

Role of Parents, Community, ECEC and Stakeholders in Early Intervention as per RPD-2016 and NEP 2020

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Abstract

The intervention at an early age has major significance in the development of visually impaired children as maintained by RPD-2016, that is, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, and NEP 2020 definition or the National Education Policy 2020. Both the documents emphasize the need for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) to lay down a solid base for children with disabilities. It goes in tune with early identification of disabilities and inclusive education as a critical factor that would ensure children with visual impairments receive proper support as early as possible-the same reflected under NEP 2020. This stressed the need for an inclusive and equitable education system to include early intervention measures under the broader frame of ECEC.

In the various stakeholders, such as the community, parents' involvement with educators and health professionals, have made great strides in the process of supporting early intervention. Community programs would offer localized resources to enable a more supportive and inclusive environment where different needs of far-visually impaired children are catered to.

RPD-2016 and NEP 2020 showcase the importance of ECEC, the community, and stakeholders in early intervention concerning visually impaired children. Their collaboration becomes imperative in ensuring that the child has access to a range of services and support to optimize their early development and integration into society.

Visual impairment is a condition to experiences a significant reduction in their ability to see everything.

The use of braille, abacus for visually impaired students refers to a tactile mathematical tool designed to teach. Such as subtraction, addition, multiplication, division. It incorporates raised beads and rods that can be manipulated by touch, making it accessible for students with visual impairment.

Visual impaired students benefits:

Independence: learning braille gives independence to the blind child as he can read and write on his own without the help of any assistive devices.

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Empowerment: Visually impaired children can be empowered by the ability to read and write braille. They can achieve personal growth and academic success through education and information.

Enhanced sensory development: Reading Braille enhances tactile sensitivity and is a unique sensory experience for a blind child.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education definitely plays a leading role in shaping the lives of children with visual malady by imperative means within the initial years of life. ECEC programs offer structured environments where cognitive, emotional, and social development are imbued within activities and learning opportunities customized and modified for the different needs presented by the visually impaired child. Government intervention and policy support, as contained in the RPD-2016 and NEP 2020, are paramount in this respect. The policies are aligned on early identification and intervention for children with visual impairments, thus ensuring that from onset visually impaired children get equitable access to quality education. Inclusionary systems embed these children within mainstream settings, allowing learning opportunities with their peers.

To attain this end, adaptation of the curriculum is essential, which involves modifying instructional strategies, learning resources, and assessment methods to meet the diverse needs of the visually impaired children. Such curricula foster a more accessible and engaging learning context as well as meaningful experiences to enable participation and avoid situations of marginalization. However, to date, implementation of ECEC for visually impaired children faces a multitude of challenges and barriers. Lack of teachers trained on inclusive teaching practices, those who could utilize technologies to aid teaching-learning processes, limited opportunities to attend a school, inadequate infrastructure, and deep-rooted societal stigma complexes have further complicated matters by alienating children.

The making of a world more inclusive requires a multiplatform strategy. Here, continuous professional development for in-service teachers and support for human and IT resource and infrastructure in collaboration with the community are implemented to establish an enabling environment to assist with inclusion. In brief, NGOs and organizations can start campaigns to build up societal acceptance and support for children with visual impairments.

Role of ECEC

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) constitutes a vital segment of the

entire process of development and education of children with visual impairment, laying the groundwork for their lifelong learning and integration into broader society. For young children with visual impairment, acquiring cognitive, motor, and social skills in early years may be a perplexing problem due to them being denied access to visual stimuli. The ECEC programs have planned an environment that enables rich sensory, structured learning of these young children, focusing particularly on the preservation of advanced function and sensory skills. In the absence of having access to visual stimuli, these programs try to build touch, hearing, and smell perception to help children experience and identify their surroundings and thus acquire fundamental life skills. Interventions at this level will not only target reducing delays in their development, but will also promote confidence and independence in the visually impaired child by encouraging them to interact with peers and the larger community.

In conjunction with that, ECEC plays a very important role in terms of early identification and assessment of visual impairments enabling an early input of support systems and interventions. Teachers who work in ECEC are trained to assess the unique needs of children with visual impairments and formulate individualized education plans (IEPs) in close collaboration with specialists and therapists. With assistive technologies and adaptive teaching strategies, inclusive learning experiences were devised for accessibility and enjoyment of all children. ECEC programs also tend to put great emphasis on family involvement, offering parents and families guidance and resources to further their child's development, whether in the home or within the larger community.

Through ECEC, visually impaired children will have access to a caring and nurturing environment that encourages holistic development. ECEC introduces children to inclusive education, thus abridging the transition to formal schooling. Early Childhood Education and Care is a starting point in preventing the different types of disadvantage that children with visual impairment will have individually in the future, these include in their school-age academic, social, and emotional development. ECEC provided that avenue into a more inclusive and equitable education system that allows visually impaired children to develop their potential and lead fulfilling lives

Government and policy support

Government and policy support are paramount in ensuring equal access to quality education and early intervention services for children with visual impairments. Policies and legislations such as the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act of 2016 (RPD-2016) and National Education Policy of 2020 (NEP 2020) in India demonstrate the commitment to promoting inclusive education that caters to the

unique needs of children with disabilities, including visual impairment. They require that early detection and diagnosis of disabilities be made and that special educational facilities be extended to these children, making sure they are not sidelined in their development and education. It embodies the right to inclusive education, stemming from a commitment to ensure that schools take seriously the fact that children with disabilities need to be provided with inclusive education and that therefore relevant steps should be undertaken towards its realization, such as providing accessible infrastructure, special teaching, and assistive technologies.

