



**A STUDY ON THE EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL SUPPORT EXTENDED
TO MENTALLY RETARDED CHILDREN IN BEHALA BODHAYAN, A NON-
GOVT ORGANIZATION OF KOLKATA**

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Abstract

Government of India has made the children with Disabilities Act (1995) in which children with special needs have the right to be educated with nondisabled children of their own age. But still at present many children with disabilities have deprived of basic some basic facilities like health, education and protection. At present, many NGOs are working with the government for the betterment of the disabled children and trying to mainstreaming them providing educational, vocational, health and other facilities. The major objective of the present study is to analyze the role of an NGO (Behala Bodhayan) for mentally retarded children. We found from this study that with the thorough educational support, vocational support and behavioral training Behala Bodhayan has success to engage many Mentally Retarded (MR) children in mainstreaming them.

Keyword: *Children with Disability Act (1995), Mentally Retarded (MR) Children, Educational support, Vocational support.*



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INTRODUCTION:

We are living in an age where the concept of inclusiveness in education is prevailing. Following the basic principles of equalization of educational opportunities, democratization of education and universalization of education, we can't tolerate that a single student with some disabilities will be considered as "excluded". To achieve this goal the Govt. of India introduced the children with Disabilities Act (1995) in which children with special needs have the right to education with nondisabled children of their peer group. But still at present many children with disabilities have deprived of some basic facilities like health, education, protection etc. According to a report of CINI (Child In Need Institution) in India where children with disabilities mainly comes under the purview of the Ministry of Social Justice & Employment. Some of the issues are dealt with by the health ministry. But still in India 1.67% of the 0 – 19 population has a disability. 35.29% of all people living with disabilities are children. Other estimates say that India has 12 million children living with disabilities.

Only 1% of children with disabilities have access to school and some of the disabilities can be prevented. Under-nutrition is a severe problem with children who suffer from cerebral palsy. In India 80% of children with disabilities will not survive past age forty.

At present many NGOs are working with government for this disable children and tried to mainstreaming them with providing educational, health etc. facilities. The major objectives of the present study are to analyze the role of an NGO (Behala Bodhayan) for mentally retarded children.

What is Mental Retardation?

Generally, we consider mental retardation as a disease. Earlier some people described it as a condition. At one time mentally retarded children were rejected by society as they were thought to be possessed by demons. Nowadays, there is greater acceptance of the awareness about them among the general public. Certainly, mental retardation is a very complex medical, social and educational problem. It presents a strong challenge to our sophisticated society. It is a condition of arrest or incomplete development of mind existing before the age of 18 years.

Hebber (1962) was the first to attempt a standard definition of “mental retardation” taking intelligence, adaptive behavior and developmental level into consideration. A more adequate definition was developed by the American Association of Mental Deficiency (AAMD) in 1973. It states:

“Mental retardation refers to significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during developmental period”. This developmental period includes the life span from birth to 18 years of age.

Mental retardation implies impairment in intelligence from early life and inadequate mental development throughout the growing period. Studies have shown that 75% of the retarded have no physical disability. They have sensory-defects, language disorders and neuromuscular impairment. Each candidate is to be provided with specialized help to enable him to realize his physical, psychological, social, emotional and vocational potentials to overcome psychological trauma and thus help him to integrate with the mainstream societies and becoming a self-reliant member.(Kar, 2008)

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The present study was conducted with the aim-

1. To know about the Behala Bodhayan institution.
2. To explore the teacher-student ratio of this institution.

3. To explore the nature of mentally retarded children residing at the day care home with respect to the level of mental retardation.
4. To explore the educational level of Mentally Retarded Children according to the levels of retardation.
5. To explore the social adjustment of MR children with their friends and teacher in this institution.
6. To highlight different services of Behala Bodhayan for MR children.

METHODOLOGY:

The basic objective of the study is to make a case study on the mental retarded children of Behala Bodhayan institution, a day care center located at Sarsuna in the southern part of Kolkata. Therefore methodology was decided with a view to basic objectives of the study. A semi-structured questionnaire was prepared in order to collect information about psycho-social aspects and skill development program for Mentally Retarded Children in the Bodhayan NGO. The questionnaire included the questions about the mentally retarded children family-Name, Age, Sex, Education, etc. The researcher also uses Semi-structured interview schedule for data collection from the members of Bodhayan institution. After data collection the researcher tabulated analyzed those data to generate important findings.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS:

1. Behala Bodhayan: Behala Bodhayan is an Non Government Organisation was set up for the education, training and rehabilitation for persons with mentally retardation which was established in 3rd September, 2001 having registration under the West Bengal Societies Registration act Vide Reg. No. S/IL/5204. This NGO is an association of parents with mental retardation, autism, cerebral palsy and multiple disabilities and has been working for their education, vocational training, welfare, social integration and rehabilitation. In recent Behala Bodhayan awarded Premlata Peshawaria National Award – 2006 as the best parent's association in India for promoting the strength of Indian Mothers, fostering cohesion in the family and upholding the social values that are crucial for healthy community living for the persons with disabilities. The Behala Bodhayan NGO has been attempting successfully with the following objectives for last 16 years.
 - i) To facilitate opportunities in order to empower and enable persons with disabilities through education, vocational training, care, inclusive education, income generation and social integration.

