
UNIT 11 EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

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11.1 INTRODUCTION

At the time of independence, India inherited an educated system which was not only quantitatively small but was characterised by striking regional and structural imbalances. Education was not accessible to all and some regions were more developed than the others as far as education was concerned. Some sections of the population were socially and educationally backward due to socio-cultural and economic reasons. Girls, children from weaker section of society, SC/ST, backward minorities and disabled children were educationally disadvantaged. Several measures have been taken after independence to provide educational opportunities to all sections of Indian society and to remove disparities. Our Constitution made special provisions to equalise educational opportunities among these groups. National Policy on Education, 1968 and that of 1986 also recommended equal educational opportunities for all children. NPE 1986 provides several guidelines to achieve this.

In this unit, we shall discuss equalisation of educational opportunities especially among disadvantaged groups i.e. girls, SC/ST, minorities and the disabled. The Constitutional provisions and various policy measures and various schemes are being discussed in this lesson. The role of teacher in providing equal educational opportunities among these children has been specially discussed here.

11.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the meaning of equalisation of educational opportunities with special reference to our Constitution and NPE 1986;
- list the main reasons for low enrolment and retention among girls;
- discuss various measures to improve girl education;
- describe equalisation of educational opportunities among SC/ST children;
- discuss measures for promoting education among backward minority children; and
- describe equalisation of educational opportunities among disabled children.

11.3 EQUALISATION OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Indian society is nearly five thousand years old society with strong social, cultural and mythological traditions marked by immense diversities and disparities and a history of gross discrimination based on caste, class and gender.

You may be aware that our Constitution provides the framework for socio-legal action for removal of disparities-

- a) by writing the equality clauses, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth; and
- b) by empowering the state to make special provisions for the historically disadvantage section of population, the scheduled castes (SCs), the scheduled tribes (STs) and other backward castes. (OBCs) through positive discrimination. These provisions have an enabling function in ensuring equality through strong measures and policies.

We know that educational system of a country is bound to be affected by its sociocultural scenario. Therefore at the time of our independence, or education system was characterised by inequalities and structural imbalances which were reflected in gender, caste, social and regional disparities. Special mention has been made in our Constitution for providing equal educational opportunities to all children. The directive principles contained in Article 45 of the Constitution states that *“the state shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of the constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years”*. Even though the post independence period saw significant achievements in the field of education, the inequalities and disparities continued. The nation is now firmly committed to provide education for all.

The National Policy on Education 1986 (NPE 1986) is a landmark in the history of Indian education. It lays special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalise educational opportunities by attending to the specific needs of those who have been denied equality so far i.e. girls and women, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, other educationally backward section and areas, minorities and the handicapped. As recommended by NPE 1986 (modified in 1992), the programmes of Action 1986 and 1992 developed specially designed strategies and programmes along with the general strategies and programmes of Universal Elementary Education (UEE) for equalising educational opportunities to these disadvantaged and deprived groups.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers will those given at the end of the unit.

1. Describe in four or five lines the meaning of equality of educational opportunity as recommended by NPE, 1986.

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11.4 GIRL'S EDUCATION: BRIDGING THE GAP

You may be aware that during the post-independence period, literacy rates have shown a substantial increase. But our Constitutional directive of free and compulsory Universal Elementary Education (UEE) for all up to the age of fourteen years remained unfulfilled even today. One of the main reasons for the non-achievement of this objective is the slow progress of girl education, although various attempts have been made from time to time to improve this situation.

Girls education has assumed special significance in the context of India's planned development. All Five Year Plans have laid emphasis on providing equal educational opportunities to both boys and girls or advocated the need for adopting special measures to improve girls education. NPE 1968 also emphasised promotion of girl education. NPE 1986 *gives over-riding priority to the removal of female illiteracy and obstacles inhibiting their access to and retention in elementary education. NPE, 1986 makes specific recommendations for removing traditional gender discrimination and sex stereotyping and promoting the access of girls to vocational, technical and professional education.*

11.4.1 Girl's Education: The Present Situation

Let us review the status of girl education in comparison to boys at various levels. Literacy rate of girl/women has improved considerably since independence, but it is still far from satisfactory. Girls continue to trail behind boys in terms of enrolment at all levels of education. According to the 1991 census the literacy rate of females is only 39.42% in comparison to 63.86% literacy for males. It means that nearly 61% girls/women are illiterate in our country (1991 census).

The literacy rate of females in rural areas is much lower than that of females in urban areas. Among the girls, literacy rate of scheduled caste girls is much lower than that of the non-SC/ST and the scheduled tribe girls are the worst off. There are also wide inter-state disparities. For example Kerala has the highest female literacy (i.e. 86.2 per cent) and Rajasthan has the lowest (i.e. 20.4 per cent). You can find out the female literacy rate of your state from the census 1991 report and compare it with national figures (females - 39%, males -54%, overall 52%).

There has been a considerable increase in enrolment at primary and upper primary level during the last five decades. However, girls are lagging far behind boys at the primary and upper primary stage; especially the enrolment of rural girls and among them of girls belonging to the SC and the ST is very low. Similarly the dropout rate of girls is higher than that of boys both at primary and upper primary stage. Among the girls the dropout rate of rural girls is much higher than that of urban girls and the drop-out rate of the ST girls is the highest.

