

Barriers to Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Schools of Jammu

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ABSTRACT

Right to education act and all Inclusive educational (IE) strategies ensure provision of education towards educating the differently-abled children along with normal ones. It seeks to address the learning needs of all children with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. The children with various disabilities find it difficult to fully participate in outdoor and indoor educational activities either due to social, physical or environmental limitations. The present empirical study was conducted to access barriers for CWSN in schools of Jammu. The data was gathered from 105 schools of Jammu district. The findings of the study reflect upon the institutional barriers in the form of infrastructural and environmental constraints, in addition paper also reflects the problem of correct diagnosis of children with mental disabilities since right diagnosis is the first step towards the appropriate treatment. The result also reveals the need for appropriate for alignment of TLM to make it more inclusive for CWSN children. In addition paper also suggests the strategies for institutional planners to minimize the prevalent barriers to make education more inclusive.

Keywords: *Inclusion, Marginalization, Exclusion, Disabilities, CWSN, Diagnosis, Environment, Infrastructure.*

The goal of education for children is to prepare them for a productive, positive and meaningful civil life. The constitution of India ensures equality, freedom, justice, dignity of all individuals and mandates on inclusive society for all, including persons with disabilities (MHRD Annual Report, (2014-15)). Accordingly education is a right of every child whether able-bodied or disabled, it is important that each and every child of school going age receives education in the manner he/she is receptive to. To achieve the aim, it is important to address the learning needs of all children with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion.

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The World wide data reflects that around 10 percent of the total world's population i.e., roughly 650 million, live with a disability. In India 1.67% of the 0-19 population suffers with disabilities of one or the other kind. 35.29% of disabled people of world are children. Only 1% of children with disabilities have access to schools and one-third of most disabilities are preventable. (Kaur.S, 2013)

Perspective of Disability/ models of disability:

Different approaches/models have been introduced from time to time on the theme of Disability. Various models of disability are **Charity model**, model of **Custodial Care**, **Bio-Centric model**, **Functional model**, **Human Rights model** etc. all the models opine to break down barriers that restrict disable's person's participation in society. These also emphasized that equality not only implies preventing discrimination but goes far beyond in reducing discrimination. These models respect autonomy, dignity and freedom of choice of disabled and every institution both in public and private sector should ensure equitable treatment to persons with disabilities.

Barrier free Access: Barrier free access reflects all enabling conditions for all children and adults within the schools and is predominantly relevant in the context of children with special needs as they have variety of special learning needs which needs to be addressed. In the absence of adequate systems in place, these learners will remain in the periphery of learning due to prevalent barriers. At the school level, multiple barriers such as barriers arising from caregivers, physical barriers etc. hampers the fullest provision of education. Physical barriers include architectural/ Infrastructural and those which are physical in nature (Marinelli and Dellorto, 1984) The physical factors poses difficulty to learning and participation, mere ramps and internal classrooms arrangements, leveled ground, safe floors, wheel chairs, toilet seats, hand basins and many others can easily help the situation. Even various acts and policies emphasize on the provision of barrier free environment for the children with special needs. Prominent acts have been cited below.

The persons with disabilities (equal opportunities, protection for rights and full participation) act, 1995

The Persons with disabilities act, 1995 (PWD Act) is the most important Piece of legislation enacted by the Parliament in the history of disability movement in India. Provisions under chapter V of PWD Act ensure that every child with a disability has access to free education in an appropriate and inclusive environment till he attains the age of 18 years. It also commits to ensure that every child with disability has access to using teaching aids and assistive devices that will support the child to learn better.

National trust act (1999)

In 1999, the Indian Parliament passed an Act entitled National Trust for Welfare of persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disability Act. This act seeks to protect and promote the rights of persons who, within disability sector, are even more marginalized than others. The objectives of this act are:

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1. To enable and empower persons with disability to live as independent and as fully as possible within and as close to the community to which they belong.
2. To strengthen facilities to provide support to persons with disability.
3. To facilitate the realization of equal opportunities, protection of rights and full participation of persons with disability.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) 2008 The convention sets out the human right of persons with disabilities and the obligations on states to promote, protect and ensure those rights as well as mechanisms to support implementation and monitoring.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA): The key objective of SSA is Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE). Three important aspects of UEE are access, enrollment and retention of all children in 6-14 years of age. Further, Amendments have given a new thrust to the education of children with special needs (CWSN), as without their inclusion the objective of UEE cannot be achieved.

