

College Connect

Increasing Enrolment for Persons with Disability in Higher Education Institutions

December, 2019



Table of Contents



Overview

- Defining Disability | 4
- Prevalence of Disability in India | 5
- Education Levels among Disabled in India | 6
- Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPwD) 2016 | 7
- Problem Statement | 9



Underlying Issues

- Objective | 11
- Our Methodology | 11
- Interview Excerpts | 12
- Key Challenges faced by Disabled Individuals and Institutions | 34



Successful Models

- Current State of Indian Ecosystem | 38
- RPwD Act compared to equivalent US legislations | 40
- International Best Practices | 41



Path Forward

- Our Understanding | 47
- Approach to Recommendation | 47
- Proposed Recommendations | 48



About Us

- Youth4Jobs | 55

Overview

Defining Disability

Crafting a universally acceptable singular definition of what constitutes disability is difficult.

Individuals tend to use the term “disability” or “disabled” in a broad sense to aid ease of conversation, whereas disability groups and other agencies (including governments) often use it to serve as a framework for suggesting/implementing policies and/or to fulfil a legal mandate.

The concept of disability is complex, with wide ranging historical, social, legal and philosophical influences on its interpretation. Given that groups are largely successful in using the term for their predefined purpose, is there truly a need to have a single precise definition?

No – there isn’t. However, given that this mini-playbook also serves a specific purpose i.e., to provide recommendations on how to increase enrollment of disabled persons in colleges, it too is built on concepts and numbers around disability that are important for the reader to understand.

This study uses the 2011 Census, conducted by the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India as the source for concepts and latest data on disabled persons in India

Usage of the term “disability” (itself taken from the WHO framework for health and disability by the Census)

“Disability is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations.

Disability is thus not just a health problem. It is a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person’s body and features of the society in which he or she lives. Overcoming the difficulties faced by people with disabilities requires interventions to remove environmental and social barriers”

Types of “disability”

- 1) Blindness
- 2) Low vision
- 3) Leprosy-cured
- 4) Hearing impairment
- 5) Loco-motor disability
- 6) Mental retardation
- 7) Mental illness

Using dated 2011 Census data – not a concern!

Why does this study use a source for its concepts and numbers that is over 8 years old?

Two reasons:

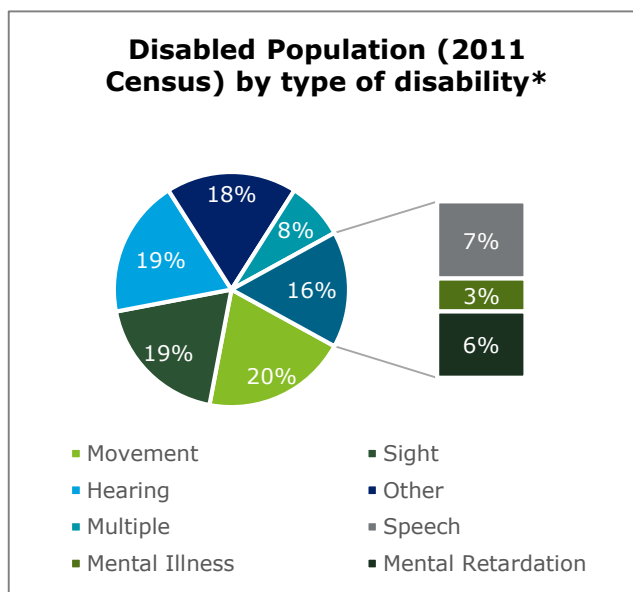
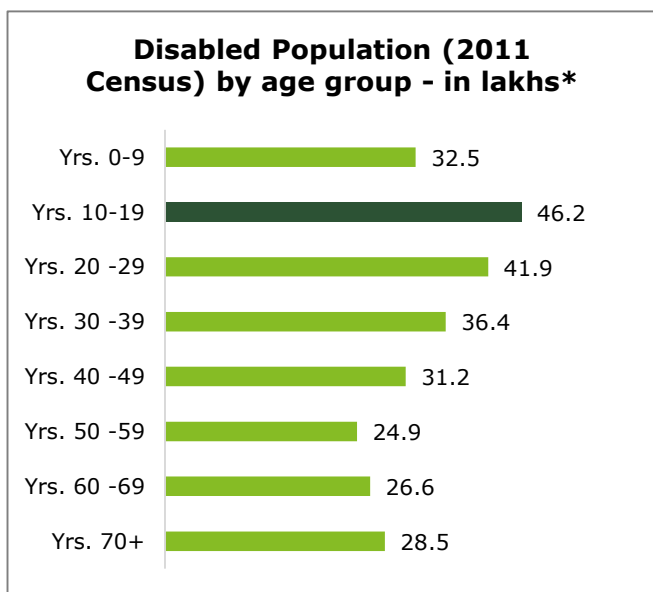
- a) India does not have any other sound disability database/research agency. So, even though we may have refreshed concepts in legislations such as the new Rights of Persons with Disability Act, 2016, which increases the number of recognized disability conditions from 7 to 21, reliable data points/research are lacking
- b) The recommendations proposed in this mini-playbook do not require numbers to be 100% accurate, but provide a sense of magnitude of underlying issues

