



Education for the Disadvantages: Need to Develop an Inclusive Society

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Abstract

Development of the country can never be possible without ensuring expansion of education among masses. Education is one of the pillars on which the whole edifice of social sector reforms rests on. The huge number of the people who are disadvantaged from education means a colossal waste of human resources. Human development is a growth paradigm that is about creating an inclusive society which includes the people who are disadvantaged socially, physically or mentally. Inclusiveness aims at building capabilities and self-esteem in the citizens so that they lead better lives, and significantly contribute for the progress of society. Besides many efforts made to universalize the education to all, but the target to bring all especially who remain disable and disadvantaged from many aspects could not be achieved. Inclusive education in India is in forefront with many emerging challenges and constraints. The present paper using data from the secondary sources discusses the need and status of inclusive education in India.

Keywords: *inclusive, disadvantages*

Introduction

Equality as a fundamental right is guaranteed in India's constitution. Accordingly, successive governments have tried to cope with educational and social inequalities. But the dream of access to equal opportunities in life by all remained distant so far. Education is the worst form of exclusion because it excludes from other walks of life and activities also. Undoubtedly, education is the long term investment in human capital. The development of the country can never be possible without ensuring the spread of education among the masses. Education is one of the pillars on which the whole edifice of social sector reforms rests on. However, the society will reap the benefits only if education is universalized and made inclusive. Inclusive education must bring into its fold students who are disadvantaged

either economically, socially, physically or mentally. This is the reason why various countries have incorporated the provision of compulsory education to be imparted to all the citizens.

The huge number of the people who are disadvantaged from education means a colossal waste of human resources. Human development is a development paradigm that is about creating an inclusive society which includes the people who are disadvantaged socially, physically or mentally. It aims to provide them an opportunity to build capabilities, which in turn help them to lead productive lives in line with their intellectual capabilities and interest. As such, this indicator is more significant than the economic indicators. Inclusive growth needs empowerment of the disadvantaged people and also to make them able for the confident life. Such an empowerment can be best achieved through education. Today, it is widely accepted that inclusion maximizes the potential of the vast majority of the students, ensures their rights, and it is approach for the twenty first century.

The fundamental principle of inclusive education is that all children should have the opportunity to learn together whether they are disadvantaged from any aspect or are normal. In short, significant numbers of disabled children and youth are largely excluded from educational opportunities for primary and secondary schooling. The usefulness of categorical classifications of disability is being questioned in terms of their cost-effectiveness and their ability to identify needed services. Environmental factors play a significant role in disabling the vast majority of students. Exclusion, poverty and disability are linked. Education is widely recognized as a means to develop human capital, to improve economic performance, and to enhance people's capabilities and choices so that exclusion from education can result in a staggering loss of freedom and productivity in the labor market and denial of availing equal opportunities of life.

The idea of inclusive education for learners with special needs is given by UNESCO world conference in 1994 held in Salamanca, Spain. According to the Salamanca Statement, all the schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. It further emphasizes that "Regular schools with 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)

Hence, the concept of inclusiveness hinges on the recognition of the need to make disadvantaged people responsible and contributing citizens of the society. Inclusive education focus on rejecting the segregation or exclusion of learners for whatever reasons like ability, gender, language, family income, disability, color, religion and ethnic origins. Inclusiveness emphasizes on maximizing the participation of all learners of all communities and making learning more meaningful and relevant for all, particularly those learners most vulnerable to exclusionary pressure. Further rethinking and restructuring the policies, curricula, culture and practices in schools and learning environments so that diverse learning needs can be met (World Bank report, Disability group 2003).

Not only is the lack of access to schooling a violation of Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states the right of all children to free primary education (UNICEF, 1993), but this potentially maintains the cycle of poverty, as without education an educationally excluded adult may not be able to work to earn a living, or participate in socio-political decision making processes and can live a dignified life. Despite this, there is no indicator in the Education for All (EFA). Global Monitoring Reports for enrolment, drop-out, or attainment of disabled children reflect the dire necessity and constraints for inclusion of all children in the common school system. This framework stems from the messages of the Jomtien World Declaration on Education for all (1990) was reaffirmed in the Dakar Framework for Action (2000): in these words that“... In order to attract and retain children from marginalized 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...” (Dakar Framework for Action, Para 33).Hence the need to bring disadvantaged sections of the society to the arena of main stream has always been the area of concern for the policy makers. UNICEF in its report 2012 reaffirmed that Inclusive education is not a marginal issue, but is central to the achievement of high quality education for all learners and the development of more inclusive societies.

