



## **Educating Visually Impaired Students: Affective Practices among Teachers and Parents in Schools for the Blind**

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### ***Abstract***

The research paper explores the role of teachers' and parents' affect in shaping the formal education process and everyday lives of visually impaired students in Odisha, India. Drawing from the ethnographic observations from the Schools for the Blind, the research study informs how teachers and parents collaborate in the everyday lives of visually impaired students. This collaboration provides intellectual, emotional, and social skills that sustain learning, dignity, and well-being in visually impaired students. The research study unravels various issues and concerns among the parents and educators, particularly their affect in making informed, functional, and independent citizens. The research inputs are highly useful for all the stakeholders dealing with the visually impaired students.

***Keywords:*** *Affect; Visually Impaired Students; Parents; Teachers; Care*

### ***Introduction***

Affect can be seen not just as the management of feelings, but also as the circulation of affect in the social relationship (Brennan, 2015). The affect of an individual is not just an inner feeling but also a relational force that circulates among individuals, which shapes the social environment of the individuals (ibid.). Affect in the context of educating the children with disabilities can be seen as the daily acts of attentiveness, care, patience, encouragement, and empathy performed by the teachers (Yeşilkaya Bennett, 2024) and the parents (Torres & Ohajunwa, 2025) of the children involved in the educational experience. Affect, thus, is not just the emotional work performed by the individuals involved in the educational experience, but also a collective process that shapes the educational institutions.

The research paper aims to examine the affective aspects of the educational world of children with disabilities, particularly the visually impaired. The paper is informed by the following question: how do

these educational worlds of the visually impaired students, including affect, go beyond the classmates towards teachers and parents? This question is informed by the assumption that the education of children with visual impairment is not limited to the classroom. Rather, it involves an array of relationships that create the educational world of the child with visual impairment.

By examining the everyday ethnographic encounters in the educational world in particular, and everyday lives in the School for the Blind. This paper aims to illustrate the significance of the affect of teachers and parents on the educational engagement of the child with visual impairment. Here, 'School for the Blind' is the administrative term for the school, but the students who attend it are referred to as children with visual impairment.

## ***Operationalizing the Study***

### **Methodology**

The ethnographic data collected from Schools for the Blind in Odisha, India, primarily consist of detailed field notes documenting teachers' and parents' everyday life from the fieldwork conducted between October 2025 and February 2026. Thus, the process of data collection and interpretation not only focuses on verbal narratives and observations but also on understanding the emotions underlying them.

The methodological approach that the research study has used to collect data is described as patchwork ethnography (Günel & Watanabe, 2023). Patchwork ethnography is a methodological approach that recognizes the research conducted in short, fragmented, geographically dispersed, or remote fieldwork sessions (ibid.). This method challenged the traditional, long-term, immersive fieldwork and allows researchers to incorporate personal aspects into the scholarly work. The research study has used situational analysis (Clarke, 2016) to analyze the data through episodic instances. Situational analysis focuses on the situation as the primary unit of data rather than just addressing human actions or social processes (ibid. 2).

The research study has approached through patchwork ethnography and situational analysis due to the restriction on the access to detailed institutional information. The restriction includes students' & parents' data, access to residential and hostel areas, limited but surveilled interviews & observations, and uneven openness across multiple schools. This uncovered a complete form of surveillance (Foucault, 1977) and a total institution (Goffman, 1961) where the flow of information is bureaucratically controlled. The information here reveals how the institution monitors the flow of information by surveilling the researchers and controlling the institution, like a prison discussed by Foucault (op cit.) and the asylum by Goffman (op cit.), respectively.

Thus, Situational analysis, when combined with patchwork ethnography, will provide a vast array of information from the limited data collected. The institutional restriction happened due to the corresponding author's low vision condition, further restricting the accessibility to the field. This condition might unfold the underlying problems of governance and pedagogical structures that the institutions do not want to uncover. It had also shown how disabled bodies and disabled narrative are disciplined and controlled within the institution.

The authors could not disclose further details of the schools and their universe due to ethical concerns. The corresponding author interviewed 30 students and 7 teachers for the study. Here, the corresponding author's disability functioned as an epistemic position that shaped attention to practices that are often invisible when viewed visually. The paper examines attention and perception among teachers and parents through the lens of a low-vision researcher.

## The Events

There were three events that we will be discussing in the following paragraphs:

**Event I:** The mother stayed outside the kindergarten classroom during school hours while her son attended his classes. She took her son to school after finishing her morning chores. She stated, *“While the school, teachers, and administration are ‘okay, not that great, but supportive, the parent is only allowed to stay during the kindergarten level, but not beyond.”*

**Event II:** During the lunch hours, the father took his child home during his working hours as his class got completed. During the brief conversation with the teacher, he learned that his child could not communicate about his bathroom activities, so he relieved himself in the classroom. The teacher noticed the child's behavior on the second day, but the child was not present on the first day. The teacher discussed the problem with the parent, asking him to put a diaper on his child and provide another one, while remaining calm.

**Event III:** Before the start of the morning assembly, a conversation took place between the student and the teacher, as the student had not taken his breakfast in the hostel. The teacher explained to the student that they should be responsible for their actions, as taking breakfast is a habit and an obligation both for oneself and for one's body. These events will help clarify what affect and care mean in the following section.

