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Title of the paper

*Access of Students with Disabilities to Higher Education in India: A Case
Study of Panjab University, Chandigarh*

Author(s)

B. S. Ghuman,

*Dean, Faculty of Arts and Professor, Department of Public Administration,
Panjab University, Chandigarh, India*

Email- ghumanbs@pu.ac.in

Rimpi,

*Junior Research Fellow, Department of Public Administration Panjab
University, Chandigarh, India*

Email-rimpiarora008@gmail.com

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**Access of Students with Disabilities to Higher Education in India: A Case Study of
Panjab University, Chandigarh**

B.S. Ghuman¹

Rimpi²

This paper examines the access of students with disabilities (SwDs) to higher education and barriers impeding their access. Both primary and secondary data have been used. The assessment is undertaken on the basis of parameters, namely, status of Government of India reservation policy for SwDs in admission; overall enrollment of SwDs; availability and access of students with disabilities to Government of India scholarships and learning outcomes followed by the factors adversely affecting the access and learning outcomes of the SwDs. The analysis reveals that the Government of India has been effective in introducing reservation policy in admission and providing scholarships. Empirical evidence suggests that performance on account of disseminating information about scholarships is not satisfactory. Various constraints such as inadequate number of fellowships; lack of awareness about the scholarships; lack of academic resources; behavior of teachers and fellow students and obstructive infrastructure are responsible for the low access to higher education and learning outcomes of SwDs. For improving access of SwDs, it is suggested that Government of India should increase the number of scholarships and disseminate information about scholarships; sensitize managers of higher education towards the

¹Dean, Faculty of Arts and Professor, Department of Public Administration, Panjab University, Chandigarh, India. Email- ghumanbs@pu.ac.in

²Junior Research Fellow (Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship for Students with Disabilities), Department of Public Administration, Panjab University, Chandigarh, India. Email-rimpiarora008@gmail.com

needs of SwDs; increase the use of disabled friendly technology; improve the quality of academic infrastructure and make buildings accessible by adopting guidelines and space standards for barrier free built environment.

Keywords: Access, higher education, infrastructure, reservation policy, students with disabilities, scholarships.

Introduction:

At present India's education system on the basis of highest enrollment of 33.3 million students is next only to China (British Council India, 2014). The report on *Higher Education in India – Vision 2030* also shows that India has been placed on global education map in terms of institutional capacity and total enrollment in the world. This progress is the result of unprecedented central and state governments' efforts such as opening up new institutions including in the private sector, public funding, and promotion of public-private partnerships in the field of higher education (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry Higher Education Summit 2013). Students in institutions of higher learning are heterogeneous on many accounts including on the basis of abilities. The students with disabilities face host of problems in institution of higher learning constraining both their access and learning outcomes.

Students with disabilities need access to higher education more than that of able-bodied students thus providing a rationale for a policy intervention. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), "the role of higher education in the life of persons with disabilities is well recognized and Governments' worldwide ensure equal opportunity and inclusive education to mainstream students with disabilities" (UNCRPD, 2006). India is no exception to this.

Government of India has initiated a slew policy measures and is striving consistently to empower the persons with disabilities through imparting education to them. It is evidenced from the implementation of provisions such as 26 (a) of Chapter V in the Persons With Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 and Clause 3 of The Right of Children to Free & Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 which stipulates free and compulsory education to child with disability till he/she attains the age of eighteen years. In case of higher education, Government of India has mandated three percent reservation in admission for SwDs, relaxation in age (5 years) and qualifying marks as eligibility criteria (5% relaxation) in all institutions of higher learning in consonance with the provision of Section 39 of the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) (PwDs) Act, 1995 and National Policy of Persons with Disabilities (2006). It is relevant to mention here that Government of India has recently replaced the PwDs Act 1995 by the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act', 2016 and has revised the percentage of seats to be reserved for SwDs from existing 3 percent to 4 percent. The new Act has also increased the number of disabilities to 21 from 7.

The University Grant Commission (UGC) being a regulatory body in higher education has initiated various schemes to improve access of students with disabilities to higher education. The schemes include (i) provision of financial aid to create accessible environment for SwDs in higher education institutions, (ii) additional time in writing examinations, (iii) scribes for visually impaired students, (iv) fee concession, (v) scholarship etc. In addition to this, the UGC has made it compulsory for all the institutes of higher education to provide barrier free built-environment including physical infrastructure and other support services to students with disabilities particularly academic infrastructure for improving their participation in higher education.

It is in this backdrop that the present paper has been conceived. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the efficacy of above-mentioned facets of public policy.

The paper is organized into four parts. Part I deals with objective and methodology. Part II describes theoretical and conceptual framework. Major findings have been reported in Part III followed by analysis of various factors adversely affecting access and learning outcome of SwDs. Concluding observations and policy prescriptions are contained in Part IV.

I

Objective and Methodology

The paper aims to examine the access of students with disabilities (SwDs) to higher education and factors affecting the access and learning outcome with special reference to Panjab University, Chandigarh. Panjab University was established in 1882 and it is the fourth oldest university of India. At present it has 78 teaching and research departments and has around 16000 campus students. The University was ranked number one among universities of India for two successive years (2014 and 2015) in World University Rankings Surveys.