Two additional forms of resource support complimentary to each other are being provided to CWSN children i.e resource support through assistive devices and barrier free access. Both of these are aimed at enhancement of the functional capacity and mobility of CWSN to promote their easy access to the schools. Schools are being made more disabled friendly by incorporating barrier free features in their architectural layout only. In inclusive education, children with disabilities are provided quality education in regular school system. It is about creating inclusive policy, inclusive culture and inclusive practices at all levels of the system. SSA also introduced BALA elements in the Schools. Teachers trained in BALA invariably can do number of activities that can stimulate learning of children with special needs in and around their schools.

Thus, it reflects the objective of providing quality education to all children without any distinctions. But there are numerous challenges which are being faced in this process which include attitude towards disability, lack of awareness, scarcity of trained teachers, absence of barrier free environment and suitable learning material and many more.

Jammu and Kashmir persons with disabilities (equal opportunities protection of rights and full participation) act, 1998

Its provision extends to the entire state of J&K. As per the act,

1. Government and local authorities shall ensure that every child with disability has the access to free education in a suitable environment till he attains the age of 18 years.
2. Endeavour to promote the integration of students with disabilities in the normal schools.
3. 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 state have access to such schools.

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4. Endeavour to equip the special schools for children with disabilities with vocational training facilities.

Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC): It means classes for children with disabilities that are located in the mainstream schools but in a separate classroom amongst the other disabled learners and with a dedicated teacher. These children have little or no contact with their non-disabled peers.

Special Education

- The term “Special Need Education” (SNE) has come into use as a replacement for the term “Special Education”, as the older one was mainly understood to refer the education of all those children and Youth whose needs arise from disabilities or learning difficulties.
- Special education means children with disabilities receiving an education in a segregated learning environment such as a special schools or centre that is often isolated from community, from other children or from mainstream education schools.

Inclusive education system:

Inclusive Education (IE) is an approach towards educating the children with disability and learning difficulties along with the normal ones. It seeks to address the learning needs of all children with a special focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. All children whether disabled or able bodied have the right to education as they are the future citizens of the country.

The principle of inclusive education was adopted at the “World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality” and was restated at the World Education Forum (Dakar and Senegal, 2000).

Inclusive Education is a process of enhancing participation and minimizing exclusion, in a manner that successfully responds to the diverse needs of all learners. It Includes teaching and learning needs of all marginalized and vulnerable children and young people; including street children, girls, children from ethnic minorities etc. It aims to ensure that these children are accorded equal rights and opportunities in education. The inclusive education does not have one single definition or method of implementation to suit all individuals and situations. It stresses more on evolving inclusive practices which can be adapted in various contexts. Inclusive education is the central means for achieving the goals of ‘Education for all promoting a child-centered approach to teaching and learning throughout the life course.

DISABILITY

Almost everyone will be temporarily or permanently impaired at some point in life. Historically, people with disabilities have largely been provided for support through solutions which segregate them, such as residential institutions and special schools. Policy has now shifted towards community and educational inclusion and medically focused solution are

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recommended as a way to more interactive approaches recognizing that people are disabled by environment factors as well as by their bodies.

Disability is a complex, dynamic and multidimensional concept over recent times, huge number of researchers from social and health services (Mc Conachie, 2006) have identified the role of social and physical barriers in disability. The International Classification of Functioning (ICF) adopted as the conceptual frame work for the world report on disability, understands functioning and disability as dynamic interaction between health conditions and contextual factors, both personal and environmental.

The Preamble to CRPD acknowledges that disability is “an evolving concept”, but also stresses that “disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hide their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”.

Definition

Disability is the condition of difficulty in Carrying out daily activities morally and in taking part in social life due to problems in parts of body and Physical system as well as obstacles created by physical, social, cultural environment and by communication.

CLASSIFICATION

According to the nature of problems and the difficulty in the parts of body and in physical system, disability has been classified into 7 categories:

1. **Physical Disability:** It is the disability which hampers the physical movement, use and movement in a person due to problems in nerves, muscles and composition and operation activates of bones and joints. For ex: Polio, Cerebral Palsy, absence of body part, Problem with joins and spinal cord, rickets, clubfeet, short and stunted growth and soon.
2. **Vision:** Disabled condition with respect to vision impairment is the condition wherein there is no knowledge about an objects, figure, shape, form and color in an individual due to problem with vision. This is of two types:
(a) Blind (b) Low Vision.
3. **Hearing:** Problems related to hearing and voice, rise and fall of position, level and quality of voice is disability related to hearing. It is of two types:
(a) Deaf (b) Hard of Hearing
4. **Deaf Blind:** An individual who is without both hearing and vision is a deaf-blind disabled.
5. **Disability related voice and speech:** Difficulty in parts of voice and speech and difficulty in rise and fall of voice to speak, unclear speech, repetition of words and letters is disability related to voice and speech.
6. **Mental Disability:** Behavior and activity pattern incoherent with the age and delay in intellectual learning due to problems arising in relation to implementation of intellectual activities like deficits arising in brain and mental parts and awareness, orientation, alertness memory, language, calculation is metal disability.