- You might have visited some of the primary and middle schools located in nearby village. You might have not seen any woman teacher in those schools for so many years. Can you guess why it is so? Yes, you are right that there may be more than one reason for this. But one of the important reasons is that the majority of the rural girls do not complete 10 or 12 years of education, a minimum requirement to become a teacher.

The basic obstacles to girl education have their roots in our social structure and reflect the discriminating attitude of our society to the girl child. The main reasons for girls' non-enrolment in schools or premature discontinuation of schooling are as follows:

- Girls are neglected since their birth or even before due to our patriarchal society that prefers sons.
- Girls are withdrawn from school once they attain puberty. This due to our conservative cultural values.

- Girl education is cut short by early marriage. Child marriage though prohibited by law is still prevalent in many parts of our country.
- Some parents do not want to send their daughters to co-educational schools or to schools where there are no female teachers.
- A large number of young girls are involved in domestic work and low paid jobs.
- Belonging to poverty stricken groups e.g. landless agricultural labourers, workers in unorganised informal sectors, unpaid family workers, migrant labourers, construction workers and slum dwellers etc. is a major cause of no or poor schooling. It is the girl education that suffers the most.
- Absence of necessary educational facilities for girls in remote rural areas.
- Lack of hostel facilities for girls particularly in rural areas.
- Lack of child care and pre-school facilities in most of the rural areas.

You can add many more minor reasons in this list. While the solution for this problem does not lie entirely in the educational system, education can and should play a positive interventionist role in improving girl education. Several initiatives have been taken during the recent years to provide equal educational opportunities to girls. For equalising educational opportunities among girls NPE, 1986 has recommended several action programmes. These programmes are designed to address the specific needs of girls who are denied equality of educational opportunities so far. Some of the major initiatives in this direction are given below:

- Programmes for awareness generation among parents and community especially among women and girls, amongst which the most successful is a Dutch assisted project, “*Mahila Samakhya*” which literally means *women equality through education*. It is basically a women’s empowerment project which primarily seeks to bring about changes in women’s perception about themselves and that of society in regard to women’s traditional roles. The project attempts to create a demand for education but moving at a pace determined by the woman themselves. Mahila Samakhya has expanded its coverage to 42 districts and over 6,876 villages in the state of Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Kerala. Mahila Samakhya has taken active lead in enrolling children particularly girls in village schools. Non-formal education centres for school dropouts girls continue to grow in numbers. Mahila Samakhya Kendras provide a unique residential learning opportunities for adolescent girls and young women.
- Another intervention is in the form of non-formal education programmes. Under this scheme 90 per cent financial assistance is given for non-formal centres exclusively for girls.
- Women are actively participating in large numbers in Total Literacy Campaigns (TLCs) organised all over the country under National Literacy Mission (NLM).
- Efforts are being made to recruit more female teachers. Under Operation Black Board scheme 59% of the teachers appointed are female. The proportion of female teachers have been increasing gradually.
- Another successful intervention for improving girls education is the *District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)* which aims to restructure primary education so as to enhance enrolment, retention and achievement especially among girls and other disadvantaged groups. It has been launched in 148 districts of 13 states. *One of the conditions for selection of a district under DPEP is that it should be educationally backward with female literacy below the national average. DPEP has a well-defined gender focus and incorporates a component of women’s empowerment through education as well as special intervention.*

- Other successful innovations in girl's/women's education are the "Lok Jumbish" and "Shiksha Karmi" projects in Rajasthan and the "Foster Child Scheme" in Maharashtra.
- Several incentive schemes are going on in various states and Union Territories to improve girls education in general and of girls belonging to disadvantaged groups in particular. For example, education is free for girls up to class VIII in all states and up to class XII in some states. Free uniform, free text-books and stationery, attendance allowance and bus passes are some of the incentives given by the state/central government for improving girls education.
- As recommended by NPE 1986, the educational programmes i.e. curriculum, text-books and teacher education programmes are being evaluated and redesigned to promote women's/girl's opportunities in education.
- Some of the private and voluntary organisations are whole-heartedly involved in improving educational opportunities among girls.

11.4.2 Teacher's Role

Alongwith the government and non-government efforts for providing equal opportunities to girls, a teacher can play a very significant role.

First of all, you as a teacher must appreciate the need of providing equal educational opportunity to girls. You have to identify barriers to UEE for girls and should plan a suitable action for improving access, enrolment, retention, participation and achievement among girls.

This is perhaps the biggest challenge for a teacher to ensure that girls come to school, learn and grow up as confident persons with a positive self-image and contribute to the development of our society and nation. For realising this, you may find the following quite useful:-

- Contacting parents and making them aware of the usefulness of girls education;
- Organising girl child campaigns in collaboration with mahila mandals, village panchayats and NGOs;
- Making arrangements for special drive for girl's enrolment in collaboration with Village Education Committee, Mahila Mandal and Youth Organisations;
- Identifying potential dropout among girls in your class/school. Those girls who are irregular, late-comers with poor academic performance have a negative self image, are burdened with excessive domestic work load, sibling care, participate in economic activities are more likely to dropout. You have to identify such girls and have to plan suitable interventions to retain them in school;
- The teacher should organise remedial classes for low achieving girls;
- During the class room processes, the teacher should not discriminate between boys and girl and should try to provide equal educational opportunities to all.

