“The blind must not only be fed and housed and cared for; they must learn to make their lives useful to the community.”

- Julia Ward Howe
CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION
1.0 Introduction

Every individual is born with some inherent potential. It is education which helps a person in realizing his/her potentials and nurturing those. A person who is different from the average is entitled to education which would be suited to his unique needs. Education and proper training enables a person to overcome his/her disability and establish himself/herself as a contributing and an independent member of the society. The researcher conducted a survey in India and Japan to find out about their system of educating the Blind children. Through the present study an attempt was made to compare the systems followed in both the nations.

1.1 Definition of the Key Words

1.1.1 Comparative Study

According to Edmund J. King, comparative study systemises our observations and conclusion in relation to the shaping of the future. In his opinion, in this world now it is no longer possible to find out the solution of any educational or social problem within that country and thus it is necessary to look for it from other countries, cultures and societies. Comparative study serves this purpose to a considerable extent, at least, in the world of education. It refers to the process of comparing and contrasting educational systems, methods, theories or policies with the intention of assessing the strengths, advantages or value of one thing over the other.

The Wiki encyclopedia defines comparative education as a fully established academic field of study that examines education in a country (or group of countries) by using data and insights drawn from the practices and situation in another country or countries.
1.1.2 Education

The term “Education” has been derived from the Latin words—‘Educere’, ‘Educare’, ‘Educo’ and ‘Educatum’. Educere implies drawing out. Educare refers to the process of nourishing, Educo signifies leading forth and Educatum is synonymous with instruction. Therefore, etymologically considered, Education can be explained as the process of drawing out the best from the human being and nourishing the best in and through the physical and socio-cultural environment. In the words of John Dewey, Education is not a preparation for life, rather it is the living. Education is the process of living through a continuous reconstruction of experiences. It is the development of all those capacities in the individual which will enable him/her to control his/her environment and fulfil his/her possibilities.

Education in the Indian perspective is one with ‘Siksha’ or ‘Vidya’ which signify the process of knowing and learning and thereby sublimating the impulses for attaining wisdom. According to ancient Indian thinkers like Sankaracharya, education is the realization of the self. Modern Indian thinkers like Mahatma Gandhi have emphasized that education is the all-round drawing out of the best in child and man – body, mind and spirit.

The Fundamental Law of Education of Japan stipulates the aim of education as “the full development of personality striving for the rearing of people, sound in mind and body, who shall love truth and
justice, esteem the value of the individual, respect labour and have a deep sense of responsibility, and be imbued with an independent spirit, as builders of a peaceful state and society.”


1.1.3 Blind

According to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, USA (IDEA, 1993), “Visual Impairment including Blindness means an impairment in vision, that even with correction, adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term includes both partial sight (low vision) and Blindness.” [Mangal; 2007; p 179]

Vision refers to a person’s ability to see finer details or clearly distinguish forms at varying distances. The Rehabilitation Council of India Act (1992) stipulated that a Visually Handicapped person means a person who suffers from any of the following conditions, namely:

i. Total absence of light;

ii. Visual acuity not exceeding 20/200 (Snellen Chart) in the better eye with the correcting lenses; or

iii. Limitation of the field of vision subtending an angle of 20 degree or worse. [Mangal; 2007; p 179]

According to the Law for the Welfare of Physically Disabled Persons in Japan, visual impairment is defined clinically in terms of:

i. Visual acuity (as measured in accordance with the International Vision Chart and measured degree of correctness; hereafter the same) of both eyes being 0.1 or less;
ii. Visual acuity of one eye at 0.02 or less and the other at 0.6 or less;

iii. Visual field diameter 10 degree or less of both eyes;

iv. Visual field defect of more than 50% in both eyes.

[www.dinf.ne.jp/doc/english/access/0705_IFLArightscom/part2/94_japan_definitions.html]

Visually impaired persons can be classified into two broad categories – those who are Blind and those who have low vision. Blind individuals are those who have no light perception and cannot count fingers at a distance of 1 metre even with corrective glass. Children with visual impairments, from the point of view of education, may at least be classified into two categories:

a) Those affected children who are educated through sensory channels other than vision; and

b) Those affected children who are able to utilize vision (residual) in acquiring educational skills.

