

IMPACT OF INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION PACKAGE ON THE AWARENESS OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS ABOUT DISABILITIES

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ABSTRACT

In the IEC campaign new messages, practices and ideas are disseminated to the target groups by utilizing appropriate media of communication that create awareness to the welfare of the society . The author tested the impact of the IEC package on class XI & XII students and their teachers about disabilities (physical disability, mental retardation and sensory impairments) and to suggest how media and educational institutions could cooperate in this regard .

INTRODUCTION

Disability is defined as a restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of an ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being. In other words disability is a consequence of impairment leading to functional limitation or activity restriction and the person having disability is perceived as being different from the non-disabled persons in the society. The society places the disabled in a subordinate status .

Disability is a universal phenomenon though the causes differ as per the socio-economic status of the societies. In the affluent industrial societies occupational hazards and age are the main causes of disability whereas in developing as well as underdeveloped countries ignorance, poverty, lack of elementary medical facilities and pseudo-religious beliefs are the principle offenders (Gajendragadkar, 1993). Efforts are required to minimize the adverse impact of disability and promote the latent abilities to the fullest extent possible. Developing a convincing ethical framework to prevent social divisiveness and to help create a united community is a task that remains to be accomplished in the future

Lack of awareness ,economic availability of resources ,medical and technological advancement and early detection measures are the main reasons for the increase in number of disable persons in India. There is an urgent need to take effective measures on mass media to make people aware of the facts

and abilities of the disabled and to change their opinions in a favourable direction which is necessary for the integration of the disabled into the society . without involving society as a whole in any awareness programme , deep-rooted traditional beliefs and superstitions can not be shaken .

Public education, awareness and opinions are more crucial than any other input for promotion of social development programmes . lack of right attitude in society about the persons with disability, lack of awareness about their potentialities and absence of information as to what all could and should be done about them has been the main reason for slow growth of rehabilitation services . Advocacy which is also spurred and sustained by awareness, attitude and information, has also been lacking resulting in low provisioning of rehabilitation services as well as discrimination even at the time of framing the Indian constitution, the perception about the disabled persons was that they are unemployable and hence worthy of relief. Although much has changed since then , a lot is still required to be done in these crucial areas. Creating awareness in this regard can brought fruitful results . Awareness campaign must involve media as media is said to have powerful impact upon society's views . Therefore , awareness programmes can be promoted to various segments of the society for

- I. Moulding and changing the prevalent negative attitude and reinforcing positive

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attitude among the persons with disability, parents, families, and the society in general.

- II. Creating awareness about potentialities of the disabled persons and the social and economic benefits of rehabilitation and preventive measures.
- III. Providing right and adequate information to persons with disability, parents, families, society in general and the professionals about various schemes , technologies availability of services etc.

Although stray and ad hoc efforts have been made from time to time in utilizing media in this regard, a concerted effort and requisite infrastructure for the same is lacking .

Despite numerous researches carried out in the subject governmental organizations in creating awareness , in providing right and adequate information among the society ,the situation is far from satisfactory. Therefore the present investigation has been planned to be undertaken.

INFORMATION EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION PACKAGE ON AWARENESS ABOUT DISABILITIES

Information is one such strategy that could help obtain desired results. IEC symbolizes interaction of three factors (I) Information (II) Education and (III) Communication. They complement one another in a way that one without the other is worthless so far as health care of society is concerned . In this IEC package is developed particularly to spread necessary message to all areas of concern through an appropriate medium to guide people to imbibe and adopt the right practices . This package offers a concerted educational endeavour with specific objectives focussed on specific programme goals in order to reach specific audience in terms of individuals groups or mass setting through skilful use of proper methods and media to create awareness about disabilities.