NEP 2020 reinforces the outlook that an inclusive system should be attuned to meet the needs of all learners, with an emphasis on building an equitable and supportive education system. It ought to see the merging of children with visual impairment into mainstream education with a sense of belonging and equality. The policy has required that teacher training programs equip teachers with skills needed to meet diverse needs of the children with visual impairments and create flexible and adaptable inclusive curricula. The use of technology is further encouraged by NEP 2020 as a good means of improving the learning outcomes and supporting assistive devices and digital learning resources aimed towards the visually impaired.

Government measures such as scholarship, financial aid programs, and special education grants are also important resources in support of the education of visually impaired children. The programs effectively reduce economic pressure for families and give their children the resources to empower them with success. Also, collaboration with NGOs and the private sector is encouraged with the aim of designing strong policies on inclusive education and enhancing access to support services.

There are still challenges to be addressed for successful implementation of inclusive education policies, policies, and programs despite these robust policy frameworks. What is needed is continual, effective monitoring and evaluation to ensure that sound policies become actions on the ground. Providing thorough training for teachers, as well as infrastructure and resource support, is critical to establishing an inclusive education system that supports a great percentage of the visually-impaired children. Despite this challenge, the way forward involves a collective effort on the part of government agencies, teachers, community members, and other stakeholders in overcoming these barriers to build an inclusive society in which visually-impaired children can flourish and accomplish their full potential.

Inclusive Curriculum

An inclusive curriculum for learners with visual impairments, elaborated in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPD-2016) and the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), creates an inclusive education platform in which diversity is valued. Inclusive education, as necessitated within RPD-2016, raises the global curriculum's attention to various learning styles of the visually impaired students: thus, teaching materials, assessment alternatives, and classroom practices must be subjected to this law to allow the visually impaired to have full participation in education. In addition, the RPD-2016 underlines the provision of assistive devices and technology that will permit effective access by learners with visual impairments to the curricular content and thus reduce learning barriers.

NEP 2020 builds upon the principles of inclusivity and equity by espousing a curriculum that is flexible and responds to the needs of all learners. It insists on the necessity for a universal design for learning (UDL) framework that can provide access to curricular content for students of various abilities. For blind learners, this means adapting braille, large print, and audio resources while also incorporating tactile learning mechanisms and modern technologies contributing to multisensory learning. NEP 2020 also insists on tailored learning pathways that allow visually impaired learners to progress at their own pace in accordance with their needs and strengths.

An inclusive curriculum for learners who are blind, within the specified and stipulated provisions of RPD-2016 and NEP 2020, ought to place emphasis on fostering critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills rather than endorsing rote learning. This demands creating an active, participatory environment within classroom contexts enabling blind learners to be active in discussions and collaborative activities.

Challenges and barriers

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) are critical for children's lifelong learning and well-being. They provide the necessary groundwork for children in the early years. Although it can be considered as one of the key pillars of social and economic development in the knowledge-based economies, the provision and access to ECEC services is limited and faces challenges and barriers worldwide. Affordability is a key barrier to quality care. Most families do not have easy access to ECEC, and the poorest families are distinctly incapable of paying for better ECEC. This cost-hermetic access leaves the children with spread parental income at a developmental deficit, as economically disadvantaged children cannot afford well-resourced programs. Moreover, not enough or clear funding

mechanisms exist for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECEC), resulting in unequal quality services. In many regions, government funding falls short of covering the costs of providing high-quality care, forcing providers to cut costs or pass along expenses to families. Cultural and linguistic diversity in ECEC presents challenges as well. Early childhood education and care (ECEC) services in increasingly heterogeneous societies must address children with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. So much of the program doesn't have staff or the training to really support bilingual or multicultural education.” As a result, the learning situation may not fit all kids perfectly, limiting their cognitive and social development. The ECEC landscape is further challenged by policy and regulatory barriers. In most countries, there is no coherent policy framework governing the sector, leading to fragmented and often inconsistent service delivery. Rugged regulations on child-to-staff ratios, facility standards, and curriculum requirements also differ across regions, producing ambiguity and variability in the quality of care that is given. Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated many pre-existing challenges of the ECEC sector. The pandemic caused widespread closures of childcare centres, interrupted learning and heightened financial strain on both families and providers. This transition to remote or hybrid learning models was especially difficult for younger children, who thrive from in-person, tactile learning experiences. Restoration of ECEC in the wake of the pandemic and its effects will need to be guided by policies and investments specifically aimed at refortifying the system and are essential if we are to rebuilding the sector and to make the sector more resilient for both crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and systemic shocks such as climate change. Tackling these challenges and barriers in ECEC asks for a multifaceted approach combining increased investment, reform of policies, professional development and societal engagement. Addressing these challenges could contribute to moving towards a more equitable, high-quality ECEC system that meets the developmental needs of all children, irrespective of circumstances. The curriculum should also include life skills education and vocational training to assist visually impaired students in achieving independence and gaining meaningful employment.

