

DEAF EDUCATION IN INDIA: A CRITICAL STUDY

Kulkarni Avinash Subhash

Assistant Teacher, The New Era High School, Jalgaon (Jamod), Dist. Buldhana, Maharashtra, India

Email: Kulkarni7748@gmail.com

Abstract

Education in India faces many challenges and opportunities. Difficulty to educate deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) people in India is one of the challenges. There is a history of educating the deaf in India, however, there is no single clear approach to their education. Oralism and the use of sign language are two competing approaches to education for DHH people. While oralism dominates in India, which is an approach that encourages speaking and hearing, it is usually not realistic for DHH children. There are a couple of hundred deaf schools in India and vocational training is becoming more common for DHH people. There are no deaf colleges or universities in India. A person's education ends with grade school- where they likely weren't able to learn.

Key words: Deaf, Education, DHH, Hearing, India, Challenges

Introduction

Education in India is primarily managed by the state-run public education system, which falls under the command of the government at three levels: central, state and local. Under various articles of the Indian Constitution and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, free and compulsory education is provided as a fundamental right to children aged 6 to 14. The approximate ratio of the total number of public schools to private schools in India is 10:3.

Education in India covers different levels and types of learning, such as early childhood education, primary education, secondary education, higher education, and vocational education. It varies significantly according to different factors, such as location (urban or rural), gender, caste, religion, language, and disability.

Education in India faces many challenges and opportunities, such as improving access and quality, reducing disparities and dropouts, increasing enrolment and completion rates, enhancing learning outcomes and employability, strengthening governance and accountability, promoting innovation and technology, and addressing the impact of

COVID-19 pandemic. It is influenced by various policies and programmes at the national and state levels, such as the National Education Policy 2020, the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, the Midday Meal Scheme, the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme, and the National Digital Education Architecture. It is also supported by various stakeholders and partners, such as UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank, civil society organizations, academic institutions, private sector entities, and media outlets.

History of education in India for the DHH population

India is very diverse with eight main religions, hundreds of ethnic groups, and 21 languages with hundreds of dialects. This diversity has made it difficult to educate deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) people in India for generations.

There is a history of educating the deaf in India, however, there is no single clear approach to their education. This stems from conditions, some similar to those faced around the world, and others unique to India. For example, prior to independence of India, there were not clear laws and protections for the disabled. Since independence, advancements

have been made for rights of the disabled, but this has not fully tackled the issue.

Pre-independence there were only 24 schools for the deaf in India, and all of these used an oral approach. The belief was that using sign language would hinder advancements of hearing and speaking in deaf children. Additionally, there was no single Indian sign language, so signs would differ depending on where the school was located.

Post-independence, there are more services and resources available for DHH people, however, challenges with education remain. There are organizations around the country that work to advance the spread and quality of education for the deaf.

Education for DHH children

Oralism and the use of sign language are two competing approaches to education for DHH people. While oralism dominates in India, which is an approach that encourages speaking and hearing, it is usually not realistic for DHH children.

There is an Indian Sign Language, however, it is not formally recognized by the government and it is not complete or comprehensive. It varies around the country and is not encouraged by professionals and educators. Beliefs of the past that the use of sign language will hinder the potential advancements of hearing and speaking in DHH children remain. In recent years, there has been a notion to encourage the use of sign language in India and teach it in schools. In 2017, the first ISL dictionary was released.

Due to these challenges and beliefs associated with sign language, education for DHH people in India often focuses on teaching children to hear, speak, and read lips, this is known as an oral approach.

In India there are regular schools and special schools. Special schools provide education for children with different disabilities. Special schools can be beneficial to DHH children, and provide a better education than they would

receive in a regular school. However, these schools aren't available for every deaf child. Sometimes they are located too far from a child's home. Another reason a child may have to attend a regular school is if they receive hearing technology. Since India focuses on hearing and speaking for the deaf, hearing technology is encouraged. Once a child receives hearing technology it is believed that they can attend regular schools. Even with hearing technology, DHH children still need special education in order to succeed. This puts them at a significant disadvantage in regular school and can cause them to fall behind academically, linguistically, and developmentally. For these reasons, many deaf children receive poor education or no education at all, causing the illiteracy rate of deaf children to rise.

Education in India in regular schools and deaf schools has problems. Even in deaf schools, sign language isn't usually taught and used. Some use a small amount of sign language but all of the deaf schools in India use or claim to use an oral approach. Some deaf schools secretly teach sign language due to the stigma and beliefs surrounding the use of sign language, and disability in general, in India. Children in deaf schools have to try to learn by hearing or reading lips and writing. In hearing schools, the children have to do the same. There are no special accommodations. Additionally, there aren't any teachers that use sign language in regular schools (maybe a few in deaf schools), and there aren't any interpreters.

There are a couple of hundred deaf schools in India and vocational training is becoming more common for DHH people.

Higher education

There are no deaf colleges or universities in India. A person's education ends with grade school- where they likely weren't able to learn. With lack of education, DHH people then have a very difficult time finding a job. There is one

interpreter in one college in India, Delhi University.

Conclusion

It was difficult to educate deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) people in India for generations. There is a history of educating the deaf in India, however, there is no single clear approach to their education. Oralism and the use of sign language are two competing

approaches to education for DHH people. While oralism dominates in India, which is an approach that encourages speaking and hearing, it is usually not realistic for DHH children. There are a couple of hundred deaf schools in India and vocational training is becoming more common for DHH people. There are no deaf colleges or universities in India. Lack of higher education DHH people creates difficulties in finding a job.

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