



## Educational Development of Physically Challenged Persons in India – Policies and Challenges

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### ABSTRACT

Education is the most important vehicle for social, economic and political transformation. Unfortunately, globally numerous Physically Challenged Persons (PCPs) and particularly Children with Disabilities (CWDs) do not get adequate opportunity of education because of social neglect, and absence of support systems in the home and inadequacy of sufficient facilities particularly in schools. The situation is worst for low-income countries compare to high-income countries.

In India, as for all children, education is vital for CWDs in itself but also instrumental for participating in employment and other areas of social activity. However, educational outcomes for children and adults with disabilities remain poor in both rural and urban India. The circumstance is more vulnerable for girl children with disability. The situation is started to change. The NSSO data shows some improvement in literacy level. The MHRD has introduced various programmes to provide educational opportunities to PCPs in an inclusive environment and emphasize on the requirement of appropriate vocational training skills to make them self reliant and productive members of the society. But, the coverage under the scheme has remained limited. Eventually, CWDs should have equal access to quality education, because this is key to human capital formation and their participation in social and economic life.

**Keywords:** *Children With Disabilities; Social neglect; Inclusive Education; Vocational Training Skill; Human Capital*

### INTRODUCTION

Across the world, People with Disabilities or Physically Challenged Persons (PCPs) or differently abled Persons make up approximately 1 billion, or 15 percent, of the global population (WHO, WB 2011). Out of total disabled population, about one hundred and fifty million children (0–14 years) living with some form of disabilities. Low - and middle-income countries are the hubs of children living with disability, and is highest in sub-Saharan Africa. Unfortunately, many PCPs and particularly Children with Disabilities (CWDs) are the most marginalized and excluded groups in respect of education wherever they exist. Worldwide, approximately one hundred and thirteen million children are not enrolled in primary school (DFID, 2001). In India, more often PCPs are denied education. An estimation suggests that twenty five million children out of school in India (MHRD 2003 statistics, cited in World Bank, 2004).

Disability is basically a socially – created phenomenon. Many children and adults with disabilities excluded from mainstream education opportunities is the fact. Social neglect and absence of support systems in the home and inadequacy of sufficient facilities particularly in schools assist them to segregate from education system. However, education is the most important vehicle for social, economic and political transformation. Socialization of children with disabilities (CWD) through education assumes an unusually important role in societies like India where social exclusion of PCP is significant.

Undoubtly, the literacy level of PCPs is very low in India. Educational outcomes for children with

disabilities remain very poor. Most of them do not get the full benefit of education. However, Indian polity has started to show some concern for PCPs student. Education is crucial to lift up the socio-economic status of PCP. Though, education of disabled people has not received adequate attention and resources that it requires. PCPs, few who are enrolled in schools are not provided equal opportunity for middle, secondary and higher education levels. At the best they are currently educated illiterates, without any capacity development for earning their livelihood.

However, the situation began to change in India. Indian polity has started to realize as for all people, education is vital for children and adults with disabilities in itself and also instrumental for participating in employment and other areas of social activity. The MHRD has introduced various programmes to provide educational opportunities to PCPs in an inclusive environment. Government of India also realizes the requirement of appropriate vocational training skills to make them self reliant and productive members of the society. But, the coverage under the scheme has remained limited. Here we cannot deny the role of NGOs.

### **OBJECTIVE**

Disability is a social fact. Socio-economic empowerment of PCP is significant. Education is the most important instrument to develop the socio-economic status of disabled people. The objective of the present paper is to widen the opportunities of education for children and adult with disabilities to empower the disabled people.

### **MEHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES**

Investigation is made in some vital areas of empowerment and negligence in order to address the problems of integrating the PCP with the society. Societal awareness and administrative measures and policies are two important areas.

The study will be undertaken with the help of published Government and private information. Publications and reports of UNO, WHO and other international bodies have been also utilized. Secondary published and unpublished sources are the main source of information. Census and NSSO are two important sources of quantitative sources of disability in India.

