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Syed Salma Jameel

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Disability in the Context of Higher Education: Issues and Concerns in India.

Syed Salma Jameel

Doctoral Student

National University of Educational Planning and Administration

Department of Inclusive Education

New Delhi, India 110016

Abstract

Disability in higher education has different implications from that of school Education. Higher education increases the chance of employability, thus, affirming dignified life for the persons with disabilities. While going through the policies and programmes in India it is found that not much has been done in the field of disability and higher education. There are number of groups working on the school education of children with disabilities. This has not translated in the entry of students to higher education because of various reasons. Infrastructural facilities within institutions, attitudes towards persons with disabilities, transportation facilities, and lack of support services are a few areas, which hinder the entry of students with disabilities into higher education.

Disability in the Context of Higher Education: Issues and Concerns in India.

The post Second World War period has witnessed various new changes in ideologies and outlooks. The civil rights movement gave impetus to such emancipation. The rise of the feminist movement and the movement against racial discrimination, also has connections with the Civil Rights Movement, which provided both strategies and a language to speak about justice. Rights of marginalized groups were recognized. The disability movement has a very recent history. During the

early 1990s, Disability Acts started passing in most of the developed and developing nations. Disability is both a global and human rights issue that has no racial, gender, socio economic and political boundaries.

Education became the hope for emancipation and enlightenment of the marginalized. The inclusion of students with disabilities in elementary and secondary education has not automatically transferred to their inclusion in higher education. Elementary and secondary education and higher education are two quite separate entities in admission, curriculum, governance, finance and policy. The context of disability becomes different in the higher education system. India is a democratic nation; it has followed the tenets of justice and equal opportunities and has made certain efforts to formulate plans and programmes accordingly. India is signatory to almost all the conventions and declarations of United Nations. In the disability sector also India is trying to keep pace with the developed world and has introduced innovative policies and programmes for the education of students with disabilities.

An attempt is made to get an overview of disability in the context of higher education particularly in India. The paper will discuss the policies and provisions being made available for the students with disabilities in higher education particularly in India. It also discusses the details of a study conducted to uncover the major issues of students with disabilities in higher education in India.

Understanding Disability: The context

There is wide range of debate about the understanding of disability. Historically, persons with a disability have been viewed as charity cases, or from a purely medical perspective, yet this view is rapidly changing. Today, disability is viewed within a human rights framework. This shift in perspective and the marginalization of persons with a disability has pushed the issue of the rights of persons with a disability to the forefront of international debate (International Paralympics Committee 2004).

Disability is commonly misunderstood with that of handicap and impairment. "Disability is a condition caused by an accident, trauma, genetics or disease that may limit a person's mobility, hearing, vision, speech or mental function" (Reynolds and Janzen 2007 p.735). Disability exists as it is situated in the larger context, while impairment is a biological condition (Braddock and Parish 2001). Handicap is a physical and attitudinal constraint that is imposed upon a person regardless of whether the person has a disability. For example some people with disabilities use wheel chairs. Stairs, narrow doorways and curbs are handicaps imposed upon people with disabilities who use wheel chairs (Reynolds and Janzen 2007 p.735).

Countries around the world give their own definitions of disability. In India Disability is mainly taken as is defined in the Persons with Disability Act (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) of India (1995) where Disability means –

- Blindness
- Hearing Impairment
- Low Vision
- Loco motor disability
- Leprosy-Cured
- Mental retardation
- Mental illness

(i) Blindness refers to a condition where a person suffers from any of the following conditions, namely:-

- total absence of sight; or
- visual acuity not exceeding 6/60 or 20/200 (Snellen) in the better eye with correcting lenses; or
- Limitation of the field of vision subtending an angle of 20 degree or worse;

(ii) Person with low vision means a person with impairment of visual functioning even after treatment or standard refractive correction but who uses or is potentially capable of using vision for the planning or execution of a task with appropriate assistive device.

