Enabling Access for Persons with Disabilities to Higher Education and Workplace

Role of ICT and Assistive Technologies

never-the-less

together, it gets better

ENABLING ACCESS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES TO HIGHER EDUCATION AND WORKPLACE

ROLE OF ICT AND ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

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FOREWORD

The Indian Higher Education system is said to be the world's third largest, preceded by the ones in China and United States. However higher education in India, in itself stands for a great contradiction. On one side, the Indian Institute of Technology ranks among the best universities in the entire world, and on the other there are numerous schools which lack proper infrastructure for basic student needs. In the midst of all these problems is a nation that is working towards ensuring equal access and education for all.

If we were to look at efforts across the nation, we see struggles at various quarters to ensure inclusion of persons with disabilities (PWDs), as they lack many opportunities available to the mainstream populace. The rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, would be enough to protect everyone, ideally. However in practice, certain groups such as PWDs, specifically women and children with disabilities, fare far worse than others. International conventions are in place to protect and promote the human rights of these groups, with access to education being one of the basic rights.

Working on the theme of the conference "Access for Persons with Disabilities to Higher Education and Workplaces" we looked at various efforts made by individuals, institutions, companies and public /civic organisations in trying to address these issues. This journal is a voice from across the nation and outside, in three broad areas:

- Crucial difference between existing educational environments and inclusive/enabling ones
- Understanding what it means to ensure equal access, be sensitive to student needs, and redefine how we build educational environments
- How can Indian campuses become inclusive to be globally competent and competitive.

This is hopefully a beginning, of a movement across universities and colleges in the country, to analyze needs and create blueprints to enable inclusion.

Our sincere gratitude to friends and mentors who have helped us find direction in crystallizing our vision of working in this sector; IIMB and MphasiS for backing 'never-the-less' with the learnings and support of the Office of Disability Services, the team at Fourth Wave for standing by the commitment through good and difficult times, the design team at Jekob Designery, and editorial team of C J Chacko, Abey Jose, Jessy Akkara and Mohan K. Pillai. Most graciously we remember all partners, and our team of relentless volunteers.

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PROF. PANKAJ CHANDRA
DIRECTOR, IIMB

NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the National Conference on "Enabling Access for Persons with Disabilities to Higher Education and the Workplace: Role of ICT and Assistive Technologies". It gives me great pleasure to host you at the IIM Bangalore campus for this conference which aims at increasing awareness about enabling technologies and solutions for people with disabilities at the workplace and educational institutions.

Over the last few years, educational institutes, especially those involved in higher education, have been taking steps to give equal access to people from diverse economic and social backgrounds. As a result we can see our campuses being more vibrant. But this equity has not yet reached persons with disability, partly because of lack of awareness and sensitivity, and also because of limited infrastructural support. With the intent of generating such awareness and creating an atmosphere of equal opportunity towards inclusivity at academic institutions and workplaces, this conference is an initiative in bringing the key stakeholders together. These stakeholders come from NGOs, corporate and educational institutes and activists from across India.

We set up an Office of Disability Services (ODS) in January 2010. IIMB is perhaps the first institution of higher education in India to have a clearly articulated disability policy (http://www.iimb.ernet.in/docs/Disability%20Policy%20revised%2013july09.pdf) and an ODS to ensure that all students with disabilities get as good an educational experience as other students. The office currently takes care of the special accommodations required by students with disabilities including access to course material, tutoring and placement advisory.

Over the next two days you would interact with people who are pioneers in the space of disability rights and have made significant contributions towards inclusivity. There are a series of panel discussions covering various facets of academia and workplace inclusivity such as sensitization, non-discrimination, employee engagement and training programs, amongst others. The conference also showcases enabling technologies, impactful cases and best practices. I believe you will have an enriching experience at the conference.

VENKATESH MACHAKANUR, K.A.S

Director, Department for the Empowerment of
Differently Abled and Senior Citizens,
Government of Karnataka.

It is very heartening to know that Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore and Fourth Wave Foundation are holding a conference on "Access for Persons with Disabilities in Higher Education and Work Places". As a part of the 'never-the-less' initiative, your efforts to share the best practices on enabling access of persons with various disabilities are laudable.

India having signed United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, (UNCRPD) has undertaken full responsibility of bringing the disabled citizens to the main stream. Number of measures are taken to improve the lot of disabled by providing social security pension to such persons, and training such persons in various skills, so as to enable them to join the main stream. Disabled people constitute 5% of our total population. In Karnataka alone the number is over Nine Lakhs. Slowly but steadily the importance of participation of disabled in all walks of life is felt by the Government as well as Society. Providing inclusive education facilities to children with special needs is underway. Making the technological solutions adaptable will go a long way in mitigating the physical hurdles being faced by PWDs in day to day life. Education, that too higher education accessibility should be easy and friendly to the disabled.

The initiatives taken by 'never-the-less' and institutions like Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore will go a long way in championing the cause of the differently abled people.

Wishing you all the success.

DIRECTOR
Department for the
Empowerment of Differently
Abled and Senior Citizens,
Government of Karnataka.

RISHIKESHA T. KRISHNAN

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IIM BANGALORE'S EXPERIENCE ON PROVIDING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

While India might be developing economically, but for us to be truly called a developed nation, our development has to be holistic, especially taking into cognizance the right of people with disability. As a signatory to the UN Human Rights Treaty, India has promised to provide a better life to its citizens with disabilities. Further, the legal basis to this promise is provided in the Persons with Disability (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation Act, 1995) According to this Act, government-funded institutions (including IITs and IIMs) have been reserving three percent of seats for persons with visual, hearing and locomotor disabilities. The UGC has been providing grants to set up equal opportunity centers.

IIM Bangalore set up an Office of Disability Services (ODS) in 2010. The ODS was set up with the help of a generous grant from MphasiS Limited. The ODS typically assesses each student at the time of admissions and determines what additional support (called accommodations) are required for the students with disabilities. These accommodations are communicated automatically, and in advance, by the ODS to faculty, teaching assistants, and facilities providers, so that these are provided without the student having to seek them each time. (This determination of accommodations to be provided is different from the certification of disability which according to law is done by a medical board constituted by the commissioner for disabilities in each state).

Technology has been of immense help in assisting people with disability in education or even otherwise in coping up with day to day chores. Software packages such as JAWS enable conversion of text into voice. Assistant technologies such as ZoomEx allow conversion of an image file into a text without the several layers of scanning and conversion. Here at IIMB, a student with visual disability receives a CD with the reading material converted into JAWS-compatible text files—at the same time when others receive their textbooks and article binders. Similarly, students with visual disabilities receive a copy of the PPT file of their classes so that they can load it on a personal computer with JAWS. Students with hearing disabilities have a note-taker assigned in advance, who is present in every class. Students with serious locomotor disabilities attend classes in rooms that are accessible without having to ask for it.

While finding appropriate job opportunities for graduating students with disability is sometimes a challenge, the good news is that a commitment to greater diversity is now visible in corporate India. Today we have companies, such as Mphasis, IBM and Wipro, seeking out students with disability. While support for students with disability is mandated by law for government- funded institutions, it could be a great differentiator for private universities.

With our eyes set on being a developed nation, one of the biggest opportunities would be to give equal opportunities to all for living up to their potential. Initiatives, such as that taken at IIMB, are essential in ensuring that people with disability aren't deprived of study and career opportunities. The ODS at IIMB is a humble effort in this direction, but there is a long way to go and this calls for a collaborative effort from government, educational institutions, NGOs, and corporate. Hopefully IIMB's experience offers some assistance towards a wider sensitization and inclusivity.

ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE ROLE OF REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

The concept of reasonable accommodations for Persons with Disabilities in educational institutes is a fairly recent phenomenon. Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995, remained pretty much silent on provision of reasonable accommodation to students, especially at institutions of higher education. The only provision the Act made was under section 39 to reserve 3% quota for students with disabilities in all educational institutions that were Government aided.

Some kind of systems were put in place by the University Grants Commission (UGC) through a scheme of Higher Education for Persons with Special Needs (HEPSN) which supported setting up of disability units in Universities. Under this scheme, fund was allocated for 20 Universities initially which applied for a grant. Initially only 13 Universities applied for it and the funds kept lapsing. One of the reasons was lack of sufficient numbers of students with documented disabilities and, secondly, the scheme was never publicized enough for institutions to apply. Technical and professional education, which is

governed by All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), did not have any such scheme except Tuition Waiver Scheme for Physically Handicapped Meritorious Students (Draft Country Report, 2011, p.208). This is partly because of the popular perception of disability and technical/professional education not going together and most importantly in all institutions, students with disabilities coped with lack of support on their own.

It was only after India signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2007, ratified in 2009, that the concept of reasonable accommodation started getting discussed and demanded by students with disabilities, especially those having sensory impairments. Reasonable Accommodation, according to UNCRPD is, "necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments…to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms." This

is interpreted as individualized support that needs to be given immediately. If not given immediately, it appertains to denial and discrimination. While the Draft Country Report acknowledges that despite financial assistance given to persons with disabilities in higher education, their number remains low indicating that more is required for inclusion.

UNCRPD - Key Issues in India (2011), prepared by DEOC has highlighted the barriers students with disabilities face in pursuing education on equal basis with others. The report says that students with disabilities struggle to get sign-language interpreters, books in accessible format, inaccessible campuses, hostels, and so on. It would be worthwhile to quote below the cases highlighted in this report.

As a person with disability who has had the experience of two different education systems (Indian and US) both in "mainstream/inclusive environments", I can step back and look at the systems in the two countries in an objective as well as a subjective way. My personal experience of disability (I am a person with reduced mobility) and the experience of having been a researcher on disability rights and services gives me a vantage point to look at the issue of access to higher education to persons with disability in an objective manner. Post-ratification of UNCRPD, one change that became visible in Bangalore at least, was the setting up of Office of Disability Services at India's No.1 Business School, IIM-B. Indian Institute of Management – Bangalore is perhaps the first and till today the only professional management institute in the country which decided to have systemic approach to inclusion of students with disabilities by providing academic support to them. This initiative was supported by MphasiS. The Private Sector in India has played a significant role in education in India. In fact, India has one of the world's most privatised system of education. In the area of higher education, corporate sector has endowed chairs, set up centres of excellence, provided scholarships to needy students but there is nothing specific to the cause of inclusion of persons with disability- until now. This is a first of its kind initiative. In my personal capacity, I have been assessing students for reasonable accommodations required by them. I always ask as to why they chose IIM-B over other institutes and one of the main reasons was the existence of Office of Disability Services at the institute.

DR. MEENU BHAMBHANI

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NO SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS IN COLLEGES ?

Adarsh College in Chamarajpet, Bengaluru has over 10 deaf students and initially provided interpreters for all of these - who ran from class to class. Now she has left as a result of feeling frustrated about not being able to provide good services and the low pay, and so the students have no interpreters. What was especially egregious is that the parents were required to chip in Rs. 2000/- towards the interpreters' pay.

I have also met one deaf student in Delhi University (DU) who is in her second year of B.Com. DU has agreed to provide an interpreter but has told her that she needs to find the person herself. She has spent the last two years searching and banging on doors, pleading with people who know sign language to leave their jobs or to help her out. It's pretty insane to watch.? -E-Mail dated 28th January 2009 from Michele Friedner, Ph.D. Candidate, Medical Anthropology, to Rama Chari, one of the authors of this document.

I applied and got through the entrance test for studying doctorate in a premier institute in Bengaluru. At the interview the Head the Department asked me why I wanted to pursue a Ph.D. when I had so many health problems. At that time I was stunned and didn't know how to react. I let it go but now I realise I should have taken this up seriously.?

-A student who has Thalaesemia

United Nations Convention On The Rights Of Persons With Disabilities: Key Issues In India, prepared by DEOC for NCPEDP, December 2011

This was supported by MphasiS with the larger vision of showcasing a success story of ODS to other professional educational institutions so that they could follow suit and also more private sector players could come forward to making educational institutions accessible and inclusive for all. The systems are still evolving but a significant beginning has been made.

CC JOSEPH

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NEVER-THE-LESS TOGETHER IT GETS BETTER!

To transform & demonstrate, real & positive impact, promoting inclusion within our communities

ntl- The Origins

With an estimated 70 million people in India (6% of our population) identified as persons with disabilities, sadly only 2% of them see through school and only 1 % gainfully employed. 'never-the-less' is a movement to engage youth and community at large on issues of inclusion, it is a journey to transform, and demonstrate real and positive impact, promoting inclusion within our communities.

Having decided to embark on this journey and building a movement finalized, we needed a name. There were many suggestions... We test run 'never-the-less' on Facebook and other social spaces. The name was an instant hit. It resonates in many ways the voice of a person with disability saying 'I am never – the - less', the other, the voice of a person without disability saying 'you are never - the - less'. The name of the movement was our first step to being inclusive.

ntl -The Philosophy

At Fourth Wave Foundation we believe in Rabindranath Tagore's notion - "the problem is not how to wipe out the differences but how to unite with the differences intact". A multi-stakeholder approach involving all segments of the society is what we promote. We believe in working with the idea that the disability is not in the individual, but in the environment/system for its lack of ability to include all. Our work is to not only focus on the issues faced by persons with disabilities, but also to involve the community at large alongside.

ntl - The Movement

Never-the-less is a movement to enable inclusion of persons with disabilities into the mainstream; unifying efforts, innovations, and solutions, with focus on education, workplaces, public places and public transport. Our

approach is to reach various stakeholder groups through many platforms- from web to social media, conferences, individuals, organizations, strategic planning, setting office of disability services in colleges/universities etc.

ntl - The Beneficiaries

Though the focus is on persons with disabilities, the beneficiary is the community at large. When we work on anything keeping persons with disabilities in mind, we are actually empowering the community. For example: introduction of audio visuals to assist teaching in schools not only supports inclusion of children with special needs into the system, but also improves teaching and delivery modes while increasing retention and addressing dropout rates.

ntl - The Challenges

When we look at the issues in our country we have pockets of excellence, but no scalable models or practical solutions to address needs across the country. Many organizations and individuals are doing credible work in the area of disability, but not many come together on a common platform to share experiences, and best practices, to work on innovative models to solve issues across communities.

We believe inclusion is a prerequisite to participation and 'never-the-less' is a natural extension of our efforts at Fourth Wave Foundation.

'never-the-less' with its three fold activities of Research, Events and Projects across four specific areas of Education, Work-spaces, Public Places and Transportation offers partnership and sponsorship opportunities for companies and other institutions to support the five year journey

A B C

[braille: alphabet for the blind]

अ आ इ
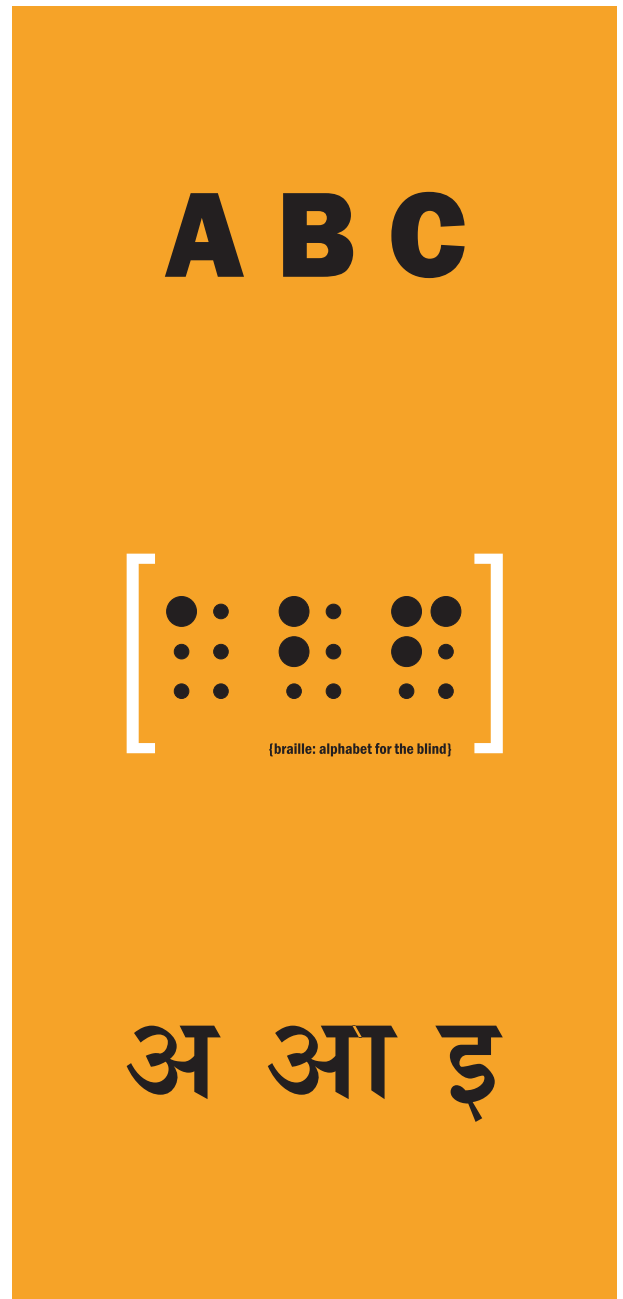
Some of us read differently, nevertheless we are the same.
Almost 70 million in India are excluded because we don't understand the uniqueness.

never-the-less
together, it gets better

fourthwave
W
foundation

SCOTT RAINS

Founder of the global forum on Inclusive Tourism – Tour Watch, served as Director of Services and Curriculum at SeniorNet, is an active writer, consultant and speaker. His scholarly work includes editorship of the first body of research on travel and disability in the field of Disability Studies.

ACCESSIBILITY IS NOT INCLUSION

WHAT IF THE FIRST QUESTION WE ASKED WAS, "WHAT IS SO UNIQUE ABOUT THIS SITUATION THAT IT JUSTIFIES EXCLUSION?" INSTEAD OF, "HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE?"

Historically, accessibility was the rallying cry of a political movement springing from the civil rights era of the 1970s. Inclusion is its off spring. Inclusion as a goal reflects a globalized, networked world where freedom of movement and the full participation of all is taken for granted—and enshrined as a right. Economically, inclusion makes good business sense. Consumers who regularly find themselves overlooked tend to be enthusiastically loyal when they discover an organization that goes out of its way to meet their needs. Think of the smile on the face of a child with a disability when he recognizes that the playground allows him to be included too!

Where accessibility is passive, leaving the door open without obstacles in the way, inclusion is active—inviting you into the human network beyond the newly barrier-free doorway. Accessibility looks at stuff and at space.

INCLUSION LOOKS AT HUMAN LIVES. ACCESSIBILITY LOOKS BACKWARD.

It tries to hold the line at outmoded and artificial standards of what—and who—is "normal." It degenerates into "mere compliance," obsession with checklists, people with disabilities as risk management problems. Slipping down that backwards facing slide, accessibility accepts performance according to the standard of the "least worst," aiming only for whatever minimum can be codified after the political compromise of legislation, regulation and code enforcement.

Inclusion looks forward. It involves a drawing in of newcomers by those who are already privileged to share in a particular social good. It is the hospitality response—the sign of a healthy community.