For ensuring this, the following guidelines may be useful:

- Do not segregate the boys and girls in the class room.
- Make mixed groups consisting of both boys and girls for groups activities.
- If girls in the class are passive listeners, make special efforts to involve them in classroom activities.
- Do not make derogatory remarks about girls in class e.g. telling a boy "TU LADKI HAI JO ROTA HAI". Such remarks reveal gender bias not stereotyping.

- Encourage both boys and girls to participate in sports, games and other activities.
- While transacting curriculum ensure it is done without transferring gender bias. Give examples with illustrations that include boys and girls, women and men from different walks of life.
- Involve parents where the community does not encouraging intermingling of boys and girls.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

2. What measures have been recommended by National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 to equalise educational opportunities for girls.

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11.5 EDUCATION OF SCHEDULED CASTES, SCHEDULED TRIBES AND OTHERS BACKWARD SECTIONS

The scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled tribes (STs) are the two most deprived sections of society in our country. As such, they have been provided statutory safeguards under the Indian Constitution, thereby making it obligatory on the part of the State to take special measures for their educational upliftment. More specifically article 46 of our Constitutions states that *“The state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation”*.

Now let us first review the progress of education among SC and ST children. There is substantial increase in literacy SC and ST since independence e.g. the literacy percentage of SC in creased from 10.27 in 1961 to 37.41 in 1991 whereas the literacy rate of ST has increased from 8.54 in 1961 to 29.60% in 1991. Let us compare literacy of SC and ST with the rest of the population.

Table 11.1: Comparative Literacy Rate Locate X Sex X SC/ST.

Persons	Scheduled Castes	Scheduled Tribes	Others (Other than SC and ST)
Rural			
Male	45.95	38.45	63.42
Female	19.46	16.02	35.3
Total	33.25	27.38	49.86
Urban			
Male	66.5	66.56	83.40
Female	42.29	45.66	67.48
Total	55.11	56.60	75.93
Total			
Male	49.91	40.65	69.53
Female	23.76	18.19	44.51
Total	37.41	29.60	57.69

(Source: Census of India, 1991)

Table 11.1 clearly shows that the literacy rates of SCs and STs are still much lower than the literacy rate of other communities. Literacy rate of female is lower than that of males and ST rural girls are at the bottom of Literacy rung.

Similarly the enrolment of SC and ST children is lower than that of children belonging to other communities both at primary and upper primary level especially of girls. Dropout rates SC and ST continue to be much higher than that of children of other communities at all levels of schooling.

During the post-independence period, the Government of India has initiated several measures to provide equal educational opportunities to SC and ST children. The NPE 1986 stressed on the removal of disparities and attainment of equalisation of educational opportunities for SC, ST and other backward sections specially for girls. POA 1986 described a number of strategies aimed at accelerating their enrolment and retention. Some of the initiatives in this regard include a number of centrally sponsored schemes for SCs, STs and other backward sections of society. These are:

- i) Initiatives to indigent families to send their children to school regularly till they reach the age of 14 years.
- ii) Pre-matric scholarship scheme for children of families engaged in occupations such as scavenging, flaying and tanning from Class 1.
- iii) Post-matric scholarships.
- iv) Grant-in-aid to voluntary organisations working to promote education among SC and ST children.
- v) Abolition of tuition fee in all states in government schools at least up to upper primary level. Most of the states have abolished tuition fee for SC and ST students up to senior secondary level: these states also provide incentives like free text-books, uniforms, mid-day meal, school bags, slates etc. to these children.
- vi) Special educational development programmes for girls belonging to scheduled castes of very low literacy level.
- vii) Provision of boys and girls hostels for SC and ST children.
- viii) Reservation in recruitment of teachers from SCs and STs.
- ix) Location of school buildings, Balwadis and adult education centres in such a way as to facilitate full participation of the children from SC and ST communities.
- x) Provision of a primary school or non-formal education centre in every scheduled tribe habitation.
- xi) Provision of educational complex in low literacy pockets for development of girls's education in tribal areas. Some of such complexes are exclusively meant for tribal girls.
- xii) Residential schools including ashram schools are being established on a large scale for ST children as their effectiveness has been demonstrated in many states like Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.
- xiii) Major programmes of the department of education like UEE, Operation Blackboard, Non-Formal Education, DPEP etc. accord priority to the education of SC and ST children. 'Lok Jumbish' and 'Shiksha Karmi' projects have a specific focus on SC and ST inhabited areas.
- xiv) Reservations for SC/ST children in educational institutions at all levels of education.
- xv) Under total literacy campaigns the SC/ST populations are the main targets.