Prevalence of Disability in India

As per the 2011 Census, 2.21% (or ~2.67 crore) of India's 121 crore population are 'disabled'. Among them, 56% are males and 69% reside in rural areas - numbers broadly in line with India's general demography.

	Males	% of Total	Females	% of Total	Rural	% of Total	Urban	% of Total
Population	62.32	51.47%	58.76	48.53%	83.55	69%	37.53	31%
Disabled Person	1.5	55.97%	1.18	44.02%	1.86	69.4%	.81	30.6%

A deep dive into the numbers reveals that disability is highest in the 10 -19 years age group; and that Movement and Sight are the most prevalent types of disability.

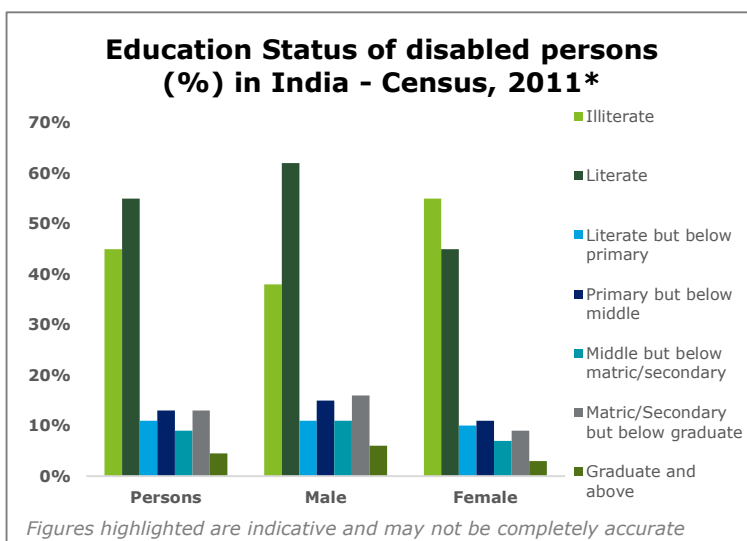
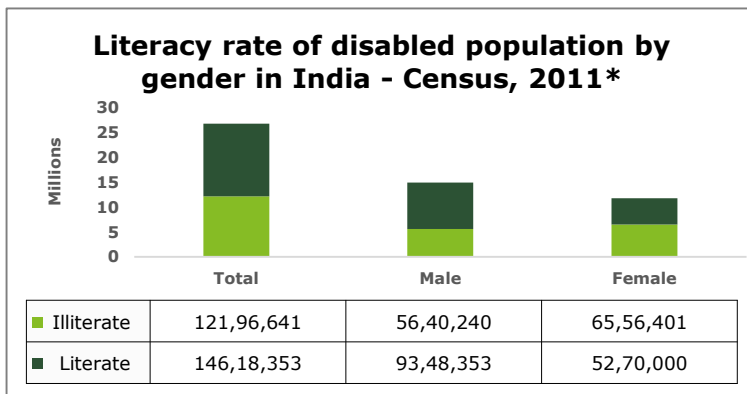


Although over 1.35 crore of India's disabled population is in the employable age of 15-59 years, ~46% of them are unemployed - owing largely to illiteracy, low level of exposure to job market, technology and skill development.

Additionally, experts believe that of the total disabled employed pool (36.3% or ~97 lakhs), over 80% are employed only in the informal sector i.e., there is a huge untapped potential for increasing GDP growth and promoting societal inclusivity.

Over the last decade, compared to a ~17% increase in the overall population, the rate of increase in PwD population has been ~22%. With illiteracy, poverty and social exclusion still a reality, this trajectory is not expected to change anytime soon – a worrying sign!

Education Levels among Disabled in India



The 2011 census figures highlight that literacy rates among persons with disabilities are much lower than that among the non-disabled population. Even within the disabled, certain disabilities and women across disabilities tend to be at a lower level.

The overall literacy rate among persons with disabilities stands at 55 percent, compared to 74 percent for the general population. Among the disabled, while majority of the population is only literate, only a small proportion (~5%) reach a graduate level or above. Further, one could observe a stark difference between male and women-specific data points.

