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Educational Policies in India with Special Reference to Children with Disabilities

Ritika Gulyani

Abstract

The present paper traces the emergence of 'inclusive education' of disabled children in India in terms of the governmental policies that have been suggested as well as implemented. The UNCRPD (United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability) in the international arena has India as a ratified member, which also places importance on making provisions for providing education to children with disabilities. The government of India is yet to come up with some concrete laws that focus solely on the education of children with disabilities, there does exist the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SAA) under which all children between 6-18 years are to receive free education and another draft bill for the new education policy which is under way. The paper will also throw a light on how far commitment towards education for children with disabilities has been successful in the country.

Keywords: India, Inclusive Education, Disability, Government Policies, UNCRPD

Defining Disability

There are innumerable definitions of disability and for the sake of convenience, these definitions can be divided into two groups: the official definitions produced by professionals and academics and those that are developed by people with disabilities and the organizations controlled and run by the people with disabilities (Oliver and Barnes 1998:14). The definitions of disability are significant as they play a vital role in diagnosing a particular condition as belonging to a specific category which can have far reaching consequences in shaping the identity of those subjected to its ramifications. Diagnosis can be understood both as a medical process as well as a system of analysis of people's lives based on special knowledge and expertise of professionals (Ghai 2003:29). There exist different models which help us understand disability, earliest among them being the medical model and the social model. The former sees the diagnostics and solution to disability in medical knowledge, with the focus being on bodily 'abnormalities', disorder or deficiency, and the way in

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which this in turn 'causes' some degree of 'disability' or functional limitation. The recommended solution lies in curative and rehabilitative medical intervention, with an increasing involvement of allied health practitioners, psychologists and educationalists (Barnes et al. 1999:22-23).

The social model in turn emerged during the 1970's and 80's as a response to the medical model by the disability activists, who argued that it is the society which disables people with impairments and therefore any meaningful solution must be directed at societal change rather than individual adjustment and rehabilitation. Disability was something that was imposed on top of one's impairments such that one is excluded from a full participation in the society. The model focused on the experience of disability, but not as something which exists purely at the level of individual psychology, or even interpersonal relations. It considers a wide range of social and material factors and conditions, such as family circumstances, income and financial support, education, employment, housing, transport and the built environment, and more (Barnes et al 1999:27-28).

However, the social model, despite being critical of the medical model, has been criticized for looking at impairment in terms of medical discourse itself. In order for social model to claim that disability was a consequence of the oppression of the society, it was essential to challenge the medical view that the body is the cause of disability and handicap. Thus, a distinction was created between impairment and disability where the former was due to biology and the latter due to society and the body is defined in biological terms. The problem with this understanding is that the dualism created by impairment/disability tends to pull biology and culture in two different directions.

Tom Shakespeare (1997) and Marian Corker (1998, Corker and French 1999) have emphasized that the social model of disability does not take into consideration the cultural processes that shape disability. For them, within a materialist view of disability, culture is seen to be an insignificant part of the superstructure that emerges from the economy. Emphasis is placed on the disability engendering role played by the cultural ideas which more often than not portray people with disabilities in a negative light. For post structuralist, like Foucault, however, even impairment is fully cultural and is the outcome of social processes (Foucault 1979, 1980). The postmodernist and the post structuralist perspectives reject the idea of the roots of disability being located in the realms of social relations. Rather as Thomas (2002:49) puts it, the social phenomena of disability and impairment should be understood as being 'woven through and out of cultural ideas'. The understanding of disability as a phenomenon has thus undergone a series of changes over the years and has come a long way from the medical model of understanding of disability to a

present post – structuralist one where culture and the surroundings play a vital role in its formulation.

