

SOCIAL WORK IN EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY: A STUDY OF HYDERABAD

Syeda Saba Quadri*

Mohd. Khalid**

Abstract:

School education is one of the basic amenities and right of every child for his/her growth and development. Disability pose hurdles in achieving this basic amenity, thus making a child vulnerable. School Social Workers offer unique perspective and knowledge to educators working with children, adolescents and their families to promote and support students' academic and social success (CASW, 1926). According to Census 2011, there are 26.8 million people with disability in India. In Hyderabad there are about 50,853 People with Disability (Census, 2011). On the basis of empirical study conducted in Hyderabad (2013), the present paper highlights the significance of School Social Work with Children with Disability.

The aim of the study is to present an overview of the school social work service in schools for special children. To appraise the relevance and efficiency of school social workers involved in facilitating CWD in their effective academic functioning.

Mixed method approach with secondary source data method has also been used to collect the fact based theoretical perspectives to substantiate the research question which involves the role of school social work with the disabled or special children in Hyderabad. Many studies, educational policies, and the role of NGOs will be taken into consideration. Further secondary data has been collected from the Department of Welfare of Disabled and Senior Citizens,

*** Research Scholar, Dept. of Social Work, MANUU, Hyderabad**

**** Program Manager, Jamia Islamia Ishaatul Uloom , A/P Akkalkuwa, Maharashtra**

Hyderabad. In addition to this the theoretical understanding has been substantiated by data available in census reports, Government documents, archives, articles and so on.

The findings of the study include the worst condition of children with disability especially in the field of education. Such children are vulnerable to exploitation from both the society, family and the complete educational system. There are very less provisions that could help such population to emerge as an equivalent in the main stream population. However, there are certain criteria being formulated by Government (state and center), local bodies, and NGOs which supplement the inclusive nature of educational infrastructure. Still there are many blanks to be filled where the role of the school social worker comes into play. The school social work has emerged as a very fundamental provision to tackle with the issues which are getting surfaced in the educational system. The paper will try to elaborate the role of school social work in the field of education with the children with disability.

Introduction:

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. Disability is a condition which results from the interaction between persons with impairments and environmental barriers that hinders full participation in society on an equal basis with others. (UNCRPWD, 2007) As per the World report on disability (2011) more than one billion people in the world live with some form of disability (About 15 percent of the world's population), of whom nearly 200 million experience considerable difficulties in functioning. In India about 2.21 percent of the total population which constitute 26.81 million persons are affected with one or more forms of disability. (Census, 2011)

Alur (2001) argues that seeing a disabled child as one's *karmaphala* (result of deeds) entails viewing the child and disability as one's personal tragedy and therefore one's individual responsibility. Disability has long been perceived as an individual problem, therefore resulting in the indifference of the society and the state. (Mohit, 2000)

Evidence suggests that the critical early years of life are the optimum time for learning basic status (Alur, 2003: 7) education help in developing basic capabilities, which are crucial to leading a life with confidence and self-respect. The absence of those capabilities condemns disabled children to a state of constant dependency on others without education; disabled children enter the vicious cycle of discrimination based on disability, additional discrimination for being illiterate, and lack of ability to speak out against discrimination and so on. (InsaKlasing, 2007: 108) Health services are vital not only in combating the degree or extent of disability, but also its very incidence. (InsaKlasing, 2007, p.77) It is discrimination and prejudice that create the sense of being disabled. (Coleridge, 1993)

“Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. (The following definition was approved by the IFSW General Meeting and the IASSW General Assembly in July 2014.)

School education is one of the basic amenities and right of every child for his/her growth and development. Disability pose hurdles in achieving this basic amenity, thus making a child vulnerable. School Social Workers offer unique perspective and knowledge to educators working with children, adolescents and their families to promote and support students’ academic and social success. (CASW, 1926) According to Census 2011, there are 26.8 million people with disability in India. In Hyderabad there are about 50,853 People with Disability. (Census, 2011)

Education is a human right with immense power to transform. Education of children with disabilities (CWD) has been a part of policy developments in India for the past few decades. The policies of the government of India towards the education of children with disabilities have been reflected in the enactments, schemes and through institutions established for various relevant activities

Significance of the Study:

