2

A Critical Study About the Preparedness of Elementary Schools for Children with Special Needs (CWSN)

Anjali Sharma*
Dibyangona Bora**

Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to explore the preparedness of elementary schools regarding facilities provided to Children with Special Needs (CWSN). To highlight the factual situation on the focus of the study, the authors explored the data supplied by DISE (District Information System of Education) and analysed the data related to enrolment of CWSN, facilities provided to them, and teachers' qualifications who deal with them. It is found that there are sufficient number of CWSN enrolled in schools with a variety of differently-abled students. Still, in this regard, it is reflected that the schools only emphasized providing ramp facilities and ignored other facilities required for other than those physically challenged. Teacher qualifications are a significant issue in truly building inclusive education. It is necessary to include information on the availability of special educators or teachers who have received training to deal with children of different abilities and the particular courses they did or did not. Unfortunately, the DISE data did not include such information in the analytical tables, and state and district transcripts released by the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA). This raised the question of whether we are stepping towards establishing inclusive education for differently-abled children; however, schools are not prepared in that way.

Introduction

As we know that every child is unique, they vary in their capabilities and work, as some of them have some special talents in thinking, seeing, hearing, speaking and socialising.

* *Associate Professor,* School of Education, Central University of Rajasthan, Kishangarh
** *Scholar,* Department of Education , School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tezpur University

At the same time, the humanitarian viewpoint believes that all children share equal value and status. Exclusion, therefore, devaluates humanity; continued segregation of children with special needs only helps to foster their stereotypes and teaches children to be fearful, ignorant and prejudiced. Inclusion reduces fear and makes them free, building their capacity, understanding and respect. It reduces or eliminates the stigma associated with disabilities as familiarity and tolerance increase. The child without disabilities learns to value the contributions of all children, despite any disabling conditions. Inclusion prepares all the children for their roles in mainstream society after finishing their schooling.

As per the guidelines established by the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), India 2011, the Country Report would contain information about activities carried out in the state in implementing and upholding these guidelines, viz., protection and promotion of human rights and information on non-discrimination, equality and effective remedies. The report marks a paradigm shift away from the medico-charity model of disability.

This developed a social model which recognises disability as 'an evolving concept'. It perceives the person with a disability as an integral part of society and brings the concept of inclusion, resulting in effective interaction between persons with impairments in the community and generally attitudinal and environmental barriers hinder full and effective participation of them in society on an equal basis with others (UNCRPD Country Report, 2011).

The International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) conducted an international seminar on inclusive education entitled, 'Lessons from the South: Making a Difference'. This discussed that the real challenge of inclusive education was to meet the particular needs of all children with and without disabilities. Inclusion is not a delicate process; it requires a lot of struggle and commitment to overcome all attitudinal and social barriers. Inclusive education can only flourish in a system that generates inclusive ideology. Many determinant factors affect and regulate the development of inclusion. Limited understanding of disability, negative attitude towards persons with disabilities and a hardened resistance to change are the significant barriers impeding inclusive education 1998.

In person's with Disabilities Act 1995, a barrier-free environment is declared. The Ministry of Urban Development is the nodal agency, but the accessible environment is still exceptional. So, they have to struggle for an accessible environment in all public places.

The authors also tried to explore the research carried out on this issue; they found much more work has been

done in this area; a few recent ones are as follows:

Shahjahan (2016) attempted to analyse the origin, concept, and practices of inclusive education and focused on a critical element of inclusive education as a challenge towards the achievement of equity for students with disabilities, and explained the nature of barriers confronted to inclusive education as the approach for successful implementation. Edusei, Mprah, Owusu and Dahaman (2015) studied the attitude of teacher trainees towards children with disabilities in the Northern Region of Ghana. The findings revealed that although the attitude of teacher trainees in the study area towards children with disabilities seemed to be positive, they lacked a deeper understanding of disability and issues affecting the inclusion of children with disabilities in general school. Sandhu (2015) studied legislation and the current provisions for Specific Learning Disability (SLD) in India. The study stated that research and advocacy in learning disabilities are still developing in India. This paper looks at the assessment difficulties and then focuses on the varying provisions for certification and subsequent concessions available to those. Sahu, KK and Sahu (2015) studied the attitudinal barrier experienced by people with disabilities. Attitudinal barriers are the most basic and contribute to other barriers.

