



ETMA

Presents

Education Matters @ ETMA

March 2021

The Innovation Station

- Yukti Gupta

Pandemic 2020, NEP 2020: Road to "Inclusion"

- Sudesh Mukhopadhyay

Arushi & Brain Gym®

- Betty Abraham

Impact of COVID-19 on People with Deafblindness

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SCHOOL



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“What makes a child gifted and talented may not always be good grades in school, but a different way of looking at the world and learning.”

- Chuck Grassley

Pandemic 2020, NEP 2020: Road to “Inclusion”

By Sudesh Mukhopadhyay



Introduction

Let me start the address by quoting from the Foreword by Hon’ble Chief justice of India, Dipak Misra (26 November 2017):

“On this day, sixty-seven years ago, the people of this great nation gave to themselves a unique document – the Constitution of India – which was a result of long deliberations and research made by the eminent members of the Constituent Assembly. The Constitution is a dynamic and living document embodying a way of life towards the progress of the nation, the society and the individual and that is why, it has been aptly said: - “Constitution is not a mere lawyers document, it is a vehicle of Life, and its spirit is always the spirit of Age.”¹

¹ Excerpt from the Foreword by Justice Dipak Misra, for Justice A.K. Sikri (2017) Role of the Judge in a Democracy (2017) for The Constitution at 67- Supreme Court of India.

<https://sci.gov.in/pdf/AnnualReports/The%20Constitution%20at%2067.pdf> accessed on 20 October 2019.

The approach adopted in aforesaid cases in order to advance the cause of justice, and in particular, to impart justice to the weaker and marginalized section of the society, is also known as, “social justice adjudication” or “social context adjudication”. Professor N.R. Madhava Menon has eloquently assigned following meaning to this manner of judging (“social justice adjudication” or “social context adjudication”) flowing from this definition of LETTER and SPIRIT. Courts in India have adverted to this social context adjudication technique, by drifting from strict adversarial approach for dispensing equal justice (Justice A.K. Sikri Sikri, 2017, P28)².

This position taken by the Supreme Court Judges is reflective of the challenge as well as a reality across the world to Understand the Spirit behind the Rules of the Land, the Spirit that inspired these and the processes that created the realities on the ground. Today beginning in the Year 2020 and still very much a concern, The Pandemic (National & Global) has challenged us again to look at Letter and Spirit; though here the Letter is that of The NEP 2020 and, the Spirit is how are we dealing with this Process of Inclusion. Though Inclusion by the scope refer to all those

² Ibid.

who at the Margins created by the Mankind that NEP refers to as the Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), our focus is on Children and Persons with Disabilities and experiences that contributed to maintain the Spirit of INCLUSION; may be in ways that were not explored earlier and/or may be showing us way to think of inclusion beyond the LETTERS.

ETMA’s Forum for Inclusion

Educational Technology and Management Academy (conducted) conducted its 5th webinar in November 2020 in the series of webinars on the National Education Policy and Its implementation; on the theme Opportunities for Enhancing Inclusion of Children with Disabilities.

Now in February 2021, we have access to experiences and evidences as to what all happened, is in pipeline and lessons to be learnt for effective implementation of NEP 2020 as well as being able to share with the international communities on our progress and response under Pandemic to SDG 4.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets a new and encouraging phase in the area of disability and development. The Agenda is built on the principle of leaving no one behind, implicitly promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Unlike its precedent MDGs, the 2030 Agenda in its Sustainable Development Goals include seven targets explicitly referencing to persons with disabilities and their needs.³ Disability inclusion will also require improvements in accessibility. This aspect is reflected in the SDGs, with targets focusing on accessible schools, transport, green and public spaces.⁴ Monitoring and evaluation of accessibility

³ SDG Targets 4.5, 4.a, 8.5, 10.2, 11.2, 11.7 and 17.18 as quoted from Source: Operationalizing the 2030 Agenda: Ways forward to improve monitoring and evaluation of disability inclusion, Technical note by the Secretariat. https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/desa/operationalizing_2030_agenda.pdf/4 Oct 2019.

