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***Summary of ERIC Project***

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**A Comparative Study of Status of  
Awareness of RPwD Act 2016 for  
Inclusive Education in Government  
and Private Schools of Chandigarh,  
Panchkula and Mohali**

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**Introduction**

The Rights of Person with Disabilities Act, 2016 supports the concept of Inclusive Education and the action plans of the education sector have prioritised educational access to children with special education needs by making compulsory the necessary arrangements. This includes the creation of a barrier free environment, adaptations in curriculum, teaching methods and evaluation procedures, engagement of specialist teachers, and ensuring the availability of specific teaching and learning material in regular schools. Further, to meet these challenges, government at Central and State levels have introduced procedures, benefits and concessions to children with disabilities.

The Act also has a provision that every child with benchmark disability between the age of six to eighteen years shall have the right to free education in a neighbourhood school or in a special school, of their choice. Chapter-III of the Act covers the educational provisions for the children with disabilities. Section 16 of the chapter enlisted the duties of the educational institutions to provide inclusive education to the children with disabilities and for the purpose of Section 16, specific measures shall be taken to promote and facilitate inclusive education with emphasis on professional training, establish adequate number of resource centres to support educational institutions at all levels of school

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education, use of appropriate augmentative and alternative mode, provide books, other learning materials and appropriate assistive devices, provide scholarships, and to make suitable modifications in the curriculum and examination system. The New Education Policy 2020, is in complete consonance with the provisions of the RPwD Act 2016 and endorses all its recommendations with regard to school education.

Therefore, it was important to examine the extent and level of awareness of school personnel about the RPwD act for inclusive education of children with disabilities in both Government and private schools. For deep insight, the study had also explored the present status along with the steps taken and challenges, and barriers faced by schools to facilitate and promote inclusive education after the passage of the act.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The present study examined the status of awareness of act for inclusive education in Government and private schools of three different sites, i.e., Chandigarh (UT), Mohali (SAS Nagar, Punjab) and Panchkula (Haryana), which help to compare and understand the status of awareness of RPwD Act, 2016 for inclusive education in these region. The study explored the steps taken by the Government and private schools of Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula schools to promote inclusive education for children with disabilities after the passage of the RPwD act 2016, and the concerns and challenges of principals, teachers and special educators of government and private schools of Mohali (Punjab), Panchkula (Haryana) and Chandigarh (UT) to provide inclusive education for children with disabilities.

### **Method**

Purposive sampling was used to select 30 inclusive schools of Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula in which children with special needs were available. Out of these, 10 schools (5 Government and 5 private) were from Chandigarh (UT), 10 schools (5 Government and 5 private) from Mohali district (Punjab) and 10 schools (5 Government and 5 private) from Panchkula district (Haryana) with maximum number of children with special needs. The 31 Principals or Heads and 37 special educators of the 30 selected schools (15 from private and 15 from Government) were part of the study. From the 30 selected schools, 158 teachers teaching

to the maximum number of children with special needs (88 from Government schools and 70 from private schools) were included. In the lines of the objectives of the study, appropriate tools were developed and prepared as per the extensive search in libraries, research literature and suggestions given by the experts. Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data were undertaken. Normative survey followed by in-depth study research design was followed. Data collected through interviews, case studies and documents, were of qualitative nature. Therefore, it required enormous time and effort to go through each interview, field notes, case and documents. These were analysed by inducting content analysis method. The analysis consisted of two different phases—the first phase in which the researcher read the interviews and field notes through several times to understand the ‘big picture’, and the second phase focused on discovering responses that highlight important messages or findings using inductive content analysis in which the qualitative data were analysed. It was used to explore the similarities and differences regarding the conceptualisation of inclusive education, understanding of RPwD act, 2016, steps taken to implement inclusive education and possible challenges and barriers faced in providing learning opportunities to children with special needs in schools. Thus, the researcher took extensive field notes of the interviews, focus groups and their observations. Descriptive statistics—mean, SD and percentages were calculated to analyse the quantitative data and for qualitative analyses, data were interpreted to present in a succinct format and analysed using thematic analysis.

## **Findings**

### ***Awareness and Knowledge level on Inclusive Education and RPwD Act, 2016***

1. The sample regions were aware about the Inclusive Education and conceptualise Inclusive Education as ‘education for all and quality education’. Majority of the participatory government schools stakeholders were not much aware about the RPwD Act, 2016.
2. The government school principals of Chandigarh were more aware and had greater knowledge (62.26 per cent) about the salient features of RPwD Act, elements of inclusive education and curriculum adaptation of children with special needs than the Principals of Mohali (Punjab) (55.28 per cent), and

