Inclusive Education – Dismal Future

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ABSTRACT

There has been enormous thrust in the National Policy on Education, 1986 to mainstream disabled children in the Elementary Education programme. The current survey by NUEPA provides valuable data on the status of integrating disabled children under inclusive Education. This paper looks at the paradigm shift in the education of the disabled, focus on International Scenario; highlight the disparities across states in India. Finally, the paper examines the implication of Data for strengthening Inclusive Education. The paper concludes with the emphasis that the Government should work towards providing high quality Education to the disabled and provide relevant training to teachers. This should be an integral part of the implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. The dream of Universalisation Elementary Education will be fulfilled after every disabled child is integrated into the mainstream of Education.

National Policy of Education (NPE), 1986 devoted an entire chapter on the Education of the Disabled. NPE while analysing the current scenario estimated that there are 12 million disabled persons, out of which about 2.6 million fall in the age group of 4-15 years. To this, it added another 1.7 million Mentally Handicapped children (MH), thus bringing the total number of disabled children falling under Universalisation of Elementary Education(UEE) to 4.3 million.

The current survey by National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) based on the DISE data of 2006 estimated that 1.62 million disabled children are enrolled in the elementary classes across the country with 1.2 million in primary and 0.38 million in upper primary classes. Within the primary, 0.99%

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of the relevant age group of disabled children are studying and it is 0.87% in the upper primary. The enrolment of disabled girls of the above classes in the primary and upper primary classes is only 42% and 40%, respectively. This difference is also reflected in the Gender Parity Index (GPI) calculated for disabled children. The GPI is as low as 0.71 in primary, 0.67 in upper primary levels. This is much lower than the GPI in case of overall enrolment. Urban areas have slightly higher GPI than rural areas. While the enrolment at primary stands at 0.99%, GPI comes down drastically and it is much lower for the girls. This fact brings out the status of inclusive education as it highlights that, even though disabled children enroll at the primary school, they dropout sooner or later and this trend is much more among girls. As a result, UEE is able to more or less achieve the enrolment of disabled children, but not retention and achievement.

Inclusive Education

There has been a paradigm shift in the education of disabled from institutionalised special education programmes to integrating children of all types of disability into the main stream of general education with an exception to severely handicapped children. This shift in the policy decision of the Government of India paved the way for re-orienting teacher education programmes and providing basic infrastructure facilities at schools including building ramps. The data available indicate that the country has a long way to go in achieving inclusive education. In fact, inclusive education is not necessarily limited to bringing disabled children to the main education system and building ramps. It is rather a change in the outlook and an important milestone in providing a new direction to the very philosophy of integration. When integration became an approach to educating disabled children across the world, India chose to accept this and implement in the primary and upper primary schools. A number of problems have arisen as a result of this paradigm shift. These problems will be analysed in this paper with suggestions for achieving inclusive education.

International Scenario

India is a signatory to or participated in the United Nations Rights of the Child, United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities, the Jomtien Declaration on Education for All and the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action.

"Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual emotionat social, linguistic or other conditions". (Article 3, Salamanca Framework for Action).

"Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all, moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system". (Article 2, Salamanca Statement).

This framework stems from the message of the Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All (1990) and was reaffirmed in the Dakar Framework for Action (2000).

"... In order to attract and retain children from marginalised and excluded groups, education systems should respond flexibly Education systems must be inclusive, actively seeking out children Who are not enrolled, and responding flexibly to the circumstances and needs of all learners..." (Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments. Expanded Commentary on the Dakar Framework for Action, Para 33).

Rule 6 of the UN Standard Rules for Persons with Disabilities

'States should recognise the principle of equal primary, secondary and tertiary educational opportunities for children, youth and adults with disabilities in integrated settings. They should ensure that the education of persons with disabilities is an integral part of the educational system. General education authorities are responsible for the education of persons with disabilities in integrated settings. Education for persons with disabilities should form an integral part of National Educational Planning, Curriculum Development and School Organisation'.