Inclusion looks forward. It involves a drawing in of newcomers by those who are already privileged to share in a particular social good. It is the hospitality response—the sign of a healthy community. If mere accessibility fails by leaving kids with disabilities as social wall flowers on the edges of a well-intentioned playground, then inclusion takes the extra step, sometimes by going beyond physical design, to educate the community on the full potential of the design.

Inclusion challenges the community to be certain it is measuring the impact of good design on traditionally overlooked community members. It goes beyond measurement of physical infrastructure to record the increase in social capital. It draws new community members into full participation in the act of doing so.

BUILDING SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH UNIVERSAL DESIGN.

The Institute for Human-Centered Design explains that Universal Design is a framework for the design of places, things, information, communication and policy to be usable by the widest range of people operating in the widest range of situations without special or separate design. Most simply, Universal Design is the human-centered design of everything, with everyone in mind. Universal Design is also called Inclusive Design, Design-for-All and Lifespan Design.

It is not a design style but an orientation to any design process that starts with a responsibility to the experience of the user. It's focus is on building social sustainability.

Where else but an inclusive playground are parents of temporarily able-bodied kids likely to learn first hand how to prepare for the inevitable scrapes, sprains and broken arms of childhood?

What more natural meeting place for these parents to benefi t from the practical knowledge and resiliency of families whose children have disabilities?

Source: http://www.adaptenv.org

CHAMPION A VISION OF INCLUSION WITHIN YOUR COMMUNITY.

What of those tempted to retreat into demanding justification of mere accessibility?

Respond to those holding the purse strings with figures on the cost of maintaining separate, segregated and stigmatized "special" recreation areas.

Remind decision-makers of the value of an enthusiastically loyal—because they were previously underserved—constituency at reelection time.

Accessibility is doing for. It was a 20th century task. Inclusion is doing with. It is a 21st century vision. Which approach makes for stronger communities?

NIRMITA NARASIMHAN

Programme Manager with the Centre for Internet and Society and works on policy research and advocacy related to IP reform and technology access for persons with disabilities. She received a National Award from the President of India in 2010 recognizing her contribution to the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. She can be reached at: nirmita@cis-india.org

TECHNOLOGY FOR ACCESSIBILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Education for students with disabilities has long been a serious cause of concern in India, as also in other countries around the world. A person with a disability studying in mainstream educational institutions in India experiences many difficulties in navigating through the obstacle course of the Indian educational system. Problems exist in many areas – course content, staff, facilities, resources as well as the educational and examination process. The relative physical inaccessibility of educational institutions, unavailability of accessible content in different languages, lack of trained and sensitive teachers, and the lack of awareness about developments in enabling technologies have hitherto rendered the educational environment itself rather difficult to access. In addition to the long waiting periods in getting the course materials digitized into accessible formats, as well as the assignment of scribes unfamiliar with subject topics for students to write the examinations put students with print disabilities at additional disadvantage – as if there weren't enough problems already! Thus the educational experience often becomes a nightmare for a student who is disabled. However, compared with the situation from a decade earlier, the education scenario for persons with disabilities has, thanks to the sustained advocacy and interventions of disability organizations, gradually improved and promises to get better in the years to come.

Today, technology has made it possible for persons with disabilities to read and work independently. Some institutions for higher learning around the country, like St Xavier's College, Mumbai, Delhi University and Loyola College in Chennai have already set up ICT centres which facilitate reading and working

students who are print impaired. They offer support through digitization, training, and facilities. Organisations like National Association for the Blind and other Daisy organizations convert study materials for blind students and make them available in formats and media of the students' choice. Students themselves, through peer to peer networks and mailing lists are able to collaboratively produce and share accessible study materials on a variety of subjects ranging from graduation to competitive exams. Another really big boon is the advent of the mobile phone as a suitable platform for listening to books. Today, two international mobile screen reader software – Nuance Talks and Mobile Speak – are available in the Indian market at competitive prices and this has led to an increase in the incidence of mobile adoption amongst persons with print disabilities, at least in the metropolitan cities.

There are many areas of improvement, which institutions of higher education can adopt for enhancing the education experience for students. For instance, the provision of digitized reading materials, access to computers with assistive devices, choice of examination methods, maintaining accessible web sites, promoting open access and open educational resources will go a long way in furthering education amongst students who have disabilities. Institutions could explore new models of imparting education which are proving successful in other parts of the world. Furthermore, existing sources of information and knowledge, such as information in the public domain and knowledge imparted through distance education should be made accessible to a wider audience.

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ROLE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES IN EDUCATION SECTOR
for people with vision impairment

Education is the stepping stone for every human to build a successful life and career and this applies to everyone including people with disabilities. Let's look back a while, people who can't have access to print used to rely on audio cassettes or human readers. So there was a rapid dependency on support worker / volunteer or someone in family. In fact, almost till early 2000, several generous people used to be very busy in either reading books to students with disabilities at their school or home or recording audio tapes for people with disabilities.

But today, in the era of globalisation, it's indeed difficult to get someone to read or even spend sometime to volunteer for people with disabilities and at the same time, especially, for higher education, the volumes of study materials keep increasing and most of them are not readily available in accessible format. This is where technology would come in to support! Let's look at some solutions for people with vision impairment

SCAN, OCR AND READ

This is one of the simplest and easy to get access to the printed material. One can use any ordinary scanner to scan the book and by default, when a page is scanned, it will become an image file. Then, user takes the help of Optical Recognition Software [1] like ABBY fine reader [2] to extract the text from the image and read using the screen reader [3] such as Non-Visual Desktop Access (NVDA) [4]

TAKING NOTES IN CLASS ROOM

It's often an issue that how people with disabilities could take down the notes in the class room. If it's in the primary school environment, it would be easy to take down the notes in Braille and that would also be helpful to improve the spellings in English. But when it comes to the higher education, it would be helpful to benefit from the use of technologies

such as using a laptop / net book so that student can store more data and easy to edit at a later date. One important tip is to ensure students carry ear phones so that screen reader is not audible to rest of the class. Other portable solution is to use smart phone that has QWERTY key pad. Also, one can use gadgets like PlexTalk Player [5] to record notes on fly.

TACTILE DIAGRAMS

Tactile Diagrams are of great help to teach concepts to students with vision impairment particularly, when it comes subjects like Geography, Computer Science, General Science or any content that requires the use of diagrams in class room

DAISY

Digital Accessible Information System (DAISY) is an international standard develop, maintains and promoted by DAISY Consortium [6]. The DAISY is ultimate solution to see printed material in accessible formats once the digital book is developed using DAISY standards, same can be produced in any accessible format, such as Braille, Large print, MP3 and so on. There are several organization in India who produces DAISY books. More information can be obtained from Daisy Forum of India's [7] website.

Also, the use of Internet would be of great help and easy to find information on any subject or information they would need for. To get the information from Internet, one need not have any specific knowledge, one can simply go to a search engine like Yahoo! Search [8] type in the keyword and hit on Search button and get results from across the globe!

To conclude, computers, assistive technology and search technologies would be of immense help to people with disabilities for their education and independent living.

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PRIYA R PILLAI

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The Persons with Disabilities Act 1995 indicates that persons with disabilities (PWDs) should have access to education at all levels. PWDs do not find proportionate opportunities to excel through higher education.

AN UPHILL STRUGGLE?
Building inclusive libraries in india
For students who are visually impaired

According to UNESCO's Global Education for All Monitoring Report 2010, "disability is one of the least visible but most potent factors in educational marginalization." India is not an exception. For the last 10 years we could see a high enrollment of students who are visually impaired in Indian universities. This is because of rising societal concerns for issues of equity and access to educational opportunities for those groups who have traditionally been underrepresented within higher education. The adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2006, has effectively directed attention towards the rights of people with disabilities. Indian disability law "Persons With Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 is yet to mandate access to educational opportunities which include accessible library services to all the disabled in India. In India legislation is supportive but has not made it mandatory for institutions to have all the accommodations which will provide accessibility to the physical premises of the institution, its programmes, courses and services. The Persons with Disabilities Act 1995 indicates that persons with disabilities (PWDs) should have access to education at all levels. PWDs do not find proportionate opportunities to excel through higher education.

INTERNATIONAL STATUS
Developed countries like USA, Canada, UK and many European nations have started various initiatives to facilitate the persons with disabilities (PWD) much earlier. Most of the universities and institutes in these countries are providing access to information to persons who are disabled by way of enacting the law, (ADA in USA, DDA in UK), by formulating the national policies, and by financing libraries and learning centers. They have ICT and other infrastructural facilities for students of higher education for information access. All such

institutes have PWD friendly infrastructure, information communication tools, facilities and services and trained man-power.

SOME INITIATIVES IN INDIA IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR:

UGC has started teacher preparation, establishing special cells for PWDs in universities and colleges, constructing infrastructure facilities, and providing finance and support.

This project aims to solve the problem of non-availability of reading materials for students who are print impaired pursuing higher education courses in universities across the country by creating accessible study materials in an accessible e-text DAISY format. More projects like this may help students with visual impairments to access resources and to attain higher education .

My Ph.D study "Provision of Library and Information Services to Visually Impaired in India" (Thesis Submitted to University of Pune) finds that most of the Indian libraries are currently acquiring accessible information sources as per the demand from users. There are limitations though. Resources cannot be obtained in the same amount of time as books in accessible format, digital rights protection etc. Which make it difficult for a student with visual impairment to effectively use accessible material. Copyright is also a major barrier. Copyright law in India does not allow libraries to convert copyrighted material into accessible audio or electronic formats. Thus there is a need for amendment of copyright. UK, USA, Korea, Denmark, and Australia, among others, have copyright exemption for the print disabled.

ICT APPLICATION IN LIBRARIES:

Many manufacturers produce softwares to enable users who are visually impaired. It is possible for the users to hear what appears on screen. Some software provide output in Braille. The scanners can scan and convert the print into electronic media which can be accessed either through audio format or through Braille. The hard-copy in Braille can be taken by using a Braille printer.

Students who are visually impaired and partially sighted must access print resources in alternative forms. Although technology enables access, adapted material such as audio textbooks are not

Copyright is also a major barrier. Copyright law in India does not allow libraries to convert copyrighted material into accessible audio or electronic formats. Thus there is a need for amendment of copyright. UK, USA, Korea, Denmark, and Australia, among others, have copyright exemption for the print disabled.

readily available in higher education institutes. In India due to unavailability of audio books related to the curriculum, students depend on volunteers to record the book. Hence there is a need for audio studios in every university for their benefit.

A separate assistive technology lab with scanners, screen readers, screen magnifiers and braille printers are available in very few universities like Tata Institute of Social Science, Calcutta university, Delhi University, JNU, Hyderabad University, Jadhavpur University, and University of Pune.

All centres are not associated with libraries. If an assistive technology lab is not part of the main library, like in the Pune and Jadavpur universities, the students will not be able to access print information available in the main library .

SUGGESTIONS:

1. **Development of Open Source software or Free software:** Open source software is not popular among the libraries and the students. Government needs to develop open source screen readers, screen magnifiers for the benefit of students and libraries in India. Indian Government needs to supply screen readers, optic braille readers and braille printers to every university library to ensure equal access to information for all irrespective of the nature of disability.

2. **Accessible Websites:** Web sites, just like buildings can be designed to meet the needs of all people, including those with disabilities. Unfortunately current web pages of universities and colleges contain major access barriers. Hence there is a need to have accessible websites for every institution.

3. **Development of e-Repository :** Just like the UGC Infonet, universities should have e-repositories for students who are visually impaired, where teachers can submit study material. The resources could be downloaded as audio or Braille. The material could be supplied in DVD on request. There should be collaboration and networking between the publishers and the UGC or higher education policy makers so that the publisher can directly submit electronic versions to the central repository.

4. **Staff and Student Training:** The library staff, as well as students, need training in order to operate assistive and adaptive technologies.

5. **Promotion through Research and seminars:** Universities should allot funds to promote research on inclusive libraries. Conferences and awareness camps need to be organised in colleges to promote inclusiveness.

6. **Collaboration and Net-Working:** Universities should collaborate with other libraries in and outside India, and promote inter-library loan facility for students who are visually impaired. Every university should subscribe to bookshare.org.

7. **Union Catalogue of Accessible material:** In India development of accessible material for persons with visual impairment are scattered among few organizations like Mitrajyothi, National Association for Blind, All India Federation for the Blind, National Institute of Visually Handicapped, Daisy Forum of India , Saksham and Blind Relief Association. There are also a few small NGOs

> Web sites, just like buildings, can be designed to meet the needs of all people, including those with disabilities. Unfortunately, most current web pages of universities and colleges contain major access barriers.

working in this field. There is a need for a collaborating agency and a union catalogue of all the accessible material available in India for persons who are visually impaired, which will help to check duplication. Conversion and publication of accessible material is time consuming.

8. **Physical Access to Library Building**: Libraries should develop policy for people with disabilities and make its premises accessible by building ramps and rails. Services and programme should be made available by supplying accessible material. Free transport to students who are visually impaired should be provided in university campuses.

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2. *United Nations Enable Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=150*

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RAJA SHANMUGAM

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ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION AND WORKPLACES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

It becomes a miracle every time a child and/or her/his parents fight against these issues and graduate from school.

I am extremely happy that we are discussing the concept of access for persons with disabilities to higher education and workplaces. When it comes to higher education, the problem of access goes beyond just physical access and assistive technologies. A wider range of issues has to be tackled to make this viable.

The enrolment percentages of children with disabilities into the primary and secondary education systems in India are extremely low. The challenges are many – the lack of accessible facilities, accessible lesson content, sensitive teachers who are competent to deal with their physical, intellectual and emotional needs, and inclusive assessment methodologies are top-of-the-line issues. These contribute to a huge drop out rate for the already minuscule percentage of children with disabilities who manage to get to school in the first place. That this level of drop-out happens in a system where the progression is almost automatic till the final milestone only highlights the challenges faced by the child. It becomes a miracle every time a child and/or her/his parents fight against these issues and graduate from school.

Institutes of Higher Education pose enormous new challenges:

❒ From a sheltered and coached world, the students step into a world where self-sufficiency becomes a necessity
❒ From a standalone, subject–exam based system in schools, peer comparison and competition becomes the new norm
❒ From a local school, where commutes were relatively simpler, students moving to places of higher education face tougher transportation issues and in many cases, even requirements of residential programmes
❒ From a homogeneous, culturally-aligned peer group, the student gets thrown into a multicultural, multilingual group with widely different socio-economic backgrounds
❒ From a structured predictable calendar, time gets compressed significantly with a huge, unpredictable workload with increasing complexity

These are daunting challenges even for an able bodied, well prepared, well supported student to cope with. For someone who has the additional task

of battling his/her own disabilities, just to do things which are taken for granted by most other people, these can be big dampeners.

I spoke about this to my colleague who has been in higher education for more than a decade now. Her experience has been that almost all institutions in Bangalore are currently unsuitable and incapable of hosting students with disabilities with any level of comfort.

Physical access is the primary problem in almost all these places. Faculty apathy and under-preparedness to deal with the needs of the students with disabilities is another major issue. Peer insensitivity is another cruel reality.

If the child battles through all these, we still have the issue of inaccessible content, teaching methods and assessment processes.

It is a miracle that even a meager number of persons with disabilities with higher educational qualifications exists amongst us today. Isn't it ironic that after all these victories, the final stumbling block is at the work place, where the companies still do not take them on board because they are "disabled"?.

What can we do to increase this and get a higher representation for this community?

❑ Mandate physically accessible premises at all public buildings – to accommodate wheel chair users, visual and hearing impaired to use these facilities without impediments. Laws exist even today. What is required is courageous and empathetic implementation.

❑ Enable easy and affordable access to assistive technologies for higher education students – motorized wheelchairs, JAWS, hearing aids, phones for the hearing impaired, large screen monitors with magnifiers, Braille readers, close captioning and the like. Scholarships exist even today; they just need help to channelize this well.

❑ Sensitization of faculty and students on inclusive growth – if they can provide a supportive environment, the students with disabilities will have the strength and courage to face the challenges with more confidence. NGOs can help in this.

❑ Help the caregivers and family members to grasp the realities and challenges of the higher education. This will help them to be better prepared to support the efforts of the student in

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this new environment and also understand the emotional and psychological challenges that s/he may undergo during this process.

❑ Increase understanding of the issues involved with intellectual disabilities and build content that helps these students navigate the roadblocks placed by these disabilities in education.

❑ Design and implement new inclusive assessment processes. Most of current ones are archaic and obsolete any way.

❑ Work with corporate houses from an early date to align the development of these students to be workplace ready when they graduate, instead of waiting for the placement season. This will enable the student, the corporation and the faculty to understand the other parties' perspectives better. This can even help in the corporates funding some of the assistive technologies as an investment.

If we can in our work environments, enable the success of more persons with disabilities with higher education credentials, more and more students will be willing to take the chance and make the effort to go through the challenges of higher education. They will be confident of a dignified and productive outcome as the culmination of their effort. If more students come on board the higher education process, the system will find ways to become more accessible and make it worthwhile, because the students, their parents and the end customers (Corporate) will demand these changes.

If higher education becomes a viable avenue for school-going children with disabilities, their enrolment and retention in the schooling system will increase, building the pipeline to ensure that the process sustains and flourishes.

PADMINI RAMESH

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A DREAM COME TRUE

Background:

Nive was born on March 24, 1991. She was born premature by 12 weeks. We realized she had Cerebral Palsy and the initial few years presented huge challenges as my family learned about the joys and hardships associated with caring for a special child ensuring that she was provided an absolutely normal environment to grow. As the years progressed, we realized that Nive was an intelligent child – always curious and willing to try new things and completely oblivious of her apparent disabilities. She completed her elementary and high school at Karnataka Spastic Society and then joined Christ College, where she studies Computer Science today.

Joys and Challenges

As a parent I have experienced so much joy in seeing Nive studying in an institution of higher learning like Christ College. It is, frankly, a dream come true for Nive and me. The main challenge we faced during her early years was the skepticism from people who looked at Nive's physical problems and drew premature conclusions that she would not be able to do much in her life. As a parent taking care of her I knew what she was capable of and ensured that this negative impression of others' did not influence either Nive or me in giving up hope. Her enthusiasm in playing the piano and while attending robotics classes to me provided her with a well rounded education. Her involvement with other special children forged in her a very high level of maturity. Together, Nive and I had this dream of her leading as normal a life as possible and of her being a productive member of our society.

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Dream Come True

Each year in school was a struggle which Nive bore with an enthusiasm that only special children can perhaps understand. Her smile when she went through difficult phases of her growth was more than an inspiration for me to do more for her. After we received her 12th grade results, both my husband and I realized that she had a chance to join a higher education institute. We forged ahead with renewed vigour when we applied to Christ College. We kept our fingers crossed regarding her admission to Christ College. When the principal conducted the interview and then welcomed Nive into the College, our joy knew no bounds and our dream for Nive actually came true.

Life as of Today

Nive has settled into a wonderful routine of classes, extra-curricular activities, hanging out with friends and is leading a full life. She brings so much joy and a "can-do" attitude that many of her friends feel inspired by her enthusiasm. I feel so blessed and thankful to God for giving me a beautiful daughter like Nive.