### **DISABILITY – CONCEPT AND UNDERSTANDING**

Concept of disability is vital. Historically, the field of special education founded on conceptions of disability originating within scientific, psychological, and medical frameworks. Traditional understandings of disability in special education have inadvertently inhibited formulation and modification of hypothesis, limited research methods, narrowed pedagogical practice, and contributed largely in formulating policies for educating persons with disabilities. Disability is a dynamic phenomenon - modified by changes in environment (Jahiel, 2007) and academic understanding. Concept and understanding of human disability are observed to be undergoing continuous modification and consequently administrative attention across the world. However, the central concerned in modern debates appears to be 'how one should view the presence of a disability' (Barnes, 2009).

The word disability as generally accepted, has superseded and outmoded the now deemed offensive terms such as "crippled" or "handicapped", but has not yet been surpassed by newer coinages such as Differently Abled (Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2008). Convergence in conceptualization is desirable, unfortunately universally accepted definition of disability is yet to emerge and according to some researchers probably impossible to achieve. Still, different international organizations discussed the concept of disability in diverse ways.

World Health Organization (WHO) has addressed the disability issue and provides a conceptual framework for disability with three significant aspects or issues – impairment, disability, handicap; they are interrelated and overlapping in some sense. We may observe some hierarchical order in conceptualization.

Impairment is "any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function". Disability is a "restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being". Handicap is a "disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or disability that limits or prevents the fulfilment of a role that is normal (depending on age, sex and social and cultural factors) for that individual".

In 2001, the "International Classification of Functioning and Disability" (ICF) explains the concept of "disability," or "functional" abilities or inabilities as an umbrella concept applicable both for the body perspective, and to the individual and society perspective.

In India, disability condition has been introduced essentially following the medical model and, as such,

they have been based on various criteria of ascertaining abnormality or pathologic conditions of persons.

The various definitions of disability in Indian context summarized below –

#### Definition of Persons with Disabilities

Statute	Section	Definition
Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 (hereinafter PWDA)	2(i)	disability means- blindness; low vision; leprosy cured; hearing impairment; locomotor disability; mental retardation; mental illness. The statute then goes on to define each of the conditions on a severity scale.
	2(t)	person with disability means a person suffering from not less than forty percent of any disability as certified by a medical authority
Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992	2(c)	handicapped means – visually handicapped; hearing handicapped; suffering from locomotor disability; or suffering from mental retardation
Mental Health Act, 1987	2(l)	mentally ill person means - a person who is in need of treatment by reason of any mental disorder other than mental retardation.
National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999	2(j)	person with disability means - a person suffering from any of the conditions relating to autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation or a combination of any two or more of such conditions and includes a person suffering from severe multiple disability
	2(h)	multiple disabilities means a combination of two or more disabilities as defined in clause (i) of section 2 of PWDA.

#### EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF PCP – GLOBAL AND INDIAN CONTEXT

Disability cannot be regarded as ‘a mere physical fact’. It is a social issue. Society distinguishes between ‘a normal and socially functional human being’; and those belonging to complementary class. Thus conceptualization ‘reflects society’s self image’ needless to state that prevailing social condition plays a significant role in framing the definition and branding. That is the main source of discrimination. The society has to weed it out.

Education is an effective tool for socio-economic empowerment, which steps up development of talents, retrieves rights and paves way for career building and future of PCPs. However, many children and adults with disabilities have historically been excluded from

mainstream education opportunities in all over the world. Thus enabling conditions for promoting inclusive education for disabled children needs specific measures to attract disabled children.

There is very little accurate information available on the extent and nature of disability among children globally – and even less on the degree of exclusion from education faced by children with disabilities. Nevertheless, the data that is available undeniably shows that disabled children have far poorer educational opportunities, compared to non-disabled peers. According to the 2004 World Health Survey found that respondents with a disability had significantly lower rates of primary school completion. The situation is more vulnerable in low-income countries.



In India, Census and NSSO are two important sources on disability. Both sources depict the gloomy and depressing picture of educational status of disabled population as compared to the general population trends. Even among disabled literates, significant proportions were educated only up to primary or

middle level both in rural and urban areas. Higher education for this section of people is insignificant. The situation is worst for girl children with disability. However, some improvement shows in NSSO data.