O' Keefe (2007) studied the People with Disabilities in India: From Commitments to Outcomes. The report estimates a wide range of 4–8 per cent of the population with a disability. Kumar et al., (2012) conducted a study on issues and challenges of disability and rehabilitation services in India, and discussed various issues and challenges related to strengthening health care and service delivery to the disabled in the community.

It is clear that differently abled children are struggling not only with disabilities but many more constraints are there; school and society should take urgent steps to strengthen them. So inclusive education is our first step; we need to see how prepared we are. That's why the authors chose this topic as school education is the foundation building.

Objectives of Study

- To study the enrolment number of differently-abled children.
- To analyse the facility-related indicators in reference to differently-abled children.
- To analyse teacher-related indicators, precisely teacher qualifications regarding differently-abled children.

Delimitations

The study is limited as

- The data relating to school education provided through DISE has been taken to study differently abled children only.

- The study is dependent on DISE data only, in which data for the years 2014–15 have been included. Data related to both localities, urban and rural have been included.

Research Methods

This study adopted an analytical method based on data published through DISE, National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), New Delhi. The document has declared that researchers, educationists, and analysers can use data for their purpose. The documents used for this study are as follows:

- State Report Card, 2014–2015 (DISE, 2014–15a)
- Analytical Table 2014–15: Progress toward USS (DISE, 2014–15b)
- Elementary Education in India, Urban India, Analytical Report, 2014–2015 (DISE, 2014–15c)
- Elementary Education in India, Rural India, Analytical Report, 2014–2015 (DISE, 2014–15d)

Analysis and Interpretation

Objective 1: To study the enrolment number of differently-abled children at the elementary level.

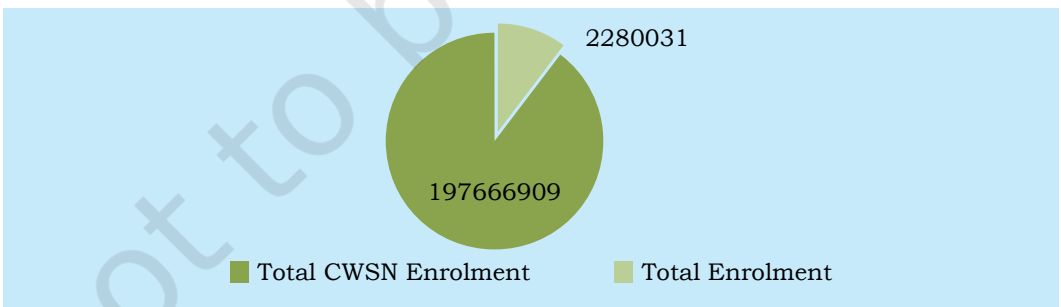
The data is shown in Table 1.1 that portraits the picture of the enrolment number of differently abled children at primary and middle levels countrywide.

Table 1.1: Grade-wise Total Enrolment of Children with Special Needs 2014–15

Total Enrolment	Classes I–V	Classes VI–VIII	Total
Total CWSN Enrolment*	15,40,072	7,39,959	2280031
Total Enrolment*	1305,01,135	671,65,774	197666909
Percentage (%) with Disability*	1.18	1.10	1.15

* (Data Source: Elementary Education in India: Analytical Tables, Part III, Page No. 72 & 78)

