

Having Ears Can We Hear Their Need ?

Dr. Geetha Gopinath^[1]
Rajesh S Vallicodu^[2]

Abstract: *Hearing impairment is a very serious disability that affects a large percentage of our population. Early diagnosis and intervention are key to providing hearing impaired students a fair and equitable chance at academic progress. This exploratory study conducted in two inclusive schools in Pathanamthitta District of Kerala used adapted teaching methods to teach students the importance of water conservation. Interviews, direct observation, discussions, lip reading, multimedia presentations, video recording and front row seats for hearing impaired were used to implement the adapted teaching strategy. Results showed the poor preparedness of resource teachers and regular teachers to deal with the impaired students. Facilities were also poor for innovative approaches. Hearing impaired students benefitted from the adapted teaching method. The researcher hopes to encourage innovative practices to help impaired students to develop academically.*

Keywords: *Inclusive schools, adapted teaching strategies, hearing impaired*

I. INTRODUCTION

“Blindness separates us from things, but deafness separates us from people.” Helen Keller

Helen Keller was both blind and deaf and what she has said belongs to an age when persons with handicaps had very little hope. The world has changed since the time of Helen Keller. Impairment is no longer seen as a handicap, rather as a challenge that has to be overcome. This study is meant to be merely an eye-opener into the difficulties faced by hearing impaired students. It tries to study how it would be possible to improve their learning abilities and hopes to promote a research based approach to their development. Hearing Impairment or ‘deafness,’ is a serious problem and its prevalence in India is fairly significant. It is the second most common cause of disability. Approximately 63 million people (6.3%) in India suffer from significant auditory loss Garg, Chadha, Malhotra, Agarwal (2009). Some of these are congenital and some due to other factors. As in any disability early diagnosis and intervention is important for the rehabilitation of children with hearing impairment. This would also involve appropriate support from the family and community Sulabha, Mahendra, Akriti (2013). As a society we are only learning to cope with this impairment and it is hoped that this paper will go one step further in the academic development of hearing impaired.

Schooling for the hearing impaired could be through special schools or inclusive schools. Special schools are very inefficient and could be mere dumping grounds for impaired students. In inclusive schooling children with learning impairment are mainstreamed in regular schools with appropriate support. However, inclusive schooling should be done with care and wisdom. Fact is that it is much more difficult to have successful inclusion of Deaf pupils in mainstream schools as such children have problems with communication. Children with visual and other disabilities can still communicate with their peers whereas hearing

impaired children find it difficult to communicate NAD (2014).

Kerala curriculum framework (2007) gives importance to integrative education for disabled children. The children with special needs are already brought into the mainstream schools. However, the aspect of implementation of the policy is poor as proper guidance or academic support for these students is lacking. In order to help such children each panchayat has only one resource teacher which is insufficient. The responsibility of such a teacher is to visit the school and provide appropriate help to the child for adaptation of the lesson. The benefit of the services of such a teacher is not properly received by the schools. These teachers do not have the necessary training and qualification for dealing with children with disabilities. They may have training in only limited areas of disabilities. Thus school teachers are not able to adapt the lessons for the benefit of such students.

This study has tried to evaluate the efforts of two primary schools in Pathanamthitta District, in providing adapted teaching methods to help students with hearing impairments. Four students with hearing impairments studying in three schools in Pathanamthitta District were chosen. Of these two children were having only partial impairments and hence were not considered. The classroom facilities for these children were limited. Teachers provided support for students only on a routine basis. Teachers were only able to provide emotional caring but lacked the ability to give academic support.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To develop an adapted model for enabling learning of lessons, through modification of lesson plan after giving due consideration to the needs of students in primary classes with hearing impairment.

^[1]Former Principal, MTTTC, Ranny, HOD, M.Ed Department, Mar Severios College of Teacher Education, Chengaroor. P.O, Mallappally, Pathanamthitta (Dt), Kerala -689594.India
E-mail : drgeethagopinath@gmail.com

^[2]P.D.Teacher, G.L.P.School, Kodumthara, Pathanamthitta- 689645, E-mail: glpskodumthara@gmail.com

- To study the difficulties faced by teachers in developing lesson plans for impaired children.
- To try out these adapted lesson plans and provide suggestions for teachers

III. METHODOLOGY

Interviews with the resource teacher for impairments in Pathanamthitta Municipal area, Kerala

Discussions with teachers in the particular school where the students were studying for finding out the facilities for teaching hearing impaired students.

Visits were made to the schools where these students were studying for data collection on the academic levels of the students with hearing impairments.

Adaptation of the lesson "Water the elixir of life" to the needs of the hearing impaired students was done for trying out the research experiment. The purpose of the chapter was to teach the importance of conservation of water. Adaptation involved listing the activities that are difficult for children with hearing impairment, changing the learning activities to meet the needs of children with hearing impairment.

The lesson "Water the elixir of life" was taught to the class including the two hearing impaired student based on the adaptation. The lesson starts with a poem related with the beauty of rain. Students were allowed to recite it.

Develop teaching tools for a particular lesson, which included presentation of the poem in a chart, allowing the child to watch the lip movements of the teacher. Other students also presented the poem in front of the particular child to enable lip reading. The class was divided into pairs and the hearing impaired student was provided the opportunity to read the lip movements of the other student.

Provision was made for enabling the children to do lip reading. A student friend was made to sit next to the impaired student to recite the poem in close proximity so that the lip reading could be done clearly.

Class activities were recorded in a video. After the experiment the child got a chance to watch that video in the computer room.

Students in the class used multimedia to show the effect of lightning and thunder and the falling of rain

Discussions were held about the consequences of the absence of rain and these were noted on the black board and these were read out. Opportunities were given for the students to read these so that the impaired student would get a chance to lip read. The student was given time to note these in the notebook. These were also read out to the student.