ELANGO R

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What we heard in the meeting was- he was different, he had a mind of his own, was brilliant but wouldn't sit in one place

IT JUST TAKE'S A BIG HEART! AND SOME COMMON SENSE…

I was really upset! Why me? Why us? Why our son? ……the conversation went on, my wife noticed I was spacing out and took the conversation on. We were meeting our son's vice principal and class teacher as he was refusing to go to school.   What happened? Why the change of circumstances? He was the same kid who once used to pull himself to school even if he was unwell and he always had 100% attendance. The reason for the change in circumstances was he ran afoul of his class teacher for some assembly session they were preparing for.

What we heard in the meeting was- he was different, he had a mind of his own, was brilliant but wouldn't sit in one place. He will finish his work and disturb his class fellas and would not apologize. We eventually did sort this out. Our good fortune the school was willing to work with us and also look at what they could do differently. Things are back to normal as of now for us.

Pause a while…. if a brief incident like the above drove me to despondency and reflect 'why me'- What do you think parents and children with disability are going through? Their lives can never get to normal- at least like the way we define 'normal'. And this is not of their making but our own! We will just not let them be normal… sample these few incidents and lessons I personally learnt from them… and you will know what I mean.

LESSON 1

For me Lesson one was when Meenu, our head of CSR, told me to behave normal. Her request… yell for me from your office like you would for the others.. don't walk upto my desk and embarrass me! I was foxed… Meenu needed a walking stick as she lost the services of one of her legs to Polio! Wasn't I being nice by not troubling her and walking up to her desk! Apparently not! That was lesson number 1 for me and I had prided myself in working in this space for sometime now. Clearly the message was don't compensate for me- I know how to figure out these things and treat me as you would others.

LESSON 2

We had all travelled out as a group for a leadership meeting and one of our colleagues was opting out of the outing! I tried coercing, cajoling- it did not work but I knew I was missing something so I let it be. That evening I learnt what that was because of. He rolled up to me at the dinner (yes he was on a wheel chair) and asked if he could speak with me. He shared that he did not want to offend me by refusing to go out, but he found it difficult on these outings as people infantilized him! Huh! What infantilized? Seeing my surprise he explained that people in their good nature wanted to help him and offered to push him around. He tried telling them politely but they did not listen! He was very well capable of rolling himself around. The result -he

was whizzed past shops, intruded in his private shopping whereas all he wanted was to be left alone. His one sentence summed it up- "Elango, I am an adult, if I want help I will ask for it… I am not a child". I wasn't going to argue with that! How many of us kill others with our noble intentions!

LESSON 3

Not so nice but hit home hard when a bright young software professional who is hard of hearing cleared the MBA exams and prepared for his admission interviews. For his in person interview all he was asked was how will he cope? He cant hear! Will he be able to cope with the rest of the batch?

Huh! What am I missing here – shouldn't we be figuring out how to help him fit in with the rest? What can we do to ensure the professor is always speaking with his face to the class so he can lip read? How can we help him with extra classes, note taking etc.? Aren't those the questions that need to be answered? But no, how will you fit in was the question.

I wish I could have done something for him…I offered to call the dean but he was adamant! I don't want references I will make it on my own!

The same goes for a blind student in a business school who spent all his time not attending classes but figuring how to get the notes converted into a format he can hear/read. The college was very generous in just admitting him! It didn't matter that except for his blindness he was a brilliant student! The professor brushed aside his request to speak the statistical equations loud while he was writing them on the whiteboard! Come on!! Is it so difficult?? Why do people like you even think of pursuing an MBA???

The above incidents got me thinking- Where is "normalcy" for them when each time we want to treat them as "abnormal"? Will they ever be able to heave a sigh of relief and put their feet up that things are back to normal as we do or at least I did in the beginning of this article? Yes they can, if each of us do the following in our institutions- they sure can-

❑ Look at the work we do with Persons with Disability as mainstream not as charity-Remember, you are not doing them a favor, they are doing you a favor by broadening your horizon and providing your students and faculty with the much needed diversity.

❑ Set up a dedicated office of disability- I am not even surprised that probably IIM- B(Indian Institute Of

Seeing my surprise he explained that people in their good nature wanted to help him and offered to push him around. He tried telling them politely but they did not listen! He was very well capable of rolling himself around.

Management, Bangalore) is the only one that has an office of disability! The office of disability will become your centre of inclusion and they don't cost too much money to set. They will institutionalize and not leave it to individual's whims.

❑ Do an access audit – is your building accessible to all? We have done this at MphasiS and trust me it doesn't require major structural change. Very small things that's it! You will only realize them when you probably break your leg or something like that! The steps will look onerous and you would wish there was a ramp.

❑ Treat them as you treat any one else – don't make them feel special but make it easy for them. Here's a story to explain this. For an induction program, we had some of our employees with disability who were present. As a gesture of understanding the trainer had lunch served for them at the training room and asked the others to go to the canteen. One of them politely pointed that we actually segregated them. We should have either served food for everybody in the room or figured out a way of getting them also to the cafeteria! I for certain am not going to forget this lesson in a hurry!

Inclusivity is about making everyone's life "normal", regular and mainstream. One step at a time… I encourage each one of us to join this movement. It doesn't take a lot but it does take a big heart and inclusive thinking. Do you have that?

If you do and if you need help to get started reach out to Meenu at Meenu.Bhambhani@ mphasis.com or to me at Elango.r@mphasis .com- we'd love to work with you!! We don't charge -we just want to make life normal and inclusive for more people!

A LEGACY TO UPHOLD

FREDRIK CHRISTENSSON

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In the beginning of the 1970: s two couples meet. Liz & Vic Finkelstein and Judy & Paul Hunt. Both couples with an interest in the oppression taking place in 1970's South Africa with its apartheid system. Drawing parallels between the segregation of "disabled people" in UK and the segregation in South Africa – they began forming the social interpretation of disability, oppression being the keyword.

Harlan Hahn was one of the people following this legacy when continuing to see similarities between what was happening in the topic and policy of disability and the same in other groups of society. Arguing for a socio-political model of disability he emphasized "people suffering from disability" to be considered a minority alongside others. Indeed, the principal problem that people of this minority group faced was "discriminatory attitudes rather than functional impairments"[1].

In his agitation for disability to be considered as the oppression that society puts on the individual Vic Finkelstein[2] takes the Indian constitution of 1950 as a role model where it states: "The enforcement of any disability arising out of Untouchability shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law".

But the social model of disability does not explain what disability is. It is a conceptual model and not a theory. With its roots in the oppression in South Africa the social model had great opportunities, emphasizing the complex causes of social phenomena. Today only shattered pieces remain of that initial thought – today perceiving disability not as oppression but simply as lack of activity. With this has followed that the controversy between the medical model of disability and the so called "social" consists of nothing more than that the medical model puts emphasis on the impairment being the barrier for activity while the "social" model emphasizes the society and social barriers.

A medical oriented sociology (with proponents such as Williams 1999[3]) claims that disability is an interplay between impairment (the body) and society. As does the shattered social model of disability. The difference lies now in which of the two that is considered to be the cause.

I find it hard, however, to see how something can exist per se. The body and the society exist not in interplay but because of interplay. Further the body comes second and the context in which it exists first. The body exists within the frames of the context, frames which it is also capable of reconstructing/reframing. It is true that one cannot deny the existence of a biological factor. But it is in the light of society that we determine the meaning of that biology. The struggle for emancipation of women, who have fought hard (and are still fighting) to change the way we perceive there unfavourable situation as something created by society and not by biology. I don't think anyone would deny biological differences existing between men and women. But in societies where equality between genders is slightly higher than others these biological differences are closer to being differences only and as such not hierarchically sorted. In the future I would like the same to be true in the scope of disability. As Simi Linton states (cleverly catching the arbitrary characteristics of hierarchy): "Disability studies takes for its subject matter not simply the variations that exist in human behaviour, appearance, functioning [sic!], sensory acuity, and cognitive processing but, more crucially, the meaning we make of those variations" (Simi Linton 1998 p. 2[4], author's emphasis).

Why is it important to define what things "are"? Because things have a tendency to become what we agree on that they are. In this logic the name that we have given our minority groups now in discussion (people with impairments suffering from disability) is a name poorly chosen. The aim to break through the tragic circle of the self-fulfilling prophecy[5] continues.

Talking about the implications of the problem (e.g. exclusion, oppression) and the goals of the practice (e.g. inclusion, accessibility, equality) is something many policy documents adopt. But working with symptoms is simply not enough to uphold the legacy being passed down to us. The role of the universities in this process of policy can be nothing less than that of a leading innovator, leading us through the mist of tomorrow. Ask the questions still dwelling in darkness – shed light, shed

1 Harlan Hahn (1986): Public Support for Rehabilitation Programs: The Analysis of U.S.
   Disability Policy, Disability, Handicap & Society, 1:2, 121-137.

2 Vic Finkelstein (1975) Phase 2: Discovering the Person in "Disability" and "Rehabilitation" Magic Carpet Vol XXVII (1), 31-38

3 See for example Simon Williams (1999) Is anybody there? Critical realism, chronic illness and the disability debate, Sociology of Health and Illness, 21(6), 797-819.

4 Simi Linton (1998) Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity New York: New York University Press

5 As Merton does when he introduces the concept of Self-fulfilling Prophecy in 1949. The Self-ful-filling Prophecy, Social Theory and Social Structure Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 181-195.

NANAGU SHAALE

DIANA JOSEPH & G THIRAVIYAM

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It is indeed a paradox, despite the Right to Education becoming a fundamental right in India; we as a nation perhaps have the greatest number of children with disabilities out of school. The United Nations Convention on Persons with Disability, to which India is a signatory in Article 24 declares that, 'States Parties shall ensure persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability.

While there are various international policies and frame works for the education of children with disabilities (viz: United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child 1989, World Declaration on EFA 1990, UN Standard Rules Equalization of Opportunities for PWDs (Rule 6) 1993, Salamanca Statement & Framework For Action (UNESCO, 1994), UN Convention on Rights of PWDs, 2006, and the National Legal & Policy Framework comprising of the 93rd Constitutional Amendment - Article 21, National Policy on Education 1986, Programme Of Action 1992, PWDs Act, 1995, The Right of children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009) there is a pressing need to ensure a model of inclusive education with the involvement of various stake holders

In India, the right of children with disability to education was envisaged as early as 1968, based on the Kothari Commission recommendations (1964-66). However 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. The 1995 Act can be deemed to directly negate the convictions of the social model, the only framework that sufficiently demonstrates that a mere understanding of inaccessible environments do not lead to political reforms without promoting social inclusion.

Physical and mental impairments are compounded by poor education outcomes, and Children with Disabilities (CWD) have very high out of school rates compared to other children. Across all levels of severity, they very rarely progress beyond primary school. This underlines the importance of getting CWD into school if India is to achieve the education Millennium Development Goals. In order for this to happen, the society has to become inclusive with focus on education especially in schools and colleges. It is in this context that Fourth Wave Foundation launched 'Nanagu Shaale' a multi stake holder inclusive education project.

'Nanagu Shaale' where all belong! is supported by MphasiS an HP company. This Project focuses on a multi stake holder model, ensuring significant transmission from segregated to inclusive education and works towards the empowerment of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) enabling their integration into mainstream society. In this model people with disabilities and their families express their demands, share their stories and participate in real social and systemic change. It promotes a model of community inclusion which recognizes respects and values all persons with disabilities.

The emphasis is on "enrolment, retention and completion rates" among disabled children in pre, pimary to secondary schools which feeds into higher education. This project not only focuses on enrolment but also identifies gaps in the existing educational system, influencing policy makers to address the same. Working with schools and teachers to create sample model schools, this project will ensure the community takes ownership, plans for the future and ensures all children with disabilities have access to basic education. Nanagu Shaale in its pilot model is designed to work in rural, semi-urban and slums spread across 24 revenue circles /talukas involving over 35,000 children with disability. We have been successful in moving the trajectory for inclusion of Children with Special Needs in the last 2 years by 10% and foresee a speedy community involvement in enabling and ensuring right to education for all.

How I wish my country had an accessible infrastructure and the support system. I would have also been a doctor like my friends

EXPERIENCES OF BEING A WHEEL-CHAIR USER STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH

The catastrophe in the form of poliomyelitis struck me at the tender age of 2 years. It not only affected my lower limbs but also spinal cord resulting in the dysfunction of upper limbs and the neck. My hands would not lift and the neck would remain tilted to either side. The support of a wooden belt was required to make me sit upright. Having not born in a very affluent family wherein my dad was struggling in his initial years of practice as a Homeopathy Practitioner and my mom trying to come to terms with an added responsibility of a disabled child at the young age of 20, I was left in the custody of maternal grandparents in Faridabad.

They were the ones to have infused a new lease of life in a 2 year old disabled girl by raising her with their indomitable spirit and daunting courage. As a result of their mammoth efforts and the electric shock given in one of the hospitals in Delhi, I regained strength in my arms and the neck however it led to the permanent impairment of the lower limbs rendering me wheel-chair bound for the rest of my life.

It was the vision of my Grand Pa to see me an educated and empowered woman no matter what the circumstances were. In his pursuit to accomplish this mission, he admitted me to a nearby school wherein I studied till 8th standard. I had always been a good scholar which was a strong motivational force for him. He would drop me and pick up daily from the school on his scooter with my hands tightly clenched around his tummy. From the ninth standard onwards, all the good schools were far off however this also did not deter my Grand Pa and for four years he would drop me to the school bus and wait for me at the exact time to bring me back home - rain or shine.

Now, let me share some of the struggles I had to undergo during my school days. None of the schools had accessible infrastructure. There was not even a single accessible washroom which meant controlling the nature's call for more than 9 hours every day for 15 years! This continued for four more years as I went on for further studies. The places where the wheel-

chair was not accessible like the computer and the science labs and the examination hall or the auditorium on the top floors, again two girls would carry me holding me under arm and the leg and me in turn clinging on to their neck with both the arms spread out.

Despite this physical and psychological trauma every day, I never lost sight of my long term goal and kept putting in my best efforts to pursue the stream of my choice. But no, how could I do that... as society would not let me... I had to follow their dictates and did not have the right to make my own choices. What if I had the power of forebearance to undergo all the trauma to follow my dream, I was not allowed to opt for Medical (Physics, Chemistry and Biology) rather forced into Commerce on the pretext that everyone excels in the stream of their choice, why don't I give myself a challenge by excelling in the stream which I did not like!!

That was the first roadblock for me and the realization that I was different from my other class mates. The trend repeated itself after two years when once again I was not given a chance to study in the college of my choice. The reason, obviously, inaccessible transport and the infrastructure which would make the daily commute for me from Faridabad to Delhi almost impossible. My Grand Parents would not let an 18 year old girl stay in a hostel in Delhi and there was no other means of taking an admission into the college of my dreams.

A scholar in me died a tragic death and what moved on was someone who could not afford to be uneducated. Thus, enrolled myself for a computer course in a Institute in Faridabad and pursued B.Com (Hons.) through distance from Delhi University. Later did PGDBA (HR) from Symbiosis, again through distance. Who should I hold responsible for all this - Myself, my disability, my parents, my grandparents, the institutions or the society?? All I know and will remember till my last breath is that my career was ruined not because something was impossible but because of the lack of infrastructure, awareness, attitude and sensitivity towards people with physical-challenges.

SHAHANA NAAZ

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We are not treated as a part of the mainstream and the decision makers rather as a weaker section that must follow the dictates of the society. My saga of woes did not end there. It took the ugliest of turn when I started hunting for the job way back in 2002. The BPOs were mushrooming in India and that was the only job I could think of keeping in view the sedentary nature and the availability of transport for daily commute. My candidature used to be rejected on the grounds of disability right in my face. One of the top executives of an MNC even ridiculed me on my aspiration of getting a job and to enter into the corporate world while the other one from another MNC compared me to the road side beggars in help!!

The luck did smile at me a little late and Rama Chari from NCPEDP had a great contribution towards it. There was a training program organized in Noida for physically-challenged people with the partnership of Hero Mindmine and NCPEDP.Infosys brought me to a city 2500 kms away from my hometown. I was sent to Mysore for almost one month as a part of the new joiner's Induction and Training. Got a chance to be a part of one of the most respectable companies in the world and also known for its beautiful campuses. Everything was like dream come true for me after a long long wait!

How I wish my country had an accessible infrastructure and the support system. I would have also been a Doctor like my friends with whom I dreamt along however was left far behind in my journey to success!

The best way out is to talk to a person and make a professional judgement rather than rejecting someone's candidature outright on the grounds of disability!

OECD REPORT ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AT WORK

Giving students with disabilities the opportunity to study in higher education institutions enhances their employment participation and at the same time meets economic, political and social goals. It favours employment, responds to the requirements of a knowledge society and meets equity demands by helping to reduce social exclusion.

In the past decade, there has been a significant rise in enrolment of students with disabilities in numerous OECD countries. Sweden recorded 125% growth from 1993 to 1998 and France around 100% from 1990 to 2000. In Ontario, Canada, disabled student enrolments at university have risen from 1668 in 1989-1990 to 6883 in 2000-2001 (OECD, 2003[1]).

This trend can be explained by inclusion policies that increased the number of students with disabilities in regular settings : in New South Wales, Australia, the proportion of students with disabilities enrolled in mainstream settings increased from 8% in 1988 to 34% in 1997 (OECD, 1999[2]). In France, the number of students with disabilities enrolled at upper secondary level grew by 38% between 1990 and 1999. The focus on quality of teaching at school may have led to better completion for students with disabilities: in the United States the proportion of school leavers with disabilities who had received a high school diploma or certificate of completion increased from 54% to 70% between 1987 and 2003 (Wagner et al, 2005[3]).

Such an evolution reflects the impact of non-discrimination policies developed in the past decade in many OECD countries. Such policies have changed the way disability is understood: instead of describing the difficulties disabled people face in terms of a within-person model, non-discrimination policies pointed to the importance of schools and higher education institutions (HEIs) being able to adapt to meet these students needs. In some countries, such as Canada, legislation (in the province of Ontario) addresses the identification, removal and prevention of barriers which impede persons with disabilities from full participation.

The various forms of statutory support available to both institutions and individuals have also been a key factor in the growth of disabled student enrolment. In financial terms, many countries have taken steps to facilitate work that makes institutions accessible to the disabled. Many countries seek also to provide institutions with methodological support and give them more scope to upgrade the skills of special staff responsible for disabled students. Many institutions employ advisors to give disabled students better access to the financial and technical support to which they are legally entitled and ensure they are in a position to make career choices.

The accessibility of universities and colleges depends on the perspective adopted to assess student needs and deliver appropriate support. Countries that have chosen needs-based approaches have a higher level of accessibility than countries having impairment-based perspectives that link the supports and the subsidies with a status of disability. At the level of the HEIs, the needs perspective requires integrated strategies that enlarge their ability to deliver appropriate services and support to all students and to cope with diversity within the community.

The OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development defines itself as a forum of countries committed to democracy and the market economy, providing a setting to compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practices, and co-ordinate domestic and international policies. Its mandate covers economic, environmental, and social issues. It acts by peer pressure to improve policy and implement "soft law"—non-binding instruments that can occasionally lead to binding treaties. In this work, the OECD cooperates with businesses, trade unions and other representatives of civil society. Collaboration at the OECD regarding taxation, for example, has fostered the growth of a global web of bilateral tax treaties.

1. OECD (1999), *Inclusive Education at Work: Students with Disabilities in Mainstream Schools*, OECD, Paris.
2. OECD (2003), *Disability in Higher Education*, OECD, Paris.
3. Wagner, M., et al. (2005), *After High school: A first look at the postschool experiences of youth with disabilities*

A report from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), SRI International, Menlo Park, CA.
Source: http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/30/7/36960580.pdf

GOOD TO KNOW

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION:
Massive system of higher education in India constitutes of 342 universities (211 State, 18 Central, 95 deemed universities) 13 institutes of national importance, 17,000 colleges and 887 polytechnics. University Grant Commission (UGC), a national body, coordinates and looks after the maintenance of standard of university education in India. The university education in India starts with undergraduate courses. Depending upon the nature of course pursued its duration may vary from three to five and a half years.

Source: http://www.mapsofindia.com/india-education.html

DEFINITION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:
In its broadest and all encompassing meaning, inclusive education, as an approach, seeks to address the learning needs of all children, youth and adults with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. It implies all learners, young people - with or without disabilities being able to learn together through access to common pre-school provisions, schools and community educational setting with an appropriate network of support services. This is possible only in a flexible education system that assimilates the needs of a diverse range of learners and adapts itself to meet these needs. It aims at all stakeholders in the system (learners, parents, community, teachers, administrators, policy makers) to be comfortable with diversity and see it as a challenge rather than a problem.

Research has shown that Inclusive education results in improved social development and academic outcomes for all learners. It leads to the development of social skills and better social interactions because learners are exposed to real environment in which they have to interact with other learners each one having unique characteristics, interests and abilities. The non-disabled peers adopt positive attitudes and actions towards learners with disabilities as a result of studying together in an inclusive classroom. Thus, inclusive education lays the foundation to an inclusive society accepting, respecting and celebrating diversity.

Source: http://www.ncpedp.org/eductn/ed-isu2.htm

ACCESS TO GRANTS TO MAKE CAMPUSES DISABLED FRIENDLY:
According to UGC's XIth Plan guidelines, every college is entitled to a one-time grant of Rs 5 lakhs to improve physical accessibility. Higher Educational Institutions can access the grant to make all the campus structures and construction projects disabled-friendly.

3 percent of seats in all Indian Universities and colleges are reserved for candidates with disabilities, eligible to apply for admission irrespective of the percentage of marks in all of the programmes of studies and who have passed the qualifying examination.

TAMIL   KANNADA   [SIGN LANGUAGE]   MALAYALAM   TELUGU

never-the-less

www.nevertheless.in

Some of us communicate differently, nevertheless we are the same.
Almost 70 million in India are excluded because we don't understand the uniqueness.

never-the-less
together, it gets better

SAM TARAPOREVALA

Associate Professor & Head – Department of Sociology, Director – XRCVC at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai. Recipient of The NCPEDP- Shell Helen Keller Award 2009 and also the NCPEDP Mphasis Universal Design Awards (Individual Category) 2010. He can be reached at: sam@xrcvc.org

BUILDING SOCIAL INCLUSION THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS
a case study: the xrcvc experience.

ABSTRACT:

This paper looks at the Xavier's Resource Centre for the Visually Challenged (XRCVC) which is a support and advocacy unit for persons with special needs, primarily for the visually challenged within St. Xavier's College, Mumbai. This case profile seeks to communicate both the successes and challenges, and thereby important learnings for those aiming to promote social inclusion. The higher education field can serve as an important gateway to effective employment opportunities. In spite of hundreds of universities, thousands of colleges and millions of students in India, the number of blind / low vision students has not been on par with this growth.

The teaching-learning experience for most visually challenged students has been one marked by multiple challenges and deprivation rather than a process of enrichment. This is largely the result of students being enrolled often times to merely meet the statutory reserved percentages rather than as an attempt to push for social inclusion. The XRCVC has attempted to confront these problems and to further engage with the community by adopting an active social advocacy programme thus ensuring that there will be wider social linkages.

BACKGROUND

St. Xavier's College, Mumbai*[1] established in 1869 is an institution run by the Jesuits. Its educational philosophy has always been one marked by an attempt to promote social justice. A number of blind students have regularly studied at St. Xavier's College since the early 1960s. These students were supported by readers and writers from the Social Service League (SSL) of the college. Typically, the college had anything between 7 and 15 students studying at different levels. The academic year 1999 – 2000 was marked by the absence of even a single enrolment. Investigation into the reasons behind the lack of enrolment indicated that one of the major factors was the absence of access technology at the college. Responding to this the college took the initiative to acquire a computer with a screen reader in September 2003.

THUS WAS BORN THE XRCVC.

There were four visually challenged students on the academic role that year. Currently there are 19 students registered at the college plus over 130 odd other members (students / non students) availing of the centre's facilities and services.

Beyond catering to running a state-of-the-art nodal accessibility centre for the visually challenged, the centre has initiated the process of making the physical campus of the college accessible. Given the legal and architectural limitations imposed by a heritage structure, this has not been an easy task. However, major workarounds have been

put into place.

THE WORK:

The XRCVC's work can be best understood in terms of an active linkage it seeks to establish between the micro and macro dimensions*[2]. The initial phase which ended in early 2006, primarily focused in terms of providing basic support to the in-house students at St. Xavier's College. The shift to a macro engagement was the result of the XRCVC responding to the needs of its users who, among other things, drew attention to diverse challenges, for example: the book drought; discrimination with regards to banking services; challenges with employment; and the overall lack of awareness among the general population. Hence was launched Project X-Sight, which is the macro project focusing on both student needs and broader social engagement. This in turn gave rise to Project Access, which specifically focuses on building technological and physical accessible systems. The projects of the XRCVC are implemented by professional staff*[3].

1   The XRCVC as a nodal accessible technology centre has a range of access technologies for the visually challenged (Exhibit A) which are able to meet the various needs of blind and low vision users. Apart from being used by students these technologies are available for testing and using purposes to others in the community so that they can decide through experience whether a given technology meets their requirements. Over and above this, they are showcased and demonstrated at various awareness workshops. Participants of these workshops include teacher trainees, school teachers, corporates, government officials, etc. Through accessible technology the enabling unit is able to actually engage with the rest of the community.

EXHIBIT A: ACCESS TECHNOLOGIES AVAILABLE

Technology	Discriptior
Computer-based screen readers	Softwares that can read aloud with multiple languages like English, Hindi and Marathi, etc Some screen reader programmes: JAWS, Supernova, NVDA, ORCA, VoiceOver, etc
Screen magnifiers	Computer-based Screen magnifiers which zoom screens for low vision and partially sighted users such as MAGic, Zoom Text, Supernova, etc
Screen readers for phones	TALKS, TalkBack, etc
Text-to-Speech (TTS)	English Indian accent Sangeeta, Hindi TTS, Lekha and C-DAC Marathi.
Dictation software	Dragon naturally speaking software with screen reader
Electronic low vision aids	CCTV systems and video magnifiers such as Prisma, Ruby, Camera Mouse, Bonita, Smart view Pocket, etc
Optical low vision aids	SEE TV Glasses, Telescopic distance reading device, Illuminated magnifiers, hand-held magnifiers – a range of magnifiers and power lenses

EXHIBIT A: ACCESS TECHNOLOGIES AVAILABLE - CONT'D

Accessible OCRs	To scan, edit, save and read aloud printed books, letters, etc. Programmes are Kurzweil 1000, Open Book, KNFB Mobile reader (phone-based system), ZoomEx. Stand alone scanning machine like SARA
Scanners	Basic, high speed, A5 size and Automatic Document Feeder (ADF) types of scanners
Braille Production System	Allows for electronic conversion and embossing of Braille in multiple languages –Shree-Lipi Braille, Duxbury and Winbraille programmes. Braille embosser Index 4x4 PRO and Braille typewriters like Mountbatten Pro and Perkins Brailler
Applications for keyboarding and spelling training	Softwares assisting keyboarding and sharpening of spelling – Talking Typing Teacher Software, Speaking Spelling, Enable India Spelling Tool programme
Math Aids	Standard and scientific talking calculators
Mac Book Pro	A Macintosh machine which has a built-in screen reader and screen magnifier programme VoiceOver
DAISY books production softwares	Applications to create DAISY books – Dolphin publisher, Sigtuna, MystudioPC, Easy producer,
DAISY playback softwares	FS Reader, AMIS, Easy Reader, Daisy2go
DAISY playback portable units	Victor Reader Stream, Buddy, Angel, Plextalk PTN2
Digital Recorders	To facilitate recording of notes and classroom instruction
Tactile Graphic Production system	High resolution tactile diagrams – Picture In A Flash (PIAF)
Braille Note Taker	Speech and refreshable Braille unit – mPower Braille Note Taker
Talking Electrotherapy Equipment for Physiotherapists	Totally speech-enabled Interferential Therapy Unit (IFT)
Other talking devices	Colour recognizer, Blood Pressure Monitor, Thermometer, Personal Weighing Scale, Kitchen Weighing Scale, Wrist watch, clock, Pen Friend talking labeler

MEMBER RELATED SERVICES:

Since its inception, the XRCVC has endeavored to not just meet the cyber needs of students studying at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, but rather become a centre which caters to the holistic needs of the visually challenged. As a result the centre has constantly striven to not only become a single stop destination for state-of-the-art technology solutions for the blind but also provide a range of support services that would help the recipients to participate optimally as more effective social agents. (Exhibit B)

EXHIBIT B: MEMBER RELATED SERVICES

Service	Discriptior
Volunteer support	Members can avail of volunteers largely drawn from the Social Involvement Programme (SIP) of the college to help with the range of activities such as creating accessible study material (through typing,
E-Library	This is a reservoir of a large range of study material and other books. As a active member of the Daisy Forum of India (DFI), which is an umbrella body of over 80 organizations aiming to promote print access in India, the XRCVC is not only an active producer of accessible study related books but is also a point where members can acquire accessible titles. In addition it also creates accessible formats on demand. These include Braille, audio and e-texts.
Training programmes	These need-based short / medium term programmes focus on computer literacy, English language training, preparation for competitive exams, etc.
Accessible Technology Orientation and Support	Given the fact that the centre hosts state-of-the-art access technology for the blind and low vision users, it provides beneficiaries the opportunity to explore and learn the use of these technologies. In addition, it regularly conducts awareness programmes regarding the use of such technologies. A number of people, both members and non-members, further avail of an informal helpdesk that has become very popular.
Personal Counseling and Career Guidance (for individuals and families)	This one to one support is designed to identify individual needs, interests and aptitudes, and to guide the person towards pursuing effective career choices.
Hardware Loans	The Centre also lends out computers on an annual basis so as to create the opportunity for users to use access technology at home as well.
Teaching Aids	Models, diagrams in accessible format, audio describe movies, Braille kit, geometry and algebra kit
Accessible Games and Sports	Card, Chess, Uno, Cricket and Football

impairment is the next crucial step. With advances in technology, even children with severe to profound hearing impairment can benefit from amplification. The best digital technology is available in India today and it has revolutionized the quality of sound that is heard by a child with hearing impairment. This technology allows the audiologist to selectively amplify frequencies that are important for speech and language development of the child. Another important feature is the cutting off of all extraneous noise that would otherwise interfere with the quality of sound that a child receives.

Cochlear implants (surgically implanted electronic devices that directly transmit sounds to the auditory nerve) are now available for those who don't benefit from hearing aids. Parents now have a choice and though expensive, the best is available in the country. This technological advancement, coupled with intensive speech and language therapy enables speech/language development. When a child has age appropriate speech and language skills he can be integrated into regular schools.

Apart from individual amplification, hearing impaired children in schools benefit from the technology of assistive listening devices (ALD) too. ALDs are designed to provide quality sound amplification by cutting out the extra noise in class rooms and auditoria and transmitting only the sound from the speaker (teacher) to the student. The best ALDs use FM technology. So, if there is a student with hearing impairment in a school, having a ALD in the classroom is highly beneficial irrespective of whether the student is wearing a hearing aid or using a cochlear implant.

Apart from these, use of multimedia in class-room teaching benefits the hearing impaired student enormously. Interactive technology is now available which makes language learning fun. Speech exercises designed for the requirements of individual child are available and can be used and stored on the computer.

Subsequent Journey

A hearing impaired child once integrated in a regular school and with continued support can aim for higher education. Unlike earlier times, when "deaf" students invariably ended up with manual skills training, early identified children

ALDs are designed to provide quality sound amplification by cutting out the extra noise in class rooms and auditoria and transmitting only the sound from the speaker (teacher) to the student.

have now begun to enter portals of higher education. Their numbers are still small but show an encouraging growth. There is a large population of hearing impaired boys and girls in our country who, having been identified late or for other reasons, have not acquired speech. They use sign language and lip reading for communication. This group needs sign language interpreters who can help them in class rooms and offices. Close captioning of programs, educational or entertainment will go a long way in opening up new horizons for the hearing impaired.

Modern technology which demands little linguistic skills from the end user has helped the hearing impaired population greatly. Use of Icons for navigation of the web, intuitive cell phone technology etc have opened up the wide world to them. Many hearing impaired youngsters have embraced computer graphics eagerly and have found related jobs. Texting has made distant communication possible for the deaf. But is technology alone sufficient? No- as individuals and as a society we need to play a greater role in the rehabilitation of the hearing impaired- we need to become inclusive- which means being empathetic and doing all that we can to make the hearing impaired part of the hearing world, be at home, school or work place.

3 SOCIAL ADVOCACY:

The social advocacy undertaken by the XRCVC since 2006 has centered on working towards building an enabling environment that would ultimately help create a more inclusive society. This focus is the result of the experience that in order to effect active social change one needs to have a multi-dimensional approach. The emphasis is not only on building excellence at the local level, but also on transforming thoughts, policies and laws locally, regionally and nationally. The XRCVC is thus actively engaged at various levels and with different authorities to build more inclusive systems (Exhibit C). As part of its strategy, the advocacy initiative has had to use multiple approaches including representations, lobbying, litigation, etc.

EXHIBIT C: SOCIAL ADVOCACY

Thrust Area	Activities
Financial Access	✤ DMAT Rules and NSDL ✤ Inclusive RBI Circular ✤ IBA Guidelines ✤ Accessible ATMsscanning, editing), scribes for examinations etc.
Print Access	✤ Work on amending Copyright Act, 1957 ✤ Primary and active member of DAISY Forum of India (DFI), a network of over 80 organizations working for the print impaired. ✤ Introduction of Bookshare and Inclusive Library Models. Bookshare is the world's largest online library for print impaired persons. The XRCVC played an active role in the launch of Bookshare India and represents Bookshare for membership purposes in western India. ✤ Active Publisher contact programme for E-content ✤ A national Right to Read campaign to get writers to agree to make their works accessible to the print disabled
Educational Access	✤ Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education circular on science education ✤ Central Board of Secondary y Education (CBSE) circular on science education. ✤ University of Mumbai – Psychology ✤ Physiotherapy – The Mainstream challenge ✤ Scribe Guidelines
Employment Opportunities	✤ Building Skills and Training ✤ Sensitization and Creating Awareness

LEARNINGS, ISSUES AND CHALLENGES:

As an enabling unit, seeking to go well beyond providing basic support, the XRCVC has experienced challenges which have proven very useful as part of learnings for further interventions. In the first place, the need to emphasize the human rights angle whether it is the Constitution of India*[4], the PWD Act (1995)*[5] and most recently the

UNCRPD*[6] is paramount. This would set the tone for decision makers to effectively align their policies both in letter and spirit with human rights requirements. Given the current inclusion philosophy, it is expected that a large number of colleges and universities across the country would set up enabling units. While doing so, it would be essential that such facilities would pay close attention to the following:

SOCIAL ADVOCACY:
Provide broad-based facilities: This would ensure that various needs and levels of disability could be addressed. Further there is a major requirement for supplementary programmes. For example, English language training as also the need to prepare students for competitive exams. This is the result of the fact that many of the visually challenged students entering the college system are from regional language backgrounds and have had to drop regular mathematics even though they could have dealt with the subject at the 10th standard level. This places them at a disadvantage when it comes to competitive exams and often restricts career opportunities.

EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION:
The XRCVC has had the occasion to interact with a number of colleges that have set up enabling units. What has marked the better run facilities has been effective supervision. The lack of such involvement has resulted in poorly maintained units with a high level of non-functioning / malfunctioning systems – a thorough waste of limited resources.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NETWORKS AND LINKAGES:
This is essential for joint learning as also to share resources. What is more, advocacy initiatives can benefit from collective action.

THE NEED TO BE PROACTIVE:
The XRCVC's experience underscores the need to take appropriate steps and thus move towards inclusion by developing relevant guidelines for science education, etc. Enabling units across the country would have to be sensitive to user needs and actively initiate measures to help change social ground realities.

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION:
Access technology does not come cheap hence the need to have allocations for not only setting up but also running of such units. Ignoring the latter would risk paralyzing the enabling unit and ultimately resulting in its demise.

WIDENING OPPORTUNITIES:
The visually challenged are moving gradually beyond the stereotypical B.A. option. It is time that resource centres gear up and are ready to provide services to meet student needs that go well beyond the humanities and social sciences. In order to do this, a strong emphasis on effective content creation is essential. Global models focusing on science education and the like could prove to be useful in this direction.

Notes:
[1] For more details, visit the college website www.xaviers.edu
[2] For more details, visit www.xrcvc.org
[3] The XRCVC utilizes the services of full and part time professionals such as project consultants, project managers, project officers, special educators, DAISY production staff and administrative staff.
[4] The fundamental rights and directive principles of the fundamental law of the land need to be emphasized to promote inclusion.
[5] Persons with Disabilities - Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation - Act (1995) is a landmark legislation for persons with disabilities in India. Many of its provisions can help promote effective social inclusion.
[6] United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) 2006. India has not only signed but also ratified this global convention and hence is obligated to implement its provisions

MOHAMMED IQBAL

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ACCESS BARRIER IN HIGHER EDUCATION

We have no experience in teaching blind or visually impaired. You would most probably fail and it would be major embarrassment for our institute.

Above quotes frequently stormed me when I made a conscious decision to pursue my higher education. I wrote a letter to the Chairman Admission seeking reservation for the disabled at IIM, with specifics of if I would be permitted extra time, use a writer, provision for reading out question papers and record my answers. IIM wrote back stating that there was no reservation for the disabled, denying extra time and allowing to appoint a writer with lesser educational qualification. I filed a lawsuit and the outcome, initiated a reservation quota for PWDs at all IIMs, IITs and government aided institutions.

Like most MBA aspirants I also wanted to learn strategies of cracking CAT and other B school entrance tests by enrolling in coaching institutes. I approached one coaching institute in town where I was bluntly told that they don't have any experience in teaching blind candidates and that most probably I would fail. I approached five more institutes and they all declined to admit me on grounds of my blindness and the sixth was a success.

