



IMPRESSIONS OF PRINCIPLE OF NORMALIZATION ON DISABILITY REHABILITATION SERVICES IN INDIA

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Abstract

Children with disabilities exist in all societies and countries across the world. The beginning of human rights movement in mid-20th century attracted mass attention towards rights and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities globally. The radical changes towards services for persons with disabilities were brought by Principle of Normalization, originated in 1969. As a consequence of Normalization, disability gained the attention of the mass and became very popular across the globe as 'a right based ideology, which in turn, initiated integration, inclusion, community based rehabilitation and other non-segregating practices. In Post Independent India, several service reforms for persons with disabilities took place. The paper was intended to examine whether service reforms for persons with disabilities in India were influenced by principle of normalization like rest of the world. A critical analysis of available literature was conducted. It is observed that major such rehabilitation reforms in India took place with rest of the world i.e. after principle of Normalization giving enough space to attribute such development in India to Principle of Normalization.

Keywords: Disability, Rehabilitation, Normalization, Community Based Rehabilitation



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Introduction

Present era is an era of human rights when entire world has been focusing on reforms in services for persons with disabilities in the context of universal human rights. The twentieth century has evidenced major changes towards persons with disabilities in terms of attitude, social perception, social participation, education, legislation and so on. All these humanistic efforts led to the emergence of integration, social-inclusion, inclusive education and protection of rights of persons with disabilities. The early 20th century saw the rise of large, non-humane institution throughout the world whereas, on contrary, mid of 20th century saw closing of these institutions and persons with mental retardation and other disabilities returning back to small, community based settings (Winzer,1993,Ainsworth &Bekar, 2004).

Prior to 1969, entire world saw a growing system of institutions during the first 70 years of the 20th century. The development was, however, uneven. This applies both to the timing of expansion and the size of institutions (Tossebro et. al.2012). In addition, before
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1969, charity model education was in practice for children with disabilities and most of such schools were being managed by some religious organization. People from religious organizations went to foreign countries, saw the practices over there, came back and started implementing similar programs in their schools.

Middle of the 20th century saw the development of various ideologies and guidelines for services to children with mental retardation and other disabilities. Principle of Normalization was among one of such great human services guide line which initiated humanistic rehabilitation services throughout the world. The Normalization Principle was first incorporated into Danish law in 1959. Bengt Nirje, then Secretary General of the Swedish Association for Retarded Children, began to apply this principle to retarded children and adults in 1967. In 1968 in the United States, the President's Committee on Mental Retardation issued a monograph (Kugel and Wolfensberger, 1969) that outlined the theoretical and functional aspects of Normalization and brought to public attention the ideas on Normalization that had been used in Scandinavia. Although the ideas of 'Normalization' evolved in Scandinavian countries during 1950's to 1960's originated by Niels Erik Bank Mikkelsen who is sometimes referred to as father of 'Normalization', but the Normalization Principle as a concept was developed and articulated by the Swedish scholar BenjtNirje and given its first statement in print in 1969 in the report of President Committee on Mental Retardation. (The committee was constituted by US president J.F. Kennedy in 1961) (Nirje, 1983).

Nirje's conceptualization of Normalization was based on rights: "making available to all mentally retarded people patterns of life and conditions of everyday living which are as close as possible to the regular circumstances and ways of life of society" (Nirje, 1976). The Normalization Principle originally defined by Nirje, (Some times referred to as Scandinavian Version of Normalization Principle) consisted of eight planks or facets as described below:

1. Normalization means a normal rhythm of day.
2. The Normalization Principle implies a normal routine of life.
3. Normalization means to experience the normal rhythm of the year.
4. Normalization means an opportunity to undergo normal developmental experiences of the life cycle.
5. The Normalization Principle also means that the choices, wishes and desires of the mentally retarded themselves have to be taken into consideration as nearly as possible, and respected.

6. Normalization means living in a bisexual world.
7. Normalization means normal economic standards.
8. Normalization implies Normalization of Physical Settings.

