

ASCERTAINING EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AMONG THE CHILDREN WITH PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENT

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ABSTRACT

Webster's dictionary defines 'aspiration' as an ambition for longing. It means a strong desire to rise high. Aspirations play an important role in the period of human being in which personality takes its proper and subtle shape. The level of aspiration is an individual's future expectations or ambitions. In the achievement oriented society, a person is judged by what his achievements are. The effect comes not from achievement but from achievement aspirations relationship. This interplay of achievement and aspirations is influenced by several factors including disability. The present paper focuses on strategies for generating educational aspirations among the children with physical impairment against the milieu of the results of a study on aspirations.

INTRODUCTION

Aspirations are an individual's desire to obtain a status object or goal such as particular occupation or level of education. They are the points of reference which influence the career patterns and the whole life of an individual. Aspirations are the ego involved goals a person sets for himself. Aspirations have been considered an essential component in the motivation to achieve, operating somewhat like a self-fulfilling prophecy. Humphray and Arggle (1962), "Level of aspiration is the expected level of achievement of the individual of the individual goal or expectations in regard to the goodness of his own future performance in a task and his estimate of future performance in that task.". In technologically advanced societies, high aspirations in terms of success are a dominant cultural value. The same holds true to quite an extent in our society which is in a developing and transition phase. Young people's aspirations are a critical ingredient in achievement in education and in occupational outcomes later in life. Skill, qualification and experience are important factors too, but without self-belief and encouragement they are not too likely to be attained in the first place, or to be put to good use. Educational goals were affected more than occupational goals, perhaps, in this opinion,

because educational goals are the first to come in contact with the limitations of personal ability, aspirations, financial resources and opportunities that are encountered in adult life. Understanding the role played by aspirations in the contemporary competitive world there is a need to ascertain the factors influencing the formation of aspirations. These include intelligence, sex, interests, values, family pressures, group expectations, cultural traditions, competitions with others, past experience, mass-media and personal characteristics. The relative stability of the childhood environment and the child training methods of parents lead the child to develop a habit of aspiring either realistically or unrealistically. By adulthood the individual has developed feelings of personal inferiority or superiority depending on how successful or unsuccessful he has been in achieving goals over the years. So it is implicit that the performance of the individual gets influenced by the aspirations he holds and they in turn get influenced by a number of factors. Besides all the above mentioned circumstances there is one more condition which influences aspirations and that is having a disability.

A child with physical impairment, apart from all the normal difficulties that many

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adolescents and young persons face, also faces the enormous burden of carrying a physical impairment. This may have severe impact on aspirations of such children. Often psychological problems such as tensions, anxiety, and frustration etc affect such children. A disability is a significantly restricted ability, in individual functioning, including physical impairment, sensory impairment, cognitive impairment or mental disorder. From medical point of view, it is seen as a problem of the person, directly caused by the disease, trauma or other health condition, which requires medical care. On the other hand, the social model views disability basically as a matter of the full integrations of disabled individuals in society. It has been well documented that the condition of disability influences several aspects of an individuals' life. Varni and Wallender (1989) found that disability of an individual always interfered in his interactions with others; which may lead to passive participation in different social activities. Sharma (1992) opines that the crisis of the handicap curtails the will power of an individual and disturbs his overall adjustment and development. The present paper would suggest strategies for appraising the aspirations among the learners with physical impairment against a backdrop of a study of aspirations of learners with physical impairment, of Rajasthan.

The study was conducted on 300 physically impaired students. The students were spread out in normal and special schools both in public and government sector from six districts of Rajasthan. The research was restricted to male students only. A self-made aspirations questionnaire was prepared and administered on the sample.

RESULTS FROM THE STUDY

1. Area of Study

<i>Preferences</i>	<i>Area</i>
I	Science
II	Arts
III	Commerce

(Table No. 1- Preference for Area of study)

As far as area of study is concerned most of the students preferred science which was followed by arts and commerce. The life style of a learner with physical impaired was found unsystematic and unbalanced due to deficiency in their lives. Thus they are very curious to find out the causes for the same. Science would resolve their curiosity and make life systematic.