(iii) Leprosy cured person" means any person who has been cured of leprosy but is suffering from -

- Loss of sensation in hands or feet as well as loss of sensation and paresis in the eye and eye-lid but with no manifest deformity;
- Manifest deformity and paresis but having sufficient mobility in their hands and feet to enable them to engage in normal economic activity;
- Extreme physical deformity as well as advanced age which prevents him from undertaking any gainful occupation, and the expression "leprosy cured" shall be construed accordingly

(iv) Hearing impairment means loss of sixty decibels or more in the better ear in the conversational range of frequencies.

(v) Loco motor disability means disability of the bones, joints or muscles leading to substantial restriction of the movement of the limbs or any form of cerebral palsy.

(vi) Mental retardation means a condition of arrested or incomplete development of mind of a person, which is specially characterized by sub normality of intelligence.

(vii) Mental illness means any mental disorder other than mental retardation.

The National Trust for The Welfare of Persons with Autism Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999 Autism, and Cerebral Palsy are also included where

“Autism” means a condition of uneven skill development primarily affecting the communication and social abilities of a person, marked by repetitive and ritualistic behavior and Cerebral palsy” means a group of non-progressive conditions of a person characterized by abnormal motor control posture resulting from brain insult or injuries occurring in the Pre-natal, Peri-natal or infant period of development.”

Policy and Provisions for Persons with Disabilities in the Five Year Plans in India

In the planning process India has included the persons with disabilities in the process of welfare employment and education. From the first five year plan requirements of persons with disabilities have been recognized

“In September 1955, the Ministry of Education constituted a National Advisory council for the Education of the Handicapped. The functions of this commission are to advise the central governments on problems concerning the education, training and employment and the provision of social and cultural amenities for physically and mentally handicapped, to formulate new schemes and to provide liaison with voluntary organizations working in this field.” 2nd Five year plan (1956) p: 603.

The above paragraph of 1956 reveals that disability has not been a totally neglected field as far as national plans are considered. The 3rd five year plan stresses on the efforts being made to educate and train the persons with disabilities so that they could enter the world of work. Employment exchanges were found to be active, by enabling persons with disabilities to find work. 3rd five year plan (1961) p:721 The 4th five year plan details some of the implementations of the previous plans and proposes the further changes in the field of disability. It also mentions that nine employment exchanges

were set up for the purpose of employing the persons with disabilities. “ The total placement of the handicapped up to 1967 since the inception of the first employment exchange in Bombay in 1950 is 4290” 4th five year plan(1969-1974)p: 409. Two contributive concerns in the 4th plan was the proposal to start a school for cerebral palsied children and initiation of “some pilot schemes for integrated education of the blind, the partially blind and partially deaf.”

Fifth five year plan does not detail much about activities in the field of disability, although it reveals the provision of scholarships in central sector. It was only in 1974 that the scheme on Integrated Education of Disabled Children (IEDC) broke new ground by stressing the need for educating children with mild to moderate disabilities in regular school settings (World Bank 2007 p. 58). The fifth five year plan in its chapter on health it stresses on the implementation two schemes National Leprosy Control Programme and National Scheme for Prevention of Impairment.

The sixth five year plan brings out the issues of integrative education, vocational training and economic rehabilitation so as to mainstream the persons with disabilities. The sixth five year plan is showing a slight shift in the trajectory of provisions being provided for persons with disabilities. The sixth five year plan also talks about the following issues concerning education and social justice of persons with disabilities:

- Infrastructural development to enhance mobility
- Discouraging special schools except for severely handicapped
- Scholarships at both centre and states for students pursuing educational and vocational pursuits

Sixth five year plan says that one percent reservation will be left vacant each for blind, deaf and orthopedically handicapped in group ‘C’ and ‘D’ posts in central sector. The seventh year plan reveals the launch of new scheme ‘Assistance to Disabled persons for Purchase/fitting of Aids and Appliances’ during the sixth plan period. The seventh plan focuses more on provision of aids and appliances and also improving the functioning of employment exchanges of 11th five year plan has proposed many developmental steps to be taken in the field of higher education and disability. It also reports the advances being made in the 10th five year plan.

In eighth five year plan the reservation was increased from one percent to three percent in central government and public sector undertaking. This plan also reviews the progress of the seventh

five year plan. In the mid-1990s, Government of India initiated the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and its subcomponent known as Integrated Education of the Disabled (IED)(World Bank 2007 p. 58).