The paper is based on primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through questionnaire from 62 respondents out of total 86 students with disabilities enrolled in various courses at Panjab University. Out of total 86 students with disabilities, 11 students with disabilities did not participate in the study, 7 didn't reply and 6 could not be contacted. Primary data was collected from the office of Dean University of Instruction, Construction office and Management Information System (MIS) office. The offices of Controller of Examination and Dean Students Welfare however, did not respond.

The data analysis was undertaken by using simple frequencies/percentages along with graphical representation. Cross tabulation technique was also used to measure the variations. Secondary data was collected from annual reports of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with

Disabilities (UNCRPD); International Labour Organization (ILO); World Health Organization; World Bank; Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment; Ministry of Human Resource and Development; Ministry of Urban Development Rehabilitation Council of India; Department of Disability Affairs; journals; newspapers; articles and online sources to supplement the findings of primary data.

The access and learning outcomes of students with disabilities to higher education has been evaluated on the basis of parameters namely (i) Comparative growth rate of Enrollment of SwDs vis-à-vis other students at pan-India level; (ii) Status of reservation policy for students with disabilities in higher education; (iii) Scholarships for SwDs; (iv) Access of SwDs to scholarships; (v) Quality of learning outcomes.

II

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The conceptual underpinnings of disability have undergone changes over time. Historically, disability revolved around variety of beliefs, myths and stigmas. It was earlier perceived as a curse from God and one's own deeds from last births (Otieno, 2009 and Officer, Alana and Nora, 2009). In recent years, conceptual understanding of disability, however, has experienced a paradigm shift and now persons with disabilities are widely considered as an important source of manpower who can contribute in the socio-economic development of the country (Government of India, 2006).

This well-deserved recognition of persons with disabilities as equal drivers of development along with able-bodied persons is the result of disability rights movement initiated in western countries in 1960 and evolution of various conceptual models/approaches which have been developed, debated and assessed for accuracy and efficacy to understand disability (Altman, 2001). Major models pertaining to disability include are Charity Model, Medical Model, Social Model, World

Health Organisation Model- The International Classification of Functioning (Revised Approach), Right Based-Approach and Sen's Capability Approach.

The models of disability provide insights to the perception of society towards disability and reveal that disability is social cultural (social model) rather than biological construct (medical model). However, it took time to build consensus on a conceptual framework which reflected various dimensions of disability beyond the medical model and social model (World Health Organization 1980). The culmination of this new approach has been landmark in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (2006) which came into force in 2008.

Importantly in the UNCRPD, “ ‘disability’ is not defined on an individual basis but rather through an ecological model in which disability is perceived as an evolving concept reflecting the interaction between the individual and social attitudes and the physical, economic and political environment which hinders the full and equal participation of persons with disability in society”

III

Major Findings

1. Comparative Growth Rate of Enrollment of Students with Disabilities vis-à-vis other Students

Existing data reveals that overall participation rate of SwDs has been very low in higher education. It works out to be 0.18 per cent of overall students enrolled in the year 2014-15. It is not only that the percentage of SwDs in total enrollment is abysmally low, the growth rate of their enrollment has also remained dismal as compared to the rate of growth of total students over time. Table 1 shows that between 2010-11 to 2014-15, the number of students with disabilities witnessed only

1.41 per cent rate of growth per annum which is as low as one-twelfth of the rate of growth of able-bodied students (11.78 per cent).

Table-1		
Compound Growth Rate of Enrollment of Students with Disabilities vis-à-vis other Students		
Year	All-India	Students with Disabilities
2010-11	27499749	53975
2011-12	29184331	65552
2012-13	30152417	86233
2013-14	32336234	51954
2014-15	33272722	62496
Total	251511397	320210
Compound Growth Rate(%) per annum	11.78	1.406

Source: Data from 2004-05 to 2009-10 collected from “Educational Statistics at Glance”, year-wise Report of Ministry of Human Resource and Development. Data from 2010-11 to 2014-15 collected from Annual Report of All India Survey on Higher Education” Note: NA*- Not Available, SwDs**- Students with Disabilities, CGR***-Compound Growth Rate.

2. Status of Reservation Policy for SwDs in Higher Educational Institutions

The Government of India under Section 39 of the PwDs Act 1995 has made obligatory for all educational institutions to reserve 3 percent seats for persons with disabilities and it is applicable to all domains of higher education such as medical, engineering, social sciences, humanities etc. Recently, under new Act (the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016) the reservation has been increased to 4 per cent. Further the Government of India has relaxed eligibility norms for admission on account of marks (5%) and age (5 years). However, the analysis shows that enrollment of SwDs in institutions of higher learning has been much below the norms of 3 percent. For example, in the year 2010-11 out of total students’ enrollment (27499749), only 53975 (0.19

percent) are students with disabilities enrolled in higher education. The enrollment of students with disabilities has increased for two years continuously and reached to 0.28 percent of the total students in year 2012-13. After a marginal increase, number of students with disabilities declined sharply and stood at 51954 in year 2013-14 which is merely 0.16 percent of the total enrollment. However, the recent provisional Report of Ministry of Human Resource estimates that number has increased to 62496 in the year 2014-15 which works out to be 0.18 percent of the total enrollment. Overall analysis of data shows that the enrollment of students with disabilities is abysmally low and has oscillated between 0.16 to 0.18 percent (See Table-2).