To enable me further I placed an advertisement in the local newspaper with hopes of finding a suitable writer who would practice for couple of hours thrice a week. Surprisingly I got over ten calls and was glad that would get to choose the most qualified out of this pool. I called each one of them and was shocked to discover though the candidates were interested but parents, grandparents or relatives objected it. After a great deal of struggle, a second year engineering student agreed to be my writer .

It is an open secret that practicing for couple hours thrice a week will definitely not help me

I approached one coaching institute in town where I was bluntly told that they don't have any experience in teaching blind candidates and that most probably I would fail. I approached five more institutes and they all declined to admit me on grounds of my blindness

in cracking MBA entrance test. I decided to approach my coaching head to provide me with soft copy of the study materials and was refused as this would violate intellectual and property copy rights law. I tried convincing them that I was not able to access regular study materials because I could not see but I can read soft copy through windows screen reader installed on my computer. Nothing seemed to convince him and my efforts proved futile. I did procure MBA CAT question papers on CD ROMs and started practicing. Two weeks prior to my CAT exam; I was directed by Chairman Admission IIM to come with my writer as the panel needed to approve my writer. One of the panel member asked my writer's education qualification and the writer narrated the fact that he was second year engineering student. The panel immediately rejected my writer. I requested the Chairperson to appoint a writer for me from the college. Chairperson's office called after a week and asked me to continue with the same writer as they could not find anyone for the job.

CAT results were out and I did not clear it. XLRI, FMS and other institutes declared their results but my name was not on the list. I missed SCMHRD by 2 marks in Data Interpretations section. I wrote a letter to SCMHRD management to consider my case on humanitarian grounds as I did exceedingly well in all other sections. Director, SCMHRD, Prof.Pillai, asked me to appear for group discussion and personal interview. Prof. Pillai conducted my interview which lasted for over two hours and he asked me questions on how would I tackle challenges of MBA. He was convinced and admission was granted.

I strongly feel that blind or visually impaired individuals should adopt strategy of being proactive as he/she prepares for battle of tackling stressful MBA comprising of two years.

I took lecture notes on my laptop and approached my professors to share their notes and PPT's. MBA at top business schools prepare an individual to become a manager who is capable of performing in any situation of conflict and crisis. PWD's at business school has to demonstrate their managerial skills by constantly seeking solutions to their continuous battle of dealing with inaccessible environment.

I strongly feel that blind or visually impaired individuals should adopt strategy of being proactive as he/she prepares for battle of tackling stressful MBA comprising of two years.

Group study was a great help, while preparing for weekly surprise quiz or semester exams. Batch mates read out chapters and would explain practical subjects such as accounts, quantitative techniques, etc. I typed answers to questions for theoretical paper in a separate room in presence of college staff. College staff would take a print out of my answer sheet and would submit to concerned professor for evaluation. There is a high degree of planning, coordinating, organizing and adopting to dynamics of higher education by blind or visually impaired individual. One should be prepared to invest 40-50% of their time towards organizing accessible study materials in order to combat this challenge.

Persistence prevails and assistive technology supports a great deal and proves to be the most efficient alternative for these challenges. Positive attitudes will certainly provide solutions for surviving the roller coaster of two years of business school. Secret to clearing MBA is to constantly adopt and adjust asking for reasonable accommodation to access learning like all students.

SWATHI T.P

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TOWARDS A DISABILITY-FRIENDLY IIMB

Though I do not conform to the idea of calling someone "disabled", I cannot deny the fact that having partial vision makes doing all things the usual way difficult. Of course, they can be performed differently with the help of assistive technologies and other mechanisms. However, constraints tend to pose challenges as we go up the ladder of competition and higher education, hence additional facilities do become imperative to have a level playing field.

The method of teaching and learning adopted at IIMs is mostly visual, with extensive use of graphs, charts, videos etc. It can be understood that visual methodology is more appealing and makes learning simple and impactful, but this poses a huge challenge to the visually challenged. To illustrate a scenario, a student who is visually challenged may not be able to participate in a discussion following a video, especially when the video had no narration and only had background music. Further, many a times, the charts, diagrams are self explanatory and the professor need not spend time on such slides. This however leads to loss of information to a student who is visually challenged, and it results in the student missing the connection to the later part of the session. To make things worse, if a graded quiz is based on any of the visuals, it is difficult to secure marks in it (in such situations, the method of assessment needs to be relooked).

IIMB is sensitive to the needs of students who are differently abled. It has established the Office of Disability Services to address the concerns of such students. Some of the accommodations made are as follows:

❏ Appointment of a co-ordinator to respond to the needs of students who are differently abled
❏ Facilities to scan text books
❏ Provision of soft copies of cases used in class
❏ Appointment of Tutors (FPM students) for quant oriented subjects

❏ Sensitised professors who are willing to spend some time after class hours to clarify doubts
❏ Flexibility to take theory based exams independently with the help of a computer and screen reader
❏ Appointment of scribes for quant related exams

While these facilities are far ahead of what's available at other institutes of higher education, the following facilities, if provided, would make it easier to tackle the challenges:

❏ Provision of course slides well in advance of the class.

❏ Establishing structured and formal tutorial sessions where slides of quant intensive courses could be explained well in advance of the class thereby making class participation possible and learning impactful.

❏ The method of conducting examinations must be altered for quantitative courses. Oral examination could be one of the feasible options because dictating quant for a scribe who is less qualified is both difficult and time consuming.

❏ A mechanism has to be thought of where a student who is visually challenged can take the advantage of the open book examination as it is almost impossible for a scribe to flip through the pages and arrive at the relevant portions in the given time.

Additional support and co-operation do become necessary to help people who are differently abled overcome their constraints in an atmosphere where there is paucity of time for every student and the programme is designed to mould the abilities of some of the best intellects of the country. The facilities would prove beneficial in helping students who are visually challenged in bringing out their potential abilities and making their learning more productive.

CHETAN K.S

Chetan K.S is student of M Phil at Christ University and can be reached at chetanks72@yahoo.com

ASSESSING DIFFERENTLY PROBLEM BASED LEARNING

The fruit of higher education is a life changing experience. It provides people with disabilities skills to make a better tomorrow.

I would like to give an example of a person who reaped the fruit of higher education. Franklin D. Roosevelt is the longest serving president of the United States of America. Roosevelt contracted an illness, then diagnosed as polio, which resulted in permanent paralysis from the waist down. Roosevelt refused to accept that he was permanently paralyzed. He tried a wide range of therapies, including hydrotherapy.

At the time, Roosevelt was able to convince many people that he was getting better, which he believed was essential if he was to run for public office again. Fitting his hips and legs with iron braces, he laboriously taught himself to walk a short distance by swiveling his torso while supporting himself with a cane. After completing his high school, he went to Harvard College to earn an BA degree and later he received an honorary L.L.D from Harvard.

After I completed my schooling, I went to Christ College to study computer science. I faced a problem in giving end of the term examinations. With my speech problem, it was an uphill task to write exams. Many of my friends from the spastic society are facing similar problems in colleges, and are unable to showcase their real talent. When I entered a pre-doctoral course, the faculty of research were surprised at my assignments because I was able to produce high quality research work without exams. In fact, many of my research papers questioned the pedagogy of exam-based-learning in higher education in a global context. The pedagogy of exam-based-learning is good for middle and high schools, in my opinion. There is new pedagogy of problem-based-learning (PBL), where students are given complex problems to solve. In PBL classes, students work in teams to solve one or more complex and compelling real world problems. They develop skills in collecting, evaluating and synthesizing resources as they first define and then propose a solution to a multi-faceted problem. In most PBL classes, students summarise and present their solutions in a culminating experience. The instructor in a PBL class facilitates the learning process by monitoring the progress of learners and asking questions to move students forward in the problem solving process.

The past decade, Indian primary schools have adopted action-based-learning for children to learn new words and new concepts. I am requesting Indian universities to adopt the pedagogy of problem-based-learning. And the fruit of PBL is not restricted for students with disabilities.

TONY KURIEN

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SOCIAL AIMS FOR ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGY

I believe that in the twenty-first century the quality of a society should be judged also based on the pace it gives to its population which is differently abled. This is particularly true when we recognize the fact that this section of the population, which I represent, is largely an invisible minority, and any attempt from the part of society towards inclusiveness will be a display of empathy and innate goodness of humanity. Two objectives are to be kept in mind while we talk about accessibility, they are-

Efficiency through lesser cost

Such objectives are important due to two specific and contextual reasons. An inefficient accessibility will undermine the purpose of its establishment. For example the installation of less performing screen readers as a part of accessibility will leave students who are visually challenged without much information on a web page. Secondly, given the reality of a strong correlation between disability and poverty in many developing countries, any attempt to achieve accessibility through expensive means will be nothing more than an exercise which misses the target population. Such costly means of accessibility has deterred many institutions from investing in inclusive education.

This requires investment in two related interventions. The public and private sector should invest more towards an accessible education, and technical researches should be better encouraged in this area. Few steps taken in this direction, like that of national initiative for blind at IIT Chennai, are worth mentioning.

This is particularly true when we recognize the fact that this section of the population, which i represent, is largely an invisible minority, and any attempt from the part of society towards inclusiveness will be a display of empathy and innate goodness of humanity.

Accessibility in higher education means educational and non-educational accessibility.

Educational accessibility enables the educational material and method of pedagogy accessible. We have made good progress in this regard. The non-educational accessibility requires the institutions to make accessible physical infrastructure, and awareness created about accessibility in administrative bodies. The students who are differently abled should be included in the extracurricular activities of the institutions. This may require conducting special events and investing in new infrastructure. Resource Centre for Differently Abled at Loyola College, Chennai, is an example for such an initiative.

TISS, the institute in which I presently pursue my education, has established Tata Memorial Learning Centre for students who are visually challenged. Computers are equipped with screen reading software. The institute is also conducting a two year programme on Disability Studies and Action. This enables the institute to create an accessible environment both in educational and non-educational matters.

THILO ROTH

Thilo Josef Roth from Bonn, Germany, a student of Management and recipient of Millennium Volunteers 200hrs award of excellence, by the Welsh Assembly Government was an intern with Fourth Wave Foundation on Inclusive Education project in 2010 and can be reached at thilo@live.com

INCLUSIVE METHODS IN DEUTSCHLAND

In Germany, people with disabilities face the same challenges as in the rest of the world. Achieving in academics can be a difficult process for a person with disabilities. In order for them to do equally well as their able counterparts, the German government has implemented laws that aim at reducing the social impact of disability. These laws are strictly enforced, and if not, they offer reason enough for a lawsuit on the basis of discrimination.

Such laws include the right to study at a university, so that all universities have a special disabilities office and should provide access to/ for people with disabilities.

❒ Mandatory accessible environment with universities: People with problems of mobility might not be able to reach everywhere in the university, but by law all essential, public and social spaces within the university buildings should be accessible.

❒ Option for assistant/ support /scribes/tutors: Another law provides students who are disabled with assistants, if required. This could be a private tutor or similar help, who would provide assistance during class, homework and exams. The cost for this is also covered by the state.

❒ Reservations and reasonable accommodations: Students with disabilities may chose or be selected under the reservation category, normally 2%, which exempts them from numerous clauses, which may make the application process accessible in various formats. Group discussions that are part of selection /qualifying rounds for competitive subjects/exams that are part of the selection process are also carefully designed and made inclusive. One method would be to introduce the candidate to the group to enable effective participation .

❒ Examinations : For example a student with reading and writing disabilities, may get extra time during her/his exams and/or her/his spelling mistakes won't count as mistakes. These students will also get the possibility to attend private, after-school tutoring to help them overcome their disability.

As you can see there are many attempts by our government to help students with disabilities, they may make life easier and try to integrate these students into the normal student body, but the real inclusion must come from the whole university student body itself.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS TO AID INTEGRATION OF CHILDREN WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT

Speech is that attribute which makes human beings unique. We are not aware of how complex a skill it is and generally take it for granted. It is only when something goes wrong that we realize the importance of this skill- for instance when a child is born with hearing loss (1-2 children in 1000 are born with a hearing impairment) learning to speak becomes very difficult. The lack of language skills cuts off these children from the "speaking "world.

It is the sense of hearing that makes it possible for us to speak. For e.g., we cannot speak a language that we have not heard. So, children born with a hearing impairment have no idea what speech sounds like and that is the reason they do not learn to speak. The challenge (and aim) is to train them to listen and speak. This needs to be done as early as possible-latest by 3-5 years. It is only when children are identified early and rehabilitation begun immediately that they can be integrated in regular schools. Integration is the first step for pursuing higher education. Statistics show that the academic achievement of hearing impaired students is way below that of their hearing peers .This is chiefly due to their poor language skills.

The first step

Technology enables early identification of hearing loss. it is possible to test the hearing of even a new born! Providing adequate amplification to a child diagnosed with hearing

RADHIKA POOVAYYA

Radhika Poovayya with over 24years of professional clinical experience, established 'Samvaad - Speech Language Rehabilitation Centre' Bangalore and can be reached at:
www.samvaadinstitute.org

The challenge (and aim) is to train them to listen and speak. This needs to be done as early as possible-latest by 3-5 years. It is only when children are identified early and rehabilitation begun immediately that they can be integrated in regular schools.

GOING UP THE LADDER
HOW INSTITUTES OF LEARNING CAN WORK WITH CORPORATES
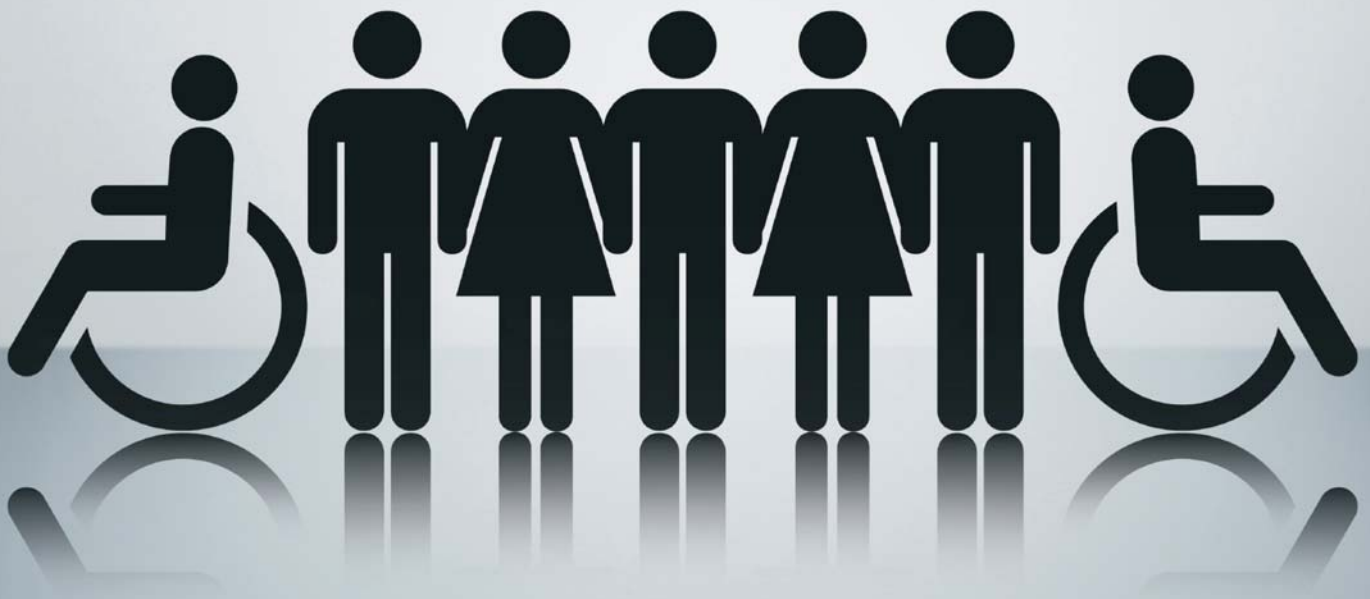
I was at an airport once and observed something that stayed with me. A child was finding it difficult to climb up the stairs, and her parent helped her up. Upon reaching the top, she scampered away, well ahead of her parent. This scene would be commonplace, so why did it stay with me?

It struck me that this girl's situation is typical of the environment of many people with disabilities, and with good reason. Usually, products or processes are designed based on the needs of the majority of people, not all people. And many cases, the needs of a person with disability may not have been considered while the product or service was designed. In such cases, if a person with disability had a little help with that product or service for a short while, like the girl running up the stair, she would get over that stage and get ahead with confidence.

It is up to a larger society to recognize this need, and to provide that support when it is relevant – my definition of "reasonable accommodation".

An area in which such support can be most effective is education – starting with our schools. If our schools were more accessible physically, and had inclusive learning systems, it would mean that a student with disability had an equal

platform for learning. And in these schools, other children would learn to be inclusive from a very early age, and build a better society. Wipro has recently seen and participated in an initiative by the government to make education inclusive for children with disabilities, and this fills us with hope that more schools in the government and private realms would be encouraged to make this a practice.

If we see schools pick this up, the trickle flow of students with disabilities who make their way into colleges could become a flood. That would be powerful, because as more of such students find their way into mainstream employment, their influence would spread into more areas of society and the corporate sector. And that would help make us a more inclusive society.

What are the simple basics that could help students? To my mind, they could all be categorized under two heads – "environment" and "networking".

"Environment" would cover the accessibility of the premises of the educational institution, availability of inclusive learning material and assistive technologies, teaching staff who are trained to be effective for students with different types of disability and an arrangement for transport to and from the institution. Wipro's environment is one of constant learning, and we have tried this with some success in our own campuses.

"Networking" is an equally important aspect. The very fact that persons with disability are a very small minority in the corporate world means that Corporates are not familiar with working with them. I believe that the educational institution should carry the responsibility of "match-making" just as the individual should make every effort to do well, and the Corporates should do what is required to enable an inclusive environment.

As a part of campus placement programs, most institutions reach out to Corporates, understand the roles that are available and take pains to present their students' strengths for these positions. A little extra effort as a part of this program would suffice – proactively presenting their students with disabilities, the assistive devices that they may use, and their personal

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WHAT ARE THE SIMPLE BASICS THAT COULD HELP STUDENTS? TO MY MIND, THEY COULD ALL BE CATEGORIZED UNDER TWO HEADS – "ENVIRONMENT" AND "NETWORKING".

strengths would go a long way in Corporates evaluating their candidature. A further step in the right direction would be to try and place these students in inclusive organizations in mainstream project assignments during their course. This would help build comfort in both the student and in the organization without either of them feeling much pressure. Often such situations bloom into job opportunities naturally.

Like Institutes should reach out to Corporates, its also important for them to reach out to their supply sources. A simple step would be to network and publicize with the schools or colleges that form their source of students that they are an inclusive institute and would welcome students with disabilities.

We hope that the current interest and momentum for inclusive education would gain strength and become the fulcrum around which students with disabilities build a shining future that sees them going way up the ladder.

GIVE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH THE ZERO RISK APPROACH

Hiring persons with disabilities has been seen by some managers as corporate social responsibility. This is clearly not the case, as it makes pure business sense.