2. Level of Education

<i>Preferences</i>	<i>Level of Education</i>
I	Secondary
II	Graduate
III	Post graduate

(Table 2- Level of Education)

Out of seven levels of education physically challenged children chose secondary, graduate and post graduate level rather than PhD or some higher level. Thus we can see that students were found to have much lower educational aspirations as most of them preferred education till secondary level. The lack of resources and feel of their unfitness restrict their aspiration till secondary level.

3. Aspirations to appear in competitive examinations

<i>Preferences</i>	<i>Competitive Examination</i>
I	Pre-engineering examination
II	Banking examination
III	Defence

(Table 3- Aspirations to appear in competitive examinations)

Learners with physical impairment actually face so many challenges with their physique even then they aspire to do technical courses so as to challenge the world.

4. Occupation Preference

<i>Preferences</i>	<i>Occupation</i>
I	Teaching
II	Administrative
III	Army, Police

(Table 4 Occupation preference)

They perceived teaching as a profession, which was within their range of abilities and so most of them preferred teaching as a profession.

5. Nature of Profession

Government service is the first preference of most of the students as it would ensure financial security for their life.

6. Aim of choosing a profession

<i>Preferences</i>	<i>Aims</i>
I	To serve nation
II	Social service
III	Own business

(Table 5- Aim of choosing a profession)

The spirit of nationality was found very strong in such students. In spite of so many disabilities they want to do such services, so that they can contribute their lives for nation.

7. Mission of life

Curiosity to know more and more about the causes and cure, they like to study the subject science. They want to shape themselves in such a way so that they can find the ways for maintaining the structured nature, environment and in essence their life. Another reason for the same could be the prestige associated with such professions, which in a way could help them overcome the disability.

8. Personality traits of life partner

The feeling of disability could be enveloping them hard, and putting them in ring of failure. To overcome these feelings, they would want their partners to be well qualified, of high character and belonging to well educated families. The educational background of the spouse families would also help them to integrate well.

With the above findings in context, it can be heartily treasured that the learners with physical impairments do not hold low aspirations barring a few aspects. Education is one area where they held low aspiration otherwise there is no other aspect. Maximum number of students held secondary education as the level of education they aspire for. However, if you match it with their aspirations in other areas like profession they are looking for, there seems to be a variance. Majority aspires to be a teacher and look for a government job mainly to ensure financial security. This shows the reasonableness of their aspirations and diffidence they feel for their future owing to their disability. Drawing from the review of the related literature and the findings of the study, various strategies can be devised to accentuate these aspirations. Some of these have been illustrated in the following points:

Raising the teacher expectations: Thistlewaite and N.Wheeler (1996) found that the teachers have more influence on educational and vocational aspirations during later childhood and adolescence than the family members. A teacher holds a central place in any adolescent's life and plays a vital role in shaping up the aspirations of the adolescents both directly and indirectly. Properly trained teachers in a sensitive manner can lead the students to higher aspirations in a realistic manner. The teacher should work in such a manner that the students are well integrated in the class and they are not a victim of social isolation. The teacher should not single them out for special treatment and all efforts should be made to have them in the mainstream system only. If the need for singular work is there, it

should be managed in such a manner that it is not very obvious to the rest of the group. The teacher does not work alone. The whole system is there but the pivot of the system is the teacher, so the main responsibility lies with the teachers. The quality of teaching should be such that it sustains the interests of this group because they are normally so ridden with complexes, frustration and other negative forces. Stereotyping of disabled children by teachers under expectation of their academic abilities may hamper the growth of aspirations in learners. The teachers of the ordinary schools therefore must be prepared to face the new challenges. Following points carry simple day-to-day things which, if the teacher adopts can play a very emphatic role:

1. The teachers should have a clear concept of special educational needs.
2. They should be determined to act as responsible persons to ensure that the school fulfills its duties to identify and provide for those with special needs.
3. They should play an active part in the identification of the children with special educational needs.
4. They should keep informing the parents of problems their children have as well as the proposed action.
5. The teacher should know the various external agencies in the locality available as support service
6. They must be willing to introduce the system of mixed ability teaching.
7. They must encourage disabled to take part in all the activities and programmes of the class as well as of the school.
8. The teacher should monitor the level of the group's acceptance of the child and integration into various co-curricular activities.