Year	All-India	Students with Disabilities	% of Students with Disabilities
2010-11	27499749	53975	0.19
2011-12	29184331	65552	0.22
2012-13	30152417	86233	0.28
2013-14	32336234	51954	0.16
2014-15	33272722	62496	0.18

Source: Data from 2004-05 to 2009-10 collected from “Educational Statistics at Glance”, year-wise Report of Ministry of Human Resource and Development. Data 2010-11 to 2014-15 collected from Annual Report of All India Survey on Higher Education” Note: NA*- Not Available, SwDs**- Students with Disabilities

In case of Panjab University, the field survey reveals that majority of the teaching departments of Panjab University are providing 3 percent reservation as well as relaxations in age and eligibility criteria for marks as per Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) (PwDs) Act, 1995 but still seats remains vacant. Enrollment of students with disabilities in University though is below 3 per cent i.e. only 0.51 percent to total 16870 students

enrolled in various courses. It is relevant to mention here that the share of SwDs in Panjab University is much higher than all India level (See Table 2).

Another notable finding of the field survey is that neither any student with disability has approached for admission nor has been enrolled in the institute of 'Dr. Harvansh Singh Judge Institute of Dental Sciences & Hospital' of the University so far. It is confirmed while interviewing Principal and administrative staff in the institute. It is mainly due to the fact that in case of medical education, regulations issued by Medical Council of India ultra-vires the Section 39 of the PwDs Act, 1995. Various legal cases based on secondary data brought forward that many students with disabilities are denied admission to MBBS and Dental courses on the grounds that reservation of seats is confined only to those students having 50-70% locomotor disability in the lower limbs. Students with upper limbs disability are considered ineligible under Medical council of India norms (Mr. D. Pugazhenthii vs. Secretary to Government of India, 2005 and Deepshikha vs Medical Council of India & Ors, 2015).

3. Scholarships Schemes

Scholarships are blessings for students with disabilities making higher education more accessible and affordable to them and paving the way for them to be successful in both their pursuit and completion of degrees (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2015). Thus, it is essential that students with disabilities should be financially supported by Government of India as well as by institutions. In order to provide financial assistance and improve access to higher education for students with disabilities, the Government of India and the University Grants Commission (UGC) have introduced various scholarships and schemes namely, 'Scholarships under National Fund', 'Scholarship under Trust Fund', 'Post-Matric scholarship for Students with Disabilities',

‘Scholarship for Top Class Education for Students with Disabilities’ and Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship Scheme for Persons with Disabilities’ to pursue regular course in the Indian institutions of higher learning. Another scholarship namely- ‘National Overseas Scholarships has been introduced for pursuing doctorate degree in abroad’. Each scholarship has a fixed number of slots per year.

The analysis of the above mentioned scholarships shows that the number of beneficiaries under each scholarship has increased consistently over the time. For instance, under National Fund Scholarship in the year 2009-10, the number of beneficiaries has increased from 417 to 517 in the year 2014-15 which is more than the sanctioned slots. It is mainly due to fixed slots and the previous beneficiaries being carried forward. Between 2009-10 and 2014-15, only 2917 students with disabilities have been benefitted under this scholarship. The data also reveals that amongst all scholarships, the highest number of beneficiaries are found under Trust Fund Scholarship (2500 slots per year). Two scholarships namely- Post matric Scholarships for Students with Disabilities and Top Class Education because have been introduced recently. Hence, data of them is not available. Under National Overseas Scholarships for Students with Disabilities, analysis of the data reveals that all seats are filled every year (Table-3). It is also relevant to mention here the number of fellowships under this scheme has increased from 20 to 100 (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2016).

Table-3							
Number of Beneficiaries in each Scholarship since its inception under Total Slot (TS) per year							
Year	National Fund (2009-10)	Trust Fund (2011-12)	Post-Matric (2014-15)	Top Class Education (2015-16)	Rajiv Gandhi National (2012-13)	National Overseas (2013-14)	Total Beneficiaries per Year
	TS=500	TS=2500	TS=1650	TS =160	TS =200	TS =20	
2009-10	417	-	-	-	-	-	417
2010-11	470	1000	-	-	-	-	1470
2011-12	492	1216	-	-	-	-	1708
2012-13	509	2293	-	-	177	20	2999
2013-14	512	2572	-	-	178	20	3282
2014-15	517	2997	-	-	300	20	3834
Total	2917	10078	-	-	655	60	13710

Note- TS* Total Slot per year

4. Access of Students with Disabilities to Government Scholarships

For assessing the access or coverage of SwDs by government scholarship schemes, only four scholarships namely- National Fund, Trust Fund, Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowships and National Overseas have been chosen for assessment. Secondly, only fresh beneficiaries are included in assessment of four scholarships to avoid the repetition of beneficiaries.

