

Equable Involvement of Students with Disabilities in Higher Education

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Abstract: *Since independence, India has made considerable gains in the education of children with disabilities, and significant advancements have been made in the previous ten years at the basic and secondary education levels. However, in terms of higher education, just 1.2 percent of students with disabilities do so (DNIS News Network, 1 September 2004). Because of this, the majority of students with disabilities are still distant from pursuing higher education. Numerous factors underlie this, according to research investigations carried out both abroad and in India. The majority of studies are carried out abroad and are impacted by the local culture. The current study examines how students with disabilities, particularly specifically women students with disabilities, participate in higher education and the problems they confront. In this context, the current study examined the existing situation of students with disabilities; various steps implemented by universities to meet the needs of students with disabilities; and issues that students with disabilities experience in higher education.*

Keywords: Disability, Higher Education, Students with Disability, Constitutional Rights, Legislative Framework

1. Introduction

People with disabilities (Divyangjan) are becoming a larger and larger portion of the global population. It is challenging to determine the precise number of people with impairments because the categories of disabilities vary from nation to nation (Ambati, 2012). According to the UN, in 2006, 650 million people worldwide, or 10% of the population, were estimated to be disabled. Eighty percent of the world's population with disabilities lives in developing nations, according to data from 2006 (UN). The World Health Organization (WHO) claims that the incidence of disability and impairment is caused by population expansion, ageing, accidents, illnesses, and improvements in medical facilities that have improved peoples' life expectancies. As a result, both in society as a whole and in academic institutions, there is a growing population of people with disabilities (Divyangjan). According to Kothari (1966), education is a potent tool for social transformation. According to Kiranmayi (1989), higher education is a crucial way to discover, create, preserve, and disseminate knowledge. Research, employment, nation - building, skill development, and national integration are all directly impacted by higher education. It increased the possibility for both economic and social development. The nation's socioeconomic, political, and industrial progress depends on higher education. Considering the value of education and higher education, the Indian government has launched a number of programmes and regulations to help students with disabilities gain access to higher education, although their participation is still quite low.

2. Definition of Disability

Disability has many diverse meanings depending on its varied sorts, forms, and degrees of severity, making it exceedingly challenging to define. Disability, on the other hand, refers to a loss of health, where the loss of health is signified by a loss of movement, cognition, hearing, and vision (WHO, 1994). The WHO issued the International

Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps (ICIDH) in 1980.

A revised definition of functioning and disability was proposed by the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps (ICIDH - 2, 1998) document. The following additional phrases were proposed:

Activity limitation for Disability

Participation Restrictions Due to Disability

For people with disabilities: Constitutional rights and legal framework

All citizens must have access to a secure constitutional and legal framework in any democratic nation that upholds the principle of equal rights for all people before the law. As a result, human rights are protected, and opportunities are equalized. The constitution has included specific provisions for disadvantaged communities to advance their rights and social fairness.

Individualised Legal Framework for People with Disabilities

A number of clauses in the Indian Constitution were created to uphold equality for socially disadvantaged groups. These rules were reflected in many legislation periodically passed by the Indian Parliament for equality and preserving the rights of the PWDs.

Below are all of the PWD - related laws that the Indian Parliament has passed.

- The 1987 Mental Health Act

The Indian Parliament passed this law as the first to address the needs of people with disabilities. In 1987, the law was passed. The act updated and consolidated the law governing the care and treatment of mentally ill people. The act is broken down into 98 sections and 10 chapters.

- Act of 1992 creating the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI)

A statutory organisation that provides education and rehabilitation services to PWDs is the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI). The provision of education and rehabilitation services to PWDs was voluntary prior to this act. Both paraprofessionals and inexperienced teachers were present. Furthermore, there weren't enough training facilities to instruct them. Additionally, these institutes lacked a set training curriculum. These requirements made having a governing or statutory authority to control these issues necessary. So, in 1993, a Parliamentary Act granted RCI the status of a statutory entity (Singh & Das, 2014).

- People with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights, and Full Participation) Act of 1995

It was the first important piece of law pertaining to the welfare of people with disabilities. The Act was passed with a number of measures, including the provision of early detection and intervention, barrier - free environments, the elimination of job discrimination.

Additionally, there is a provision for the construction of homes for seriously impaired people.

- Act of 1999 known as the National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation, and Multiple Disabilities (NTA 1999)

Another name for the law is the National Trust Act of 1999 (NTA 1999). Four disabilities are covered under this law.

Autism, mental retardation, cerebral palsy, and many disabilities are among them.

- Act of 2016 on the Rights of People with Disabilities

The fundamental goals of the Act are to guarantee the complete equality and inclusion of people with disabilities, as well as to provide them with access to social security, work opportunities, and a barrier - free environment. With a multi - sector collaborative approach, the Act can be implemented by multiple Central Ministries/Departments, State/Union Territories, and local entities (Shrivastava, 2017). The number of infirmities grew from the previous 7 to 21. Combinations of two or more disabilities are referred to as multiple disabilities.