IEC PACKAGE CONTENT SPECIFICATIONS

The content of information , education, and communication package designed for enhancing awareness about disabilities is divided into 2 weeks intervention programme . It comprises various crucial content components inviting variety of activities on the part of teachers and students within the classroom and outside in expectation of meaningfully tangible outcomes in general and specific positive student gains in particular . Content-wise ,the IEC package includes previous knowledge testing through probing question answer sessions , orientation about the package involving interactive approach, lectures , discussions, flip charts, question box, quiz, puzzle, audio visual cassettes , expert talks by DRC teachers . implications of the package spread over two weeks in actual classroom and school situation resulted in tangible gains in the awareness among students and teachers about disabilities (physical disability , mental retardation and sensory impairment).

IMPACT OF IEC PACKAGE

The information, education, and communication (IEC) package envinced a positive impact on improving the level of awareness among students of Haryana state as an outcome of transacting IEC package in the classroom at XI & XII level. This package was implemented in the classroom for two weeks , devoting one hour per day . The results indicated the following main findings regarding the effect of the IEC package on awareness about disabilities (physical disability, mental retardation. Sensory impairments)

1. That students are found to have a low level of awareness about disabilities before the IEC package.
2. The IEC package has been found to have a significant positive effect on the overall level of awareness on the basis of comparison between pre-test and post-test scores of students on their level of awareness about disabilities .
3. The IEC package has been found to have a

significant positive effects on the activity wise (i.e concept of disability, abilities of the disabled , causes of disability , education and training of disabled, myths and misconceptions and facilities provided to disabled) level of awareness of students about disabilities on the basis of comparison between pre-test and post-test scores of students on their level of awareness about disability.

4. The IEC package is specifically addressed to creating awareness about disabilities (physical disability, mental retardation and sensory impairments) among the student and teacher community.
5. It is high time to use the IEC package not only in schools of different grades in the formal system of schooling as well as non-formal educational institutions and NGOs interested and engaged in education of the masses .

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

It is evident from the present study that IEC package is effective in creating awareness among school students and teachers about disabilities (physical disability, mental retardation, and sensory impairments) in a favourable direction. Hence, in many ways the findings of the present study can be beneficial for students , teacher, social workers .media personnels , administrators and policy makers .

The utility of the present study lies in :-

1. Information and awareness about disabilities into the society by heterogeneous mass of students who will take message home from school.
2. Making teachers aware of the level of cognizance of the problems of disabled among their students thereby enabling them to design and use educational strategies and interventions in a favourable direction .
3. Enabling social workers to plan and run rehabilitation and awareness programme thereby enhancing the amalgamation of the disabled into the society at large in a favourable direction.
4. Creating awareness amongst media personnel about the problem load of creation and enhancement of awareness about the

disabled amongst the masses , thereby enabling them to plan more informative and interesting media based interventions for all segments of the society in a favourable direction.

5. Enabling education planners to introduce curricula incorporating educational contents to create and propagate awareness about disabilities in the target population .
6. Creating awareness of the magnitude of the problem among policy makers enabling them to allocate sufficient funds for evolution and execution of the intervention strategies .
7. Creating insight amongst authorities in the field of education to organise exhibition , workshops, Seminars, lectures, field visits. camps, dramas and plays related with the problem under study and society should also be invited to participate in these activities .

ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION AND OTHER SPECIAL INSTITUTIONS

Since the IEC package is specifically addressed to creating this awareness about disabilities among the student community and taking into consideration the imminent perils of this , it is high time to use the IEC package not only in schools of different grades in the formal system of schooling as well as non-formal educational institutions and NGOs interested and engaged in education of the masses, it is also extremely important for the teacher training institutions to use the IEC package as per need of the specific area . By way of an example, a set of disability awareness lesson plans developed for teacher trainees undergoing their training based on the IEC package would not only promote but also boost their knowledge about disabilities among them and in turn among school students at different stages of school education as well as among the community as a whole . Lessons can be developed by the teacher trainees, school teachers as well as teacher educators to serve as model demonstration lessons on disability awareness based on the school syllabi, teacher educators curricula in different subjects and special group institutions content input to give a boost to awareness about disabilities . The risk of disabilities looming large can be tackled

meaningfully using the IEC package in a creative and constructive way . The options are as many as the teachers to meet the alarming challenge .

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