India is the world's second most populated country. A large number of children with disabilities live in families with income significantly below the poverty level. According to Mondal & Mete (2012), while disability causes poverty, it is also possible that in a country like India, poverty causes disability. The combination of poverty and disability results in a condition of "simultaneous deprivation". This is a syndrome that sets up barriers to the participation of persons with disabilities in the normal routines and activities of the community, including regular schooling. Attitudes of the non-disabled are proving to be a major barrier in the social integration of persons with disabilities. "The more severe and visible the deformity is, the greater is the fear of contagion, hence the attitudes of aversion and segregation towards the crippled". Such attitudes reinforced by religious institutions may militate against any attempts to include students with disabilities into regular schools. (Kauts & Bhardwaj, 2012) Especially parents of children with disabilities and school personnel are made knowledgeable about the various provisions enshrined in the Act, the Central and State governments to providing integrated education will be in vain. School social workers handle these cases as part of their job profile. School social work is a vital component of most of the schools in the Western countries and social workers play crucial role in ensuring mental health and social well-being of children in the education setting. However, in India, it is still in its nascent stage. School social work has received meager research attention in the Indian setting. Arti Mann Ph.D. Scholar, School of Social Work, Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi, India about the status of school social work in India, Gandhi (1990) observes that many social work practitioners and educators have believed that school social work in India has not become a movement and it is still at the experimental stage. The education departments of central and states governments have not yet accepted this service as an integral part of their school system. It is only a few private or aided schools in prominent cities which have employed social workers in their schools. The growth achieved so far is attributed to the efforts made by colleges of social work, child guidance clinics, associations of trained social workers, few progressive educationalists and local Parent Teachers associations. (Gandhi, 1990)

School Social Work and Disability:

School Social Worker, Guidance Counselor, School Psychologist, School Physician, Speech Therapist, Special Educators and Psychiatrist (Gandhi, 1990:8); together they work for:

- i. Identification of seriously disadvantaged children and arranging welfare benefits for them
- ii. Undertaking supportive educational and guidance work for the normal children
- iii. Counseling and therapeutic work for selected children who need this help
- iv. Home-school liaison

Social Workers focus on social functioning and on the needs of the child to make the best possible use of the learning experience. They intervene to remove barriers to learning, working with individuals, groups, the school itself and ally themselves with the community in support of the schools purposes and objectives. School social workers help in solving problems that interfere directly or indirectly with the pupil's schooling. (Skidmore, et, al., 1997) School social workers help students whose learning difficulties, with the resulting frustration, adversely affect their school behavior and social interactions. Students at risk are dropping out of school. (CASW, 2014)

Studies show that Social workers can play a vital role in the field of the handicapped, and need to involve themselves actively in various capacities and in different aspects of service. (Gajendragadkar, 1983) Social workers provide social, emotional and physical development services to children and also strive to modify the environment for the best interest of child. To do this effectively, social workers work with parents, teachers, schools and communities. School social workers focus on school-community-child-parent interaction. School social work has a unique approach to view student within the context of the classroom, the family, the community and his or her culture. An international survey of school social work (2012) by International network for school social work has documented the status of school social work in different countries. According to this report, school social work started in 1970s in India. It also mentions that schools social workers in India work on attendance problems, emotional issues, behavioral issues, material needs, motivational needs, special education areas and child protection.

In India mainly social organizations are performing various child development activities in school Social organizations have shared various services for improvement of school environment and development of children.

- Supporting inclusive education by providing infrastructure requirements and intervening at policy level.
- Assessing abuse and neglect and take steps accordingly
- Conducting home visits, parents meetings, and facilitation home school liaison
- Providing counselling services
- Providing life skills education to students
- Career guidance for children
- Providing awareness program on various scholarship program
- Identification and intervention of children according to their learning levels

