

Relevance of inclusive education for children with special needs: In context to India and Uttarakhand

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Abstract

The concept of inclusive education has been incorporated into various national and international declarations, policies and Acts. At the National level NPE 1986, POA 1992, PWD Act 1995, PWD act 2016 gives basic policy framework for including children with special needs (CWSN) and providing access to free education in an appropriate environment to all learners with disabilities till they Attains the age of eighteen years. The initial draft of National education policy (NEP draft- 2019) does not reflect any extraordinary effort made for the betterment of CWSN. There seems no major target or innovative idea to explore this program at national level. Although, section 3(2) of the RTE Act focus on the elementary education of children with disabilities. The component like SSA, RMSA and Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (2018-19 onwards), provides support for various student oriented activities which include identification and assessment of CWSN, provision of aids and appliances, corrective surgeries, Braille books, additional incentives and uniforms, therapeutic services, development of teaching-learning material (TLM), assistive devices & equipments, orientation programmes to create positive attitude and awareness among community, parents counseling, purchase/ development of instructional materials, in-service training of special educators and general teachers on curriculum adaptation etc. Targets have also been set under Sustainable Development Goals- 2030 (SDGs) and country is steadily moving towards inclusiveness and equitable quality education. We need to further understand the gaps in programmes and barriers to inclusive education. It is observed in census data of 2011 that the number of CWSN and their educational scenario very much depends upon the geographical conditions. As per Census 2011, there are 26.8 million PwDs (2.2 per cent of population) in India. The U-DISE data collected for 2017-18 of all schools in India claims 23 lakh children are suffering from various disabilities while in Uttarakhand 15214 (Enrolled 14150, Not enrolled 1064) children are identified in this category. Taking cognizance of this fact, inclusive education for children with special needs have been focused in this study on the basis of census data 2011 with reference to India and Uttarakhand state.

Keywords: NPE 1986, POA 1992, PWD ACT 1995, PWD ACT 2016, NEP DRAFT- 2019, CWSN, sustainable Development goals- 2030 (SDGS), UNESCO, PWDS, U-DISE

Introduction

Every child in our country has a right to education. This goal of Universalization of education (UEE), has further been facilitated by the constitutional (86th amendment) act, making free and compulsory elementary education a fundamental right, for all the children with special needs (CWSN). In the 1970s, the government launched the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC). The scheme aimed at providing educational opportunities to learners with disabilities in regular schools, and to facilitate their achievement and retention. To integrate children with disabilities in the general community at all levels as equal partners to prepare them for normal development and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence. The theme behind which was 'Child towards school'. A cardinal feature of the scheme was the liaison between regular and special schools to reinforce the integration process. Understanding the diverse needs of learners, especially those who are physically and mentally challenged, and creating an enabling school, the program 'Inclusive education' for CWSN was started from District primary education Program (DPEP) 1994 and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA 2000) ^[1], the concept changed and this program became known as 'Inclusive education' whose theme was '*School towards child*'. Inclusive Education (IE)

is a new approach to educate and facilitate special need children and the normal children in the same environment together. *The process of inclusion means focusing on the system and making it welcoming to all. In case of the children with special needs, inclusion illustrates the shift in services from mere education to personal development. Inclusion is based on recognition of the capacities and potential of all children to develop if the environment is responsive to their needs* [Rao: 2003] ^[3].

Equity, to mean not only equal opportunity, but also creation of conditions in which the disadvantaged sections of the society – children of SC, ST, Muslim minority, landless agricultural workers and children with special needs, etc. – can avail of the opportunity [Bordia committee report, RTE – SSA 2011].

