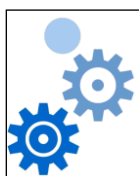


“MAKING IT WORK!” Good Practice case study



How to successfully facilitate integration for vision-impaired students in mainstream education?

Title : Integration of students with vision-impairment in mainstream schools
Organization/project : Braille Without Borders
Location : Lhasa, Shiagtse, Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) - CHINA
Scope : Regional (TAR)

Related articles of the CRPD :

This practice relates to **article 24** concerning the right to education.

Related article of the China National Law of the Protection of Persons with Disabilities (2008)

This practice relates to the **Chapter 3** concerning the right to education.

Article 25 “Ordinary educational institutions shall be open to students with disabilities who are able to receive ordinary education, and offer them facilitation and help.

Ordinary primary schools and junior high schools must accept children or juveniles with disabilities who are able to adapt themselves to life and study there; ordinary senior high schools, secondary polytechnic schools, and institutions of higher learning must accept students with disabilities who meet the state admission requirements and shall not deny their admission because of their disabilities; in case of such denial, the students concerned, his family members or guardians are entitled to appeal to relevant authorities, and the latter shall instruct the schools concerned to enroll the student. “



High school vision-impaired students integrated in mainstream school.

EDUCATION –
EQUAL
OPPORTUNITY-
INCLUSION –
SELF-
INTEGRATION –
DISABILITY AWARENESS –
AUTONOMY- MAINSTREAMING

Key words

Background and context

In 1998, Braille Without Borders, a school for children with vision-impairment was opened in Lhasa by Sabriye Tenberken and her Paul Kronenberg. The school was the first initiative fostering the needs of children with vision-impairment. Later in 2004, a similar school, with a vocational training component was opened by Braille without Borders in Shigatse, the second city of TAR. Concerned by the future

autonomy and self-reliance of the students, the founders worked on the integration of their students with vision-impairment into the mainstream education system.

Description of the practice

Successful integration of students with vision-impairment in regular schools is often only possible because of costly investments and lots of commitment on the part of parents, teachers and government social workers providing daily support to the students. In TAR, such a service is not available. On one side, there are no social workers, and on the other teachers lead classes with more than 40 students which prevents them from dedicating sufficient time to students with vision-impairment.

In the Braille Without Borders school, children with vision-impairment are coming from all over TAR with no prior education. During their two first years of training, they gain enough **self-confidence to cope with daily life independently**. First, the students receive an **intensive training in orientation, mobility and daily living skills** (orientation in a room and the school compound, walking with a cane, eating with chopsticks and daily hygienic skills) followed by a training in the **Tibetan, Chinese, English and mathematical Braille script**. In addition to the training of the special techniques for persons with vision-impairment, the students are also taught in basic colloquial Chinese and English language skills. With this knowledge they are in a position where they have something to offer to other students in mainstream schools.

When ready, the students with vision-impairment are integrated into mainstream schools. They will ask sighted schoolmates to read what is on the blackboard and in return, they provide assistance with English and/or Chinese. Since the students also receive mobility and orientation training, they are rather independent. In this way, an **equal relationship between sighted and students with vision impairment develops**. Students are generally able to make a lot of friends but also met some competitors in class which shows that the integration is real and that the students with vision-impairment do not get a special treatment.

Process involved

The integration process started in 2004 with 4 students that were sent in primary boarding school near Lhasa (Medrogondra). The experience was successful and opened the path to more integration in mainstream school. In between, most of **the official text books for primary and secondary education have been translated in Tibetan, Chinese and English Braille**, depending on the subject. In 2012, among the students with vision-impairment of Lhasa and Shigaste, 25 students are integrated in primary school, 28 students in middle junior school, 7 students in senior high school. 3 students will be integrated in university next year.

The factors that made this practice possible

- Exchange of information between headmasters/teachers which have already experiences in integrating students with vision-impairment.
- Strong involvement of the Tibet Disabled Persons' Federation and the Education Bureau to provide all the official documents.
- Most of the official text books for primary and secondary education are available in Braille. (prepared by Braille Without Borders)

Some of the difficulties encountered

- The project faced resistance from some mainstream schools, where headmasters and teachers had no experiences dealing with persons with disabilities and were scared about accepting students with vision-impairment. They were worried about their security and by possible additional workload. Negotiations conducted by the Tibet Disabled Persons' Federation and the Education Bureau were successful in convincing the schools to accept students with vision-impairment.
- Teachers can not correct children homework's written in Braille. Some time has to be allocated for the children with disabilities to read aloud their homework to the teachers.
- Students with vision-impairment could not take official examinations. Later, a teacher with Braille knowledge has been appointed by the Government to correct tests from students with vision-impairment.

The effects / impact of the practice

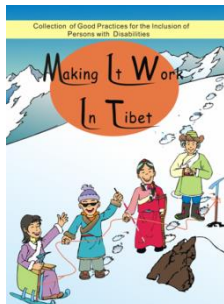
This practice is an example of the possible successful integration of person with disabilities in the mainstream society. **Enough self-confidence and basic education are necessary for students with vision-impairment** to integrate themselves into regular schools. But this integration is also contributing to strengthen **their assertive skills and future integration to a labor market and society**. Integration of student with vision-impairment is necessary to develop their understanding on how the society is functioning and to gain independence. It also contribute to develop knowledge and cooperation between the vision-impaired and sighted communities at an early stage.

Recommendations to replicate this practice

- The successful integration is only possible with **children with vision-impairment who are well prepared and have a strong self-confidence**.
- **Exchange workshops between schools** which have already integrate students with vision-impairment and the school intending to do so should be organised.
- **Disability awareness sessions** should be given to students, parents, teachers, and headmasters before starting the integration process.
- Media, in particular TV and radio, have a big impact on people knowledge and attitude toward disability. **Media should be lobbied** to give more information on possible student integration into mainstream school.

More information

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Full project report: [Collection of good practices for the inclusion of people with disabilities](#)

Criteria for the good practices: see page 8 (Part 1 of the report)

Recommendations from the good practices: Part 3 of the report