Healthier Learning in India

A vast concept, education. It's quite difficult to define. The Latin verb "educare" (which meaning "to bring up" or "to rise") is the source of the English term "education." Radhkrishnan claimed that every person's journey through life is different and that "all India is on the one side, a search for truth; on the other side, it is a pursuit of social betterment." He held the view that every person had a unique story to tell.

In order for each person to realise their full potential in the reality of the real world of people and things, education serves as a guide. The individual's growth, as well as the identification, cultivation, and use of his unique skills, are its goals. Gandhiji described education as the process of bringing out of the best in men, physical, mental and spiritual and it is a lifelong process. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "all types of studies, training or training for

research at post - secondary level, provided by universities or other educational establishment that are approved as institutions of higher education by the competent State authorities" are included under the umbrella term "higher education." According to the dictionary Encyclopedia, higher education is the "last stage of education that is imparted after the senior secondary stage of formal learning that occurs after secondary education."

Indian Higher Education System Organization

A fairly rigid structure governs the academic system. Figure below depicts the organizational structure of the university system. Three subsystems are described under this paradigm. The three of them are the governance system, the administrative system, and the academic system.

Administrative System: This system is used in the administration and policy - making processes at the university. Decisions about the goals and regulations of the universities will be made at this strategic level. The structure contained the Academic Council, Court/Senate, Executive Council/Syndicate, Boards of Studies, and other sub - committees. The Executive Council/Syndicate has control over the university system, however the Senate/Court is the highest court.

Governance System: The administrative system's policies and procedures were to be carried out by the governance system. The administrative staff of the governance system consists of the Registrar, the Controller, the Deputy and Assistant Registrars, the Section Officers, and other personnel.

Academic Structure: This structure consists of deans, heads of departments and/or schools, professors, readers, lecturers, research scholars, etc.

Status of People with Disabilities in Education

According to the Census of 2011, just 55% of people with disabilities are literate, with 62% of men and 38% of women. Rural areas have a literacy rate of 49%, but urban areas have a literacy rate of 67%. Only 5% of the population's disabled graduates (6% of men and 3% of women) have completed their metric or secondary education.

Indian Higher Education Programme for Students With Disabilities

To boost the number of SWDs enrolled in higher education, the Indian government launched many programme. These plans are included below:

- Centralized financial aid programme for college and university students
Establishing an Equal Opportunity Cell (EOC) in a university; National Mission on Education via Information and Communication Technology (ICT); and Modification of the Copyright Act of 1957
- Financial support for visually impaired teachers; Higher Education for Persons with Special Needs (HEPSN); Teacher Preparation in Special Education (TEPSE); 3% (horizontal) of all university and college admissions are reserved for applicants with disabilities.
- M. Phil. and PhD Scholar Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship for Students with Disabilities.

PWDs' entry age cap has been lowered, and universities are now providing tape recorders to students with visual impairments.

Census (2011) reports that 55% of people with disabilities were literate, with 62% of men and 38% of women. The graduation rates for men and women were both 67.34% for men and 32.96% for women. (2011 Census). The number of students who are orthopaedically handicapped is higher than the numbers of students who are visually and audibly impaired. The same was corroborated by Moisy (2004)'s work. In addition, he noted that of 604 students with disabilities enrolled at Athabasca University between 1998 and 2001, a high enrollment rate of students with physical disabilities (50%) compared to students with learning disabilities (20%), students with visual impairments (4%) and students with hearing impairments (3%) was noted. A study conducted by The National Post secondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) in the academic year 1995–1996 revealed that all students with disabilities participated practically equally. In a sample of 21, 000 undergraduate students, the findings show that 29 percent of students had learning difficulties, 16 percent had visual impairments, 23 percent had orthopaedic disabilities, 16 percent had hearing impairments, and 3 percent had speech impairments.

While there are more students enrolled in professional courses, academic courses have a greater S - 2 enrollment of students with disabilities. All graduate courses, including academic and professional ones, have a 3% reservation for students with disabilities, however many courses have open seats despite the lack of qualified applicants. As a result, there is a very low representation of students with disabilities. According to the findings of a research conducted by the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP, 2004), 3 percent of seats at educational institutions should be set aside for students with disabilities.

3. Conclusion

Education at the graduate level promotes social fairness, as was previously discussed. More career options, a higher quality of life, increased self - assurance, and a respectable position in the family and in society are all benefits it offers people. In higher education institutions, the present study provided a clear image of students with disabilities from different genders. In the current session, there was a depressing image regarding the enrollment of students with disabilities.

Students with disabilities enrol in higher education at a far lower rate than other social groupings. In higher education settings, the representation of women and other genders is worse. The study concentrated on the issues faced by SWDs in higher education institutions, including issues with the admissions process, academic issues, financial issues, social issues, and support services offered by the higher education institutions. It also clarifies the numerous programmes and policies created for students with disabilities. The study found that there is no substantial difference in the status of students with disabilities in higher education institutions. Conclusion: The equitable involvement of students with

disabilities in higher education is not regarded as sufficient. Therefore, it is necessary to develop special policies and programmes for the equal participation of SWDs in higher education institutions.

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