



EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE SPECIAL CHILDREN IN KERALA

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Abstract

The early origins of special education in India started with Christian missionaries and non-governmental agencies which stressed a charity model of serving populations such as the Visually Impaired (VI), Hearing Impaired (HI) and Mental Retardation (MR). However after its independence from Great Britain in 1947, the Indian government became more involved in providing educational rehabilitation and social services especially to the disabled. Over the past four decades India has moved gradually toward an inclusive education model with prevailing challenges like, high level of poverty, lack of teacher especially special education teachers and lack of binding national laws concerned with inclusive education, dual governmental administration, private administration and aided administration for special education services.

Keywords: *Special Education, Visually Impaired, Hearing Impaired, Mental Retardation, Government Administration, Private Administration, Aided Administration.*

Introduction

In India essentials on disabled personnel is unruffled all the way through the Decennial Demographic Census and from beginning to end NSSO surveys (Periodicity not regular). Census 2011 in India out of the 121 core Populations, 2.68 core persons are 'disabled' which is 2.21 per cent of the whole population. Encircled by the disabled laypeople 56 per cent (1.5 Cr) are males and 44 per cent (1.18 Cr) are females (World Bank Report, 2011).

Education for all children in public schools together with those with disabilities is an unanswered issue in many countries around the globe. Today, India legitimately requires the education of all students in schools, however despite millions of students with disabilities prolong to stay behind out of school or be given little or no education.

Special Children and their Education

Special Child or Exceptional Child is the one who needs special care or attention as he or she is different from that of a normal child. An exceptional child is unique and their needs are different from that of a normal child. The committee for the National Society for the Study of Education has described special children as “those who deviates from what is supposed to be average in physical, mental, emotional or social characteristics to such an extent that they require educational services in order to develop their maximum capacity.”(Research in Edu; US .Dept. National centre).

Special education or special needs in a way addresses the special student’s individual differences and needs. Special education or special needs education is the education of students with special ideally, this process involves the individually planned and systematically monitored arrangement of teaching procedures, adapted equipment and materials, accessible settings, and other interventions designed to help learners with special needs, achieve a higher level of personal self-sufficiency and success in school and community than would be available if the student were only given access to a typical classroom education.

Common special needs include challenges with learning communication challenges, emotional and behavioral disorders, physical disabilities, and developmental disorders. Students with these kinds of special needs are likely to benefit from additional educational services such as different approaches to teaching, use of technology and a specially adapted teaching area, or resource room.

Special Schools

A special school is a school catering for students who have special educational needs due to severe learning difficulties, physical disabilities or behavioral problems. Special schools are specifically designed, staffed and resourced to provide the appropriate special education for children with additional needs.(Disabled world .com, January 2019).

Review of Literature

Kuyini and Desai (2007) reported that teachers admitted needed more training in the field of educating children with special education in order to accommodate and teach children with special needs which shows that teachers’ of colleges and universities need to have trained lectures to develop more courses in special education. Teachers expressed concern that school inspectors do not know enough about the inclusive education concept and need to be trained as well so collaboratively they could implement the policy. This includes training of specialists to support teachers, funds for teaching and learning resources

and facilities in schools. Government support is needed to effectively implement the inclusive education policy.

Usharani (2008) analyzed the awareness of teachers of inclusive education for the disabled were average. Female teachers had more awareness than their counter parts. No significant difference in awareness was reported according to groups such as a) head teachers-assistant teaches; b) junior teachers; c) Secondary grade, BT and PG Teachers.

Mehta (2006) revealed that there is a significant difference in the awareness of learning disabilities in teachers of different boards such as SSLC, CBSE, ICSE. Among the board teachers were more aware about learning disabilities as compared to CBSE and SSLC board.

Kamalm (1996) carried out a study in the primary schools of Tiruverumbur Block (Rural Area) in Trichy District. The study focused on the capacity building of the teachers in educating the mild mentally retarded. The teachers gained knowledge about Mild Mentally Retarded (MMR) after training.

Sharma (1993) attempted to examine the difference in the personality characteristics of the Learning Disabled (LD) and the Non-learning Disabled (NLD) children. The study assessed the efficacy of intervention programmers developed specially for parents, teachers and the LD children in improving the academic performance and children with varied learning disabilities.