It has been recognized and proven that Diversity improves business and people. It creates an organization and society which is progressive and makes business more meaningful as well as profitable. All institutions and organizations pride themselves by calling out the fact that they embrace Diversity and that all those who apply to positions within these institutions are given equal opportunities. The real facts are far from what is listed on the websites……..more often than not, persons with disabilities and especially those with some invisible disabilities are discriminated against. However, in my experience, the finding is that lot of these do not happen due to deliberate intent.

The real issue we face with is the lack of awareness. Our education system has not been very inclusive in the past and therefore it has created with it a group of people, including decision makers at CXO levels who have very little idea of issues around Persons with Disabilities. Whenever CXOs are asked whether they do hire Persons with Disabilities they say that there is no reason why they should not but have very little to say about the actual facts around what is being done to raise awareness levels within the organization. Also, generally it has been found that most middle and senior level managers do not even know the legal framework which supports Persons with Disabilities.

When I have spoken to a lot of senior managers all express their intent to hire persons with disabilities but also highlight the risk of perceived failure and thereby the risk posed to the hiring managers, the

clients as well as the organization as a whole. I therefore propose certain ways of approaching this issue from a ZERO risk based approach which will not put the organization, its employees and its officers at any risk while trying to become an equal opportunity employer.

1. SPREAD AWARENESS

a. Diversity Week. Campaigns to spread awareness regarding Disabilities can be undertaken from time to time. More often than not, institutions celebrate a Diversity week every year where a particular day can be dedicated to the issue of Persons with Disabilities.

b. Recruitment Drives. Recruitment agencies could be given a mandate to present a diverse candidate pool for every level of hiring within the organization. The recruitment team could be made aware of the issues around Disabilities and specific positions which are conducive to those with Disabilities.

c. Sensitisation sessions. Specific sensitization sessions can be conducted by professionals or internal trainers. This can be targeted at different levels in the management as well as in the external hiring environment. The real awareness campaign could start at induction or even earlier, when the hiring process is on.

2. GET AN NGO PARTNER

Getting a good NGO partner is critical to the success of hiring PWD's. This NGO relationship will definitely help raising awareness, ensuring accessibility and understanding the roles within the organization where Persons with Disabilities can be hired. Also, a nodal NGO partner will ensure that other relationships with the source pools of this talent are nurtured.

3. REVIEW YOUR PROCUREMENT MODEL

Do start thinking whether your procurement strategy is inclusive of Persons with Disabilities. Today, more often than not, institutions outsource activities such as housekeeping, facilities, administration, security among others. Do we ask our vendors whether they can hire a percentage of their staff who are Persons with Disabilities? I think that there is a great opportunity here. These are really low hanging fruits which can make a real difference in the longer term.

4. ENSURE REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

This is guaranteed by law and hence is a mandate on all employers and institutions to follow. The word reasonable is important here. Unreasonable demands may not be met but reasonable accommodation is a right of Person with Disabilities. This may include

5. TRAIN AND HIRE MODEL

Normally, any hiring manager who has not been sensitized is really worried about the performance of those who are Persons with Disabilities. This along with the anxiety about how this will be perceived by the rest of the team leads to a situation where Persons with Disabilities are not shortlisted due to this lack of awareness as well as low risk taking approach. Studies have found that Persons with Disabilities do equally well at work and that organizations run the same risk as they would with any other employee.

Once a nodal NGO has been identified please ensure that there is a level of transparency to them so that there is a starting point. This starting point can be the job analysis and identification of roles which are suitable to be categorized as per Disability categories. We have to understand that proper sourcing is required since job and skill matching are important.

Post this sourcing of candidates can be undertaken under the assumption of a train and hire model where the organization commits itself to train the pool of people who are identified to roles already analysed. This training can be done with the help of the NGO resources, the internal process and skill trainers as well as specialist trainers, if required. After this training is completed, the normal hiring process can be started to decide the final offer list. Today,

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Educational institutions are also mandated by law to ensure that they are giving opportunities to Persons with Disabilities and therefore it is essential that an Office of Disabilites is opened by all such institutions to deal with those they take into their courses. If this is not done at the earliest, these institutions may find themselves facing a lot of internal as well as external challenges in dealing with this issue. THE ISSUE OF COSTS AND TIME

There is a question which is asked of me very often…Who is going to pay for this additional cost? The answer is very simple…any organization or institution has costs as an integral part of the system and therefore it should ensure adequate budgeting for those costs. Accessibility in terms of the infrastructure can be addressed through proper planning and there are ways around costs as well. In the normal course of conducting business there is a cost of hiring and there is a cost of attrition. If you put these together, that is also the normal cost of hiring Persons with Disabilities. Bankers can also be roped in to make the initial investment for a specific tool eg. Specific software like JAWS. The volunteering and Train the Trainer model can also be used to reduce training costs which are incurred. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of business to make the REASONABLE ACCOMODATION. This a cost of doing business and being part of society.

Hiring Persons with Disabilities has been seen by some managers as Corporate Social Responsibility. This is clearly not the case, as it makes pure Business sense. If we do not get the best of talent in and provide equal opportunities for those who want to join, it is us and the society who loses out. If you have any doubts, just look up the list of personalities with disabilities and your doubt will be removed.

PURPOSE
MAXIMIZERS

We are all purpose maximizers. To me the calling in life came when I first worked with Disha Foundation, a center for vocational training and rehabilitation for physically and mentally challenged children. Like most things in life, joining Disha didn't happen under any grand scheme of things. But on the hindsight, I reckon it to be one of the best things that had happened to me, as that experience revealed how life could be unfair to a section of society.

My tenure in the corporate world over the last half a decade did help me hone my interpersonal and business skills but gave me fewer avenues to engage with the society at large. I did contribute my time to a NGOs and taught a visually challenged girl and realized that the satisfaction I drew strength from such activities which far overweighed the mundane that I was usually engaged with. The breakthrough came when I met Prof. Rishi, who heads the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at IIM Bangalore, and got to learn that there was an opportunity to work with his office. That one cue was enough for me to happily transition from my job to take up the task of evangelizing the concept of ODS and assisting the physically challenged students at IIM Bangalore. The responsibilities here involve understanding the accommodations of students with disability and working with staff and faculty members to provide an inclusive education environment to the students. This includes providing accessible reading material to the visually challenged, tuition facilities and ensuring technology aids in the classrooms for

That one cue was enough for me to happily transition from my job to take up the task of evangelizing the concept of ods and assisting the physically challenged students at iim bangalore.

those who require. The bigger objective of the Office remains to sensitize fellow students, faculty and staff to the fact that students with disability get every possible education facility as a matter of right and not as a favor. This National Level Conference is an aspiration in the direction of bringing together various stakeholders in deliberating on issues and best practices in generating awareness and enhancing inclusivity.

Knowing the magnitude of the challenge, a call for wide scale awareness generation and action is in order. Allow me to share few of my learnings I had through the journey with the ODS at IIM Bangalore and various volunteer projects I did in past. Firstly, the shrinking tolerance in our societies unfortunately gets manifested much more acutely in our classrooms, owing to intense competitions, especially at higher education. This intensity of competition, coupled with lack of enabling infrastructure, often render the students with disability at disadvantage, keeping in mind that all students vie for the limited pool of jobs. Knowing the damage it can do to someone's self confidence, it's a responsibility to keep them motivated throughout the course. Also one needs to be cautious that students with disability don't get any undue advantage over their peers in the process. It's indeed a balancing act and becomes even more challenging with fewer best practices in the field. Secondly, not all educational institutions, even government funded ones, are well equipped in terms of infrastructure, including ramps, lifts, teaching aids, and softwares, among others. This considerably shrinks the available options that students with disability have in pursuing higher education. As a result, not many students with disability get an opportunity to further their education in India. I believe it is not only a responsibility, but also a great opportunity for educational institutions, to invest in making their facilities more amicable to persons with disabilities as they are a hugely untapped asset of the society.

Thirdly, sharing the insight from the job market and the corporate world, not many firms are prepared to absorb this talent in their value stream. Interestingly, research has shown that persons with disability have higher propensity to stay in a certain job and also it is widely known that such people excel in certain unique skills. Keeping this in view, large organizations have a

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Caution is in order here that many firms consider hiring such people as a mere signal of appearing socially responsible, yet considering these people 'special'.

social responsibility as well as a business opportunity to frame policies and implement those diligently to attract and retain persons with disability. Caution is in order here that many firms consider hiring such people as a mere signal of appearing socially responsible, yet considering these people 'special'. Instead, an understanding is needed that such people be treated at par with rest of the employees and considered as much as an asset as any one of them.

As we can see here, providing equal rights for persons with disability is a challenge that spans the value stream from education to employment through society. Right sensitization at a social level, at educational institutions and the corporate, coupled with policies, infrastructural support and best practices, can help create an inclusive society. IIM Bangalore's efforts through the ODS is a humble experience and I am hopeful that through this two day conference we are able to reach out to a larger audience in furthering the cause of inclusivity in academia and workplace.

VASANTHI SRINIVASAN AND MUKTA KULKARNI

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LEVERAGING THE TALENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN ORGANIZATIONS

Diversity as a source of competitive advantage for organizations is a mantra that corporate India has embraced in recent years. In this write-up, we address diversity in the form of people with disabilities. With the increased war for talent leading to a severe shortage in the workforce, persons with disability are seen as a source of talent. If this diversity has to really yield results for the organization in the long run, there are three critical challenges that need to be addressed by senior leadership teams and the Human Resource (HR) department in organizations

If this diversity has to really yield results for the organization in the long run, there are three critical challenges that need to be addressed by senior leadership teams and the Human Resource (HR) department in organizations

The first challenge that organizations face while hiring persons with disability (PWD) is infrastructure related. For example, the nature of seating arrangement, ramps, disability friendly rooms and toilets, all require special effort. Corporate India is likely to address these since new buildings are being designed with such needs in mind.

The second challenge is the manner in which recruitment has happened so far. A few job categories have been set aside for PWD. This results in stereotyping and boxing PWD into certain positions. Receptionists, help desk support, and other such positions are seen as those where visually impaired persons can fit in

an organization. These are positions where minimal assistive technology is needed to make a person proficient in the job. This however stifles the human potential from a performance perspective and results in employees ending up in positions where they have few opportunities for growth and development. While the problem of hiring PWD today (either because of legal requirements or to be seen as a responsible employer) drives the decision, the consequences of the decision have a far reaching impact on the employee and the organization in the long run. Organizations need to begin with a perspective that PWD can fill in any position provided they have the required competence and

skills needed to perform in that position. The question then that arises is whether there are other assistive technologies or other interventions (e.g., mentoring programs) that can make PWD more effective in the workplace, and ensure career progression.

A third challenge that organizations need to address is that different forms of disability require different levels of socialization and orientation of other employees in the organization. For example, if an organization is hiring people with hearing or speech impairment, the peer group and the manager may need to know sign language. Some critical questions that an organization needs to address are around the nature of the orientation and socialization efforts. Who should be the buddy assigned to PWD when they first join? What awareness needs to be created for peers and managers so they can productively engage with the employee? In the absence of such efforts from an organization, hiring of PWD will become isolated acts of altruism by a few managers and not a sustainable process in the long run.

The final challenge is the nature of commitment and competence needed at the senior management level to create a talent management process with appropriate levels of feedback and support for PWD. In managerial roles, interpersonal awareness and effectiveness is a critical element. Given the Indian context, where disability is still seen as a bane, many young professionals with a disability have had to suffer higher levels of hardship to reach the position that they are in today. This makes them resilient, but also makes it difficult for them to seek support from others and their organizations. This lack of seeking support is often misconstrued as arrogance in organizations. The nature of the coaching needed from senior leaders and managers in organization is not just technical or organizational, but much more in terms of feedback on how other members of the team interpret and perceive PWD as leaders or effective individual contributors. This requires a high level of feedback skill on the part of managers, to be empathetic and to appreciate the hardships that the individuals have experienced

In managerial roles, interpersonal awareness and effectiveness is a critical element. Given the Indian context, where disability is still seen as a bane, many young professionals with a disability have had to suffer higher levels of hardship to reach the position that they are in today.

in their growth journey and yet provide fair feedback for further improvement.

In a country like India, there is an urgent need for research in understanding how PWD fare in the workplace. We raise a few questions that may help managers think about their own efforts in hiring and leveraging the talent that PWD may offer. For example:

1. What are the sources of recruitment most easily accessible to PWD? Are these the same that managers utilize?

2. Can an organization tap vocational schools where PWD learn skills in order to fill niche jobs?

3. What training (if any) is provided to those who recruit PWD? Are organizations ensuring that biases do not creep in inadvertently when recruiting and selecting PWD?

4. Can HR managers design feedback mechanisms that ensure managers provide realistic and supportive feedback to PWD?

5. Does the organization offer disability specific socialization programs that help PWD integrate fully in organizations with their counterparts without any disability?

R. DHARMARAJAN

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WITHOUT TECHNOLOGY MY JOB WOULD HAVE BEEN PERHAPS IMPOSSIBLE TO HANDLE

The use of modern technology as an assistive tool to enable PWD's, especially the visually challenged cannot be overemphasized. As compared to 25 years ago, when information technology through screen reading softwares and digital output was not heard of, or not easily available, today many softwares and electronic gadgets have entered the market to suit the requirements of visually challenged students and working individuals.

While two decades ago, I had to rely on human eyes to read or type documents, today I can read any printed document through the help of instant scanners like Zoom X Camera and have access to information on the internet through JAWS screen reader. I can also access files of my junior officers or other divisions in office through LAN. Voice recorders like victor stream reader or Plextalk which I use have changed my system of working totally. I can transfer files in these gadgets and listen any time, apart from making instant voice recordings. I get news and bulletins on various matters in my email and I do not have to read newspapers in its physical form. Technology has transformed my life both in official and personal arena as I have become vastly independent.

While two decades ago, i had to rely on human eyes to read or type documents, today i can read any printed document through the help of instant scanners like zoom x camera and have access to information on the internet through jaws screen reader.

Nature of my job requires regulation of commodity exchanges in terms of monitoring and surveillance on prices, volume of trade, issues on board of directors, complaints, independent directors, audit and inspection of exchanges and so on. Without technology my job would have been perhaps impossible to handle. Technology should be introduced and adopted by all children from primary level of schools for making their education more accessible and modern.

I may state here that my office has gone out of way to support my needs and provided me with all latest gadgets and softwares and I sincerely thank my Chairman, both present and past for their extra ordinary generosity and gesture.

A LETTER FROM AN IIM ALUMNI

MICHAEL SEQUEIRA

Michael Sequeira is a consultant with Wipro Consulting Services, completed PGDM from IIM Bangalore and based out of Silvassa working as a government consultant for the Department of Taxation. He can be reached at michael.sequeira@wipro.com.

If you join IIMB you would paint the walls with your poetry. Yes these very lines convinced Professor Deepak Sinha that I could belong to IIM Bangalore with a touch of creativity and a passion to get through my two years that whistled away.

Today working for a top MNC and getting a high salary seem like good perks, but truly all I can hope for is to ask for more responsibilities from my bosses at work, to make my alma mater proud. I guess the formulae is in the teaching and the friends whom we compete with for GPAs during the two years only to realize that we remain at the bottom of the ladder. But as soon as we step out into the real world, we learnt the lesson which truly counts, on how to lift our spirits high.

I remember taking a course on Public Economics in the second year. The faculty always ensured that I sat in the front row and got me a book with a font size of 14. Although my peers felt that it was only fair, I did feel special. Today, I am told that IIM Bangalore has scanners to print a complete book, offers JAWS to visually impaired students, senior students take classes for persons with disabilities, the campus is more accessible with a lift, and so on. Steps to ensure each student with a special ability is truly capable of competing with the best in the country.

The Six Thinking Hats theory, when applied, teaches us to work better in teams. I have studied courses on Business Law and Creativity in Arts and Science at IIM Bangalore and have applied this theory. Today, as a consultant with Silvassa (India) the experiential learning which was imparted helps me to take up responsibility, and perform better every time I fail. I have given training programs to hundreds of traders and manufacturers on filing their tax returns online (in Hindi), have written a Mission and Vision statement, have designed a State Department website, and also authored a paper for Aadhaar. I am currently running my own newsletter, with an audience of 1,200 consultants, and am hoping to bag a National award.

How prepared was I for such an experience back in college? Yes. I guess the confidence is present in every student who joins IIMB. But the exposure came from the environment the college provided. The intensive courses, like Financial Accounting, Operations and Quantitative Methods, have helped me perform today, though I was not so good at them in college. I don't hesitate a bit when a challenge is thrown upon me. Each time I fail and need to get up, I remember the words of Professor Krishnan "There are no two ways about taking the easy way out of the PGP programme, if you pass the year with your peers, one day you would be proud of the effort, Mike".

Yes, there is no gain without pain and I would like to share a message with all of you. Assistive technologies are able support to perform well at a task, but it is the spirit within you that counts. Any student with a special ability has within her/him the spirit to find the best solution to a current problem, and just needs to reach out to the faculty to seek guidance. Placements at IIM Bangalore may be the best, but without sound judgment and a passion to know your limits, you would not do justice to the fine abilities and skills developed as a student of IIM Bangalore.
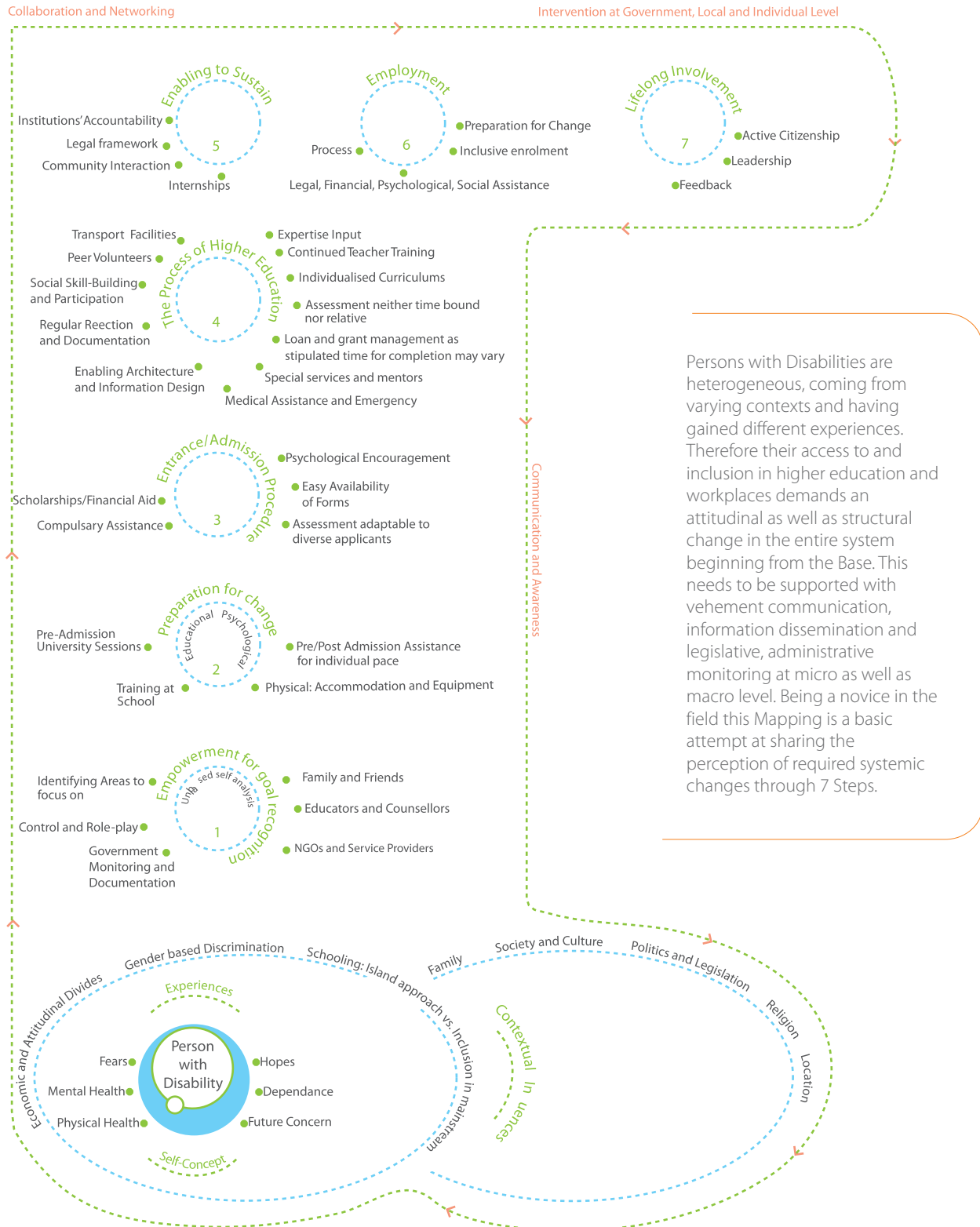
Difficulties will saddle you each day, but if you have grit don't turn back anyways. For time and tide wait for no man's say. Performer in you shall lead you today.