The existing data reveals fluctuating trend so far students with disabilities availing scholarships as percentage of total SwDs in enrollment are concerned. In year 2010-11, only two type of scholarships were available. Out of total 53975 SwDs, only 1470 students (2.72 percent) availed benefits of scholarships at pan-India level. Though the number of beneficiaries increased further

and reached to 1708 in year 2011-12 but percentage of SwDs having scholarships declined to 2.60 percent. In the year 2012-13, students availing scholarships increased to 2999 which constitute 3.47 percent of total students with disabilities. The number increased further to 3834 (6.13 per cent) in 2014-15. From 2010-11 to 2014-15, total 320210 students with disabilities were enrolled at pan-India level out of which only 4.15 per cent availed scholarships. The remaining 96 percent financed education of their own. Very low coverage of SwDs by the scholarship schemes of the Government of India reflects inadequacy of the public policy either on account of slots or not disseminating the information about the scholarships among the target group, namely, students with disabilities (See Table-4).

Access of Students with Disabilities to Government Scholarships at Pan-India Level				
Year	All-India SwDs Enrollment	Out of total 4, Type of ongoing Scholarship Scheme per year	Total no. of Beneficiaries	Scholarships Coverage %
2010-11	53975	2	1470	2.72
2011-12	65552	2	1708	2.60
2012-13	86233	4	2999	3.47
2013-14	51954	4	3282	6.36
2014-15	62496	4	3834	6.13
Total	320210	4	13293	4.15

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development Report 'All India Survey on Higher Education' (2014-15)

In case of Panjab University, the percentage of beneficiaries of scholarships of total SwDs is 11.3 percent is almost double than that of all India figures. The data highlighted that out of total 62 respondents, 7 students (11.3 percent) stated that they applied for scholarship and got it. Out of 62, around 44 respondents (71 percent) did not apply for Government of India scholarship schemes.

On the other hand, 8 respondents (12.9) reported that though they applied for scholarships but they have yet not received any feedback about their selection or rejection (See Table-5). The University is also providing financial assistance to the students with visual impairment in the form of fee exemption and free hostel accommodation but not to other differently-abled students enrolled in the University.

Table-5					
Access of Students with Disabilities to Government of India Scholarships in Panjab University					
Have you Applied and Selected for any Government of India Scholarships?	Visual	Locomotor	Hearing	sMultiple	Total
Yes	2 (3.2)	5 (8.1)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	7 (11.3)
No	18 (29)	24 (38.8)	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	44 (71)
applied but no information yet	5 (8.1)	3 (4.8)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	8 (12.9)
Applied on other Quota but not Selected	2 (4.8)	1 (.0)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	3 (4.8)
Total	23 (43.6)	33 (53.2)	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	62 (100)

Note: Figures in parentheses are Percentages, ADIP*- Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids and Appliances Schemes

5. Quality of Learning Outcomes of Students with Disabilities

The survey reveals that majority of the respondents 29 (46.8percent) scored marks less than 60 percent followed by 19 (30.7 percent) scoring 60-75 percent marks. Variation in percentage marks scored is also found across categories of impairment. Majority of the students who obtained marks

in the category of 60-75 percent belonged to locomotor impairment. Most of the visually impaired students 20 (32.2 percent) scored less than 60 percent marks (See Table-6).

➤ **Factors Responsible for Dismal Performance**

The reasons for dismal performance highlighted by students with disabilities during survey are lack of clarity in admission process in the University; inadequate efforts of the Government, the UGC and Panjab University in information dissemination about scholarships; lack of academic resources and non-availability of essential facilities during examination.

What percentage did you score in the Last Semester?	Visual	Locomotor	Hearing	Multiple	Total
75 or more	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)
60-75	4 (6.5)	15 (24.2)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	19 (30.7)
Less than 60	20 (32.2)	8 (13)	1 (1.6)	0 (.0)	29 (46.8)
Reappear/Compartment	3 (4.8)	10 (16.1)	0 (.0)	1 (1.6)	14 (22.5)
Total	27 (43.5)	33 (53.1)	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	62 (100)

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Absence of Equal Opportunity Cell, lack of transport accessibility, lack of infrastructure, behavior of teachers and fellow students are other factors affecting the access and learning outcomes of the SwDs.

i. Lack of Clarity in Admission Process in the University

The field survey reveals that number of students with disabilities experienced various difficulties starting from enrollment to the end of the session in the University. Around 32 (51.6 percent) of the respondents opined that they faced difficulties while undergoing the admission process. Respondents having visual impairments constituted the highest percentage 17 (27.4 percent). A perusal of Table-7 reveals that the percentages of students facing difficulties varied across categories of impairment. The students also revealed though they got admission in regular courses but they had been forced to stay at religious places like ‘*gurdwara*’, ‘*mandir*’ etc. due to lack of clarity in the process of lodging and non-availability of seats in hostel accommodation.