International efforts around Disability

Internationally, efforts have been going on to address the issue of disability and the rights of people associated with it since the last four decades. Patil (2008) in his work has outlined a trajectory of these developments. In 1969, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted the Declaration on Social Progress and Development to address the concerns of the rights of people with disability, while in 1975, it adopted the Rights of Disabled Persons which proclaimed that 'disabled people have the same civil and political rights as other human beings'. The year 1981 was declared by the General Assembly as the International Year of Persons with Disabilities with a theme of full participation and equality, while the decade 1983 to 1993 was the UN Decade of disabled persons for Better Implementation of the World Program of Action for the Disabled. The end of the decade was marked by declaring 3rd December as the International Day of Disabled Persons. The General Assembly in 1993 adopted the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Person with Disabilities. This in turn gave rise to different countries accepting and drawing up policies so as to promote equality of opportunity, protection of rights and full participation of persons with disabilities. In 2006, the UN convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was brought forth which emphasized on the non-discrimination and effective and full participation and inclusion in society (Dias 2013:38-39).

Out of these, there have been a few conventions and treaties that have pertained to the rights of disabled children and their education specifically. These include the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Standard Rules of 1993, the UNESCO Salamanca Statement of 1994 and the recent 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified by about 177 countries worldwide which included India. The Convention overall has statements to the effect that 'all rights shall apply to all children without any discrimination on any grounds, including disability', 'the best interest of children will be a primary consideration' and that 'the children will have a right to express opinion and that opinion would be taken into account.' However, it is Article 24 of the Convention which specifically deals with disabled children and says that the education of the child should lead to the fullest possible social integration and development of the individual and also active participation in the community (Vaughan 2002:154). Also unlike the other declarations on disability, the CRC asks the state to lay down provisions for the education of disabled children as a basic human right rather than it being aimed to achieve charity or social integration (Hernandez 2008:501). But while the Convention obliges the states

to recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education, just the recognition of these rights does not ensure education. Education policies may be in place but if schools have a rigid curriculum, buildings that are inaccessible, teachers not trained in special education and so on, then it may prevent children with disabilities from attending school.

The UN Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities set out a standard that was to be internationally followed when making policies for people with disabilities. These Rules put emphasis on inclusive education for the development of disabled students. The UNESCO Salamanca Statement, was a declaration on the education of disabled children, and had representatives of 92 governments and 25 international organizations, which included India, agree on it. The main aim of this statement is to urge the governments of the different countries to adopt inclusive education and to enroll all children in a mainstream school unless there is a reason not to do so (Vaughan 2002:155).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD 2007) aims to promote an equal society by recognizing the fact that the persons with disabilities should be guaranteed respect, dignity and social inclusion the same way as other members of the society. The Convention looks at the disability issue as a central part of development. As specified in Article 4 of the Convention, the signatory states are “to take into account the protection and promotion of the human rights of persons with disabilities in all policies and programmes.” As suggested by Durocher in the work “Disability and global development”, only about 2-3% of children with disabilities in the developing countries attend school while most of them remain illiterate (O’Dowd, Mannan and McVeigh 2013:70). In the same vein, UNESCO pointed out that in developing countries, about ninety percent of children with disabilities did not attend any school (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities). The UNCRPD is the move of the United Nations from understanding disability from the point of view of the medical model to understanding it from the point of view of the social model. The early document of UN emphasized on seeing education as a treatment for disability, while the more recent ones have tended to see it as a human right which is required by children to develop their full potential (Hernandez 2008:499).

The CRPD in specific was an important step as it brought with it a paradigm shift in the way in which disability is understood in terms of the international human rights law. It is based on the social-human rights model that focuses on capability and inclusion: on lifting the environmental as well as the attitudinal barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from full inclusion and equal participation in all aspects of community life. As Kothari points out, with the coming of the CRPD, the dichotomy between the civil-political as well as the

socio-economic has been dissolved and it easily blends in the two. It also includes highly disability specific interpretations of the existing human rights which transform the negative rights or the non-interference based rights into positive state obligations (Kothari 2012:181).

