

Research Journal

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Creating an Inclusive Education Model in India

Dr. Ketna L Mehta, Dr. Amit Algotar

Abstract

This paper studies the largely successful inclusive education policies and practices in USA with a specific case of University of Arizona in creating equal educational opportunities for the disabled community at large. The structure, set up and outcomes of The Disability Resource Centre is studied in depth to present a role model case for creating such inclusive polices, infrastructure and practices in the Indian education field.

We believe that in today's context inclusive education will play a key role and therefore there is all the more a need to understand its different facets as well as focus on the best practices of the institution which actively follow it.

Introduction

Philosophically and pragmatically, inclusive education is primarily about belonging, membership, and acceptance. Historically, the inclusive education movement grew out of a parent-initiated effort that focused on the rights of children with disabilities to participate with their non disabled peers (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001). Parents believed, and educators supported the notion, that discriminating children on any characteristic, such as ability or race, inherently leads to an inferior education for those who are moved out of the mainstream. In addition, efforts to allow part-time involvement in targeted subject areas (usually nonacademic) based on student "readiness" to participate, as in the case of mainstreaming, resulted in less than favorable outcomes (Gartner & Lipsky, 1987). What then emerged was a commitment to full-time membership in age-appropriate, general education classes.

Inclusion: Literature Review

Inclusion can be simply defined as the delivery of instruction to disabled/handicapped students in the regular educational institutions (Stainback, Stainback, East & Sapon-Shevin, 1994). The overview includes discussion of research and theory related to: the least restrictive environment (LRE) mandate, methods of determining the LRE for each child; strategies and techniques used by special education teachers, resource specialists and other relevant professionals for meeting the educational needs of "included" students (commonly referred to as mainstreamed students); the controversy involving simple versus full inclusion; California law as it relates to inclusion; and the effects of inclusion on special education students' self-concept and self-esteem.

The passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142) in 1975 was the culmination of years of litigation regarding discrimination against handicapped children in schools. A key principle of this law was the mandate that handicapped children be educated in "the least restrictive environment." According to Turnbull and Turnbull (1990), the LRE, essentially, mandates the need for a continuum of services for disabled/handicapped children in public schools.

Simple Versus Full Inclusion: According to Borthwick-Duffy, Palmer and Lane (1996), simple inclusion is wedded to the notion of a continuum of placement options depending on the children's degree of need for physical/medical and other services associated with his/her disability. Full inclusion, on the other hand, holds that almost all disabled students, regardless of the continuum of services they require, should be placed in regular schools. Another way of saying this is that full inclusion involves more than the mainstreaming of students with disabilities in a specific social or academic area, but involves the full-time placement of students with mild, moderate, or severe disabilities in neighborhood schools. There are several pros and cons associated with full versus simple inclusion. In terms of those advocating full inclusion, they point out that the key difference between disabled children is not the setting but the degree of services required. Some common words found in the essay are:

Inclusion in the classroom

Inclusion "mainstreams" physically and mentally disabled children into regular classrooms. Back in the sixties and the seventies, disabled children

were excluded all together from regular classrooms. The federal inclusion law, I.D.E.A. (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), addresses children whose handicaps ranges mild to severe (I.D.E.A. Law Page). From state to state the laws of inclusion vary. The laws may permit the special needs children to be in regular classrooms all day and for all subjects or for just one or two subjects (Vann 31). Other times the state laws allow those with special needs to have aids with them to help them in the regular classrooms (Sornson). The focus of school should be to educate children in a manner and environment which supports and values them as people (Vann 33, Barak Stussman, March 1997, "The Educational Digest").

Case Study: USA

A. American Policies

American disabilities rights movement:

The American disabilities right movement began in the 1960s and received major impetus in the 1970s (<http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/collections/drilm/index.html>). Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act passed in 1973 forbids discrimination against persons with disabilities by programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance (<http://www.ada.gov/publicat.htm>). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) passed in 1975 requires public schools to make available to all eligible children with disabilities a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their individual needs. IDEA requires public school systems to develop appropriate Individualized Education Programs (IEP's) for each child. The specific special education and related services outlined in each IEP reflect the individualized needs of each student (<http://www.ada.gov/publicat.htm>).

Americans with disabilities Act (1990):

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), patterned after Section 504 of the rehabilitation act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, State and local government, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications (<http://www.ada.gov/publicat.htm>). An individual with a disability is defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such impairment, or a person who

is perceived by others as having such impairment. The ADA does not specifically name all of the impairments that are covered.

