EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHEME IEDSS IN INDIA

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgement
Executive Summary
List of Tables & Figures

Chapter I     Introduction            1-18
Chapter II    Review of Literature    19-39
Chapter III   Methodology            40-45
Chapter IV    Results and Analysis   46-95
Chapter V     Discussion and Recommendations  96-114
References                                             115-130
Annexures
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Executive Summary

Children with disabilities constitute one of the largest groups that are still outside the fold of the general education system. The earlier scheme of ‘Integrated Education for the Disabled Children (IEDC)’ introduced in the 1970’s, covered children with disabilities at all levels of school education. This scheme was revised in 2009 as ‘Inclusive Education of the Disabled at the Secondary Stage’ (IEDSS) because of two reasons. Firstly, there was a paradigm shift from charity approach to rights approach for persons with disabilities and schools needed to be organized accordingly and secondly, the special needs of children with disabilities at the elementary stage were being addressed under the umbrella programme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA).

The IEDSS scheme provided an opportunity to all students with disabilities completing eight years of elementary schooling to complete four years of secondary schooling (classes IX to XII) in an inclusive and enabling environment. The scheme is being implemented by different organizations/divisions under the Education Departments of State Governments/UT Administrations on the basis of 100% Central Assistance. The scheme covers all children of age 14+ passing out of elementary schools and studying in Secondary Stage in Government, Local Body and Government-aided schools, with one or more disabilities as defined under the Persons with Disabilities Act (1995) and the National Trust Act (1999) in the age group 14+ to 18+, namely

- Blindness
- Low vision
- Leprosy cured
- Hearing impairment
- Locomotor disabilities
- Mental retardation
- Mental illness
- Autism
- Cerebral palsy

Girls with disabilities receive special focus under the scheme and efforts are to be made under the scheme to help them gain access to secondary schools, as also to information and guidance for developing their potential.

The Scheme is being implemented in a number of States from the year 2009. However, the funds under the scheme go under utilized and the proposals submitted for funding are generally structured loosely without any evidence of demands matching with the special needs of children with disabilities. Also, the data from the Seventh All India School Education Survey (7th AISES), Schools for Physically Challenged Children (2008) shows a sharp decline from upper primary stage to secondary stage of education. Specifically, at the senior secondary level, very few children with disabilities are enrolled. Realizing this dismal scenario, the Department of Education of Groups with Special Needs (DEGSN), NCERT, undertook a study entitled “Evaluation of the Implementation of the Scheme IEDSS in India” sponsored by
Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). The major objectives of the study were:

1. To assess the current impact of the scheme on enrolment, access, retention of students with disabilities at the secondary and higher secondary stage.
2. To find out whether the students covered under this scheme are getting the required resource support in terms of trained (general and special) teachers, assistive devices, appropriate teaching materials and learning environment etc.
3. To identify good practices of inclusive education in the States at the secondary stage.
4. To assess the role of State Governments in planning, implementation and monitoring of the scheme.

In addition, the study tried to assess the special needs of girl students with disabilities and of students with disabilities belonging to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other disadvantaged groups.

**Methodology**

The data for the study was collected from 27 States/UTs where the IEDSS scheme was being implemented after the approval of the proposals by the MHRD. Data was collected by the study team through personal visits to the concerned States/UTs and interaction with the IEDSS coordinators/administrators, principals/heads of the schools, teachers, students with disabilities and their parents. The tools used were: a) State Information Blank; b) Teacher Interaction Schedule; c) Students Interaction Schedule and d) Classroom Observation Schedule. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis of data was carried out. Data was also collected from 203 teachers and 278 students.

**Major Findings**

- Out of 35 States/UTs, 16 States/UTs started implementation of IEDSS in 2009-10, 7 States/UTs started it in 2010-11 and 4 States/UTs started it in 2011-12. Eight States/UTs, namely Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Goa, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand and Lakshadweep are still not implementing the IEDSS.
- Seventeen States/UTs have established the administrative cell for implementing this scheme. However, 10 States still need to establish a proper cell.
- Enrolment has increased in 11 States from 2009-10 to 2011-12. In Uttarakhand and West Bengal, that have given data for only two years, show an increase in enrolment. However, there is a decrease in enrolment in States like, Daman & Diu, Tripura & Bihar. In Manipur (Data has been given although the Scheme was implemented only in 2010-11), there is a decrease in enrolment from 2009-12 but increase in the year 2012-13. Delhi, Mizoram, Puducherry and Punjab show a mixed trend.
• The enrolment of girl students with disabilities is 43.57% in 2009-10, 43.07% in 2010-11, 41.51% in 2011-12, and 40.21% in 2012-13. Comparison of boys and girls enrolment in the year 2012-13 indicate a gender gap in enrolment in eleven States out of the thirteen States that have given relevant data. However, in Manipur the girls enrolment is more than boys and in Daman & Diu it is equal.

