are disabled not because of their physical or mental handicaps but because of the barriers put up by the society to establish differences between disabled and non-disabled like Environmental Barrier, Institutional Barrier, Attitudinal Barrier and Information Barriers. In order to ensure that the persons with disabilities are given their rights it is essential that the District Administration coordinate the programmes and schemes of all development to the departments in the district to bring out a comprehensive policy to focus the programs of the Government for the welfare of the disabled people.

LEGAL FRAMWORK FOR DISABLES

- I) Design Act, 1911
- II) Succession Act, 1956
- III) Marriage Act
- IV) Mental Act, 1987
- V) The person with Disabilities (PWD) Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and full Participation Act, 1995.

The persons with Disabilities (Equal opportunities, Protection of Rights and full Participation, Act, 1995 has come into enforcement on February 7, 1996 (GOI and MHRD). It is a significant step, which ensures equal opportunities for the people with disabilities and their full participation in the nation building. The Act provides for both the preventive and promotional aspects of rehabilitation like education, employment and vocational training, reservation, research and manpower development, Creation of barrier-free environment, rehabilitation of persons with disability, unemployment allowances for the disabled, special insurance scheme for the disabled employees and establishment of homes for persons with severe disability etc. There has been a shift in focus in the policies of the Government for the disabled people. The focus is on rights rather than clarity. Similarly Government of India has brought out a legislation to deal with the problems of disability and to ensure that the rights of the disabled are protected. The persons with Disabilities (Equal opportunity, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Bill, 1995 was passed in December 1995 and came into force on 07-02-1996 (MHRD 1995-2002 and GOI). This act establishes responsibility on the society to make adjustment for disabled so that they over come various practical, psychological and social hurdles created by their disabilities.

A need has been strongly felt to involve more government organizations and society in implementation of the schemes with focus on inclusion instead of integration. Social resources in Indian context can be classified under four categories – Parents and Caregivers, community, local governing bodies, Panchayati Raj institutes, NGOs and other institutions working for children with Special Needs and Socio, cultural environments Thomas (2006). When we talk of using social resources for working for children with disabilities it becomes necessary to establish effective partnership with all these persons and organizations and share the same vision. Thus

they become effective partners of government effort to provide education to children with disabilities. The present study was an attempt to study the awareness regarding the PWD Act 2005 among the primary teachers among Northern Haryana because if teachers were not aware than it will be very difficult to implementation of the inclusion. The RTE Act 2010 has been implemented in the State which also talk about the inclusion of the children with special needs in regular classroom teaching.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Over a past 2 decade a considerable amount of researches have been conducted and many policies are framed for the protection of disabled rights and awareness about these policies. Batra (1981) made an attempt to study awareness in general public in a study entitled, "Social integration of the Blind." The main areas selected for studying the awareness are: opinion of causative factors of blindness, views on limitations imposed by blindness, education, vocational training, mobility, marriage and employment. The sample from the general public comprised 54% male and 64% female. Madhavan et al., (1990) conducted a study entitled, "Mental retardation awareness in the Community." The awareness of various groups of persons in a community about mental retardation was studied in a rural area near Hyderabad. A case vignette was used to study the awareness and attitudes of 247 parents, 67 teachers and 43 Communities health volunteers and 310 auxiliary nurse midwife trainees. The study shows that there is awareness to some extent in the community about the presence of mental retardation (Desai, 1990). The method of referral and management were towards the doctors and hospital in a majority of cases. Various studies have been conducted on Disability awareness and attitudes of young children in an integrated environment (Kobe and Mulik, 1995; Sherman et al, 1996; Mostert and Crockett, 1999-2000). A naturalistic inquiry even used in the context of a case study. The unit of analysis was a children centre. The primary information was the normally developing children aged 3 through 6, enrolled in the centre. Participant observation and open-ended interviewing were the primary data collection techniques (Kobe and Mulik, 1995; Kennett, 2007). Non-participants observation and analysis of school record were also used upon completion of the field study, the data analyzed and interpreted according to accepted procedures in the naturalistic research tradition. Data consisted of comprehensive field notes and interviews transcripts derived from participant's observation, formal interview and document analysis (Holland et al., 2002). The participants expressed early awareness of sensory and physical disabilities but virtually no awareness of intellectual disabilities. Wolfson, (1984) conducted a study, "Historical Perspective on Mental Retardation:." The study reviews research on Mental Retardation (MR) from a historical perspective with special focus on its definition assessment, prevention and amelioration. Mental Retardation and its amelioration are highly culture bound especially when problems in adaptive behaviours are considered as indicative of mental retardations. The method of assessment of intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviours the prevalence rate of mental retardation, the prevention and amelioration of mental retardation have been discussed historically with special emphasis on recent advances made in the field. Verplanken et al., (1994) conducted a study entitled, "Emotions and Cognition: Attitudes towards persons who are visually impaired". They surveyed 263 health care workers (aged 21-24 years) about the emotional and cognitive components of attitudes. Myths regarding the causes still continue to be held by the illiterate section of the society and where the educational level is low. This revealed that there is lack of awareness in the community regarding causes of various disabilities.