There are four titles under the ADA. Title I requires employers with 15 or more employees to provide qualified individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to benefit from the full range of employment-related opportunities available to others. It prohibits discrimination in recruitment, hiring, promotions, training, pay, social activities, and other privileges of employment. Title II requires that state and local governments give people with disabilities an equal opportunity to benefit from all of their programs, services, and activities (e.g. public education, employment, transportation, recreation, health care, social services, courts, voting, and town meetings). Title II also prohibits public transportation companies not associated with the state and local governments from discriminating against people with disabilities in the provision of their services and states that reasonable accommodation must be provided for people with disabilities. Title III and IV prohibits discrimination and requires provision of reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with disability with respect to equal access at public places and also with respect to using telecommunication devices. (<http://www.ada.gov/publicat.htm>.)

As a result of the above laws, each university or comparable center of learning has an office that meets the needs of students, faculty and staff towards bringing down barriers

and integrating them in all professional as well as non-professional aspects of the institution. The exact services that need to be provided, structure of this office or qualifications of the person designated to lead this office are not defined, and each institution formulates this independently. In the current article we review one such office located on the campus of the University of Arizona. The program at University of Arizona is amongst the top five such programs currently in the US.

B. American Practices: Case

Disability Resource Center at University of Arizona:

The University of Arizona established in 1885 is the oldest state funded

university located at Tucson in the state of Arizona and caters to more than 45,000 students, faculty and staff. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) a service office at the University of Arizona responsible for determining, arranging and providing reasonable accommodation to students, faculty and staff with disabilities (<http://drc.arizona.edu/>). It also offers competitive athletic opportunities, physical support, and provides training and consultation to the campus community. Its mission is to create inclusive and sustainable learning and working environments and facilitate access, discourse, and involvement through innovative services and programs, leadership, and collaboration. This office is currently headed by Dr. Sue Kroeger who has more than 25 years of experience in the field of disability issues and she herself uses a wheelchair. Dr. Kroeger received her master's degree in rehabilitation counseling at the University of Arizona and her doctorate in human rehabilitative services at the University of Northern Colorado. The center is currently staffed by 40 full and part-time staff. In the academic year 2007-2008 this office served 1900 students and 72 employees with various forms of disabilities (<http://drc.arizona.edu/about/reports.html>).

Services and programs provided by this office are:

A) Campus Services: The DRC works with faculty, supervisors and campus leaders to promote a broad definition of diversity that appreciates the disability experience and to foster usable, equitable, inclusive and sustainable learning and working environments. These include:

- Coordination of reasonable accommodations
- Consultation on the design of physical, curricular, informational, employment, electronic and policy environments
- Providing technical assistance for addressing issues related to the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act
- Conducting presentations and workshops to educate the campus community regarding disability issues
- Providing assistive technology for students, staff and faculty towards meeting the above goals

B) Individual Services: The DRC delivers individual services that promote growth, self-determination and minimize the time and energy required to

access the campus. This includes providing reasonable accommodation such as the following to eliminate barriers for students and employees with disabilities. Accommodations include but are not limited to:

- Test modifications
- Sign Language interpreters
- Note-taking assistance
- Document conversion
- Course and program modifications
- Assistive technology computer laboratory
- Job modifications
- Problem solving, support, information and referral

C) Adaptive Athletics: The DRC provides a comprehensive program of competitive athletics and fitness to allow all round growth and development of the disabled community on campus. Competitive teams currently part of the University of Arizona program are:

- Men's Wheelchair Basketball
- Women's Wheelchair Basketball
- Rugby
- Wheelchair Tennis
- Wheelchair Track and Road-Racing

In addition to these established sports teams, the DRC also provides facilities for fitness with a full equipped adaptive gymnasium and a workshop for repair of wheelchairs, scooters and other such devices. The DRC also does considerable out reach to the Tucson community by sponsoring various adaptive athletics events.

D) Campus and Community Partnerships: Goals of the DRC include engaging the campus and external communities in the creation of inclusive environments and fostering a heightened disability discourse, awareness, and involvement. This is carried out through close interaction between the DRC and the community of Tucson.

Comment:

Major impetus for a law like the ADA lies in the core American values of respect for individuality as well as equality, liberty and freedom for all. An office such as the DRC is essential for academic and professional success of individuals with disabilities. The main purpose of the DRC is to treat people with disabilities with respect and as productive members of the society by paying attention to and meeting their needs. Providing reasonable accommodation removes the barriers faced by individuals with disabilities and allows them to realize their full potential thus increasing their confidence and self-esteem.