- xvi) In Navodaya Vidyalayas, admission for SC and ST children are reserved on the basis of either the national norm of 15 per cent and 7.5 per cent respectively or of the percentage of SC and ST population in the district, whichever is higher.
- xvii) Coaching and remedial teaching classes are being organised for SC and ST and other backward sections in order to enhance scholastic achievement of these students. Special coaching for entrance examinations for institutions of higher learning particularly for professional courses is being provided to SC/ST students of classes X and XII.
- xviii) Additional scholarships are provided for ST/ST girl students in the secondary and senior secondary classes. Special coaching and remedial courses are being organised for SC/ST girl students.

Sharodi's story highlights the problems faced by a typical tribal child whose home dialect and the medium of instruction are different.

“Sharodi is a tribal girl living in a hilly area of Assam. She speaks her own language (dialect). She goes to a nearby primary school. In the school, the medium of instruction is Assamese which is different than Sharodi's dialect. Most of the time she is not able to communicate with her teacher who understands Assamese only. She does not fully understand the content given in the textbooks which is also in Assamese. Her performance is not satisfactory. Gradually she loses interest in studies and drops out from the school”.

The above mentioned episode is a common feature among most of the tribal children. The socio-cultural milieu of the STs has distinctive characteristics including in many cases their own spoken languages. In most of the primary schools and in tribal schools also, the medium of instruction is the regional language, which is different from the language of communication of the tribal child. As a result, the child finds it difficult to comprehend classroom instructions. This underlines the need to develop curricula and devise instructional material in tribal languages at initial stages with arrangements for switching over to the regional language. The Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysore and the Tribal Research Institutes in many states now play an important role, in this area. CIIL prepares textbooks, dictionaries, and bilingual textbooks facilitating translation from regional languages to tribal languages. The CIIL has worked in 75 tribal language.

The NCERT has prepared, developed and published 10 textbooks in tribal dialects and has further prepared teaching-learning materials in 15 tribal dialects.

11.5.1 Teacher's Role

After going through the above, you must have understood that our government is providing all the necessary support to equalise education opportunities for children from SC/ST and other backward communities. However, the efforts of the government alone may not be sufficient. Keeping in view the magnitude of the problem everyone of us has to work towards this goal. Thus the role of the teacher becomes equally important in enrolling these children in school, retaining them in school as well as helping them to participate fully in educational activities. A teacher has to work more than one way. For example:

- S/he can contact the parents of such school-going children and make them aware of the various incentives and other schemes provided for such children.
- At the beginning of every academic session, a teacher can organise special drives to enroll all social-age children specially girls belonging to SCs, STs and other backward communities. For this purpose, active assistance of voluntary agencies and local community can be sought. Traditional media and folk media can be very effective in reaching parents and children remote areas.

- Majority of SC and ST children are first generation school learners and their parents are not able to provide them any academic guidance. If timely help is not provided, these children are likely to drop out from school/non-formal centre. It is therefore, the responsibility of the teacher to design need-based interventions to keep these children in school.
- Educationally backward SC and ST children generally belong to low socioeconomic sections of society. Majority of them have low self-image which demotivates and discourages them from participating in classroom activities. The teacher has to provide social and emotional security to these children and involve them in all curricular activities.
- Majority of ST children find schools strange and unfamiliar places which are so very different from their home and community; as a result, they are tempted to dropout from schools. For improving their participation teachers must try to understand the tribal life and its culture.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

3. List the major initiatives taken after NPE 1986 to promote education among SC/ST and other backward children.

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11.6 PROMOTING EDUCATION AMONG BACKWARD MINORITIES

Article 29 and 30 of the Constitution of India guarantee the rights of minorities to conserve the language, script and culture and to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice whether based on religion or language. So far as education of the minorities is concerned, the following educational guarantees have been provided which are in addition to articles relating to fundamental rights in Part III of the Constitution.

Article 29 (1) : “any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same”.

Article 29 (2) : “no citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the state or receiving aid out of state funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them”.

Article 30 (1) enjoins that “all minorities whether based on religion or language shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice”.

Article 30 (2) lays down that “the state shall not in granting aid to educational institutions discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language”.

Article 350A states that “it shall be the endeavour of every state and of every local authority within the state to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups”.

The High Power Panel on Minorities, SC/ST and other weaker sections appointed by Ministry of Home Affairs has identified *Muslims and Neo-Buddhist* as educationally

backward minorities at national level. Subsequently, the government has extended to Neo-Buddhists all the benefits which are available to Scheduled Castes. The state government may identify other groups which are educationally backward at the state/district level. Special efforts need to be taken to bring the educationally backward minorities at par with the rest of the society and to make them participate fully in the national development.

The NPE, 1986 has also made a special mention about providing equal educational opportunities to children of backward minorities. It states “some minority groups are educationally deprived or backward. General attention will be paid to the education of these groups in the interest of equality and social justice. This will naturally include the constitutional guarantees given to them to establish or administer their own educational institutions and protection to their languages and culture”. It further stressed that minorities should be objectively represented through the text books and all school activities.