### Global Education Outcomes for Disabled and Not Disabled Respondents

Individuals		Low-Income Countries		High-Income Countries		All Countries	
		Not Disabled (%)	Disabled (%)	Not Disabled (%)	Disabled (%)	Not Disabled (%)	Disabled (%)
Primary School Completion	Male	55.6	45.6*	72.3	61.7*	61.3	50.6*
	Female	42.0	32.9*	72.0	59.3*	52.9	41.7*
	18-49	60.3	47.8*	83.1	69.0*	67.4	53.2*
	50-59	44.3	30.8*	68.1	52.0*	52.7	37.6*
	60&Above	30.7	21.2*	53.6	46.5*	40.6	32.3*

Source: World Health Survey. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2002–2004

(<http://www.who.int/healthinfo/survey/en>).

Note: Estimates are weighted using WHS post-stratified weights, when available (probability weights otherwise). \* *t*-test suggests significant difference from “Not disabled” at 5%.

### Percentage Distribution of Educational Status of Disabled population by Sector in India

Educational Status	2002		1991	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Illiterate	59.0	40.0	70.1	46.2
Primary	24.4	28.8	20.3	29.8
Middle	9.7	13.7	5.3	11.0
Secondary	3.8	7.8	2.3	6.4
Higher-Secondary	2.1	5.1	0.8	2.8
Graduation and Above	1.0	4.6	0.4	3.1
Not-Reported	0.1	0.1	0.8	0.8
Vocational Training Received	1.5	3.6	1.2	3.1
Engineering	20	25	20.2	26.6
Non-Engineering	80	75	79.8	73.4
All	14085000	4406000	12652000	3502000

Source: NSSO Rounds 47<sup>th</sup> and 58<sup>th</sup>, 1991, 2002

### Percentage Distribution of Educational Level of Disabled Persons in India: by sex

Educational Level	India		
	Persons	Males	Females
Illiterate	45.48	37.63	55.44
Literate	54.52	62.37	44.56
Literate but below Primary	10.59	11.38	9.58
Primary but below Middle	13.26	14.65	11.49
Middle but below Matric/Secondary	9.13	10.79	7.03
Matric/Secondary but below Graduate	12.86	15.54	9.45
Graduate and Above	4.65	5.60	3.44

Source: Census, 2011, India

**Percentage of Children With Disabilities**

Age Groups (Years)	Children With Disabilities (%)
0 – 4	1.14
5 – 9	1.54
10 – 19	1.82

**Source: Census, 2011, India**

**POLICY FOR PCP – FROM SPECIAL EDUCATION TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

The history of education of PCPs is a progression from segregation to integration, and now to inclusion. In India, the educational system supports exclusion of disabled children from the education system, as accessibility as well as methodology of teaching in the schools is unfavorable for them. Most of the disabled children are unable to reach schools due to unfriendly communication and accessibility approach of the schools. Even the staff available in the schools is not trained to provide appropriate educational training to the disabled children. Thus enabling conditions for promoting inclusive education for disabled children needs specific measures to attract disabled children.

In this connection the various commissions, committees, Acts, schemes have been made, implemented and constituted for PCPs in India, for their education, by collaboration with Government and Nongovernmental organization. Govt. also facilitates learning through Augmentative and Alternative Modes for PCPs. The NIH runs the Indian Sign Language Cell for the development of teaching materials to teach Indian Sign Language (ISL), training of ISL interpreters, to train deaf persons to become sign language teachers, sign language training for hearing staff at educational institutions, for hearing handicapped parents and family members and documentation of sign language vocabulary used in different regions of the country and their variations.

**Policies related to Education for CWD in India –**

Education for CWD is significant. A considerable portion of CWD in India excluded from education system. However, Government of India started to take some serious steps for CWD. The various policies related to education for CWD in Indian context summarized below –

