Inclusiveness in classroom: Empowering students with disabilities

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5 Day Hands-on Workshop on “Advanced Pedagogies: Active Learning and Digital Tools”

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Summary

Inclusiveness in education is the first step towards empowering our differentially abled fellow citizens. Ensuring that we adopt the right strategies for their complete participation in learning is essential for the progress of the society. We will discuss about such strategies in the paradigm of understanding the specific needs both for visible as well as invisible impairdness, addressing the accommodation requirements and adoption of technological learning aid in a traditional classroom setup.
What is Disability?

According to World Health Organization (WHO):

"Disabilities is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations."

*Source:* WHO Health topics: Disabilities
www.who.int/topics/disabilities/en/.
What is Disability ? (Contd ...)

1. It is much beyond just the health problem.
2. It relates the overall functionality of an individual with the surrounding environment and society at large.
3. People with disability face innumerable environmental, social and (more alarmingly) systemic barriers.
4. Barriers and marginalization in accessing health-care, rehabilitation services, education, housing, employment and having families.

Source: WHO Infographic on Disability
www.who.int/disabilities/facts/Infographic_en_pdf.pdf?ua=1
Disability in India

According to 2011 Census Data on Disabled Population:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>1,028,610,328</th>
<th>100.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total disabled population</td>
<td>21,906,769</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability rate (per lakh population)</td>
<td>2,130</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Disability</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) In seeing</td>
<td>10,634,881</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) In speech</td>
<td>1,640,868</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) In hearing</td>
<td>1,261,722</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) In movement</td>
<td>6,105,477</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) Mental</td>
<td>2,263,821</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: 2011 Census Data on Disabled Population*
censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/disabled_population.aspx.
Disability in United States

26% percent of adults in United States have some kind of disability.

1. Mobility – 13.7%
2. Cognition – 10.8%
3. Independent Living – 6.8%
4. Hearing – 5.9%
5. Vision – 4.6%
6. Self-care – 3.7%

Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention Data
The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016: A Game Changer?

As a result of relentless effort on the part of disability rights activists, self-advocate persons with disabilities and other well wishers, “The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016”, was passed in the Parliament as “An Act to give effect to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.”

The Guiding Principles

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities lays down the following principles for empowerment of persons with disabilities:

(a) respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one’s own choices, and independence of persons;

(b) non-discrimination;

(c) full and effective participation and inclusion in society;

(d) respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity;

(e) equality of opportunity;

(f) accessibility;

(g) equality between men and women;

(h) respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities;

The Benchmark Disabilities

The Benchmark Disabilities as laid down in The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

(a) blindness and low vision;
(b) deaf and hard of hearing;
(c) locomotor disability including cerebral palsy, leprosy cured, dwarfism, acid attack victims and muscular dystrophy;
(d) autism, intellectual disability, specific learning disability and mental illness;
(e) multiple disabilities from amongst persons under clauses (a) to (d) including deaf-blindness in the posts identified for each disabilities:

The Rights Enshrined: Provisions of the Act

(I) CHAPTER I: PRELIMINARY
(II) CHAPTER II: RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS
(III) CHAPTER III: EDUCATION
(IV) CHAPTER IV: SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT
(V) CHAPTER V: SOCIAL SECURITY, HEALTH, REHABILITATION AND RECREATION
(VI) CHAPTER VI: SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR PERSONS WITH BENCHMARK DISABILITIES
(VII) CHAPTER VII: SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES WITH HIGH SUPPORT NEEDS
(VIII) CHAPTER VIII: DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF APPROPRIATE GOVERNMENTS
(IX) CHAPTER IX: REGISTRATION OF INSTITUTIONS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND GRANTS TO SUCH INSTITUTIONS
(X) CHAPTER X: CERTIFICATION OF SPECIFIED DISABILITIES
(XI) CHAPTER XI: CENTRAL AND STATE ADVISORY BOARDS ON DISABILITY AND DISTRICT LEVEL COMMITTEE
(XII) CHAPTER XII: CHIEF COMMISSIONER AND STATE COMMISSIONER FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
(XIII) CHAPTER XIII: SPECIAL COURT
(XIV) CHAPTER XIV: NATIONAL FUND FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
(XV) CHAPTER XV: STATE FUND FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
(XVI) CHAPTER XVI: OFFENCES AND PENALTIES
(XVII) CHAPTER XVII: MISCELLANEOUS

Interacting with Disabled Students

• With growing awareness on inclusive education, chances are high that your classroom will have enrollment of students with disabilities.