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- a) **Intellectual Disability/Mental Retardation:** An individual having difficulty in carrying out activities relative to age or environment due to absence of intellectual development before age of 18 years is intellectual disability, mental retardation.
 - b) **Mental Illness:** It is an inability where there is difficulty in leading routine life due to mental illness or weakness or deviation.
 - c) **Autism:** Absence of normal behavior as expected by the persons of the same age group to show abnormal reaction to keep on repeating one activity, to not socialize with others or to show extreme reaction in autism.
7. **Multiple disabilities:** It is a problem where two or more than two types of disabilities mentioned above prevails together.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The present section tries to extrapolate the barriers in inclusive education faced by “Children with Special Needs”. Barrier Free Access is relevant in the context of children with special needs as there is variety of needs which needs to be addressed. **Mattingly, J et al., (2010)** in a guidance note by Department of International Development discussed about perceived barriers (physical, social, financial) to educating children with disabilities and talked about low school budget resulting in lack of appropriate facilities, inadequate teachers training in inclusive methodology, lack of awareness of disability among teachers and many others that acts as a barrier in educating children with special needs. They also discussed about different provisions so as to ensure the participation of CWSN in schools. Study conducted by **Ishmael (2015)**, examine social and physical barriers to learners with physical disabilities and also illuminate the strategies that may be used to minimize such barriers to ensure smooth inclusion in regular schools. Another study by **Kaur, (2013)**, focused on access to physical environment as well as access to curriculum and the teaching environment of children with special needs and emphasized on adoption of inclusive approaches in education so that the goal of ‘Education for all’ can be achieved. Survey by **Banik, et al., (2015)** tried to find out the awareness of Barrier Free Environment with hearing impairment in Inclusive schools and results revealed that teachers were more aware towards examination related barriers while environmental barriers were least under their consideration and suggested that appropriate educational and technical input is necessary to create an optimal barrier free environment. MHRD, Guidelines for Inclusive Education for **CWSN (2014)** also discussed about major challenges and Issues in education of CWSN which includes Assessment of CWSN, Lack of Resource teachers, Lack of well equipped sufficient resource rooms, Removal of Architectural Barriers and Quality access to CWSN and so on.

Research Gap

Although Inclusive education has been realized as a way towards meeting the needs of disabled children since a decade but still today, multiple barriers prevalent in the environment are hampering the full participation of children with disabilities in education. Most of the empirical literature reviewed on the said theme pertains to issues delved by different states of India but researcher could not find a study conducted in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Thus, the present work aims to highlight the barriers to inclusive education for Children with

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special needs in the Jammu division of J&K State and also recommends different strategies for the policy makers for the inclusion of such focused group children in Schools.

Objectives of the study

- To access the barriers to inclusive education for Children with Special Needs in Jammu.
- To recommend strategies for Institutions/policy makers related to inclusion of focused group children in to school.

METHODOLOGY

The present work attempts to examine the barriers that pose as challenge to education of learners with disabilities with special focus on children with special needs in the schools of Jammu Region of Jammu and Kashmir State. The Present Work was carried out in 55 different schools (24 Primary and 29 Upper Primary) by using Convenience sampling technique. Prior to the data collection, verbal consent was sought from the concerned heads of the schools seeking permission for data collection. The study focuses on the physical/infrastructural/ environmental barriers and Diagnostic barriers existing for CWSN in the selected schools. After collection and analysis of the data, various barriers creating obstacles in the path of CWSN were assessed.

Observations/ findings:

Numerous natural and manmade barriers were found to pose physical threat/ difficulty in approaching the sampled schools, such as some of the schools were located on the roadside and different vehicles pass through these roads which poses great threat/ danger to the lives of the students accessing the schools.

Attitudinal Barriers

Illiteracy and lack of awareness among parents with regard to importance of education for children is seen to be the major hindrance in the provision of education to children particularly communities in rural areas

Table.1.1 Facility of Ramp in the schools.

Responses	No.	Percentage
Yes	12	21.82%
No	43	78.18%

The enabling devices presents a gloomy picture in terms of provision of assistive devices as provided in the above stated table. There are fewer enabling devices like ramps and handrails in schools thereby, restricting physical movement of children with disabilities. Only 21.82% of schools have the availability of Ramps and Handrails in the schools

Table.1.2 Arrangement of proper lightening in the classrooms.