- ii) To strengthen families so that after the demise of their parents such children can be taken care by their legal guardian or other eligible persons / registered organization.
- iii) To enhance parent's co-operation and association for taking care of children with mental retardation, autism, cerebral palsy and multiple disabilities.
- iv) To develop family support programmes for the children with disabilities which include, training of parents and siblings, awareness within the family and relatives in order to keep their environment free from physical and psychological barriers.
- v) To synergize community people for the need of partnership between governments, persons with disabilities, their families, voluntary organizations, special educators and the mainstream of the society.
- vi) To develop comprehensive centers with diagnostics, counseling and therapeutic services, self-help groups, sustainable services, district level information system and networks and multi-sectoral linkages.

For rehabilitation of MR Children Bodhayan institution has adopted following techniques for development of different skills among them.

1. **The Type of Daily Living Skill:** Daily living skills are taught to the students in BEHALA BODHAYAN (Society for Help, Education, Love, Training and Employment for the Retarded), e.g. eating, drinking, washing, toilet training, removing clothes etc.
2. **Type of Social Skills:** The social desirable behaviour which the students are supposed to be familiar with the common phrases like good morning, thanking you, welcome etc. and other ways to develop social skill are playing indoor games, music, dance, talking with friends, marketing etc.
3. **Type of Vocational Skill:** In BEHALA BODHAN different types of vocational training are provided. Such as weaving, carpentry, tailoring, silk screen printing, jute products, food processing, catering with students, lamination, poster making, etc.

Some of their products are- khesh folders, handmade paper folders, paper bags, jute bags curtains, gas cylinder cover, gift bag, candle, bed cover etc.

2. **Teacher-Student Ratio:**

A favorable teacher-student ratio is found in the Bodhayan institution.

Presently there are 112 students and 15 teachers in Behala bodhayan institution. Hence the teacher-student ration is 1:7. All the teachers are specially trained and teach every children efficiently. All MR children are categorized into three groups mild, moderate, severe. Curriculum of teaching are varied for different sections. Among this

three sections the mild and moderate MR children learn faster than the severe MR children. Hence special classes needed to arrange for this severely MR children.

As the MR children are not similar to so called normal child their disability in some skill create disturbance in teaching learning process. The teacher-student relationship of this institution is comparatively good. But still some special educators are needed for betterment of the teacher- student ratio in this institution.

3. Types of Mentally Retarded Children: There are different types of MR children were nurture in the Behala Bodhayan NGO.

Table: 1 Number of different types MR children

| Types of MR children | Number of MR children | | | Percentage |
|----------------------|-----------------------|--------|-------|------------|
| | Male | Female | Total | |
| Mildly | 9 | 6 | 15 | 13 |
| Moderately | 46 | 28 | 74 | 66 |
| Severely | 17 | 6 | 23 | 21 |

The above table shows that majority (66%) of mental retarded children are moderate type of mental retardation. 21% MR children are fall under severe type of mental retardation and 13% are mild type of mental retardation children. In respect of sex category we found that number of MR children is higher in all three types of mental retardation than female MR children.

The special educators of NGO teach some simple activities to all of these 3 type MR children. Generally mild MR children are slow learner and they can do all the activities that a normal child can do, that's why special educators teach them different topics of common subjects like English, Mathematics, Science etc by using easy and enjoyable techniques.

For moderately and severely MR children, teacher or trainer teach in the following ways: 1. Washing and drying hands before and after eating. 2. Putting away things to dress and undress independently have been using whether toys or other materials. 3. Learning to hang clothes. 4. Washing face, brushing teeth. 5. Keep own room in orderly fashion. 6. Using tissues when needed. 7. Teach to zip, button, or tie shoes on self. The models used for teaching a child to button, zip, tie and buckle are good for motor training. 8. Provide paper cartons for toys.

It has been seen that after all these basic training many MR children have returned to the mainstream and successfully continuing education.

4. Educational level of MR Children:

Table: 2 Numbers of Educable MR Children in Different Educational Level

| Present educational level | Numbers of MR Children | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| Pre Primary | 21 | 35 |
| Primary | 10 | 16 |
| Vocational | 30 | 49 |

With help of proper teaching/training strategy nearly 50% of the total MR children of the NGO have been able to get mainstream education. It has been seen from the above table that among the total educable MR children majority (49%) were got vocational education where they learned to make different types of handicrafts products like toys, show piece and food products jam, pickle etc., 35% MR children were studying in Pre Primary level and 16% MR children were studying at Primary level.