It was during the eighth plan period in 1995 that Persons with Disabilities ((Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act was brought out in India. The thorough insight of the education of the persons with disabilities in the ninth five year plan is because of rights underpinnings of the Persons with Disabilities Act.

Ninth plan counts disability as a major concern in education. Education of the children with disabilities was legal obligation up to age 18. The ninth five year plan in its chapter on social welfare details the findings of Nation-wide Sample Surveys of NSSO in 1981 and 1991 giving rationale to the further developments being initiated in this field.

The implementation of the policy of 3 per cent reservation of vacancies for the blind, deaf and orthopedically disabled in Group 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' posts in Central Services and in the Public Sector Undertakings, will be monitored on a continuous basis and stock-taking will be done at regular intervals both at the Central and State levels. Group 'A' and 'B' posts are also included this plan showing that if opportunities are provided persons with disabilities can lead a somewhat normal life and plays roles expected from an adult in the society.

From the Ninth Plan there is a slight shift from a welfare based approach for the people with disability to rights based approach. The Government of India has enacted three legislations for persons with disabilities viz. (i) Persons with Disability (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, which provides for education, employment, creation of barrier free environment, social security, etc. (ii) National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disability Act, 1999 has provisions for legal guardianship of the four categories and creation of enabling environment for as much independent living as possible. (iii) Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992 deals with the development of manpower for providing rehabilitation services.

Tenth five year plan came up with the provisions for students with disabilities in higher education through the scheme Higher Education for Persons with Special Needs. The tenth five year plan also mentions giving incentives such as scholarships, both domestic and overseas to the students with disabilities with good academic record in higher education.

To ensure adequate financial support to efforts to support the disabled, the Tenth Plan advocated the introduction of a 'Component Plan for the Disabled' in the budget of various Ministries/ Departments.

The Eleventh five year plan has proposed many developmental steps to be taken in the field of higher education and disability. It also reports the advances being made in the Tenth five year plan. 500 scholarships were provided every year during the Tenth Plan for higher and professional courses.

- The 'Disability Division' of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment will be strengthened by converting it into a separate department, so that it can liaise effectively with all the other concerned Ministries/Departments
- To promote greater accessibility and a barrier-free environment to the disabled, a new National Institute of Universal Design will be set up in the Eleventh Plan
- A commitment has been given in Parliament that education would be made disabled friendly by 2020. If this commitment is to be fulfilled, certain urgent steps are necessary, including the setting up of disability units in the University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council For Technical Education (AICTE), National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), and all other apex education bodies
- Deserving persons with disabilities should be supported for training/education abroad, especially in studies relating to disability.
- Support to institutions with larger student population of SCs, STs, OBCs, minorities, and physically challenged;
- Support to the SCs, STs, OBCs, minorities, physically challenged, and girl students with special scholarships/ fellowships, hostel facilities, remedial coaching, and other measures;
- Setting up of an 'Equal Opportunity Office' in all universities to bring all schemes relating to this group under one umbrella for effective implementation.

Disability in the context of Higher Education

The recent changes in policies on Affirmative Action is building pressure on Higher Education system to rethink about the strategies and give vent to new areas of exploration so as to address the issues of the diverse culture existing within the higher education system. "Equity in Education is a commitment of the public education system to social justice. To implement rights based approach to

education requires using human rights as a framework for pedagogical theory for access to places of learning, for testing of capacity and measuring success. It makes principle of human rights integral to the design implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes, and it means assessing the human rights implication of education policy programmes and legislation” (Marcia 2007 p.107). The human rights movement has also given a new meaning and content to the notion of affirmative action based upon equity, justice, accessibility, neutrality with respect to gender and/or to physical or mental disability, fairness and other liberal democratic ideals. Social justice may be conceptualized in relation to the distribution of social goods such as education, hence our concern with rates of participation of disabled students in higher education and their social profile with regard to gender, social class and ethnicity (Riddell et al 2005 p.14).

