

Organization and Administration of Special Schools in Andhra Pradesh - An Evaluative Study

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ABSTRACT

An evaluative study on the organization and administration of special schools in Andhra Pradesh would likely assess the effectiveness of current systems in providing education and support to students with disabilities. This could involve examining aspects like infrastructure, teacher training, curriculum adaptation, resource allocation, and the overall integration of students with special needs into the mainstream educational system. The study might also explore the extent to which government policies and programs are being implemented and their impact on the quality of education and inclusion.

Keywords: Development, Special Schools, Disability, Teachers, Impairment, Social Justice.

INTRODUCTION

The right to live with dignity and self-respect as a human being leads to a continuous analysis of policies and services aimed at marginalized sections. UNICEF's Medium-Term Strategic Plan for 2024–25, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, demands that 'all children have access to and complete an education of good quality'. Several initiatives by governments, NGOs, INGOs, UN agencies and others have addressed the special education needs of children with disabilities, and some have successfully demonstrated examples of special and inclusive education. A specific feature of SSA is a zero-rejection policy: This suggests that no child having special needs can be neglected, nor denied enrolment on the basis of such concerns.

The PWD Act provides, however, a loophole in how this is defined in practical terms. It states that children will be educated in an “environment, which is best suited to his or her learning needs” and that it is possible that the special needs of a child compel him or her to be educated in special schools. More than 90% of disabled children are found in the rural areas in India. The special schools as well as integrated education Programmes are only a few in numbers and cannot serve all disabled children. Therefore, inclusive education is needed to provide equal educational opportunities to all disabled children in their own locations. As far as the standardized models of integration are concerned, one specialist teacher serves 8 to 10 disabled children of the same category. This approach is not practical in rural areas.

Disability is the consequence of an impairment that maybe physical, cognitive, mental, sensory, emotional, developmental, or some combination of these. It may be present from birth, or occur during a person's lifetime. A disability is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. Impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. Thus disability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives. Impairment leads to disability.

Due to impairment there is a reduction in functional ability. Just as impairment leads to disability, disability handicaps the individual. There is variation in definitions of different types of disabilities but the PWD Act (1995) which is built upon the premise of equal opportunity, protection of rights and full participation provides the definition of disabled person as a person suffering from not less than forty percent of any disability as certified by a medical authority (any hospital or institution specified for the purpose of this act by notification by the government).

As per PWD act (1995), disability means-blindness; low vision; leprosy-cured; hearing impairment; locomotors disability; mental retardation and mental illness. The state government is determined to fulfil the constitutional obligation under 86th amendment which makes education a fundamental right of every child and to implement the Section 26 of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 which states that the appropriate government and local authorities shall ensure that every child with a disability has access to free education in an appropriate environment till he attains the age of 18 years. Provision has been made to provide 3% reservation in the admission of students with disabilities in

the institutions especially at higher level, so that they can pursue higher studies and professional courses. For the protection of the rights of Persons with Disabilities and to ensure their equal participation in the development of the state, the Government of Andhra Pradesh is implementing the Persons with Disability (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 and National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disability Act, 1999 legislations. As per Census of 2020, there were 1,55,950 persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Andhra Pradesh, which constitute approximately 2% of the total population. As a result of this survey total 66,932 Persons with Disabilities have been identified out of which 10,611 are Visually Impaired, 11,924 Hearing Impaired, 36,249 Orthopedically Impaired and 8,148 Intellectually Challenged Persons. As per census of 2023, there are 1,55,316 persons with disability in Andhra Pradesh out of which 26,076 are impaired in Seeing, 26,700 Hearing Impaired, 8,278 Speech Impaired, 32,550 Movements Impaired, 8,986 Mentally Retarded, 5,166 Mentally Ill, 29,024 any other and 18,536 are having Multiple Disability (Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disability, 2023). The process of providing special education to physically disabled children in Andhra Pradesh is looked after by the two different departments namely Andhra Pradesh State Department for Child Welfare and Department of Social Justice and Empowerment.