Understanding Special Education

When the western education system developed, it was to cater to mass education and disability was thought of to be an impairment that should be given special treatment in a separate environment. Since the medical profession was the one responsible for diagnosing the defects, it irrevocably became tied to it. It also became a screening process to keep the children with physical and sensory disabilities, and later also those with behavioral and learning disabilities, out of the mainstream school. However, the notion of special education was not very successful, as pointed out by Oliver (1996:93):

‘Special segregated education has been the main vehicle for educating disabled children throughout most of the industrialized world in the twentieth century. Over a hundred years, a special education system has failed to provide disabled children with the knowledge and skills to take their rightful place in the world, and it has failed to empower them.’

However, a significant shift has been observed from special education to the inclusive education all over the world. The integration of disabled learners into mainstream schools has become an alternative to the presence of special schools, especially in the west (Polat 2011:50-51).

Inclusive Education

It was the idea of inclusive education that radically altered the basis of special education and everything that it stood for, namely the growth of categories of disability and their subsequent rectification, the separation of education and the certification of teachers. The distinction between Mainstream and inclusion as explained by Minow is that while the former means the “selective placement of special education students in one or more ‘regular education classes’ to the extent that these students can keep up with the work assigned by the teacher in the regular classroom while utilizing the relevant educational services, inclusion means to structure the educational environment in such a way that it becomes possible to include students with special needs in the classroom itself. In other words, mainstream tries to bring children with special needs to fit them in the existing classroom methods and goals, inclusionary approach tries to provide education that is responsive to the needs of all students (Minow 2012:41). Inclusion tries to bring together the efforts of the general and the

special educator to the child rather than the child moving for this support. The idea of inclusion is not a new one and it has its roots in liberal and progressive thought. The current schooling system seems to be based on two opposing avenues, that of integration and segregation. There were many like Elizabeth Burgwin, a child welfare pioneer, who saw no point in segregation and while thinking about the needs of disabled children, assumed that the adaptation that had to be made would be to the normal school. The other body of opinion dealt with the view that children could be divided according to the difficulties they faced and consequently special schools could be set up to cater to their needs. Instead of referring to children as having 'special needs', inclusive education sees these 'needs' as a part of diversity among learners who need equal treatment (Jha 2010:8). While the emphasis when discussing about inclusion tends to emphasize on the curriculum, the attitudes and the teaching method, there is a further dimension which is related to inclusion not just in the classroom but in the overall society as well.

Inclusion in most circumstances is understood as being opposed to the concept of segregation, in a very similar way to which integration is seen as opposed to segregation. However it is important to keep in mind that inclusion and integration are not synonyms. The word inclusion should be understood in opposition to exclusion (Thomas et al 1998:12). Integration thus focuses on the child and how the child should adapt to fit into the school whereas inclusion focuses on the school itself where it is the school which has to make adjustments to make the child fit in.

Disability and Education in India

The disability rights in India right from the 1980's had been following three parallel tendencies; there are the individual-centered organizations who mainly lobby for the provision of services, to create awareness and to circulate information, then there are the NGO's that are managed by the activists for the rehabilitation programmes among the poor of rural and urban areas and finally there are the disability studies scholars who are involved in the production of knowledge (Mehrotra 2013:102). However Ghai (2003) points out that organizations centered around disability rights are usually riddled with concern of the middle-class men. For Mehrotra (2013) this becomes a matter of concern when the 'rights for the disabled' turn into the rights for only the privileged disabled such as special parking facilities, concession in travel etc. All these, though important, are a far cry from the reality of the majority of people with disabilities who are marginalized even further on account of their caste, class, place of residence and gender. More vital to them would be issues like education, residence, employment etc (p.103).

Especially in regards to education, India has been consistent to achieve this goal. This has been a part of its development strategy and is very visible in the

form of the formation of the University Education Commission (1948-49), the Secondary Education Commission (1952-53), the Education Commission (1964-66) and the National Commission on Teachers- I & II (1983-85). Additionally, the National Policy on Education (1986) (later revised in 1992) laid forth a plan for a national system of education where “up to a given level, all students, irrespective of their caste, creed, location or sex had access to a comparative quality of education” (Government of India 2016 (1), 3-4).