Best Practices:

1. Most Business Schools in USA have clear policies to provide a welcoming and friendly environment, which is supportive to students, faculty and staff with disabilities. This is part of a wider commitment to equal opportunities.
2. Applications from people with disabilities are considered against the same criteria as those from people without a disability applying for the same programme. Full consideration of the specific support facilities required are considered and the Business School makes every effort to effect reasonable adjustments in order to enable applicants to join the programme of their choice. The application forms itself urge all applicants with special needs to identify their individual requirements by ticking the relevant section of the application form
3. Despite some of the Business School buildings being old and which were not designed for disabled access, given prior notice delegates/ programme members with disabilities are accommodated.
4. Most B schools have designated staff with responsibility for disabilities.
5. General aids and facilities available include: Dietary needs, the catering department makes every effort to accommodate all special dietary needs.
6. B schools either have medical care facilities within the campus or an arrangement with a local GP to deal with medical problems if they arise.
7. Libraries have large double doors allowing wheelchair access and

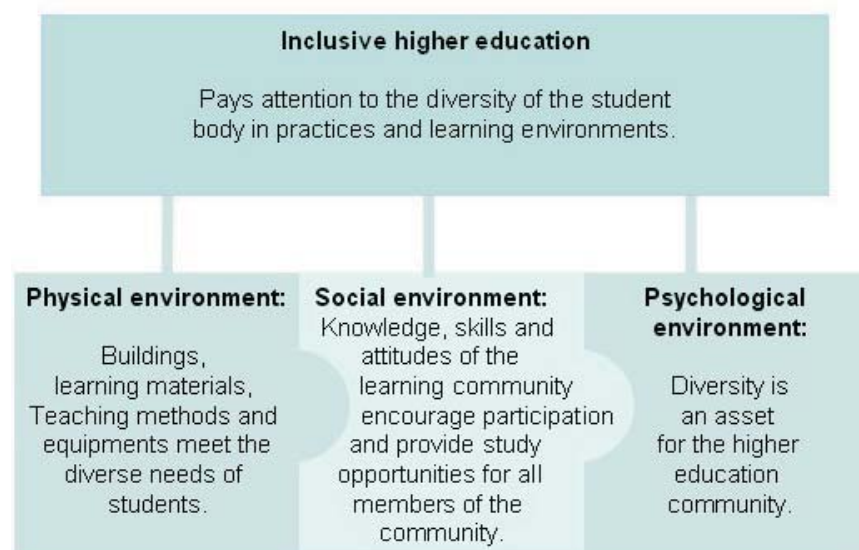
trained library staff that are available to assist if required. A disabled lift allows those with mobility difficulties access to materials on the lower level of the Library. The Library also has a photocopier with an enlarging function that may be useful for programme members with visual impairments.

8. Computers can be set up with special screen, keyboard, mouse and software configuration, etc. Computer-based sessions can be scheduled on the ground floor.
9. There are disability officers who meet and greet any delegate with a disability and discuss the particular help that he or she might need. First Aiders have received awareness training in the implications of disability in relation to incidents requiring first aid.
10. Visual Disability: Some of the Business School's rooms are specially equipped with emergency signs with raised photo-luminescent lettering and Braille. Fire call points have been fitted above. Swipe card readers have a tone to confirm successful operation. Swipe cards can be modified for Braille users. Delegates with guide dogs are also permitted Staff is available to assist with route planning around the Campus if required.
11. Mobility Difficulties/Wheelchair Access. Most schools have lifts, lectures and syndicate sessions can be scheduled in ground-floor rooms if lifts not available.

Most public rooms are accessible in a wheelchair including powered wheelchairs. Disabled- friendly toilets are provided in all public areas of the Business School.

12. Hearing Difficulties: Visual and physical fire alarm equipment is available on request in the form of flashing beacons and a vibrating pillow.
13. Website Web Teams in the Business School are aware of the need to build accessible websites. All new web environments are designed with physical and cognitive impairments in mind. The Business School aims eventually to build websites that comply with the international W3C Guideline 1.0 (Priority 1 and 2) standards.