Despite the promise of universal access to education through 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan' (Education for All Movement), which promotes free and compulsory education for all children between ages of 6 and 14, children with special needs form the largest out-of-school group in India. According to the 2014 National Survey of Out of School Children report, Some 600,000 (28%) special-needs children between six and 13 years of age are out of school.

Among children with special needs, approximately 44% of children with more than one disability remain out of school. Children with mental (36%) and speech (35%) disabilities are more likely to be out of school than those with other types. According to the 2014 United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization report, a higher percentage of children with hearing disability, orthopedic/locomotive disability and visual disability attend school, with only 20-30% failing to do so. Even when children with disability do attend school, they rarely advance beyond the primary level, translating to lower employment opportunities and lower chance of escaping poverty.

It is implicit that varying combinations of structural factors (such as age group, gender, region, income group, etc.) intersecting with different types of disability result in varied individual experiences, but the broad commonalities that shape the lives of disabled people transcend these divisions. Their lives are largely marked by illiteracy, poverty and marginalization from mainstream social processes.

With the purpose of creating an equal platform for the disabled to pursue educational opportunities, and in turn, gain relevance in the job market, the Government of India has enacted special legislations and subsequent amendments to these, as deemed necessary. One of the recent examples is the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 with specific provisions for education among disabled.

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

In 2016, after years of painstaking advocacy by disability rights activists with the government, the Indian Parliament passed the RPwD act. This landmark Act, which replaces the dated Persons with Disabilities Act of 1995, is an empowering step for a country that remains largely uninformed about disability-related matters. It also fulfills the obligation of the Indian government towards UNCRPD – an international treaty aiming to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disability.

The key highlight of the RPwD Act is the increase in the number of recognized disability conditions from 7 to 21, allowing more people to access government disabled focus schemes and facilities. It also mandates specifics for the PwD welfare such as the creation of institutional infrastructure, setting up of district level special courts and committees, state and national funds, etc.

EDUCATION SPECIFIC HIGHLIGHTS OF RPwD ACT 2016*

- Right to free education for ages six to eighteen
- 5% reservation in all government schools of higher education
- Relaxation in the upper age limit by five years, for admission in higher education institutes
- Duties of government funded/recognized educational institutes towards PwDs:
 - ✓ Admission without discrimination
 - ✓ Ensure accessible infrastructure
 - ✓ Provide reasonable accommodation
 - ✓ Make available appropriate language, mode and means of communication for blind and deaf
 - ✓ Detect specific learning disabilities in children at the earliest and undertake suitable pedagogical and other measures
 - ✓ Monitor participation, progress and completion of education
 - ✓ Provide transportation facilities (and also attendant for high support needs students)
- Measures taken towards inclusive education:
 - ✓ Conduct periodic (every 5 years) survey for identifying children with disabilities and how to meet their needs
 - ✓ Establish teacher training institutions and resource centers
 - ✓ Train and employ teachers, professionals and staff
 - ✓ Make suitable modifications in the curriculum and examination system
 - ✓ Promote research to improve learning
 - ✓ Provide scholarships
 - ✓ Provide books, additional learning materials and appropriate assistive devices
 - ✓ Promote the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

Our take on the Act:

While the disability policy of India on paper is comprehensive, when compared globally, it seems it could have been more robust.

- The Act is often vague in its wording – e.g. the principal beneficiaries of the law are persons with benchmark disabilities:

Section 2 (r) – "person with benchmark disability" means a person with not less than forty per cent of a specified disability where specified disability has not been defined in measurable terms and includes a person with disability where specified disability has been defined in measurable terms, as certified by the certifying authority".

How does the Act expect to measure a disability it agrees to be unquantifiable? Does every disabled person who does not have at least 40% disability mentioned on their disability certificate/UDID card is to be excluded?

- The Act appears to be inconsistent in its intention. It starts out by expanding the definition of the term "establishments" to include the private sector, but then goes on to exclude it from multiple subsequent provisions.

How does the Act plan on making the corporate sector accountable?

- The Act misses out on mandating certain must haves - e.g. how are the SWDs expected to thrive in today's information age if adaptive technology is not made compulsory in schools/higher education institutes?

Final remarks:

The Act is certainly a step in the right direction towards protecting the rights of the disabled. Majority of the onus may be on the government to formulate rules or schemes, but for the Act to realize its full potential, focused proactive efforts towards its implementation will be required by multiple stakeholders. The government machinery and society at large will have to be sensitized towards the needs and equality of PwD. Equal opportunity for all can not be achieved only by passing a law. The entire society has to participate in creating such opportunities.