Propitious school environment: A school is a communication centre for a whole range of values and aspirations of a society. In large part, it defines the values that transcend society through

educational medium. Pas Carella (1981) conducted a study on the contextual effects of schools on the educational aspiration of adolescents. The finding of the study is that the quality of the classroom environment is positively and significantly associated with educational aspiration. It would be unassuming if one wants to list down the impact of the school environment on any aspect of the learner's development. The special school concept does not hold too well because it provides "too cosy" an atmosphere for the learners. In the study also, the disabled youngsters in mainstream education were more likely to want to get a job when they left education whereas those attending special schools were more likely to respond with 'don't know'. The prior academic achievement gained in the school also influences the aspirations, so it should provide a positive school environment. More and more chances should be built in the school learning process so as to let the students feel successful. Child and Whiting (1954) found that success leads to raise and failure to lower the level of aspiration. The difficulties at the institutional level like admission policies, segregation for part or all of the time, physical access and delays in providing appropriate support to the learners should be overridden so as not to put the aspirations on the downward spiral. The students should not be discouraged from taking particular options at school like science, commerce and taking vocational qualifications. The infrastructural facilities like well equipped classrooms, laboratory, library, appropriate furniture etc also work as an incentive in raising the aspirations of the learners. It is interesting to note here that making a building disabled friendly costs just 2 percent of the total building costs. A lot of cost effective adaptations can be made within and outside buildings to make them exclusively barrier free. Similarly, lack of appropriate prosthetic aids and appliances can do the opposite effect. The basic needs like wheel chairs, braces, lap boards, and thick pens among others should also be provided.

Parents' contribution: Young people with impairments and their parents may find themselves in a particularly difficult situation. Parents are a key source of support but this support should be regulated and they should not become overprotective. The parents might have a desire to encourage the aspirations of their children but at the same time they may also fear disappointment if aspirations rose above likely outcome. The parents own expectations from their children go to a large extent in influencing the aspirations children hold for themselves. So they should be watchful of their behaviour with children and try to induce an amount of trust in them about their own abilities. The educational profile of the parents also may influence the aspirations of the students. The parents should keep themselves updated and work on their own education. Also they should take a keen interest in their school and home-work. Besides, efforts should be made to push them into varied co-curricular activities. The parental concerns about safety, travel and practical coping rise in case of a disabled child also influence the direction the parents give to their children's aspirations. The word 'supportiveness' describes everything the disabled child would need from the parents. For that matter it is important for any child, but more so for a disabled child. In circumstances when there are other siblings for a disabled child, the disabled child gets the least priority in education compared to his/her siblings, either due to poverty of parents or the attitudinal barriers in the society. This needs attention from the parents.

State's role: The education system should be developed in such a manner that no student should be at a disadvantage because of disability. Presently, it is inaccessible for many disabled students, as the teaching methods, learning aids, the curriculum itself and the evaluation system is not disabled friendly. (Braille books and materials, readers for students with visual impairment, sign language interpretation

and teaching are not available in most schools). Even when alternative teaching methods are used, the same methods are not used for evaluation. For example if a child is taught using the picture communication system they are not evaluated using this system. This allows little opportunity for disabled children to continue with their education. This grim picture when is presented in front of the children they go weak on their aspirations. So whether it is through Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan or training teachers in special education or providing enough resources, efforts should be made by the state in delivering its role.

CONCLUSION

"All men are created equal" has become trite but it still has important meaning for education in a democratic society. Under the constitutional obligation to accomplish the task of welfare state based on social justices the Indian social system cannot remain unmindful to the problems and issues confronting handicapped. The educational system of any country helps in achieving the objectives of the constitution and the society at large. So our system should also respond to the same and work in all possible directions to increase the educational aspirations among the disabled. The prevalence of architectural and environmental barriers should be hurdled out. The results of a survey conducted in 320 odd universities and schools shows that only 0.1% of disabled students are in universities and 0.5% in mainstream schools. Clearly, a huge amount of neglect prevails in the society. A disability sensitive attitude should be developed among the parents, family members and the community at large Even a stringent law can do very less unless there is a change in the mindset of people and a willingness to accept and respect (disabled) people. The society should be dynamic enough to accept all differences, as the world exists only because of its differences and the natural balance among them. All citizens should have the attitude to value the contribution of disabled people as they do their own. For such

an attitudinal shift to happen the society should believe in disabled people and that they are like anybody else.

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