

Patterns of Educational Attainment of Differently-Abled Persons in India

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Abstract

The educational status of children with disability and the level of educational attainments of differently abled persons have been examined for the rural-urban areas, gender, age groups and social group wise across the states and NSSO regions by types of disability. The vast majority of differently abled young persons have been excluded from most educational, economic, social and cultural opportunities. Literacy among persons with disabilities was found to be considerably lower in comparison with the rest of the population. The case of women with disabilities is noteworthy as their literacy rates are more likely found to be lower than even their male counterparts on account of double discrimination that they suffer, on the grounds of both gender and impairment. The differently abled persons are more likely found to be out of job and families with a differently abled member are often worse off than the families with a non-differently abled member. This leads to lower employment and incomes.

Introduction:

Differently abled persons are generally amongst the poorest of the poor. It has been documented in several research that living in poverty increases the likelihood of suffering from physical or health impairment; differently abled persons generally experience higher rates of poverty than the able bodied (Yeo, 2001). Poverty is both a cause and consequence of disability. Poverty and disability reinforce each other. It increases the vulnerability among them (DFID, 2000). The contemporary education system negates mainstream education to the differently abled children because approachability as well as methodology of teaching in the schools is not favorable to them. As estimates made under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Census 2001, around 1.5 to 2 percent of children with disabilities in the 6-14 age groups have special needs. Most of the differently abled children are unable to reach schools due to communication problems and inaccessibility to the schools. Even the staff available in the schools are not trained enough to provide appropriate educational training to the differently abled children. “A recent SRI-IMRB report assessed that around 38 percent of such children with disabilities are out of school.

Special measures are needed for such children ranging from appropriate school infrastructure to special training for teachers, and provision of suitable learning material, aids and appliances etc”(Govinda& Bandyopadhyay,2008,p.17).Therefore, enabling environments for promoting inclusive education for differently abled children needs specific measures to attract differently abled children. The DISE Report calculated that about 1.4 million children with special needs are currently enrolled in elementary schools across the country, of which 1 million were enrolled in lower primary classes and 0.4 million were in upper primary classes (Govinda & Geetha et al., 2007).

Educational Attainment of Differently Abled Persons:

“Literates, were those who could read and write a simple message with understanding” (NSSO 2002, p.16). At all India level, about 58.6 percent of differently abled persons were found to be illiterate and around 11.4 percent persons were found to be literate but below primary level and merely 11 percent have completed their primary education in India. The level of secondary of above education is be lower that was merely 8.3 percentage. Percentage share of differently abled persons in higher education was found to be about 1.5 percent that is considerably lower than the average education attainment in the higher education. There is huge gap between percentage of males and females illiteracy. As per NSSO (2002), the percentage of male’s illiteracy was found to be 48.8 percent; however, female’s educational attainment was comparatively low which estimated around 71.8 percent illiteracy.

The percentage shares of males were found to be higher at each level of education as compare to females which shows differently abled female were more deprived and vulnerable because patriarchal society produces more restricted environment for females. There is also shortage of gender sensitive policies and programmes that utterly focus on the educational attainments of differently abled girls. The lack of educational access dose not only deprives the differently abled girls from access to information, opportunities for economic, social and political involvement, but also from the process of skill development. Differently abled females are the most susceptible in the Indian society which exists across class and castes. Most of the parents were scared of physical, sexual and emotional harassment of their daughters. Consequently, they don’t send their daughter alone which resulted in absence, gaps and even dropouts at school. (Ramakrishna & Nembiakkim, p.1-5).

In sector wise, the educational attainment among differently abled persons was found to be around 62.5 and 44.4 percent in rural and urban areas respectively. Huge urban biasness could be seen at secondary and above level, as educational attainment in this category was about 6.1 percent and about 15.7 percent in rural and urban India respectively. The urban biasness of enhanced performance in educational attainment could be due to improved infrastructural facilities for the differently abled persons in urban area. In rural area, the percentage share of educational attainment in higher education was also quite lower than urban India that constitutes 0.9 percent and 4.0 percent respectively.