Problem Statement

"Higher Education being at the apex of the educational system is an essential input for meeting the manpower requirements of the highest caliber in the crucial areas of national development. It is also an important contributory factor for ensuring social justice by providing vertical mobility to deprived sections of society by making higher levels of knowledge accessible to them and, in the process, improving quality of life of the nation as a whole" (Azad 2008 p.19)

Higher education is a crucial juncture in the lives of persons with disability in terms of employability, political participation and national development. Students with disability enter higher education institutions at an important age, when triggering changes in their personalities is necessary to make them ready for the competition that lies ahead. This is the stage where students come out of their cocoons, ready to mingle in a different atmosphere of living (which includes teaching and learning, making new friends, self assertion, etc.). Higher education has significant impact on the lives of the disabled since it increases the chance of employability, thus, affirming dignified life for the persons with disabilities.

While measures undertaken to include students with disability into higher education institutions have shown explicit signs of progress, a careful analysis of policies, as well as interactions with select disabled students, reveal that **considerable scope for improvement exists**. There are number of groups working on the school education of children with disabilities, however, this has not translated in the entry of students to higher education owing to reasons, including but not limited to:

- Infrastructural facilities within institutions
- Attitudes towards persons with disabilities
- Inadequate support from government organizations
- Lack of support services

"A child is only as disabled as their environment and the beliefs of the people around him."

- Bala Pillai DPT

Underlying Issues

Underlying Issues

Objective

One of the primary objectives of this document is to identify the underlying challenges faced by universities and colleges in ensuring reservation of minimum seats for disabled students, as prescribed by the legislations. Further, it aims at underlining the bottlenecks that prevent these institutions from filling the reserved seats or ensuring retention of such students.

The exercise also considers disabled individuals as a separate stakeholder and attempts to understand the challenges from their perspective with regard to obtaining admissions to the education institutes and subsequent completion.

Our Methodology

Basis detailed discussions, a streamlined approach including primary and secondary research was adopted to identify the challenges and root causes thereof.

In line with the agreed-upon methodology, interviews with disabled individuals as well as education institutions were conducted. To include interviewees with varied demographics, necessary measures were taken - identifying disabled individuals from various states, prior educational backgrounds and disability types; while conventional colleges were identified to understand the current state enrolment situation, disability-focused institutions were included to identify best practices in the domain.

Following tactical steps were taken:

- **Interviewee identification:** Identify suitable candidates for primary interviews (a total of 22 interviews with an equal split between individuals and education institutes). Interviewees were identified basis consideration of various factors such as types of disability, geographical regions, types of education institutions (disabled-centric or conventional), educational and family background, etc.
- **Interview scheduling:** Coordinated and scheduled interviews with stakeholders including interpreters (wherever required)
- **Questionnaire drafting:** Drafted detailed questionnaires specific to PwD individuals and education institutions with the objective of sourcing relevant information and data points
- **Mock interviews:** Conducted mock interview sessions with disabled students to assess relevance of questions, clarity in language and ease of communication (including cases when interpreters are involved). The feedback originating from these sessions was analyzed and appropriate changes to the questionnaires were undertaken.
- **Interview sessions:** Undertook detailed discussions with identified candidates/institutions basis finalized questionnaires to understand the issues in detail
- **Data analysis:** Collated interview data and analyzed these to understand common themes/topics
- **Final observations:** Supplemented information from primary interviews with secondary research data to arrive at final conclusion and remarks

Underlying Issues

Interview Excerpts - College

National Institute of Speech & Hearing (*Disability focused*)

Teacher-student ratio	1:1.5
Graduation rate (last year)	NA
Special courses offered	NA

"The horse-shoe seating arrangement has significantly improved the sign language communication"



What we have done to support PwDs

- Faculty undergoes a 6 month special education training program and training in modules on sign language; high teacher-student ratio
- Technologies such as FM System, smart boards, interactive boards and alternative technology for autistic students; bigger screens in the auditorium
- Tie up with Vishesh (NGO) for job placement training
- Industry placement cell



Issues deterring progress

- Inability to keep up with class topics being discussed
- Lack of access to resources that assist with better understanding of topics
- Assistive technology resources/devices are not adequate given the number of students
- Lack of awareness, empathy and sensitization amongst communities and institutions towards the issues that disabled students face



Our ask of governments, NGOs & corporates

- More training programs (free if possible) in sign language
- All aspects of accessibility should be looked into in order to ensure that PwDs feel secure and comfortable in their work environment
- Availability of interpreters during meetings at workplace



Our unique features and what we offer

- Devised an 'Early Intervention' program, encouraging children under 3 years to develop age appropriate language skills
- Teachers use the method of 'Total Communication' - a mix of sign, gestures and speech
- Counselling sessions for parents, along with training programs on how to better equip their children
- Preparatory first year for disabled students meant to develop English, Math and Sign Language skills to better equip them for jobs

Underlying Issues

Interview Excerpts - College

Madonna College for the Deaf (*Disability focused*)

Teacher-student ratio	1:18
Graduation rate (last year)	100%
Special courses offered	NA

"Multiple orientation session with parents/PTM ensure they continue sending students to the college (given it is private). Session covers education quality, placement opportunities etc."