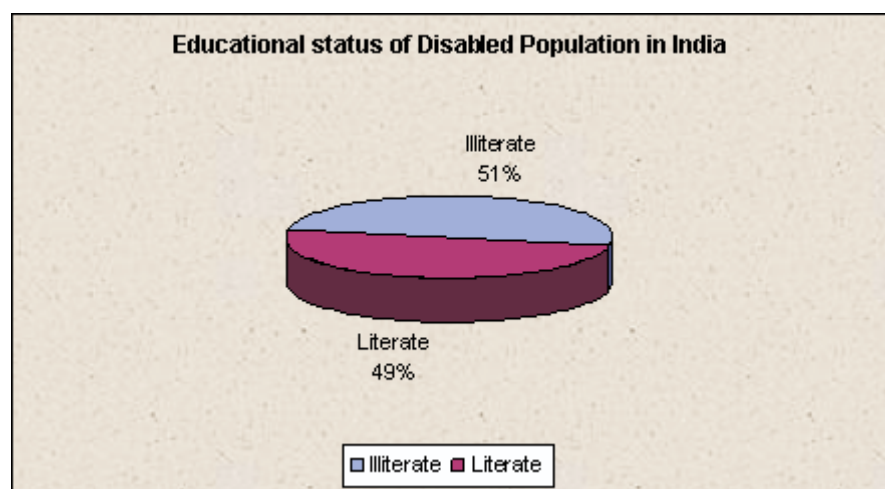
14. Assessment Provisions. Special arrangements which could be offered by the Business School to programme members taking written examinations include: - provision of a scribe - provision of a word processor - additional time - private rooms.
15. Complaints and Appeals: The University's Student Complaints Procedure covers all disability issues. If a programme member feels that he or she has not been given adequate assistance in dealing with the effect of a disability upon completion of assessed work, he or she may wish to proceed as stated in the Procedure
16. The following Business School staff generally have particular responsibility for disability issues: Overall Disabilities Co-Coordinator, (with responsibility for admissions to qualifications programmes) Disability Officer (Site & Facilities), Disability Officer (Assessment) and Disability Officer (Information Services).
17. Access Technology Loan Scheme to provide free loan of various types of equipment, to help with studies.
18. ESOK project - Inclusive Higher Education. Equal study rights for everyone. The essential aim of the project is to promote physical, psychological, and social accessibility in teaching and learning in Finnish higher education institutions (HEIs) so that everyone has the same right and access to study regardless of one's characteristics.

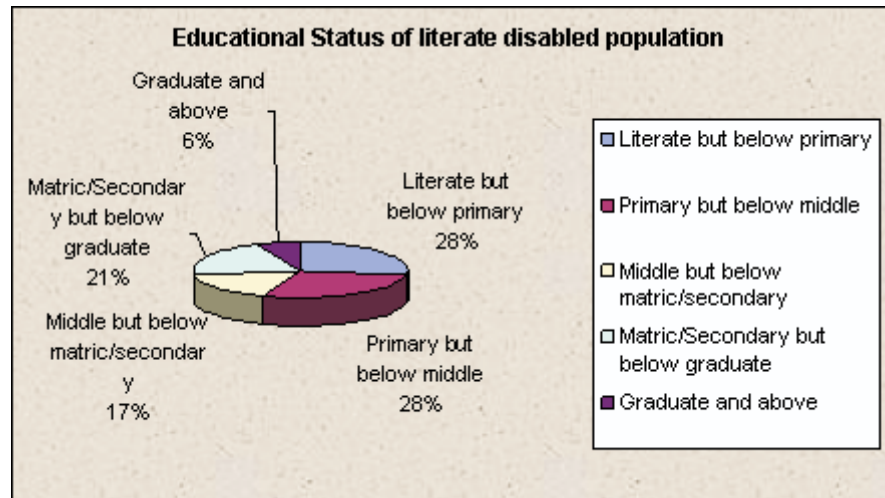


The Indian Context

Census 2001 has revealed that over 21 million people in India are suffering from one or the other kind of disability. This is equivalent to 2.1% of the population. But according to the World Health Organization, people with disabilities constituted about seven per cent of India's population. Among the total disabled in the country, 12.6 million are males and 9.3 million are females. Although the number of disabled is more in rural and urban areas, such proportion of the disabled by sex in rural and urban areas has been reported between 57-58 percent for males and 42-43 percent females. The disability rate (number of disabled per 100,000 populations) for the country as a whole works out to 2130. This is 2,369 in the case of males and 1,874 in the case of females. Among the five types of disabilities on which data has been collected, disability in seeing at 48.5% emerges as the top category. Others in sequence are: In movement (27.9%), Mental (10.3%), In speech (7.5%), and In hearing (5.8%). The disabled by sex follow a similar pattern except for that the proportion of disabled females is higher in the category in seeing and in hearing.

Across the country, the highest number of disabled has been reported from the state of Uttar Pradesh (3.6 million). Significant numbers of disabled have also been reported from the state like Bihar (1.9 million), West Bengal (1.8 million), Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra (1.6 million each). Tamil Nadu is the only state, which has a higher number of disabled females than males. Among the states, Arunachal Pradesh has the highest proportion of disabled males (66.6%) and lowest proportion of female disabled.





