An International Peer Reviewed & Referred

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH STUDIES

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF SOCIALIZATION FOR INCLUSION OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED

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Abstract

Socialization is the process by which humans begin to acquire the skills necessary to perform as a functioning member of their society, these socialization abilities are dependent on a person's acquired repertoire of learned social skills and behaviors. Research shows that social deficits in adolescents can cause social isolation, low self esteem and low mental health. Various theories are studied and analyzed to develop theoretical framework to explain, predict and understand various interrelated aspects of the phenomena of socialization of visually impaired students for their inclusion that had helped to connect to the existing knowledge in the related areas and to support in prescribing future solutions. The theoretical analysis support the socialization and inclusion override the physical impairment and social skills can be developed in students with visual impairment that further lead to develop their personality and sense of self.

Key words*: Socialization of Visually Impaired, Inclusion, Theoretical Framework*

Background of the study

India is currently facing a number of challenges and one of them is to provide equal rights to its large population with disabilities. The students who are blind are not getting the same opportunities to participate in regular activities and do not attain the same psychological, social, and physical benefits as their sighted peers. With 7.8 million blind people in India, the country accounts for 20 per cent of the 39 million blind population across the globe (Deccan Herald, April 6, 2012). The major cause of social difficulties in children with visual impairments (VI) is a lack of information about the visual aspects of interacting with others. It is found that children who are visually impaired do not display a full range of play behaviors and demonstrate compromised social interactions (Rettig, 1994). Children with disabilities receive fewer positive responses to their social attempts to engage in social interactions and demonstrate less interest in their peers, which makes them isolated socially (Guralnick M., 1999). Hence from this discussion it is clear that, the need of an hour is to encourage socialization in persons with visual disability.

Conceptual framework – The present paper has focused on improving socialization of visually impaired so that they can be included in the mainstream. It includes following major areas of concern-

1. Socialization

Socialization is the child's ability to relate positively to people in society in an age appropriate manner. Social skills help people cope with the problems of life and facilitate interaction and communication with others. Social rules and relations are created, communicated and changed in verbal and non-verbal ways, and the process of learning such skills is socialization.

The term social skills has been specifically defined as learned behaviors that allow an individual to engage in socially acceptable interactions with other individuals such that the interactions lead to positive responses from others and aid in the avoidance of negative responses (Elliott & Gresham, 1993) Socially competent children use successful strategies in dealing with conflict, explain their viewpoint when they disagree with their peers and suggest alternative activities (Kekelis and Sacks, 1992). Social emotional competence impacts on the overall development of a child and children with vision impairment are vulnerable in this area. Adults play a very

important role in creating learning environments that promote development and inclusion (Roe Joao, 2008).

2.Inclusion

Children who are perceived 'different' because of their impairment, background, language, poverty, etc. are often excluded from society and local communities. Their inclusion includes changing the attitudes and practices of individuals, organizations and associations so that they can fully and equally participate in and contribute to the life of their community and culture. The term inclusion is interpreted in different ways and at different levels.

Inclusive education is defined as - providing instruction which is specifically designed and providing supports for special needs students in the context of regular educational settings. The Draft Scheme on Inclusive Education prepared by the MHRD (2003) uses the following definition: "Inclusive education means all learners, young people –with or without disabilities being able to learn together in ordinary preschool provisions, schools, and community educational settings with appropriate network of support services (Draft of Inclusive Education Scheme, MHRD, 2003). Johnson T.,(1994) provides most comprehensive definition of inclusive education: It is a flexible and individualized support system for children and young people with special educational needs (because of a disability or for other reasons). It forms an integral component of the overall education system, and is provided in regular schools committed to an appropriate education for all.

Philosophy of inclusion -

The blending of various skills and characteristics is essential to benefit the child with special needs along with the normal children who will in adult life experience people of various backgrounds, talents and abilities.(Unnikrishnan P.,2010)

Socialization of disabled is important for their successful inclusion, beyond their integration and the role of skill development in it, is clear from the following figure that indicates principles of inclusion –

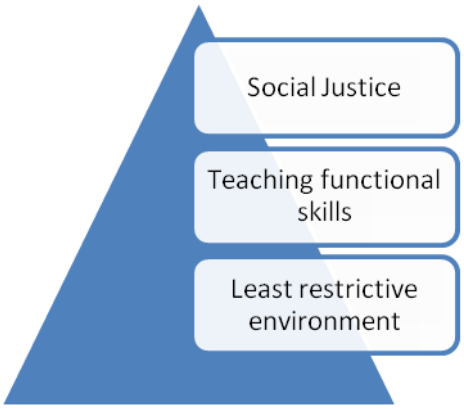


Figure 1: Principles of Inclusion (Johnson, T. 1994)

3. Visual impairment

The WHO (1980) adopted an international classification of impairment, disability as follows -

Impairment was defined as "any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function." Impairment would relate to the disordered development of socialization, communication, and restricted repertoire of interests and repetitive patterns of behaviors.