What we have done to support PwDs

- Skill development center for imparting technical skills
- Faculty is well-versed in sign language,
- Educational trips are organized for students
- Placement-focused awareness campaigns through local newspaper advertisements and campus drives



Issues deterring progress

- Students have difficulty in coping up with the standard curriculum
- Collection of PwD pension is a time-consuming exercise often leading to instances of absenteeism/rescheduling of classes (usually it takes 4-5 days for the process to complete)
- Poor placements due to inadequate corporate interest



Our ask of governments, NGOs & corporates

- Support required for setting up an inclusion cell, both in terms of resources and awareness
- Guidance required in getting corporates more involved in placements
- Monetary support and awareness from government is required to improve vocational training programs
- Stronger awareness campaigns



Our unique features and what we offer

- One of the few disability-focused institutions
- Motivation sessions by the principal during the weekends

Underlying Issues

Interview Excerpts - College

S V School for the Deaf/TTD (*Disability focused*)

Teacher-student ratio	NA
Graduation rate (last year)	NA
Special courses offered	NA

"Placement team was setup last year and it was the first time that the students got placed"



What we have done to support PwDs

- Providing free education, accommodation, meals, uniforms etc.
- Technical education is available in ITI – electrical, mechanical, etc.; diploma college provides computer education
- High quality infrastructure
- Sign language is used; college is Telugu medium



Issues deterring progress

- The students lack in fundamental concepts
- Lack of language training
- Insufficient digital aids



Our ask of governments, NGOs & corporates

- NA



Our unique features and what we offer

- One of the few disability-focused institutions
- The institute is run by TTD which has 7 educational institutes under its ambit, and the disability exclusive ones include Intermediate (SV College), ITI and Diploma colleges
- All students who study at TTD try to complete education at both ITI and Intermediate (SV College) because they have the incentive to get 2 degrees

Underlying Issues

Interview Excerpts - College

RDT College (*Disability focused*)

Teacher-student ratio	1:8
Graduation rate (last year)	95-100%
Special courses offered	NA

"The college has close ties with self-help groups which facilitate admission for disabled students"



What we have done to support PwDs

- Infrastructure: Wheelchairs & ramps, special flooring and braille material is available
- Technology: Magnifying vision software for students with low vision, availability of computers & JAWS software
- Common sessions for parents and students are conducted to provide information on various colleges and corresponding admission processes
- Efforts are made to provide maximum assistance in terms of college fees, books and transportation



Issues deterring progress

- Ongoing residential programs are expensive and difficult to maintain
- Collection of PwD pension is a time-consuming exercise often leading to instances of absenteeism/rescheduling of classes (usually it takes 4-5 days for the process to complete)
- Negative attitude of parents who consider disabled as a burden



Our ask of governments, NGOs & corporates

- Government should electronically transfer pension to disabled's bank account
- Government funding and programs to encourage PwD enrolment



Our unique features and what we offer

- Focus group meetings are held in nearby villages to create awareness about courses being offered for the disabled
- Local youth with required qualifications are identified and trained designed as special educators

Underlying Issues

Interview Excerpts - College

St. Louis College for the Deaf (*Disability focused*)

Teacher-student ratio	1:14
Graduation rate (last year)	95-100%
Special courses offered	NA

"PwD students here don't lose confidence or feel self-conscious while studying with other non-disabled students"



What we have done to support PwDs

- Infrastructure: Smart board and green board (eco and health friendly) installed in all classrooms to enforce visual learning
- Counselling by teachers for students struggling with studies, facing financial crises, etc.
- Faculty knows sign language
- Availability of financial assistance schemes
- Provision of remedial classes for academically struggling students



Issues deterring progress

- Short of staff trained in working with PwDs
- Lack of government assistance making it difficult to provide free lodging and education
- Dearth of psychiatrists for students in need of counselling and psychological help



Our ask of governments, NGOs & corporates

- Government funding (especially for staff salaries and renovation of computer lab)



Our unique features and what we offer

- All 3rd year PwDs attend a skill training program (run by Youth4Jobs) to assist them with job placements
- Multiple programs available for skill development- typing, computer skills, photography, etc.
- Language flexibility: If a student knows Tamil, they learn all subjects in Tamil