The emphasis on inclusive education emerges especially after the National Curriculum Framework (2005) and UNCRPD (2006), and is further strengthened by the RPWD Act (2016). Recent developments, like the draft National Education Policy, 2019 also places emphasis on inclusive education practices. However, critical analysis and evidence suggest that while the earlier frameworks and policies on inclusive education created awareness among various stakeholders, they have not yet resulted in effective inclusive practices. The UNESCO Salamanca Statement

(1994) calls for inclusive education, stating 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”. UNICEF's Report on the Status of Disability in India (2000) states that there are around 30 million children in India suffering from some form of disability. 10% of the world’s population lives with a disability, and 80% of these people with disabilities live in developing countries. But 75% of people with disabilities live in rural areas in India. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA-RTE) had adopted a more exclusive and a broad-based understanding of the concept of inclusion, wherein a multi-option model of educating CWSN was being implemented. It brings all students together in one classroom and community, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area, and seeks to maximize the potential of all students. Three important aspects of UEE are access, enrolment and retention of all children in 6-14 years of age. There are an estimated 8 million children out of school in India (MHRD 2009 statistics), many of whom are marginalized by dimensions such as poverty, gender, disability, and caste. Today, what are the needs and challenges for achieving the goal of inclusive education? How will an inclusive environment meet the needs of children with disabilities? How quality education can be effectively and efficiently delivered for all children? Therefore, inclusive schools have to address the needs of all children in every community and the central and state governments have to manage inclusive environment. The school can only be inclusive when all its students are able to access its resources and participate in its activities without exception. Children with disabilities should not be left behind. There is an urgent need for interventions for equipping general teachers with special skills, making general curricula, teaching methods, evaluation procedures, disability-sensitive learning material and skills in addressing the attitudes of other children in the school. This will help in ensuring effectiveness of such interventions. There has been clear progress in this regard in the last few decades, with various international frameworks and national policies now in place, and a common understanding that *children with disabilities must be educated in regular schools and not taught in separate educational settings*. Education of children with disabilities is still insufficiently addressed by schooling systems around the world. In India itself, both legal frameworks and their implementation have evolved at pace, but as everywhere else, more can be done to better include children with disabilities. The operationalization of legal provisions occurs primarily through Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan which envisions inclusive education as the underlying principle of education policy. While it focuses on increasing enrolment of children with disabilities in regular schools, removal of barriers, training of teachers and use of technology, it also provides for home-based education. Implementation of the scheme through a coordinated effort, as envisioned, is yet to be operationalized. The Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009 and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD) Act 2016 has helped create a comprehensive legal framework for inclusive education. However, there are a few ambiguities about where children with disabilities should study and who should teach them. Gaps remain in the form of appropriate norms and standards applicable to all educational institutions, services provided to CWSNs, and

the absence of a coordinated authority to enforce the norms and standards. It expressly envisions special schools as resource centers for general teachers who are required to teach children with disabilities.

Objectives of the study

The major objectives of the study are:

- To analyse the efforts made by various policies and acts in the area ‘Education and wellbeing of CWSN.
- To judge the provisions made in draft of NEP- 2019 for CWSN.
- To make an overview of data on children with special needs in context of India and Uttarakhand state.

Need of study

One-fourth of the CWSN population aged between 5 and 18 do not attend any educational institution. The number of children enrolled in school drops significantly with each successive level of schooling. The proportion of children with disabilities who are out of school is much higher than the overall proportion of out-of-school children at the national level. Thus, although the schemes and programs, Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 4) and the Education 2030 Agenda (UN General Assembly), In India, regulations such as the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act) and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPWD Act) constitute two highly significant milestones in the journey towards realizing the right to education of CWSN have brought children with disabilities into schools but gaps remain. As far as the state Uttarakhand is considered, the number of CWSN is less than the national average but enrollment is still not so satisfactory. The need of study is to assess the enrollment, out of school status, the provisions and efforts been made for CWSN in context of national and Uttarakhand state.

Methodology

The study is based on secondary data. Extensive desk reviews and thematic analysis were conducted using the sources - Acts, policies, programs, schemes, and guidelines related to disability and education, National and international academic literature as available, Databases and statistical reports, Findings of various survey and civil society reports, Official reports by central and state governments. The paper was written in a short time using available material and statistical resources on the subject, and this could be a possible limitation.

