

STATUS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN INDIA

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Abstract

In India, the child population in the age group of 0-6 years as per the 2011 Census was 158,789,287 million with boys accounting for 51.88 per cent of the population. Approximately 6 per cent of persons with some disabilities are in the age group of 0-14 years in rural areas and slightly more than 5 per cent in urban areas. According to the 2011 Census, the total population of the disabled was 2.68 crores of which 1.5 crores were males and 1.18 crores were females. It means 2.21 per cent of the country's population has been reported to have some kind of disability. The percentage of disabled males to the total males in the Country was 2.37 per cent whereas this percentage was 1.87 per cent for females. The scenario was not different in rural and urban areas. In the rural areas the proportion of the disabled males was recorded at 2.47 per cent and it was 2.12 per cent in the urban areas. Similarly, the percentage of disabled females in rural and urban areas was 1.93 per cent and 1.71 per cent respectively.

The plight of disabled children is rooted in their inability to manipulate the personal and environmental variables thereby restricting the performance of daily tasks and disrupting the established role patterns and social role expectations. The problem of disability emanating from physical, sensory or mental impairments therefore has insisted many policy issues in shaping the social roles of the disabled persons. While the issue of their equal rights to live with dignity and self- respect of a human being leads to continuous analysis of public policies and rehabilitation services for disabled persons. Professionals from various disciplines examine their problems and difficulties from different perspectives. Acknowledging the beneficial policies for the disabled in India, especially with respect to their education and employment, analyzing the prevalent policies in the proposals and the actual practice has become a crucial issue for study.

1. Introduction

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The total disability rate for every one-lakh population in the Country as reported in census 2011 was 2,130. The figure for the rural areas was 2,207 and for urban areas it was 1,929. Among the various types of disabilities reported, the highest disability rate of 1,060 has been recorded from rural areas in the case of persons suffering from the disability "In Seeing" while the category of disability "In Hearing" recorded the lowest disability rate of 138 in rural areas. An identical pattern of disability rate was recorded in the urban areas. As many as 1.08 crores or 49.3 per cent of the disabled population were reported to be literate as against 1.11 crores (50.7%) of illiterates. The literates among males were 73.30 lakhs (58.1%) whereas the figure for females was only 34.71 lakhs.

The plight of disabled children is rooted in their inability to manipulate the personal and environmental variables thereby restricting the performance of daily tasks and disrupting the established role patterns and social role expectations. The problem of disability emanating from physical, sensory or mental impairments therefore has insisted many policy issues in shaping the social roles of the disabled persons. While the issue of their equal rights to live with dignity and self-respect of a human being leads to continuous analysis of public policies and rehabilitation services for disabled persons. Professionals from various disciplines examine their problems and difficulties from different perspectives. Acknowledging the beneficial policies for the disabled in India, especially with respect to their education and employment, analyzing the prevalent policies in the proposals and the actual practice has become a crucial issue for study. As Barton and Oliver (1992) maintained, 'disability is a social phenomenon and needs understanding of social determinants of the experiences of disability'. Significantly, the problem of disability is defined

mostly in terms of impairment and dysfunctions thereby suggesting the need for skill development.

2. Classification of Disabled Persons: The term ‘handicapped’ contains two important aspects in it one the mentally retarded and two the physically handicapped persons.

1. Mentally Retarded:

Mental retardation depends on numerous variables and social parameters, which is difficult to define. There are many definitions of mental retardation but the most widely accepted definition describes mental retardation as significantly sub- average intellectual functioning, which manifests itself during the developmental period and is characterized by inadequacy in adaptive behaviors. As all mentally retarded are not equally retarded and they differ in their level of retardation, it becomes imperative to classify them on the basis of degree of mental retardation. Psychologists and clinicians follow various approaches to categorize them.