- Panchkula (Haryana) 51.84 per cent. However, all the three Government school Principals of Chandigarh, Mohali (Punjab) and Panchkula (Haryana) lied in the moderate range of knowledge level.
3. General teachers of Government schools of Chandigarh (60.97 per cent) and Panchkula (57.43 per cent) had moderate level of awareness, and knowledge than the teachers of Mohali (Punjab) which was 45.52 per cent which were at inadequate level. The awareness and knowledge level of the Mohali, Punjab Government school general teachers (45.52 per cent) scored lowest than the teachers of other two regions—Panchkula (Haryana) and Chandigarh.
  4. Resource teachers of Panchkula (Haryana) (65.80 per cent) had more knowledge about the RPwD Act than the resource teachers of Chandigarh (57.65 per cent) and Mohali (Punjab) (43.58 per cent). However, resource teachers of Panchkula (Haryana) and Chandigarh had moderate level of knowledge about the RPwD Act than the Mohali (Punjab) resource teachers with inadequate level of knowledge.
  5. Majority of the participatory private schools of the selected region were aware about the inclusive education. Majority of the private school principals and special educators were aware about the RPwD Act. However, general teachers were not much aware about the act and surprisingly, most of them had not heard about the Act.
  6. The school Principals of Mohali (Punjab) (82.41 per cent) and Chandigarh (92.20 per cent) had adequate level of awareness, and knowledge on the RPwD Act to facilitate and support inclusive education for children with disabilities. School Principals of Chandigarh possessed more knowledge about the RPwD Act. However, majority of the school Principals of Panchkula (Haryana) (65.06 per cent) had moderate level of knowledge about the RPwD Act.
  7. Majority of the general teachers of the three regions—Mohali (Punjab) (54.13 per cent), Panchkula (Haryana) (51.67 per cent) and Chandigarh (65.70 per cent) had moderate level of knowledge about the RPwD Act on the salient features of the act, elements of inclusive education, and curriculum adaptation and modification in classroom.
  8. The resource teachers of all the three regions—Mohali (Punjab) (68.45 per cent), Panchkula (Haryana) (59.61 per cent) and

Chandigarh (70.87 per cent) had moderate level of knowledge level about the RPwD Act on the inclusive education and different types of disabilities. However, the resource teachers of Chandigarh had more knowledge in RPwD Act than the resource teachers of other two regions—Mohali and Panchkula.

***Steps Taken by the Schools to Promote Inclusive Education After the Passage of RPwD Act, 2016***

1. All the selected states and UT had made the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Rules, 2019 to direct the institutions to provide support to children with disabilities.
2. In government schools of Mohali, Punjab, around 60 per cent of the school Principals, 75 per cent of the school teachers and 100 per cent of the resource teachers attended the training programme on inclusive education. In Panchkula (Haryana), 80 per cent of the school Principals, 53 per cent of the general teachers and 100 per cent of the resource teachers attended the training programme on inclusive education. In Chandigarh, 100 per cent of the school Principals, 72 per cent of the school teachers and 100 per cent of the special educators attended the training programme on inclusive education.
3. In private schools of Mohali, Punjab, almost 100 per cent of the school Principals, 19 per cent of the school teachers and 60 per cent of the special educators attended the training programme on inclusive education. However, 30 per cent of the schools had not appointed the special educators. In Panchkula, Haryana, 80 per cent of the school Principals, 60.32 per cent of the general teachers and 60 per cent of the special educators had attended the training programme on inclusive education. 80 per cent of the schools had appointed special educators. In Chandigarh, 100 per cent of the school principals, 39.4 per cent of the general teachers and 80 per cent of the special educators attended the training programme and 80 per cent of the schools had appointed special educators, psychologists and counsellors.
4. Majority of the government schools had children with intellectual disabled. The children with learning difficulties were also been seen as special children in schools. In all the three regions, majority of the private schools had children with specific learning disabilities.

5. In all the three region, majority of the private and government school placed children with disabilities in the regular classrooms based on the IQ and learning levels. Only the children with mild level of disability are the part of general classrooms. Children with low vision, speech impairment and learning disability were taught in regular classrooms, whereas children with ID and CP were fully placed in resource room. They were segregated from the regular classrooms even for co-curricular activities. Separate activities are being conducted for these children in the schools by the resource teachers. Participation of children with special needs depend on the 'degree of severity'.
6. In Government schools of the three regions, it has been found that the schools where there are special educators, the regular teachers had a tendency to send the disabled children to the resource rooms.
7. Infrastructure facilities are better in Chandigarh schools than the Mohali (Punjab). In few schools of Mohali (Punjab), facility of resource room was not available.
8. Facilities of modified toilets and ramps in Mohali (Punjab) and Panchkula (Haryana) were not available. Non-availability of ramps and improper sanitation facilities in few schools of the regions.
9. In majority of the sample, children with benchmark disability receive allowances and benefits.
10. Majority of the participatory schools reducing the difficulty level and the content were the major adaptations done. Assigning CwSN with other work instead of focusing on learning part was noted during the interviews. Reinforcement techniques—appreciating the child, clapping, recognition or providing chocolates to encourage the CwSN were used by the teachers.
11. Reducing the difficulty level and the content were the major adaptation done. Assigning CwSN with other work instead of focusing on learning part was noted during the interviews. Reinforcement techniques—appreciating the child, clapping, recognition or providing chocolates to encourage the CwSN were used by majority of the selected sample teachers.
12. Individualised education programmes are prepared by the resource teachers. Lack of coordination and collaboration between the resource teachers and general teachers was found.