## The Life of Affect: Ordinary Encounters, Extraordinary Meanings

At Schools for the Blind, the everyday functions of schooling were developed and sustained through affective ties between parents and teachers, while pedagogical structures ensured that schooling processes functioned well. We suggest that affect in these institutions became distributed practices as they emerge through small interactions, gestures of care and concern, and moral support that facilitate the environment of the institution. Care can be thought of as a relational infrastructure shared among actors who can together provide both educational and emotional support to children.

In the first event, the mother who remains outside her son's kindergarten classroom throughout the school day, waiting for the end of the school hours, is an example of how parental care has extended beyond the home into the institution. This mother arrives at school each day, having completed her morning housework, and sits inside the classroom, demonstrating an affective commitment to her son and establishing a bridge between the home and school environments. By remaining inside the classroom, the mother provides emotional reassurance during transitions into a new environment. Such Events of waiting for a child, which are infrequently written about in institutional narratives, are examples of how parents provide affection to their children. At the same time, the limitations imposed on parents' ability to remain at the kindergarten level demonstrate how institutions have increasingly exerted control over their affective participation. This shows how power within an institution regulates not only the researchers but also the parents, who are considered outsiders.

The second event illustrates how the teacher employed affective strategies to address the young child's physical needs (e.g., going to the washroom) and communication barriers (e.g., using words to communicate what they needed). The exchange between the teacher and the parent about the child's inability to communicate the need to go to the washroom illustrated that caregiving for children with impaired vision is a shared responsibility between parents and teachers. Affect in this Event was exemplified in the teacher's display of patience, empathy, and pedagogical understanding. In suggesting that another set of diapers be provided for the child, affect can be seen as not only supportive of the

child's emotional well-being but also pragmatic, considering the child's developmental stage without compromising the child's self-esteem.

In the third event, affect, in the sense of its moral aspects, is highlighted in the teacher's experience with students in a school environment. A teacher had a private conversation with a student who had not taken breakfast at the hostel. The teacher's private conversation with the student provided an excellent example of how everyday activities (such as eating) can be considered morally acceptable when viewed through a self-care lens, even when done privately in a public space. This example illustrated how teachers use affect to establish a combination of self-discipline for the student and a physical awareness of their bodies, as a parent does in the above two scenarios. This incident helps to understand the idea of affective pedagogy (Quiñones et al., 2021; Ahmed, 2025), in which everyday daily routines create opportunities for teachers to help develop students' positive body image and well-being.

Here, affect was conceptualised as a distributed network rather than the sole responsibility of the individual. Parents contributed to the distribution of affect through their acts of waiting, providing company, and offering emotional support. Teachers provided affect through their ability to communicate supportively, guide with moral values, and express patience in pedagogical practices. Thus, the institution itself becomes a regulatory mechanism. The vulnerability due to the loss of sight reframes the institutional policy towards a more effective nature that includes additional care from teachers as well as parents.

The distribution of care across the school revealed the extent to which institutions depend on forms of labour that are often invisible (e.g., waiting inside a classroom, mediating physical communication, guiding routine behaviours, and adaptive behaviours among teachers and parents). Collectively, these acts are examples of subtle forms of affect that help sustain the educational environment. These acts also help to understand how disability reshapes expectations of responsibility. These responsibilities, as we observe, are often needed by the children with visual impairment due to the absence of ocular-based coordination.

The role of becoming a parent for a disabled child plays an important role. Maintaining the role as a parent, both father and mother played an important role in the child's care. The act of care shows that both the genders are equally involved in the child's upbringing. This defied the notion of gender roles in caregiving as an act of maternal instinct.

Affect here is a form of emotional infrastructure that holds relationships among parents and teachers towards the visually impaired students. It is through these everyday, ordinary interactions that caring is produced and flows across bodies, spaces, and boundaries. The actions, especially those shown by teachers, are neither overly protective attitudes (Aruldas et al., 2023) nor unwillingness to take responsibility (Taneja-Johansson et al., 2021). Instead, there is a sense of affection for a child with visual impairment, as seen in these observations, which the parents accompany. Finally, the data shows that caring for visually impaired students extends to the practices of affect, responsibility, and embodied experience of teachers and parents.

While observing care positively, we have also noted the possible tensions of being cared for by asking, 'Does affect empower or regulate disabled bodies?' It does both empowering and regulating. The affective process is helpful to understand the students' dependency on parents and teachers. This dependency also regulates their actions, which, in turn, affect the autonomy of movement, as they are always accompanied.

## Conclusion

This paper examined the role of affect in shaping the educational experiences of visually impaired students in Schools for the Blind in Odisha through ethnographic observations of interactions among teachers, parents, and students. The study shows that affect is not merely an individual emotion but a relational process that circulates through everyday interactions within the institution. Ordinary encounters such as a parent waiting outside a classroom, a teacher calmly addressing a child's bodily communication, and conversations about daily routines illustrate how care and affect sustain the educational environment.

The findings demonstrate that the education of visually impaired students extends beyond formal pedagogy. Teachers and parents collaboratively engage in affective labour, including patience, attentiveness, guidance, and reassurance. These practices create an affective infrastructure that supports the learning, dignity, and well-being of students, although such labour often remains invisible in institutional narratives.

At the same time, the paper highlights how institutional structures regulate access and participation. Within this context, affect operates both as support and regulation, shaping students' routines and responsibilities. The corresponding author's low-vision perspective further informed the ethnographic attention to these subtle interactions. Overall, the paper argues that recognising the affective labour of teachers and parents is essential for understanding disability education and for strengthening more collaborative and inclusive institutional practices.

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