• The enrolment of girl students with disabilities is consistently below 40% level in the States of Gujarat, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Nagaland, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu.

• Percentage of girls has decreased over years in the States of Gujarat, Karnataka, Puducherry and Tamil Nadu. An increase in enrolment over the years is seen in Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Manipur, Mizoram, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan.

• Four States Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Nagaland and Andaman & Nicobar show an increase in drop out rates. One State, Odisha shows decrease in drop out in the second year but again an increase in drop out in the third year.

• The major reasons stated for dropping out are: shortage of special teachers in the States, disturbances in Maoist affected and tribal areas, poverty and social stigmas attached to disability, lack of modified/adapted curriculum, lack of awareness and sensitization, absence of secondary schools in the neighbourhood especially for girls: absence of basic infrastructural and other facilities in school: and absence of linkage between different inclusive schemes/interventions, between different departments, and between school and vocational education.

• Eleven States gave lack of funds as a major reason for not giving assistive devices to students with disabilities and wanted Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO), under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment to be harnessed with this scheme. Lack of awareness was also considered to be a reason for this.

• Construction of resource rooms has taken place in ten States and even these are not very well equipped and functional. The States were of the opinion that more funds should be provided for this activity under the scheme.

• Six States have carried out activities to create an enabling physical environment and eight are in the process of doing so. However, the removal of architectural barriers remain limited mainly to creation of ramps, railings and in few places toilets. Some of the States stated lack of timely allotment of funds as the main reason for not taking up this task. Students from various States have expressed the need for better adapted toilets and playgrounds.

• Only 12 states have appointed special teachers under IEDSS. These states are Assam, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, and Tamil Nadu. The major problem for appointing special teachers in the States, as stated, is lack of trained teachers and the recruitment policies of the States.

• Twelve States namely Assam, Delhi, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Puducherry and Uttarakhand, have provided training on special needs education to general teachers. Only 3 States have provided training for more than 5 days to general teachers.
• Assam Gujarat, Haryana Karnataka, Kerala, Mizoram, Odisha and Puducherry provided training to special teachers appointed by them.

• Only seven States have given relaxation in evaluation procedures in terms of time, type of questions, grace marks/reducing passing percentage and weightage to co-curricular activities.

• Only six states have provided information regarding relaxation in admission procedures for students with disabilities in terms of age of admission, reservation and no rejection policy.

• Setting up model schools is a slow activity in the States. Only two States, Haryana and Kerala reported setting up model schools under this scheme. Other States reported that they are in the process of setting up these schools.

• Almost all the students with disabilities (99%) expressed that they like coming to the school and half of them (49%) reported that they did not face any difficulties.

• Majority of the students with disabilities (83%) interviewed did not specify the facilities being provided to them.

• While 6.5% of students with disabilities like all aspects of the school, 18.2% like studies, 15.3% like teachers, 12.7% like classmates and friends, 11.3% like reading, 8.4% like games and sports and the rest like other aspects of the school like cultural activities, library, Mid-day Meal, Art and Craft etc.

• The students like the most those classmates who helped them in their daily activities.

• Nearly half of the students (44.5%) expressed the need for special attention from their teachers.

• Majority of students with disabilities (87.3%) interviewed attend classes regularly.

• Almost half of students with disabilities (55%) stated that they get adequate chance of participating in extra-curricular activities.

• Only 35.1% of teachers interviewed identify the needs of students with disabilities.

• Only 29% of teachers face difficulty during the classroom teaching.

• Majority of the teachers (88.1%) gave no response to the question regarding the strategies used for meeting the special educational needs of these students in the classroom.

• More than half teachers interviewed gave no response to the question regarding the how they included these children in their regular day to day teaching.