Disability was defined as "any restriction or lack resulting from impairment, of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being. According to Persons with Disability Act, 1995: As per the act "Disability" means - (i) Blindness; (ii) Low vision; (iii) Leprosy-cured; (iv) Hearing impairment; (v) Loco motor disability; (vi) Mental retardation; (vii) Mental illness.

"Blindness" refers to a condition where a person suffers from any of the following conditions, (i) Total absence of sight. (ii) Visual acuity not exceeding 6/60 or 20/200 (snellen) in the better eye with correcting lenses; (iii) Limitation of the field of vision subtending an angle of 20 degree or worse; "Person with low vision" means a person with impairment of visual functioning even after treatment or standard refractive correction but who uses or is potentially capable of using vision for the planning or execution of a task with appropriate assistive device.

With regard to definitions adopted by **PWD Act**, Census of India stated 2001 defined five types of disabilities:- (i) seeing, (ii) speech, (iii) hearing, (iv) movement, and (v) mental.

The terms partially sighted, low vision, legally blind, and totally blind are used in the educational context to describe students with visual impairments. Visual impairment is the consequence of a functional loss of vision, rather than the eye disorder itself.

Characteristics of visually impaired students are found to be as follows -

- Limitations in range and variety of experiences
- Limitations in mobility
- Limitations in environmental interactions
- Can affect incidental learning, social interactions, career development.

Need of socialization for Visually Impaired

The presence of a visual impairment can impact the normal sequence of learning in social, motor, language and cognitive developmental areas. Reduced vision often results in a low motivation to explore the environment, initiate social interaction, and manipulate objects (Project Ideal). According to Project Ideal, children with visual impairments must be taught compensatory skills and adaptive techniques in order to be able to acquire knowledge from methods other than sight.

The students with Visual Impairment have limited ability to explore the environment, often need to rely on other senses to gather information, hence cannot share common visual experiences with their sighted peers, and therefore vision loss may negatively impact the development of appropriate social skills. As a result, these students may experience low self-esteem that limits their sense of mastery over their own lives. This calls for providing them a conducive learning environment, to overcome these potential difficulties (Perez-Pereira and Conti-Ramsden, 1999).

Children's social skills predict important outcomes, such as peer acceptance, friendships, and positive opinion by significant others (Nassau & Drotar, 1995). Also many researchers found the connection between personal assertiveness and the effective provision of supportive relationships with others (Elliott & Gramling, 1990). The early development of social skills promotes psychological well-being, resilience, and mental health (Kolb & Hanley-Maxwell, 2003).Thus mainstreaming through social skills improvement, may offer visually impaired students to develop and learn among their sighted peers successfully with whom they are expected to lead active community life.

Social deficits in children with visual impairment are typically caused by a lack of information about the visual aspects of interacting with others (Torreno Stephani, 2012). Hence it is important to find out how visually impaired students socialize, what are their strengths and weaknesses regarding social skills and how to improve their socialization for their inclusion.