11.6.1 Major Interventions

Several short-term and long-term measure have been suggested in POA of NPE, 1986 to provide equal educational opportunities to the minorities. The short-term programmes include orientation of principles/managers, training of teachers, coaching classes in colleges, setting up of resource centres, evaluation of text books from the standpoint of national integration and extension of scheme of community polytechnics. The long-term strategies in the POA include emphasis on science and mathematics in traditional institutions, setting up of early childhood education, introduction of SUPW as centrally sponsored scheme, eliminating delay in sanctioning linguistic minority posts, adequate representation of minority managed institution in the scheme for computer literacy and provision of incentives specially to girls and the poorer sections. Some of the scheme/interventions are described below in detail.

i) Area Intensive Programme for Educational Backward Minorities

POA, 1992 suggested that education of educationally backward minorities will be taken care of by an area approach with block/tehsil as the unit where specially designed programmes would be implemented to ensure accelerated progress.

This was translated into action through a scheme entitled, “*Area Intensive Programme for Educationally Backward Minorities*”. This scheme was launched in May, 1993 with the objectives of providing basic infrastructure and facilities in areas of concentration of educationally backward minorities which do not have adequate provision for elementary and secondary education. Under this scheme cent percent financial assistance is provided to state governments and voluntary organisations for the following programmes:

- Establishment of new primary/upper primary schools and residential higher secondary schools for girls.
- Strengthening of educational infrastructure and physical facilities in existing schools.
- Opening of multistream residential higher secondary schools for girls where science, commerce, humanities and vocational courses are taught.

The scheme covers 331 blocks with concentration of educationally backward minorities in 93 districts spread over 13 states and 3 UTs. Since the inception of the scheme, full/part grants have been given for starting construction of 1,414 primary/secondary schools, 6 residential higher secondary schools for girls, construction of 607 classrooms upgradation of 26 primary schools to upper primary schools and high schools to higher secondary schools, constructing 14 hostels for girl’s higher secondary schools, construction of toilets/urinals in 69 schools and provision of teaching learning material in 681 primary/upper primary schools.

ii) Modernisation of Madarsas and Maktabas

Muslim community generally prefers to send their children, especially girls, to the nearby Maktabas and Madarsas for religious instruction and general education.

Madarsas and Maktabas have served as centres for the secular and religious education, primary level education is given in Maktabas and secondary and higher education in Madarsas. These are still the most popular centres for learning among the muslim community. The Government of India has estimated the existence of about 12,000 Madarsas and Maktabas in our country. Although these institutions are fulfilling the felt needs of the Muslim minority group in our country, most of them are no better than literacy centres. The typical curriculum followed in these institutions is not relevant for many students in the context of modern occupational requirements.

In order to provide equal educational opportunities to Muslim children the NPE-1986 and its POA stressed on modernisation of Madarsas and Maktabas.

Under the “15 point programme of empowerment committee on minorities education, the scheme of Madarsas on voluntary basis was launched in 1993-94. The objective of the scheme is to encourage traditional institution like Madarsas and Maktabas by giving them financial assistance to introduce Science, Mathematics, Social Studies, Hindi and English in the curriculum. The scheme will help to provide opportunities to students of these institutions to acquire education comparable to that in the national education system. During the Eighth Plan several states and UTs have given encouraging response regarding the implementation of this scheme. In the Ninth Plan the scheme envisages the coverage of Madarsas at the secondary level.

iii) Coaching Classes for Competitive Examinations

The University Grant Commission (UGC) implements the scheme of coaching classes for the weaker sections of Educationally Backward Minorities. This scheme was introduced in 1984 to provide assistance for organising coaching classes to prepare minority students for competitive examinations. Currently the scheme is being implemented in 22 universities and 59 colleges (including 9 women coaching centres).

iv) Community Polytechnics

As part of the implementation of the 15 Point Programme, ten polytechnics were selected during 1984-85 in minority dominated areas of upgrading them as community polytechnics. By the end of financial year 1990-95, all the minority concentration districts excepts Bidar district in Karnataka were covered by community polytechnics or their extension centres.

Besides the above countrywide programmes, the following schemes also given special attention of the coverage of minority dominated blocks/tehsils as identified by the Ministry of Welfare :

- Non-formal education
- Operation Blackboard
- Mid-day meal
- All externally-assisted basic education projects like DPEP, Lokjumbish, Shiksha Karmi project. Out of the 41 minority dominated districts 20 have been covered under the DPEP for promoting primary education among muslims.
- The TCLs (Total Literacy Campaigns) have been sanctioned in 40 out of 41 minority concentration districts.
- NCERT conducts training/orientation programmes for teachers of minority educational institutions. These teachers have also been included in the special orientation programme for teachers (SOPT) organised by NCERT. The NIEPA also conducts orientation programmes for heads of educational institutions for minorities on a regular basis.

As already discussed that muslims are more educationally backward in comparison to other minority communities in our country. Within the muslims the girls are most backward in education. Can you think why? there may be more than one reasons for their educational backwardness. Several researches have indicated that the muslim community does not have a favourable attitude towards girl's education.

Referring to improve education of muslims minority girls, NPE-1986 stressed that 'minorities' needs should be fully met in the schemes of lady teachers, opening of girls hostels and providing incentives in the form of mid-day meals. Uniform etc. It further recommends opening of a production-cum-training centre for crafts exclusively for girls preferably with women instruction to the extent possible in each of the identified minority concentration districts.

