

Special Education Facilities for the Handicapped Children in Pakistan

By

Mrs. Aisha Akbar^{*}

Introduction

In our society, disabilities in body or mind, whether genetic or occasioned by disease or accident, have been traditionally looked upon with indifference, callousness or pity. Even parents of disabled children do not usually have a positive or encouraging attitude, rather it is considered to be a matter of shame and social scorn, or superstitiously considered to be the will of God. Mostly the care of the disabled person is left to individuals' charity.

However, in the rapidly changing society, the traditional attitude of indifference and callousness is being gradually replaced by a more sympathetic, kind and humanistic disposition towards the disabled persons. Now, there is a growing realization that disabled persons are also entitled to a respectable and dignified life, and that most handicapped people are endowed with extraordinary courage and talent to combat life's hardships. The view that disabled can be educated and trained, be made useful citizens to earn their livelihood and could become self-sufficient, is gaining general acceptance. It is because of this realization that education and training of the handicapped is receiving greater attention these days. Presently education and care of the handicapped is being accepted as a moral and social obligation of the society. "THE nation which is most decent and worthy of respect is one in which the weak, the oppressed and the sick have the first claim". It is this philosophy which provides the firm foundation on which special education services are built in a society.

Children with physical, sensory or intellectual disabilities encounter learning problems, and need special interventions by way of modified curriculum, special instructional methodology and use of special aids to neutralize/reduce the impeding effects of disabilities on learning and achievements. In the absence of such

^{*} The writer is an Assistant Professor in AIUO.

interventions, the handicapped are bound to suffer from a degree of social incompetence and inadequacy to live well below the level of their potential.

Development of Special Education - A global perspective

The welfare of the handicapped has come a long way since the days of purely custodial and protective care. At first, it was believed that handicapped children were sub-normal and consequently, provisions were custodial in nature. But eventually an attempt at rudimentary education and training became a part of the pattern.

Special education in western society had a true beginning in 16th century. Pedro Ponce de Leon taught some deaf pupils in Spain to speak, read and write. The first book on teaching the deaf was published in 1620 in Spain by Juan Pablo Bonet. This gave rise to a wider interest in the education of the deaf in Europe. In England, John Bulwer (1654) wrote on teaching the deaf to speak and read lips. In France, similar work was later carried out by Charles Michael, abbe L'Epee (1912-89) who made profound contribution in developing the natural sign - language of the deaf. His work was further developed by abbe Sicard (1742-1820) and gave rise to silent method of teaching the deaf. In Germany, Samuel Heinicke (1727-90) educated deaf children orally, and later Friedreich Moritz Hill (1805-74) developed this method which ultimately became accepted practice throughout the world.

No real attempt was made to educate and train the blind until the close of 18th century. Valentine Haüy (1745-1822) opened the first institution for blind in Paris in 1784. Haüy's success soon spread to other countries. Schools for the blind were opened in Liverpool (1791), London Vienna (1805), Berlin (1806), Amsterdam and Stockholm (1808), Zurich (1809) and Boston and New York (1832).

Scientific attempts to educate the mentally retarded began with the efforts of Jean-Marc-Gaspard Itard, a French Physician and otologist. Later, Edouard Séguin, a student of Itard who emigrated to US devised an educational method using physical and sensory activities to develop mental processes. Séguin's published works influenced Maria Montessori, an Italian pediatrician who became educator and innovator of a unique method of training young mentally retarded and culturally deprived children.

The field of special education for the handicapped children had an important beginning in the 19th century as represented in the pioneering work of Itard, Séguin, Gallandet, Haüy, Montessori, Braille and many others. In the United States

many residential schools for deaf, blind and retarded children were established during the late 19th century. Early in the 20th century, development regarding both the handicapped and gifted children were modest at best.

In the recent years, a remarkable upturn in the pace of development has been observed. *Special education programmes* in many countries have doubled and redoubled in size in the last two decades. In a summary of a series of nationwide surveys conducted by the US office of education, Machie (1965 b) reported that 442,000 children were enrolled in *special education programmes* in 1948. The comparable figure for 1963 was 1,666,000 which indicates that special education enrollments had more than tripled in 15 years. By 1963, about one-half of the school system in US was thought to be providing some type of special education service.

From the modest beginning in late 19th and early 20th century, the field of special education, in recent years, had received greater attention due to the growing acceptance of the concept that a handicapped child is, in majority of cases, a normal child faced with some disadvantage which is often only temporary. This new attitude is not yet universal and consequently the extent of activity at the national level varies from country to country. The International Conference on Public Education convened in Geneva by the UN's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and International Bureau of Education, held on July 6, 1960, justified organizing special education for handicapped children on the following grounds:

1. Right to Education laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights applies to all persons capable of benefiting from it, including the least gifted.
2. Principle of compulsory education for all children is to be universally accepted.
3. It is an economic, social and cultural disadvantage for a nation to include a number of handicapped persons many of whom might have become useful citizens if they had been suitably educated.
4. Any particular ability possessed by a handicapped child should be used to further his education.