The Indian 'Equal Opportunities and Rights of Persons with Disabilities ACT' 1995, Rule 26, speak about the 'education of children with disabilities up to the age of 18 years in an appropriate environment'.

Indian Scenario

Education of children with disabilities in India, as all over the world, has moved from segregation, special schools to integrated education. There is a national level central government sponsored scheme called

Integrated Education of Disabled Children (IEDC). This project was started in 1980s and designed based on the experience gathered from a UNICEF assisted pilot project called PIED (Project on Integrated Education of Disabled Children). In the mid-1980s many NGOs implemented this IEDC with grants from Government of India. This project is implemented by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. This is basically an itinerant resource teaching approach and one resource teacher was given to every eight children with special needs.

Inclusion of Holistic Vision

Any child may experience a special need during the course of educational years (UNESCO). Some children feel 'left-outs' and never enter school or enter only for a few years and, as repeaters, become 'dropouts' or, more correctly 'pushed-outs', without their needs having been met. These children are a vivid illustration of the failure of schools to teach rather than the pupils' failure to learn. A school system emphasising Education for All should ensure the right of all children to a meaningful education based on individual needs and abilities (Johnson 2002).

The regular schools will now increasingly play a major role in making provision for children with special educational needs available nation-wide. Making the school system flexible and adopting an inclusive approach may, however, prove the most challenging task of all, a task calling for deep reflection and discussion of the two fundamental questions: "What is the overall role of education" and "What is it that we want children to learn in school?" It might lead to the need of reforming the school system as a whole from a traditional, examination-oriented to an inclusive, child-oriented approach.

Disparity Across States

Nature of disability varies among the children in the 6-14 age groups. Table 1 indicates enrolment of children by nature of disability. The direct implication of this is the question of providing facilities and re-training the teachers both on the skills side and the needed attitude. When Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) was launched, it was expected to cater to a substantial number of disabled children in the age group of 0-6 years. The number of disabled children covered in the primary classes either through ICDS or through pre-primary education is quite low. Again here the data is limited to the number

enrolled and not the quality of service provided. A number of studies evaluating the disability programmes and the ICDS schemes have revealed that social stigma of not bringing disabled children to Anganwadi Centres has been a major hindrance. Even though the respective state governments with the help of NGOs have tried to re-train Anganwadi workers in order to be able to diagnose and address the needs of disabled children, the reality provides a dismal picture. There are a good number of Anganwadi centres with absolutely zero disabled children found in a study conducted by Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore (Somaiah, 2005). The ability to attract and retain disabled children is rather high among the private managed schools compared to the government schools. When children do not enter the pre-school programmes in ICDS, they are much more reluctant to enter primary education at the age of six years. Enrolment of children across disability (Table 1) indicates that the highest number have moving disability, followed by visual and 'mentally retarded' in primary schools (1-5) as well as in upper primary schools (1-8).

TABLE 1
Enrolment by Nature of Disability: 2005-06

Disability in	*Grades*		
	I-V	VI-VIII	I-VIII
Seeing	20.06	24.47	21.10
Hearing	9.81	9.50	9.74
Speech	12.53	9.56	11.83
Moving	26.96	36.03	29.09
Mentally Retarded	18.97	9.39	16.72
Others	11.66	11.06	11.52
% to Total Enrolment	0.99	0.87	0.96

Source: NUEPA Study

Enrolment of disabled children across rural and urban areas (Table 2) indicates Gender Parity Index (GPI) of girls to be 0.69 in rural areas and it is 0.74 in urban areas. This is explained due to the higher levels of awareness among parents of girls in urban areas and the increased facilities available in urban schools. Table 3 highlights the enrolment of children across grades by nature of disability and this also supports the earlier table wherein the dominant disabilities seem to be moving, seeing and mental

retardness. Even though across disability, hearing (9.74) and speech (11.83) have lower percentage, its implications on teacher training and retraining are rather crucial. Even a small number of children with certain specific disabilities need to be catered to. This is the major challenge facing the successful implementation of inclusive education. The skill sets provided during the pre-service training of teachers is not substantial to handle varied disabilities in schools. Besides, teachers in many training institutions during pre-service training do not get an opportunity even to visit schools with disabled children, let alone conducting practice teaching in these schools. The lack of hands-on experience in the pre-service training is a major limitation in implementing inclusive education.