The concerns for the rights of disabled people in India were visible in the public domain only in the 1990's when a number of legislation were passed and enacted by the parliament. These included the Rehabilitation Council of India Act 1992, the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act 1995, and the National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act 1999. It was the rise of the disability rights movement and the role of United Nations that had given an impetus to the developments in the field of legislature as well as laid a foundation for the jurisprudence of disability in India. The most vital development in this regard was the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 13 December 2006 (Addlakha and Mandal 2009:62).

The International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities created a framework based on the rights-based model of disability. India was the seventh country to ratify this Convention on October 1, 2007. From then onwards there was a demand to amend the law on Indian disability so as to shift from a welfare based approach which treats people with disability as objects of charity in need of medical treatment and social protection to a rights-based approach where people are treated as being equally capable of laying a claim on their rights and being allowed to make autonomous decisions based on free and informed consent (Chopra 2013:808). This constant push has finally resulted in the passing of the Rights for Persons with Disabilities Bill 2016.

India has 16% of the world's population which makes it the biggest democracy in the world. Out of this population, of about 1 billion, about 10% have some form of disability. Out of this, about 1.67% of the population under the age of 19 in India has a disability. In other words out of all the people living in India with disability, about 35.29% are children, or about 12 million children. Of these children, only 1% has access to school (Child Line India). Education in India is largely the responsibility of the state government but the central government has made various provisions to address the inconsistency of the different state laws. It was due to the 42nd Constitutional Amendment of 1976 that education was transferred from the state list to the concurrent one and giving equal importance to both the state as well as the centre in forming the

policies.

Government documents such as that of the Ministry of Human Resource Development show that children who belong to a certain group like the schedule caste, the schedule tribe, from the various religious, linguistic and minority groups, those who are girls and those children who have disabilities are usually more likely than others to be excluded from the schools. The Government of India has made various provisions to sort out these discrepancies along with an effort to equalize the educational opportunities by attending to the specific needs of those whose equality has been withheld so far. The responsibility of the education of children with disabilities rests with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the Department of Education and the Department of Women and Child Welfare (Singal 2006:354). Historically, as well, there are certain groups in the society, such as children of colour, ethnic minority, the working class, the poor children and boys who have been a part of special education for a long time (Connor and Ferri 2007:68). For Ferri rather than this being a problem of race or disability, it is more about the forms of discrimination and exclusion that takes place in these schools. It is a critique on the part of the school to be unable to teach and value everyone and to make sure no one is excluded (Ferri 2009:419).

So despite all that the government has done so far, there are still pressing issues in front of the government in the form of the access and participation in education, the efficiency of the system, the quality of education that is imparted, and the financial contribution to the development of education. Also many groups of children, despite the best efforts from the government and the presence of multiple policies, are still unable to avail full benefit of these policies. These include children with disabilities along with children belonging to nomadic families, children in remote locations and migrant children among others. They are usually the children who belong to the vulnerable/disadvantaged sections of the society (Government of India 2016 (1); 10). In terms of enrollment and retention of children with disabilities in schools is very poor. According to Chatterjee (2003), about 40 million disabled children in India do not attend school. This is about ninety percent of the number of disabled children in India. In addition, according to World Bank (2007), children with disability hardly progressed beyond the primary education and only 9% of children in India completed their higher education (Hiranandani and Sonpal 2010).