The disabled need to be addressed. They should come out from the clutches of inferiority complex, especially in providing educational opportunities and employment opportunities for disabled women in a speedy space. (Sujatha & Subba, 2012) Any physical disability whether it is the loss of sight, hearing, or a limb greatly affects the outward appearance of a handicapped person. He looks different from others and therefore is considered abnormal. This hinders integration into family and community. A handicapped child often gets segregated from his playmates because he is not considered fit enough to play with them in a normal way and compete with them on equal terms. Sometimes the parents are also ashamed of their handicapped child and so they try to conceal him from their friends and relatives. Disability makes it difficult for a handicapped child and virtually impossible for a totally deaf child to receive education along with normal children. (Shankar & Udai, 1976) Lack of awareness in the public, lack of Braille books and other necessary equipment, lack of qualified and trained teachers, the blind child finds it difficult to study. The studies conducted on the teachers for the blind in India showed that majority of the teachers were not only matriculate but were also untrained for the job. (Prasad, 1962)

Since childhood, socialization of a disabled child in the family, at school, by society at large creates alienation by internalization of culture. A disabled girl child is the most vulnerable, faces social problems, and is dependent due to disability. Marrying disabled girls at an early age, secluding their identity, cultural barriers, radically make disabled girls vulnerable and oppressed. . Educating a disabled girl child is an obstacle in a physical and social environment that construes disability a 'noun' into disabled an 'adjective'. (M. Shahid et.al. 2015) Hence to gain an employment status

is a way long route to be attained. According to Johan Galtung (1980a), this is violence which makes a person disable. Lack of education and vocational skills and as there girls and women with disabilities stay mostly at home, their employment is extremely restricted and they are vulnerable to sexual, emotional and physical abuse. Sexual abuse against girls and women with disabilities is common, but it is seldom reported.

A recent study by the World Bank (2007), for example, noted that children with disability are five times more likely to be out of school than children belonging to scheduled castes or scheduled tribes (SC or ST). Moreover, when children with disability do attend school they rarely progress beyond the primary level, leading ultimately to lower employment chances and long-term income poverty. Government documents also describe marked variations in the provisions envisaged for different marginalized groups. Historically, SCs/STs have had a strong political lobby since independence and this is reflected in the provisions made for them. Article 46 of the Constitution makes a straightforward commitment to promoting the ‘special care and education’ of SC/ST populations, whereas Article 41 referring to children with disabilities, states:

The State shall within the limits of its economic capacity and development make effective provision for securing the right to work, old age, sickness and disablement. The clause, *within the limits* of the State’s economic capacity and development, greatly reduces the expectation of urgent action that is seen in Article 46. Such caveats have had a significant impact on the national planning process. Majumdar (2001: 123), analyzing educational provisions for various disadvantaged groups across different states, sums up the scenario for children with disabilities as:

A paper drafted by the NCERT (2005) notes that “the Office of the Chief Commissioner of Persons with Disabilities stated that not more than 4 percent of children with disabilities have access to education”. Yet the MHRD claimed in 2004 that 1.08 million children with disabilities were being educated, and by using a very low estimate of the total number of children with disabilities, thus arriving at an estimate of 67.5 percent of children with disabilities receiving education. (MHRD, 2004) Again, a different figure would be found by using the Census estimates for the total number of children with disabilities, and the MHRD (Ministry of Human

Resource Development) data would then suggest that around 28 percent of children with disabilities were enrolled in school.

School Social Work and Children with Disability:

Data on children with disabilities in elementary classes collected under DISE (District Information System for Education) reveals that their number varies from year to year. In the year 2003-04, there were 1.75 million such children as against 1.40 million in 2004-05. However, their number has always remained around one percent of the total enrolment in elementary classes. In 2006-07, about 1.42 million children with disabilities were enrolled in elementary classes across the country, of which 1.04 million were in primary and 0.38 million in upper primary classes. The percentage of children with disability, in primary, is 0.79 and in upper primary 0.80 of the total enrolment in these classes. The corresponding percentage at the elementary level is 0.80.

Some interesting differences are evident as children make the transition from primary to upper primary classes. Compared to 20.79 percent of children with visual impairment in primary classes, their percentage in upper primary classes is as high as 32.87. On the other hand, figures for children with mental retardation show a significant decline in numbers.

