



ROLE OF ICT IN DISABLED EDUCATION

Ms Tanu Aneja

Research Scholar Punjabi University Patiala

Abstract

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has been a major breakthrough in education worldwide. By overcoming the barriers in teaching learning, ICT has been a major support in achieving the goal of inclusion of the disabled children, both physically as well as socially. The countries across the globe have been using it for the capacity building of the children, including the disabled. In the light of the above, the paper highlights the concerns related to disability and the areas that need to be prioritized to utilize ICT to the maximum extent.

Key Words: Disability, ICT



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Introduction

Disability has always been under the lenses of researchers, teachers and other facilitators who have been working really hard to de stigmatize the conventions attached with the term. Beginning with the medical model approach the disability has seen a long discourse that has covered tremendous levels and is yet struggling to achieve the platform equivalent to others in the light of the human rights based approach.

The disabled have always been the victims of exclusion in several forms ranging from the physical exclusion to the social ones. Tough several initiatives have been planned and undertaken from time to time both at the international and the national platforms yet a lot seem to be lacking in this regard. Long back Disabled babies were rejected on the notion that nothing imperfect should exist in the world. Disabled were treated as the burden and parents blame themselves for it. In 18th century, from rejection and guilt the attitude changed to educating such people. Special schools established in USA, UK, France and India yet these children excluded from the mainstream till 1960. In second half of the 20th century the various societies began to recognise the rights of the disabled children for a free and appropriate education which led to the integrated education for the disabled.

The Kothari commission emphasized that the education of the handicapped children should be an inseparable part of the general education system. The ministry of social welfare, govt of India, sponsored the scheme of integrated education for the disabled children in the year 1974. The UN declared the year 1981 as the year of the disabled persons with the theme as “full participation with equality”.

As per the recommendations of the economic and the social commissions for Asia and the Pacific in the year 1992 India pledged to promote the integration of disabled children in the formal and the non formal education system. In 1995 and 2001, DPEP and the SSA also emphasized the importance of the integrated education. The person with the disability act 1995 of govt of India has made integration of the students with disability a legal responsibility of the government.

ICT for Disability Inclusive Development

The ICT stands for Information and Communication Technologies and is defined as a “Diverse set of Technological tools and resources used to communicate, and to create, disseminate, store and manage information. ICT is changing processes of teaching and learning by adding elements of vitality to learning environments including virtual environments for the purpose. () ICT has gone a way forward and proved its utility in making the teaching learning process more interesting. Researchers have shown that the use of ICT increases the learning output of the students. It helps in making difficult topics easy to understand by offering a variety of experiences in the field. UNESCO takes a holistic and comprehensive approach to promoting ICT in education. Access, inclusion and quality are among the main challenges they can address. ICT has tremendously broadened the opportunities for people to acquire information, interact, network, address issues of common concern, generate income and participate in society.

ICT has been a way forward for the inclusion of the disabled. Ranging from the removal of access difficulties, ICT has worked on the broad areas including health care services, benefits at educational levels, in competitive labour market, public life etc. ICT has developed innovative solutions for fighting social exclusion of the disabled from the society. It helps in the capacity building of the disabled by integration of various technological techniques into the teaching learning practices.

How Does ICT Work?

ICT has played a vital role for the education of the disabled with its various integrated technologies; ICT has helped in numerous ways by creating a variety of virtual experiences to facilitate the learning of the disabled.

Be it the use of the audio equipments to facilitate the education of the blinds or the variety of the video broadcasts for the deaf, ICT has made the teaching learning processes much more feasible than the earlier times.

The concept of virtual learning to facilitate the development of people having psychological disorders have worked wonders in stimulating the development of the disabled, thereby moving ahead towards inclusion, which has been high on both the international as well as national agendas. Research data has shown that the ICT has played a vital role in the integration of the disabled into the mainstream classrooms.

The use of internet to explore the wide world of knowledge has been unquestionable in this regard. Not only has it helped to promote the disabled education rather it acts as a ready to use in resources for the facilitators of the same. The technology has helped the disabled in a variety of manner. The features of the software such as MS Office, World Wide Web have been framed in accordance with the needs of the people with the different forms of learning disabilities. Text and graphics enhancement software can enlarge sections of a monitor enough to be seen by persons with vision impairments. Text can be read electronically by a digitized voice synthesizer for a person who is blind. For persons with hearing impairments, amplification devices can filter extraneous noise from the background or pick up an FM signal from a microphone on a teacher's lapel. Word processing, editing, spellchecking, and grammatical tools commonly found in high-end software facilitate the inclusion of students with learning disabilities in regular classrooms by allowing them to keep up with much of the work

Teachers dealing with disabled children can explore the readily available encyclopaedia for their ready reference. Thus ICT has been a major threshold in the inclusive education and that aims at both physical as well as social inclusion of disabled in the society.

In countries round the world, importance is being given to increasing accessibility of web services to all people including the disabled. The government of Canada needs a special mention here for its 'Web for ALL' programme that aims to place more than 1000 assistive technology devices in public internet access sites. By simply swiping a card, the users can enter into the computers equipped with various technological devices that may adjust the services as per the users' need such as enlarging the text, increasing the sound etc. Thus people who are blind or partially sighted can get the text read aloud or magnified. Similarly, people with limited dexterity can manipulate the things according to their needs.

More such initiatives need to be practiced globally to achieve the aim of complete inclusion into the system.

Priority Actions

More than a billion people live with some form of disability, and 80% of them live in developing countries. (UNESCO, 2013). ICT has been playing a vital role in removing the barriers in the teaching learning processes to make it useful and disabled friendly. Yet, the developing countries need to proceed in a systematized manner by prioritizing the needs and integrating the same into the wider policy decisions for integrated action. The policy needs to address the Incorporation of accessibility requirements. The provisions need to be made to strengthen the research and development platforms to develop new ICT-enabled solutions for persons with disabilities taking into account the economy of the country as well.

The development efforts need to be monitored and evaluated on the global, regional and national levels to determine the effectiveness of the development policies, programmes and projects. Mobilization campaign must be initiated to create awareness and a demand for action. These priority actions are essential for removing the barriers that still prevent persons with disabilities from accessing social and economic opportunities at both national and international levels.

References

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