

INDIA

Improving Educational Practice and Environment for Students with Intellectual Disabilities – for active participation in Society through employment

Country Report – India (Abstract)

Neerja Shukla
Professor and Head
Department of Education of Groups with Special Needs
National Council of Educational Research and Training

Prologue

Indian society is traditionally an inclusive society where various groups of citizens with different cultural, religions and linguistic diversities live together. Children with intellectual disabilities are very much a part of our society and basically families are responsible for their care and upbringing.

Facts about India and its Education

India is a multilingual, multi-religion and multi-culture society with 28 States and 6 Union Territories. It has 593 districts, 5470 sub-districts, 5161 towns and 6,38,588 villages. As per Census of India, 2001 the total population of India is 10,027,015,247 with 531,277,078 males and 495,738,169 females. The literacy rate of the country stands at 65.38%. The difference between the male and female literacy rate comes to 21.69%. The multilingual nature of Indian society poses various challenges before the education system of the country. Besides India have 32 languages with numerous dialects. The Seventh All India School Education Survey conducted by NCERT (2005) with data upto September 30, 2002 has assessed the position of enrolment in schools. As per this survey India has 651381 primary schools, 245274 upper primary schools, 90761 secondary schools and 43951 higher secondary schools. The growth of these four types of schools since 1993 is 14.19%, 50.66%, 38.43% and 85.75% respectively. The total number of schools in India is 1031367, which has registered 25.40% growth. Overall rural habitations having primary schools within them had shown 23.68% growth from 1993 to September 30, 2002 the number of habitations being

653,076 in 2002. A large number of rural habitations i.e. 10,70,863 out of 12,31,391 had primary schools within 2 km. (21.13% growth). The number of rural habitations with upper primary schools was 227,146 (54.37% growth) and 961,899 (19.10% growth) and rural habitations had primary schools within 3 km. The enrolment in various classes and the growth rate since 1993 is given below:

Classes I to V	122397715 (growth rate 26.15%)
Classes VI to VIII	46845207 (growth rate 37.49%)
Classes IX & X	21795735 (growth rate 43.21%)
Classes XI & XII	9781856 (growth rate 78.99%)
Classes I to XII	200820513 (growth rate 32.31%)

The teacher-pupil ratio in primary, upper primary and secondary schools was found to be 42.01, 34.23 and 30.28% respectively.

The National Policy on Education (1986,1992) envisaged free and compulsory education to all children in 6-14 age group. Through 86th amendment in the Constitution of India the Govt. has made free and compulsory education to all children in the age group of 6-14 a fundamental right Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for All) is a programme of Govt. of India to provide education to all children including children with disabilities. Under this programme new schools have been opened in school less habitations and the existing school infrastructure has been improved by providing additional classrooms, toilets, drinking water, maintenance grant and barrier free access. Additional teachers, organization of teacher training programmes, intensive monitoring and special focus on education of children with special needs made the programme more effective. Decentralized planning is one of the specific features of this programme.

Disability Statistics

The National Sample Survey organization through 58th round of its survey conducted in 2002 has shown that the total number of persons with disability in the country was 1.85 crore which constituted 1.8% of the total estimated population. About 10.63% of the persons with disabilities suffered from more than one type of disabilities. A break up for the population with disability (disability wise) is as follows:

Estimated Number of Disabled Persons

Type of Disability	Rural			Urban			Rural+ Urban
	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Any Disability	83.102	57.748	140.850	25.811	18.249	44.060	184.91
Mental Retardation	4.34	2.561	6.995	1.824	1.128	2.951	9.946
Mental Illness	5.022	3.377	8.399	1.623	0.988	2.611	11.01
Blindness	7.494	8.536	16.030	1.793	2.311	4.104	20.13
Low Vision	2.982	3.563	6.545	0.711	0.877	1.588	8.133
Hearing Disability	12.516	11.171	23.687	3.617	3.313	6.930	30.67
Speech Disability	9.495	6.532	16.027	3.416	2.102	5.518	21.545
Locomotor Disability	49.987	29.839	79.826	16.352	10.162	26.514	106.44

The survey also revealed that for every one lakh persons in India, there were 1755 who were either mentally or physically disabled. Among the rural residents the prevalence of disability was 1.85% as against that for urban-based persons which was 1.50%. The prevalence of disability was also found to be marginally higher among males than females. The number of intellectually disabled (mentally retarded) persons per one lakh population comes to 115 male and 72 females while these numbers for mentally ill are 122 and 86 respectively. The survey also found that about 84% of the mentally retarded persons were born with the disability. So far as marital status is concerned, results showed that at the All India level, out of 1000 disabled males living in rural areas 471 never got married and this number for urban was 484. Amongst the females the number of never married females for rural and urban areas were 376 and 415 respectively. In the case of mentally retarded it was found that most of them have to lead an unmarried life. The percentage of illiterate disabled persons (age 5 years and above) was found to be 55% (59% in rural areas and 40% in urban areas). However, the highest percentage of illiterate disabled persons belonged to mentally retarded group (87%) followed by visually disabled persons (74-77%). The literacy figures of mentally disabled persons (mentally retarded and mentally ill persons) per 1000 disabled persons of 5 years + were as follows:

	Mentally retarded	Mentally ill
Not literate	866	591
Upto Primary level	106	215
Upto Middle level	24	102
Secondary to above	3	89

Source NSSO Survey, 2002, India.