Indian Legislation

India has the Persons with disabilities Act 1995 which is a very good piece of legislation. Under chapter V 'education' the clauses featured are:

26. Appropriate Governments and local authorities to provide children with disabilities free education, etc. - The appropriate Governments and the local authorities shall -
 - Ensure that every child with a disability has access to free education in an appropriate environment till he attains the age of eighteen years;
 - Endeavour to promote the integration of students with disabilities in the normal schools;
 - Promote setting up of special schools in Government and private sector for those in need of special education, in such a manner that children with disabilities living in any part of the country have access to such schools.
 - Endeavour to equip the special schools for children with disabilities with vocational training facilities.

27. Appropriate Governments and Local authorities to make schemes and programmes for non-formal education, etc. - The appropriate Governments and the local authorities shall by notification make schemes for -

- Conducting part-time classes in respect of children with disabilities who having completed education up to class fifth and could not continue their studies on a whole-time basis;
 - Conducting special part-time classes for providing functional literacy for children in the age group of sixteen and above;
 - Imparting non-formal education by utilizing the available manpower in rural areas after giving them appropriate orientation;
 - Imparting education through open schools or open universities;
 - Conducting class and discussions through interactive electronic or other media;
 - Providing every child with disability free of cost special books and equipments needed for his education.
28. Research for designing and developing new assistive devices, teaching aids, etc. - The appropriate Governments shall initiate or cause to be initiated research by official and non-governmental agencies for the purpose of designing and developing new assistive devices, teaching aids, special teaching materials or such other items as are necessary to give a child with disability equal opportunities in education.
29. Appropriate Governments to set up teachers' training institutions to develop trained manpower for schools for children with disabilities - The appropriate Governments shall set up adequate number of teachers' training institutions and assist the national institutes and other voluntary organisations to develop teachers' training programmes specialising in disabilities so that requisite trained manpower is available for special schools and integrated schools for children with disabilities.
30. Appropriate Governments to prepare a comprehensive education scheme providing for transport facilities, supply of books, etc. - Without prejudice to the foregoing provisions, the appropriate Governments shall by notification prepare a comprehensive education scheme which shall make provisions for -
- Transport facilities to the children with disabilities or in the alternative financial incentives to parents or guardians to enable their children with disabilities to attend schools;

- The removal of architectural barriers from schools, colleges or other institutions imparting vocational and professional training;
 - The supply of books, uniforms and other materials to children with disabilities attending school;
 - The grant of scholarship to students with disabilities;
 - Setting up of appropriate for a for the redressal of grievances of parents regarding the placement of their children with disabilities;
 - Suitable modification in the examination system to eliminate purely mathematical questions for the benefit of blind students and students with low vision;
 - Restructuring of curriculum for the benefit of children with disabilities;
 - Restructuring the curriculum for benefit of students with hearing impairment to facilitate them to take only one language as part of their curriculum.
31. Educational institutions to provide amanuensis (*a person employed to write what another dictates or to copy what has been written by another; secretary.*) to students with visual handicap - All educational institutions shall provide or cause to be provided amanuensis to blind students and students with or low vision.

The Indian Education Bill

The Right to Education Bill, likely to be passed by Lok Sabha in Aug 2009, excludes disabled children from its ambit, in effect denying some 30 million children their right to education. This is viewed as a regressive government policy on education for disabled children, and it needs amendment to include provisions for disabled children. The past governments have shown commitment to primary education for the disabled. The 11th five year plan also stresses on inclusive education for the disabled. With the 2005 draft of the Right to Education Bill which had several specific provisions for disabled children. The current draft has done away with many of these provisions which does not augur well for an inclusive education policy.

The National Knowledge commission

This report too omits the importance of creating an inclusive education environment for equal opportunities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

It is imperative that India wakes up to the good practices professed by institutions of higher education in the USA and the globe to create equal opportunities for education in India and thus better employment opportunities through an inclusive learning environment.

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Useful links:

- The disability rights and independent living movement. University of California, Berkeley. <http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/collections/drilm/index.html>
- Disability Resource Center. University of Arizona. <http://drc.arizona.edu/>
- Association on higher education and disability (AHEAD). <http://www.ahead.org/>
- <http://punarbhava.in>
- <http://www.knowledgecommission.gov.in/>
- www.disabilityindia.org/pwdacts.cfm
- <http://www.censusindia.net/>

Dr. Ketna L. Mehta PhD in Management, Editor and Associate Dean, Research, We School of Management, Mumbai.

E-mail: ketnam@gmail.com

Dr. Amit Algotar Ph.D, M.B.B.S. Post-Doctoral Research Associate, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona.

E-mail: algotar@email.arizona.edu