Underlying Issues

Interview Excerpts - College

Pune University (Conventional)

Minimum Quota	5%
Graduation rate (last year)	NA
Special courses offered	Certificate programs in Basic Computing and Assisted Technology

"A small team is researching on how to impart science and technology education to PwDs"



What we have done to support PwDs

- Faculty development and orientation programs focused on challenges of the disabled
- Awareness around PwD inclusion spread through social media and campus drives
- Special trainings for students with weak conceptual understanding
- Placement cell for PwDs which coordinates with potential employers and ensures awareness regarding skills/capabilities of such students



Issues deterring progress

- Lack of accessibility to infrastructure and web services
- Low course content accessibility compliance; in-fact, ecosystem compliance guidelines are low/missing in general
- General lack of awareness and sensitization to the issues faced by disabled students



Our ask of governments, NGOs & corporates

- Government needs to take more steps in making institutes comply with policies; make non-compliance penalties more severe



Our unique features and what we offer

- Team comprising doctorate students, master students and engineers is trying to identify challenges that the disabled face and provide relevant suggestions

Underlying Issues

Interview Excerpts - College

K J Somaiya (Conventional)

Minimum Quota	5% in 2017-18; none moving forward
Graduation rate (last year)	90%
Special courses offered	NA

"A hearing-impaired student had problem understanding the faculty since they used to keep moving. She suggested that faculty remain in front of her so that she can lip read; the suggestion was imbibed"



What we have done to support PwDs

- Sensitization workshops are conducted for students and faculty once a year
- Educational environment – infrastructure, content, examination - has been made accessible
- Financial assistance/fee waiver is provided for some PwD students from economically backward sections



Issues deterring progress

- Lack of awareness amongst parents and teachers on how to deal with PwD issues
- There is inadequate involvement of corporates; roles offered to PwDs are often not compatible with their skillsets



Our ask of governments, NGOs & corporates

- Government should coordinate efforts with the private sector for infrastructural development
- Government and NGOs can incentivize corporates to create more roles that are disabled-friendly



Our unique features and what we offer

- Classroom buddy program where able-bodied students (e.g. TISS) shadow PwDs to better understand their issues and provide solutions; able-bodied students of the institute are encouraged to join the classroom buddy program

Underlying Issues

Interview Excerpts - College

Kalasalingam University (Conventional)

Minimum Quota	10%
Graduation rate (last year)	96%
Special courses offered	Software programming (JAVA, C, etc.), Word processing software

"A very high teacher-student ratio of 1:4"



What we have done to support PwDs

- College tries to recruit faculty with sign language training. It also encourages existing faculty members to undergo such trainings
- Training (and placement) cell for disabled students which focuses on improving communication and math skills
- Faculty advisors and counselors are appointed to monitor PwD performance and to identify their issues/concerns
- Animations are used to explain concepts to hearing & speech impaired and blind students



Issues deterring progress

- Students often lack requisite communication skills since they have had limited exposure to English up until admission
- Lack of support in developing facilities for the disabled such as animation software, additional IT facilities, etc.
- No monetary support from government or NGOs
- Lack of efforts required to publicize availability of special courses



Our ask of governments, NGOs & corporates

- Monetary support from government and NGOs
- Training imparted to students by NGOs should be for a complete semester; the current one-month program is insufficient
- Government needs to promote English as part of the curriculum in schools
- Faculty needs to identify PwDs' areas of interest and undertake efforts to nurture skills in relevant domains



Our unique features and what we offer

- Educators undergo special training around necessary teaching skills (technical terms, sign language and aptitude training)
- Failing PwDs are encouraged to attend extra classes and appear for re-exams during summer vacations

Underlying Issues

Interview Excerpts - College

University of Hyderabad (*Conventional*)

Minimum Quota	5%
Graduation rate (last year)	NA
Special courses offered	NA

"PwDs often constitute around 10 -15% of the batch"



What we have done to support PwDs

- An empowered committee to provide and implement need-based recommendations for PwDs
- PwD-friendly infrastructure such as computer labs, special unit in library, free battery-powered vehicles for campus transport, etc.
- Separate lab technician to assist visually or hearing impaired in lab experiments
- Special financial initiatives



Issues deterring progress

- Not enough funding for PwD accessibility (or in general)
- Lack of basic resources to provide assistance to PwDs during entrance tests



Our ask of governments, NGOs & corporates

- Government to provide more funding for awareness campaigns and infrastructural developments; they are certainly becoming more "aware" and are creating PwD-focused campaigns, but things cannot change just by circulars and official communications
- Partnerships with NGOs for funding and other requirements