The distribution of differently abled persons (aged 5 years and above) by level of general education (including illiteracy) was ascertained by the NSSO reports in 1991 and 2002. As expected in 2002, about 59 percent in rural areas and 40 percent in urban areas were illiterate. However, a satisfying note was that between 1991 and 2002, illiteracy among differently abled persons has declined appreciably from 70.1 percent to 59 percent in the rural areas while it has decreased by around six percentage points from 46.2 percent to 40 percent in urban areas. In comparison to the general population trends, this picture is still gloomy and depressing, which requires immediate measures like promoting inclusive education and opening of specialized schools for differently abled children depending upon the nature and severity of their impairment. Despite of Supreme Court's observation on the right to education that flows directly from the right to life (Article 21), Article 21-A (Eighty-sixth Amendment Act, 2002) in the Constitution and The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 that's provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of 06-14 years, the students with disabilities are the utmost marginalized group and they need to be brought toward equal opportunity in education. They are predominantly under privileged in terms of admittance, retention and performance in education. (Halder, 2009, p633-634).

Even among differently abled literates, significant proportions were educated only up to the primary or middle level both in rural and urban areas. In 2002, only 6.1 percent and 15.7 percent differently abled persons were educated up to secondary or above secondary in rural and urban areas respectively. The proportion of differently abled persons educated up to secondary or above secondary level was very low in 1991 compared to 2002. This indicates that some positive changes have taken place to improve the secondary and higher education levels for differently abled persons during 1991-2002 but it requires further strengthening.

The educational scenario also depicts that majority of the differently abled persons do not have equal opportunities of education and even the few of them who are enrolled in schools do not have equal opportunity for middle, secondary and higher education. They can refer as currently educated illiterates, without any capacity development for earning their livelihood. Consequently, the present education system has provided very little opportunity for their social and economic development. It is essential to provide enabling environment for differently abled persons through easy accessibility for schooling and quality teaching to meet their educational requirements. These differently abled also require appropriate vocational skills to make them self-reliant and make them productive members of the society.

The illiteracy rate and level of educational attainment varies according to degree of disability because differently abled persons do not form a homogenous group. The highest rate of illiteracy was found among the mentally retarded which constituted 87.5 percent. The percentage share of illiteracy of not sighted was about 77.7 percent against the low vision which constituted 74.1 percent. The lowest share of illiteracy was found among differently abled locomotors persons which is 46.6 percent as they could be easily accommodated in normal school than others who require special training at the initial age of schooling to begin the education for example. Differently abled persons with visual impairments required to be trained in brail language. Overall, in 2002, educational attainment among differently abled was quite lower as compare to non-differently abled persons.

The highest illiteracy (2002) has been recorded for Arunachal Pradesh that was 86.1 percent followed by Sikkim (74.6), Bihar (68.6), Jharkhand (68.1) and Andhra Pradesh (67.0). The lowest illiteracy has been registered in Delhi (31.0%) followed by Kerala (38.3) Nagaland (44) & Pondicherry (44.9). Highest illiteracy as per, NSSO 2002 data was found in Arunachal Pradesh (81) among males followed by Sikkim (68.1), Jharkhand (61.9), Bihar (60.7) and Jammu & Kashmir (58.6). However, the lowest illiteracy among male differently abled has been recorded for Delhi, Andaman, Kerala Gujarat and Maharashtra.