⁴ Ibid. Respectively, SDG targets 4.a, 11.2 and 11.7

will therefore be needed to implement the 2030 Agenda. International accessibility standards have been produced for the built environment and the internet; international surveys on accessible governmental websites have already been conducted and some countries have produced their own accessibility standards and accessibility assessments of public buildings.⁵

These dimensions of Accessibility became very dominant when we all faced continuous lockdowns and closure of schooling facilities as well as need to explore alternatives to reach our students. ETMA has been an organization that has always tried to research, practice and do the capacity building of the educational administrators and practitioners in understanding, learning and using Technology of Technology in Education across all levels of education over last few decades.

Use of available technology such as mobile phones, tablets and computers by adults and learners has been already in our experience since at least three decades. But Pandemic created a situation where the acceleration of use in and for education not only multiplied, became indispensable but also became a discovery of self-learning by support providers (such as teachers, parents, siblings, volunteers, caregivers) to persons with disabilities. In the process all are benefitting. Examples are numerous across the country and the Globe; all available on Platforms like YouTube and many government portals like : <https://www.india.gov.in/website-diksha>; <https://epathshala.nic.in/>, and NISHTHA (<https://itpd.ncert.gov.in/>). We all also need now to document, read and learn how Persons with Disability especially Children with Disabilities have fared during this Pandemic.

This Issue of ETMA Magazine

We are happy to share three articles about the response of two organizations; One

⁵ *Ibid.* Monitoring and evaluation tools aim at tracking progress and facilitate decision making. They typically include a list of indicators, a data collection and an analysis of impact of policies and programs.

representing Pan- India experience; the other linked with a University attached Centre that provides services to Children with Disability and their Parents/ Families. Relevant Links are mentioned for facilitating the Readers to explore, learn and practice.

The Article Impact of COVID-19 on People with Deafblindness by Akhil Paul gives us an awareness about the challenges faced by the Person who are Deaf as well as Blind (Deafblind). Double sensory loss poses an immense challenge; remember Helen Keller! Do watch the Link https://youtu.be/8ch_H8pt9M8. Sense International India took many initiatives to reach out to Children and Adults with Deafblindness during this Pandemic Using Technology at the right time and right place is an exemplar of timely and critical response through commitment and collaborations.

Yukti shares with us Innovation Station. Purpose has been to support the Children and Parents during the closure of schools and helping children with disabilities to adjust to new Routine and Place of Learning! But then this is equally useful to all children!

Betty Abraham in many ways is my facilitator to the world of digital world. The first line of her Article explains all: "During the lockdown, at Arushi Brain Gym® became the go to activity to help the students to maintain their calm and attention to task." She shares with us this process/technique that can help not only children with special needs but may be us adults and our other children and young persons also to be at peace with self and open up to learn actively!

Please read and learn more and let us try to imbibe the LETTER & SPIRIT.

Prof. Sudesh Mukhopadhyay

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The Innovation Station

By Yukti Gupta



Around the nation, schools are frantically trying to adapt to abrupt closures during this pandemic situation. But while all teachers are struggling with the new normal, special education teachers in particular are facing unparalleled challenges transitioning both their teaching and their students and families to home-based instruction tailored to each student's needs. Families have been playing a far more active role in this new normal. We all need to appreciate this and also learn lessons for the future.

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered many changes in education—some major, like learning remotely from home, and some minor, like sitting farther apart on the school bus. While most students have had routines interrupted, the children perhaps most affected by that disruption are students with special needs.

Challenges being faced

Although schools are offering support via online learning opportunities, it can be challenging for younger kids to navigate and even more daunting for parents of children with special needs to implement. Students with special needs are not the only ones struggling during these challenging times. Their parents are trying to figure out how to balance working full time from home with teaching and supervising their children 24/7.