Statement of the Problem

Disability is increasingly on the development agenda and is one of the major challenges to be focused for the overall development of the society. Disability is one of the major causes for dependency and deprivations throughout the world. However, causes leading to it and its magnitude vary across different cultural setups. WHO (2001) defines disability as a contextual variable, dynamic over time and in relation to circumstances. Parents of differently disabled children have different or an additional set of responsibilities compared to the parents of other normal children and thus may endure an additional level of stress related to their child's disability disabled children along with other children in the family and also to integrate with the society. The parents of disabled children also face inferior status and discrimination in society and have to deal with the problems associated in their daily life where adaption and coping are major issues. In addition, most parents desire to raise their children with special health care needs at home, though for some, individual circumstances and societal factors limit the family's ability to provide for their child's special needs. In this connection the present study tired to find out the educational opportunities available for the special children in Kerala with the following objectives.

Objective

The board objective of this article is to find out the educational opportunities available in the special schools of Thrissur, Ernakulam and Kottayam districts of Kerala.

Methodology

This study is based exclusively on primary data. The primary data required for the study has been collected from the selected districts of Kerala states, simple random sampling technique was used to select the districts Thrissur, Ernakulam and Kottayam which had more number of special schools identified for the present study. All the special schools available in three districts were chosen and surveyed. The totally sample size was 30 special schools which were surveyed for the present study. Finally all the heads of the special schools were approached in personal and collected the required data.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the specialization schools in the study districts. The specialization of school was classified in to 6 broad categories viz., Blind, Mental Retardation, Deaf /Hearing Impaired, Blind Integrated, Deaf/Blind and Physically Handicapped. It reveals that one half (50%) of the special schools were providing mental retardation, while 23.33 per cent of the schools were deaf/Hearing impairment. Only a few schools were specialized in Blind (13.33%); Blind Integrated (3.33%); Deaf /Blind (3.33%) and physically handicapped (6.67%). Among the districts also the same trend could be seen. However, there was no deaf and Hearing Impaired (HI) schools in Kottayam where the number of blind schools were high (28.57%).

Table 2 unveils ownership of the school wise classification in the study area and classified in to four categories, viz., and government, private, aided and trust. It could be seen from the table that 56.67 per cent of the schools were belonged to trust (charitable welfare society) and 23.33 per cent of the school were aided in nature. While the government schools were less (13.33%) and the remaining 6.67 per cent of the schools were under private ownership. Among the districts also the trust schools were higher than other ownerships. Surprisingly, no school was found under government category in Ernakulam and no / private school was found in Kottayam.

Table 1: Specialization of Schools in the Study area

SL. No	Type	Districts			Total
		Thrissur	Ernakulam	Kottayam	
1	Blind	1 (7.69)	1 (10.00)	2 (28.57)	4 (13.33)
2	Mental Retardation	6 (46.15)	5 (50.00)	4 (57.14)	15 (50.00)
3	Deaf/Hi	4 (30.77)	3 (30.00)	0 (0.00)	7 (23.33)
4	Blind Integrated	1 (7.69)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (3.33)
5	Deaf/Blind	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (14.29)	1 (3.33)
6	Physically Handicapped	1 (7.69)	1 (10.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (6.67)
Total		13 (100.00)	10 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	30 (100.00)

Source: Computed

Note: Figures in parentheses are per cent age to the total

Table.2: Ownership of the special schools

SL. No	Nature of School	Districts			Total
		Thrissur	Ernakulam	Kottayam	
1	Government	3 (23.08)	0 (0.00)	1 (14.29)	4 (13.33)
2	Private	1 (7.69)	1 (10.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (6.67)
3	Aided	2 (15.38)	3 (30.00)	2 (28.57)	7 (23.33)
4	Trust	7 (53.85)	6 (60.00)	4 (57.14)	17 (56.67)
Total		13 (100.00)	10 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	30 (100.00)

Source: Computed

Note: Figures in parentheses are per cent age to the total

Facilities of the special schools are presented in table 3. The facilities were classified into building, boundary wall, inside and outside play ground, library, electricity, furniture and transport. It is revealed from the table that almost all the schools were having own building, boundary wall, playground, library, electricity and furniture, while one of the schools were not having transport facilities. The picture was more or less equal in all the districts. Further none of the schools in Ernakulam and Kottayam districts have outdoor playground.