Provisions made so far for CWSN (After independence)

The central and state governments have been a constant endeavor for children with special needs (CWSN) in India. Until a decade after independence the government did not have a sound policy for the identification and welfare of children with disabilities.

1. In 1960 ministry of education was divided and the ministry of Social justice and cooperation was constituted. Since then this ministry took concerns of CWSN and other weaker and vulnerable sections of the society, by providing nominal grants-in-aid and rehabilitation facilities as needed to them.
2. Based on the suggestion made by Indian education commission (1964-66) headed by Dr. D.S. Kothari keeping in view the special needs of these children,

- provision of separate special schools was made for them.
3. In an important step by ministry of social justice and cooperation, India in 1974 made a provision for disabled children the '*Integrated Education of Disabled Children Scheme*' (IEDC) 1974. This scheme was partially funded by UNESCO to improve the classroom environment, providing aids and appliances, uniform and several other incentives to children with disabilities.
 4. In the New education policy (NEP-1986), a provision was made to mainstream the disabled children in educational section but it was added too that the children with moderate to severe disability will be mainstreamed in general schools only when they will be equipped with basic skills in special schools. Provision of teacher training at different level to deal with disabled children was a welcome step taken in NEP-1986.
 5. The provision made by NEP- 1986 carried forward till the report of the 'Program of action committee' (POA-1992) but the possibility of violation of article 45A to provide equal opportunities for 'education to all' was felt seriously.
 6. Rehabilitation Council of India Act(1992) states that CWSN will be taught by a trained teacher. The council under the Act has prescribed the minimum standards of education required for granting recognized rehabilitation qualification by universities or institutions in India [www.disabilityindianetwork.org]. RCI act- 1992 regulate and monitor services given to persons with a disability, to standardize syllabus and to maintain a Central Rehabilitation Register of all qualified professionals and personnel working in the field of Rehabilitation and Special Education.
 7. Mental Health ACT 1987: An Act to consolidate and amend the law relating to the treatment and care of mentally ill persons, to make better provision with respect to their property and affairs and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
 8. Special provisions were made to identify disability-wise children and linking them to the main stream of education, under the World Bank supported project 'District primary education program' (DPEP) 1994. Sarva shiksha abhiyan (SSA) came to an existence in year 2000. The concept 'Inclusive education' instead of 'Integrated approach' started with new hope and dimensions.
 9. Persons with Disabilities Act (1995) made the provision for educational entitlement for all CWSN up to 18 years in an appropriate environment.
 10. Provision was made in National Trust Act (1999) to serve and support severely disabled children.
 11. The SSA listed 8 priority areas of intervention for inclusive education: Survey for identification of CWSN, Assessment of CWSN, Providing assistive devices, Networking with NGOs/Government schemes, Barrier free access, Training of teachers on IE, Appointment of resource teachers, Curricula adaptation/textbooks/appropriate TLM
 12. In the 86th Constitutional Amendment (2007), mandate of free and compulsory education to children up to 14 years also helped shape the comprehensive 'National Action Plan for Inclusion in Education of the Children and Persons with Disabilities' (MHRD, 2005), and the 'National Policy for Persons with Disabilities in 2006' (an MSJE initiative).
 13. The 'Right to Free and Compulsory Education' (RTE) Act, 2009 mandates free and compulsory elementary education to all children including CWSN. As per the Amendment of 2012, it also mandates that, a child with multiple and/or severe disabilities have the right to opt for home based education.
 14. In order to address the educational needs of CWSN at the secondary and senior secondary level, the scheme for Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) was, implemented. The Scheme aimed at enabling all students with disabilities completing eight years of elementary schooling, an opportunity to complete four years of secondary schooling in an inclusive and enabling environment in the general education system at the secondary level (classes IX to XII).
 15. 2018-19 onwards, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan aims to cover all children with special needs in a continuum from classes I to XII. The major provisions of Samagra Shiksha are -
 - Identification and assessment of CWSN.
 - Provision of free escort up to schools.
 - Provision of aids and appliances, assistive devices.
 - Stipend for girls with special needs
 - The provision for home-based education covering children with severe/multiple disabilities has been extended for children till class XII
 - Support services like establishment of resource rooms, vocational education, therapeutic services and counseling, etc.
 - Community sensitization and parents counseling.
 - Barrier free access of CWSN to classrooms, laboratories, libraries and toilets etc in the school.
 - Medical certification camps.
 - Incentives like Free stationary, school bags, TLMs, medical facilities, guidance and counseling services, vocational training and therapeutic services to CWSN.
 - In service teachers will be sensitized and trained to teach and deal children with special needs in the general classroom.
 - Capacity building programs for resource teachers.
 16. In the RPWD Act, 2016, the number of disabilities has been expanded from 7 to 21 and it now also includes dwarfism, muscular dystrophy, specific learning disabilities, hard of hearing, speech and language disability cerebral palsy, autism spectrum disorders, chronic neurological disorders such as multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease, blood disorders such as hemophilia, thalassemia and sickle cell anemia, acid attack victims, and multiple disabilities. The RPWD Act, 2016 provides that "the appropriate Government shall ensure that the PWD enjoy the right to equality, life with dignity, and respect for his or her own integrity equally with others." It is also stipulated in the section 3 that no PWD shall be discriminated on the ground of disability.