Policy	Objective
Sargent report/ The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) report, 1944	This report is the milestone in the policy on 'Integration' of disabled children in general schools in India.
The National Education Commission/ Kothari Commission(1964-66)	It was evidently in favor of making education of the handicapped an integral part of the general education system and recommended a Cell, at NCERT, to study in this country and abroad, the work being done in the field of education for the handicapped and prepare material for their teachers.
National Education Policy (NPE), 1968	The report suggested the expansion of education facilities for physically and mentally handicapped children and the development of 'Integrated Programme' enabling handicapped children to study in regular schools.
National Policy on education (NPE), 1986 and Programme of Action, 1992	Stressed the need for integrating children with special needs with other groups and envisaged some measures to integrate children with physical and mental impairment to mainstream educational institutions.
Bahrul Islam Committee, 1988	It mentioned that the state should endeavor to provide free and universal elementary education to children with physical and mental disabilities. The state shall also provide assistance to them for education and training at the secondary and higher levels. It also emphasized promotion of integrated education and continuation of residential education.
Programme of Action 1990, MHRD	Stressed on the service training programmes for teachers, orientation programmes for administrators, development of supervisory expertise in the resource institutions for school education at the district and block levels, and provision of incentives like supply of aids, appliances, textbooks and school uniforms.
Integrated Education for the Disabled Children (Revised 1987,1989 and 1992)	The Scheme provided funding for rehabilitation aids and equipment, educational material, training of resource teachers, establishment of preschool and parent counseling centers, transport allowance, removal of architectural barriers in school buildings, etc.
Project Integrated Education for the Disabled (PIED), 1987	The National Council for Educational Research and Training implemented PIED with the financial support from UNICEF, which provided support for the development of instructional material, training of personnel, mobilizing community support, training of parents and coordination of the project in remote and rural areas and difficult places. It also extended support for identification and assessment of children with disabilities, establishment of resource rooms, provision of aids and appliances and allowances for children with disabilities.
District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)	DPEP is an excellent and bold step towards promotion of inclusive education of children with disabilities. It emphasized to put local communities in charge of education in their area and enhance investments in primary education for inclusive education either in the formal system or through non formal education programme.
The National Action Plan for Inclusive Education Of Children and Youth with Disabilities (IECYD), developed by the MHRD, 2005	Emphasizes on the inclusion of children and young PWDs in all general educational settings from Early Childhood to Higher Education.
Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) (Education for All Campaign)	Stride towards achieving the long cherished goal of Universalization of Elementary Education through a time bound integrated approach, in partnership with states. It makes a provision up to Rs.1200 per child for integration of disabled children as per specific proposal.



**Secondary Education Schemes and Programmes in India –**

The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) is the highest advisory body to the Central and State government in the field of education. The committee report on the Universalization of Secondary Education (June, 2005) recommended that the guiding principle of Universal Secondary Education should be Universal Access, Equality and Social Justice, relevance and Development, and Structural and Curricular Considerations. The CABE Committee Report on “Girls’ Education and the Common School System” has recommended making the curriculum flexible and appropriate to accommodate the diversity of school children, including those with disability in both cognitive and non-cognitive areas. The various schemes and programs related to education for disabled people in Indian context summarized below -

Scheme	Objective	Coverage
Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan	Making secondary education of good quality available, accessible, and affordable to all young people in the age group of 15–16 years, removing gender, socio-economic, and disability barriers, making all secondary schools conform to prescribed norms, achieving a GER of 75 percent in secondary education in a period of five years, providing universal access to secondary level education by 2017 and universal retention by 2020.	Government secondary schools throughout the country
Inclusive Education for the Disabled at Secondary Stage	To enable them to continue their education at the secondary stage in an inclusive environment in regular schools.	Covers children with disabilities in the secondary stage from classes IX to XII

**Policies related to Higher Education for PCP in India –**

The outcome of higher education for PCP is unsatisfactory in India. However, University Grants Commission has issued instructions to all universities and colleges for providing 3% reservation (horizontally) in admission for PCP students, reservation of 3% for the PCPs in the appointment of Lecturers and in admission of to courses, relaxation of 5% for NET admission, and relaxation in upper age limit up to 5 years to PCPs in admissions. The various schemes and programs related to higher education for disabled people in Indian context summarized below –

Scheme and Programme	Objective
Higher Education for Persons with Special Needs (HEPSN)	Aims to create an environment in the higher education institutions including Universities to create awareness about the capabilities of PWDs by constructing facilities to improve accessibility, purchase of equipment, to enrich learning through establishment of Enabling Units, providing access and special equipment to augment educational services.
Financial Assistance to Visually-Challenged Teachers (FAVCT)	The scheme is formulated to help visually challenged permanent teachers to pursue teaching and research with the help of a reader by using teaching and learning aids.
Upgradation of existing Polytechnics to integrate physically challenged persons	This Scheme has been formulated with the aim to integrate physically PwDs into maintaining technical and vocational education.
Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)	IGNOU provides several diploma and certificate courses for PwDs.
Establishment of Equal	To make colleges and universities more responsive to the needs