As per Census 2001, there are approximately 60 million children in the age group of 3-6 years. While the 86th Amendment to the constitution does not cover children less than 6 years of age, the government acknowledges that there is a need for early childhood care, crèches and pre-school initiatives for this group, especially for those belonging to deprived communities. The government has been attempting to meet this commitment through the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS). ICDS along with a few private initiatives covers approximately 34 million children and discrepancies in provision are widely varied according to location (rural-urban divide) and quality. Because of the involvement of the unorganized private sector (alongside the state sector largely through the Department of Women and Child Development) for which no statistics are collected, the data on early childhood is extremely inadequate. (Aggarwal, 2008)

According to the NSS, 58th round (2005), the proportion of persons with disabilities aged 5-18 years who attended a pre-school intervention program was only about 13 percent of the total population of persons with disabilities (NUEPA, 2008: 32). Of these 20 percent were in urban areas and only an estimated 11 percent in rural areas. Not only has the outreach of the ICDS been limited, its pre- school component (known as *Anganwadi*) has been very weak with high repetition and low learning levels. Research also indicates that children with disabilities are not found in the *Anganwadis* and the workers here are not trained in handling their needs. Noting the lack of government focus on ECCE for CWSN, recent years have seen increased demands for revamping the existing ICDS scheme. (Alur, 2007)

Objectives:

The aim of the study is to present the need of the school social work service in schools for special children.

To appraise the relevance and efficiency of school social workers involved in facilitating CWD in their effective academic functioning.

Methodology:

The study is based on the primary data and data obtained through empirical researches conducted on the people with disability in Hyderabad. A survey method was used and Primary data was collected from the Muslims with physical disability of Hyderabad. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect data. Secondary data was collected from the Department of Welfare of Disabled and Senior Citizens, the Hindu newspaper and internet. Tools used in the collection of data were interview schedule, observation and case studies. The universe of the study was Muslims with physical disability, of Hyderabad. Purposive sampling technique was used to collect a sample of 100 respondents from two zones (central and south zone) of Hyderabad. The issues have been widely incorporated by many of the researchers and theoreticians. The statistical figures and the theoretical impression available in this study will prove considerable to the research work.

Limitations of the Study:

It is very difficult to find reliable data about the prevalence of disability in India. In general, the search for a single prevalence rate is an illusion, and the range of estimates, and their varied origins, makes it difficult to say very much with assurance about people with disabilities.

The Registrar General of India (2001) agrees that the Indian data on disability are unreliable, due to few well-trained field investigators, and issues of social stigma. Underreporting due to stigma and a range of other socio-cultural variables has also been noted by the World Bank (2007); Kuruvilla and Joseph (1999); Erb and Harriss-White (2002). Societies where extended kin groups retain significant rights and obligations (as in much of Indian society) the impact of disability will be broader than where kinship groups are smaller and more individuated. This is likely to impact on people's willingness to disclose disability within a family. More importantly, this lack of reliable estimates has an impact on the kind of policies and provisions that are framed for people with disabilities and indeed those for their families.

Need of Social Work Practice in School Setting:

School social workers offer the scope of fulfilling gap between parent-child communication and interaction. Social workers working in the school setting are the connecting link. (Robinson, 1978) Oftentimes, there are gaps in the relationship of the pupil with his/her school or within the family or between the school and the family – all these affect the development of children. The gaps between the school system and the family have repercussions on gaining benefits of education. Social workers have been professionally trained to fill-in these gaps in the school setting. School social workers are an integral link between school, home, and community in helping students achieve academic success. Social worker is becoming a useful professional to assist children who are marginalized – whether economically, socially, politically, or personally – to participate in the process of empowerment through education. Social workers help in making the education process effective. To do this, their central focus is working in partnership with parents on the pupil in transaction with a complex school and home environment. In the globalized world, the roles of school social workers are becoming broader and more complex. In a classroom, children from all sections of society, with differential sets of abilities and capabilities, problems and challenges are present. Social work practice rests on a wide range of skills such as counseling, networking, referring, educating, advocating, and so on. Bowen (1996)

in her article “A role for school social workers in promoting student success through school family partnership” highlights a social work intervention that enhanced parents’ ability towards creating home conditions, which help in learning and promoting family involvement in home learning activities. There is a scope of school social workers to work with teachers too on their mental health issues, particularly in the light of ever-expanding roles and challenges encountered by the teaching community in the present social setting. School social workers often have to deal with problems like lack of motivation among parents, no conducive home environment for studies, resistance in sending girl children to school, first generation learning and such others. (Gandhi, 1990) While concluding all, it may be stated that school social work has a great potential to make the school system conducive for all the children, and make the education process more meaningful. It has the capacity to realize the Right to Education (and quality education) for all. Hopefully, the social planners and policy makers soon recognize the value of school social work and make provisions to ensure their presence in each and every school of the country.