Kothari Commission (1964-1966)

Kothari Commission (1964-1966) brought up the issue of education of children with special needs and was one of the first education commissions to do so. It recommended that 'children with special needs should be integrated into

ordinary schools. The education of such children should not be organized merely on the grounds of humanitarianism and pity but rather it should be such that education enables the individual to overcome his/ her handicap and emerge as a useful citizen of the country.' for this the commission recommended that the Ministry of Education allot the necessary funds to help educated children with special needs (Alur 2002:54). However, despite the recommendations of the commission, the needs of the children with special needs was relegated to the voluntary sector, where the government would give out funds for their welfare and thus not maintaining direct link to the children. Most of the children with intellectual disabilities and multiple disabilities are still educated in schools run by NGO's (Lakhan 2013:83).

Although post independence, India witnessed a lot of development in the field of education, but none of them benefitted the disabled children to a large extent. The main problem faced by the special education system was lack of teachers qualified to teach the children with special needs. In the past, there have been other programmes as well which were introduced to improve the educational quality like Operation Blackboard by the Ministry of Human Resource Development in 1987, the Lok Jumbish in 1992 and the District Primary Education Programme by the Ministry of Human Resource Development in 1993. These programmes were based on various ways of improving the overall infrastructure, the curriculum, human resource, and on ways to improve the achievement levels of the learner (Singal 2006:353). The Ministry of Welfare in 1974 launched a scheme for Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC). Under this scheme, educational opportunities were to be provided to children with disabilities in the normal schools so as to ensure they remain in the educational system and do not drop out. It provided for full financial assistance for the education of such children.

In 1987, the Project for Integrated Education Development (PIED) was introduced to strengthen the IEDC scheme. This project was introduced with the assistance of UNICEF. It was carried out in a few blocks of ten selected states of India where all the schools of the blocks were converted into integrated schools. The teachers of these schools were given training to handle the needs of children with disability and an external evaluation of this project showed that due to the implementation of such integrated schools, the enrollment as well as retention of students with disability was higher, the awareness about education in general schools regarding those with a disability increased and also the teachers felt that they had become better teachers by teaching disabled children (Dasgupta 2002:42-43).

However in 1982, the implementation of the IEDC was transferred to the Department of Education and in 1986 the education of these children was brought under the Equal Education Opportunity Provision under the National

Policy on Education (NPE). Under this, the Programme of Action states that every child with a disability who can be educated in a general school should not be put in a special school. In addition, those children who are studying in a special school should be integrated into a general one after they acquire skills pertaining to daily living, communication and basic living. This Programme of Action not just emphasized on the principle of integration but made it an integral component of all the basic ongoing projects like the non-formal education, adult education, etc. (Dasgupta 2002:44).

There have been other schemes like the Integrated Education for Disabled Children and the Inclusion in Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities which provide for financial assistance to help include children with disabilities in the mainstream but along with that there has been an increase in the number of special schools as well (Singal 2008:1518). The policies on education have to recognize the role played by the other policies at the national level and has been acknowledged in other policies such as the National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) put forth in 2013, the National Youth Policy (NYP) of 2014 and the national policy of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015 in addition to various other policies of the state.

Persons With Disabilities Act 1995

The Persons with Disability Act 1995 also identifies different mental and physical categories of disabilities, ranging seven in all. Specifically chapter 5 of the Act deals with the right to education. Under it, every child with a disability has a right to free education in an environment considered appropriate for the child. For this, the Act provides the establishment of special schools and provision for imparting non-formal education and open school education to the disabled children, and also to take steps in adapting the curriculum to make it more student friendly, to reform the examination system and to provide opportunities of research to the disabled students. In order to fulfill these responsibilities, the Act put the government at the national, state as well as local level in charge. At the national level, while the welfare of disabled in general is looked after by the Ministry of Welfare, the education of disabled students comes under the Department of Education. Education is a concurrent subject in the Indian constitution, which means that both the governments at the level of the state as well as the center make laws on it and education is primarily under the administrative control of the state government and the role of the central government is to provide support to the state government (Dasgupta 2002:46).