The State Government is implementing the provisions of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995. For the convenience of the present study, only 3 institutions i.e. School/ Home for Speech and Hearing Impaired Children (Boys), in Anakapalli and Visakhapatnam which are being run by Women and Child Welfare Department and Institution for Children with Special Abilities (Girls) in Eluru which is being run by Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of Andhra Pradesh were considered in this study.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In the present study for the review of related literature, investigator has gone through different sources of information by visiting the libraries of Andhra Pradesh. In view of the importance of the review of related literature, in this study investigator has made an attempt to analyse the related research on status of education of speech and hearing impaired children, various facilities provided to them, their rehabilitation and academic achievement, and various problems faced in this area. During the review of Encyclopaedia of Educational Research and Survey of Research in Education it has been found that the first review of research in special education appeared in Encyclopaedia of Educational Research in 1982. In India, this area received attention from the Fourth Survey of Research in Education i.e. 1988 and research activity in special education has increased during the Fifth Survey of Research. In Fifth Survey of Educational Research, Jangira and Mukhopadhyay (1991) reported that first three surveys of research did not identify sufficient number of researches to warrant independent review of trends for this area. Upto, Fourth Survey of Research in Education, 60 studies (including the education of gifted) were identified and the number of studies reported on education of children with physical and intellectual impairments were 44. They further reported that research in the area of special education, as a subject of independent existence in literature on educational research, is a recent development. The scholars have explored different areas of education of children with disability.

Rationale of the Study

Disabled children are like non-disabled children except their specific disabilities. They have a strong desire for independent functioning. Even though the needs and problems of disabled children are related to their characteristics yet they have certain common needs and problems such as need for appropriate education need for independent functioning, need for respect for their individuality, etc. Education begins where medicine ends. It is of medical concern to provide a hearing aid to hard of hearing children. But teaching the children to use their residual vision or hearing capacities effectively is certainly an educational function. This warrants special education for these children. It is not possible to ensure optimum human resource development without developing the potentials of special children.

Special equipment and additional training are quite necessary for teaching special children. Without special education/or training these children cannot develop independent living skills and social skills and will be more likely to become a liability. So special education for them is indispensable. After going through the review of related literature it has been found that, in India a very few studies have been conducted in this area, similar to this study. In India and Andhra Pradesh the present study is very much needed and is quite justified on the plea of breaking new horizons in the area of role of special schools in the development of special children. The findings of this study will definitely awake different stakeholders about the instructional and infrastructural facilities yet to be required in these special schools for the harmonious development of these children.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were framed in this study:

- To study the organizational structure of special schools for speech and hearing impaired children in Andhra Pradesh.
- To study the administration of special schools for speech and hearing impaired children.

METHODOLOGY

In the present study survey method under descriptive method of research was used to study and evaluate the existing status of institutions for speech and hearing impaired children. The organizational structure and administration of these schools as perceived by heads, students, teachers, wardens and investigator have been studied in detail. All the heads, teachers, hostel and wardens of special schools constituted the population of the study. The sample was selected from - Heads, Teachers, Students, and Hostel wardens of special schools in Anakapalli, Visakhapatnam and Eluru.

An infrastructure inventory and observation schedule was also prepared by the investigator to recheck and cross verify the facts as reported by heads, teachers, students and hostel wardens. For the analysis of data method of content analysis and percentage analysis were used.

Findings of the Study

The findings of this paper are presented under two main headings A&B:

A) Organizational Structure of Special Schools

Institution-I: (School/ Home for speech and hearing Impaired Children (Boys) Visakhapatnam, which are being run by Women and Child Welfare Department) - This school was started in the Year 1978-79 for speech and hearing impaired children and at that time 15 Hearing Impaired Children (Co-educational) were admitted in the School. Due to very small strength of students only one Head teacher was appointed for both the sections (visual impairment section as well as speech and hearing impairment section). In the Year 1985-86 the school was upgraded up-to 8th standard and also was affiliated to A.P Board of School Education. In the Year 2008-09 the school was upgraded upto 10th standard and also got the affiliation from A.P Board of Intermediate Education in the same year.

At present 85, speech and hearing impaired Students (Boys) are getting free education in this institution. This Institute has its own building on the land of Red Cross Society. The school is working under A.P State Child Welfare Department. The Central Government provides grant of 90% to this institution and 10% grant are being provided by the State Government. Financial administration is being looked after by A.P. State Child Welfare Department. During the year 2023-24, this institution received a grant of Rs. 81.56 lakhs and the expenditure was 81.56 lakhs. Students here are being provided with free boarding, lodging and educational facilities.