Table-7					
Number of Students with Disabilities (SwDs) Faced Problems While Getting Admission in Panjab University					
Did you face problems while getting admission in the University?	Visual	Locomotor	Hearing	Multiple	Total
Yes	17 (27.4)	14 (22.6)	0 (.0)	1 (1.6)	32 (51.6)
No	10 (16.2)	19 (30.6)	1 (1.6)	0 (.0)	30 (48.4)
Total	27 (43.7)	33 (53.1)	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	62 (100)

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

ii. Inadequate Efforts about Information Dissemination regarding Scholarships and Grievances Redressal Mechanisms

It is essential to disseminate information and create awareness about scholarships among SwDs so that they become self-dependent. In this context, the Government of India has provided one-stop

solution namely- National Scholarships Portal. It is a Mission Mode Project under National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) initiated with the aim to have Simple, Mission-Oriented, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent '**SMART**' System for faster and effective process from disposal of scholarships applications to delivery of funds directly into beneficiaries account without any leakages (<http://www.scholarships.gov.in/aboutusPage>).

The secondary data analysis reveals that the Government of India and the UGC are regularly disseminating information of scholarships on official website such as www.nationalscholarshipportal.in, www.ugc.ac.in and www.disabilityaffairs.gov.in etc. and advertising in national newspaper to create awareness of scholarships among the target group at pan-India level (See Figure-1).

Figure-1

Government of India Efficiency in Information Dissemination on Official Website and Newspaper



www.nationalschoalrshipsportal.in

<p>www.TeachersBadi.in National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation (Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Govt. of India)</p>	<p>ALL INDIA COUNCIL FOR TECHNICAL EDUCATION (A Statutory Body of the Govt. of India) 7th Floor, Chanderalok Building, Janpath, New Delhi-110 001 Ph. : 011-23724150-55 Website : www.aicte-india.org</p>				
<p>SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME II — FOR 2500 DIFFERENTLY ABLED STUDENTS National Scholarship Scheme(Trust Fund) 2500 Scholarships</p>	<p>Advt. No. AICTE/AQIS/PRAGATI/2014-II AICTE invites applications for TWO Scholarship Schemes to (1) Girls under (PRAGATI) Scheme & (2) for Differently abled Students</p>				
<p>Application for award of Scholarship (Trust Fund) to students with disabilities</p> <p>www.TeachersBadi.in</p> <p>New Scholarship Application Renewal Scholarship Application</p> <p>Sign to</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="760 296 1096 384"> <p>Scholarship for Girls (PRAGATI) Number of Scholarships available per annum : 4000 Amount of Scholarship : Rs. 30,000 or tuition fees at actual whichever is less and Rs. 2,000 per month for ten months as contingency allowance.</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1096 296 1421 384"> <p>Scholarship for Differently abled Students Number of Scholarships available per annum : 1000 Amount of Scholarship : Rs. 30,000 or tuition fees at actual whichever is less and Rs. 2,000 per month for ten months as contingency allowance.</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="760 384 1096 472"> <p>Eligibility 1. One girl per family 2. Family income should be less than Rs. 6 lakhs per annum 3. Admitted to AICTE approved institutions programmes / courses of Diploma and Undergraduate Degree Level 4. Only students admitted in first year of the academic year 2014-15.</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1096 384 1421 472"> <p>Eligibility 1. Differently abled students 2. Family income should be less than Rs. 6 lakhs per annum 3. Admitted to AICTE approved institutions programmes / courses of Diploma and Undergraduate Degree Level 4. Only students admitted in first year of the academic year 2014-15.</p> </td> </tr> </table> <p>Eligible students who are already admitted to technical programs/courses in AICTE approved Institutions during 2014-15, in the first year, may make an application in a prescribed format available on AICTE portal at www.aicte-india.org > Students > Scholarships. The duly filled in form complete in all respects along with scanned attested copies of the certificates in pdf are required to be submitted as attachments on e-mail rifd.aicte.india@gmail.com on or before 30th October 2014.</p> <p>RIFD/10(02)/2014 VICE CHAIRMAN AICTE</p>	<p>Scholarship for Girls (PRAGATI) Number of Scholarships available per annum : 4000 Amount of Scholarship : Rs. 30,000 or tuition fees at actual whichever is less and Rs. 2,000 per month for ten months as contingency allowance.</p>	<p>Scholarship for Differently abled Students Number of Scholarships available per annum : 1000 Amount of Scholarship : Rs. 30,000 or tuition fees at actual whichever is less and Rs. 2,000 per month for ten months as contingency allowance.</p>	<p>Eligibility 1. One girl per family 2. Family income should be less than Rs. 6 lakhs per annum 3. Admitted to AICTE approved institutions programmes / courses of Diploma and Undergraduate Degree Level 4. Only students admitted in first year of the academic year 2014-15.</p>	<p>Eligibility 1. Differently abled students 2. Family income should be less than Rs. 6 lakhs per annum 3. Admitted to AICTE approved institutions programmes / courses of Diploma and Undergraduate Degree Level 4. Only students admitted in first year of the academic year 2014-15.</p>
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www.nhfdc.in

Notice of Scholarship2014-15 by AICTE

Notwithstanding these efforts, respondents who are availing scholarships have expressed dissatisfaction over delayed disbursement of fellowship, lack of accountability and transparency in the process of disbursement. Although Government of India is supporting financially to the students with disabilities but there are no grievance redressal mechanisms to address their grievances.