Theoretical foundation

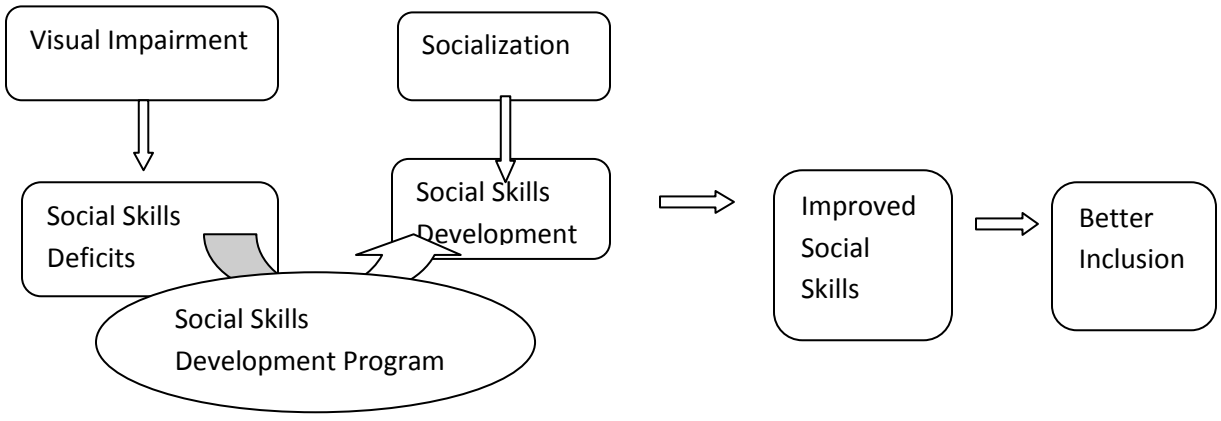
If we want to establish inclusion as a new paradigm and thus training VI for improving their socialization, it is required to know fundamental framework based on various theories. For this purpose, different theories are analyzed by considering three major areas viz. disability, socialization- social skills development and inclusion and the related conceptual components, as shown in the figure -