2. Physically Handicapped

The concept of physical handicapped on the other hand is associated with the impaired limbs and parts of the body and the deficiencies that are associated with them in making the person physically handicapped. There are basically four terms that are associated with physically handicapped. They are: (1) Visual disability, (2) Hearing disability, (3) Speech disability and (4) loco-motor disability. The four terms are defined as follows:

- I. **Visual disability** includes those who do not have perception of light in both eyes and those who have perception of light but could not correctly count fingers of a hand (with/without spectacles) at a distance of 3 meters in good daylight.
- II. **Hearing disability** includes those who do not hear normal sound with one or both the ears without the use of hearing aids.
- III. **Speech disability** includes those who have voice and can cry or cough, but cannot speak. Speech defects are further classified into (a) speaking unintelligibly, (b) stammering, (c) speaking with abnormal voice, and (d) other nasal voice and articulation defects.
- IV. **Locomotor disability** includes those who are unable to move both him and objects from place to place due to (a) paralysis of the limb or body, (b) deformity of the limb, (c) amputation, (d) disfunction of joints of the limb, and (e) other deformity in the body, viz., inspire in neck, hunch backs, dwarfs etc. The Census of India has also defined a related concept of totally crippled as one whose both arms or both legs or all four limbs are

crippled. The loss refers to the inability to use the limbs and, therefore, includes the old people who cannot use the limbs due to old age.

3. Objectives

The major objectives of our Study are as follows:

1. To analyse the percentage of different types of disabled persons by sex in India.
2. To analyse the educational status of disabled persons in India, and
3. To estimate the progress of special school's vis- a- vis general schools in India during the period 1961 and 2001.

4. Data and Methodology

We have collected the required data and information from various secondary sources like National Sample Survey Organisation, A report of Disabled persons; Status of Disabilities, Rehabilitation Council of India; and Census of India.

In order to estimate the growth of general and special schools, we have calculated the index numbers for all types of schools. To estimate the growth of each type of school, we have calculated percentage growth rates over a period of five decades and also estimated annual compound growth rates for general and all types of special schools.

5. Meaning of Special Education

Special education may be defined as that educational service, over and above the regular school programme, which is provided for a disabled child to assist in the development of his potentialities and / or in removing or compensating his disabilities. Special education relates to the provision and organization of a system of education outside the ordinary school system.

Special Education is useful for mentally retarded, intellectually enlightened children emotionally disturbed, hearing impaired, visually impaired and orthopedically handicapped children.

6. Need for Special Education

The experience of the schools confirms that there are many children who are so backward in basic subjects that they need a special help. The number of children involved varies from place to place, from one district of a town to another and from school to school. The type of provision also varies because of the nature of backwardness and its principal causes. Fifty years of research and experience paved the way for a new concept of the need for special educational treatment for a section of the school population. This concept reflected changes in attitudes towards handicapped children and has helped to bring about a broader approach to their education.

“Special Education” refers to those aspects of education, which are applied to disabled children but not usually used with a majority of average children. Special education is distinguished from the regular educational framework by some unusual quality, something uncommon, noteworthy, extraordinary, and additional to the regular, which is utilized or employed for a certain purpose.

7. The National Policy on Education and Programme of Action relating to Special Schools

The National Policy on Education (NPE -1986) has formulated several objectives to integrate the physically and mentally handicapped with the general community as equal partners, to prepare them for normal growth and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence. The NPE – 1986, in its Programme of Action (POA), has suggested the following measures regarding the special educational programmes.

a. Opening of Special Schools

For severely handicapped children, special schools will be established at district headquarters. In a particular district, if the number of particular disabled children exceeds 70 a separate special school for that area should be established. It was planned that 400 special schools be established during the Seventh Five Year Plan Period. Separate hostel facilities should be provided for both boys and girls. The strength of the boys’ hostel should be 50 and that of the girls is about 25.

b. Craft Training Centre

Wherever the special school is built up craft training centre either as a part of the school or as an adjunct to it will be established. Such centers will provide vocational training to the severely handicapped children for appropriate vocations. While imparting training, it is required to consider about the availability of local jobs.

c. Training of Teachers

It is not an easy task to handle the children who are enrolled in special schools. Teachers training programme disability-wise should be organized immediately. To make run the special school at the suggested speed, not only teachers should be trained properly, but also untrained teachers should be trained. Besides the trained teachers other professionals like physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and speech therapists should be appointed in the required number.

d. Special Curriculum

Taking into account the learning difficulty of the handicapped children a special curriculum should be designed, as curriculum designed for any vision impaired may not be suited for speech impaired.

8. Prevalence of Disability by Type in the year 2011

Disability in “Seeing” emerged as the single largest category that accounted for 1.06 crores disabled population or 48.6 per cent of the total disabled population (both physical and mental) rest of the other categories together account for the remaining 51.4 per cent of the total disabled population. Disability in “Hearing” recorded as the lowest category that accounted for 12.61 lakhs disabled population or 5.8 per cent of the total disabled population. Females suffer more in the case of “visual” and in “hearing” disabilities and males suffer more in the case of locomotor and mental disabilities compared to their counter parts (Table-1).