Responses	Light	Percentage
Yes	48	87.27%
No	07	12.73%

1.2 The suitable lightening in the institutions enables children with visual disability to attain education in classrooms. The findings in this regard in the schools visited revealed that majority of the school’s classrooms (87.27%) visited were properly lighted and only few (12.73%) reflects the gloomy scenario. Those who were suffering from vision disability find it difficult to study under these conditions.

Table.1.3 Separate provision for boys and girls toilets.

Responses	No.	Percentage
Yes	09	16.36%
No	46	83.63%

1.3 The safe and clean sanitation is a prerequisite for healthy life which is an enabling condition for able educational environment, with regard to the sanitary conditions of the schools visited; it was found to be very miserable as (83.63%) schools lack separate toilets units for boys and girls. In addition to it, there is no running water supply in toilets. Above that, the toilets available in the schools were inadequate for students and lastly, toilets available were not CWSN Friendly and cannot be used by such children easily. In adequate sanitary conditions particularly pose threat to girl’s inclusion and safety concerns in the mainstream schooling specially in coeducational institution.

Table.1.4. Existence of playground in the schools.

Responses	No.	Percentage
Yes	51	92.73%
No	04	7.27%

1.4 Majority of the schools visited had the availability of playgrounds (92.73%) but use of these schools was minimal to conduct outdoor activities. As far as children with special needs are concerned they were not able to participate in any sort of outdoor activities. Playgrounds ensure children with special needs to build crucial social skills amongst them, which inurn also increases positive attitudes and interaction between all children regardless of their abilities.

While visiting the schools it was revealed that very few percentage of schools had the appropriate facilities for inclusive education and that too only in urban areas. Schools in rural areas were largely deprived of such facilities. Thus, very few CWSN children were attending

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the schools because of the reason that not only these schools lack identification of children with special needs but also lack the facilities been provided to these children.

The sitting arrangement of children in classroom setting was observed to be pro inclusion. Children were made to sit in small groups like a family but as far as sitting facility was concerned, it was found that in most of the schools in rural areas of Jammu region, the children were made to sit on the floors. Desks were not available in all schools and thus, CWSN found it difficult to sit on the floors. Thereby, posing difficulty in education provision of these children.

The sampled schools exhibited healthy participation for normal children where as in case of CWSN children it was observed that certain inhibiting factors were there to hamper their participation.

Diagnostic Barriers

Diagnosis is the process of determining disease or condition explaining the symptoms and signs of its prevalence. It is an investigation or analysis of the cause or nature of a condition, situation or a problem. It is usually conducted by the doctor/ specialist in specific field.

The number of CWSN is observed to be Irregular in school premises as observed during the course of study. Schools visited did not organize regular medical checkup camp for the assessment of these CWSN. Lack of proper diagnosis also had detrimental effect on the psyche of children because of labeling. So, it was not feasible to assign the accurate degree of disability to them. Although, there exists good friendly interaction of peers with CWSN in classrooms but no active support was found among the peers to CWSN during co-curricular activities or during recess. Teacher's Behavior was found sometimes to be same as towards others and at other times they ignore CWSN (Indifferent). Above that, Teachers in these Schools doesn't receive any adequate special training for teaching the CWSN as well as individualized educational plan (IEP) was found to be missing in the curriculum framed by the schools. There was non availability of resource teacher for CWSN in the schools. With regard to learning and mental disabilities, parents and community members because of their ignorance and illiteracy are not aware of existence of any such disability. The behavioral training for teachers, caretakers and parents was the dire need to enable them to handle such children. Social structures and Stigmas attached further complicate the problem.

This points towards the underassessment of such students. Students with certain types of disabilities like MI, MR, and autism require assesment from time to time. Banik et al., (2015), reveals that the children with disabilities face different problems in school education because of the lack of awareness about the characteristics and the specific needs of these children on behalf of the teachers. Assessment should be done with the help of Clinical Psychologist, special educators, therapists, doctors based on student's need to ensure quality of assessment. In addition, assessment should also be done to identify the educational needs of children with special needs.

Recommendations for Barrier Free Environment

Based on the findings of the empirical studies on Barriers of inclusion across the country and the observations of the field realities in District Jammu. There is a clear indication to policy makers and implementers to minimize the barriers to include the special children in mainstream education in order to achieve the goal of universalisation of education. Some such recommendations for the policy makers consumption are outlined as below. These include access to Physical environment as well as to curriculum and teaching environment. Access to the Physical environment with regard to children with orthopedic as well as visual impairment, access to curriculum and Teaching learning environment is particularly important for children with Visual, Hearing impairment, intellectually challenged, Cerebral Palsy and Children with multiple disabilities.