Figure 2: Areas of Research

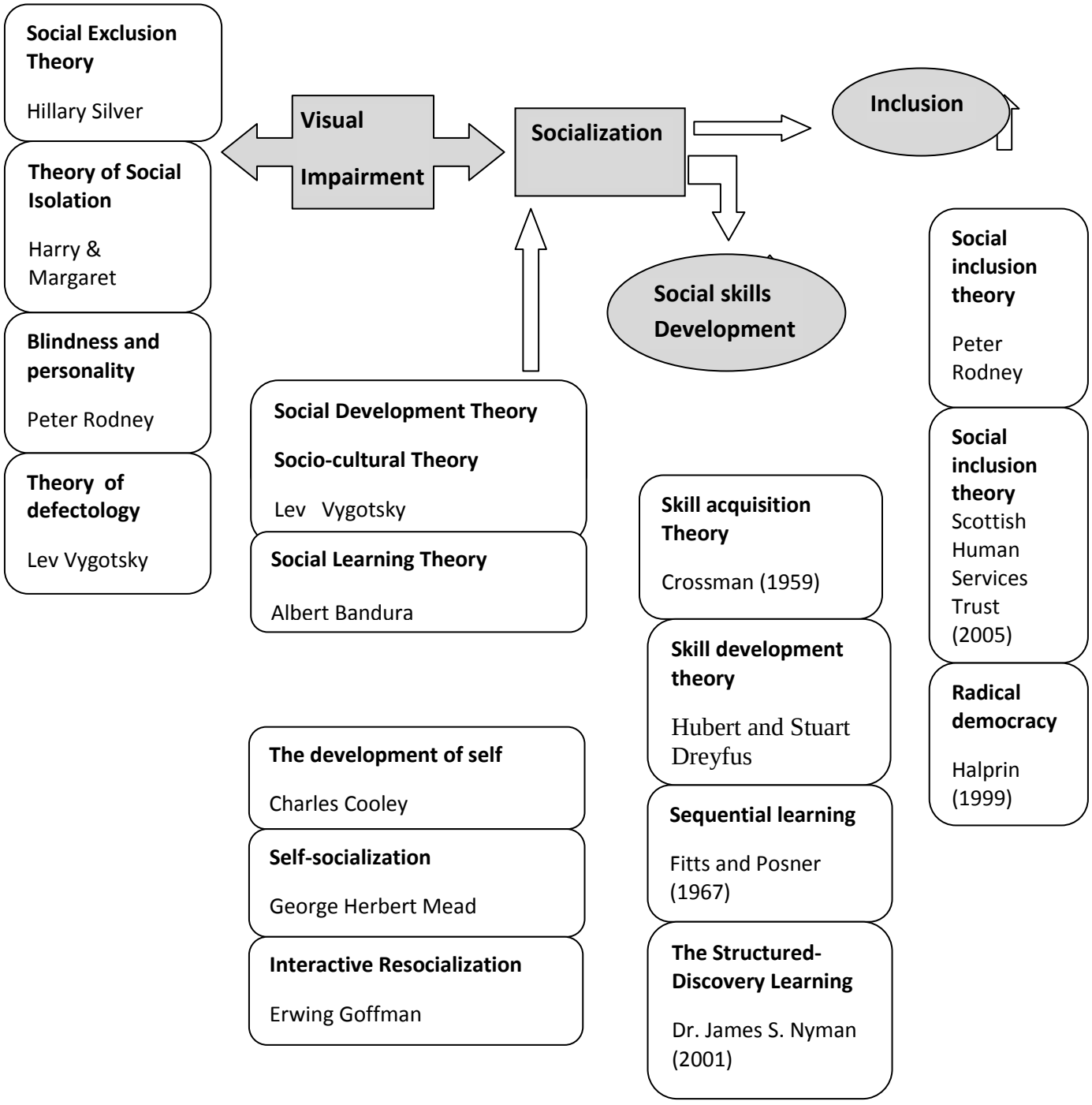
Integrated conceptual components

Conceptual components included are related as -

Figure 3: Integrated conceptual components



Proposed Integrated Theoretical Framework



The theoretical framework is formulated to explain, predict and understand various interrelated aspects of the phenomena and helped to connect to the existing knowledge in the related areas

and to support in prescribing future solutions. These theories are presented according to the major areas and their interrelatedness as -

Inclusion is a broad concept and many theories are considered which explains the nature and role of inclusion in education. **Social Inclusion** (*Scottish Human Services Trust, 2005*) is based on the values as - Everyone is ready, Everyone can learn, Everyone needs support, Everyone can communicate, Everyone can contribute, and Together we are better. It states that difference is our most important renewable resource. **Social inclusion theory** by *Peter Rodney,(2003)* explains that the basic didactic and psychological belief underlying inclusive education is that there is no difference between the educational needs of the child with a disability and the other children. They have one common goal: social inclusion. These theories thus are based on the social inclusion strategy, important to facilitate better life outcomes through better social engagement of individuals and to benefit them irrespective of their disability.

According to the theory of **Radical democracy (***Halprin D., 1999*), a particular form of democratic association is fundamental to the considerations of nature and practice of inclusive schooling to achieve the long-term goal that all students, upon completion of secondary schooling are capable of fulfilling the requirements of an informed, active and responsible democratic citizen. This theory thus supports that inclusion is important to prepare disabled students to become capable and responsible citizens. Hence certain measures are needed for preparing disabled students for their democratic inclusion.

Further the **Social exclusion theory** by *Hilary Silver* (2007) stated that Social exclusion is a multidimensional process of progressive social rupture, detaching groups and individuals from social relations and institutions and preventing them from full participation in the normal, normatively prescribed activities of the society in which they live. This theory is thus helpful to know that if we want to integrate the disabled students in the mainstream social inclusion is necessary. Social exclusion can be avoided by improving the participation of the disabled.

Social exclusion results in a social isolation and thus become a barrier in mainstreaming of the disabled students. According to *Harry & Margaret Harlow*,(1949) in their **Theory of Social Isolation**, as discussed in the Fifth Canadian Edition of Sociology, extreme social isolation results in irreversible damage to normal personality development. It focuses on importance of

training Visually impaired students for social skills improvement to lead a normal life and avoid their social exclusion.

Peter Rodney in his theory of social inclusion, stated the relatedness of **blindness and personality** and explained that psychologically, blindness does not limit the mental processes. It is emphasized that, efforts to train the blind person's sense of hearing have their limitations, the same is not true of the mental and social development. Thus training visually impaired students for inclusive settings by developing their social skills will help them in developing their personality.

According to **Theory of defectology** by *Lev Vygotsky,* (1993), the psychological aspect of visual impairment in the development of inclusion corresponds more or less to the current concept of special needs education (SNE). Any physical handicap not only alters the child's relationship with the world, but above all affects his interaction with people. Any organic defect is revealed as a social abnormality in behavior. Thus it is clear that socialization and inclusion override the physical impairment and, makes the term 'defect' incomprehensible. Thus visually impaired students if trained properly may improve in their social skills and thus lead a normal life which can be explained with the concept of **Compensatory Education Development** (*Garbner, Howard L.*,1988)**.** The focus of the Compensatory Education is to help the individual to become as independent as possible through acquiring basic and life skills needed to function successfully in daily living. Compensatory education is provided to help disadvantaged students to overcome any cognitive and social deficits due to their environment.