Figure 1

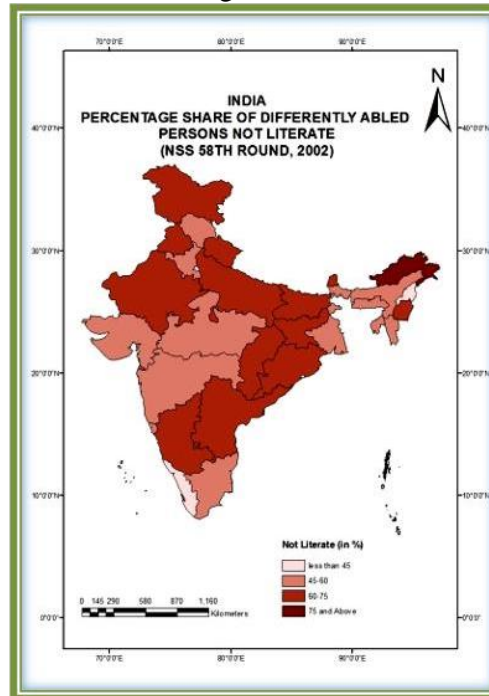
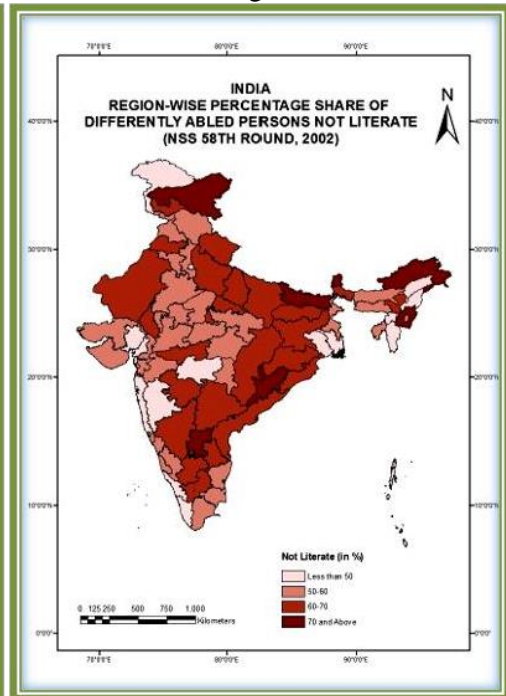


Figure 2



Highest illiteracy among the females also recorded in Arunachal Pradesh (92.6) followed by Sikkim, Bihar Orissa and Jharkhand. However, the lowest illiteracy has been registered for Delhi (41.1), Nagaland, Kerala Mizoram and Meghalaya. Rural India has recorded the highest illiteracy for Arunachal Pradesh followed by Sikkim, Jharkhand, highest Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa. However, the highest illiteracy in urban Indian has been registered for Arunachal Pradesh, J & K, Meghalaya, Orissa and Chhattisgarh. “The education of the differently abled remains a contested site as it fights the twin forces of globalization as well as politics of normative hegemony unless we fight the institutional disablism” (Ghai, 2006, p.161).

Social Group wise Educational Attainments of Differently Abled Persons

The marginalized sections of society in India were down-trodden and deprived. The social groups wise analysis based on unit level NSSO data (2002) had revealed that about 70.7 percent scheduled tribes were illiterate. However, percentage share of scheduled castes and OBCs was slightly lower than scheduled tribes that constitute 65.4 and 60 percent respectively in India. In comparison to this, less than 50 percent illiteracy rate was found among the “other category” who are quite well-off than ST, SC and OBCs. This was the most alarming situation because marginalized section have limited access to resources and if children with disabilities were out of the school education system, their deprivation be exaggerated and the objective framed by PWD Act would not be achieved. The deprived section would remain trapped in various circles of

poverty and disability. “Education of children with disabilities has been a priority issue since it minimizes the impact of disability on livelihood to a great extent. The proportion of non-literate persons with disabilities is highest among Scheduled Tribes (71 percent) followed by Dalits (65 percent). These are distinctively higher than the proportion of non-literates among higher caste groups”. (Pal, 2010, p9-10).

The percentage share of scheduled tribes population in education attainment in ‘secondary and above’ was found to be about 3.6 percent. However, the percentage of scheduled castes and OBCs in secondary and above category was 4.4 percent and 7.1 percent respectively. However, the ‘other category’ educational attainment in ‘secondary and above’ category was 13.9 percent. The more gloomy picture emerged when the differently abled person’s educational attainment have been compared with non-differently abled person. The percentage share of non-differently abled scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in illiteracy were considerably lower than the respective category of differently abled persons. The percentage share of non-differently abled person educational attainment in ‘secondary and above’ category was more than two time higher in each social category. It shows that those are depressed and differently abled are suffering with double discrimination.