NPE (Draft) 2019 and CWSN

The draft of new education policy 2019 does not appear to be successful in bringing new provisions over traditional

aspects towards CWSN. Children with special needs have been included along with weaker sections of the society, scheduled cast, scheduled tribes, Muslims and other disadvantaged groups. This provision does not seem to remove the discrimination with this focus group. The term CWSN was misconstrued in the PWD Act- 2016 and it was expected that inclusion in the new education policy would be treated as more serious concern, which was not there. Almost 28% out of school are children with special needs but policy is not focused on what innovations can be done for their maximum enrollment and inclusion? Simply providing a structural barrier-free environment cannot be the solution. After the implementation of DPEP in 1994, SSA 2000 and now Samagra shiksha abhiyan 2018-19, only traditional approach was emphasized. In-service teachers training and special training for resource persons in the area of children disability has not been taken as focus area yet now. It is also reflected in the policy that NGO's and intellectuals working in the disability related field, even the top committee members of RCI and PWD act- 2016 were not taken in to consideration while the policy draft was being prepared. However it is a good initiative to strengthen the support system for CWSN will be carried out under central Govt. schemes and efforts will be made for their betterment and educational inclusion. *The Draft National Education Policy (NEP) 2019 fails to address the needs of children with special needs (CwSN) and persons with disabilities (PwDs). Therefore, there is need for a separate policy for CwSN and PwDs.* [Sreenu: 2007]

Overview of data on children with special needs in context of India and Uttarakhand state:

As per the 8th All India School Education Survey (AISES) the statistics of schooling facilities for children with disabilities are appalling to say the least. Out of total 59 Lakh teachers, only 1.32% teachers have received any kind of training in inclusive education. only 10% of the schools have handrails, 4.2% have adapted labs and 7.8% have adapted toilets.

Disability and Census data: A historical Perspective

- The question on disability was canvassed in all the Censuses of India since 1872 to 1931
- The question on disability was not canvassed in the Censuses from 1941 to 1971
- In Census 1981, information on three types of disability (totally blind, totally crippled, and totally dumb) was collected.
- The question on disability was dropped in Census 1991.
- In Census 2001, the question was again included and information on five types of disability (disability in seeing, in speech, in hearing, in moving, and mental disability) was collected.
- In Census 2011 information on eight types of disability (disability in seeing, in hearing, in speech, in

movement, in mental retardation, in mental illness, any other and multiple disability) has been collected.