Table 3: Facilities Available in the Special School

SL. No	Particular	Districts			Total
		Thrissur	Ernakulam	Kottayam	
1	Own Building	13 (100.00)	10 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	30 (100.00)
2	Boundary	13 (100.00)	10 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	30 (100.00)
3	Play Ground	13 (100.00)	10 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	30 (100.00)
4	In Side(PG)	7 (53.85)	10 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	24 (80.00)
5	Out Side(PG)	6 (46.15)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	6 (20.00)
6	Library	13 (100.00)	9 (90.00)	7 (100.00)	29 (96.67)
7	Electricity	13 (100.00)	10 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	30 (100.00)
8	Furniture	13 (100.00)	10 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	30 (100.00)
9	Own Transport	7 (53.85)	6 (60.00)	3 (42.86)	16 (53.33)
	Total	13 (100.00)	10 (100.0)	7 (100.0)	30 (100.0)

Source: Computed, Note: Figures in parentheses are per cent age to the total

Table 4: Position of Teaching Staff in the Special School

SL. No	Teachers	Thrissur	Ernakulam	Kottayam	Total
Total Number of Teacher					
1	Below – 10	2 (15.38)	1 (10.00)	2 (28.57)	5 (16.67)
2	10 – 20	3 (23.08)	5 (50.00)	2 (28.57)	10 (33.33)
3	20 – 30	4 (30.77)	3 (30.00)	3 (42.86)	10 (33.33)
4	Above – 30	4 (30.77)	1 (10.00)	0 (0.00)	5 (16.67)
Total Number of Disability Teachers					
1	Below – 10	9 (69.23)	6 (60.00)	5 (71.43)	20 (66.67)
2	Above – 10	4 (30.77)	4 (40.00)	2 (28.57)	10 (33.33)
Total Trained Teachers					
1	Below – 10	3 (23.08)	1 (10.00)	2 (28.57)	6 (20.00)
2	10-20	3 (23.08)	3 (30.00)	3 (42.86)	9 (30.00)
3	20-30	5 (38.46)	5 (50.00)	2 (28.57)	12 (40.00)
4	30-40	1 (7.69)	1 (10.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (6.67)
5	Above-40	1 (7.69)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (3.33)

Total Untrained Teachers					
1	Below -10	9 (69.23)	7 (70.00)	4 (57.14)	20 (66.67)
2	Above -10	4 (30.77)	3 (30.00)	3 (42.86)	10 (33.33)
Total Permanent Teachers					
1	Below -10	2 (15.38)	1 (10.00)	2 (28.57)	5 (16.67)
2	10-20	11 (84.62)	9 (90.00)	5 (71.43)	25 (83.33)
Total Temporary Teachers					
1	Below 10	8 (61.54)	3 (30.00)	4 (57.14)	15 (50.00)
2	10-20	2 (15.38)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (6.67)
1	Below 10	9 (69.23)	7 (70.00)	5 (71.43)	21 (70.00)
2	10-20	4 (30.77)	3 (30.00)	2 (28.57)	9 (30.00)

Source: Computed, **Note:** Figures in parentheses are per cent age to the total.

Table 4 explains the distribution of position of teachers and it was classified into four categories viz., below – 10, 10 – 20, 20 – 30, 30 – 40 and above 40 teachers. It could be observed from the table that about one third (33.33%) of the schools had the teaching staff of 10-30 teachers. However some of the schools had their teaching staff above 30 members. In case of districts, also the number of teaching staff was more or less equal in the category of overall. However none of the school in Kottayam had the highest teaching staff category (above30).

The disability teachers of position were classified two categories viz., below 10 and 10-20. It could be seen from the table that more than two thirds (66.67%) of the special schools had their disabled teachers upto10. It is also noted that the number disabled teaching staff were little high in Ernakulum district (40%) when compared to other districts. Regarding the total trained teachers, in all, about 40 per cent of the schools possessed 20-30 trained teachers, which was followed by 10-20 (30%) and below 10 (20%). Among the districts also the total trained teachers were high in the category of 20-30 excepting Kottayam where the share of 10-20 was somewhat higher (42.86%) than that of other districts. In Case of total untrained teachers majority of the schools (66.67%) were possessed 10 or less untrained teachers. Surprisingly, about one third of the schools had above 10 untrained teachers. It could also be observed that a vast majority of the schools (83.33%) had more than 10 permanent teachers. While about one half of the schools have up to 10 temporary teachers. Further more than one third (70%) of the schools had their permanent teachers with disability though it was a necessary condition.

Table 5. Explains opinion of the special schools about the satisfaction with the available for facilities for marginalize in the special schools. In total all (100%) the special schools were provided the facilities in their special schools for the marginalized. The facility is categorized in to two viz., PTA/Parental Counseling/Smart Class and Braille Orientation Course (BOC). In total three fourths of the institutions agreed that they have adequate special facility for marginalized groups in their schools.