Higher Education has its own importance in terms of employability, political power and national development. “Higher Education being at the apex of the educational system is an essential input for meeting the manpower requirements of the highest calibre in the crucial areas of national development. It is also an important contributory factor for ensuring social justice by providing vertical mobility to deprived sections of society by making higher levels of knowledge accessible to them and, in the process, improving quality of life of the nation as a whole” (Azad 2008 p.19). Diversity is seen in the college campuses .There are students who may be disadvantaged in many ways for example a student may belong to a Scheduled Caste and also has a disability. The situation is more deprived if the Schedule caste student with disability is a girl. Institutions need to be ready to cater to the issues of such students. Warnock committee report 1978 emphasizes the importance, of reassessing needs of students with disabilities well before they enter into the world of higher education.

Disability Service providers in Higher Education must recognize the need for multicultural awareness and prepare themselves for the pivotal role in the success of minority students with disabilities (Reber A. 2007p. 1036). College campuses plays pivotal role in the awareness and sensitization of issues. College campuses were centers of activism for the new movement (disability rights movement). (Scotch 1989p.387)

Post secondary education stage demands the formation of an independent personal and social identity. Students with disabilities have to overcome the dual obstacle of academic demands combined with their disability. Disability becomes a public issue and the student’s privacy is lost (Shevlin et al., 2004). Many students, due to the fear of being labeled, avoid disclosing their disabilities.

Borland and James 1999 in a study compiling the learning experience of Students with Disabilities in a U K university finds that the vast majority of students with disabilities indicates that moving away from home to university or college is a time when they have to confront their disabilities. Living at home with family and friends, going to a school which they have attended for many years, or coming from a village or locality where they are accepted, their disability has been a private matter. However, in coming to a new place a new institution, working with people they have never known disability becomes a public matter.

Disability and Higher Education in Indian Context

Policy and provisions for students with disability take place within different contexts and different educational structures and systems. Action Plan for Inclusive Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities (IECYD) 2005 deliberates with the issue of inclusive education for students with disabilities. This action plan gives equal emphasis on the higher education for students with disabilities. The major provisions in this regard are:

- Increase in number of young persons with disability accessing secondary education. Smooth transition for young persons with disability wishing and able to access secondary and higher education. Consistency in providing for disabled friendly examination facilities across states and boards.
- Resource support in the form of special educators and rehabilitation professionals across disabilities available in adequate numbers to assist mainstream teachers at all levels.
- Increased enrolment of young persons with disability in mainstream higher education and vocational courses.

Building the bridge between school education the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of 'Inclusive Education of the Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) was brought out by MHRD in 2009. This scheme includes all the disabilities mentioned in the Persons with Disability (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, and The National Trust for The Welfare of Persons With Autism Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999. It also says that the scheme may eventually cover (i) Speech impairment and (ii) Learning Disabilities, etc.

The schemes like Teachers Preparation in Special Education (TEPSE) and Higher Education for Persons with Special Needs (Persons with disability) (HEPSN) 1999- 2000 have been implemented with an objective to develop courses for special teachers and counselors and also to provide facilities in

various forms for the persons with disability. These schemes have not been fully implemented in all the higher educational institutions.

H.E.P.S.N. fared marginally better with eight Universities and Colleges being approved for funding in the same time frame. H.E.P.S.N. is an extremely comprehensive scheme to promote the cause of the disabled in higher education (N.C.P.E.D.P.2005). It has essentially three components:

1. Establishment of Enabling Units^{1[1]} in colleges and Universities

The first was the establishment of Disability Units in various universities and colleges in the country, to facilitate admission of the disabled in these institutions and to provide guidance and counselling to them. These Units were also meant to assist disabled graduates seek gainful employment.

2. Providing Access to the students with disabilities

The second was to improve the accessibility of these institutions by making their infrastructure and architecture more disabled-friendly. Preference for these one-time grants of Rupees 10,00,000 per university was to be given to those institutions that had enrolled the maximum number of disabled students.

3. Providing Special Equipment to increase Educational Services for Students with disabilities

The third was the provision of special equipment to augment educational services for disabled students. The research findings and academic literature in the context of disability and higher education collected for this study is mostly from the developed countries.