[Source: Disabled persons in India: A statistical profile 2016, social statistics division, ministry of programme implementation, Government of India, <http://www.mospi.gov.in>]

Table 1: Population Vs Persons with disability data

2011 Census	Population (crore)			PWD's (crore)			
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Disabled population %
India	62.32	58.76	121.08	1.5	1.18	2.68	2.21
Uttarakhand	0.52	0.49	1.01	0.01028	0.00825	0.01853	1.83

Table 2: Rural Vs Urban disability data: (In Crore)

Disability Data	Rural			Urban		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
India	0.99	0.87	1.86	0.48	0.33	0.81
Uttarakhand	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Table 3: PWD data, 2001-2011

PWD %	2001			2011		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
India	2.21%	1.93%	2.13%	2.24%	2.17%	2.21%
Uttarakhand	NA	NA	1.80%	NA	NA	1.83%

Table 4: Literacy status and disability: 2011 Census

Literacy status and disability	Literate (Crore)	Illiterate (Crore)	Total (Crore)	% Literate to total disabled persons	Total literacy rate
India	1.46	1.22	2.68	54.52	74.04
Uttarakhand	.0103	.0082	.0185	55.59	79.63

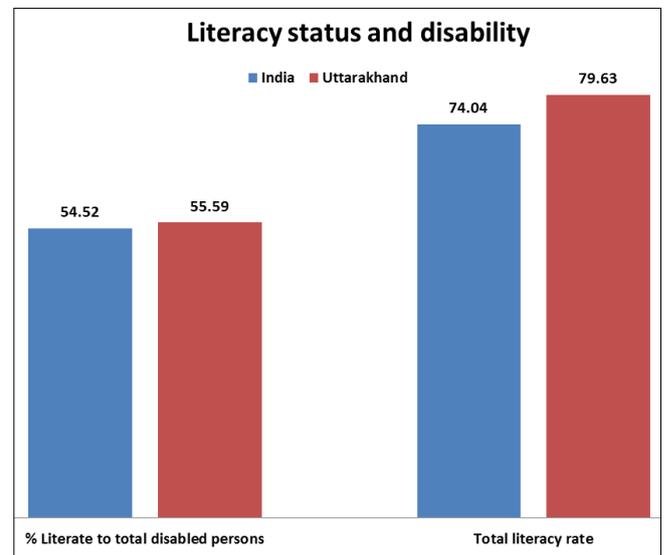


Fig 1

Table 5: Disability data at pre-primary level (0-6 Years): 2011 Census

0-6 years	No of disabled persons (Crore)	No of disabled children (Crore)	Share of Disabled Children in Disabled population	Uttarakhand share in Indian population
India	2.68	0.204	7.61%	0.6%
Uttarakhand	0.0185	0.00122	6.59%	