11.6.2 Teacher's Role

You may wonder that inspite of many policy parameters and interventions which have been planned to equalise educational opportunities among Muslim minority, their education is not improving at a satisfactory rate. You may have already understood that main reason for the educational backwardness among muslims are rooted in cultural and socio-economic structure of the community. Therefore, unless the community itself is sensitised to the need for education, the situation will not improve.

The teacher can play a very crucial role in improving education among minority children. She can mobilise Muslim community of nearby locality. You can make them aware of constitutional provisions and schemes of government which are in progress for improving their education. Remember active and well-informed cooperation of teachers is essential to implement these programmes and schemes successfully. Rather than depending entirely on the government for action to promote education, the minorities should rely upon their own internal resources and community initiatives for developing educational facilities and increasing their participation in addition to availing themselves of the facilities provided by the government as part of its normal educational activity. As a teacher you can act like a catalyst in this process. Muslims in certain parts of our country especially in Kerala and Tamil Nadu are already trying to promote education among their community through creation of a *network of community schools* organised and run on the lines of states established secular schools. You can motivate Muslims of our locality to try this experiment.

- Teachers can organise intensive campaigns to wipe out illiteracy among Muslims, especially girls. You can utilise electronic and printmedia for this purpose. This can be supplemented by the assistance of voluntary groups and dedicated social workers both within and outside the community.
- The Muslim community is influenced by their religious leaders to a great extent. Therefore, they have to be taken into confidence for planing and implementing any programme or scheme for improving their education. The linkages between community leaders and religious institutions needs to be strengthened. A teacher has to plan and devise his/her own strategy for achieving this depending upon the requirement. *DPEP Assam planned to provide general primary education to Muslim girls in maktabs through the clergies.* During first phase, 20 maktabs in one DPEP district were selected for providing primary education to Muslim girls. The schools/maktabs were made more convenient for girls by introducing clergies as their teacher. Proper orientation to the clergies were give to improve enrolment, retention and achievement among girls. Such experiments can be tried out in other districts too.
- During classroom processes, you have to provide equal educational opportunities to all children irrespective of their caste, language or religion. Try to give your students some examples/illustration from minority groups. These will help to develop positive self-image among minority children especially among girls.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

4. Explain in four-five lines, the role of “Area Intensive Programme” for improving education among Muslim minorities.

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11.7 EDUCATION OF DISABLED CHILDREN

Another group of children which is educationally disadvantaged and requires special attention is **disabled/handicapped** or **impaired children**.

First of all, let us try to understand the terms like **impairment, disability** and **handicap**. You must have noticed people using these terms interchangeably in many situations. The term “impairment” is used to denote a permanent or temporary psychological, physiological or anatomical loss or abnormality of structure or function in an individual. For example, defect in the optic nerve or retina of the eye is an impairment. ‘Disability’ means any restriction or prevention of the performance of an activity resulting from an impairment. Brain damage in a child may result in resulting in reduced intellectual ability compared to other children of his/her age. This is an example of a disability caused by an impairment. Finally, a ‘handicap’ is a disadvantage experienced by the child because of his/her impairment or disability. A Child who is born blind will not be able to see and move about freely. This will be a handicap for his/ her development.

11.7.1 Type of Impairment and Disability

Impairment may be of various kind, thus causing different types of handicap among children. For example,

- (i) **Visual Impairment** : Children who are totally blind (Total absence of sight) or having extremely low vision.
- (ii) **Speech and Hearing Impairment** : Inability to hear property which in turn affects speech and communication.
- (iii) **Locomotor Impairment** : These children have some kind of physical impairment relating to bones, joints or muscles leading to substantial restriction of the movement of the limbs or any other body part.
- (iv) **Mental Impairment or Retardation** : Mental retardation means a condition of incomplete development of brain of a person which is specially characterised by subnormality of intelligence.
- (v) **Learning Disability (LD)** : Learning disability is actually a hidden disability. These children appear like normal children. What makes these children different is that they have ability to learn, but can not use this ability effectively. Such children have limited ability in specific areas of learning like reading, writing, spelling or mathematics. For example, the child writes 16 as 61 and get confused between ‘X’ and ‘+’ signs. Children with learning disability may have average of even above average intelligence, but somehow these children show a ‘lag’ in learning when provided with the same opportunities to learn as normal children. This means that children with LD do not learn in the usual normal situation in which most other children of their age and class learn.

Children having disability or impairment of any kind have special learning needs and require special treatment for their education. It is estimated that about 12.59 million children with disabilities are to be provided education in the school system in our country. As one of its concern for equalisation of educational opportunities, the NPE-1986 focuses on the needs of the children with disabilities. The NPE-1986 recommends *an integrated education in general schools for children with locomotor handicaps and with other mild disabilities, orientation and pre-service training of general teachers to meet special needs of these children, provision of vocational training, establishment of special schools for severely disabled children and encouragement of voluntary organisations in these tasks*. POA, 1992 postulated that a child with disability who can be educated in a general school should be educated in a general school only and not in a special school. Even though children who are initially admitted to special schools for training in daily living skills, should be transferred to general schools once they acquire daily living skills, communication skills, basic academic skills. POA, 1992 seeks to acquire universal enrolment of disabled children by the end of the ninth plan either in general schools wherever possible, in special schools or in special sections of general schools.