The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 was passed with the philosophy of viewing disability as a medical condition and so the Act does not make a distinction

between special schools and special education. As per the 1994 Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action, one important criterion for special education is inclusion, which the PWD Act seems unaware of. It also seems unaware of the distinction between inclusion and integration when it states in Article 26 that “the appropriate Government and local authorities shall endeavor to promote the integration of students with disabilities in the normal school. Even the use of the term “integration” in the PWD Act 1995 does not simply signify functional integration but rather either geographical or social integration. In most cases, this trickles down in practice to resource rooms or separate classes (Bhattacharya 2010:19). A survey by National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEPD) of 89 schools in 2004 found that even after a decade of liberalization and the economic reforms, only 0.51% and 0.1% students were enrolled in the primary and secondary level and university level respectively, which is a far cry from the 3% reservation enacted by the PWD Act (Hiranandani and Sonpal 2010).

Right to Education Act 2002

By the 86th Amendment Act in 2002 to the Indian constitution, free and compulsory education to all children within the age of six to fourteen years was guaranteed as a fundamental right. This was the *Sarva Shiksha Abiyan* (Education for All), a programme of the Indian government for the achievement of the Universalization of Elementary Education. SSA was implemented so as to address the needs of 192 million children and is undertaken with the help of the state governments. Within this programme, new schools were to be opened in those locations which did not previously have a school and also to strengthen the already existing infrastructure as well as provide extra teachers to schools that had inadequate teaching staff. The main focus of SSA was to provide education to girls and to children with special needs (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India). A consequent legislation of this was The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act which was passed in 2009, according to which every child had a right to “full time elementary education of satisfaction and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards.” The key words here are 'free and compulsory' which implies that those children admitted into schools that are supported by the government will not have to give any fee or undergo any expense which would otherwise prevent the child from completing elementary education.

By compulsory education it is meant that the government and the local authorities would ensure and provide the admission, attendance as well as the completion of the elementary level of education (Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India). The RTE Act promises to guarantee free and compulsory education to

children aged 6 to 14. Although it is devoid of obvious segregationist terminologies, it does little to encourage inclusive education (Bhattacharya 2010:21). One major drawback of the RTE is that it guarantees free education to children between 6 and 14, thereby denying the children below the age of six of their right to pre-primary education (Hiranandani and Sonpal 2010). Although *Sarva Siksha Abhiyan* (SSA) is showing progress towards inclusion of children with physical disabilities, but the situation for children with intellectual and multiple disabilities remains unchanged (Lakhan 2013:83).

The oldest and still prevailing model for education of disabled children was that of segregating the children with exceptional needs in a completely different learning environment, the special schools made especially for them keeping their needs in mind. The curriculum that was taken up in these special institutions was specific for each school, keeping the disability in mind. The segregated model has now been replaced by integrated and inclusive education for disabled children. There is evidence that due to 'special schooling' and historically low expectations, people with disabilities are less likely to undertake formally valued education and training. Studies show that processes of educational segregation have a strong impact on the social and cultural experiences of the child, which includes the ability to develop friends at home, mix with a variety of children in school, play in local spaces etc.

There has emerged a global shift away from the schooling method of segregation or special schools to the mainstream schools. Disability activists have also called to attention the mindset, which presumes that children with disabilities require differential treatment as they slow down the rest of the class (Kothari 2012:69-70). So it is vital that not just mainstream schooling be available but also be accessible to the students with disabilities. The focus of education needs to shift from the outside to the inside and one should pay attention to what is being offered in the educational settings and their relevance in the lives of the children receiving it (Dawn 2014:26). What is required in India is for the focus to shift from the problems 'within' the child to problems within the society. In most cases, the concept of inclusive education is not defined but rather is taken as a given, as a result of which the usage of the term, especially in official documents, remains unclear and confusing (Singal 2008:1519).