In order to ensure smooth and proper inclusion of learners in regular schools, an effort shall be made to suggest some strategies to the institutional planners so that these barriers needs to be minimized.

GENERIC IMPROVEMENTS PROPOSED TO REDUCE PHYSICAL BARRIERS TO CWSN

- Massive survey and household survey should be done with the help of NGOs. SSA teachers, Social Welfare department and many others.
- So as to raise the rate of enrollment of CWSN at schools counseling and Guidance session for the students as well as parents needs to be organized with the help of experts in the field.
- To organization of orientation programs and specialized training programmes for regular school teachers to acquaint them with different disabilities, barriers free environment and their related special needs should the priority area.
- Infrastructure improvements for sanitary conditions in schools to include toilets in Schools for Children with Special Needs (CWSN) friendly with fitted commode and grab-rails.
- The drinking Water supply should be made available to CWSN as well as to other children.
- Classroom apparatus should be designed while keeping in mind the particular child such as corner seats with lap straps, footrests etc.
- Schools should provide barrier free transport system so that the children should come or go out safely from school.
- The Paths from gate to playground and school buildings must be clear and leveled.
- Use of concrete objects as Teaching Learning Material needs to be emphasized.
- For easy recognition, beginnings and endings should be painted with bright colors. The classrooms should be spacious so that it would not restrict the movement of child with physical disability.
- Floors within the school premises should not be slippery. They must have non-skid surface floor, with rubber tiles.
- Teacher should be conscious about the positioning and placement of every child in the classroom, with special focus on CWSN.

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- The prescribed gradient of ramp-1:12 should be strictly followed and all ramps should be fitted with handrails.

STRATEGIES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIFIC DISABILITIES (MUSCULAR DIFFICULTIES, CEREBRAL PALSY, INTELLECTUAL, MENTAL RETARDATION, HEARING, VISUAL AND MULTIPLE DISABILITIES)

- Ensure wheel Chair accessibility to children and their movement in classrooms, toilets, Playground etc.
- Provision of Ramps, Handrails and other assistive devices at appropriate place.
- All sort of barriers including Social, architectural/ physical barriers should be minimized as far as possible.
- Children with special needs should be provided with all facilities at ground floor only.
- Availability, training and use of aids and appliances (Braille, White cane, Abacus, Low vision aids, magnifiers etc) should be ensured.
- Learning aids with regard to various disabilities need to be easily available and accessible.
- Teachers should prepare the lesson for the class by keeping in mind the level of understanding of the child, including suitable TLM.
- In case of children with hearing disabilities, provision for hearing aids must be available.
- For hearing disabilities, teacher's face (lip reading) and blackboard should be positioned in a manner that is clearly visible to the child.
- Pictorial teaching aids needs to be emphasized upon in classrooms.
- Sign language can be used as an option under co- curricular activity to enhance peer support.
- Ensure availability of teaching learning material (Braille, large print, audio, e-text etc).
- Training & orientation, mobility and orientation skill must be provided to children with visual difficulties.
- Access to communication and information in the required language through interpreters, electronic devices should be ensured properly.
- So as to enhance communication and mobility skills, peer support should be used effectively.

Limitations of the study:

- The present Research work is carried out only in Jammu Region of Jammu and Kashmir State.
- The sample selected for the study was limited because of the time constraint.
- Only selected aspects of barriers are considered for the present work. So other aspects can be included in future research.

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- The study is limited to inclusive issues in government schools only. Further, the status of barrier free environment needs to be probed in Government as well as private schools.

CONCLUSION:

Children with various disabilities are often targets of prejudice and discriminatory behaviors. Many children with disabilities have even been denied to the right to education as one of the most basic human rights in any democratic society. Children with disabilities if happen to be in schools, find it difficult to take part in most of the indoor and outdoor activities, due to either social, physical, infrastructural or architectural limitations that may arise with their disability. The findings of the study are in line with already existing literature which states that insufficient training of teachers, teaching learning material, inaccessible educational environment which includes sanitary facilities, drinking water facility, lightening, unawareness among teachers as well as parents pose threat in the path of education of disabled children (Corps et al., 2012).

Couple of other studies advocate that children with disabilities are entitled to strive for the removal of institutional, physical, informational & attitudinal barriers in society and emphasized that all schools should be made inclusive by minimizing multiple barriers prevalent. To provide barrier free access, to children with disabilities, it is opined to eradicate all sorts of barriers prevailing in and around the schools. Therefore, we need to understand the problems in the educational system and focus on fostering barrier free access so as to ensure that every child with or without disability can learn.

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