In Panjab University, the information about the ongoing Government of India scholarships has neither been disseminated by official website of the Departments/University nor by organizing seminars, conferences and workshops. It is found that on the official website of the Panjab University (www.puchd.ac.in) only scholarships form under student section has been displayed. The financial aid such as concessions in fee for low vision, free education for Totally Blind-Below Poverty Line are also mentioned in 'Handbook of the University' 2015-16. During survey, out of total 62 respondents, 60 (98.3 percent) respondents, however, stated that the University has not organized seminars, conferences and workshops to counsel them about financial support and other services available for students with disabilities (See Table-8)

Table -8					
Seminars, Conferences, Workshops Organized to counsel Students with Disabilities in Panjab University					
Does University organize seminars, workshops, conferences to counsel students with disabilities about financial aid and other services?	Visual	Locomotor	Hearing	Multiple	Total
No	26 (42.6)	32 (52.5)	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	60 (98.3)
Don't Know	1 (1.6)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	1 (1.6)
Total	27 (44.3)	32 (52.5)	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	61 (100)

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

It is also confirmed in formal interview with official staff of Dean University Instruction (DUI) that the University does not organize seminars, workshops and conferences specifically to counsel students with disabilities about scholarships but existing University schemes are mentioned in the Handbook of Information of Panjab University.

The survey has further revealed that awareness of students with disabilities about Government of India scholarships is very low. Table-9 shows that out of total 62 respondents, 41 (66.1 percent) stated that they are not aware about scholarships for students with disabilities. The data also highlighted that students with locomotor disability were less aware as compared to students with visual impairment (See Table-9).

Table- 9					
Overall Awareness about Scholarships among SwDs in the University					
Are you aware of Scholarship Schemes?	Visual	Locomotor	Hearing	Multiple	Total
Yes	12 (19.4)	9 (14.5)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	21 (33.9)
No	15 (24.2)	24 (38.7)	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	41 (66.1)
Total	27 (43.5)	33 (53.2)	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	62 (100)

Note: Figures in parenthesis are percentages

iii. Lack of Academic Resources

The survey finds that there is lack of availability of information on academic resources for visually impaired students. Not a single book in braille is available in the library. It is evident from the recent news of the community radio station of the University- Jyotirgamaya: 91.2 Mhz, providing recordings to visually impaired students free of cost in the form of DVDs or online in the form of a digital library (The Tribune, 2016). The University has not installed Job Access with Speech (JAWS) software nor hearing aids and phones for the hearing impaired students or other disabled-friendly technology in the Departmental libraries. The University also does not have large screen monitors with magnifiers nor Braille readers and close captioning. Majority of respondents stated that JAWS software is installed in a computer at the A.C. Joshi Library but library staff is not trained in using the technology. Recently, 'ZoomX' software for students with disabilities has been installed in the main library. The Chief Librarian stated that now a separate room has been allocated for the use of students with disabilities and staff is available for help.

Out of total 53 respondents, 36 (67.9 percent) stated that they are dissatisfied with the facilities available in the library whereas 15 students (28.3 percent) expressed that they were satisfied with the existing library facilities. The data also suggest that dissatisfaction level of visually impaired is highest as compared to other categories of impairment. (Table-10)

Table-10				
Satisfaction Level of Students with Disabilities about A.C. Joshi Library				
Are you satisfied with the facilities available in and around the main library?	Visual	Locomotor	Hearing	Total
Satisfied	2 (3.8)	12 (22.7)	1 (1.9)	15 (28.3)
Neutral	0 (.0)	2 (3.7)	0 (.0)	2 (3.7)
Dissatisfied	24 (45.2)	12 (22.7)	0 (.0)	36 (67.9)
Total	26 (49)	26 (49)	1 (1.9)	53 (100)

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

iv. Non-Availability of Essential Facilities during Examinations

SwDs need special facilities during internal and terminal examinations. Around 33 respondents (53.2 percent) stated that they have faced problems while appearing in examinations. Visually impaired students suffered the most as they constituted 22 (35.5 percent) of the total respondents. On the other hand students having locomotor impairment faced less problems during the examination. The variation across the impairment category is due to the fact that visually impaired students need scribe while students with locomotor impairment can manage on their own. (See Table-11)

Table-11					
Number of Students with Disabilities (SwDs) Faced Problems while Appearing in Examination					
Did you face problems while appearing in last Examination?	Visual	Locomotor	Hearing	Multiple	Total
Yes	22 (35.5)	11 (17.7)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	33 (53.2)
No	5 (8.1)	22 (33.5)	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	29 (46.8)
Total	27 (43.6)	33 (53.2)	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	62 (100)

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages.