Physical Infrastructure

While every physical infrastructure called, facility indicator makes a huge difference for a normal child to be enrolled and retained under UEE, it makes much more difference to a disabled child. To illustrate, schools without blackboard would be a major disadvantage to a partially visually impaired child than a normal child. Lack of facilities for drinking water, for girls toilets, keep away disabled girls from attending schools. Lack of presence of women teachers will add to the lower percentage of disabled girls enrolled under UEE. In addition to this, absence of ramps in schools would make a difference not only to the enrolment of disabled children but speak volume about the effort and attitude of the administrators in making inclusive education a reality under UEE. Even though *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) emphasises on enrolment of disabled children, there are a large number of schools existing without ramps. The DISE data indicate that only a few schools across the country have the provision of ramps in schools (Table 4). The percentage of such schools is as low as 15.65 in primary and 26.19 in upper primary. It is interesting to note (Table 4) that the government managed schools are (18.6%) more concerned about physically challenged children than private managed schools (10.38%). As usual, urban schools have higher percentage (18.69) compared to rural schools (17.69). This also reveals another disparity of enrolling disabled children. This important dimension of inclusive education has not been taken seriously. It is widely recognised that poverty and disability go together. As a result, there are more disabled children among the poor communities. These children can only enroll among the government schools. In fact, the urban privately managed schools get disabled children from higher

TABLE 2
Enrolment of Children with Disability: 2005-06

Grades	*All Areas*			*Rural Areas*			*Urban Areas*		
	Girls	*Total*	*GPI**	*Girls*	*Total*	*GPI*	*Girls*	*Total*	*GPI*
I-V	5,12,993	12,36,891	0.71	4,48,097	10,82,624	0.71	64,611	1,53,560	0.73
VI-VII/VIII	1,52,684	3,79,965	0.67	1,20,026	3,04,078	0.65	32,568	75,653	0.76
I-VIII	6,65,677	16,16,856	0.70	5,68,123	13,86,702	0.69	97,179	2,29,213	0.74

Source: NUEPA Study

TABLE 3
Enrolment Across Grades by Nature of Disability: 2005-06

Nature of Disability	Gr.1	Gr.1I	Gr.1II	Gr.IV	Gr.V	Gr.VI	Gr.VII	Gr.VIII	Gr.I-V	Gr.VI-VIII	Total
% in seeing	18.19	18.56	19.17	21.04	24.09	23.51	25.01	25.01	20.06	24.47	21.10
% in Hearing	9.36	10.15	9.84	10.00	9.78	10.00	9.57	8.46	9.81	9.50	9.74
% in Speech	14.28	13.05	12.40	11.88	10.60	10.11	9.49	8.64	12.53	9.56	11.83
% in Moving	23.98	25.38	27.03	28.66	30.54	33.70	35.26	41.60	26.96	36.03	29.09
% Mental	23.32	20.62	19.01	16.39	14.41	10.99	8.93	7.23	18.97	9.39	16.72
% Others	10.87	1.23	12.55	12.03	10.58	11.69	11.54	9.07	11.66	11.06	11.59

Source: NUEPA Study

TABLE 4

Percentage of Schools Having Ramp in School: 2005-06

School Category	Percentage							
	All Areas			Rural	Urban areas	All areas	Govt. managements	All private Managements
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06				
Primary Only	4.56	4.908	11.21	15.65	15.95	12.59	16.35	9.43
Primary with Upper Primary	5.03	5.16	14.48	26.19	28.17	17.49	31.06	11.65
Primary with Upper Primary & Secondary/ Hr. Secondary	8.06	8.58	12.85	18.05	17.67	18.69	22.16	15.41
Upper Primary only	4.07	4.69	8.33	12.78	12.76	13.06	14.04	7.97
Upper primary & Secondary/Hr. Secondary	6.10	6.64	10.87	13.32	12.82	14.77	16.12	9.75
All Schools	4.63	5.10	11.49	17.14	17.57	14.62	18.60	10.38

Source: NUEPA Study

echelons of society who are even capable of obtaining education in specialised schools. Besides, they are able to demand better facilities for the children due to higher levels of awareness among parents. This also raises the level of accountability of teachers for inclusive education and increases the demand for training and re-training.