The most important thing parents or caregivers can do to help a child with special needs cope during these uncertain times is to create a routine or schedule. It helps children know what to expect and help with any stress that may be being created unknowingly. Families that are struggling with special education instruction can ask their children's school to help to create a schedule based on the children's typical day at school. There is a need to stress upon the importance of helping kids learn flexibility. Teachers need to start by making one small change to the daily schedule. For example, alternate between reading books and coloring or singing songs. Another tip that can be suggested is to use pictures to help explain the child their schedule.

Both special education and general education teachers have also questioned how much parents and caregivers will be able to help, given that students with special needs often rely on specialized coaching and instruction like cues or sensory activities that keep them on task. Additionally, many students with special needs thrive within the structure of the school day, say educators in our audience, who worry students may be disproportionately impacted by the upheaval brought on by the coronavirus.

Our Response at Arushi- The Learning Centre

When we say, 'special education,' we are talking about an umbrella of ages, interests, abilities, and disabilities, within which are individual needs identified by their Individualized Education

Programme (IEP). But though the new reality is a sudden and an upsetting shift, Arushi the Learning Centre, already have some ideas on how to make the best of it.

Unlike developing a whole-class lesson plan online, special education teachers are now tasked with developing unique plans for every student that align with their IEPs. One huge hurdle, according to teachers of Arushi- The Learning Centre is determining if both the learning and services students are accustomed to receiving in school can even be offered in a home-based setting or through digital resources. Some of these refer to skills like gross motor enhancement/remediation and behavioral therapy.

Teachers are trying to help parents by suggesting and guiding them to try having learning

activities that take place in different spaces or rooms in a home, as students are used to shifting locations at school depending on what they are learning.

While teachers are creating instructional videos (or written directions), arranging webinars for students, our special education educators also advise creating these for parents to teach them how to set up and support their children in various activities. Some video services offer translations for parents whose first language is not English. Some of our efforts can be viewed at Facebook, Youtube or our Instagram page.

<https://www.facebook.com/2210534432396824/>

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCw_6nT-Iev9_CPkLsh3AAvA

@arushisndtwu

Website: www.dsesndtwu.in

Teachers are really working hard to make the sessions interactive and making it a new normal.

Three Cheers to Students, Teachers, Parents and stakeholders

Ms Yukti Gupta (M.Ed. Spl Ed. Visual Impairment, Ph.D. Scholar);
Assistant Professor
Department of Special Education;
SNDT Women's University;
Juhu Campus; Santacruz (W).Mumbai



“Dr Kalam used to say - ‘The purpose of education is to make good human beings with skill and expertise. Enlightened human beings can be created by teachers.’ Changes in the education policy is a major way to provide the nation better students, professionals & better human being.”

Arushi & Brain Gym®

By Betty Abraham



During the lockdown, at Arushi Brain Gym® became the go to activity to help the students to maintain their calm and attention to task. Each class follows a specific combination of activities that the teacher gauged supported certain needs she identified in the children. The activities range from PACE, Lazy 8, Brain Button, Hook ups, Arm Activation to Cross Crawls. Each activity supports the development/maintenance of certain skills/abilities.

Before we get into getting an understanding of each activity and how it supports the students, let's find out a little about what is Brain Gym®.

Brain Gym®

Brain Gym® was developed by Dr Paul and Gail Dennison over 20 years of experimentation and experiential research. Specialist Educator Dr Paul Dennison, PhD, noticed that people who came for help with learning challenges to his remedial learning centres (California) had postural, physical or perceptual stresses and inhibitions.

He found that the physical activities and techniques he was developing could sometimes ease the compensatory patterns and encourage co-ordinated and integrated movement patterns. As the physical blocks released, learners were better able to express their innate intelligence and abilities.

Through trial and experience, Dr Paul developed a core set of 26 physical activities, which he named 'Brain Gym' activities. The Brain Gym® activities became the foundation movement programme of his Educational Kinesiology system.

What makes Educational Kinesiology interesting and an effective supportive tool is that it draws on techniques and tools from a number of disciplines, including behavioural optometry, kinesiology, postural alignment therapies, learning theory and sport.