Teacher training is a crucial element in the successful implementation of an inclusive curriculum. Both RPD-2016 and NEP 2020 give importance to ongoing professional development programs that equip teachers in effectively supporting visually impaired students. This training course should not only cover the use of assistive technologies but also include the teacher's awareness and identification of the special learning needs of visually impaired students and the adoption of inclusive teaching methods. Besides, the creation of a school environment which can provide the support and inclusiveness to visually impaired students is of

major importance, teachers, students, and staff should respect and accept the needs of visually impaired students and join to make it a reality.

Although RPD-2016 and NEP 2020 put forward progressive frameworks, the execution of inclusive curriculum for visually impaired students is still confronted with some challenges. Inadequate resources, lack of skills in teachers and limitations in infrastructures can be the major hindrances for the effective implementation of inclusive educational policies. Addressing the problems needs a joint and concerted effort between the government, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations to bring the inclusive curriculum vision to life.

The future curriculum should create a path to use technological advances that will result in improving the quality of education for visually impaired students. By implementing digital learning platforms, accessible e-books and interactive learning applications, educational institutions will be present in a wide number of available resources that will enable visually impaired students to get the maximum benefit. Also, by developing partnerships among schools, NGOs, and private sector, resources would be more available and supportive educational environment would be promoted for the visually impaired.

Future direction

The teacher training programs that will endow the teachers with specific skills should be the focus of future efforts. The fact that the use of modern technologies such as screen readers, Braille displays, and digital learning platforms in the regular education would not only give the handicapped students equal opportunities but also it should be done well. The collaboration between government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private entities will be the driving force in solving the problems related to the development of infrastructure, the allocation of resources, and public attitudes. These efforts will in the end result in a successful way of solving the visually impaired persons' issues on their way to get independence and social inclusion. As per the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPD-2016) and the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), the inclusion and integration of visually impaired individuals is the future direction of the education system which is inclusive, accessible, and equitable for all. RPD-2016 gives emphasis to new techniques such as early intervention, accessible infrastructure, and the use of loom assistive technologies to ensure that the visually impaired individuals fully participate in education and society. NEP 2020 wants to reach this by implementing new curriculums that are inclusive and flexible, promoting teacher training as well as leveraging technology to enhance the learning experiences for the visually impaired students.

The aims for the treatment of visual impairment under the Act on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016 (RPD-2016) and the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) are created to ensure equal, inclusive, and empowering experiences for the visually impaired individuals in education and society. RPD-2016 which is the Act on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPD) 2016, is an act which provides for the creation and development of barrier-free environments for disabled persons in the sectors of health, education, employment, rights and protection. It seeks to provide equal rights and opportunities for visually impaired individuals by identifying them early and administering the needed treatments to be sure they get the right educational and personal development support. It forms the basis of teach them services and provides services like assistive technologies, such as Braille, screen readers, and audio resources, and requires that educational institutions and public facilities include the appropriate disability-friendly infrastructure which is of course necessary to bring disabled students to the same level at par with their peers. Apart from this, the law works towards absolute eradication of discrimination and at the same time offering legal cover for the blind people hence leading to the realization that they can be part of all life sites. On the other hand, NEP 2020 prioritizes an educational setting that is inclusive by ensuring that there are flexible curriculums catering to diverse needs of the blind students that the integration of assistive-teaching devices and the application of the more person-specific learning approach inflexibly allow. It also stresses the fact that the staff for such special programs should be especially trained to be able to handle the specially challenged students thereby helping the students to cope with the condition amicably. NEP 2020 also underscores the involvement of the parents and the other community people in the visually challenged student's learning process, thereby, creating a cohesiveness that not only will help this child but will also boosts the overall power of the education facility. These plans/combinations together are designed to help the visually impaired by providing them with a much more equal, more accessible, and more supportive system where they can succeed both academically and socially.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the involvement of parents, the community, Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), and various stakeholders is vital for the early intervention of visually impaired children, ensuring their overall development and integration into society. According to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPD-2016) and the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), identifying and addressing the unique needs of visually impaired children early on is crucial. Parents serve as the primary advocates for their child's needs, fostering a nurturing home environment. The community plays a significant role

by promoting awareness and inclusive practices, which help dismantle societal barriers and create a more accepting atmosphere. ECEC programs offer essential opportunities for children with visual impairments to engage in tailored educational experiences that emphasize sensory development and early learning. Various stakeholders, including educators, healthcare professionals, government agencies, and NGOs, collaborate to ensure access to resources, assistive technologies, and specialized services that support inclusion. The combined efforts of these groups, guided by the principles outlined in RPD-2016 and NEP 2020, are crucial for establishing an inclusive, equitable, and supportive environment for visually impaired children, enabling them to reach their full potential. Together, they ensure that these children are not only educated but also empowered to lead independent and fulfilling lives in an inclusive society.

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