National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP 2005) conducted a survey on a large scale where it had selected 119 Universities, where 52 universities were able to provide data on the total number of students enrolled with them. Only about 0.1% of the students were found to be those with different disabilities as per the data from 52 respondent universities. 3% seats are reserved for the students with disabilities, this shows that these students are not able to reach the higher levels of education.

^{1[1]} In order to develop awareness in the higher education system and also to provide necessary guidance and counseling to differently-abled persons, it is proposed to establish resource units in universities in the country, which will be called as Enabling Units (UGC 2008).

The survey also gives the number of students with different disabilities that were enrolled in the universities. There were

- 1203 students with orthopedic impairment
- 311 students with visual impairment
- 38 students with hearing impairment
- 22 students with mental disability

The gender factor keeps is a drawback for female students with disabilities, 76.3% of the disabled students were males, while 23.7% were females.

294 colleges were taken for the study purpose across the country; about 10 colleges from each state and 1 college from each union territory were contacted. Response was received from only 96 colleges. It was found that out of the 96 respondent colleges only 0.525 consisted of the students with disabilities. Surprisingly it was found that 3 colleges mentioned having sign language interpreters but none of these colleges had any student with hearing impairment.

The University of Delhi in association with Samarthyam (a Civil Society Organization promoting Accessible Environments for Disabled Persons) has launched a Project in 2008 "Accessible University of Delhi". The University of Delhi is dynamically collaborating with such Non Governmental and Governmental bodies for the different aspects related to students with disabilities. The Equal Opportunity Cell of the University is vigorously involving students with disabilities in the training and awareness processes.

Students with Disabilities in Colleges: A Description

Although steps have been taken towards the inclusion of students with disability in higher education and there are very few explicit signs of progress. But, there is dearth of research focused on this area. We have a long way to go to mainstream issues of disability within and outside the institutions of higher learning. Higher educational institutions are the places where students with disability enter at a crucial age from which the outer world demands a change. Here they are out of their cocoons, ready to mingle in a different atmosphere of living (which includes teaching and learning, making new friends, self assertion, etc).

Students with disabilities have equal rights; right against discrimination, right to self-respect and dignity, right to self-assertion and right to freedom (to choose from a variety of options) being basic to them. Education increases the capabilities of an individual and thereby leads to development of the individual. There has to be rights underpinnings in all the policies and provisions for students with disabilities in higher education. The needs of students with disability in higher education require to be addressed. There is insignificant number of documentation of the issues of students with disability at higher education in the Indian context.

A study was carried in order to get into the bigger picture the main issues of students with disabilities in Higher Education.

The descriptive study was conducted to find

- the approximate number of students with disabilities in the colleges
- the nature and extent of disabilities prevalent in students with disabilities
- the admission policy and procedure applicable for students with disabilities
- the type of courses which students with disabilities generally opt for
- the financial assistance given to the students with disabilities
- the mode of entry (whether it is through reserved disability quota, general or any other reserved quota) of students with disabilities into the colleges

Method

This study was carried to know the wide-ranging characteristics of students with disabilities in the colleges. Colleges of Delhi University offering B.A., B.Sc. and B.Com programmes was taken as the first criteria for the selection of colleges. There were 63 such colleges out of which 15 colleges were randomly selected for this study out of which two colleges had no students with disabilities.

This study was carried out using information pro forma and interview schedules made for this purpose. Information was collected personally from most of the colleges. The information pro forma was filled in the administrative offices of the colleges with prior permission of the principles of the respective colleges. In this study the administrative staff was interviewed. The information was also collected from the Equal Opportunity Cell of Delhi University which deals with issues of Students with disabilities. The information collected is summarized below.

Equal Opportunity Cell

The Equal Opportunity Cell was set up by the University of Delhi to address the issues concerning SC, ST, OBC, Minorities and Persons with disabilities. The mission statement of Equal Opportunity Cell ensures the following:

- A barrier free access to all the buildings of Colleges, Departments, Libraries, Hostels and Offices of the University.
- Smooth and efficient running of a Resource Centre that specializes in addressing the needs of the Persons with disabilities in all categories including Visual, Hearing Orthopedic and Neurological.
- Nondiscrimination on grounds of disability and minority status.
- Short time courses for imparting employable skills for the disabled and seminars/workshops for raising awareness about disability
- Reaching out to the like-minded institutions and organizations dealing with similar issues
- Affirmative actions concerning Scheduled Castes ,Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Class

In the equal opportunity cell I met the officer on special duty; she briefed me about the admission procedure of the students with disabilities and also explained the responsibility of equal opportunity cell towards persons with disabilities.