Our unique features and what we offer

- The National Institute Ranking Framework, created by MHRD, has consistently ranked University of Hyderabad amongst the top institutes with regards to infrastructure, accessibility and other facilities for PwDs in India
- Co-organized (with Youth4Jobs) a mega 2-day career expo for people with disabilities in April, which was attended by over 600 participants and featured 20+ companies. The aim was to: a) provide the differentially abled with information on skills required to increase employability, and b) build awareness amongst corporates around having an inclusive workplace

Underlying Issues

Interview Excerpts - College

Sri Meenakshi College of Arts and Science (*Conventional*)

Minimum Quota	2%
Graduation rate (last year)	100%
Special courses offered	NA

"Some of the disabled students are performing very well. Shalini, who is visually challenged, is outperforming non-disabled students"



What we have done to support PwDs

- Ramps in place for each building
- Special educators are available
- Ward meeting is conducted every 1st and 3rd Wednesday wherein PwDs discuss their challenges; attempts are made to address them
- Availability of braille material in library
- Placement and career guidance cells exist to offer extra support in placement activities



Issues deterring progress

- A lot more can be done in terms of funding, infrastructure development, hiring of special instructors, etc.



Our ask of governments, NGOs & corporates

- Additional support (e.g. funds) to further build the infrastructure and add more disabled-friendly study material
- Special courses for the disabled students need to be introduced targeted at improving employability



Our unique features and what we offer

- Moving the focus of PwD placements from private to the more stable government jobs

Underlying Issues

Interview Excerpts - Individual

Ankita Jain

Age	27
Disability type	Speech and hearing impaired
Duration of disability	Since birth
Highest education qualification	B.Com.

"Supportive family has made me all the more determined to continue education despite the challenges"



Motivation behind pursuing higher education

- Aspires to have a well-paying job to support her family
- Long-term motive is to pursue PhD in the long run



Challenges faced, & what helped through the journey

- Difficulty in understanding the technical terms associated with accounting
- College does not provide interpreters during exams when clarification is required
- Family has always been very supportive
- Teachers are knowledgeable and are sensitive towards the disabled students



Assistance obtained/required

- Financial assistance not required currently
- Organizations such as Youth4Jobs to assist with providing employment guidance and interview scheduling
- Assistance required to help secure a scholarship for future education



Awareness related to programs, scholarships etc.

- Aware of scholarships but is not availing any for the current program; interested in NMC scholarship but never tried
- Knows about the RPwD Act – aware of provisions such as all police stations and hospitals need to have an interpreter for PwDs
- Aware of the various benefits available to PwDs through the disability certificate: quota for PwDs in government jobs, tax exemption on income, extra time provided during exams, free conveyance in local transport (UDID card)

Underlying Issues

Interview Excerpts - Individual

Chandrakala T

Age	22
Disability type	Locomotor (right hand)
Duration of disability	Since birth
Highest education qualification	Diploma in Education

"Friends helped me pursue my hobby of drawing"



Motivation behind pursuing higher education

- Loves teaching children
- Aspires to be a government teacher



Challenges faced, & what helped through the journey

- Commute to the institution was a major challenge but the faculty was helpful (moving on stairs/ramps, accompanying her home, etc.)
- College did not discriminate with assistance during classes
- Supportive friends, family and college



Assistance obtained/required

- Assistance and guidance provided by Youth4Jobs
- Requires assistance in terms of money and awareness on the enrolment process and subsequent employment



Awareness related to programs, scholarships etc.

- Aware about the disability certificate through sessions organized by RDT with the help of village self-help groups
- Got to know about the RPwD Act during the skill development classes organized by RDT
- Lack of awareness regarding job opportunities

Underlying Issues

Interview Excerpts - Individual

Lakshmi Nageswara Priyanka C

Age	18
Disability type	Speech and hearing impaired
Duration of disability	Since birth
Highest education qualification	SSC

"I would have pursued education further had there been a painting/drawing college"



Motivation behind pursuing higher education

- Financial support required at home
- Parents have been a strong support structure
- Pursues drawing classes with her parents' support



Challenges faced, & what helped through the journey

- Poor food and water quality in hostels
- Intellectual disability makes it difficult to focus on studies
- Introvert by nature
- School has no placement cell, nor does it provide assistance
- College instructors know sign language



Assistance obtained/required

- Completely dependent on her parents
- Placement assistance and training provided by Youth4Jobs



Awareness related to programs, scholarships etc.