Chart 1: Grade-wise Enrolment of Children with Special Needs 2014–15



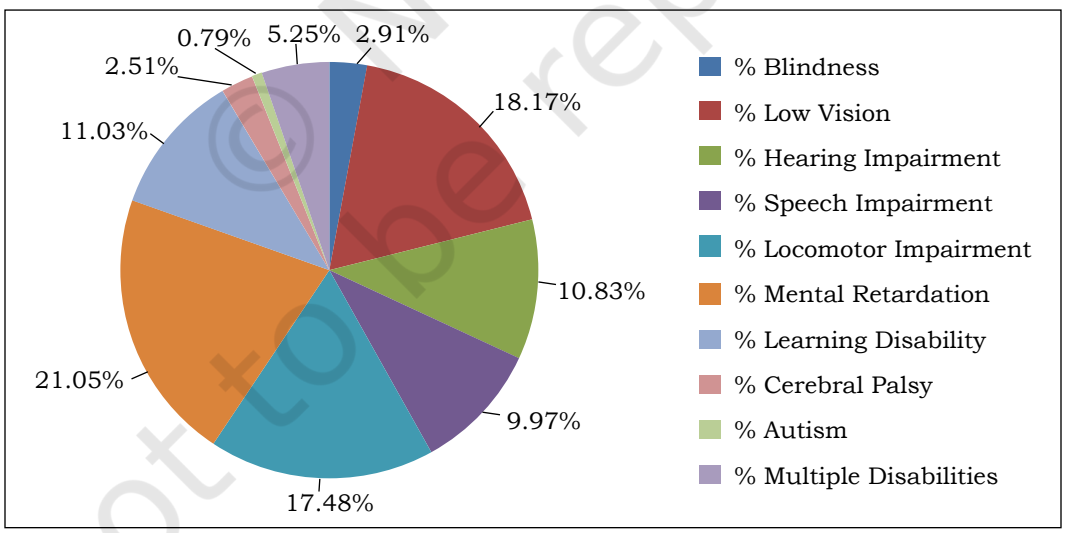
(Data Source: Elementary Education in India: Analytical Tables, Part III, Page No. 78)

Chart 1 shows the total enrolment of children and the total enrolment of CWSN. The percentage of CWSN enrolment is 1.15 compared to the total enrolment of children at the elementary schools.

Table 1.2: Percentage by Nature of Disability to Total Students with Disability Enrolment (2014–15)

Nature of Disability	Grades I-V	Grades VI-VIII	Total
% of Blindness	2.84	3.06	2.91
% of Low Vision	13.81	27.25	18.17
% of Hearing Impairment	10.97	10.54	10.83
% of Speech Impairment	10.71	8.43	9.97
% of Locomotor Impairment	17.27	1792	17.48
% of Mental Retardation	22.79	17.44	21.05
% of Learning Disability	11.73	9.58	11.03
% of Cerebral Palsy	2.91	1.68	2.51
% of Autism	0.88	0.59	0.79
% of Multiple Disabilities	6.08	3.51	5.25

Chart 2: Percentage by Nature of the Disability to Total Students with Disability Enrolment (2014–15)



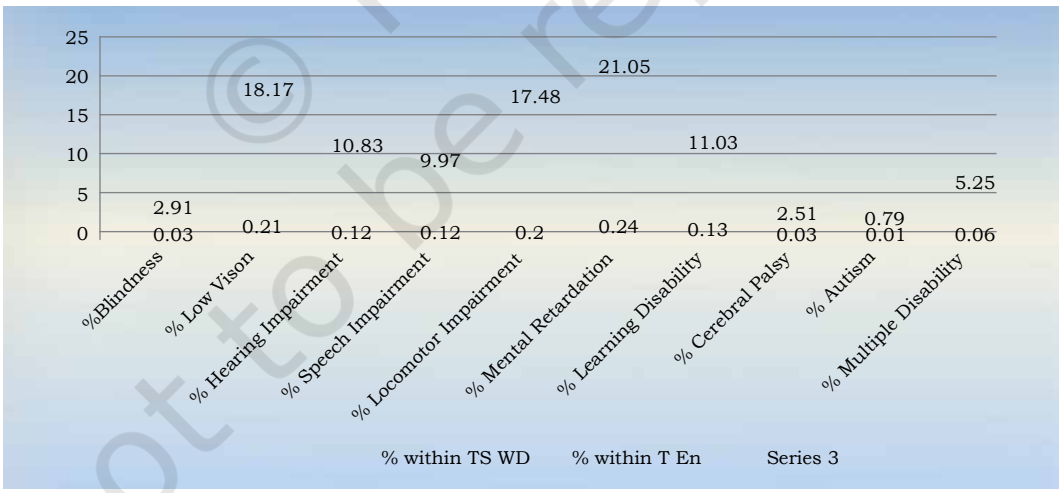
(Source: Elementary Education in India: Analytical Tables, Part III, Page No. 78)

Table 1.2 and Chart 2 shows the percentage of disabled students by their disability to the total enrolment with a disability, which is 1.15 per cent. This reveals that schools are now accessible to children with special needs. Due to inclusion, many differently abled children with diverse needs are enrolled in schools currently. This might be considered a positive sign for the country's development.

