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Inclusion of Experiential Learning Programme for Visually Impaired Students

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Abstract

The paper is related with the inclusion of experiential learning in curriculum for special education teacher training courses and discusses that how experiential learning is effective in enhancing academic achievement, self-confidence, mastery over the content, self-management and quality of leadership in children with visual impairment. Experiential learning includes engaging the students in direct experience and is focused in developing knowledge, understanding, skill and co-operation. The approach of teaching in experiential classroom is different than traditional classroom. Experiential learning activities for normal children are helpful in learning through experiences, systematize their work, evaluating their own performance and furnish a suitable direction for long term learning. If we throw light on the chapter IV of RPWD there is a provision that government shall provide formal and non-formal vocational and skill training schemes and programmes of person with disability with sufficient support. As a result if experiential learning is included in teacher training courses for special education, than it may prove a potential tool for enhancing learning experiences of children with visual impairment. This paper proposes that experiential learning should be made a part of teacher training courses for teacher educators at D.Ed., B.Ed. and M.Ed. level. The possible benefits of inclusion of experiential learning would lead to enhance academic achievement of children with visual impairments and help them to retain material relatively for longer period of time. The paper concludes that RCI may modify its teacher education curriculum to incorporate experiential learning a mandatory part in all teacher training courses.

Key Words: Experiential Learning, children with visual impairement, special education.

Introduction

Experiential learning is an instructional approach that engages students in direct experiences, fostering knowledge, skills, and cooperation through active participation. This paper examines the inclusion of experiential learning in the curriculum for special education teacher training courses and its effectiveness in enhancing academic achievement, self-confidence, mastery over content, self-management, and leadership qualities in children with visual impairment. The implementation of experiential learning can significantly contribute to improving educational outcomes for children with disabilities.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the significance of experiential learning in enhancing academic achievement and self-confidence in children with visual impairment.
2. To examine the impact of experiential learning on the mastery of content, self-management, and leadership skills in visually impaired children.
3. To propose the inclusion of experiential learning in special education teacher training courses at D.Ed., B.Ed., and M.Ed. levels.
4. To analyze the provisions under Chapter IV of the RPWD Act related to formal and non-formal vocational and skill training for persons with disabilities.

Experiential Learning: An Overview

Experiential learning involves engaging students in real-world experiences that promote the development of practical skills and knowledge. This instructional method differs from traditional classroom approaches by emphasizing active participation, self-reflection, and the application of theoretical concepts to practical situations. Experiential learning is particularly beneficial for children with visual impairment as it facilitates long-term knowledge retention and self-reliance.

Significance of Experiential Learning for Children with Visual Impairment

Children with visual impairment face unique educational challenges that require

specialized teaching strategies. Experiential learning provides the following benefits:

1. **Enhanced Academic Achievement:** Active engagement in experiential activities promotes better understanding and retention of content, leading to improved academic outcomes.
2. **Increased Self-Confidence:** Hands-on experiences allow children to develop problem-solving skills and confidence in their abilities.
3. **Mastery Over Content:** Repeated practical experiences enable students to gain a deeper understanding and command of the subject matter.
4. **Self-Management Skills:** Experiential learning fosters independence by encouraging students to evaluate their performance and take responsibility for their learning.
5. **Leadership Qualities:** Collaborative experiential activities promote teamwork, decision-making, and leadership development.

Legal Framework: Provisions of the RPWD Act

Chapter IV of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act emphasizes the government's responsibility to provide formal and non-formal vocational and skill training for persons with disabilities. This legal provision supports the integration of experiential learning in special education teacher training programs. By incorporating experiential learning, teacher educators can equip future teachers with the skills necessary to meet the diverse learning needs of visually impaired students.

Recommendations for Curriculum Modification

To optimize educational outcomes for children with visual impairment, the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) should consider the following recommendations:

1. **Incorporate Experiential Learning:** Make experiential learning a mandatory component of special education teacher training courses at D.Ed., B.Ed., and M.Ed. levels.
2. **Develop Experiential Modules:** Design practical modules that align with the curriculum and address the specific needs of visually impaired learners.
3. **Teacher Training:** Provide specialized training to educators on implementing experiential learning methodologies in their classrooms.
4. **Assessment and Evaluation:** Implement continuous assessment strategies to evaluate the effectiveness of experiential learning on student outcomes.

Conclusion

Incorporating experiential learning in special education teacher training courses has the potential to transform educational practices and improve outcomes for children with visual impairment. By fostering academic achievement, self-confidence, content mastery, self-management, and leadership skills, experiential learning empowers visually impaired students to succeed. The Rehabilitation Council of India should consider making experiential learning an integral part of the special education curriculum to ensure holistic and inclusive education for all learners.

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