In pre-independent India, families of children with disabilities were considered as inferior because of frequent misconceptions about children with disabilities like it is a result of all sin committed in last birth or it is due to effect of bad souls and similar other. Due to this discrimination from society, parents and families having children with Disability, cut them off from social activities, they had a tendency not to accept that they have a child with disability, hiding the child from neighbors, guests. India, after independence saw paradigm shift in the lives of persons with disabilities and increased awareness and acceptance among parents and families of children with intellectual disabilities. The awareness of family members of children with disability has a strong impact on their education, vocation, societal attitude or in nutshell overall quality of life of children with disabilities. Now family members have come up for the advocacy, and education of their child with disability.

But in Indian context, there was no remarkable specific legal measures and provisions for children with disabilities until 1995 when Government of India enacted PWD Act. Prior to this act, National Policy of Education, 1986 gave little attention to children with disabilities and their education. Principle of normalization accelerated a humanistic approach towards disability rehabilitation across the globe but it was developed as a response to Institutionalization. The scene of India was different. Institutionalization was never the practice in India. Children / Persons with disabilities were always the part of the family for their life needs and little or no care for their education and rehabilitation was practiced until 1970s. In such a situation the paper progress with its objective to find out whether development of special education in India was influenced by principle of normalization later termed as social role valorization.

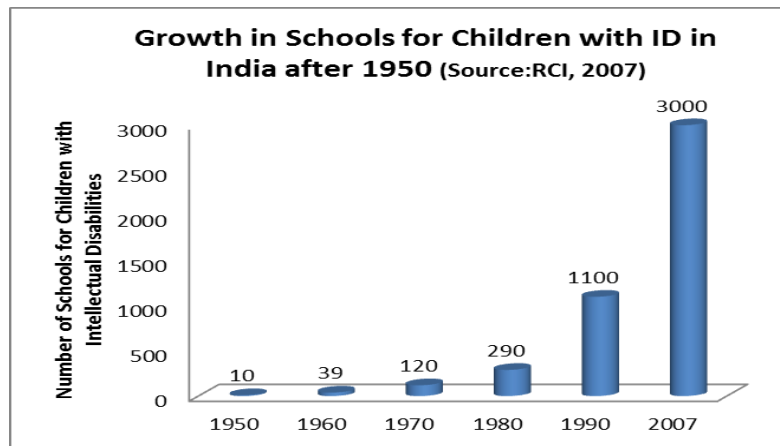
It may be noted here that people from several countries visited India, and people from India visited other countries and learnt these educational reforms. As Nirje expressed his experience in his writings 'How I came to formulate Normalization Principle' as "*In the 1980s and 1990s, the Normalization Principle has frequently been quoted in scientific studies, almost around the world. I have had the pleasure of invitations to Australia, India, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Finland, and Japan, and of return visits to the USA and Canada*" (Nirje, 1980).

Methodology:The objective of this study was to find out whether development of special education in India was a result of principle of normalization later termed as social role valorization. Concerning the objective of the study, secondary data including data from CENSUS, India were taken into account. Publications from NCERT (National Council of Education, Research & Training), RCI (Rehabilitation Council of India), MHRD (Ministry of Human Resource Development), MSJ&E (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment) were critically analyzed for relevant information.

Results:

Rapid growth in number of special schools:

In post independent India, a rapid growth in number of special schools took place after the Principle of normalization and Social Role Valorization. It is evident from the figure that the growth of special