• Accordingly, it is essential that students with disabilities are included and integrated into the academic as well as overall college life.

• We will dwell upon some accommodation adjustment to the teaching style, peer-learning and laboratory set-up, which can go a long way in the inclusion of our disabled students, as much as practicable.
Proactive Role of Colleges

- Ideally, one would expect an Office of Disability Affairs (ODA) to exist in your college. However, in reality, this is unlikely to happen.
- So, the first proactive action could be to set up such an Office (In an Ideal World !!!).
- Alternatively, it might be more practical to set up a one-to-one peer system of support a.k.a the “The Buddy System”.
- The ODA can be accorded the following mandate:
  - Arrange for necessary accommodation on a case-by-case basis.
  - Arrange for human assistance (such as sign language specialists, readers, note-takers, scribes, prompters) or adaptive technological assistance.
  - Awareness campaigns on campus, through disability specialists.
  - Ensuring complete physical accessibility.
Proactive Role of Colleges (Contd ...)

MOST IMPORTANT

“Reasonable and appropriate accommodation during quizzes and examinations, such as scribes, laptops for typing the answer, prompters, extra time – 20 minutes for every 1 hour of quiz/examination”. Extensive prior publicity of existence of such accommodation for quizzes and examinations.
Identification of Disabled Students

Two kinds of disability:

1. Visible disability: where one needs to identify the level of accommodation and assistance required.

2. Invisible disability: where the disability is not obvious to the instructor/educators.
Sensitivity Towards Disabled Students

- In order to maintain confidentiality and privacy of the concerned disabled students, it is essential to be extremely sensitive. One obvious way is to make an announcement in the class and/or send an email to students, that they can individually meet and/or email the instructor/educator about their accommodation needs.

- It is very important to ensure that enough care and caution is exercised not to lower the expectations driven by the disability of the individual student.

- Welcome any sort of human and/or technological assistance into the classroom and allow for digital capture of the classroom teaching, by the disabled students.

- Make all necessary accommodation arrangements during the quizzes and examinations, as mandated by law.
Blindness and Low Vision

1. Enlarged print and digital study materials.
2. Monitors connected to laboratory equipment.
3. Computers enabled for enlargements.
4. Audio and/or Braille study materials.
5. Optical character reader enabled computer with voice enabled output.
Deaf and Hard of Hearing

1. Interpreter and real-time closed captioning of lectures and video materials. (For example, encourage the usage of transcripts of NPTEL MOOC courses).
2. Discussions via email or other appropriate digital form of communication.
3. Speak directly to the student.
4. Indian Sign Language is yet to be accorded the status of a scheduled language under the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.
Locomotor Disability Including Cerebral Palsy, Leprosy Cured, Dwarfism, Acid Attack Victims and Muscular Dystrophy

1. Classrooms only in accessible areas, namely, accessible ground floor and classrooms accessible by ramps and/or elevators.
2. Adjustable study areas, like desks and lab equipments.
3. Counselors and psychologists to help with the anxiety, depression and social stigmatization faced by these individuals.
Autism, Intellectual Disability, Specific Learning Disability and Mental Illness

1. Allowing for note-takers and/or prompters.
2. Allowing for digital recording of classroom lectures and discussion.
3. Alternative testing approaches.
4. Optical character reader enabled computer with voice enabled output.
5. Spelling and grammatical checker.
7. Counselors and psychologists to help with the anxiety, depression and social stigmatization faced by these individuals.
Multiple Disabilities from Amongst Persons Under Preceding Four Clauses, Including Deaf-Blindness

1 Already subsumed in the preceding discussion.
WHAT NOT TO DO

• **DO NOT** ever say “Oh! You seem to be fine. What is the problem?”

• **DO NOT** ever comment “Oh! I think the student is just fine and is faking the disability to get the extra time during exams”.

• **DO NOT** discuss about the student and their disability (even the existence of their disability) with other students and colleagues (unless the latter is necessary for arranging accommodation for the student).
Some Great Achievers with Disability

- Professor Stephen Hawking, Fellow of Royal Society
- Wilma Rudolph, 1960 Rome Olympics Gold Medal
- Prime Minister Erna Solberg of Norway
- Professor Temple Grandin
Thank You