The Equal Opportunity Cell conducts various programmes which include short time courses in Information Technology, Language Improvement and Human Rights. They also conduct workshops and skill development programmes for the students with disabilities.

The recent activities of the Equal Opportunity Cell include the launch of a disabled friendly bus within the north campus.

Lessons from the Study

Admission Procedures

Students with disabilities apply directly to the University; the whole process is central. If they are found eligible then on the day of admission they are counseled at the Dean of student welfare Office. Camps are held on the day of admission some of the students and faculty voluntarily come forward for assistance. Then they are sent to the World University Service Health Centre - University Of Delhi for medical examination and are certified according to their extent of disability. This certification determines whether they are entitled for the admission under the 3% reservation quota meant for students with disabilities in educational institutions. They are then allotted to different colleges according to their subject and college preferences. The residences of these students are also kept in view while allotting them to the colleges.

Non-availability of Facilities

Physical access is considered as one of the major obstacles. Borland and James (1999) in their case study of a UK university write that "Access to facilities is often regarded as one of the most straight forward areas to deal with, but access issues for students with a range of disabilities are extremely complex. Access issues need to be more frequently related to campus-wide issues and to settings outside of the university, such as student's pubs and cafes."

The colleges varied in terms of availability of facilities, gender differences and attitudes towards students with disabilities. Two of the colleges I had visited had no students with disabilities, one of them is Sri Aurobindo College, Malviya Nagar where one of the teachers who is himself visually challenged pointed out various reasons for the total absence of students with disabilities from this college although the student enrolment is about 3000 including morning and evening classes. The main reason cited was unavailability of space as the building is a rented one and cannot even accommodate the even enrolled students. The teacher also mentioned about some students with disabilities who were enrolled in previous sessions but they could not pass the examinations. The other reason was that the college is situated in the area where there are transportation problems. Acharya Narendra Dev College is another college which had no student with disability in its rolls, the number of enrolled students is 1400.

Attitudinal Differences

People with disabilities face barriers because they have to negotiate an environment which was not designed for them, and if they are to enjoy equality of access it is this deficit in environment which must be overcome (Tinklin and Hall, 1999). Attitudinal barriers are found to be the major obstacle when it comes to inclusion of students with disability in educational institutions. Some of colleges which have students with disabilities enrolled have used different terminology to address these students for example the document of Ramjas College says Physically Handicapped students. Deshbandhu College and Kirori Mal College writes handicap quota for the reserved quota. The Miranda House College addresses them as Physically Challenged; rest of the colleges addresses them as Persons with Disability in their official documents.

Financial Assistance

Resources become important for the proper functioning therefore identification of financing policies and agencies should receive proper impetus. In a study by Matshediso (2007) on students with disability in higher educational institutes of South Africa “the majority of the institutes (70%) said that they received funding from university and technicians. Thirteen percent said that they receive half of their funding from their institutions and other half from private donors. Nine percent received funding from private donors. Four percent received from grants, but it was not sure if the grants were internal or external. The other 4% of the respondents were not sure how it received its funding.

There were mainly two types of scholarships available for the students with disabilities; one comes from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and the other one comes from the V.C. fund. The amount of Scholarship from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment ranges from Rs.5000- 6000 per annum and the amount which comes from V.C. fund is Rs.1000-1300 per annum. The students receive scholarship only if they apply for it. Different scholarships are provided by some colleges for example Gargi College gives Yashoda charitable Trust Scholarship for physically disabled which is Rs.5000 per annum, like wise Miranda House receives some amount of scholarship from All India Blind Association.

Students with disabilities in several colleges are exempted from college fees if they do not get financial assistance from anywhere. One thing that the official staff at accounts department in most of the colleges revealed that visually challenged students receive most of the scholarship money.