• More than half of the teachers (57 %) have not received any training for meeting the special needs of children in the classroom.

• The two UTs not implementing the scheme stated that they are in the process of sending the proposals (Dadar & Nagar Haveli) or are harnessing resource support from the SSA (Chandigarh).

• The special needs of children having mental illnesses, although covered under
the scheme, are neither being identified nor being taken care of like other disabilities.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are made for strenghtening the implementation of Scheme of IEDSS

- There is a need to address the gap between the students passing out of elementary classes and enrolling in secondary schools. The IEDSS Scheme needs to develop a data base for tracking the child's progress from elementary to secondary in partnership with SSA. The gaps may occur because of number of reasons, for example, some students may take admission in private schools, special schools or branch to vocations.

- Low enrolment of girl students is a serious concern at this level of education. Strong initiatives are required to increase enrolment of girls. All the facilities earmarked for this purpose like escort allowance, stipend to girl students, transport facilities, hostel facilities, adapted toilets should be a priority for the States.

- Children studying through the Open school system which may be another option for gaining education at secondary and higher secondary levels must also benefit from the provisions of the scheme. The scheme can be revised accordingly. Linkages need to be developed also between this scheme and Vocational education component at secondary and senior secondary level.

- There is lack of awareness regarding different types of aids and appliances suitable for different disabilities as well as their availability. Also, the aids and appliances component of the scheme may include provisions for the maintainance of devices.

- Identification of special educational needs (SEN) should be built on the earlier assessments done under SSA. Interpretation of SEN should be done more broadly and not restrict to definitions given in the PWD Act, 1995. Unnecessary labeling like low vision, learning disablity without a proper mechanism of assessment of special needs will segregate these children within an inclusive system.

- The class size must include to a maximum of 30 students in general and a maximum of 20 in case the class includes children with SEN.

- Resource rooms are required at school level as these are more beneficial and accessible for students with disability.

- All the schools should be made architecturally barrier free irrespective of the enrolment and category of students with disabilities.

- The component of 'inclusive education' should be made compulsory at all levels
of teacher training. The course of teacher training need restructuring focussing on inclusive practices and strategies.

- RCI should take the initiative to prepare a complete database on number of special teachers trained each year. This will help in bridging up the gap between demand and supply of special teachers.

- Uniform recruitment policies should be followed by States for appointing special teachers.

- Guidelines for relaxation in evaluation procedures could be developed by the States following the CBSE norms.

- The curriculum has to be broad, flexible and appropriate to accommodate the diversity of school children including those with disability in both cognitive and noncognitive areas.

- It is important to make support services available in the form of technology (including ICT), teaching–learning materials and specialists. Very few States are doing this inspite of the provisions available.

- It is important to develop perspective and skills in all administrators, including school principals, for planning and executing programmes based on the philosophy of inclusion. Policymakers in States should be provided awareness/orientation programmes and guidelines for preparing detailed proposal including all the components under the scheme. The provisions must match the identified SEN of students.

- The scheme can be strengthened by harnessing different innovative movements in different States.

- Students who can study in regular schools must be given opportunity to do so. Only children with very severe and profound disability conditions need to be put under home based education.

- It is sometimes difficult for students with disability to walk up to school in difficult terrains like hilly areas. Regular schools should provide them with hostel facility if necessary. This is one of the component under the scheme also.

- The scheme of IEDSS needs to be strengthened by involving Institutions like SCERTs, DIETs NUEPA and the National Institutes.

- IEDSS coordinators should be in constant touch with the institutions working in the area of special/inclusive education in their respective States. This includes special schools and NGOs working in this area and located near the schools.

- Attitudinal barriers are a serious concern and need to be addressed seriously through sensitization programmes

- The procedure of releasing funds need to be made simpler by removing various
levels. It would be simpler if funds are directly released to schools implementing the scheme.

- Getting a disability certificate from the medical board is sometimes a nightmare for parents of children with disabilities. Also, it may not be permanent certificate as the disability condition may change over time. It is important that admission, retention, getting support facilities, scholarships, and full participation of children in all aspects of education, should not be subject to any criteria based on assessment tests, judgment by professionals and experts including psycho-medical certificates. No child with disabilities should be asked to produce certificates either for admission, examination, getting support facilities/scholarships, etc. as far as possible.