THE SEVEN STEPS TO INCLUSION

POORNIMA SARDANA

An independent researcher in the field of Design and Education. She is currently pursuing her post graduation at National Institute of Design (NID), Ahmedabad and is working on developing an Inclusive Communication Tool that assists in storytelling and dialogue creation.

Collaboration and Networking

Intervention at Government, Local and Individual Level

Enabling to Sustain — 5
Institutions' Accountability
Legal framework
Community Interaction
Internships

Employment — 6
Preparation for Change
Process
Inclusive enrolment
Legal, Financial, Psychological, Social Assistance

Lifelong Involvement — 7
Active Citizenship
Leadership
Feedback

The Process of Higher Education — 4
Transport Facilities
Peer Volunteers
Social Skill-Building and Participation
Regular Reection and Documentation
Enabling Architecture and Information Design
Expertise Input
Continued Teacher Training
Individualised Curriculums
Assessment neither time bound nor relative
Loan and grant management as stipulated time for completion may vary
Special services and mentors
Medical Assistance and Emergency

Entrance/Admission Procedure — 3
Scholarships/Financial Aid
Compulsary Assistance
Psychological Encouragement
Easy Availability of Forms
Assessment adaptable to diverse applicants

Preparation for change — 2
Educational   Psychological
Pre-Admission University Sessions
Training at School
Pre/Post Admission Assistance for individual pace
Physical: Accommodation and Equipment

Empowerment for goal recognition — 1
Unbiased self analysis
Identifying Areas to focus on
Control and Role-play
Government Monitoring and Documentation
Family and Friends
Educators and Counsellors
NGOs and Service Providers

Communication and Awareness

Persons with Disabilities are heterogeneous, coming from varying contexts and having gained different experiences. Therefore their access to and inclusion in higher education and workplaces demands an attitudinal as well as structural change in the entire system beginning from the Base. This needs to be supported with vehement communication, information dissemination and legislative, administrative monitoring at micro as well as macro level. Being a novice in the field this Mapping is a basic attempt at sharing the perception of required systemic changes through 7 Steps.

Experiences
Gender based Discrimination
Schooling: Island approach vs. Inclusion in mainstream
Family
Society and Culture
Politics and Legislation
Religion
Location
Economic and Attitudinal Divides

Self-Concept
Fears
Mental Health
Physical Health
Person with Disability
Hopes
Dependance
Future Concern

Contextual Influences

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RAMEEZ MUSHTAQ

A commercial pilot by profession, worked as Head Emergency Response at Mother Helpage Worldwide, a UK based disaster management company which runs Safe Water Programs in 23 countries. Representing the Kashmir- Mother helpage team at the World Disability Union, he focuses on seeking international experts to work for the betterment of PWD's & CWD's in India and J&K in particular.

PWD'S IN J&K

Jammu & Kashmir is the northern Part of India with its summer capital as Srinagar and winter as Jammu.

According to Census 2001, there were around three lakh physically challenged persons across the state, which has increased to over seven lakh during the last 10 years. The increase in disability cases is attributed to firing, blasts, street protests and other such incidents.

The preoccupation of the government to maintain law and order in the valley, particularly in the last three years, has meant that many vulnerable sections of the society continue to suffer. There has been a two-fold increase in the number of physically challenged persons in the valley over the last 10 years.

The World Disability Day, observed on 3rd of December, was marked by various functions, highlighting the plight of persons with physical disabilities. On the occasion, we also get to hear the ministers and officials talk at length about the problems faced by them and the schemes meant for their welfare. They don't go beyond the token gestures of giving prosthetic limbs, wheel chairs or financial support to few. As a result, the real problems facing this community remain unaddressed.

Given the situation in the valley in the last three years, there has been a sharp increase in the number of persons rendered handicap in police and CRPF action. Persons who survive bullet and pellet injuries add to the ever-growing list.

Given the situation in the valley in the last three years, there has been a sharp increase in the number of persons rendered handicap in police and CRPF action. Persons who survive bullet and pellet injuries add to the ever-growing list. There has also been a surge in cases of mental disorder in the past two decades. Some non-governmental organizations like Medicos Sans Frontiers (MSF) have been doing their bit to help people suffering from anxiety, depression and Post Traumatic Stress Disorders. According to MSF, 30 per cent of patients in the valley are suffering from anxiety and depression, 18 per cent are suffering from mental illness as a result of physical health problems, 15 per cent are mood related disorders and rest are suffering from psychological instability, domestic problems and trauma.

Among the affected, 60 percent are women. Furthermore, MSF has discovered that 50 per cent of these cases have trauma background related to conflict. The government must take concrete steps to alleviate their sufferings. The government must live up to its claims of improving the health sector. It must work for the betterment of persons suffering from physical and mental disabilities.

India as a country has recently started the process for harmonizing disability law 1995 with the UN – convention on Rights of persons with disabilities but still discriminating in relation to persons with mental retardation, autism, mental illness and multiple disabilities by not bringing National Trust Act 1999 into effect. Members of Legislative Assembly and Council should look into these voids. The question remains as to why best Acts of country are not adopted?

The corporate sector in J&K is also neglecting persons with disabilities. Apart from inaccessible websites all banks have inaccessible banking systems. No ATM in our state is accessible for severely disabled people.

A huge number of people visit civil secretariats but persons using wheel chairs who cannot access these offices are asked to meet officers at the gates. It is not common practice for officials to give their contact numbers or meet at the gate.

This is no solution. Access to all public places and Government offices needs to be addressed.

EDUCATION:

Almost three quarters of those with severe disabilities are illiterate, and even for those with mild disabilities, the illiteracy rate is around half. For severely disabled, just over 10 percent have achieved middle school and around 2 % higher education, and for moderately disabled people the share is only 20 percent.

Because of social stigma, inaccessible school buildings most discontinue there education after middle or high school and are isolated from society. They lack proper sources of Income and therefore dependent on others for their basic needs.

There are few schools for PWD's but most of them provide only basic education. There is hardly any professional or skill developing centre for PWD's in Kashmir. The Rural literacy rate of PWD's is way to smaller as compared to the Urban PWD population.

From creating accessible schools and colleges to enabling skill development centres, a lot needs to be done to help PWD's of J&K.

STEPS TOWARDS INCLUSION:
Access for all in Higher education

ANJLEE AGARWAL

Anjlee Agarwal, is co-author of Universal Design India Principles© developed at the National Institute of Design, India and Founder, Executive Director of Samarthyam. She can be reached @ www.samarthyam.org

The demonstrable impact of accessible features at higher education campuses and workplaces is far reaching. Not only does it create an awareness of conditions that encourage inclusion, but also imperceptibly they inculcate in an impressionable audience the standards that will be perpetuated by them in the future. Students at university are the most receptive to ideas of inclusion- the impact of not only creating an accessible atmosphere in their learning environment, but informing them of the benefits of accessible elements, the opportunities it opens up and also the challenges that crop up. At this stage, they can also be informed of the potential limitations of the lack of access, misapprehensions of cost implications, the hazards of poor implementation and understanding and the need to invest in safe, secure and low effort access for all.

While the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 makes it mandatory to make campuses, colleges, libraries and auditorium etc. accessible to all, as does the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), successful accessibility is dependent on proper implementation, a result of awareness and understanding of the concepts and impact of Universal Design. At present, educational opportunities are limited for those with disabilities due to lack of accessible classrooms, toilets, facilities and resources.

Access is the key to inclusion. For example, a ramp at the ground floor entrance, classes at the ground floor and availability of an accessible toilet can make a college accessible to the prospective disabled student, the absence of which denies them that education and their later employment opportunities. Similarly small interventions in the conception and design of a campus or even on an existing campus can not only create access for persons with locomotor limitations, but also for those with cognitive, sensory (vision or hearing impaired) and temporary ailments (reduced mobility) as well.

These opportunities that accessible features create for the persons with disabilities also expose others to their needs, reducing societal stigmas, promote and encourage independence and empowerment.

Samarthyam, National Centre for Accessible Environment is a civil society organisation that works at a national level to promote universal accessibility in the education system through the project "Access for All" under the Sakshar, Education for All initiative.

A multi-pronged approach to improving accessibility that has found some success includes Access Audits, Sensitization Workshops, including concepts of accessibility and Universal Design in the Curriculum of academic courses. An access audit is a capacity building exercise wherein the existing facilities are assessed and suggestions provided for further improvement. Similarly access appraisals of potential projects during the planning stage have proved instructive to all stakeholders.

A typical sensitization workshop conducted at a university with team of resource persons from Samarthyam raises awareness on access issues. Participants from the administration's civil engineering wing, student's welfare, faculty and students are invited. Other participants include architects, urban and town planners, policy makers, academic institutions, stake holders/service providers and NGO's. It also initiates the development of a Disability Cell. This leaves the participant with the awareness of the needs of persons with disability, the tools to make informed decisions and resources to support this initiative. Its aim is to improve buildings and places and make them more user friendly for "Everyone", including children, women, elderly persons and persons with disabilities.

These approaches go hand in hand with Networking, Advocacy and Lobbying – in promoting the rights of persons with disabilities to enhance their potential to exercise these rights.

A. CHIDAMBARAM

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WORDS FROM A TORCH BEARER

It is hard for people with physical, emotional or psychological disabilities to survive in our society. People with disabilities need compensatory skills to become self-sufficient and emotionally stable, even as they perceive the world as every other person does. In order to be able to reach out to this segment of the population, one must have a clear knowledge about the disability, their strengths, and weaknesses.

I realized that there is a huge disconnect between the enormous resources available on the one hand, and meeting the needs of people with disabilities on the other. As part of my on-going research, I have identified and documented, skilled and semi-skilled persons with disabilities who sell and beg on trains and in places of religious worship. Eleven districts in Tamil Nadu came under this survey. I documented the day to day struggles and difficulties in getting access to higher education.

I had put forth my findings to the Vice Chancellor of Pondicherry Central University and action was promptly taken. Free higher education, including boarding and lodging were instituted, along with making the University campus completely accessible. The University was recognized as a role model institute by the Government of India and received an award from the President.

I headed a political lobby in representing our requirements to the Government of Tamil Nadu under the leadership of the then Chief Minister Dr. J. Jayalalitha in 2005. The outcome included:

✤ Eight government orders came out on 16th March 2005 in the assembly session

✤ 324 disabled persons were placed in various government services in Grade A,B,C and D categories.
✤ 100 students were enrolled in Government Colleges for pursuing B.ED.
✤ Employment Relief Fund was sanctioned for visually impaired literates
✤ The order which banned recruitment of group C & D was lifted

I was also involved in influencing various government policies and secured maintenance grant for persons with severe disability on October 2006. The monthly grant was enhanced from Rs.200 to Rs.500 and the beneficiaries were increased from 10400 to 30000.

There was a vast difference in the census of 2001 and the district disabled rehabilitation centre data on disability in the Tirunelveli District in Tamil Nadu. I identified and brought it to the notice of the concerned officials. I sensitized the government officials to take the lead in training ICDS teachers and NGOs to conduct door-to-door surveys to identify the needs of the disabled. In 2007, they came out with updated data, which was followed by constituency-wise medical camp to distribute national identity cards for the people with disabilities. This effort was recognized by the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, who released a government order to other districts to conduct similar surveys.

The society is beginning to wake up to the needs of people with disabilities but a lot more needs to be done to make them financially and emotionally independent. They need a strong personal identity in society.

DISABILITY THROUGH A HUMAN RIGHTS PARADIGM

A progressive view of the issue is considered, one in which it becomes a charity issue where individuals become beneficiaries of charity groups and are constantly viewed as being in need of the kindness and benevolence of others.

It was through my work with L'Arche[1] that I had my first encounter with PWD's in India. During my ten plus years with L'Arche in India, US and Canada I realized the tremendous potential a person with disability brings to our society, and the enormous power they have in transforming individuals and societies to become better individuals and more just societies. In most cases, especially in India, these individuals were kept away from mainstream society and have to face many challenges before coming to live in L'Aarche. What was distressful for me to realize was that those handful of people are the lucky few who got into places like L'Arche but there are thousands of hidden faces in our villages and cities who are forbidden from participating in mainstream society.

In a country like India with many socio-cultural and religious beliefs and practises, disability is a more complex issue than in the US or Canada. However, while doing my master's degree in disability studies, I learned that one crucial aspect of the problem faced by people with disabilities in many places, and more so in countries like India, is the projection and treatment of the issue of disability as an individual or medical issue. Therefore, it remains an individual's or their family's problem to deal with it. A progressive view of the issue is considered, one in which it becomes a charity issue where individuals become beneficiaries of charity groups and are constantly viewed as being in need of the kindness and benevolence of others.

For people with disabilities to succeed in life and to practice full citizenship, there needs to be a paradigm shift in the conception and dissemination of disability in the public discourse in India and elsewhere. Construction of disability from individual, medical and charity models has to shift to the Rights model. This in turn will change the complex social construction of disability that produces different experiences and 'otherness' for individuals based on the socio-cultural, economic and political landscape. Disability is viewed and experienced quite differently by persons living in the West and the East. However, experiences of marginalization[2] and oppression that people with disabilities encounter on a daily basis is a common feature across many countries.

The individual and charity models of disability have been the prevailing constructs and continue to comprise the dominant paradigm which places the individual with disabilities under the shadow of an able bodied individual or under the medical system or in institutional care which render individuals as in need of help or in a permanent state of dependency. The human rights model of disability, which proposes disability as a rights issue and places the individual at the centre of all decisions affecting him/her. This model suggests that the main problems related to disability stems from the lack of responsiveness of the state and civil society to the difference that disability presents (UN, 2002).

Education, formal and informal, is the key to fighting ignorance and injustice placed on people living at the margins of India. A simple yet profound way of shifting to a human rights paradigm is to begin by introducing and developing disabilities studies courses at universities/colleges, incorporate it in the elementary school curriculum, and promote campaigns like "never the less" throughout the country.

In my experience at educational institutions in Canada, I have observed the human rights model is implemented through accessibility laws/policies, which would be a good model for India to follow. These policies are implemented throughout schools and universities all over Canada and services varies from   special accommodation, accessible buildings, educational assistants at

schools and disability services departments that cater the needs of students with disabilities etc. Alternatively, public spaces like libraries are equipped with systems to meet the needs of the person with disabilities and services like transportation are designed to accommodate persons with disabilities. Anti-discriminatory policies and special grants for employers hiring people with disabilities make work places accommodating and accessible for many people with disabilities, which make their educational success meaningful and helps them live with dignity and respect like persons without disabilities. According to UN reports, India has the best disability policies among the developing countries; however, implementation and best practice of these policies has been a challenge.

For persons with disabilities to reach their potential and to fight oppression, poverty and other experience of marginalization they have to have access to higher education. In India, so far the focus has been on vocational mode of training and rehabilitation when it comes to the educational need of students with disabilities, which is derived from the medical/individual model of disability. There needs to be a change in the manner in which students with disabilities are viewed, so they may have access to all available educational and professional opportunities to succeed in life. In my observation and from reviewing the UN, ILO and local reports one can see, not having access to higher education is a significant barrier for students with disabilities in India. Making admission available and campuses accessible will be the first steps in the right direction to overcome this constraint. Only a handful of post secondary and professional institutions in our country have ramps or any services available for students with disabilities. Another crucial step for inclusion is possible through collaborative work between academics and groups/movements led by people with disabilities. This as Barnes suggests (2006)[3] will provide a strong foundation for making inclusive higher educational policies and practices as the experience/voice of disabled people and the expertise of academics with logical and consistent political analysis come together.

Providing equal opportunities to education and work, and creating spaces for individual with disabilities to participate in the daily discourse, will bring people from the margins to the centre. In order for this to materialize, state and other private sector leaders need to take the lead and commit finances to making buildings accessible and develop policies for inclusionary work/education practices. Another crucial avenue will be through the media and literature by making room for silenced voices in order to deconstruct and alter the stereotyped images of people with disabilities as dependent and helpless to individuals with agency and voice who can contribute and help bring about change in society.

AGNES S THOMAS

Agnes S Thomas is currently a doctoral student at the department of Adult Education and Community Development at OISE, University Of Toronto. MA in Critical Disability Studies from York University, Canada and a Graduate diploma in Social Development from ST. Francis Xavier University, Canada. She is an active advocate for the right of PWD's and dreams to see progressive change in the area of education for students with special needs.

In India, so far the focus has been on vocational mode of training and rehabilitation when it comes to the educational need of students with disabilities, which is derived from the medical/individual model of disability. There needs to be a change...

1 L'Arche is an international federation of communities founded by Jean Vanier where people with developmental disabilities, and those who choose to share life with them, live and work together (Larche.org, 2011).

2 According to UNESCO, (2000), "Marginalization occurs when people are systematically excluded from meaningful participation in economic, social, political, cultural and other forms of human activity in their communities and thus are denied the opportunity to fulfil themselves as human beings."