Opportunity Cells in Universities	and constraints of the disadvantaged social groups, the Commission has financed Institutions to establish Equal Opportunity Cells to see the effective implementation of policies and programmes for disadvantaged groups and to provide guidance and counselling in academic, financial, social and other matters.
National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology	In order to facilitate the PwD students, the focused interventions have been incorporated in the Mission are Unicode font to provide support in various languages and for visually impaired students.

### Scholarships for PCP in India –

In India, the policy related to education for PCPs is satisfactory compare to other areas. Government of India started different types of scholarships for PCP to boost up their self-confidence. The various scholarships related to education for disabled people in Indian context summarized below -

Scholarships	Objective
National Means-cum-Merit Scholarship (NMMS), 2008	The provision to award 1 lakh scholarships every year to selected candidates in Classes IX–XII and some State Government provide scholarships to students with disabilities from standard I to VIII i.e. upto 14 years.
Kendriya Vidyalaya/Navodaya Vidyalaya	Under this 3% reservation in admission and exemption from payment of Vidyalaya Vikas Nidhi and tuition fee is provided to students with disabilities, covered in the PWDA.
National Scholarships for PwD	Under this scheme, the MoSJE awards 500 new scholarships every year for pursuing post matriculation, professional and technical courses of more than one year duration with respect to students with cerebral palsy, mental retardation, multiple disabilities and people with profound or severe hearing impairment, scholarship are awarded for pursuing studies from IX standard onwards. Students with 40% or more disabilities whose monthly family income does not exceed 250 USD are eligible for scholarship. The scholarship is provided to the students pursuing Graduate and Post Graduate level courses; pursuing diploma and certificate level professional courses. In addition, the students are also reimbursed with the course fee. Financial assistance under the scheme is also given for computer with editing software for blind/ deaf graduate and postgraduate students pursuing professional courses and for support access software for cerebral palsy students.
GyanPrabha Scholarship Scheme	Under the scheme, financial assistance is provided to the disabled to pursue vocational training/professional courses leading to skill development and employment for PwDs. The scheme was launched in to provide financial assistance with the monthly family income limit of 250 US Dollar and condition of minimum 50% marks for renewal of the scholarship for every year has been waived.
Scholarship and other schemes of State Governments for Higher Education	Various state governments extend scholarships to PwDs for Graduation, Post Graduation and Engineering and Professional courses that range from 2 US Dollar to 25 US Dollar per month. Besides these Readers Allowance from 1.61 US Dollar to 26 US Dollar per month and Hostel allowance is offered ranging from 1.61 US Dollar to 3.87 US Dollar per month is for graduation, post graduation and professional courses.



## CONCLUSION

Overall, the educational outcomes for children and adults with disabilities remain poor across the world. No exception in India also. However, in India, the policy related to education for disabled people is satisfactory compare to other areas. The NSSO data depicts some improvement in literacy level. Although, Indian polity faces challenges to implement the policies. Here, NGOs play a significant role.

Majority of PCPs are not provided equal opportunities for education and even few who are enrolled in schools are not provided equal opportunity for middle, secondary and higher education levels. Situation is vulnerable for CWDs particularly in low-income countries. CWDs should have equal access to quality education, because this is key to human capital formation and their participation in social and economic life. In addition, Government should shown concern for vocational training of PCPs.

The study shows that respondents with a disability had significantly lower rates of primary school completion compare to non-disabled in all the countries. The situation is more vulnerable in low-income countries compare to high-income countries. Disability is a social phenomenon. Empowerment of PCPs is essential. Education is the most important vehicle to develop the socio-economic status of PCP. The National Policy for PCPs voiced the need for mainstreaming of PCPs in the general education system through inclusive education, identification of CWDs through regular surveys, enrolment in appropriate and disabled friendly schools till successful completion of education. However, there has much scope to improve the circumstances.

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