It also envisaged reduction of dropout rates among disabled children to bring them at par with general dropout rates by

- Adjustment and adaptation of curriculum and teaching to the special needs of the children.
- Reorientation to pre-service and in service teacher training programmes.

A comprehensive law namely. *“The Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation)*, was enacted and enforced from 1996". The Act deals with definitions of various disabilities, early identification, implementation mechanism, education, employment, non-discrimination, care of the disabled, recognition of, the institutions offering services to disabled and access to information and transportation. The act advocates a multi-option programme of education and provides for free uniform, aids and appliances to needy students with special needs.. *This Act is an important landmark and should hopefully ensure equal opportunities for persons with disabilities.*

For providing equal educational opportunities to disabled children, systematic micro planning for UEE has to be done. POA 1992 recommended that the special needs of disabled children should be taken into consideration while supplying material under Operation Blackboard. It further stressed that architectural adjustments should be made in school buildings to ensure access for disabled children. It also recommended opening of special schools for educating severely handicapped children in each district.

POA-1992 further recommended that all schemes of education i.e. teacher education, non-formal education, adult education, vocational education etc. should be made responsible for the education of children with physical and intellectual impairment

11.7.2 Integration of Disabled Children in Regular Schools

You must have come across this phrase even earlier. In the context of disabled children integration is a process of increasing the participation of children with disabilities in the regular classroom / school activities in which their peers (without disability) participate. Research evidences indicates that disabled children show significant gains in social and academic skills if placed in integrated education environment. Consequently, in educating disabled children the stress these days is on integrating them in normal schools rather than keeping them in separate special schools.

However, for improving the participating of disabled children in regular school systems, special support and certain adaptations have to be made in regular school curriculum,

teaching-learning strategies and evaluation. In other words, we can say that the whole school environment needs to be adapted to them. Several schemes and projects have been started in India to integrate disabled children in regular schools and to equalise educational opportunities available to them. Some of the major projects/programmes in this area are discussed below :

i) Integrated education for disabled children (IEDC)

This centrally-sponsored scheme was started in 1974 with the objective of providing educational opportunities to disabled children in the general school system so as to facilitate their retention and ultimate integration in this system. This scheme is currently being implemented by the Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, though the education departments of States and Union Territories (UTs), autonomous organisations and non-governmental organisations in 26 states and UTs through nearly 15,000 schools.

ii) Project for integrated education for the disabled (PIED)

Considering the importance of integration, this project was initiated by NCERT in 1987 to strengthen the implementation of Integrated Education of Disabled Children (IEDC). This project was started in one block each in 10 states. The thrust of the project was to place disabled children in ordinary schools with the help of special teachers, aids and other need-based resources. Orientation and training programmes for functionaries involved in IEDC were organised and funds were provided for teacher training, equipment, books, identification assessment facilities.

iii) District primary education programme (DPEP)

Another programme which is trying to integrate disabled children in regular school is DPEP. It has evolved parameters for various interventions to integrate disabled children in the mainstream. For this, DPEP aims to

- provide support services to general primary school teachers to enable them to meet the educational needs of disabled children.
- to prepare resource teachers to deal with all categories of disabled children in primary integrated schools.
- to enhance the competencies and skills of general teachers to meet the educational needs of children with special needs through in-service training.
- to develop instructional materials and appropriate strategies/interventions for promoting the education of children with special needs through general school teachers.
- to design special modules to familiarise teachers with children with various impairments so that they can appreciate not just the limitations of disabled children but also the reservoir of talent hidden them.

iv) Curriculum flexibility for disabled children

You may be already aware that the new education system advocates child-centered education. For child-centered education, flexibility in curriculum is essential to meet the needs of every child. Curriculum flexibility has special significance for disabled children. Curriculum adjustments have to be made, teaching methods have to be adapted and new materials have to be worked out to suit the needs of disabled children. The following steps have been taken at national level in this context.

- Guidelines for child-centered education, including special needs in the classroom, are being developed by NCERT. .

- Guidelines for adjustment of curriculum and instructional material and methods for the visually and the hearing handicapped at primary and upper primary level have been developed and made available to teachers.
- The achievement to 'Minimum Level of Learning' by children with mild disabilities is being ensured through resource support and alternate learning material, wherever needed.
- Special efforts are being made by the 'National Institute of Handicapped' (NIH) and the NCERT to develop an action programme to improve access of disabled children in science and mathematics.
- Special learning aids and equipment such as Braille books, Braille kits and audio-visual material are being developed and made available to schools by NIH and NCERT.

11.7.3 Teacher's Role

While teaching you must have observed that every class has some children who suffer from some impairment or disability. Did you find any difficulty in education such children? Most of the teachers think that they may not be able to educate such children as it requires special teaching methods and strategies. Indeed, a teacher has to plan and make preparations for providing equal educational opportunities to disabled children. The teaching methods and strategies may be the same for normal children, however the difference lies in the way the curriculum is adjusted, the classroom managed, resources used and materials/aids and appliances utilised. The following guidelines may enable you to educate such children in a better way.