Table – 1: Prevalence of the Total Disabled Population (both Physical and Mental) by Type in India: 2011

Type of Disability	Persons	Males	Females
In Seeing	10,634,881 48.6%	5,732,338 45.5%	4,902,543 52.7%
In Hearing	1,261,722 5.8%	673,797 5.4%	587,925 6.3%
In Speech	1,640,868 7.5%	942,095 7.5%	698,773 7.5%
In Movement	6,105,477 27.9%	3,902,752 31.0%	2,202,725 23.7%
Mental	2,263,821 10.3%	1,354,653 10.8%	909,168 9.8%

Source: Census of India, 2011.

9. Education of Children with Disabilities

Education is the key to human development. Education is a fundamental right of every child. The Article 26 of United Nations Organization’s Declaration for Human Rights highlights the right to education. The Article 45 of Constitution of India notes free and compulsory education for all children under the age of 14 years. Further, the Article 41 emphasizes the right to education for persons including those with disabilities. Under the Constitution of India, persons with disabilities have been guaranteed all the Fundamental Rights as provided to other citizens of the Country viz., equality of opportunity, non discrimination, no untouchability, freedom of religion, right to the language, script or culture, right to franchise, right to property,

right to enforce fundamental rights, access to education in any educational institution, and right to work. Now the most significant fact about education of the disabled children of India is that, it is widely available to them in comparison with yesteryears. Though, the equality of education varies from school to school, the most important point is that no child today is denied of an opportunity to get education.

Most of the special schools are run by the NGOs, supported by either Central or State Governments whereas almost all the Integrated Schools are run by Central Government through the NCERT, the SCERT and the NGOs and the UNICEF, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India and State Governments support them.

10. Special Schools for the Disabled

Along with other parts of the World, India too, witnessed the emergence of special schools for the people with disabilities. The first school for the deaf was set up in Bombay in 1883 and the first school for the blind at Amritsar in 1887. The development in special education over the years has been slow but steady. Before 1900, voluntary efforts and Christian missionaries mostly managed institutions for persons with disabilities. The charity approach was predominant during those days. After Independence in 1947, the human rights approach started gaining ground and provision for service to persons with disabilities found place in the Constitution itself. Special school approach was considered to be the most effective strategy. As a result, scores of special schools have emerged. The governments started committing to education of these persons with disabilities thereby starting special schools in various states. Even today, special schools are increasing in number and this approach will remain as one of the models to serve persons with disabilities, especially to meet the needs of children with severe disabilities. There has been a rapid expansion in the number of such institutions. Today, there are more than 3,500 special schools throughout India.

11. Progress of Special Schools for the Disabled

Provisions of education for children with disabilities are range from residential schools to inclusive schools. Residential schools are considered as the most restrictive environments while inclusive schools are considered to be the least restrictive to children. Other provisions include, home based training, itinerant teaching, special schools and cluster schools. Special schools are the largest in number in the Country. There has been a steady growth in the educational institutions in the Country in both regular and special education.

It is estimated that the general/regular schools (which constitute recognized primary, upper primary and high schools in India), increased from about 4 lakhs in 1961 to 9.6 lakhs by 2011. The percentage growth rate of general schools in 2011 over 1961 was 140 with an annual compound growth rate of 2.21 per cent. The total special schools were increased from 164 in 1961 to 3,560 by 2011. The percent of growth rate of total special schools in 2011 over 1961 was estimated at 2,071 and the annual compound growth rate of total special schools was 8.00 per cent. The data show that there are 40 schools for persons with visual impairment and low vision in 1961 and it increased to 960 by 2011. The percentage growth rate of schools for the visual impairment in 2011 over 1961 was 2,300 with an annual compound growth rate of 8.27 per cent. Schools for persons with locomotor disabilities increased from 45 in 1961 to 700 in 2011. Its percentage growth rate over the period was 1,456 and the annual compound growth rate of these schools was 7.10 per cent. Schools for persons with hearing impairment increased from 40 in 1961 to 900 in 2011 with the percentage growth rate of 2,150 and with an annual compound growth rate of 8.09 per cent. Schools for persons with mental retardation also increased from 39 in 1961 to 1,000 by 2011 and the percentage growth rate of these schools during the period was 2,464. The annual compound growth rate of these schools was 8.45 per cent. However, the trend in growth of regular/general schools shows a steady gradual growth over the years and the increase in all types of special schools is rapid during the study period (Table-2).