In fact, there is no disability indicator at all, which is potentially excluding millions of children from a high-profile global campaign in which they were vaguely included in the category of “children in difficult circumstances” in EFA goal two at the Dakar Conference (World Education Forum, 2000), where the drive for Education For All was finally agreed by 92 countries. Hence, although EFA is about ‘all’ children, it appears that children with

disabilities do not count in the final analysis. The quantitative information based upon the 55th round of NSSO has reported the following information on the educational status of disabled people in India

Table 1

Educational Status of Disabled people (in percentage)

Educational Status	Rural	Urban
Non Literate	59.0	40.0
Primary	24.4	28.8
Middle	9.7	13.7
Secondary	3.8	7.8
Higher secondary	2.1	5.1
Graduation and above	1.0	4.6
Not reported	0.1	0.1
Total	100.1	100.1
Vocational training received	1.5	3.6
Engineering	20	25
Non engineering	80	75
ALL	14,085,000	4,406,000

Source: NSSO 58th round

Table 1 reports the varying figures regarding persons with disabilities and no data about the section studying in primary, secondary and higher level of education. It has been remained as a challenge to estimate the total number of students with disabilities at various stages of education.

Accordingly, based on the most conservative estimate of the NSSO (and the lowest of all estimates mentioned above), the proportion of disabled youth in the country should be 60 per cent of 185, 00,000 i.e., 111, 00,000. As applicable to the normal youth, 6 per cent of the disabled youth population should be studying in institutes of higher education i.e., 6 per cent of 111, 00,000 should be studying in universities as per the norms for normal youth. The picture could be far worse than this since the estimates for persons with disability in India ranges from 185 lakhs to 800 lakhs as the higher end of WHO's estimates. However, the figures given by WHO about the disabled people differ from the data given by NSSO. According to UGC report, it is estimated that six percent of India's youth population is in universities and colleges. There is no reliable information on the percentage of disabled youth in higher education institutes. Since 2 to 8 percent of the India's population is disabled and six percent of this should be studying in the institutes of higher learning.

Based upon the survey conducted by National center of Promotion of Employment for Persons with Disability (NCPEDP) in August 2004 on 152 universities of the country, the number of disable students in the universities in India is presented in table 2.

Table-2

Statistics of Disabled Students

Total No of Students	Total No. of Disabled Students	Total No of Male students	Total No of male disabled Students	Total No of Female Students	Total No Of female disabled Students
713167	694	496209	489	216958	205
100%	0.1%	69.5%	0.07%	30.4%	0.03%

Source: Survey conducted by NCPEDP.

Many laws advocate the provision of education for the disadvantaged i.e. People with special needs but despite the laws, our ability to include disabled people in mainstream education and employment has been far from effective and extremely dismal. Three major type of discrimination have been identified: attitudinal, environmental and institutional. Disabled persons are socially ostracized by non-disabled people due to their attitudes of fear and ignorance. There may harbor false perceptions of such people or such people may excluded from society because of generally low expectations of what persons with disabilities can achieve .Given the Indian environment, deprived people face double discrimination ; first on account of their disability and then because of their deprivation. Environment exclusion is reflected in the way in which public services, buildings and transport services are designed with total disregard to the access-needs for persons with disabilities in mind. Institutional exclusion takes place when the laws explicitly or by omission discriminate against the rights of persons with disabilities, making them in some way second class citizens. As a result of which the persons with disabilities are hardly involve in the mean stream.

Summarizing the above discussion it is inferred that education is a basic human right no citizen of the country should be denied from this right. In order to eliminate the inequalities present in our society in terms of availing equal opportunities of life the urgent need is to develop the inclusive society. The role of teachers is also emphasized in instilling

self confidence in the students who need special education. Inclusive education is noted in the recognition of education as a common service for all the people despite having any type of disability. If we look at Kothari Commission report it also speaks about the common school system. The report has recognized the responsibility of education system to bring different social classes and groups together and promote an egalitarian and integrated society. To mitigate certain types of disparities existing in the education system of India the commission report noted about the common school system. Inclusion virtually means all kinds of practices that are ultimately practices of a healthy teaching learning process and based upon the philosophy that all children who learn together, learn to live together. Thus, inclusiveness is about creating an environment where each and every member of any community is an integral part of the society, notwithstanding man made constructs like religion, caste, physical or mental capabilities, disabilities or economic status. It aims at building capabilities and self-esteem in the citizens so that they lead better lives, and significantly contribute for the progress of society. This is a whole school approach where all children regardless of their capabilities, backgrounds, interest or handicaps get education and rebuild confidence.

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