New Education Draft Policy 2016

Since children with disabilities form a very significant number of out-of-school children, it becomes vital that their needs are addressed by the schools and appropriate authorities. In light of this, the New Education Policy will ensure that students with varying levels of disability, which includes visual, locomotor, speech and hearing, and neurodevelopment disorders are given the opportunity

to take part in the general educational process. The draft refers to these children as Children with Special Needs (CWSN). It also states that where the level of difficulty is great, there, provisions for special schools will be made. Additionally, it will lay special emphasis on the training and recruiting of teachers who will be able to teach in an inclusive classroom (Government of India 2016:90-91). It also recommends the setting up of boards which will oversee as well as guide the schools in addressing the needs of especially those children with a learning disability. This will be particularly beneficial as special programs by the government for students with learning disabilities do not exist at the moment (Government of India 2016:194).

India and UNCRPD

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol (UNCRPD) (A/RES/61/106) was adopted on 13 December 2006 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, and was opened for signature on 30 March 2007. The convention stated that the government should promote the 'inclusion' of children in normal schools instead of their 'integration'. This means that the schools should be adapted in a way to adjust the child with disability rather than the child adjusting to the school curriculum. India needs to adopt strategies for inclusion and make amendments to its current laws. In addition to this, more funds need to be allotted for the education of children with disabilities. In fact providing inclusive education is equal to or less than the cost incurred for providing education in a segregated school. This is so as the establishment of segregated school will incur the cost of infrastructure as well as the administration whereas in a inclusive education, the infrastructure is already in place, just the way of teaching needs to be changed (Hernandez 2008:517).

A major concern in adopting the inclusive education in India is the training of teachers where the average size being about forty students to one teacher. In such situations it becomes difficult to provide individual attention to those students who need it. This also calls for training the teachers to work with students of different abilities. Many times, the teachers are not willing to admit students who are disabled in the classroom. In addition, in India, there is provision for either special education or mainstream and thus no teacher is prepared for both (*Ibid*:518). The country lacked appropriate laws as well as the fiscal and human capacities to implement these laws.

A major difficulty for the Indian educational system was to figure out as to how to bring special education to the poor, the lower castes, and the rural regions, when in fact even regular education is not accessible to these sections. Additionally as Misra (2000) and Dailey (2004) have pointed out, that while there is a shortage of special education teachers, it is a challenge for the parents

as well as the families who do not have proper access these services (Byrd 2010). An attempt has made by the India state to rectify the above mentioned lacunas in the form of the recently passed Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill 2016. In this Bill, there have been many new and welcome changes, in accordance to the UNCRPD. The Bill states that in addition to the Rights of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, it will be the duty of the educational institutions to provide not just equal educational opportunities but also opportunities for sports and recreation. Additionally, the accessibility of the structures would be kept in mind, which would also include transport facilities. Not just the physical accessibility, but the Bill also lays down plans for suitable pedagogical adaptations to be made in the classrooms. Finally, it also talks about the employment of teachers who are trained and have a disability themselves. This simultaneously not just takes into concern the proper environment for education but also ensures employment of PWD's in the field of teaching (The Gazette of India 2016)

Conclusion

The emergence of one single definition of disability is a very complex process as it takes into account many variables. The understanding of disability may differ from person to person and even for the same person at different stages of life. Pertaining specifically to the earliest stage of life, namely that of a child, there is very little focus on the issues and challenges faced. Ironically, this is the most vital stage where proper and equal opportunities are required, lest, the whole trajectory of life may be ruined. Concentrating specifically on the education of children with disabilities in India, it has been found that there are very few policies and programs in India that cater to it. Prior to 2016, the last bill catering to disability was in 1995 and that which catered to education of children as a whole in India in 2009. So it is not surprising that the ratification of UNCRPD by India and subsequently the passing of the RPWD 2016 have given new hope to the disability sector. The New Education Policy is also a welcome step. It is wished that the void left by the previous policies will be successfully filled by the new bill. What is desirable from the government and the society at large is not feelings of sympathy, but rather empathy, in order to provide equality of opportunities for this largely unnoticed but highly important marginalized section of the Indian society.

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