Table - 2: Growth of Institutions (Regular and Special Schools) in India: 1961-2011

Year	General Schools (Total)	Index	V I	Index	Locomotor	Index	H I	Index	M R	Index	Special Schools (Total)	Index
1961	399228	100	40	100	45	100	40	100	39	100	164	100
1971	539911	135	110	275	80	178	90	225	120	308	400	244
1981	674345	169	268	670	114	253	140	350	125	320	647	394
1991	808064	202	440	1100	500	1111	424	1060	650	1667	2014	1228
2001	956519	239	960	2400	700	1555	900	2250	1000	2564	3560	2171
2011	1396331	281	1318	2800	926	1865	935	2850	1012	3125	4191	2975
% Growth Rate in 2011 Over 1961	139.59		2300.00		1455.55		2150.00		2464.10		2070.73	
Annual Compound Growth Rate	2.21		8.27		7.10		8.09		8.45		8.00	

Note: VI = Visual Impairment; MR= Mentally Retarded; HI = Hearing Impairment.

Source: Census of India, 2011

Reasons for the rapid increase in special schools may be the establishment of National Institutes, which train special educators and provide technical assistance for establishment of special schools by NGOs, streamlines teacher training through the regulations by the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), Financial assistance for establishment of special schools by Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and the general increase in the awareness about disabilities among public.

The exact number of special schools is not fully known, as there are many NGOs running such schools which are yet to be included in the directories. There are 130 parent associations, which have educational facilities for mentally retarded children. Though most of the schools are registered as societies or trusts, there is no central registry or system of recognition for such special schools, resulting in poor documentation of the number of schools.

12. Special Education for Disabled Children in Andhra Pradesh

The State of Andhra Pradesh implements varied models such as special, integrated and inclusive education strategies. Most of the organizations involved in educating the mentally retarded children follow the National Institute of Mentally Handicapped (NIMH) model in which the students are grouped into pre-primary, primary, secondary and pre-vocational groups. Wherever necessary, training on daily living skills, communication skills and basic education are given. Some schools follow their own model for educating children with special needs by rationalizing that a general model would not help because the problems and the needs of the children differ.

13. Summary and Conclusions

There are limited numbers of individuals who need specialized form of education. They are mentally retarded accompanied by additional handicaps, such as physical deficiencies, ill health, limited verbal experience at home, and emotional disturbances. Their educational problems are usually so acute that they need special treatment outside the ordinary school, i.e., in special schools.

Disabled children form a very large minority group in the Country. According to the 2011 Census, the total population of the disabled was 2.19 crores of which 1.26 crores were males and 93 lakhs females, were reported as having various types of disabilities. Disability in

“Seeing” emerged as the simple largest category and it constitutes 48.6 per cent of the total disabled population.

Special School concept is an accepted model of education for children with disabilities throughout the World. Special Schools are the largest in number in the Country. There has been a steady growth in the educational institutions in the country in both regular and special education. However, the trend in growth of regular schools shows a steady gradual growth over the years and the increase in special schools is rapid during the last five decades. According to the 2011 census, there are 3,560 special schools for the disabled children in India. Among them, 960 institutions are for visual impairment, 700 institutions are for children with locomotor disability, 900 are schools for hearing-impaired children and the remaining 1,000 are for mentally retarded children. Reasons for this rapid increase in special schools may be attributed to the establishment of National Institutes, which train special educators and provide technical assistance to establishment of special schools by the NGOs with financial assistance from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India.

Special schools are given importance in the overall system of education. Though other models of services are also growing in the Country Special schools remain as an appropriate strategy to educate children with disability. As children such as those with multiple disabilities and those who do not have any access to even general education require special school services, this approach will remain as an avenue even if all other models grow under the umbrella of education for all. The state governments need to incorporate educational services for disabled children under its plan expenditure so as to facilitate their inclusion right from the beginning. A cadre of special teachers needs to be created in states so as to appoint them at block/ mandal levels to cater to the educational needs of children with disabilities. Sustained research should be undertaken to determine the needs of the physically handicapped and produce technological aids capable of helping in overcoming such handicaps.

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