School Social Work and Disability in Hyderabad: Role of Universities, NGO’s and Different Agencies:

Believe it or not, 12.2% (43.04 lakh) out of its 3.52 crore population, as per 2011 census in the new Telangana state, are disabled and they could be suffering from one or more forms of disabilities like epilepsy, vision, hearing, depression and physical impairments, says a new study.¹

With age, the prevalence rate of disability was found to have increased as the worst affected were found to be in the age group of 50 plus population, followed by 18-49 age group and 0-17 age groups. Incidentally, the high number of disabled population in Telangana goes against the conservative national average of 2.2%, according to the 2011 census.

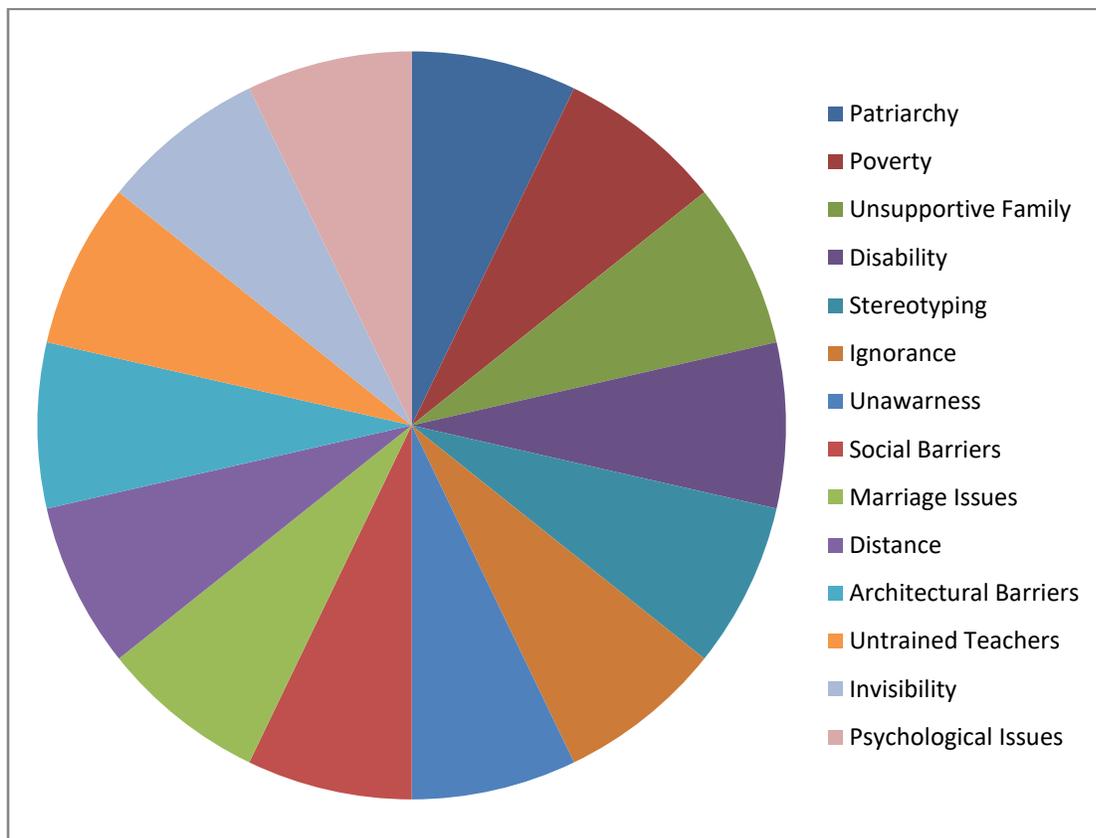
A study² conducted in Hyderabad (2013), which covers 5 zones, 18 circles and 150 wards of GHMC with a sample size of 100, all with some kind of physical disability on random bases has

1 <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/Bifurcation-row-hits-Red-Cross-Society/articleshow/45289847.cms>

2 A dissertation titled ‘Multidimensional exclusion of physically challenged Muslims: A Study of Hyderabad’, submitted to the ACSSEIP, MANUU, Hyderabad in 2013 by Syeda Saba Quadri

been included in this study to draw the ground situation of the challenges and problems faced by the disabled persons which may be a reflection with respect to the children with disability in Hyderabad. The study shows among the PWD (People with Disability), 20 percent females and 13 percent males discontinued education at primary or secondary levels of school. The educated were (up to 10th standard) 27 and 29 percent female and male respectively. The respondents seem to face many social, cultural, economic, psychological and educational challenges which are enlisted in the pie chart 1.