Gender Imbalance

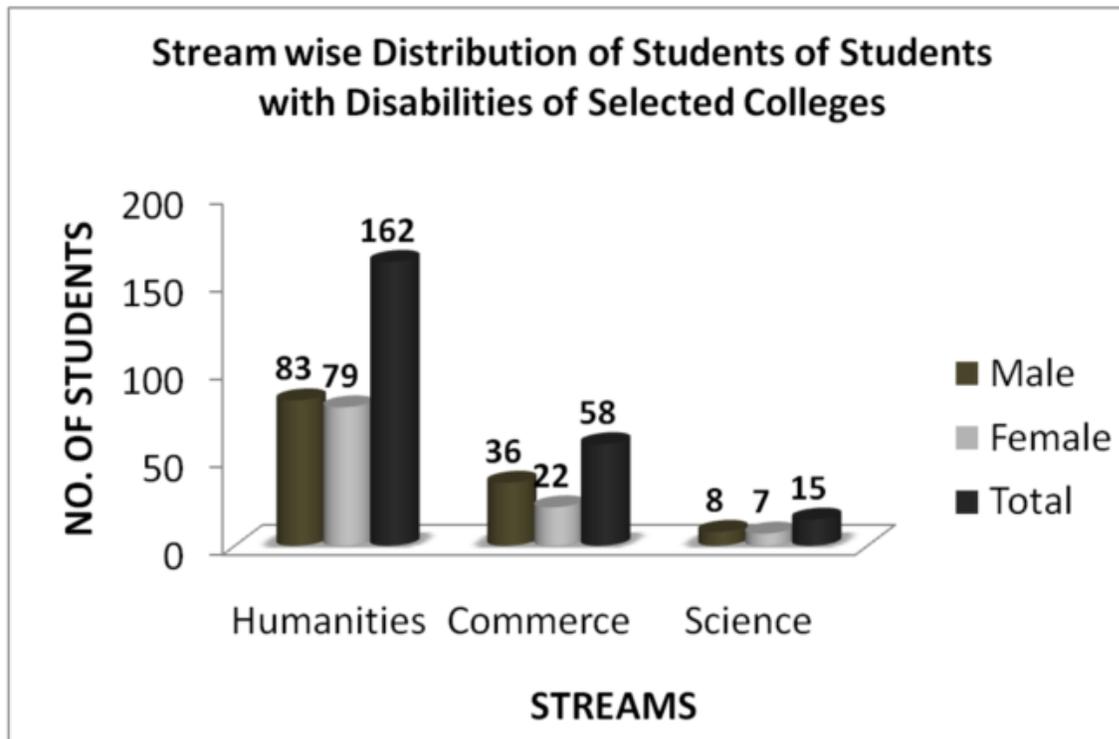
Women with disability not only have to settle themselves with social and cultural concerns but also have to deal with social structural inequalities at the practical level. They also have to take up the challenging job of theorization and representation, including how disabled people have been looked at within the mainstream of socioeconomic and cultural systems. The inclusion of women with disabilities into mainstream services, along with specialized interventions where necessary, would constitute a Rights Based approach to disability in all development activities. The census 2001 data shows that the literacy rates of females are abysmally low in all types of disabilities as compared to the males.

In the Co-Educational colleges the number of male students with disabilities are more in number than female students with disabilities.

Stream wise Distribution of Students with Disabilities

The data available shows the stream wise data where it was found that mostly students with disabilities are concentrated in the humanities. The total number is 162 out of which 83 are male students and 79 are female students. In commerce the enrolment is much lower it is 58 out of which 36 are male students and 22 are female students. The lowest enrolment was found in science which is only 15 out of which 8 are male and 7 are female students. Figure 1 shows the stream wise enrolment in selected colleges.