UDL & Educational Kinesiology

A few parallels may be drawn between the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and the concepts behind Educational Kinesiology (Edu K). According to the Edu K program:

- Learning is a characteristic gift we are all born with
- True learning is an experience that involves the body as well as the mind
- When we learn more about ourselves it empowers us to make changes and achieve our potential

Universal design for Learning focuses on the 'How' of learning, about providing the multiple means of action and expression. UDL is about the learner becoming more aware of their own learning needs and styles.

Potential for Understanding Learning Process

Educational Kinesiology/Brain Gym® is about developing the 'noticing' skills of the learner; i.e., becoming aware of their learning processes, their areas of challenges and working towards to easing those challenges in a stress-free manner.

Educational Kinesiology/Brain Gym® also draws significantly from the ideology that movement enhances the learning process as theorised by child development and perceptual motor specialists like Jane Ayres (2005), Sally Goddard Blythe (2005, 2009) to name a couple. The movement-based premises are that:

- Learning to move more freely increases our ability to release old effortful patterns
- Our attitudes and beliefs are reflected in our posture and movements and we can use specific movement techniques to make positive changes.

With this understanding, let's look at the specific activities the students of Arushi practice every day and how they benefit from them.

Our Experience

- Let's begin with PACE. It's a combination of four Brain Gym® exercises done sequentially to activate the brain and the body. PACE is an acronym which stands for Positive, Active, Clear and Energetic. Each word relates to a specific exercise/activity. Positive: Hook Ups; Active: Cross Crawl; Clear: Brain Buttons; Energetic: Drinking Water. Performing PACE enables the Arushi students to relax and notice what is available for learning and engage with it. It empowers the students to become self-initiating learners.
- Another Brain Gym® activity the students do on a regular basis is 'Lazy 8'. It turns on or activates the eyes. Drawing a Lazy 8 boosts coordination of the eyes for crossing the visual midline without interruption and building eye movement skills within the left right and central visual fields
- A Sleeping 8 (what is also known as the infinity sign) is traced by the students in the air or on/in some material which provides sensory feedback. The tracing is done using a finger or the hand/s. The students are encouraged to watch their hand/s as they trace the Lazy 8. As the eyes follow the flowing movement of the hands, the students learn to focus together for binocular ease.
- Simply put, doing Lazy 8 improves ocular motor function, which assists with reading, and crossing the mid-line improves integration between the two hemispheres of the brain.
- 'Brain Button' is an exercise that stimulates points corresponding to the Kidney Meridian (from Touch for Health modality). The brain buttons activity provides a constant physical orientation for moving the eyes left and right and support easy shifts between focal and ambient attention.
- The Brain Buttons done by placing two fingers (making a 'c' shape) in the soft

hollows just below the collar bone. This specific activity supports the development of directionality for keeping one's place while reading and maintaining the correct ordering of letters and numbers along with left to right scanning for improved consonant blending. Brain Buttons can also help develop digital and hand eye coordination for handwriting or computer work.

- The students also practice 'arm activation' a Brain Gym® exercise which is considered as an isometric self-help activity. Performing this activity lengthens the muscles of the upper chest and shoulders and balance the muscles of the chest and back while relaxing the fingers. By virtue of the impact of relaxation arm activation supports the development of penmanship and cursive writing, spelling and creative writing.
- A contralateral movement similar to the action of walking in place and swinging the arms known as 'Cross Crawl' is performed by itself or as part of PACE. The movement involves muscles of the hip helping to stabilize the pelvis while also activating the muscle systems that activate and steady the shoulders. The cross crawl is a perfect gross motor limbering up activity for small motor skills like reading and writing that require the crossing of the body's vertical midline. Practicing the Cross Crawl can support skills like spelling and writing, listening along with reading and comprehension.