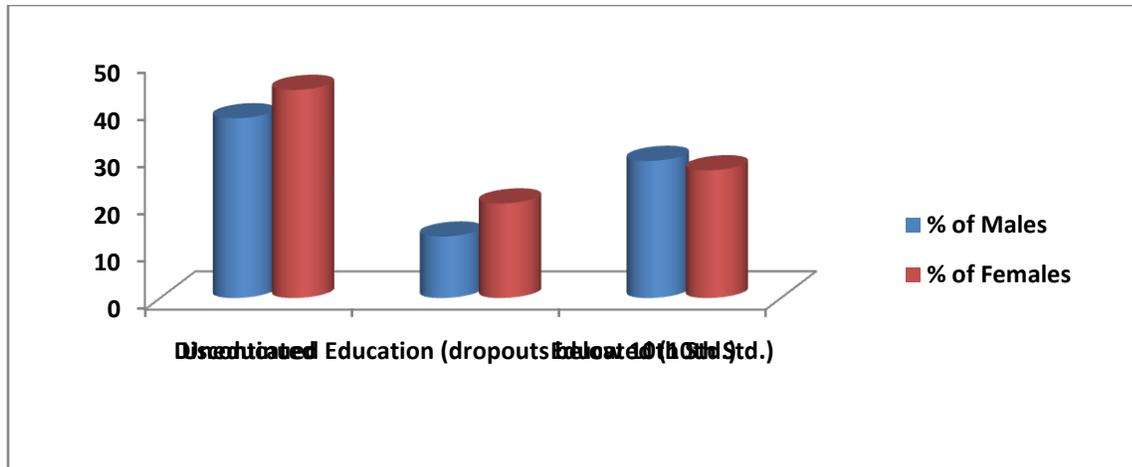
Pie Chart 1. Challenges faced by the Physically Disabled persons



Source: Fieldwork (2015)

Further the study shows the educational status of people with disability that can be well understood in the bar graph 1 below.

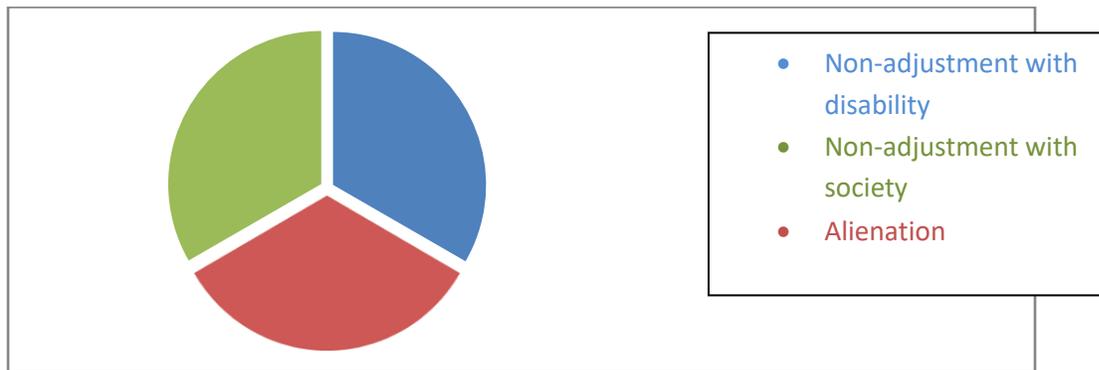
Bar Graph 1: Educational Status of People with Disability



Source: Fieldwork (2015)

The study also explains the psychological issues of varied nature faced by the persons with disability at different social spaces including family, neighborhood, and schools. This idea can be well understood in the pie chart 2 below.