5. Progress in medicine, child psychology and remedial education had made it possible to identify children suffering from various handicaps and to undertake their education by methods based on differentiated and individualized teaching.
6. The use of differentiated education method should not lead to the complete social isolation of children who need to remain in contact with normal life so that they may later become integrated in it, and that the experienced teacher may take advantage of this situation to cultivate in children different abilities which contribute to greater mutual understanding.
7. The problem of existing special education for handicapped children is always related to the stage reached in providing education for normal children and to differences existing between rural and urban areas as well as to male and female population.

In advanced countries today, special education of the handicapped has become relatively universal. The developing countries are also deeply concerned about it and are showing ever increasing interest in the development of education and rehabilitation services for the disabled. Voluntary associations both at the national and international levels are busy in contributing to the betterment of the lot of the handicapped. In order to promote general awareness and provide greater impetus to the special education and rehabilitation programmes of the handicapped at international level, the UN declared 1981 as the year of the disabled and 1983-92 as Decade of the disabled.

Development of Special Education in Pakistan

At the time of independence only two government institutions for the education/training and rehabilitation of the blind were functioning at Lahore and Bahawalpur. The Ida Rieu Welfare Association offered education and vocational training facilities for the blind and physically handicapped in Karachi. Over the years the successive governments in Pakistan have been trying to expand and improve the education system.

In Pakistan, provisioning of special education facilities has been largely neglected in the past. Although the special education needs for the handicapped children have been recognized in the successive education policies and development plans, but the main thrust of the government in education sector has been

towards expansion and development of educational institutions for the normal children. It has been, perhaps due to lack of adequate resources to meet even the educational requirements of normal population that the arrangements for special education remained mostly neglected. From 1947 till late seventies, only the philanthropic voluntary organizations established and managed institutions for the education and rehabilitation of disabled persons. However, because of their resource constraints, only a negligible fraction of handicapped population could benefit from the available special facilities.

A survey of special education, facilities for the handicapped children (5-14 years) in Pakistan, conducted by Raja Muhammad Akbar in 1988, revealed that as compared to 3 special education institutions for the handicapped children in 1947, the number of such institutions grew to 10, 28, 66 and 158 in 1960, 1970, 1980 and 1988 respectively. Upto 1980, the number of institutions run by the NGOs and those organized by the Government were almost equal. As a result of the new Govt. policy for the handicapped children, the number of special education institutions in the public sector grew much faster. In 1988, the number of special education institutions run by the Federal Govt. Provincial Govt. and NGOs were 46, 62 and 40 respectively. Disability wise, the break up of the total institutions for physically handicapped, mentally retarded, visually impaired and hearing impaired children was 24, 35, 39 and 60 respectively.

The total enrollment of handicapped children in 1988 was estimated to be 10373 out of which 3247 (31.3%) were girls. About 80% of the enrollment was from urban areas. This enrollment, when set against the estimated total population of disabled children, showed a participation rate of only 1.76%. Further, the participation rates for physically handicapped, mentally retarded, visually impaired and hearing impaired were found as 1.04, 0.79, 0.81 and 9.45. The statistics when further broken down sex wise and areas wise were heavily tilted towards male and urban.

The data gathered on buildings, teacher student ratios, teachers qualifications, availability of transport and hostel facilities and availability of specific teaching aids reflected that Federal Govt. Institutions were favourably placed than others. The NGO institutions which still caters for about 1/3rd of total enrollments face problems due to lack of adequate financial resources. Yet some of them are doing excellent work in this field.

The following table shows the number of institutions for various disabilities as well as the number of teachers and students in 1994:

DATA ON SPECIAL EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

	Hearing Impaired	Mentally Retarded	Physically Handicapped	Visually Impaired	Multiple Disabled											
	F.G.	P.G.	NGOs	F.G.	P.G.	NGOs	F.G.	P.G.	NGOs	F.G.	P.G.	NGOs	TOTAL			
Islamabad																
No. of Centres	2	-	1	2	-	2	1	-	1	-	4	-	2	15		
No. of Children	166	-	66	135	-	35	68	-	-	60	-	-	322	952		
No. of Teachers	18	-	7	17	-	8	13	-	-	10	-	-	19	92		
Punjab																
No. of Centres	6	25	14	5	2	11	4	3	9	5	14	14	1	8	14	135
No. of Children	666	3596	1436	265	80	1035	214	191	300	263	498	436	-	129	1407	10516
No. of Teachers	70	328	159	24	8	129	21	19	78	24	119	62	-	14	104	1159

	Hearing Impaired	Mentally Retarded	Physically Handicapped	Visually Impaired	Multiple Disabled
F.G. P.G. NGOs	F.G. P.G. NGOs	F.G. P.G. NGOs	F.G. P.G. NGOs	F.G. P.G. NGOs	F.G. P.G. NGOs
TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL

Sind																	
No. of Centres	1	2	6	2	2	-	8	2	-	3	3	1	8	1	13	9	59
No. of Children	68	146	828	121	-	406	88	-	70	175	137	283	-	531	1484	4337	
No. of Teachers	7	16	108	5	-	39	7	-	5	15	20	25	-	60	149	456	
N.W.F.P.																	
No. of Centres	2	9	5	2	1	2	2	-	9	2	7	6	-	3	5	55	
No. of Children	92	466	163	93	177	265	115	-	91	64	151	66	-	-	134	1883	
No. of Teachers	12	49	15	7	20	15	10	-	7	3	36	10	-	-	18	202	

	Hearing Impaired	Mentally Retarded	Physically Handicapped	Visually Impaired	Multiple Disabled
	F.G. P.G. NGOs	F.G. P.G. NGOs	F.G. P.G. NGOs	F.G. P.G. NGOs	F.G. P.G. NGOs
	TOTAL				

Baluchistan															
No. of Centres	1	1	2	1	1	-	1	1	2	-	1	1	-	1	12
No. of Children	32	78	94	42	57	-	72	70	26	-	71	5	-	10	557
No. of Teachers	1	7	12	1	6	-	8	7	9	-	7	1	-	3	62
Northern Areas															
No. of Centres	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	1	7
No. of Children	30	-	30	-	-	-	-	-	117	-	-	-	-	83	260
No. of Teachers	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	6	13

	Hearing Impaired	Mentally Retarded	Physically Handicapped	Visually Impaired	Multiple Disabled
	F.G. P.G. NGOs	F.G. P.G. NGOs	F.G. P.G. NGOs	F.G. P.G. NGOs	F.G. P.G. NGOs
	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL

AJK					
No. of Centres	-	-	-	-	-
No. of Children	-	-	-	-	-
No. of Teachers	-	-	-	-	-
Total:					
No. of Centres	13	37	29	12	4
Grand Total	79	39	42	11	23
No. of Children	1054	4286	2717	656	314
Grand Total	8057	2711	1447	562	857
No. of Teachers	110	395	303	54	34
Grand Total	808	279	189	52	182

Source, Directory of Special Education 1994.

The areas which need special attention in future are:

- opening of more special education institutions for the physically handicapped and mentally retarded children;
- training of teachers in the aforesaid disabilities;
- procurement/indigenous production of training aids;
- rehabilitation of disabled children; and
- achieving a measure of integration of special education schools with normal schools.

Alternative approaches for the provision of education and rehabilitation services for the disabled

The programmes of special education and rehabilitation of the handicapped were rather belatedly undertaken in Pakistan and that too in the beginning on ad-hoc basis. But, gradually this aspect of social welfare was given due importance and the government started putting in considerable planned efforts to increase the education and rehabilitation services for the handicapped. During the eighties, the federal government took upon itself to plan and implement a comprehensive programme for ameliorating the condition of disabled population. As a result, the number of special education institutions in the country have significantly increased. However, the trend so far is towards establishing more and more institutions. But Pakistan, because of its resource constraints and lack of professional expertise, cannot hope to increase the number of special education institutions to a level which will cater for the needs of its entire disabled population.

Mr. Miles of Mental Health Centre, Peshawar, has observed that "although the Government of Pakistan has substantially increased its rehabilitation structures, yet in ten years time, at the present rate of expenditure and allowing for population to increase to 140 million, some formal help could be available for perhaps 10% of the disabled children". Thus, under the prevailing economic and demographic factors, the majority of disabled children will have no access to any education and rehabilitation service. This calls for some low-cost and practical approaches to the problem.

In the context of Third World countries, UNICEF and US Agency for International Development have advocated consideration of community and information based rehabilitation services as low-cost alternatives to formal structures. These approaches have both strong and weak points, viz, formal institutions approach. But they can be applied to extend and augment the role of institutions, community-based rehabilitation services imply enabling the community itself to education and rehabilitation approach consists of dissemination of accurate and appropriate information conveyed by any media like pamphlet, manual, radio and TV broadcast, etc. to relevant targets.

According to Miles, for countries lacking in professional skill and community resources "methodical information dissemination, feedback and evaluation, leading to self-generating information system, is an approach accessible to countries at the lowest stages of development and to both government and non government organizations may be the only strategy, for millions of disabled people in third world". Also the *world Programmes of Action for Disabled Persons* (UN 1986) recommends early priority to the establishment of national information resource centres.

Use of Distance Education for Spread of Special Education

The mode of distance education as practiced in Pakistan in the form of Open University can play a vital role in the spread of special education in two ways. It is already being used for producing a cadre of qualified teachers for the special education institutions and at the same time it can help create packages of useful information which can be effectively disseminated to the concerned clientele in the shape of literature, audio-visual recording and broadcasts. The manner in which the distance educational model as practiced by the Allama Iqbal Open University has been used in the spread of literacy, functional skills, teachers training and general education upto Master and Ph.D. levels. It is no wonder that it can augment the national effort in the field of special education in a big way.

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