Table 1.3: Comparison of Percentage by Nature of the Disability Within Total CWSN Enrolment and Total Enrolment (2014–15)

Nature of Disability	% Within Total Enrolment with Disability	% Of CWSN in Respect to Total Enrolment
% of Blindness	2.91	0.03
% of Low Vision	18.17	0.21
% of Hearing Impairment	10.83	0.12
% of Speech Impairment	9.97	0.12
% of Locomotor Impairment	17.48	0.20
% of Mental Retardation	21.05	0.24
% of Learning Disability	11.03	0.13
% of Cerebral Palsy	2.51	0.03
% of Autism	0.79	0.01
% of Multiple Disability	5.25	0.06

Chart 3: Comparison of Percentage by Nature of the Disability Within Total CWSN Enrolment and Within Total Enrolment (2014–15)



(Source: Elementary Education in India: Analytical Tables, Part III, Page No. 78)

Table 1.3 and Chart 3 shows a comparison between the per cent of differently abled children by nature within total CWSN enrolment (blue colour) and per cent of them in total enrolment (red line). We can also visualise that few CWSN are enjoying their school life by taking benefit of inclusion, but comparing this percentage to differently abled children getting benefits under inclusion is very low.

The data exhibited in Table 1.3 represents the proportion of the disabled population in the country concerning age group. This is easy to figure out that the total proportion of disabled people between 5–9 and 10-19 years is 1.54 per cent and 1.82 per cent while the total enrolment of differently abled children is 1.18 at primary and 1.10 at the middle level. The total enrolment of CWSN is 1.15 per cent. Hence, we can conclude that we are stepping to transform the vision of inclusive education into reality but lag in the true sense.

From the Table 1.4 and Chart 4, we can compare the enrolment of boys and girls with disabilities; the number of girls' enrolment is lower than boys' enrolment in total and at the primary and upper primary. This reveals that, as usual, girls with disability in India lag behind and also need more support.

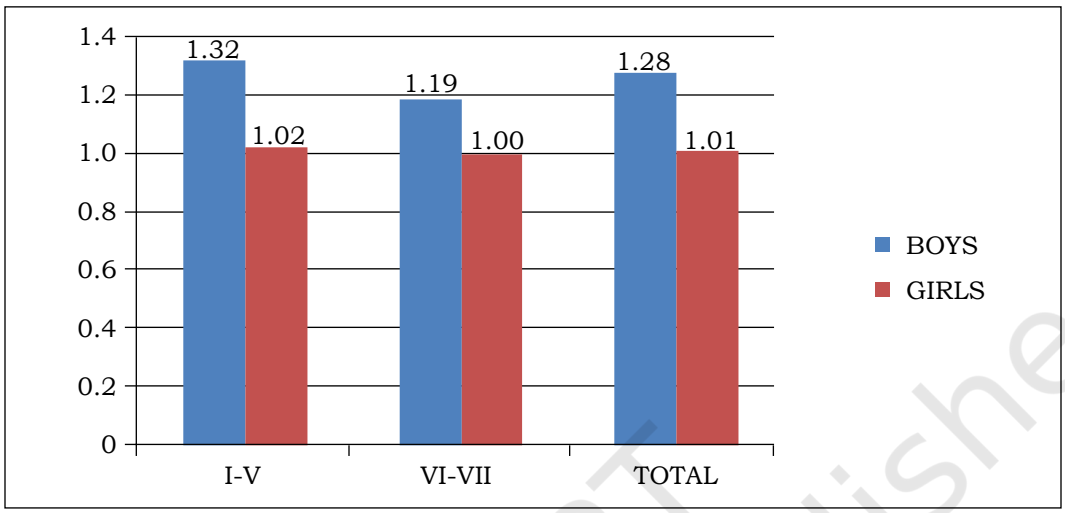
Table 1.4: Proportion of Disabled Population in the Respective Age Groups, India: 2011