From the above discussion it is clear that all these theories support the need of socialization for the visually impaired students for inclusion. The term socialization has been approached in a number of ways. Various theories are studied to understand the interrelated components of socialization. **Social Development Theory (***Lev Vygotsky,1978*) argues that social interaction precedes development; consciousness and cognition are the end product of socialization and social behavior. A second aspect of Vygotsky's theory is the idea that the potential for cognitive development depends upon the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD): a level of development attained when children engage in social behavior. Full development of the ZPD depends upon full social interaction. The range of skill that can be developed with adult guidance or peer collaboration exceeds what can be attained alone. In other words it can be said that social

interaction improves socialization. Further Vygotsky added that disability will change during development and that it is sensitive to the influence of remediation programs and social influences. Through his **Socio-cultural theory,** Vygotsky (1995) introduced the core concepts of the "primary disability, "secondary disability" and their interactions. A "primary" disability is an organic impairment due to biological factors. A "secondary" disability refers to distortions of higher psychological functions due to social factors. An organic impairment prevents a child from mastering some or most social skills and acquiring knowledge at a proper rate and in an acceptable form. He stated, if the path of development diverges from normal social development because of the child's disability, then the child is socially deprived. This leads to the emergence of delays and deficiencies, i.e. secondary handicapping conditions and inadequate compensatory ways of coping. Thus it is clear that socially deprived child develop delays and deficiencies and disability is sensitive to remediation and social influences.

Theory of Social Behaviorism by *George Herbert Mead* (1967) explained that people develop self-images through interactions with other people, a person's personality consisting of self-awareness and self-image, is a product of social experience. The self develops solely through social experience. The planned and organized experiences lead to develop person's self image and lead to improve their socialization. *Charles Cooley* through the **Development of self** explained that the heart of socialization is the development of the self. It further suggests that the mark of successful socialization is the transformation of social control into self-control. (Spark Notes Editors, 2006). It shows that the development of self and identity in the context of intimate and reciprocal relations is important for socialization.

In addition to the above concepts *George Herbert Mead* through the concept of **Self-socialization** stated that the sense of self is developed through social interaction. The self is a changing but enduring aspect of personality that is a collection of beliefs that one hold about oneself. An individual formulate his beliefs based upon his social interactions with others. (SparkNotes Editors, 2006). It indicates that through improved social interactions, self can be developed.

Bandura Albert, (1977) in his **Social learning theory** explained that people learn new behavior through overt reinforcement or punishment, or via observational learning of the social factors in their environment. People can learn through observation - observational learning can occur in

relation to three models: Live model – in which an actual person is demonstrating the desired behavior. Verbal instruction – in which an individual describes the desired behaviour in detail, and instructs the participant in how to engage in the behavior and Symbolic – in which modeling occurs by means of the media, including movies, television, Internet, literature, and radio. This type of modeling involves a real or fictional character demonstrating the behaviour.

For the Interactionists, society consists of organized and patterned interactions among individuals. The interactionist theorist sees humans as active, creative participants who construct their social world, not as passive, conforming objects of socialization. From **Symbolic Interactionism** by *George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer* put forward the perspective that people act toward things based on the meaning those things have for them; and these meanings are derived from social interaction and modified through interpretation. (Griffin, Emory A. 2006). Further it states that - Social interaction through organized and patterned programme make children active in their social world.

Erving Goffman created the concept of total institution in his essay "On the Characteristics of Total Institutions" published in 1961 in Asylums. Total institutions are social hybrids, part residential community and part formal organization intended for the bureaucratic management of large groups of people. Goffman (1961) offers this definition: A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life (Encyclopedia of Social Theory,2013). Erwing Goffman, presented **Interactive Resocialization** where Resocialization is stated as a process of tearing down and rebuilding an individual's role and socially constructed sense of self. Resocialization is defined as radically changing an inmate's personality by carefully controlling the environment. Resocialization programs operate on the assumption that values, attitudes, and ability can be permanently altered as a result of outside intervention. Thus Resocialization through social skills development programme may help visually impaired for their mainstreaming and development of self.

Moreover there are two different aspects of socialization, cognitive (*Jean Piaget*) and psycho-social (*Erik Erikson*) development. According to cognitive approach - Socialization is largely a matter of cognitive development, viewed as a combination of social influence and maturation.

Thus it is clear that Socialization program may be helpful to change children's thought process that may improve their interaction with the world as skill assimilation and accommodation is an ongoing process. Instead of focusing on cognitive development, psycho-social theory focuses on how children socialize and how this affects their sense of self. According to this theory, successful completion of each developmental stage results in a healthy personality and successful interactions with others. Thus it confirms the need of Social skills improvement for socialization and thus sense of self.

As discussed earlier social rules and relations are created, communicated and changed in verbal and non-verbal ways. The process of learning such skills is called socialization. Social skill is any skill facilitating interaction and communication with others. Thus to improve socialization social skills are needed to be developed. A Social skill development programme can be designed to satisfy this purpose. There are various theories that explain the skill development and social skill development specifically.