- It is important to nurture all aspects of the personality, viz., cognitive, affective, and conative—games, dance, drama, music, and art and craft must be given equal importance and value. The scheme must focus on these aspects also.

- All the new schemes and programmes like the 'Augmenting School Education through Public Private Partnership' that involves setting up of 2500 Rashtriya Aadarsh Vidyalayas especially for providing access to quality education for the children of under-privileged families should develop these model schools as inclusive schools.

- Alternative curricula should be developed for children with intellectual disabilities.

- Community involvement is an important factor for facilitating inclusion of children with disabilities in education. In the absence of resource support, community members like the other children in the neighbourhood, retired persons in the community etc. can make a lot of difference to the lives of these children.

- There is a need to draw linkages between the SSA and IEDSS since both these programmes are equally important. There should be smooth transition from elementary level to secondary level and since different special needs have to be addressed at both these levels, provisions should be accordingly harnessed.

- The scheme should also provide exemption from the fee component in schools for children with disabilities studying in Government or Government aided schools. At present this is not being covered under the scheme.

**Suggestions for Research**

The following are the areas of research emerging from the findings of this research study:

- Assessing the training needs of regular and special teachers and creating a database of trained teachers
• Identifying the reasons for dropping out of schools by children with disabilities

• Studying the attitudes of administrators and teachers toward inclusive education

• Studying the difference in effectiveness of general teachers who have received training for inclusive education and of those who have not received training for inclusive education.

• Evaluating the teacher education curriculum for pre-service from the perspective of inclusive education.

• Studying the existing in-service training programmes for their efficacy from the perspective of inclusive classrooms

• Studying the practices/models adopted by States that are successfully implementing the IEDSS Scheme.

• Taking up in-depth/longitudinal studies on identifying the special needs of children belonging to socially disadvantaged groups and girl students.

• Taking up sample studies for mapping the out of school /hidden children with disabilities.

• Researching the reasons for poor enrolment of girl students.

**Conclusion**

It is a fact that students with disabilities reduce in numbers as they go up the education ladder. Earlier surveys have shown that by the time they reach secondary and higher secondary levels, only $1/8^{th}$ of students enrolled at primary level are left at the higher secondary level. On the other hand, there are various good centrally sponsored schemes like the IEDSS that gives 100 per cent provision to facilitate inclusion of children with disabilities at the secondary and higher secondary levels. In spite of this, students express lack of special attention, teachers express lack of training, administrators express helplessness as they are not aware of the special needs of these children and as a result, not able to develop annual plans matching their special needs.

The wide gap between policy provisions and actual utilization of these provisions needs to be addressed through significant interventions. Some of the challenges as indicated by the results of the study are the following: understanding of Inclusion, attitudes, collaboration, administrative support, planning and management, training.
List of Tables

Table 3.1 States Implementing the IEDSS Scheme
Table 4.1 Details of funds released under Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS)
Table 4.2 IEDSS Administrative Cell & Concerned Personnel/Department
Table 4.3 Enrolment of Students with Disability (2009-10 to 2012-13)
Table 4.4 Disability wise Enrolment of Students (Percentage)
Table 4.5 Percentage of Girls with Disabilities Enrolled at Secondary and Higher Secondary Level
Table 4.6 Educational Aids, Assistive Devices & Teaching Learning Material
Table 4.7 Number of Resource Rooms Established
Table 4.8 Number of Special Teachers Appointed
Table 4.9 Training of General and Special Teachers
Table 4.10 Inputs given by Students
Table 4.11 Inputs given by Teachers

List of Figures

Figure 4.1 States/UTs Implementing the IEDSS Scheme
Figure 4.2 Total Enrolment (2009-10 to 2011-12)
Figure 4.3 Boys & Girls Enrolment (2012-13)
Figure 4.4 Percentage of Girls Enrolled in Different Years
Figure 4.5 Number of Students with Disabilities Dropping out of Schools in different years
Figure 4.6 Transition of Students with Disabilities from Elementary to Secondary Level
Figure 4.7 Number of Resource Rooms
Figure 4.8 Number of Students with Disabilities per Special Teacher
Figure 4.9 Total Number of General Teachers Trained under IEDSS & Days of Training