The children of the first category refer to fully Blind– have no ability in functional use of vision and are generally called totally Blind. The children of the second category can use their vision in a limited way and are called partially sighted.

Educationally speaking, Blind children are those visually handicapped children who use Braille and partially seeing are those who use large print materials and make use of their residual vision as a primary source of their education.

1.1.4 India

India, located in South Asia, is the seventh-largest country by area. It is a populous democracy with over 1.2 billion people. Bounded by the
Indian Ocean on the south, the Arabian Sea on the south-west, and the Bay of Bengal on the south-east, it shares land borders with Pakistan to the west; China, Nepal, and Bhutan to the north-east; and Burma and Bangladesh to the east. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India#Demographics.]

1.1.5 Japan

Japan, located in the Pacific Ocean, is an island nation in East Asia. It lies to the east of the Sea of Japan, China, North Korea, South Korea and Russia; stretching from the Sea of Okhotsk in the north to the East China Sea and Taiwan in the south. Japan is an archipelago of 6,852 islands. The four largest islands are Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, and Shikoku, which together comprise about ninety-seven percent of Japan's land area. Japan has the world's tenth-largest population, with over 127 million people. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japan.]

1.2 Disability in India and Japan

According to International Classification of Impairment, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH) impairment is any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or functions generally taken to be at the organ level. Impairment is damage to tissue due to disease or trauma. Disability has been defined as any restriction or lack of ability (resulting from an impairment) to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being, generally taken to be at the level of the individual. Disability denotes the consequences of impairment in terms of functional performance and activity by the individual. The ICIDH
defines Handicap as a disadvantage for an individual, resulting from an impairment or disability that limits or prevents fulfillment of a role that is normal (depending on age, gender and socio-cultural factors) for that individual.

Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities, in force since May 2008, ratified by India on 1st October, 2007, persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.


The Disabled Persons’ Fundamental Law in Japan which came into effect on 3rd December 1993 states that “Disabled Persons” mean persons whose daily life in society is substantially limited over the long term due to physical disability, intellectual disability or mental disability.[www.jicafriends.jp/vocational/gi2005/material/resume/welfare_in_japan.html#table3]

The Census of India, 2001 revealed that over 21 million people in India are suffering from one or other kind of disability which is equivalent to 2.1% of the population. Among the different types of disabilities, disability in seeing has the highest prevalence rate of 48.5%.[censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/disabled_population.asp]

The Planning Commission, Government of India 11th Five Year Plan estimates that 5-6% of the population have some kind of disability. [www.cbrforum.in]
According to the Government Report of 2001, 2.55% of the population in Japan has some kind of disability. Among them, 9.28% has disability in seeing. In the year 2006, the disabled population was estimated to be 2.73% with 8.9% having disability in seeing. [http://www8.cao.go.jp/shougai/index.html]

1.3 Education of the Blind

Blind child’s needs and goals for learning and education are not different from those of the regular learners. It is only the means of achieving these goals which are different. The completely Blind children need more systematic plus curricular materials, teaching strategies, assistive technology, etc. About 80-85% of the general curriculum can be duplicated for the Blind. The rest can be provided with modified or special curriculum. In order to compensate his/her difficulty in vision, he/she needs extra support and also learn some skills which are peculiar to Blindness. These skills are plus curricular activities and the additional part of this total curriculum is commonly called Plus Curriculum. The Plus Curriculum skills mainly include

- Sensory Training: Training of the remaining senses in activities or tasks to be performed.
- Orientation and Mobility: Orientation refers to the development of ability to build mental map about one’s immediate environment while mobility is the ability to move from place to place for locomotion and gaining expanded experiences without being tied within a limited periphery of home.
- Braille reading and writing: It includes understanding the Braille inscriptions.
- Abacus: A manual calculator developed in Asia; with proper training it can be used for doing additions, subtractions, multiplications, divisions, decimals, fractions, percentages and square roots.
- Recorded Books (Talking Books): Books which are read out and recorded in the form of audio cassettes and compact discs.
- Typing: This is to be taught after the Blind child has developed good finger coordination and strength. Training can also be given in computers depending on availability.
- Activities of Daily Living: These include Self Care skills, Home skills and Cooking skills.