5. Relationship of MR Children with Teacher:

Table: 3 Levels of Relationship with Teachers of MR Children

| Types of Relationship | No. of MR Children | Percentage |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Not adaptive | 9 | 8 |
| Good | 21 | 19 |
| Average | 22 | 20 |
| Poor | 60 | 53 |

The above table revealed that nearly 53% MR children have maintained poor relationship with their teachers and 8% MR children were not adaptive. It is also found that among these children majority were of either severely or moderately mentally retarded. Generally some of the moderately and mildly MR children maintained good (19%) or average (20%) relationship with their teachers.

6. Relationship of MR Students with their Friends:

Table: 4. Level of Relation with Friends

| Level of Relation | No. of MR Children | Percentage |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Good | 15 | 13 |
| Average | 97 | 87 |

It's found from the above table that majority of MR children (87%) have maintained average relationship with their friends and only 13% MR children have maintained good relationship with their friends. It is also found that mildly MR children adapted socially good behavior faster than moderate or severely MR children, That's why mildly MR children were maintained good relationship with their friends as well as with their teachers whereas majority of moderate or severely MR children maintained socially average type of relationship with their friends.

7. A brief overview of different Services of Bodhayan:

At present the realm of the services of Bodhayan institution is not only confined with indoor activities but it also spread with different outdoor activities. A brief overview of various range of services that has been performing through 16 years by this institution is mentioned below.

- i) Running a vocational training center and workshop at Sarsuna where women were also trained along with the persons with disabilities since the year 2001. At present 20 adult male and female students are undergoing Vocational Training in the Centre.
- ii) Running a special school since the year 2002 for education with therapeutic activities through regular classes and integrating our students with special needs with normal children in regular schools.
- iii) Working as District Level Resource Organization (DLRO) of the Sarva Shiksha Mission, Kolkata since 1st July 2004, having a jurisdiction of 380 Council Schools covering 45 numbers of Kolkata Municipal Corporation Wards and 50 Primary Schools of the Corporation.
- iv) Running a food processing unit in association with Balmer Lawrite & Co. Ltd. for employment and rehabilitation under-privileged women and those with disabilities.
- v) Running a Residential Care Unit under the “SAMARTH” Scheme of the National Trust.
- vi) Running a ‘Day Care Clinic’, ‘Respite Care Centre’ and ‘Home Based Training Programme’
- vii) Running a play clinic at Sarsuna and conducting art, yoga, music and dance classes at Arya Samity Hall, Behala.
- viii) Promoting Social integration through various programmer, art competition and sports activities.
- ix) Attending exhibitions and fairs for sale of the products prepared in the vocational centre.
- x) Promoting group activities through organizing picnic, outings, interaction amongst members and also the general public.
- xi) Imparting training for self-development and discipline through Sab Payechir Asar as an affiliate member

- xii) To uplift mental strength and inculcate motivation, they organise a Study Circle amongst their members and outsiders.
- xiii) They provide guideline to other affected parents for the facilities and rights available for their special children.
- xiv) They arrange for self-advocacy for development of self-confidence of the children with mental disabilities.
- xv) They work with others social services organizations and help them in activities like rallies for benefits of Thalasaemia patients, blood donation camps, clean Kolkata programmes.
- xvi) Even their students participated in Special Olympics at the National level and also in Canada and USA. Ranjan Dutta, a student of Bodhayan institution who participated in the Special Olympics held in Sanghai, China in the year 2007 and won a Gold Medal for the Country.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since last 16 years Behala Bodhayan has been successfully rehabilitating mentally retarded children through different ways of educational and vocational support. According to a member of this NGO, 'Mental retardation is not a serious problem, we give them proper mental support, education and training they must be able to engage themselves in socially desirable behavior'. Their activities are not only limited in indoor but also achieved huge success at outdoor activities. From this study we found that there were some problems causing interruption in the services of this NGO, e.g. irregular supply of required amount of money from Government causing interruption of various welfare schemes or services, unconsciousness of parents keeps many MR children detached from their services, sometimes services gets interrupted when workers left their job to get better opportunities and there is problem for up-gradation of MR children into upper primary or higher class in normal school due to absence of special educators and facilities for special children in normal schools. Here are some recommendations which may solve this problems in future : government should focus on the disbursement of fund to the NGOs, more number of permanent staffs should be recruited and better facilities should be provided to them, level of consciousness of local people about various services and schemes should be increased through the social campaign, both government should take initiatives in the employment of a special educator in normal school and also improve the facilities for special children in normal school that there would be no problems in educating them.

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