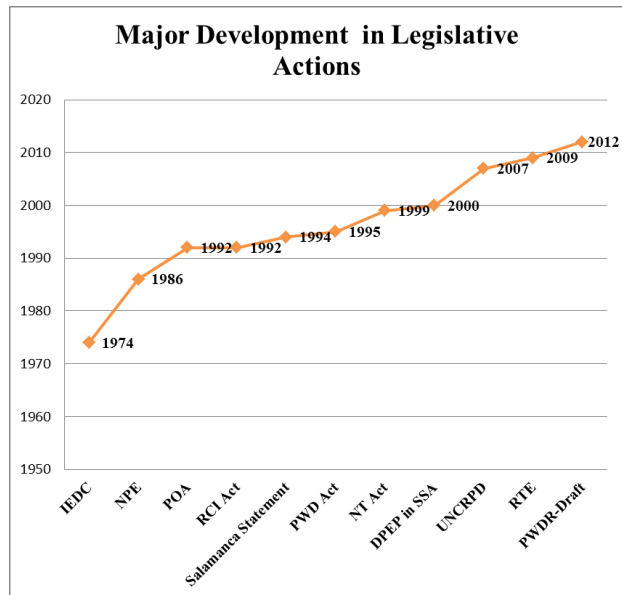


schools was slower till 1980 where as it got a bounce after 1980 and at present in India, more than 3000 schools are catering educational needs of children with intellectual disabilities (RCI, 2007).

As per the NCERT position paper on education of children with special needs, in 1947, India had a total of 32 such schools for the blind, 30 for the deaf, and three for the mentally retarded. The number of such schools increased to around 3000 by the year 2000 (NCERT, 2006). The increased number of special schools in India within 50 years is surprising. The addition of approximately 60 new special schools per year supports a strong impact of Normalization on development of special education services in India. Similar impact of Normalization and Social Role Valorization was observed on disability related legislation, policy, and practice in many part of the world, for example in Newzealand and Australia (Millier, 1999).

Legislative action for disability rehabilitation and allied services in India:

Data captured from available literature from secondary sources and publications about the legislative actions taken by Government of India for persons with disabilities. As indicated in the adjoining figure, it can be observed that major developments in legislative action for individuals with disabilities were took place in India between 1990s to 2000 A.D. This is the same period when major



developments in rehabilitation services were taking place in several countries as a consequence of Normalization. Also during this period social role valorization was being implemented in European countries by Wolfensberger and his associates.

Major legislative action toward education of children with disabilities in India after independence.

Sl No	Name of the National Institute	Located at	Establishment Year
1	National Institute of Orthopedically Handicapped	Kolkata	1978
2	National Institute for the Visual Handicapped	Dehradun	1979
3	National Institute for the Hearing Handicapped	Mumbai	1983
4	National Institute for Mentally Handicapped	Secunderabad	1984
5	National Institute for Empowerment of Profound and Multiple Disabilities	Chennai	2005

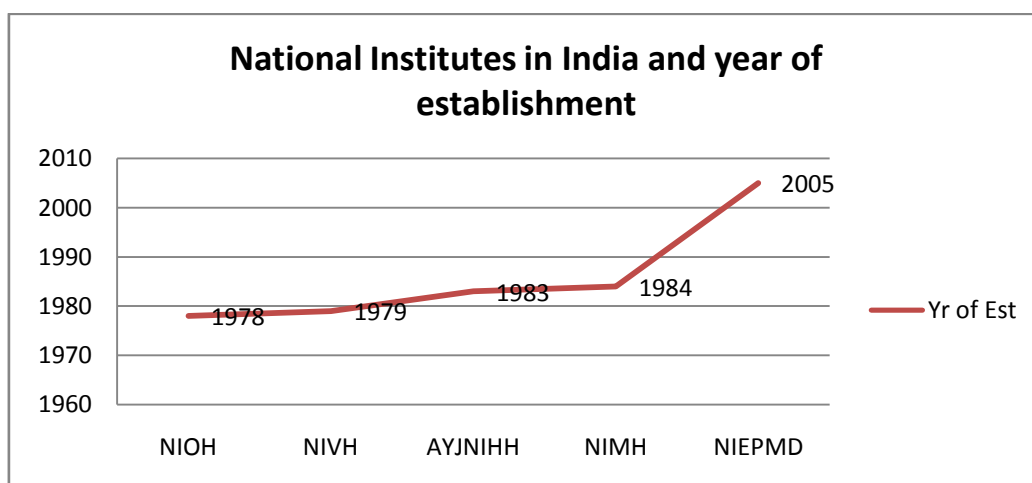
Growth in Special Teacher Training Institutions and availability of trained manpower:

Prior to 1969 neither sufficient trained manpower was available nor were any such training centers available providing specialized teacher training for children with disabilities. In 1992, RCI Act was enacted by parliament and RCI became a constitutional regulatory body for Teacher Trainings in Special Education. Since then, many training institutes have started several training programs for manpower development in the area of disabilities including training programs for children with intellectual disabilities. As reported by RCI, 2007, in 1947, only 3 organizations were providing educational services to children with Intellectual disabilities whereas in 2007, these rose to 2010 organizations. In 1993, when RCI Act came into effect, the number of training courses and institutes stood at 22 and 25 respectively. Seventeen years later, in 2007 institutions providing such training in manpower development in various disabilities at various level increased by 350 in number (RCI, 2007). In addition to these, several short term courses have also been started. Strong impact of Normalization and Social Role Valorization on training programs for manpower development in special education for children with disabilities has been observed, all of them were the result of legislative actions.

Establishment of National Institutes for fostering the needs of different disabilities:

Government of India established several National Institutes for fostering the needs of different disabilities as an apex institution in their fields. The national institutes serving children with disabilities with their year of establishment and headquarters are as below:

Table: National institutes for children with disabilities their location and year of establishment:



A closer look on the above picture indicates that out of five national institutes, established to cater the needs of different disabilities; four were established between late 1980's and the early 1990's which was the period of reforms inspired by principle of normalization.

Educational practices like inclusive education:

As observed earlier, many government schools were denying admission of children with disabilities due to their 'disability'. After enforcement of Right to Education Act, no child can be denied and deprived from education on the basis of disability. Now a days 'Inclusive Education' become a policy slogan in India, being imparted through a broad banner of SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan). As Singhal (2009) noted "*with India becoming signatory to the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), the 1990s saw the rapid incorporation of the term 'inclusive education' in various official documents, reports published by institutions such as the NCERT and media. The background paper of a workshop organized by the RCI stated: while special education began in India with the establishment of special schools, it was in 1960s–1970s that integrated education began to be advocated; however, after 1994, inclusive education is strongly recommended. (Singal, 2010).*

This observation indicates that the roots of inclusive education in India can be traced back in integrated education which was started in India during 1960's to 1970's. It is interesting to note here that 1960's and 1970's were the period when 'Normalization Principle' was being practically implemented, formulated and initiated deinstitutionalization movement, starting from Scandinavian countries and soon became popular in Canada, America, Europe and Australia.

As per the mandate of SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan), it has to ensure that every child with special needs, irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability, is provided education in an appropriate environment which is based upon 'zero rejection' (similar to EAHCA, 1975 as a result of Normalization Principle) policy so that no child is left out of the education system (SSA, 2007). SSA and its focus on children with special needs (CWSN) The SSA has identified eight priority areas of intervention for promotion of inclusive education in India:

1. Survey for identification of CWSN
2. Assessment of CWSN
3. Providing assistive devices

4. Networking with NGOs/Government schemes
5. Barrier free access
6. Training of teachers on IE
7. Appointment of resource teachers
8. Curricula adaptation/textbooks/appropriate TLM (Singal, 2009)

Inclusive education in India, is another broad area of research and is not within the scope of the present study, but as a result of educational reforms for children with disabilities, initiated by Normalization and Social Role Valorization, India has been implementing Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan can be interpreted, however, India has long way to go as noted by Anthony (2013) “India, for example, is an ancient country that adopted several laws and policies for its citizens with disabilities after gaining independence from British rule. Today, India legally requires the education of all children in schools; despite this, millions of children with disabilities continue to remain out of school or receive little or no education (Anthony, 2013).”

Conclusion:

Principles of Normalization conceptualized in Denmark by Neils Erik Bank Mikkelsen and further developed by Benjt Nirjie have had a strong impact on several disability rehabilitation services across the world. It influenced reforms for disability rehabilitation at policy, practice and societal level. The development of disability rehabilitation services in India like legislative reforms, special education services, employment opportunities, media attention etc were mostly took place during the period when such reforms were taking place in European, American and Nordic countries, indicating a strong influence of Principle Normalization on disability related reforms in India, if not profound then also up to a greater extent.

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