Institution-II: (Institution for Children with Special Abilities (Girls), Eluru which is being run by Department of Social Justice and Empowerment) - This school was started in 1990 for physically disabled children. In 1998, when the state government adopted integrated education for disabled plan of NCERT based on New Education Policy (1986), this institution was taken over by the state government. It is working under and on support of Government of Andhra Pradesh. All its employees receive their salaries from Department of Women and Child Welfare. During the year 2023-24 this school received a grant of Rs. 16.04 lakhs and the expenditure was 15.86 lakhs. At present 105, speech and hearing impaired children (Girls) are getting free education in this institution. They are also being provided with free books, uniform, boarding and lodging facility.

B) Administration of Special Schools

Administrative Hierarchy in Institution-I is as: President- His Excellency the Governor of H.P, Vice-President- Hon'ble Lady Governor, Chairman- Chief Minister, Vice-Chairman- Hon'ble Minister Department of SJ&E and General Secretary- Nominated respectively. Besides these, there is supporting staffs which include Account Officer, Principal, Special Teachers, Warden/Accountant and fourth class employee.

Administrative Hierarchy in Institution-II is as: Hon'ble Minister Social Justice & Empowerment, Chief Secretary Social Justice & Empowerment, Director SCs, OBCs & Minority Affairs cum Joint Commissioner Disability, Deputy Commissioners disability, District Welfare Officer and Tehsil Welfare Officer respectively. Administrative hierarchy also includes Principal, Assistant Superintendent and Staff Members.

Objective of Teaching in the Institution:

As far as the objective of teaching in these institutions is concerned majority of the teachers in both the schools have joined these schools to earn their livelihood. The number of those who want to help the handicapped students and those who want to get a new experience by teaching them is comparatively less. Training in the Concerned Field: Teachers in both the special schools are well trained and having degrees and diplomas in the concerned field.

SPEECH AND HEARING IMPAIRED CHILDREN

Causes and Hereditary History:

As per data collected by the researcher and the school record, in majority of the cases the cause of disability was by

birth (90% in Anakapalli, 92% in Visakhapatnam and 85% in Eluru). In a small percentage (3% in Anakapalli, 4% in Visakhapatnam and 7% in Eluru) the students were suffering from this disability due to accident. The disability due to heredity was 2% in Anakapalli, 4% in Visakhapatnam and 8% in Eluru. The relations of the students suffering from hereditary disability included parents, grandparents, siblings, uncle-aunts and cousins. Only in 4 cases (one in Anakapalli, two in Visakhapatnam and one in Eluru) siblings of the speech and hearing impaired children were also found to be suffering from the same disability without any hereditary history.

Age of Entry into the School:

A higher percentage of students (32% in Anakapalli, 38% in Visakhapatnam and 36% in Eluru) joined their respective special school in class one, in the age group of 7 to 8 years and next higher percentage of students (24% in Anakapalli, 30% in Visakhapatnam and 32% in Eluru) joined the same class in the age group more than 8 years. The number of students who joined the school in the age group of 5 to 6 was 14% in Anakapalli, 12% in Visakhapatnam and 8% in Eluru and those who joined school in the age group of 6 to 7 were 14, 12 and 18% respectively. Another category of students who joined these special schools in later stages (more than 9 years) was 12% in Anakapalli, 10% in Visakhapatnam and 6% in Eluru. The reasons for their late entries into these schools were late identification of their disability and low awareness level of their parents about special schools.

Educational Implications

The purpose of educational research is not only to contribute new facts to the field of education for the sake of knowledge alone but it should also yield some recommendations for the improvement in educational process and practices. It should be oriented to practical or applied aspect also. For the protection of the rights of Persons with Disabilities and to ensure their equal participation in the development of the state, the Government of Andhra Pradesh is implementing the Persons with Disability Act, 1995 along with other Acts.

CONCLUSION

The authors of this paper evaluated these schools and found that schools are lacking in instructional, infrastructural and special facilities as well. The government of Andhra Pradesh should work on making proper budgetary provisions, providing skilled man power and other special facilities for the smooth and effective working of these schools. It was found that the heads and teachers appointed in these schools were qualified and trained in the concerned field. It is suggested that the concerned authorities should conduct regular refresher courses and orientation programmes in the concerned fields to update and refresh the knowledge of the teachers. Teachers working on contract basis should be regularized as per the policy of the government in time bound manner so that they can give due emphasis to their duties and have full job satisfaction.

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