The data given above has a great relevance to the employment situation of intellectually disabled persons as very few of them go beyond middle level of education (Class VIII). The NSSO 2002 survey also studied the activity status of disabled persons. The results of this status per 1000 distribution of disabled persons for persons with intellectual disability was found to be as follows:

Category	Mentally Retarded	Mentally ill
Employed	56	126
Unemployed	0	1
Out of labour force	943	873

Education

A. Special Schools and Residential Schools for Mentally Retarded

The Government of India has opened these two types of schools to cater to the educational requirements of children with mental retardation. Though special schools have been opened for all categories of disabilities, however, the number of such schools for mentally retarded is the largest. The total number of special schools working in the country for persons with Mental Retardation as on 30th April, 2001 was 1062 with an enrolment of 21,952 males and 12,129 females (Panda, 2003)

B. Home based programmes and Self Help Groups

Home-based programmes have come into existence in India at places where service programmes are not available at district sub-district and rural levels and also for children who are more severe and young. In both centre based and home based programmes parents are trained to train their children at home and make required interventions. Self help groups help parents of children to help themselves and to improve programme of parents in the task of upbringing a child with retardation. Parents participation and cooperation in training and management of the child given positive and good results.

C. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education For All)

Under SSA an additional sum of Rs.1200/- per year per child with disability is also available. This amount can be utilized for various activities including early detection, formal and functional assessment, providing aids and appliances, support services like special equipment, reading material, physio-therapy for children with physical or multiple handicaps, occupational therapy for children with physical handicaps and mental retardation etc., parental counselling, awareness building, material development, resource support and harnessing support from NGOs (Draft National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, MSJ&E, 2005).

Under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan the first step towards providing education to children with disabilities is to identify them. Till date, the categories of children identified and enrolled in schools is as follows:

Category	Children identified			Children enrolled		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Visual Handicap	3,11,174	13,1958	114028	252176	118536	104248
Hearing Handicap	356550	161588	117840	254893	126508	93949
Orthopaedic impairment	599398	292282	187893	520917	276808	179922
Mental Retardation	285414	133571	96724	196266	104129	67609
Mentally Deficient	30663	12225	10977	15108	8435	6673
Learning Disabled	184322	102980	70039	157303	85806	67703
Others	131333	71745	49323	50785	27641	22979

Note: Regarding identification of 14 states have provided gender wise data, 8 only category wise data and 13 states have provided a lump sum figure. Children with Mental Retardation stand at 2.85 lakh (285 million). Regarding enrolment 14 states have provided category wise, gender wise data, 5 states have provided category wise break up, 8 states have not provided any data and 8 states have provided lump sum data.

Children with mental retardation stand at 1.96 lakh (0.19 million). Out of 11,17,944 schools covered 2,22,689 schools have now barrier free access which comes to 19.92% (source: DISE data 2003-04) Besides this 43.86% teachers have been benefited by Mass Teacher Training while 13.02% teachers have received 3-5 days training in inclusive education. Out of 20,60,756 children with special needs identified, which constitutes 1.02% of the child population, 15,85,916 children (76.96%) are enrolled in schools while 46591 are enrolled under Education Guarantee Scheme and 9594 are being provided home based education. The number of NGOs involved in this programme is 470. Out of 336371 children requiring aids and appliances 294881 have been provided the same. A total of 28,97,875 Village Education Committee members and 89,176 parents have also been benefited through orientation programmes. A total of 56,174 master trainers trained under the programme are equipped

with competence to improve the over all teaching learning process in the classroom thus influence the life of children with disabilities.

D. National Policy For Persons With Disabilities

A comprehensive National Policy for Persons with Disabilities is also being prepared by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Govt. of India which has taken care of all the aspects of persons with disabilities including education, rehabilitation and employment. It has recognized that a large percentage of persons with disabilities (55%) are still illiterate and that there is a need for mainstreaming of the persons with disabilities in the general education system through Inclusive Education. Under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan the Govt. of India has set up the goal of providing eight years of elementary schooling to all children including children with disabilities. Various learning options like open learning system and open schools, alternative schooling, distance education and learning, special schools wherever necessary, home based education, itinerant teacher model, remedial teaching, part time classes, community based rehabilitation (CBR) and vocational education and cooperative programmes available to other children are also available to children with disabilities including children with intellectual disabilities. Government of India also provides scholarships to students with disabilities for pursuing studies at postdoctoral level.

The National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (draft) of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Govt. of India has also dealt with the employment aspect. The Ministry of Labour and Employment is the main Ministry dealing with employment issues. This policy envisages that persons with disabilities shall be provided equal opportunities for productive and gainful employment and the Government will ensure 3% reservation for persons with disabilities against identified posts, which is the statutory requirement. It also envisages employment of these persons in private sector by developing appropriate skill for their employability and enhancing opportunities of self-employment.