The percentage share of PWD at graduate and above was about 1.5 percent while non-PWD percentage share in higher education was around 4.1 percent. However, this is much lower than what the new education policy and foreign university bill is willing to achieve i.e., 25 percent share in higher education. Consequently, if PWD remained out of the higher education system then difference has to be widening up that would create huge inequality and compel them to live at margins. This would again defeat the purpose of the government policy to achieve the inclusive development which is not possible without inclusive education. Amartya Sen, proposition that “class and castes coexists in India” is fruitful and was reflected very well in analyzing the socio-group wise educational attainments. The percentage share of scheduled tribes was highest in all four categories at extend to disability. The scheduled castes and OBCs attained second and third position in extend to disability. However the lowest percentage shares in illiteracy have been attained by the other category. “Differently abled people are not only the most deprived human beings in the developing world; they are also the most neglected” (Amartya Sen, Indian Economist, Winner of Noble Prize for Economics, 1998).

The ‘education to all’ was being implemented since 2001 with the objective of achieving 100 percent enrollments of children with in age group of 6 to 14 years. The objective of enrollment has been achieved

successfully but the disadvantage section of society remained out of formal education system. The constitutional provision under Article 21A states that all children between age group 6 to 14 years must be given free and compulsory education. In spite of this mandatory and obligatory provision of the constitution, the children with disabilities were out of education system.

Disability from birth has serious impact on education of the PWD. Among those who were differently abled since birth, 64.8 were illiterate while those who were not differently abled since birth, of them only 54.9 percent were illiterates. The 10 percentage point gap has significant aspects in understanding the concept of disability from the point of view of ‘onset of disability’ by age. This effect is pronounced as we can see, for example in the education category of ‘Secondary and above’ the percentage share of differently abled from birth and otherwise was 5.8 percent and 9.5 percent respectively.

Along with what has been discussed above, the Gender differences were significant in determining the effect of disability since birth. In over all, females have been found to be more illiterate than the males but on the disability from birth criterion, the proportional share of males were 60.3 percent which was quite higher than the males, belong to not differently abled from birth constituting 42.4 percent. Female’s proportional share in illiteracy did not show discrepancy to a great extent in disability since birth and disability acquired to later stage of life.

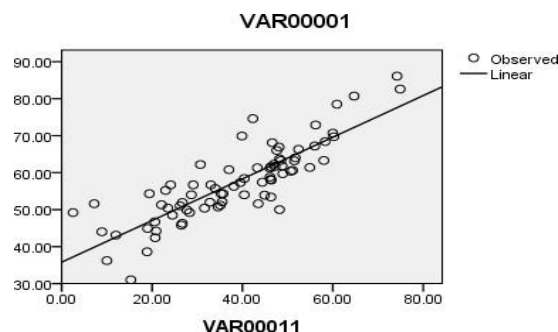
In terms of sector, the percentage share of illiterate among differently abled since birth was higher in both rural and urban India as compare to their respective categories in disability when acquired to the later stages of life. Insofar, it is explicit that those persons who acquired disability from birth experience more hardship compare to those acquire disability at the later stage of life.

Educational Attainments of Principal Earner of Household

The principal earner’s educational attainment was clearly linked with their differently abled child’s level of educations which is also supported by the regression analysis given below. Those principal earners were educated; their offspring have also achieved level of education irrespective of their disability. The strong causal relationship is evident from significantly high R^2 value which is 0.719 which shows that around 72 percent illiteracy of differently abled children is explained by the principal earner’s illiteracy.