IV. METHOD

Case Study Method

The study seeks to emphasize the use of adapted teaching. It involves the collection of data in the settings of the classroom. The study is exploratory in the sense that it seeks to create a ground for a larger study, using a larger sample of children and possibly using quantitative as well as qualitative methods. To prevent researcher bias and improve the

trustworthiness of the research only factual details were collected. Cases were defined as 'students with hearing impairment.'

Study design

The design involved the study of two hearing impaired students from schools in the Pathanamthitta municipal area

Design Theory

A theoretical perspective that teaching methods adapted for the needs of the hearing impaired student could help hearing impaired students to better understand the subjects was the basis of the research.

Data collection

Data collection has been done through: (a) open-ended interviews with key participants (hearing impaired students, teachers, resource teachers, other unimpaired students) (b) direct observation in the classroom. (c) Subjective self report by the student in an interview on the utility of the adapted method and questionnaire on the knowledge base gained by the hearing impaired student after the class.

V. RESULTS

The interview with the resource teacher in Pathanamthitta Municipal area, Kerala, revealed that the resource teacher was not very familiar with the adapted method of teaching hearing impaired students and the teacher did not have proper rapport with the regular teachers of the class in which the hearing impaired student studied. It was also found that the facilities for teaching the hearing impaired was very poor. A visit to the schools where these students were studying indicated poor academic levels of the students with hearing impairments. The hearing impaired child was seated in the front row which enabled the student to lip read well. In addition the presentation of the poem in a chart along with the close observing of the lip movements of the teacher made it easy on the hearing impaired student. Also, when the other students presented the poem in front of the particular child the lip reading by the child enabled better understanding of the words. Apart from this the division of the class into pairs provided the hearing impaired student the opportunity to read the lip movements of the other student as that student read the poem.

The methods adapted enabled the hearing impaired student to understand the importance of conservation of water. The video recording of the class activities and the multimedia program to show the effect of lightning, thunder and falling of rain was enjoyed by the students and improved their ability to deal with the subject as could be seen from the post class interview. The discussions and other notes on the black board with the lip reading reinforced the subject of conservation of water.

VI. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An evaluation of the students with hearing impairment after being taught with the adapted lesson plan using a subjective interview provided us feedback that the students were able to

understand the values of water and the need for its conservation. This is indicative that the adapted method of teaching was essentially good for these students. However, it is also a fact that as it stands, students with hearing impairment were not able to get the best of educational inputs through the inclusive classroom. Some other points that stand out based on the study are as follows:

1. The interaction with the teachers revealed that both the resource teachers and the regular teachers did not have sufficient experience or grasp of the methods for adapted teaching.
2. It is best to adapt the teaching methods in the normal routine process of teaching in the inclusive classroom. This is so because it encourages the involvement of the others students in the process and they learn better through peer teaching and learning.
3. The number of resource teachers need to be increased and the post of one person per panchayat is insufficient as the teacher cannot do justice to the needs of several students with diverse impairments.
4. One important aspect that was noticed by the researcher is that teachers were not familiar with the hearing aid. Students with hearing impairment should sit at places where they can lip read properly.
5. Multi media classroom is very good for helping students with hearing impairment.
6. It is also to be noted that we cannot generalize the methodology for all hearing impaired students, rather it has to be typical based on the need of each student.

All of these indicate the need for a systematic and efficient approach to dealing with the training and equipping of the resource teachers and regular teachers in the school system.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited by its very nature as it is a case study and the results cannot be generalized to other situations and experiences, though parallels can be drawn.

Implications of the Study

This study raises a number of important issues especially relating to the academic and developmental aspects of students who have hearing impairments. It is very clear that, students with hearing impairment when placed in inclusive secondary school settings experience besides communication problems, feelings of anger, frustration and isolation depending on the dictates of the environment. Learning is a process that happens under observable and ideal conditions to the extent that situations in which students are placed deliberately or otherwise have great effects on them. Also literature on teacher attitudes towards the inclusion of hearing impaired students indicates that this area is still shrouded with controversies and discrepancies. Lastly, practices that facilitate the inclusion of hearing impaired students were contingent on skills of teachers, the needs of learners and the availability of resources. Thus it becomes imperative that all these factors are considered and put in place for effective teaching of students with hearing

impairment Gudyanga, Wadesango, Eliphanos, Gudyanga(2014).

VII. CONCLUSION

The world has gone fast forward from the time of Helen Keller and there are more and more innovations that are taking center stage in the journey of life. This study is merely a drop in the ocean. The hearing impaired students need a just and equitable response from our side to their plight. It is hoped that this study will open more ears to hear the cry of the people whose worlds are shut off to sound and whose world is different than ours.

VIII. REFERENCES

- [1] Gar, S., Chadha, S., Malhotra, S., Agarwal, A.K. (2009). Deafness: burden, prevention and control in India. National Medical Journal of India, Mar-Apr;22(2):79-8
- [2] Gudyanga E., Wadesango N., Eliphanos Hove., Gudyanga (2014)., Challenges Faced by Students with Hearing Impairment in Bulawayo Urban Regular Schools., Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences ISSN 2039-2117 (online) ISSN 2039-9340 (print) MCSER Publishing, Rome-Italy Vol 5 No 9
- [3] Kerala Curriculum Framework (2007). Available at: www.scert.kerala.gov.in/images/docs/kcf_englishfinal.pdf
- [4] NAD Deaf Education., (2013) Available at <http://nadindia.org.in/position-papers/education/73-nad-deaf-education.html>
- [5] Sulabha, M. N., Mahendra, S. N., Akriti, S., (2013)., M.M. Institute of Medical Sciences & Research, Mullana, Ambala, Rehabilitation of hearing impaired children in India – An update