The students of Arushi look forward to the Brain Gym® sessions as stage setting or breakout activities. One of the teachers for the younger students reported "The kids are fresh after doing Brain Gym®. They love to do the activities of Lazy 8." Another teacher with older students observed improvement in energy levels especially on low energy or lethargic days.

One of the teachers reports specifically with reference to doing the Arm Activation that 'the student's shoulder strength has improved. Still overall muscle strength is poor and he tends to be sloppy during the exercise'.

What was very pleasing to read in a teacher's report was 'At the beginning of the first term Arav (name changed) used to show extreme emotions. Anxious, excited etc. Not knowing where to draw a line. Now he is more settled and more independent. His need for mother's presence during class has dropped drastically.'

In conclusion there is only one thing I would like to share, Brain Gym® is an effective stress-free activity that supports students in their ability to know themselves and develop their own learning skills effectively. Use it, help the students to develop and blossom. Share with them a technique for life.

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Teachers' Response

The implementation of these activities/exercises in the online mode was not the easiest of tasks, but the teachers at Arushi have persisted and the students are now reaping the benefits.

One of the challenges the teachers initially expressed was trying to get the children to do the movement precisely. However, the advantage of the Brain gym activity is that 'preciseness' is not required. Each child is expected to do the activity/exercise at his or her own level staying within the comfort zone being completely stress free.





Impact of COVID-19 on People with Deafblindness

By Akhil S Paul

The Challenge

Covid-19 has been one of the most impactful phenomena which rattled the world since beginning of 2020 and led to disruption of day-to-day life, even more for people with deafblindness because the 'touch' became a forbidden word. Due to the impaired vision as well as hearing, almost all People with Deafblindness benefit from one-to-one tactile sign language and support but the pandemic took away this comfort and threw them in complete isolation. With no educator, care-giver or therapist, who could reach out to deafblind people, soon they began to go back to their shells of loneliness. For a deafblind child, the world is limited to her fingertips and the call for 'social distancing' isolated her as she was not allowed to interact with the surrounding environment. The lack of therapeutic support led to deterioration in condition and also de-learning of acquired skills. Due to various comorbid conditions associated with deafblindness, it was vital that people with deafblindness needed extra care and precautions.

The rapid spread of Covid-19 pandemic led to closure of services overnight and children with deafblindness and their families were left to fend for themselves for initial days of global lockdown. Most of the people with deafblindness could not come to terms with the fact that they are not able to go to schools/ centres and also that they are not able to effectively communicate with their family members and this led to frustrations for both sides. Most of the parents and family members could only use gestures and due to inconsistency, there have been serious communication issues leading to behavioural issues.

The Response

The pandemic forced Sense India and its partners to close down services and staff has to stay home due to lockdown but by early April we decided to start taking initiatives to respond to ongoing situation and reach out to persons with deafblindness across the country.

Creating Online Platform

We decided to make use of available technology and open up the online platform to reach out to people with deafblindness across India. We started using apps like WhatsApp/skype/Zoom/Google meet along with video calls as well as short video modules of training through mobile phones, which helped parents and family members to start communications and basic training at home. During the pandemic, we also realized that now every family had access to smart phones to participate in the online sessions so we raised funds to provide a basic phone with data-packs so that they can benefit from the online services.

Along with online support to people with deafblindness and their families, Sense India also ensured that all the monitoring and reporting moves to online platforms through Google docs and sheets. Since capacity building of educators and parents is one of the major role of Sense India, in the last 8 months, we conducted 15 webinars wherein more than 3500 educators/professionals participated.

Meeting Basic Necessities of Life

'Hunger' breaks persons from inside and inability to arrange food for one's family to survive is the darkest day in anyone's life. With millions of people struggling every day to get one square meal a day, the invisible segment of our society i.e. persons with deafblindness were left on their own for the survival. It has been observed that disaster in any form puts a question mark on the very existence of people with disabilities due to their inability to avail basic right to health care services, education, and accessible infrastructure, social and financial security through meaningful employment.