Pie Chart 2: Psychological issues of varied nature faced by the persons with disability



Source: Fieldwork (2015)

Education is the right of every child because it equips him to meet the challenges of life. The Vice-Chancellor University of Hyderabad has constituted an Empowered Committee for Differently Aabled Persons, issued a letter vide No.UH/REG/2008, dated December 12, 2008 from the Office of the Registrar.³

As per the decision taken at the 64th STAC meeting held on 23rd October, 2008, the said document was discussed in detail:

³ <http://www.uohyd.ac.in/index.php/services-and-facilities/persons-with-disabilities>

A Group of Union Ministers (GoM) came up with recommendations for ensuring equal opportunities to the differently abled persons. The recommendation states that:

1. All Education Institutions should be made barrier-free within a reasonable time-frame of say, two years for universities, and three years for colleges. They should also have facilities to provide Braille books and talking books. Sign language interpreters should also be provided in institutions having hearing impaired students.
2. Most central Universities should have a Department of Disability Studies, which should address all issues relating to persons with disabilities – especially human rights, rehabilitation, education, etc.

The University of Hyderabad admits every year about 50 students who are Differently Abled. At any point of the year there will be not less than 100 students who are Differently Abled

Ashray Akruiti a Hyderabad based NGO make efforts to provide diagnostic and therapeutic services and to the children at a tender age. They make sure that our children deserve quality life and educational facilities. They provide other quality services like meeting the recurring expenses for Cochlear implants and hearing aids, thus, mainstreaming them to a barrier free, and right based society focus on hearing impaired children.⁴ Similarly, Samanvai, one more Hyderabad based NGO works on the mission to provide individualized, need-based, and goal-oriented support services for students with multiple disabilities in order to elevate their functional abilities to the highest level possible. They support students in order to increase their educational, rehabilitation, vocational, employment and independent living skills, [Blind boy reading Braille] and help them gain social status in the society. They aim to create awareness which could allow challenged people to access their fundamental rights and main stream opportunities. Their primary goal is to provide equal opportunities for all disabled children. They believe in developing hardworking/dedicated students into role models.⁵ Sparsh Model Special Education Center located at Hyderabad is one more example to quote. The School endeavors to excel in building capacities to empower kids with special needs. Since the quality of life of every kid with special needs is equal to other kids in the country, in that they live independently to the maximum extent possible and through constant professional endeavors, Sparsh schools

4 <http://ashrayakruti.org/why-support-us/>

5 <http://www.samanvai.org/about.html>

empowers the Kids with special needs to access the state of the art rehabilitation intervention viz., educational, therapeutic, vocational, employment, leisure and social activities, sports, cultural programmes and full participation.⁶

There are many such examples around the city of Hyderabad that assure the professional and technical capacities to cater the issues in the educational setting based on children with disability and their necessary demands to ensure their inclusion in the world of education. The schools and NGOs engage the professionally well off teachers and social workers who are not only qualified in the respective subjects but have the additional competencies and expertise of professionalism which prove helpful in restructuring the level of education for special children.

Discussion:

Unfortunately it is not a fully appreciated fact that 10 per cent of the Indian children below 14 years of age have some kind of an impairment or physical disability. Their absolute number is a staggering 30 million, which mandates a responsible and effective role of the society and its government. The children with disabilities (CWD) need this all the more, to supplement their differential talents so that they can prepare themselves for a happy productive and useful life. . The obstacles in the path of development are overcome by struggles and hard work on the part of the disabled themselves and by others who advocate on their behalf. Raise the flag for education as a universal human right. Urge the governments and development partners, all teachers, parents and private sector providers; remove the barriers to and in learning, to realize the full and equal participation of all persons with disabilities in society. (Irina Bokova, Director- General of UNESCO, on the occasion of Global Action Week 2014). There are different programs and training programs to ascertain the basic infrastructure reliable and apt to the new emerging demands in the world of education. Schools are bound to provide the necessary commodities to the special children. The physical infrastructure of schools and universities is to be made viable for such children, so that they can move across the space without any hurdles. So, the scope of Social Work in educational setting pertained to the special children is getting more relevant and

⁶ <http://www.sparshspecialschool.com/>

important. This study gives a clear image of many theoretical perspectives based on the discrimination faced by the children with disability in the educational setting.

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