

Education Of Children With Disabilities In India

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I. Introduction

1. The Constitution of India guarantees equality, liberty, justice, and dignity to all its citizens and explicitly emphasizes the need for an inclusive society, including persons with disabilities. In recent years, society's attitudes toward persons with disabilities have rapidly changed. It is believed that if persons with disabilities are provided with equal opportunities and effective rehabilitation, they can lead a better quality of life.
2. According to the 2001 Census, there are 21.9 million people with disabilities in the country, representing 2.13% of the total population. 75% of persons with disabilities live in rural areas, and 49% are literate and 34% are employed. Instead of the previous emphasis on medical rehabilitation, more attention is now being paid to social rehabilitation. The increasing abilities of persons with disabilities are being recognized, and emphasis is being placed on their integration into mainstream society.



In addition to the legal framework, a comprehensive infrastructure has been developed. There are seven national institutions working in various fields for manpower development. These are:

- Institute for the Physically Handicapped, New Delhi
- National Institute for the Visually Handicapped, Dehradun
- National Institute for the Orthopedic Handicapped, Kolkata.
- National Institute for the Mentally Handicapped, Secunderabad.
- National Institute for the Hearing Handicapped, Mumbai
- National Institute for Rehabilitation and Research, Cuttack.
- National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities, Chennai.

Recommendations for improving the educational status of persons with disabilities:

- To address the specific concerns related to the education of such children, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD Act), 2016 should be aligned with the Right to Education Act.
- It should cover all persons with disabilities.
- Reliable data is essential for effective planning for persons with disabilities.

- There should be effective coordination and convergence of all education programs related to persons with disabilities.
- Increasing budget allocations for education to meet the learning needs of persons with disabilities.
- Using information technology for the education of persons with disabilities.
- Providing necessary training to teachers to promote diverse learning for persons with disabilities.
- Dispelling stereotypes about persons with disabilities and creating a positive environment.

Based on extensive research of national and international documents, this report provides comprehensive and detailed information on the current state of education for children with disabilities and presents ten key recommendations for policymakers.

Speaking on the occasion, UNESCO New Delhi Director Eric Falt said, “Much has already been done in India for the education of children with disabilities, but with this report we are suggesting concrete steps that can take many more steps forward and ensure that approximately 8 million Indian children with disabilities get their due share in education.”

Vice President of India M. Venkaiah Naidu, in his message on the occasion, expressed hope that “UNESCO's State of Education Report 2019 will enhance our understanding in this regard and help the education system to better respond to the learning needs of children with disabilities.”

Ten key recommendations of the report:

- Amend the Right to Education Act to better align it with the RPwD Act, incorporating specific education challenges for children with disabilities.
- Establish a coordination mechanism within the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) to effectively integrate all education programs for children with disabilities.
- Ensure specific and adequate financial allocations in the education budget to meet the learning needs of children with disabilities.
- Strengthening data systems for planning, implementation, and monitoring to make them robust, reliable, and useful.
- Enriching school ecosystems and involving all stakeholders in supporting children with disabilities.
- Expanding the use of information technology for the education of children with disabilities.
- Giving every child an opportunity and leaving no child behind due to disability.
- Transforming teaching practices to support the inclusion of diverse learners.
- Breaking stereotypes and building positive attitudes towards children with disabilities, both in the classroom and beyond.
- Promoting effective partnerships involving government, civil society, the private sector and local communities for the benefit of children with disabilities.

The report summary has been developed by an experienced team of researchers from Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai under the guidance of UNESCO New Delhi.

Need for accessible resources:

This is a free online educational resource that includes information about the types of sign languages used by the deaf community.

The application currently includes data on 3,000 words and has the potential to expand the database further. Government bodies have taken several other initiatives to make resources accessible to children with disabilities.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) created the Barkhaa - Graded Reading Series for Children, which highlights the potential of Universal Design for Learning.

NCERT has developed two manuals on 'Inclusion of Children with Special Needs' for primary and upper primary level teachers.

Many states are using them extensively to understand the need for curriculum adaptations where children with disabilities study with other children in inclusive classrooms.

According to a UNESCO report, the attitudes of parents and teachers toward including children with disabilities in mainstream education are also crucial to achieving the goal of inclusive education.

Developing inclusive practices requires flexible curricula and the availability of appropriate resources.

Suggestion:

Although several programmes and schemes are increasing the enrolment rate of persons with disabilities in schools, more measures are needed to ensure quality education for every child to achieve the goals of Agenda 2030, especially Sustainable Development Goal 4.

Reasons:

- Genetic conditions. ...
- Problems during pregnancy. ...
- Problems at birth. ...
- Certain diseases or toxicities. ...
- Iodine deficiency, affecting approximately 2 million people worldwide, remains a major cause of preventable mental retardation in developing countries, where iodine deficiency has become epidemic.

Diagnosis:

According to the latest issue of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM IV),[7] three criteria must be met to diagnose mental retardation: IQ less than 70, impairments in two or more areas of adaptive behavior (as measured by scales that rate adaptive behavior, such as communication, self-help skills, interpersonal skills, and more), and evidence that limitations are evident by the age of 18.

IQ below 70

The Terman-Binet, the first English-language intelligence test, was developed by Binet of France as a tool for measuring achievement potential. Terman adapted this test and established it as a means of measuring intellectual ability based on verbal language, vocabulary, numerical reasoning, memory, motor speed, and analytical ability. In this way, the number of IQs for a test is 100, with one standard deviation being 15 (Wais/Wisc-IV) or 16 (Binet-Stanford). Sub-average intelligence is considered to exist when the individual scores two standard deviations below the test score. IQ test scores may be low due to factors other than cognitive ability (depression, anxiety, etc.). It is important for the evaluator to differentiate the individual before concluding that the IQ is "significantly below average." The following categories, based on standardized intelligence test scores, are based on the American Association of Mental Retardation, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV-TR, and the International Classification of Diseases-10:

Social class	intelligence quotient
Profound mental disability	Below 20
severe mental disability	20-34
moderate mental disability	35-49
mild mental disability	50-69
average intellectual function	70-84

Since diagnosis is not based solely on intelligence test scores, a person's adaptive functioning characteristics must also be taken into account, and diagnosis should not be based on a rigid approach. This includes intelligence test scores, an adaptive functioning score determined by a scale measuring adaptive behavior, and a description of the person's abilities provided by someone familiar. This assessment is also based on the examiner's opinion, which he or she has obtained by talking directly to the person (male or female) through their understanding, medium of conversation or preferred language.

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