v. **Absence of Equal Opportunity Cell (EOC)**

The UGC keeping in mind the needs of students with disabilities as well as to provide them infrastructural access in higher education institutions has started the scheme of assistance to universities and colleges during the Ninth Five-Year Plan for involving special education activities to empower differently-abled persons. For availing the grants, it has mandated that institutions should set up Equal Opportunity Cell. The main functions of EOC are to (a) facilitate admission of differently-abled persons in various courses; (b) provide guidance and counselling to differently abled individuals; (c) create awareness about the needs of differently abled persons, and other general issues concerning their learning; and (d) assist differently-abled graduates to gain successful employment in the public as well as private sectors. During the field survey, it was found that University did not have the EOC for SwDs, though the University has established the EOC for scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students. It is a month earlier that the University has established Equal Opportunity Cell for students with disabilities.

vi. Lack of Transport Accessibility in the University

The transport facilities of the University are also not designed keeping in mind the needs of the students with disabilities. Out of total 62 respondents, 36 (58.1 percent) stated that they prefer to walk. On other hand, 15 (24.2 percent) students with disabilities stated that they use personal modified vehicle or their parents drop them. Around 10 percent respondents stated they take help from friends and only 8.1 percent said that they use public transport to reach the University. But within University they prefer to go along with their friends. Another notable finding of this survey is that none of the student with disability has ever boarded the University bus. The respondents stated that due to lack of information about the bus timings and due to other reasons such as high bus floor, less door width and lack of apparatus such as a lift or pull-out/foldable ramp they prefer not using University’s bus services (Table-12).

Table-12					
Perceptions of SwDs about University’s Shuttle Services					
Which Mode of Transport do you use to move in and around the University?	Visual	Locomotor	Hearing	Multiple	Total
Public Transport	3 (4.6)	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	0 (.0)	5 (8.6)
Personal Vehicle	2 (3.2)	13 (21)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	15 (24.2)
On Foot	19 (30.6)	16 (25.6)	0 (.0)	1 (1.6)	36 (58.8)
University's Shuttle Services	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)
Other	3 (4.6)	3 (4.6)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	6 (9.2)
Total	27 (43.5)	33 (53.2)	1 (1.6)	1 (100)	62 (100)

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

vii. **Lack of Infrastructure**

The infrastructure accessibility was assessed on the basis of parameter prescribed in the 'Harmonised Guidelines and Space Standards on Barrier Free Built Environment for Persons with Disability and Elderly Persons' issued by the Ministry of Urban Development and overall perceptions of students with disabilities about existing infrastructure in the University. The analysis reveals that majority of the infrastructure does not comply with the guidelines. The survey also found that the students with disabilities face a lot of problems in the form of higher level of steps from floor, absence of kerb ramp, absence of handrail and ramp at prominent places. Other obstructions such as poles, barricades and trees on the pathway also accentuate problems of the students with disabilities.

During survey, respondents were asked to rate the overall infrastructure facilities available in the University. Out of total 62 respondents, 26 (41.9 percent) stated that available infrastructure facilities are average while 19 (38.7 percent) stated the University has poor infrastructural facilities and only 12 (19.4 percent) stated that available infrastructural facilities are good. Across category, the survey revealed that 17 students with locomotor disabilities (27.4 percent), 8 visually impaired (12.9 percent) and 1 student with multiple disabilities (1.6 percent) stated that infrastructure facilities available for them are average (See Table-13)

How do you rate the overall infrastructural facilities available to students with disabilities in the University?	Visual	Locomotor	Hearing	Multiple	Total
Good	4 (6.5)	7 (11.3)	1 (1.6)	0 (.0)	12 (19.4)
Average	8 (12.9)	17 (27.4)	0 (.0)	1 (1.6)	26 (41.9)
Poor	15 (24.2)	7 (14.5)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	19 (38.7)
Total	27 (43.5)	33 (53.2)	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	62 (100)

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

The secondary data analysis also reveals that there is hardly any institution of higher learning in India which is providing barrier free built environment to students with disabilities. Though some institutions like Delhi University, Jawaharlal Nehru University and others have taken few steps to improve access of students with disabilities but SwDs still face a number of problems in the form inaccessible footpaths, transport services, buildings etc. (National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP), 2015).

viii. Behavior of Teachers and Fellow Students towards SwDs

During survey, 43 (69.4 percent) respondents expressed that behavior of teacher was somewhat helpful towards them while 18 (29 percent) respondents were of view that teacher behavior was not at all helpful. On the other hand, as compared to teacher's attitude towards SwDs, majority of respondents 34 (54.9 percent) stated that their friends and fellow students are more helpful than teachers. (Table-14).