13. School walls were beautifully painted with teaching-learning materials in all the Government schools of the three region.
14. Less emphasis on screening, identification and certification process for children with special needs to avail the supports and benefits.
15. Majority of the private schools had provision of extra-curricular activities for CwSN including personality and communication development. Few schools emphasised on the vocational skills and education to all children including children with special needs. Extra attention and care, using role plays, musical instruments and group activity, which focus on learning by doing, comfortable environment, reducing the content quantity and difficulty to make them part of the regular classroom. Buddy approach in the classroom was used by most of the schools to support CwSN in various activities.
16. Majority of the participatory private schools used oral assessment along with the concession and relaxation provided by CBSE board in Classes X and XII for children with disabilities.
17. During online classes, much cooperation from the parents was reported by the teachers to teach children with special needs at home than the Government schools.
18. The Government schools of Mohali showed inadequacy in all the categories of inclusive practices—school culture and philosophy (42 per cent), family involvement (44 per cent), school management committee (40.66 per cent), school infrastructure (24 per cent), classroom physical environment (29.9 per cent) and instructional practices (48.4 per cent).
19. Panchkula (Haryana) schools were inadequate in school administration and involvement (42 per cent), family involvement (18 per cent), school management committee (29.96 per cent), school infrastructure (38 per cent), classroom and physical environment (47.13 per cent) categories, whereas in instructional practices (58.17 per cent) category, schools are in the process of developing.
20. Chandigarh Government schools are performing better in the administration and involvement (70 per cent), family involvement (52 per cent), school infrastructure (72 per cent), classroom and physical environment (54.28 per cent) and instructional practices (61.81 per cent) categories which indicate the schools were in the process of developing the inclusive practices to implement the RPwD act. In school management committee (83.33 per cent), the schools are performing well.

21. The private schools of Mohali (Punjab) had not developed the school management committee (36.66 per cent) to provide support and facilitate children with special needs. Other categories indicating inclusive practices—school philosophy and culture (68 per cent), family involvement (58.66 per cent), school infrastructure (70 per cent) and classroom physical environment (74.26 per cent) are in the developing process.
22. The private schools of Panchkula (Haryana) also revealed the similar results as of Mohali (Punjab) schools. Inadequacy of schools in school management committee (26.66 per cent) category, and in school administration and involvement (60 per cent), family involvement (76 per cent) and instructional practices (65.45 per cent), school infrastructure (54 per cent) and classroom physical environment (67.65 per cent) categories the schools were in the process of development.
23. The private schools of Chandigarh had adequate school management committee (80 per cent), positive classroom environment (85.65 per cent), stimulating pedagogical resources, and techniques (even in pandemic) under instructional practices (96.336 per cent) with cooperation and involvement of family (96 per cent). However, in school administration and involvement (74 per cent) more efforts are required.

### ***Challenges or Barriers Perceived by the School Stakeholders***

1. Lack of a disabled-friendly infrastructure such as ramps, adequate lighting and availability of wheelchairs, lack of proper sitting arrangements, lack of transportation facilities, inaccessible buildings and the provision of friendly water and sanitation facilities along with the non-availability of resource materials for children with special needs.
2. Lack of awareness and non-acceptance of parents—parental ignorance, lack of understanding and awareness of disability, no time for proper diagnosis and certification of their children, lack of transportation facilities, lack of basic means of livelihood were the few parent-related factors.
3. Shortage of special educators along with visiting one school from another of their respective block, and dealing with loads of paperwork and field work are major barriers in inclusive education for CwSN.
4. Lack of coordination and collaboration among general teachers, and special educators and resource rooms were isolated from the school considered as a separate component.

5. Inflexible curriculum, shortage of time to complete the syllabus and incapability to teach CwSN due to lack of professional training, considered as major challenges by the school teachers.
6. Non-availability of concession or provision in board exams for slow learners.
7. Inadequate vocational skills for CwSN and non-availability of teachers, and experts to teach the vocational skills or courses.

To sum up, the present study found that there were gaps in the awareness and knowledge level of the Act, and implementation of inclusive principles in the participatory schools of three regions for the education of children with disabilities. The policy cannot be implemented, if the departments do not closely coordinate with the schools. The provisions and guidelines issued to the schools for the education of children with disabilities shall be monitored effectively with due support and facilities. The results of the study showed little adaptation done by the schools, however, few schools had adopted good practices in terms of pedagogical measures to teach children with disabilities. The findings of the study can be used as a reference by the NCERT and the concerned departments, while preparing the National Curriculum Framework for school and teacher education as per the NEP, 2020.