Age Group	Persons	Males	Femals
All Ages	2.21	2.41	2.01
0–4	1.14	1.18	1.11
5–9	1.54	1.63	1.44
10–19	1.82	1.96	

Table1.5: Sex-wise Comparison of Enrollment of Students with Disability 2014–15

Total Enrolment	Gender	I–V	%	VI–VIII	%	Total	%
Total CWSN Enrolment	Boys	8,98,617	1.32	All Ages	1.19	13,10,045	1.28
	Girls	6,41,455	1.02	0–4	1.00	9,69,986	1.01
Total Enrolment	Boys	676,09,101		5–9		1021,10952	1.44
	Girls	628,92,034		10–19		955,55,957	

Chart 4: Sex-wise Comparison of Enrolment of Students with Disability 2014–15



Objective 2: To study the facility-related indicators provided to differently abled children.

In the facility-related indicators data provided in DISE for differently abled children, the authors didn't find any other information regarding facilities offered to them except ramp availability. That's why only this data has been taken to make a dialogue.

DISE data showed the schools have a ramp in India. Only Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Jammu & Kashmir and Sikkim are required to take more initiative in providing ramps as the percentage of having ramps is less than 50 per cent. In Gujarat, Haryana, Maharashtra, Manipur and Assam, 90 per cent of schools have a ramp. Only in Delhi, there is a hundred per cent of schools with ramps holding the top position in this regard. The second one is Dadar & Nagar Haveli, having 99.10 per cent of schools with a ramp. Jammu & Kashmir is at the lowest place; only 26 per cent of schools have a ramp, and the requirement for the ramp is much more.

However, there is no category in DISE data on facilities such as availability of Braille books and reading material, software to convert text into speech as well as skill-development workshops. This is a matter of concern.

Objective 3: To analyse teacher-related indicators, precisely teacher qualification about differently abled children.

Among teachers-related indicators data for the teachers' profile by qualification included both urban and rural areas as shown below:

Teachers by Academic Qualifications 2014–15

Table 2.1: Contractual Teachers

Academic Qualifications	All Schools	
	Make	Female
Below Secondary	1.30	1.23
Secondary	5.57	6.17
Higher Secondary	25.66	23.56
Graduate	45.76	42.78
Post Graduate	20.56	24.97
M. Phil.	0.83	1.00
PhD.	0.22	0.22
Post Doctoral	0.03	0.03

Table 2.2: Regular Teachers

State/UT	Academic Qualifications	All Schools
All States and Union Territories	Below Secondary	1.23
	Secondary	6.17
	Higher Secondary	23.56
	Graduate	42.78
	Post Graduate	24.97
	M. Phil.	1.00
	PhD.	0.22

The academic qualifications strata mentioned teachers' qualifications, i.e., secondary, higher secondary, graduate, postgraduate, M. Phil., PhD. and Post Doctoral. There is no information regarding whether the teachers have any particular capabilities or professional training to deal with differently abled children.

Discussion

As we know, the national report card produced by DISE shows the picture of the status of school education across the country and states or even within districts since 1994. NUEPA has been actively involved in strengthening the Educational Management Information System (EMIS) in the country. The Analytical Tables: Elementary Education in India: Progress toward UEE is based on the data received from as many as 1.45 million schools spread over 680 districts across 36 States & UTs the country for the year 2014–15.

In enrollment-related indicators, the complete information about the enrolment of differently abled children like enrolment of children by nature of the disability, enrolment of children with disability and percentage enrolment of children by nature of disability has been given. Still, DISE produced the data related to the percentage of dropouts as a whole in which the percentage of differently able dropouts is not exhibited. If this means that there is no differently abled dropout, how could reasonable causes and measures be identified to stop them from being dropout in the absence of these figures?