3 (Barnes, 2006)British Journal of Sociology of Education Vol. 28, No. 1, January 2007, pp. 135–145

LEAD SCHOOL TRANSITION SERVICE FLEXIBLE PATHWAYS

COLIN GLADSTONE

Colin Gladstone is Manager Lead School Transition Service atthe Christchurch, New Zealand and can be reached at gladbrick@yahoo.co.uk or schoolstransition@allenvale.school.nz

As Manager of the Lead School Transition Service I am delighted to tell you about our exciting service that is improving post-school outcomes for a group of young people who have historically found it difficult to make the transition into a 'happy and productive life'.

Transition for disabled secondary school aged students in Christchurch had been identified for some time as an area of concern and often lacking a consistent and co-ordinated approach. In 2007, the Wayne Francis Charitable Trust commissioned a research project that undertook a literature review and wide consultation process to produce a report in 2008 that identified systemic issues in the transition of students with disabilities and those who may be identified as having learning difficulties. The report recommended a Ten Point Best Practice framework to underpin future work.

Best Practice Framework for Transition of Students with disabilities (Established by Wayne Francis Trust/Creative Solutions 2008)

01. Transition starts to occur no later than the age of 14 years and is part of a specific transition planning process that aims to develop academic potential as well as functional transition skills.

02. The process is driven by the student and the student/whanau is actively engaged in determining/implementing their future goals.

03. Partnerships between the school and community supports are developed at least 2 years before the young person leaves school.

04. The transition programme is integrated within the structure of general education rather than as a separate and parallel programme.

05. The process identifies and overcomes barriers to the disabled student's learning and support.

06. The students/whanau are offered information and support that opens the door to a wider range of inclusive community based options.

07. A clear distinction is made between the transition needs of the young person and those of their family.

08. Functional transition skills are in the curriculum and practised at home.

09. Those at school after 18 years of age receive services in adult settings.

10. The outcomes of the transition planning process are regularly evaluated.

In late 2008, the Trust looked to The Ministry of Education to show leadership in this work. The Ministry formed a Transition Working Party involving key players within the community, with representation from the Young people with disabilities, Parents, Canterbury Chamber of Commerce, the Ministries of Education, Health and Social Development, the Tertiary Sector, Ngai Tahu, Schools, Vocational Services, Community Groups and Supported Employment. The working party developed a vision of what an effective transition service would look like, what its key activities would be, how it would meet the needs of students, whanau and schools and how it could be funded. The working party also considered how such a service could deliver better outcomes for disabled secondary aged students, as well as how to encourage communities to place greater value on disability. Following these discussions, the working party determined that a new approach to the provision of transition was required.

Further consultation and collaboration resulted in the development of A Lead School Transition Service (LST) model, underpinned by the Ten Point Best Practice Guidelines. The Service scope is to

build the capacity and capability of schools to better support disabled students while establishing a framework for inter-agency collaboration and community based initiatives. The model allows for the delivery of a dedicated, collaborative and co-ordinated transition service across originally eight, but currently now ten participating Christchurch secondary schools which maximises access to a range of employment, tertiary and community based options post secondary school.

The Transition Service provides a range of services including transition planning, tools and resources, advice, support and critical intervention and crucially professional development for school staff. It has developed a comprehensive planning resource for schools called the 'Transition Toolkit' with a supporting programme of professional development to ensure its effective implementation. It encourages inclusive and active involvement of students and parents and works in a collaborative way to inform, link, educate, develop and share. It has established a number of networks for young people, parents and teachers that all have their own regular termly meetings, seminars/workshops and newsletters. Over seventy students turned up to the last student seminar from across the schools, a great way to make new friends! The student network has elected its own student committee to run its affairs with the support of Pratima a university graduate who works for LST part-time and has a physical disability herself. Students without disabilities attend this network to forge stronger links and understanding. LST organises a disability sector presence at the Coca Cola Career Expo and has recently launched a website www.newzealanders.org in response to the Canterbury earthquakes and this resource will be developed over the coming months. I am particularly excited about an inter-agency project that we are currently developing with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Social Development to use funding flexibly to support both funded and non-funded students who require considerable support with their transition to post-school life.

Allenvale School is the Lead School for the Transition Service with me as Manager, Sally and Pratima making up the dream team! The Lead School Transition Service has been developed by building strong relationships, fresh thinking, innovative ideas and solutions. The participating schools have contributed to the project through re-alignment of current funding streams, the Wayne Francis Trust made a one off donation in the first year and the Ministry of Education contributes to ongoing costs for administration, travel and resources.

The service has just completed its second year in

It encourages inclusive and active involvement of students and parents and works in a collaborative way to inform, link, educate, develop and share. It has established a number of networks for young people, parents and teachers that all have their own regular termly meetings, seminars/workshops and newsletters.

operation and has been taken on as the 'learning in action' project by the Government Officials Group on Transition in Wellington. It has also been recognised by the Ministry of Education as an example of best practice in their recent Special Education Review document.

In writing this article I would like to finish by providing some thoughts to ponder:

❐ Young people and their parents/caregivers and families should be at the centre of the transition process.

❐ Good careers and transition planning should be a requirement for ALL students and is not something done particularly well in schools across many contemporary western countries.

❐ Effective career and transition planning considers the whole of a person's life.

❐ A 'whole of school' approach is required when working with disabled students or those who require more support. By this I mean the culture, values and leadership of the school creates an environment where ALL students are embraced and succeed.

❐ Schools should be required to demonstrate they are 'inclusive confident'.

❐ ALL teachers should be supported to be leaders of inclusive teaching and learning.

❐ Effective transitions are all about creating effective relationships.

❐ A 'person centred' approach is required rather than a service centred reaction.

❐ A 'consortium based' approach by clusters of schools maximises opportunities for ALL involved.

❐ A generic transition planning process should be in place in ALL schools.

❐ Consistent, accessible information should be available to ALL young people and their parents/caregivers and family.

RAHUL CHERIAN

Specialises in intellectual property rights and is recommended by the Legal 500 for his expertise in this field. He is also a leading disability policy activist with extensive work in the area of copyright law. He can be reached at: rahul.cherian@inclusiveplanet.com

INCLUSIVE PLANET
Centre for disability law and policy

Inclusive Planet Disability Law & Policy Centre works toward bringing about effective disability policy changes in India so as to ensure that India complies with its obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ("UNCRPD"). Inclusive Planet works with lawyers, academics and researchers from 2009 to contextualize the requirements of the disability movement within the Indian legal framework and provide support to the disability movement to enable policy change.

ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Higher education and employment remains out of reach for persons with disabilities due to 3 primary problems:
❑ lack of physical access (for persons with physical disabilities) and lack of access to electronic infrastructure (for persons with visual impairment);
❑ lack of educational material and reference material in accessible formats due to copyright-related barriers (for persons with visual impairment); and
❑ discrimination in the admission and the recruitment process, particularly by the private sector.

INCLUSIVE PLANET INITIATIVES:

India's new disabilities legislation
India is in the process of revamping its disabilities legislation to comply with its international obligations under the UNCRPD. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has prepared a draft new legislation to replace the outdated Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995. However, this draft leaves a lot to be desired not only in terms of coverage but also in terms of the legal wording of the draft. For example, the proposed legislation does not cover the provision of accessible electronic infrastructure at the workplace, which is critical to enable persons with visual impairment perform at the workplace.

Similarly, the draft completely excludes technology from the purview of reasonable accommodation that is required to be provided by institutions and organisations.

Amendment to the Indian Copyright Act
Inclusive Planet was instrumental in conceptualizing and executing a national Right to Read Campaign to bring about changes in copyright law to enable persons with disabilities access copyrighted work on an equal basis with persons without disabilities. Inclusive Planet was invited by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Copyright to make submissions after which the Committee in its report accepted the submissions made to them. This amendment, which proposes the most progressive wording in the world is ready and is awaiting introduction in Parliament

Copyright Treaty for the Visually impaired at the World Intellectual Property Organisation

Rahul Cherian was one of the experts who helped draft the TVI. Subsequently Inclusive Planet has been assisting the World Blind Union in advocating for the Treaty at the World Intellectual Property Organization at Geneva. As part of our role, Inclusive Planet assists the World Blind Union with strategy as well as with input in understanding the legal implications in the wordings of various instruments proposed at WIPO.

Disability plan for the State of Kerala
As chairman of the Working Group on disability constituted by the Kerala State Planning Board, Rahul Cherian helped the southern Indian State of Kerala draft a plan document with a vision to ensure that by the year 2025 persons with disabilities are completely integrated into mainstream society.

CLYDE WHITE JR

Clyde White Jr, with American University's School of International Service Washington, DC, United States can be reached at www. aseanidpp.org

ONLINE COURSE IN DISABILITY STUDIES AND PUBLIC POLICY

The Disability Policy and Organization: UNCRPD course is part of the Institute on Disability and Public Policy's Masters degree program. This is the world's first virtual Masters programme on disability studies and public policy.

Our current program is focused on the ASEAN Region, but the degree itself is granted from American University in Washington, DC. We are wrapping up our first semester of the program, with a wonderful cohort of 10 students. As the program is completely virtual, it is open to students worldwide; however, through the Nippon Foundation, we are able to offer fellowships for up to 15 students who live in the ASEAN region and have a documented physical disability (deaf/hard of hearing, blind/visually impaired, and/or mobility impaired). The class on the UNCRPD is taught by Ambassador Luis Gallegos, one of the authors of the Convention itself.

The admissions window for Fall 2012 is currently open, and this class will be taught again the next fall. For anyone seeking more information about our program, please visit our website at http://aseanidpp.org/

Innovative
IDPP offers the world's first virtual Masters program on disability studies and public policy. The programme cuts across geographic boundaries, allowing faculty to teach, and students to be taught, entirely online.

Flexible
The Master's of International Affairs in Comparative and International Disability Policy is accessible to students regardless of disability, impairment, special need, or location.

Anywhere
Students can participate from anywhere with an internet connection. Our cyber infrastructure facilitates, course delivery, administration, and collaboration among geographically distributed students and faculty.

Contact admissions@aseanidpp.org with questions or concerns regarding this deadline.

Admission to the Master's of International Affairs in Comparative and International Disability Policy (CIDP) degree program through American University's School of International Service is open to all students who meet the criteria listed below. Preference for the Nippon Foundation Fellowships is given to those applicants who are residents of an ASEAN country and living with one of the eligible disabilities Once completed applications are received, they will be comprehensively and carefully reviewed. Applications are only accepted for Fall admission.

VISHNU MURTHY

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CHALLENGES MULTI FOLD

Understanding prevalence rate of disability in India has always been a challenge. It is estimated that somewhere between 5 to 20 percent of our population is effected with one or more type of disability. Though it is very critical to have accurate senses on prevalence rate of disability to know it's magnitude in the society, it is evident that people with disability are integral part of our society and they are subjected to discrimination, marginalization and excluded in all stages and spheres of life. The irony is that the world has set itself a target to provide education to all by 2015 but disability is not mentioned in the United Nations millennium development goals. It is important to note that without inclusion of persons with disability it is impossible to achieve the millennium development goals..

Before we understand challenges at higher education it is important to take a look at the primary education for children with disability. For mental and physical growth of a child early days of parenting care is very essential.

During the last senses it was observed that approximately 3%of the children between age group of 0 to 14 years in urban areas have developmental delays, and in rural areas it is 29

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out of every 1000 children, which also indicates a high numbers as mental retardation.

With this background the challenges for persons with disability at higher education goes up multi-fold, namely mobility, economic deprivation, inaccessible environment, lack of direction towards career and difficulty in accessing education materials, etc. In addition to this, the availability of resources like technology and professionals like sign language interpreters is not in proportion to the need, despite the fact that they are an integral part of reasonable accommodation. Having said these, the challenges are increasing based on type and level of disability. Addressing these issues, especially in relation to education and skill enhancement, will not only create livelihood opportunities for persons with special needs but will also ensure their inclusion and well being.

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MAKING THE DISABLED, DIFFERENTLY-ABLED ACCESS HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

It is indeed an achievement that in the last one decade, government, policymakers, and the institutions of higher education (IITs, IIMs, JNU, and many more) have recognised the special needs of differently-abled people and taken steps to provide them equal opportunity and rights based on equity to excel in their respective field. However, it is limited to very few institutions, particularly governed and regulated by the government (University Grants Commission, Ministry of Human Resource and Development, etc.). Still a large number of private and even government institutions of higher education have not recognised the needs of differently-abled population and have not done much for it.

The study by National Centre for Promotion of Employment of PWDs (NCPEDP, 2004) shows that only 0.1 percent of students with disabilities were in mainstream educational institutions at the university level and 0.51 percent at the primary and secondary level, a negligible figure compared to the 3 percent reservation enacted by the Persons with Disability (PWD) Act (1995). In such a scenario, there is need that regulatory bodies like All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) and the Medical Council of India (MCI) make it mandatory for institutions to have a policy for the differently-abled and implement it earnestly. Even institutions of higher education which claim to be concerned in addressing the needs of differently-abled do it half-heartedly, limiting themselves to fulfil seats,

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appointments and some specific provisions for making barrier-free environment for differently-abled like audio-visual facilities, ramps and toilets, etc. Unfortunately, despite these initiatives, differently-abled students in institutions of higher education remain under-represented. We need to understand that these initiatives are not enough for mainstreaming differently-abled citizens with the general population. There is a cognitive barrier which needs to be broken, challenged, and changed, which makes it difficult to accept differently-abled as one among us.

The Census of India (2011) shows that 6 to 7 percent of India's population is differently-abled and it is estimated that this number will

increase due to poverty, malnutrition, emergence of new diseases, drug-abuse, road-accidents, armed-conflict, violence, poor health care and service, and other factors leading to disability. The World Bank Report (2007) predicts that between 1990 and 2020, there would be a doubling of disabled population due to injuries and accidents, and a more than 40 percent increase may be witnessed in the share of disability due to non-communicable diseases. This compels us to think that India should have a comprehensive policy for differently-abled people to ensure their access to higher education and employment, which is based on a multi-faceted approach to make them realize their full individual potential and maximize their social and economic contribution to the society.

The study by NCPEDP shows that employment need of differently-abled remains unmet despite the PWD Act which advocated for 3 percent reservation in government jobs. The study also shows that of the some 70 million differently-abled people in India, only about 1,00,000 have succeeded in obtaining employment in industry. Although the PWD Act provides incentives to private sector employers for promoting PWD employment, the percentage of employees with disabilities in multinational corporations is only 0.05 percent (World Bank Report, 2007). We need to understand the strong linkages between economy and disability. After globalisation and neo-liberal economic reforms in the 1990s, employment opportunities have increased, but this has mostly benefitted the middle-classes and highly-skilled differently-abled persons, leaving the majority of that population out of India's economic affluence (Hiranandani and Sonpal, 2010).

Differently-abled people face many physical and systemic barriers but cognitive and attitudinal barriers are the major concerns. Our society at large and teachers and employers in particular do not expect much from differently-abled people, which hinders them to prove their excellence and worth as any ordinary citizen would normally have. These attitudes keep people away from appreciating and experiencing the full potential of differently-abled. The most pervasive negative attitude is focusing on a person's disability rather than on an individual's abilities. For a manager his

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or her managerial skills and deliverables should be important, not his or her disability. This manger could be blind and may access books through a Kurzweil reader is immaterial. We need to understand that differently-abled people do not need patronization and the drive to relegate them to low-skill jobs, setting different job standards; one should not expect a worker with a disability to simply be content by appreciating the opportunity he or she gets to work instead of demanding equal pay, benefits, opportunity and access to workplace amenities. Unless we work to break these cognitive and attitudinal barriers, access to education and employment will remain a dream for the differently-abled population, even in our citadels of higher learning.

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LIFE OF SELF–EXPRESSION AND JOY

People with different abilities, like people with normal abilities, have two options – One to find a way to live day to day life such that they are in the race of so called successful life and survive as one more human being before we leave the body. This way of living is most acceptable for all of us and I am sure we all would accept that this is the only option available, some of you may say "not the only option, but yes at least the only wise option".

Then there is another option – Living a life of Self–Expression and Joy. In here, life's joy is not dependent upon what you have or what you don't have. You find yourself engaged so much in what matters to you that life's current circumstances and challenges become an opportunity for you, and you are left with natural ways of generating energy and enthusiasm in life, and ways to use your natural human faculties such that nothing comes in the way of living a life of total self-expression. This I call a true celebration of life.

At the outset, for most of you, what I am saying may sound like a good philosophy that may seem coming out straight from a motivational book or some self-help book. But given the fact I deal with these two options in my everyday life at every walk of life, has got me to a place in life that I can now boldly claim that life's circumstances or the abilities or disabilities of human body has no relationship with living a life of dignity, honor, joy and a life that can be of contribution.

In 37 years of my life, what I think has made a profound difference to me and my life is the thinking of my people about what is possible for me. It starts with my mother, born and brought up in a traditional Rajasthani family. The limitation in her academic education or cultural and religious background did not cloud her thinking about what was possible for her son, whose entire body was affected by polio. In addition to the usual challenges of parents in bringing up their kids, (in my parents' case, we are five) and creating financial stability for the future of an entire family, my parents had a new challenge to deal with- my physical disability.

It is not that my parents had some special education to take care of me, nor did they undergo some training to take care of differently-abled people. When I look back 37 years of life, I am amazed by the greatness of my parents. And I am sure that the greatness and generosity of my parents was so contagious that my brother, my sisters, my friends, my professional colleagues and whoever I meet are infected with this unique belief that "anything is possible for me". Perhaps this belief of people in every stage of my life made me so successful, that today I can think beyond just myself.

The current policies and laws of government to address the challenges of people with disabilities require transformation. As long as our policies, laws, regulations and project spring from a perspective of limited possibilities. I am afraid that nothing much can impact their lives. It's rare to find people like my mother, for whom her son living an extra-ordinary life was not only important, but was also able to make it a reality.

When You start thinking from that direction (like my mother did) you will not want differently-abled people to struggle, beg or fight for basic needs rather you would empower them to earn what they want. When you (You means

The current policies and laws of government to address the challenges of people with disabilities require transformation.

people with normal abilities) start thinking from a perspective that "anything is possible", What Will happen to me? (Me means differently abled people)

- ✥ I will not see special schools for me but I will find schools where all my needs can be taken care, to be equally educated like you and so

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that I can share my insights and views about any subject with you and at the same time I can have fun and friendship with You.

- ✥ I will not sit at home and watch movies in TV/DVD – I will find theaters and halls that are equipped and where You can take me too and we can share with each other good and gala times.
- ✥ I will not have to look for job quotas. I will find You openly challenging me to explore my talent and make use of knowledge not only to take care of my basic needs but also to fulfill my commitment as your brother, sister or friend or employee.
- ✥ I will not have to sit at one place and crib about life or circumstances – I will have freedom to move anywhere and express in any field.
- ✥ I will not have to question the existence of God – Like you I can come to temple/church or mosque to experience the divinity and peace of my God and so that I can find God in everything including You.

With the belief that anything is possible, 'Trust Astha', a journey of faith was formed. I truly have trust in all who are working on this aspect of people in our country (if my mom can trust me, I am sure I can trust You too and I am sure you do not have anything less that tell me not to trust You). With this trust I am sure in next two years we can together eliminate the difference between You and I.

Some of us walk differently, nevertheless we are the same.

Almost 70 million in India are excluded because we don't understand the uniqueness.

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