- **The Dependent Variable is VAR00001 Illiteracy of Differently Abled Persons.**
- **The Independent variable is VAR00011 Illiteracy of Principal Earner of Household.**

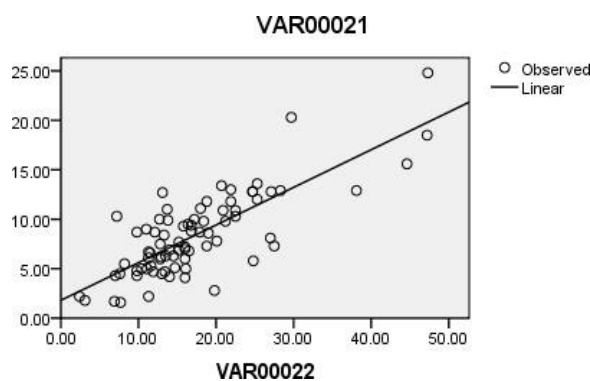
Equation	Model Summary					Parameter Estimates		
	R Square	F			df1	df2	Sig.	Constant
Linear	0.719	194.63	1	76	0	35.783	0.563	



The principal earner’s educational attainments of secondary and above level have significant relationship with education of differently abled persons. It certified the perceived notion that if the head of the household is educated then other family members will get better chance to achieve education irrespective of their physical and mental disability. The value of R^2 is about 0.622 that shows significant relationship between principal earner’s educational attainment of secondary and above and differently abled person’s educational attainment of secondary and above.

- **Dependent Variable:VAR00021** (Secondary and above Education Attainment of Differently Abled Persons)
- **Independent variable:VAR00022** (Secondary and above Education Attainments of Principal Earner)

Equation	Model Summary					Parameter Estimates	
	R Square	F	df1	df2	Sig.	Constant	b1
Linear	0.622	124.961	1	76	0	1.81	0.381



Land Holding Size, MPCE and Educational Attainments of Differently Abled Persons in India

Land holding size has revealed noteworthy impact on educational attainments in the rural areas. Educational attainment of those having land size two and above hectare are better than those having less than a hectare in the rural areas. The percentage share of illiteracy, in rural areas, was considerably higher among those who have less than half hectares land holding size compare to those who have two and above hectare land holding size that constituted 64.6 percent and 56.3 percent respectively. The analogous trends have also been reflected in “secondary and above” educational attainments on the basis land holding size in the rural areas. Those have two and above hectare land holding size of them educational attainment in secondary and above level was better off than those have less than half hectares land holding size that constituted 9.4 percent and 5.0 percent respectively.

However, on the basis of monthly per capita consumption, the educational attainment increases with the increase in per capita consumption of person with disability. Similar, positive trends have also been seen in “secondary and above” educational attainments on the basis of MPCE. The lowest MPCE households category (Rs <1000) have attained lower level of education in “secondary and above category which is 2.8 percent. However the highest MPCE category of households (Rs 3500 and above) have attained highest level of education in secondary and above category that constituted around 17.5 percent among the differently abled.

Conclusions

About 58.6 percent of differently abled in India were illiterate and about 59 percent differently abled persons in rural areas and 40 percent differently abled persons in urban areas were illiterate. Illiteracy rate among differently abled persons in rural areas has declined from 70.1 percent to 59 percent while it has decreased from 46.2 percent to 40 percent in urban areas during 1991- 2002. About 8.3 percent have completed secondary and above level of education and only 6.1 percent and 15.7 percent differently abled persons in rural and urban areas respectively, were educated up to secondary or above secondary levels in 2002.

About 70.7 percent of scheduled tribes were illiterate. However, percentage share of scheduled castes and OBCs was slightly lower than scheduled tribes that constitute 65.4 percent and 60 percent respectively. The percentage share of scheduled tribe’s population in education attainment in secondary and above was about 3.6 percent the percentage of scheduled castes and OBCs in secondary and above category were 4.4

percent and 7.1 percent. Other category educational attainment in „secondary and above“ category was 13.9 percent.

The Regression analysis explored that principal earner’s illiteracy has severe impact on children educational attainment. Land holding size has shown a significant impact on educational attainments in the rural areas. Those have two and above hectare land holding size educational attainment was better off than those have less than half hectares land holding size in the rural areas.

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