Table 5 highlights percentage of schools having ramps across States and Union Territories. Like any other physical parameter, there has been a wide gap across States and UTs. To illustrate, Maharashtra (59%), Delhi (59%), Harayana (48%) and Gujarat (44%) are the ones with better facilities for ramps compared to other schools. These are also educationally advanced states. On the contrary States having very low percentage of schools with ramps are Nagaland (2.8%), Orissa (8%), Sikkim (4%), West Bengal (8.8%), Jammu and Kashmir (1.9%). These states are also educationally backward. This table brings out the fact that overall educational backwardness or otherwise determines the physical facilities provided for disabled children and correspondingly the enrolment and retention of disabled children. There are two issues here, the ability and willingness of the state governments to allocate funds for developing the required facilities and lack of political will to implement inclusive education which is also reflected by lack of motivation to improve the overall primary education in which inclusive education is only a subset.

Implication of Data for Strengthening Inclusive Education

Most of the services carried out and data generated through information system like DISE are not really integrated into policy making and implementation. The above data on the status of inclusive education speaks volumes about the relevance of this information to policy implementation. The following issues are worth considering:

- The need for involvement of professionals to assess the degree of handicap across disabilities. It is important to network with health care institutions at the grassroot level for early identification. This will, in addition to improving the quality of data, will also provide directions for the schools to persuade the parents and enroll these children under inclusive education.
- Currently there are no monitoring agencies to follow up on enrolment, the quality of education provided within the school and the exposure to the vocational component. This job somehow is not handled well by the Department of Education in any state for that matter. Therefore, it is a good idea to break inclusive

TABLE 5

Percentage of Schools having Ramps in school: 2005-06

State/UT	Percentage of Schools						
	Primary only	Primary with Upper Primary	Primary with Upper Primary & Sec./Hr.Sec.	Upper Primary only	Upper Primary with Sec./ Hr Sec.	No response	All Schools
Anandaman & Nicobar islands	6.21	2.08	7.27	0.00	6.67	0.00	5.57
Andhra Pradesh	6.44	9.28	17.35	0.00	10.67	0.00	7.66
Arunachal Pradesh	5.39	12.59	10.76	0.00	9.09	0.00	6.87
Assam	12.35	12.08	2.35	5.99	3.09	0.00	10.85
Bihar	10.72	15.34	10.14	16.37	5.71	0.00	11.73
Chandigarh	13.79	9.09	33.33	0.00	80.00	0.00	28.65
Chhattisgarth	17.21	8.86	13.07	15.80	13.17	1.79	16.02
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	0.81	2.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.32
Daman & Diu	8.16	0.00	9.09	7.14	20.00	14.29	9.90
Delhi	46.21	65.11	70.26	80.00	79.36	0.00	59.05
Goa	3.38	4.35	8.48	0.00	4.90	0.00	4.09
Gujarat	39.54	48.37	20.64	12.16	12.93	0.00	44.18
Haryana	47.50	27.91	45.10	50.91	59.05	0.00	48.85
Himachal Pradesh	5.99	4.96	7.70	3.73	5.31	0.00	5.65
Jammu & Kashmir	1.28	2.72	4.49	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.99