- As a teacher you should realise that every child is your responsibility, no matter how diverse he or she is. You should accept this diversity, accommodate it and value it.
- The first step in educating such children is their identification i.e. identification of their disability. You may be thinking that such children can only be identified by doctors, or specialists. You too can only identify them easily as any disability is usually observable in most cases. A disability is reflected through the child's behaviour. Visual and locomotor impairment can be easily identified.
- Once the disability of a child is identified, take him/her to a specialist for diagnosis and assessment. Talk to the parents and see if any special aids or appliances are needed.
- Assess what the child can do by himself or with slight guidance. This will reveal his/her potentialities and capabilities.
- Adapt the curriculum keeping in view the specific need of children with disability. Modify teaching and learning material according to their needs.
- Keep yourself aware of various instructional strategies and use them keeping in view the impairment of children.
- Arrange the classroom to facilitate maximum participation of disabled children.
- Ask peer group to help if required. Talk to other teachers as well.
- Share success stories of people with disabilities to develop confidence and positive self-image among disabled children.
- Try to visit schools practising integration and discuss your problems with teachers working in such schools.
- Creates awareness among people about education of disabled children. Sensitise

parents, teachers, other children, administrators and even people in general about the attitude of people towards the disabled which is imperative for their integration into the regular school system.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

5. What do you mean by integration of impaired/disabled children in regular schools? Explain.

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11.8 LET US SUM UP

Indian society is characterised by strong socio-culture disparities and diversities which get assimilated in and perpetuated through educational systems. After independence our constitution made special mention for providing equal educational opportunities to all children irrespective of the caste, gender, religion, culture of origin. However, disparities and inequalities in education continue even today.

The National Policy on Education -1986 lays special emphasis on removal of disparities and equalising educational opportunities by attending to the specific needs of those who have been denied equality so far i.e. education of girls and women, SCs and STs, education of educationally backward minorities and handicapped. NPE, 1986 adopted policy of protective discrimination to promote education among these underprivileged groups.

POA, 1992 detailed out specially designed strategies and programmes of primary and elementary education for equalising educational opportunities to these deprived groups. Several initiatives and programmes have been undertaken to equalise educational opportunities.

Alongwith the government, non-government agencies too are involved in providing equal educational opportunities to all these groups. The teacher’s role in this context is especially important. The teacher has to identify the main obstacles to UEE among these groups which may vary from area to area and from one community to another.

The main reason for lower participation of girls in education lies in discriminatory attitude of our society which still provides all facilities to the male child as far as education is concerned, this is done even at the cost of the girl child’s education.

Muslim girls need special attention, as they are not backward when educational opportunities are provided to them and they are encouraged to stay on and achieve

SC children generally remain out of school due to poverty whereas ST children do not feel comfortable in school due to their socio-cultural background which is very much different from the school environment.

While planning education for these children, these factors need to be taken into consideration by the teacher and authorities.

The Teacher needs to take suitable action for improving access, enrolment, retention, participation and achievement among these groups. These include Area Intensive programmes, contacting parents and community, special drives to enroll children in school.

Children with disability or impairment of any kind have special learning needs and require special treatment and resources for their education.

NPE, 1986 recommends integration of such children along with normal children in regular schools as research studies have shown that such children learn better when they are given a chance to learn along with normal children.

To facilitate them school system and environment has to be adopted including proper attitude and preparation of teachers, curriculum, teaching strategies, classroom management, assessment, school building and furniture.

11.9 UNIT-END EXERCISES

1. Give reasons for low enrolment and retention among girls in your region.
2. As a teacher, how can you improve the enrolment and participation of SC/ST children in school (describe at least four methods/ways).
3. How will the scheme of “Modernisation of Madarsas and Maktabas” help to equalise educational opportunities among Muslim minority? Explain in about 30 words.
4. For integrating disabled children in regular schools what basic changes, in your view, to be made in regular primary schools. Explain in 4-5 lines.

11.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

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ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. NPE (1986) emphasises equality of educational opportunity. This removal of disparities and providing equal educational opportunities to those who had no limited access to education so far. The focus is on girls and women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, minorities, handicapped and other backward sections and areas.
2. Programmes for awareness generation amongst parents and communities; Non-formal education programmes; recruiting more female teachers, provision of incentives like free uniforms, books, attendance allowance, bus pass etc. are some of the measures recommended of the measures suggested by NPE, 1986.

3.
 - i) abolition of tuition fee in all states in government schools at least up to upper primary level.
 - ii) post-matric scholarships.
 - iii) reservations for SC/ST children in educational institutions at all levels.
 - iv) coaching and remedial teaching classes for SC and ST, and other backward sections.
4. Area Intensive programme aims at providing basic infrastructure and facilities in areas inhabited by educationally backward minorities and lacking adequate provisions for elementary and secondary education.
5. Integration of impaired /disabled children in regular school implies that a child with disability who can be educated in a general school should be educated in general school. Teachers in case should be sensitive to their special needs and special provisions need to be made to cater to their respective needs.