Table-14					
Perceptions of Students with Disabilities about Teacher's Behavior					
What is the behavior of teachers towards you?	Visual	Locomotor	Hearing	Multiple	Total
Helpful	1 (1.6)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	1 (1.6)
Somewhat Helpful	15 (24.2)	26 (41.9)	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	43 (69.4)
Not Helpful at All	11 (17.7)	7 (11.3)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	18 (29)
Total	27 (43.5)	33 (53.2)	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	62 (100)
Perceptions of Students with Disabilities about Fellow Students Behavior					
What is the behavior of fellow students towards you?	Visual	Locomotor	Hearing	Multiple	Total
Very Helpful	21 (33.9)	12 (19.4)	1 (1.6)	0 (.0)	34 (54.9)
Helpful	6 (9.7)	20 (32.3)	0 (.0)	1 (1.6)	27 (43.5)
Somewhat Helpful	0 (.0)	1 (1.6)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	1 (1.6)
Total	27 (43.5)	33 (53.2)	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	62 (100)

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

IV

Concluding Observations and Policy Prescriptions

The foregoing analysis highlights that Government of India for enhancing the access of SwDs to higher education has enacted laws, formulated policies like 3 percent reservation of seats (now increased to 4 percent), relaxation in age (5 years) and marks (5 percent) for SwDs during admission; free coaching for preparing competitive examination; provision of scholarships; and making physical and academic infrastructure friendly to SwDs. In spite of the best efforts of the

Government of India and Panjab University, factors such as, lack of academic resources, absence of disabled friendly technology, less use of audio-visual aids by teachers in the class rooms, inadequate funding, lack of transport accessibility, lack of physical infrastructure and absence of Equal Opportunity Cell (till recently) act as major barriers that impede the knowledge base of the students with disabilities. With a view to improve access of students with disabilities to higher education, the following policy prescriptions have been suggested:

1. Launching a Special Drive for Implementing the Reservation Policy:

Although the Government of India has provided 3 percent reservation for students with disabilities but their enrollment of SwDs in higher education is very low (less than 0.50 per cent). For increasing the number of students with disabilities in the higher education. Government of India has passed “The Right of Persons with Disabilities Act”, (2016). The Act has increased reservation to 4 percent in admission instead of 3 percent according to the PwDs Act 1995. Speedy implementation of the Act is the need of the hour. Panjab University has been following the reservation policy religiously. In spite of this the seats are not filled. In light of this, a special drive for admission of students with disabilities be launched in the advance of the academic session by using both print and electronic media including social media for disseminating information about reservation policy for SwDs.

2. Organizing Dissemination Workshops for Creating Awareness About Scholarships Schemes:

Information dissemination is the key to open pathway to increase access to higher education of students with disabilities. Although Government of India and Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry of Human Resource Development and Department of Disabilities Affairs have disseminated information through print and electronic media but majority of respondents 41

(66.1 percent) were not aware about scholarships. Majority of the respondents (98.3 percent) reported that University has never organized seminars, conferences and workshops to create awareness among students with disabilities. The students stated that such campaigns should be organized. These campaigns will also help in reducing the dropout rate. Government of India and the universities including colleges should also disseminate information through other means of communication such as radio, television, sources of social media like whatsapp, facebook, twitter etc. Government of India should also incentivize educational institutions for organizing seminars, workshops and conferences for information dissemination. Panjab University should launch a special campaign for disseminating information about schemes and scholarships in the campus as well as in its affiliated colleges.

3. Increasing the Number of Scholarships and Regular Monitoring of Disbursement of Scholarships:

Although Government of India has introduced various scholarships and number of beneficiaries have been increasing each year under all scholarships but coverage percentage is abysmally low (4.15 percent). Government of India should increase the number as well as slots of scholarships per year to attract students with disabilities in higher education. Government of India may introduce scholarships for particular category of impairment so that persons with severe disability may also gain from Government of India incentives. The scholarship holders stated that though they were happy for being selected but dissatisfied particularly with the delayed disbursement of scholarships amount despite of (Direct Benefit Transfer-DBT). Thus, the Government of India, the UGC and particularly Panjab University should disburse amount regularly and on time (first week of every month as per instructions of the UGC). It is also suggested that grievances redressal mechanism be set up for SwDs for resolving their issues pertaining to scholarships schemes.

4. Introducing Infrastructure Accessibility as Parameter in the Universities Ranking Survey

For improving infrastructure accessibility, the Government should include parameter of 'infrastructure accessibility' to SwDs while ranking the universities. By factoring in this parameter, it will encourage the universities to improve infrastructure accessibility of SwDs to get better ranking scores. Institute of higher learning should make all building accessible to students with disabilities having different impairment by rigorously implementing the guidelines of the Ministry of Urban Development. The institutes also need to make use of available grants of the central Government of India for improving the infrastructural accessibility of SwDs.

5. Availability of Academic Information Resources:

Government of India recently launched '*Sugamya Pustakalaya*' a one-stop-shop library for the blind, students with low vision or with any other print disability to access books in diverse languages from various libraries across India. Government of India should encourage involvement of NGOs, Civil society and education institutions to join the '*Sugmya Pathshala*' as it will end the book famine faced by students with print disabilities. It will also help in tapping the potential of students with disabilities and enable them to improve their skills and open avenues to employment. It will also enhance their participation in development of the society. Panjab University should also tap the potential of Civil Society Organizations and its Department of Community Education and Disabilities Studies to reap the benefits of new technology for improving learning outcomes of students with disabilities.

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