Jharkhand	3.30	7.55	8.10	6.57	3.39	0.00	4.27
Karnataka	7.84	21.09	15.77	14.32	14.34	1.75	14.21
Kerala	32.72	39.53	38.14	23.91	27.84	2.42	32.92
Lakshadweep	38.46	72.73	66.67	100.00	100.00	0.00	60.00
Madhya Pradesh	17.16	14.48	17.46	16.70	20.03	0.34	16.69
Maharastra	73.60	69.87	15.10	28.72	9.16	5.70	59.19
Manipur	1.05	2.10	3.32	2.13	0.00	0.00	1.48
Meghalaya	2.19	3.63	1.74	1.23	1.94	0.00	2.09
Mizoram	12.63	6.78	15.52	9.31	9.09	0.00	11.03
Nagaland	3.65	3.70	3.45	5.83	3.15	0.00	2.82
Orrisa	7.12	12.07	9.38	6.22	4.16	3.15	8.09
Puducherry	24.59	21.67	19.81	50.00	32.10	0.00	24.19
Punjab	12.93	8.04	10.73	12.99	13.39	0.00	12.65
Rajasthan	9.81	16.58	19.02	16.90	18.81	0.00	12.59
Sikkim	3.78	6.21	6.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.47
Tamilnadu	15.31	27.87	16.69	16.85	0.00	0.00	17.77
Tripura	15.81	28.76	38.67	0.00	49.30	0.00	24.01
Uttar Pradesh	12.93	10.56	11.27	11.75	7.51	0.11	12.39
Uttarakhand	6.63	4.93	7.33	5.96	1.63	0.00	5.96
West Bengal	8.79	10.94	8.65	12.54	8.51	0.49	8.85
All Districts	15.65	26.19	18.05	12.78	13.32	2.78	17.14

Source: NUEPA Study

education into several independent tasks and those tasks which need interaction with the community and other professional bodies should be handed over to local NGOs.

- Development of alternative learning material, teachers' handbook and guidance in managing these children is a very crucial input for inclusive education. Any visit to a typical primary school reveals that none of this pedagogic support is made available. The question is why SSA does not consider it a priority issue.
- On-going programmes for professional development of teachers including workshops to provide an opportunity to discuss mutual problems of handling disabled children will go a long way. State Council of Educational Research and Training, (SCERT), District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), sub-divisional and block level agencies such as Cluster Resource Centre (CRC) and Block Resource Centre (BRC) should look into it.
- It is important to look at the types of disabilities which are existing in certain schools in every state and union territory. The implication is primary teacher training programmes both pre-service and in service need to cater to training in handling at least two disabilities. The data about these teachers should be made available to the administrators in the states. This should be a major consideration in transferring teachers across schools by posting teachers trained in one or two disability to those schools where children with these two disabilities are dominant.
- Networking with women and child development department and health services is crucial for inclusive education. This has not been the main agenda of policy makers. A typical primary school in rural area does not have any data on the number of disabled children and nature of disability coming under its jurisdiction. The Primary Health Centre (PHC) also does not have this data. The Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRI) is not sensitive to this. More than all this, there is no coordination with the ICDS programme. In fact, if this coordination exists, the implementation is very smooth. A primary school should know how many disabled children with nature of disability are already enrolled in the ICDS programme (0-6 years) and this should help the schools to plan for their smooth transfer to regular schools in the subsequent academic year. Correspondingly, the PHCs with this data should be able to provide the medical intervention and work closely with the schools.

- Providing support services for disabled children is an important intervention in making inclusive education a success. To illustrate, blind children need education on brail, software available for blind children, software for the hearing impaired children and other self-learning materials. In addition to this, appropriate devises for the physically handicapped children would not only provide an incentive for them to enroll in schools but would motivate them to remain and learn. Significantly this will bring about a substantial attitudinal change among the teachers and help them to invent creative methods of providing individualised instruction.

Conclusion

The Government of India should carry out evaluation studies to obtain first hand information about the status of inclusive education. Disabled children have a fundamental right to education along with normal children. Mere access to schooling is not universalisation. They have to receive quality education and the retention and achievement levels have to be improved to a great extent. The physical facilities in schools including ramps, trained and high quality teachers including female teachers are the need of the hour. It is high time that every one working in the area of inclusive education pay attention to these issues.

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