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## **ROLE OF EDUCATION FOR VISUAL IMPAIRMENT**

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### **Introduction**

**“Alone we can do so little together we can do so much”**

Special education is the practice of educating students with special educational needs in a way that addresses their individual differences and needs. The education is specially framed for the needs of the disabled under which visually impaired also benefitted. Visual impairment is considered as the most severe and traumatic physical handicap. Since more impressions are conveyed to the brain through the eyes, the visual anomalies may influence the life of the individual in physical, mental, social, vocational and educational aspects.

### **Visual Impairment**

Visual impairment [Blindness] is a lack of vision. It may also refer to a loss of vision that cannot be corrected with glasses or contact lenses. There are three types of blindness such as complete blindness, colour blindness and night blindness. Complete blindness means cannot see anything and do not see light.

Blindness is defined as the state of being sightless. In a strict sense the word “blindness” denotes the inability of a person to distinguish darkness from bright light in either eye. The terms blind and blindness have been modified in our society to include a wide range of visual impairment. Blindness is frequently used today to describe severe visual decline in one or both eyes with maintenance of some residual vision. The American medical association proposed this definition in 1934. “ A legally blind person is said to be one who has visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye even with correction, 20degree or less in the better eye after correction”.

### **Causes of Blindness**

- a. Glaucoma refers to four different eye conditions that can damage your optic nerve, which carries visual information from eyes to brain.
- b. Macular degeneration destroys the part of eye which help see light. It mostly affects older adults.
- c. Cataracts cause cloudy vision.
- d. Optic neuritis is inflammation that can cause temporary or permanent vision loss.
- e. Retinitis pigmentosa refers to damage of the retina. It leads to blindness only in rare cases.
- f. Tumors that affect retina or optic nerve can also cause blindness.

## Education for visually impaired children

“Education makes a door to bright future”

The visually impaired children constitute a heterogeneous group. Some are totally blind, some are partially sighted, some low vision and some one eyed. The care and training of such children must therefore match with the nature of their loss of vision. Care, training and education of such children must be the joint responsibility of parents, teachers and community members. Most experts agree that, for that, for the most part, the visually impaired should be educated in the same general way as the sighted following the same general principles. Visually impaired children do their primary education at sighted school along with normal children but with modified teaching methods. One of that methods is Braille which is thought for classes 6-9. The completely blind student's are aided by their parents for their projects but children with low vision do it by themselves. In order to make visually impaired children read and write like other children, Braille books and slates are used. There Braille books and slates help them to improve their reading and writing skills. They also attend spoken English classes to improve their language. Role play and audio tapes are used to develop their speaking skills. They use tailor board and Pecs to learn mathematics.

### Braille

Braille is a basic system of reading and writing for the blind. It consists of a six-dot cell that provide for sixty three different characters. 26 combinations of dots are used for 26 letters of the alphabet. The remaining 37 combinations represent punctuation signs and contractions that allow for shortening or abbreviating words. In some ways, Braille is a system of shorthand since each word is not spelled out letter for letter. As a result blind children have difficulty with spelling because of the frequent abbreviations used in the Braille system. In addition to Braille code for reading and writing there are codes for music, mathematics, computer sciences and chemistry. Braille has many disadvantages. Books and periodicals printed in Braille are very bulky, expensive and take up a great deal of storage space. Moreover, Braille materials are not always available for all subjects and in all languages.

### Talking Calculator

The blind profit from a talking calculator. In the talking calculator numerical entries are read aloud to the student through an earplug. Blind children may profit more from the talking calculator in learning mathematics. At the student's level of thinking while beyond his /her arithmetic skill level will encourage curiosity and persistence in mathematics. The calculator enables students to solve problems which are challenging and interesting.

### Tape Recordings

Reading materials from both standard texts and books for leading can be transcribed by the teacher and presented to the blind that usually profit from audio – aural cues more than visual cues. The use of tape recording is gaining in popularity as a method of teaching language,

history, geography, science etc. Blind can learn the same material much more quickly because of the usage of tape recordings. Sighted children have an edge over blind children in the acquisition of knowledge through experience. Sighted children acquire rich experiences in a natural way. They learn the experience as a whole but the learning of blind children is in pieces of information. There is thus a need for different approaches to the curriculum for blind children.

### **Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC)**

IEDC is one of the major initiatives from the government of India to promote “integrated education” in 1974 by the ministry of welfare. Integrated education is not simply placing a child in a regular classroom. The child needs assistance. Blind children can easily assimilate more than 80% of teaching and experience in the regular classroom if they are provided with the correct material in the correct form at the correct time. Therefore, development of the right educational environment will make integration of blind children a reality.

### **Conclusion**

Students with limited vision need a multisensory approach to learning. In addition to using their vision when it is effective and efficient, they should be encouraged to develop both listening skills and tactile skills. To develop full literacy skills that will last throughout life, students with low vision should be taught to read and write both print and Braille. They must also develop the ability to determine which medium would be most appropriate for the task at hand. Instruction in Braille must be thorough. Only if the student gains sufficient speed and fluency can Braille be a realistic and efficient choice for a given task.

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