In facility-related indicators, the parameters included present a complete picture of the facilities available in schools across the country within all areas. Still, DISE

data didn't produce any data related to the facilities required for differently abled children to provide barrier-free environments except for the percentage of ramp schools. The data revealed that variety of differently abled children are enrolled in schools across the country. However, facilities to meet their needs are still not provided as reading material in Braille, hearing mould, workshop to train mild mentally retarded, separate toilets, etc. Suppose the country has the vision to establish inclusive education in an absolute sense. In that case, there is an urgent need to pay attention to facilities indicators so that schools can facilitate them with their specific needs.

Under teacher-related indicators, unfortunately, the data related to the percentage of special teachers in schools and specifications regarding training to deal with differently abled children have not been given. And within academic qualification of teachers, emphasis on teachers' skills and capabilities to handle differently abled children is not included. They should have a degree, diploma or certificate relevant to inclusive education. They need to develop skills to teach in Braille or sign language, etc.

This analysis showed that providing an inclusive environment means that the teacher is a key component in creating the atmosphere. Still, it seems that the nation has no concern about this.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Above all, the discussion reveals an urgent need to provide an inclusive environment to differently abled children in schools. The first step is to modify the data capture format of DISE to be filled by schools so that parents, stakeholders, researchers, administrators, and policy makers can get a realistic picture of the facilities provided to them in the name of inclusive education. Every indicator needs to review in the view of whether we are producing complete data regarding differently abled children or not. The present data produced by DISE for differently abled children reflects the preparedness of elementary school to nurture them. This raises a question, are our schools prepared for their development under the flagship of inclusive education? This is a challenging task to answer.

The second step is related to teachers-indicator. Although the pre-service teacher training curriculum included inclusive education as an essential component, there is a need to train every teacher as a special educator to create an inclusive environment in every school. DISE should include this in the teacher qualification indicator, and the government should make it mandatory for recruitment and professional degrees. Third, schools should take the initiative to provide facilities especially required for their development either with the help of the government or stakeholders.

REFERENCES

DISE. 2014-15A. State Report Card, 2014-2015, DISE, NUEPA, New Delhi.

———. 2014-15B. Analytical table 2014-15: Progress toward USS, NUEPA, New Delhi.

———. 2014-15C. Elementary Education in India, Urban India, Analytical Report, 2014-2015. NUEPA, New Delhi.

———. 2014-15D. Elementary Education in India, Rural India, Elementary Education in India, NUEPA, New Delhi.

Edusei, A.K., Mprah, W.K., Owusu, I and Dahaman, T. 2015. 'Attitude of Teacher Trainees Towards Children with Disabilities in the Northern Region of Ghana'. *J. Disability Stud.* Vol. 1, No. 2. pp. 55–60. Retrieved from https://pubs.iscience.in/journal/index.php/jds/article/download/318/252

IDDC. March 1-7 1998. Lessons from the South: Making a Difference. India, Agra, An International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) Seminar on Inclusive Education. Enabling Education Network. Retrieved from http://www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/agra.php

Philip O'Keefe. 2007. People with Disabilities in India.

Kumar, S., Ganesh., Roy Gautam, Kar and Sekhar Sitanshu. 2012. Disability and

Rehabilitation Services in India: Issues and Challenges. Journal of Family Medicine and Primary care. Vol. 1, No. 1. pp. 69–73. Retrived from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC389394

Sahu, K.K. and Sahu, S. 2015. 'Attitudinal Barrier Experienced by People With Disabilities'. *J. Disability Stud.* Vol. 1, No. 2. pp. 53–54. Retrieved from http://pubs.iscience.in/jds

Sandhu, P. 2015. 'Legislation and the current provisions for specific Learning Disability in India- Some Observations'. *J. Disability Stud.*, Vol. 1, No. 2. pp. 85–88. Retrieved from http://pubs.iscience.in/jds

Shahjahan, Ali. 2016. 'Children with Disability and Right to Education Through Inclusive Education'. *Dimorian Review*: A peer Reviewed multidisciplinary Indexed journal No. 5, pp. 3.

Where we work/CBM in India. 2016. Retrieved from http://www.cbmindia.org.in/Where-we-work-252671.php

United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). 2011. *The Country Report*. India. Retrieved from http://www.disabilitystudiesnalsar.org/report.php