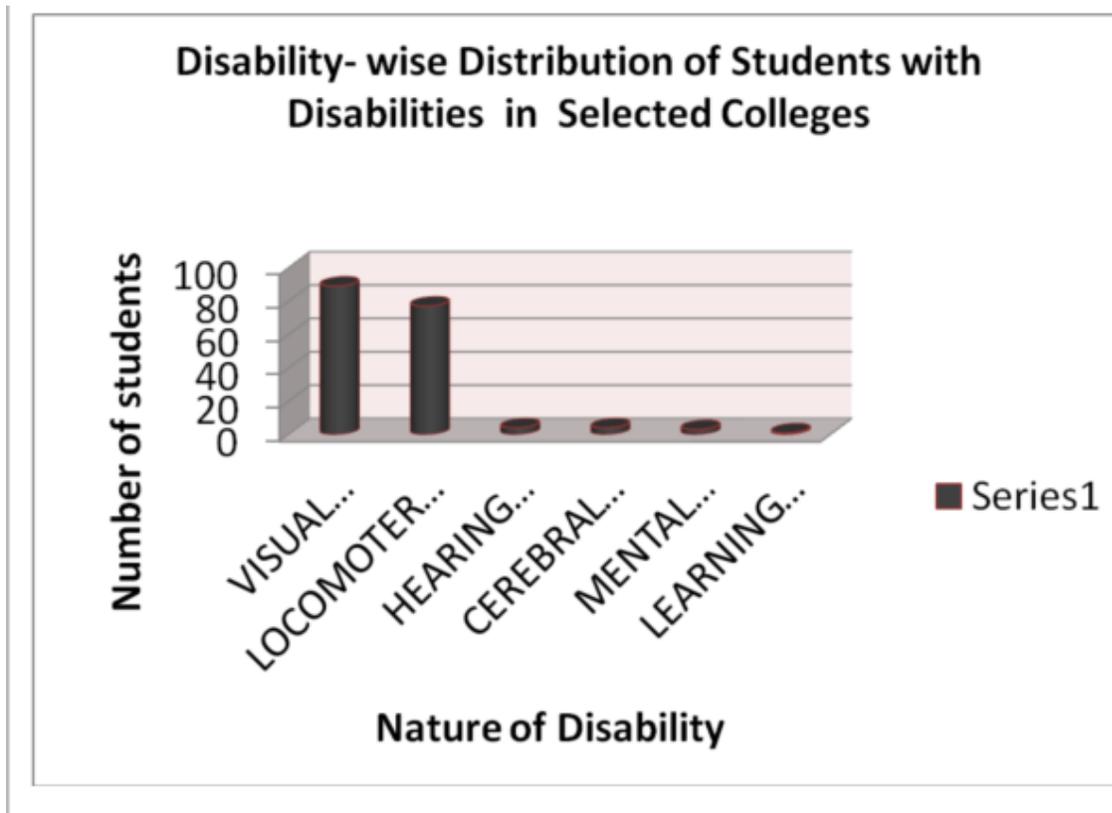
Figure 1



Disability- wise Distribution of Students with Disabilities

The majority is of the Students are with Visual Impairment (89). The number of students with Locomotor Disability was found to be 77. The list consist of only 4 students with Hearing Impairment, The needs of persons with hearing and/or speech impairment have been relatively neglected so far. In the Eleventh Plan, a determined effort will be made on mainstreaming this segment. The interventions planned will provide access to information in all its forms 11th five year Plan). Only 4 students with Cerebral Palsy, 3 in the category of Mental Illness and 1 with a Learning Disability could be found in the sample. Figure 2 shows the disability-wise distribution of students with disabilities in selected colleges.

Figure 2



Conclusion

The recent efforts by the ministry of Human Resource Development and University Grants Commission in India may become a shifting motive towards the mainstreaming of persons with disabilities in higher education in India. Representation of students with disabilities in the university forums and student union will lead to empowerment and emancipation. The recommendations in the 10th and 11th five plans if being properly implemented can make a big change happen. Further efforts are needed in terms of more researches and academic teaching of disability studies in the higher education. Most importantly there is need for opening up of equal opportunity cells in the universities so that there is a place in every university which becomes a platform for every student with disability to upgrade their skills and share their experiences.

The type of information collected implies that study of participation may need to be geared to the challenges being faced and practices and policies as these impact the students with disabilities. It also implies that reasons for fewer numbers of other disabilities will also need to be studied.

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