Lowenfeld suggested five principles suitable for the education of the Blind. They are:

i. Individualization: In order to provide individual care and attention to the Blind children, the class size should be kept small; preferably 5-8 children in a group or class.

ii. Concreteness: Blind children mainly gain knowledge through their auditory and tactile senses. Therefore, concrete materials should be used as much as possible and information should be presented through concrete objects which the Blind child can touch, feel and manipulate.

iii. Unified Instruction: Adequate verbal explanations of things and situations should be provided.
iv. Additional Stimulation: This will help in developing the range of experiences and imagery of the Blind child and also orient him/her to a wider environment.

v. Self–Activity: A Blind child should be taught to differentiate between objects through touch and sound. He/she should be provided opportunity for self–activities of various types—simple to complex as he/she matures.

Other inventions and technological advancement like production of talking books and other materials for the Blind on long playing records; development of the Perkins Brailler; development of the laser cane; development of the talking text writer along with the services of computers have also enhanced education of the Blind children across the world.

1.4 Need of the Study

In today’s awakened societies, every individual as a potentially useful citizen has his/her unique worth and should be provided with sufficient educational opportunities for his/her maximum growth and development. Education is one of the important factors which make people self–sufficient and competent.

Exceptionality of children in one way or the other is deeply associated with the need of the satisfaction of their special needs. For example: the disabled child may feel the need and necessity of overcoming their deficiencies. So, these children are usually referred to as children with special needs. They have to be helped in the process of coping with their exceptionality. They are in great requirement of some appropriate educational measures for helping them in meeting their
exceptionalities and coping with their deficits or extra ordinary abilities. It is, therefore, essential to have an appropriate way to organize adequate special education services for special children.

A special child, irrespective of his/her disability, possesses innate potentials and it is the responsibility of the education system to identify those potentials and nurture them so that they are able to exercise their skills, however limited they might be. Education assists these children in developing their senses to its optimal capacity and makes them competent so that they are not considered burdens of the society. Usefulness determines the value of an individual to the society; with training, individuals with disabilities can contribute more fully to the economy of the country.

Special education has received a new momentum with the increase of knowledge about globalization along with the evolution of new perspectives regarding the rights of individuals with disabilities, and empowerment of those with disabilities. From the point of view of the educators, it is important to look not only at education in their own country, but also at educational circumstances in other countries and learning from each other by searching out information and exchanging opinions and expertise at the global level. Educators who have broader views and increased knowledge would contribute to the further improvement of special education and benefit children with special needs.

The present study is a comparative work between India and Japan regarding their system of educating the Blind. The researcher chose these two nations mainly because both are Asian countries. Both India and Japan have faced domination and devastation; domination by the British for over two hundred years in India and devastation in the
form of nuclear attack in Japan during the Second World War. It was around the same time when both the countries started reshaping their destinies. Yet, today India is a Developing Country, but Japan with its rapid progress has established herself as a Developed Nation. Japan has also made its mark in the field of technology. A comparative study would help in analyzing the facilities and educational opportunities for the Blind in both the countries and incorporate them (if required and if possible) into one’s system. Being a technologically advanced nation, it is always assumed that Japan will have better facilities and educational opportunities for their Blind population. This study is important because it will help in finding out whether this assumption is true; and if it is true then how and to what extent these facilities can be provided to the Blind children in India.

1.5 Conclusion

Education is the acquisition of experiences throughout one’s life. It is a continuous process which intends to bring some desirable changes in the original nature of any individual. It is designed to guide children in learning a culture, moulding their behavior in the ways of adulthood, and directing them toward their eventual role in society. It is, therefore, a process of teaching, training and learning especially in the educational institutions to improve knowledge and develop skills. Education is the activity of integrated and gradual development of individual’s abilities.

All people exhibit differences from one another. Often, the differences are quite apparent; in other instances, the differences may
be subtle. Education, in the form and style of Special Education can meet the special needs of different individuals.

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Introduction

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