SAMPLE AND METHOD

The descriptive survey method was used to collect the data from the field. The sample was composed of 80 teachers (40+40) working in Government and private schools in Haryana were randomly selected. Self made and field tested questionnaire was used to collect the data from various Government and private school. The scale has 20 items consisting of statements regarding PWD Act 1995. Simple percentage and mean was calculated and t-test by using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) 11.5.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

TABLE-1 AWARENESS LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SCHOOL TEACHERS

Group	N	Mean \pm SD	P
Government Teacher	42	12.66 \pm 1.26	0.07
Private Teachers	38	12.96 \pm 0.98	

Table-1 showed the scores among teachers belong to different management and it was found in the present study that Government and Private school teacher's scores do not differ significantly in terms of their PWD Act, 1995 awareness level. It means the nature of the school in which teacher is working does not affect PWD Act, 1995 awareness level of teachers.

TABLE-2 AWARENESS LEVEL OF MALE AND FEMALE TEACHERS

Group	N	Mean	P
Male Teachers	45	10.36 \pm 2.04	0.65
Female Teachers	35	10.76 \pm 1.76	

Table-2 showed the difference on the basis of gender, and found that male and female teachers do not differ significantly in terms of awareness level. It means gender of teacher does not influence level of awareness regarding PWD Act, 1995.

TABLE-3 AWARENESS LEVEL ON THE BASIS OF EXPERIENCE

Group	N	Mean	P
More Experienced	42	12.66 \pm 3.46	0.04
Less Experienced	29	9.44 \pm 2.30	

Table-3 shows that if experience play any differences on the awareness regarding the famous PWD Act 1995. It was observed that more experienced and less experienced teachers differ significantly with regard to their PWD Act, 1995 awareness level. In other words experience affects level of PWD Act, 1995 awareness. It means that those who have more experience of teaching they have more knowledge and more aware regarding the Act.

TABLE-4 OVERALL AWARENESS LEVEL OF TEACHERS

	Very Good	Good	Average	Poor
Scores	16+ (7.5%)	11-15 (44.00%)	6-10 (46.00%)	<5 (2.5%)

Table-4 shows that the overall awareness level among the teachers working in Government and private schools. It was found that 7.5% teachers have very good, 44.0% good and 46% average and 2.5% have poor awareness about the disability act i.e. PWD Act, 1995.

The present study indicates that there are higher percentage of subjects who do not have information of the full form of the terms PWD Act, 1995. Even they are well informed about PWD Act, 1995 only without knowing it.

CONCLUSION

The present study investigated the attitude of the Government and private schools primary teachers about PWD Act, 1995. The present study has its implications for Government administration, teachers, health organizations, rehabilitation centres and voluntary organization that are already doing a very good and noble job but there is a need of doing much work in this area because of its less awareness. The challenges of having severe physical disabilities are serious enough. Ironically, the community hardly plays constructive role to support the persons with special need. That's why the awareness towards the new legislative provisions for the disabled is very necessary and PWD Act, 1995 was passed by the parliament to help such type of persons. Awareness of this act is also necessary for the teachers of such persons as teacher can guide a student towards his/her right future and best inclusion practices and fill the gap between the disabled and non-disabled. Because of the awareness a teacher can tell about the rights of disabled persons and implement the concept in a proper way in the society. With the help of it they can get employment and stand on their own feet and mainstreamed in the society. By the knowledge of such provisions they can fully participate in their socio-Economic life.

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