The vicious circle of poverty and disability adds to their struggle to meet health care and rehabilitation needs of the child with deafblindness. Such demanding situations leads to growing frustration due to exclusion and lack of support from extended family members as well as community. Uncertainties about what future holds for their child, parents also face relationship issues. Sense India works with families of persons with deafblindness across the country, and build their capacity to not just support the basic educational and development needs of their sons and daughters, but also to advocate for their rights.

Partnership is the Key

With generous support from foundations, philanthropic groups and individuals, Sense India ensured that essential ration kits are distributed to deserving families with persons with deafblindness/multiple disabilities in these difficult times. Over the last 2 months, our project partners in different States have procured essential ration items even when grocery shops were shutting



down. In spite of severe challenges to reach to families living in containment zones and high-risk zones, team members strived to reach to such families with help from district administration and volunteers.

Most important was to ensure that children with deafblindness, who may have low immunity due to associated medical conditions get proper nutrition and essential items on time. Providing essential food items meant a lot to the families with single-earning parent; fathers who have lost their job during lockdown; parents who themselves are aged and cannot step out; families who have spent their entire savings during lockdown; daily wage labourers parents and families of children with deafblindness living in far off interior places.

The support to families is being provided through the national network "Prayaas"; a national network of parents of persons with deafblindness in India. Prayaas has more than 1500 families who are providing support to each other and children with deafblindness at local, regional and national levels.

There are various young adults with deafblindness who are engaged with IGA (Income generation Activity) with the support of their families. The support of families become crucial for young adults to deal with the issues related to communication, marketing, stock-keeping and building shopkeeper – customer relationships. The IGA support is based on the community-oriented business plan they develop in consultation with partner organisations. This is one-time support with an amount ranging from INR 20,000 to INR 25,000,



depending on the capacity of the individual. So far, over 130 adults with deafblindness have been provided with the seed capital till March 2020 and they have started businesses such as – Ration shop, Electric Works, Small Scale Poultry Farm, Bike and Cycle Repairing Shops, Book Shops, Cattle Rearing, Stitching and Tailoring, Paper Plates, Bowls and Bag Making, Ironing shop, Canteen and Tiffin Service, Clothes Business etc.

The adults with deafblindness who have received support from Sense India mainly belong to low-income group/Below poverty line (BPL) families. The lockdown and the current pandemic have posed extreme difficulty and challenges for them as their customer turnover has been affected. The difficulties have also posed challenges to families as income from the IGA helped meet daily needs. This combined with the loss of income has made it quite impossible for some of them to afford their regular medication and get adequate nutrition support.

Our Reach-out as of Today

In the first phase of COVID-19 support, Sense India identified young adults with deafblindness from 11 states whose businesses and income have been affected and supported them with Rs. 10,000 each to sustain their business. These persons belong to Bihar, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Odisha, Maharashtra, Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana, Kerala and Tamilnadu. We are also extending support to 1200 families with deafblind children with ration for their homes.

All are welcome to join us and write to us if you need more information about us or follow us at:

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Educational Technology and Management Academy (ETMA)

ETMA is a registered trust engaged primarily in the education space with focus on quality improvement in education through constructively aligned intervention of educational technology and management. ETMA is guided and advised by an interdisciplinary group of educationalists, scientists, medical experts, technologists, management scientists, entrepreneurs and others drawn from IITs, IIMs, Universities, Medical Institutions, Schools, International agencies and corporate leaders in education.

ETMA's work space includes research and consulting, training and capacity building of educational leaders and teachers, media and publications, seminars and conferences, and extension and outreach programme.

ETMA has been consulted and/or collaborated by UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID, CEMCA, Intel, Microsoft and many other organizations.

Under the extension and outreach programmes, ETMA identifies and supports education of brilliant students at risk from poor families converting potential unskilled worker into IIT (Kanpur, Mumbai, Kharagpur) and engineering graduates, university scholars through a monthly scholarship. ETMA has also adopted 35 rural primary schools under School Improvement Programme, and successfully eliminated drop out and achieving improved performance.



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