According to **Skill acquisition Theory,** *Crossman (1959)* provided an early view on how practice leads to performance improvements. Crossman's model qualifies as a theory that proposes, practice leads to more efficient procedures for performing a task. While *Dreyfus and Dreyfus* in their Skill development theory explained that, as human beings acquire a skill through instruction and experiences, they do not appear to leap suddenly from rule-guided "knowing that" to experience-based "knowing-how." Hubert and Stuart Dreyfus Dreyfus Model of Skill Acquisition postulates that, when individuals acquire a skill through external instruction, they normally pass through five stages: Novice, Advanced Beginner, Competent, Proficient, and Expert. Progression through the five stages is viewed as a gradual transition from rigid adherence to rules to an intuitive mode of reasoning believe that there is a gradual process involved for an agent to go through in order for him to reach the stage of expertise or knowing-how. (Hall-Ellis Sylvia, D., Grealy Deborah S.,2013)

Transfer of learning - Identical Element Theory by Edward Thorndike also explains Skill to skill transfer. Transfer of learning occurs when learning in one context or with one set of materials impacts on performance in another context or with other related materials. If the influence is on a new skill being developed then this is said to be proactive and if the influence is on a previously learned skill then this is said to be retroactive so skill development is based on

the concept of transfer of learning. Education can achieve abundant transfer if it is designed to do so (Perkins, D. N. & Solomon, G.,1992).

Similarly according to **Transformational learning** by Jack Mezirow (1990) the process of learning, analyzing and making deliberate changes to the assumptions that we have, cause us to think act and behave in certain ways. He explained this through Communicative Learning- Communicative learning focuses on achieving coherence rather than on exercising more effective control over the cause effect relationship to improve performance, as in instrumental learning. This includes a critique of the assertion itself. It also requires a critique of the relevant social norms and of cultural codes that determine the allocation of influence and power over whose interpretations are acceptable. This discussion shows that Social skills can be taught to visually impaired through experiences and instructions to improve their performance, assertion and ultimately socialization.

Dr. Dame Lilli Nielsen believes that all very young children learn by being active, rather than passive recipients of stimulation. A visual impairment prohibits a child from having enough opportunities to develop these abilities and have these experiences without intervention. She encourages the adults to set up the child's environment so that he can do this. **Active Learning** explains that the immediate repetition enables the child to store the information gained from the experiences in his memory. Thus Activity based program should be considered while designing the intervention to help visually impaired students to learn social skills. (Shafer Stacy, 1995).

Sequential learning *by Fitts and Posner (1967)* explained that there are three stages to learning a new skill: Cognitive phase - Identification and development of the component parts of the skill - involves formation of a mental picture of the skill. Associative phase - Linking the component parts into a smooth action - involves practicing the skill and using feedback to perfect the skill and Autonomous phase - Developing the learned skill so that it becomes automatic - involves little or no conscious thought or attention whilst performing the skill - not all performers reach this stage. The leaning of physical skills requires the relevant movements to be assembled, component by component, using feedback. Rehearsal of the skill must be done regularly and correctly.

The Structured-Discovery Learning by *Dr. James S. Nyman (2001)* suggests two approaches to provide training to blind people – The science model: The counselor need only take charge of

the individual's behavior and with patience and skill effect the equivalent of a cure. It is not necessary for the student to know the science behind the training, only to execute the acquired skills to a prescribed standard. The philosophy model: Most of the environmental knowledge is derived from reflection by generations of blind people on their shared experience in developing alternative techniques for accessing relevant information. This is the foundation of the philosophical approach known as structured-discovery learning. This supports that the Visually impaired children can be trained by monitoring their behavior and giving them experiences to develop alternative techniques for effective socialization through a need based intervention.

Conclusion

As discussed, the theories specified the need and importance of socialization for visually impaired students and the role of socialization in their inclusion and suggest that social exclusion results in a social isolation and thus become a barrier in mainstreaming of the disabled students including visually impaired students. The theories support the socialization and inclusion override the physical impairment and social skills can be developed in students with visual impairment that further lead to develop their personality and sense of self.

Acknowledgement-

The present work benefited from the input of the various online resources, who provided valuable ideas for writing this paper. We, gratefully acknowledge all the authors of the cited sources of information for theories, opinions, conclusions, or findings, that helped in designing the theoretical framework for this paper.

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