
Intellectual Disability: Not A Burden, It's A Challenge

Our group visited Chinmaya Institute For Mentally Challenged Children. It is a residential institution which includes training for around 35 children. This institute aims to train the children so that they would be able to do at least their daily routine. According to science, the main cause for the mental retardation in children might be due to genetic disorders such as Fragile X syndrome and Down's syndrome, other factors such as pulling a child with forceps during delivery. Thus they thought that we cannot change the genetic makeup after a child is born but we can train and overcome his/her mental retardation with the help of various activities and physical therapies. The parents send their children to this institution and there would be two vacations in summer and winter in which they visit their homes. The disability is not a person's problem but the normalcy constructed by the society are the hurdles for them to be normalized and fit in the society. The children with mental retardation can also be normalized if they would be given proper training with love and affection rather than discriminating against them from the society. With this belief, this institution had taken certain steps and made protocol for the children.

One garden is constructed in this residential institution in which they planted bamboo trees, ayurvedic herbs and several sacred trees. Bamboo trees are planted to prevent the heating up of the institution. They made their own protocols and curriculum for the daily routine of children. There would be no fixed timings for them to wake up in the morning. They believed that the minds of those children are of age 2-3 years so there would be no restrictions for them and in this way they can activate their minds and get the idea of waking up in the morning. The institution has well-trained teachers who can take care of these children and shape them. The head of the institution had made certain protocols for the training of the teachers first. After waking up in the morning, they were supposed to freshen up and the teachers help them in the sanitation purposes and bathing as they are not able to do it on their own. They follow their curriculum strictly on a daily basis. This is the overview of their morning routine. People help everyone in all ways but when it comes to the help of sanitation, none of them will help. So this institution aims that every single child can do their bathing and sanitation on their own. They are providing lunch in the afternoon and there is a tradition in which first they will perform prayers and then they will eat the lunch. From this observation we can conclude that the teachers are teaching good manners also. A normal child cannot follow strict rules of not eating food if prayers are not performed but these children are well trained by the teachers and follow rules. Mental retardation is an impairment in one's body but the society does not accept it and term them as disabled as they would not be able to fulfill every task and norms constructed by the society which recognize them as normal. But the fact is that they can also fit in the society in their own way. They do not want people to pity them.