In district analysis, 92.31 per cent of the special schools from Thrissur district agreed that they had PTA, counseling and smart class facilities for marginalized groups in their special schools. Whereas 90 per cent special schools from Ernakulam district agreed that they had good Parental and Teachers Association (PTA), Parental counseling, Smart class with special facility for marginalized groups in special schools. The district wise analysis 28.57 per cent of the special schools from Kottayam district were agreed that they had Braille orientation courses for marginalized groups in the special schools. Whereas 7.69 per cent and 10 per cent from Thrissur and Ernakulam district respectively agreed that they had good Braille Orientation courses facilities for marginalized groups in special schools.

Table 5: Special Facility for Marginalized Groups

SL. No	Facility	Districts			Total
		Thrissur	Ernakulam	Kottayam	
1	Yes	13 (100.00)	10 (100.0)	7 (100.0)	30 (100.0)
Types of Facility					
1	PTA/Parental Counseling/Smart Class	12 (92.31)	9 (90.00)	5 (71.43)	26 (86.67)
2	Braille Orientation course & All	1 (7.69)	1 (10.00)	2 (28.57)	4 (13.33)
Total		13 (100.00)	10 (100.0)	7 (100.0)	30 (100.00)

Source: Computed

Note: Figures in parentheses are per cent age to the total

The problems faced by the schools are reported in table 6. The major problems faced by the schools have been classified in to two categories viz., text books and Braille. It could be seen from the table that almost all the schools were faced some problems .The major problem faced by almost of the schools was text i.e., they could not get the required books for the students. Being disabled students they could not cope up their studies without textbooks. Further a few schools were not received Braille the most required thing for the disabled students.

Table 6: Problems faced by the schools

SL. No	Problems	Districts			Total
		Thrissur	Ernakulam	Kottayam	
1	Yes	13 (100.00)	10 (100.0)	7 (100.0)	30 (100.00)
Total		13 (100.00)	10 (100.0)	7 (100.0)	30 (100.00)
Reasons					
1	Text Books	12 (92.31)	9 (90.00)	5 (71.43)	26 (86.67)
2	Braille	1 (7.69)	1 (10.00)	2 (28.57)	4 (13.33)
Total		13 (100.00)	10 (100.0)	7 (100.0)	30 (100.00)

Source: Computed

Note: Figures in parentheses are per cent age to the total

Table 7. Shows the physical infrastructure in your special school. Mentally Retardation school at Ernakulam district, students using things charts, drawing books, sketch, pencil etc (others 70%). Deaf students using more fundamental facilities in Thrissur district (30.77%). Blind students using physical infrastructure Braille/ Braille slate and stylus pen, learning the letter using taylor frame etc, facilities more used district in Kottayam (28.57%).

Table 7: Special School Physical Infrastructure

SL. No	Infrastructure	District			Total
		Thrissur	Ernakulam	Kottayam	
1	Braille/Braille slate/Stylus/Taylor Frame	2 (15.38)	0 (0.00)	2 (28.57)	4 (13.33)
2	Audiogram/Hearing Aid	4 (30.77)	3 (30.00)	2 (28.57)	9 (30.00)
3	Others(Charts/drawing book/Sketch / pencil	7 (53.85)	7 (70.00)	3 (42.86)	17 (56.67)
Total		13 (100.00)	10 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	30 (100.00)

Source: Computed

Note: Figures in parentheses are per cent age to the total

Conclusion

India appears to be at the crossroads with the implementation of inclusive education. On one hand, the Indian government has demonstrated its determination by implementing a number of policies, programmes, and legislations for inclusion in the last four decades; while on the other it faces a number of unique challenges that limits its successful implementation. This it is concluded that the educational opportunities available for the disabled children and at almost all the three study districts. However, the

government schools for them was very estimated, Which schools that the government of Kerala has not strong enough to provide better education for the disabled .Further, the provision made to the disabled also not enough in almost all schools. Hence it is the right time to take necessary action to safeguard the disabled and their education, which is the only means for the disabled.

Suggestions

The following are the important suggestion drawn by the researcher directly from the present study.

- The infrastructure facilities in the most of the surveyed schools were poor and hence the infrastructure facilities should be increased and improved by either the government or the sponsors.
- Only a few schools consist of library facility, so the government or the donors or the management may establish libraries in all the special schools as soon as possible.
- Government should recruit more teachers in special schools so that studies at higher education level will be improved in a better way.

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