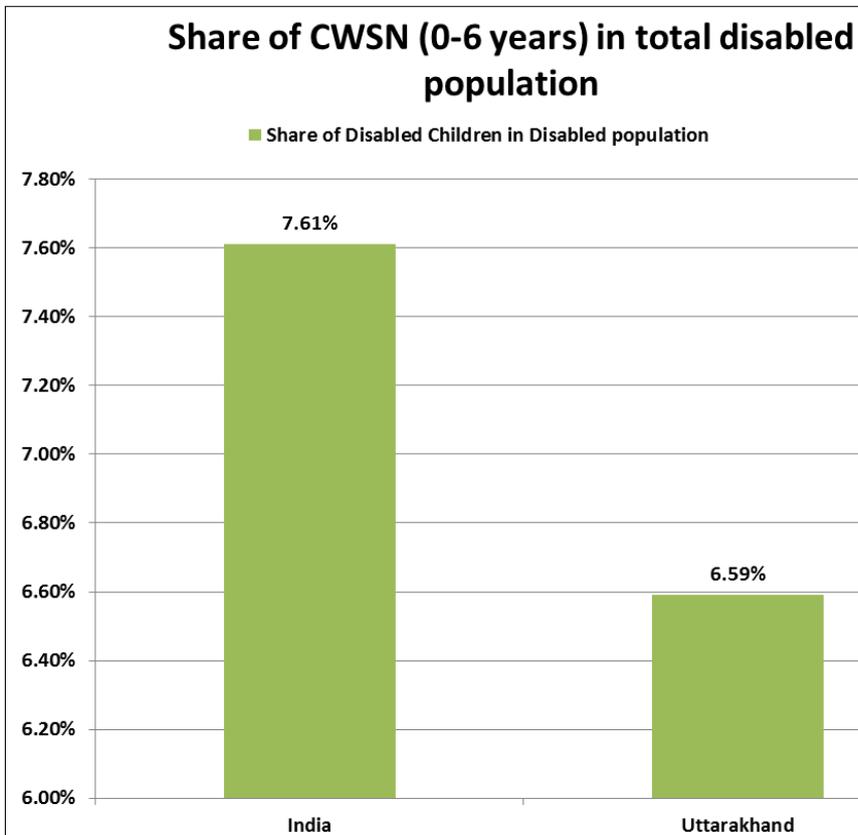


Table 6: Disability in school education (5-19 Years) (in Crore): 2011 Census

Disability in (5-19 Years)	Male (5-19 Years)	Female (5-19 Years)	Total (5-19 Years)	Total disabled population	% disability in total population
India	0.370	0.288	.658	2.68	24.55%
Uttarakhand	0.00253	0.00192	0.00445	0.0185	24.05%

Findings

1. The percentage of people with disabilities in Uttarakhand state is less than the national average. (Table 1)
2. The number of PWD’s is more in rural areas than in urban areas. (Table 2)
3. Both in India and Uttarakhand, in census 2011 compared to 2001, there has been an increase in the population suffering from disabilities in both rural and urban areas. (Table 3)
4. The literacy rate of persons with disability is much lower than that of normal persons. But the literacy rate of Uttarakhand is better in both categories as compared to national average. (Table 4)
5. Total share of children with disabilities in 0-6 years category, to the total PWD’s in India is 7.61% while it is 6.59% in Uttarakhand. (Table 5)
6. Above 24% Children from the age group 5-19 years alone suffer from various disabilities to the total disabled population in India and Uttarakhand. Issue of serious concern arises, because this is the main

7. schooling age group and all the efforts are being made for the same age group in different educational policies and projects. (Table 6)

Conclusion with recommendations

The trend of census during 2001 to 2011 indicates that by 2030 the population of India will reach up to 1.5 crore and the number of people with disability around 3 crore. Statistics also show that in two important stages of schooling, 0-6 years and 05-19 years of category, India, Uttarakhand and many other states have higher disability rates. However, many voluntary organizations including the ministry of education, ministry of social justice and cooperation and ministry of health are making their efforts in this direction but the challenge is to include these CWSN in the mainstream of education and protect them from discrimination. Only 61% of CWSN in the age group 5-19 years are enrolled in school education out of which 57% are boys and just 43% are girls. There are 27% of CWSN in this category who have never been enrolled in schools. The real issue is about these 27% children who must be the focus

Group. In the PWD act 2016 the number of disabilities has been increased from 7 to 21 which is a message that any child now suffering from disability must be identified in the initial stage of schooling. Children with severe disabilities whose access to school is actually very difficult, there is a need to strengthen the home-based education program and provision of appropriate incentives to them. Training based on inclusive education will have to be made mandatory in all types of teacher training programs. The provisions for CWSN those are suggested in NEP draft – 2019 should be reviewed thoroughly. Every provision for CWSN's must be supported by curricular interventions including appropriate TLM's, training designs, student assessment system, classroom practices and even suitable infrastructure.

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