Recently on March 23. 2005 Shri Arjun Singh, Union Minister of Human Resource Development, Government of India while presenting the scheme of inclusive education for children and youth with special needs stated that "The government is committed to provide education through mainstream schools for children with disabilities in accordance with the provisions of the Persons with Disabilities Act 1995." He made it very clear that "It should, and will be our objective to make mainstream education not just available but accessible,

affordable and appropriate for students with disabilities”. An action plan is being developed by Ministry of Human Resource Development to implement the same.

All these efforts made are directed at providing education to all children including children with disabilities and prepare them for leading quality life as well as provide them equal opportunity for gainful employment.

Disability Laws

Equality, dignity, autonomy and liberty, which are the basis of International human rights law, are reflected in true sense in the Constitution of India. During the 1970s a group of persons with disabilities started a sustained movement demanding protection and recognition of their human rights. The Government recognized the need for such legislation and that is how the Persons with Disabilities (equal opportunities, protection of rights and full participation) Act came into existence in 1995. Other disability laws with focus on intellectual disabilities include National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities, Act (1999), Mental Health Act (1987) and Rehabilitation Council of India, Act (1992).

Employment of Persons with Intellectually Disabled -Policy directives and status

India passed the Mental Health Act in 1987. The Act covered various important aspects of support to mentally ill persons. The PWD Act, 1995 has dealt with Employment under chapter VI, section 38(1) has directed Governments and local authorities to formulate schemes through notification for ensuring employments of persons with disabilities and under section 39 directed all Govt. educational institutions and other educational institutions receiving aid from the Government to reserve not less than 3% seats for persons with disabilities. Under section 40 it directs all Government and local authorities to reserve not less than 3% in all poverty alleviation schemes for the benefits of persons with disabilities. Another important directive of this Act under section 41 to Government and local bodies shall within the limits of their economic capacity and development shall provide incentives to employers, both in public and private sectors to ensure that at least 5% of their work force is composed of persons with disabilities.

With the increased number of industries in India, the role of Corporate Sector in terms of generating job opportunities is increasing while the numbers of jobs available in government sector are becoming less and less. As a result of such opening during the post Persons with Disabilities Act (1995) period, efforts have been made to sensitize the corporate world towards their responsibilities in recognizing the abilities of persons with disabilities and provide them equal opportunities in the job market. One such study was conducted by National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) in 1999 in which top 100 companies were surveyed to study their employment practices vis-a-vis disabled persons. The study revealed that only 0.40% disabled persons were employed in all the three types of companies i.e. public, private and multi-national out of which very small percentage i.e. 0.62% had mental impairment.

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment supports approximately 190 NGOs running vocational training programme for persons with disabilities. During the year 1992-2000, 11,400 persons had been placed through 40 Special Employment Exchanges. In 2001 the Government established expert committee to identify types of jobs suitable for persons with different disabilities. As a result of this a list of over 1,900 jobs has been prepared (<http://www.apedproject.org/countryprofile/india/india-current.html>).

The Government of India has established 47 special Employment Exchanges and 41 special cells in the normal Employment Exchanges for making employment available to persons with disabilities. It has also introduced a scheme to establish District Rehabilitation Centres (DRCs) in 11 selected districts of the country. A Central and Coordination Unit has been established to coordinate the administration. Four Rehabilitation Training Centres (RRTC) have also been set up to impart training to DRC functionaries. Besides these, a National Centre for Disability and Rehabilitation has also been established at the Central level. The Ministry of Social Justice and Environment has also formulated a scheme under which rehabilitation services are being provided to all categories of persons with disabilities through voluntary organisations. Vocational training to persons with disabilities is also being provided in specialized institutions as well as other training institutions. The number of such centres is 17 out of which two are exclusively for handicapped woman. They are mostly located in State Capitals and act as models for State Governments for setting up more such centres. Seven of these Centres also have facilities for skill training. Eleven Rural

Rehabilitation Extension Centres (RRECs) established during the Sixth Plan period at the Block Headquarters cover rural handicapped population and make vocational assessment of the handicapped as well as impart them short term training. Each year VRCs rehabilitate about 7000 handicapped persons in various areas.

Summing up

A multi facet approach is being adopted for improving educational practices and environment for persons with disabilities including intellectual disability. Development of a National Policy for Persons with Disability and the statement made by the HRD Minister are concrete steps taken by the Government in this direction. Other Ministries involved in the tasks are Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Urban Development, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Railways.

As has been stated earlier, Ministry of Human Resource Development is providing support to institutions, organizations and NGOs for providing integrated education to disabled children under IEDC scheme. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has taken special care of children with special needs through identification, enrolment, creating barrier free environment, improving infrastructural facilities, organizing teacher training thus improving the whole system from the view point of children with disabilities. An attempt to develop and implement time bound plan for providing inclusive education to children and youth with special needs by the Ministry is praiseworthy. The statement made by the Union Minister of Human Resource Development shows the commitment and vision of the country and the Government for their education. Most of the schemes being implemented are common to different disability areas. However, some specific schemes for intellectually disabled are also in operation. All these efforts are likely to create a better environment for persons with intellectual disabilities in general and provide them equal rights and full participation in the society.