- Knows about the disability certificate but not about its specifics
- Unaware of any scholarships
- Village has self-help/employment group that provided advised her parents on future education and job opportunities

Underlying Issues

Interview Excerpts - Individual

Manohar Boina

Age	37
Disability type	Visually impaired
Duration of disability	Since birth
Highest education qualification	SSC

"My mother has been real reasons for me to enroll in college and pursue education"



Motivation behind pursuing higher education

- Requirement of financial assistance at home
- Faculty at the Indian Association for Blind (IAB) and his mother motivated him to pursue SSC



Challenges faced, & what helped through the journey

- No such challenges faced since he was part of an open learning program
- IAB faculty assisted him during the admission process and subsequent course completion (e.g. provided books)



Assistance obtained/required

- IAB helped him obtain the disability certificate
- He is not looking to pursue further education and hence does not require further assistance



Awareness related to programs, scholarships etc.

- Knows about the pension of INR 5,000 paid by the government to the disabled
- Unaware of the benefits associated with disability certificate
- Understands seats in govt. jobs have been reserved as part of the new legislations enacted

Underlying Issues

Interview Excerpts - Individual

Muth M Ajith

Age	25
Disability type	Speech and hearing impaired
Duration of disability	Since birth
Highest education qualification	M.Sc. Computer Science

"I want to be in a position to help other deaf students improve their situation"



Motivation behind pursuing higher education

- Always been fascinated by computers - software making and related technology development - and hence wanted to study B.Sc.
- M.Sc. was a natural progression and is considering enrolling in a PhD



Challenges faced, & what helped through the journey

- Use of sign language was not prevalent in her Masters program owing to which she had difficulty in understanding topics.
- No special facilities such as course material, classroom facilities, etc. were made available



Assistance obtained/required

- Kerala University assisted her with a scholarship of INR 5,000 per year
- Youth4Jobs assisted her in building communication and quantitative skills and prepared her for job interviews
- Does not feel the need for any support at this stage; she is confident about the future given that she has a job and can support herself



Awareness related to programs, scholarships etc.

- Has a disability certificate; panchayat provided awareness on the requirements and associated benefits to her parents
- Has heard about the RPwD Act but does not know the provisions
- Neither has she received any information from the government, nor is aware of any government-run assistance programs

Underlying Issues

Interview Excerpts - Individual

Palani Murugan

Age	27
Disability type	Visually impaired
Duration of disability	Since birth
Highest education qualification	MA - English

"Although my ambition was to get a law degree, I chose not to pursue it as it probably isn't the right field for a disabled person"



Motivation behind pursuing higher education

- In high school, his headmaster suggested that he take up higher education in English since it is a common language and commanding it would help improve his chances of landing up a job
- Currently, his primary motivation is to work in the corporate sector, specifically with BPOs
- He has a strong friend circle that guided him during the admission processes



Challenges faced, & what helped through the journey

- During bachelors, topics were often explained through writing on the boards. It would have been difficult for him to keep up had it not been for the support provided by his friends
- No unique technology was used to teach during lectures
- Taking exams was difficult since questions were in hard copy format and he couldn't understand these without a reader; Braille books were unavailable
- Infrastructure in the college was not very accessible for visually impaired



Assistance obtained/required

- Got admission in college through principal and community quota
- Plans to avail support from Youth4Jobs and his own network of friends to secure a suitable job; previously, he landed a job with a BPO through Youth4Jobs
- Would require a scribe and reader during exams



Awareness related to programs, scholarships etc.

- Availing a financial support of INR 5,000 per year granted by District Differently-abled Welfare Office
- Aware of the disability certificate, and the provision for laptop to PwDs studying in government supported institutions

Underlying Issues

Interview Excerpts - Individual

Parthiban Muniappan

Age	27
Disability type	Locomotor disability
Duration of disability	5 years
Highest education qualification	B.E.

"Youth4Jobs has been my primary source of PwD related awareness and assistance"



Motivation behind pursuing higher education

- Not applicable (he has recently become disabled. He completed his graduation as an abled body individual and had to drop-out of his Masters because of an accident which left him disabled)



Challenges faced, & what helped through the journey

- Not applicable (he has recently become disabled. He completed his graduation as an abled body individual and had to drop-out of his Masters because of an accident which left him disabled)



Assistance obtained/required

- Youth4Jobs helped with building work integrated skills (computer training and others) and referred him for company interviews; during the training, room accommodation was provided in Chennai



Awareness related to programs, scholarships etc.

- Has a disability certificate which was arranged by the District Collectorate Welfare office
- Aware of a few benefits related to the disability certificate - can avail discounts on state-run transport (TN State govt. offers a 75% concession), get monthly pension of INR 1000 for non-working disabled (not applied since he is working)
- Not aware of the RPwD Act, nor has attended any awareness programs

Underlying Issues

Interview Excerpts - Individual

Chandrayee Dutta Chowdhury

Age	24
Disability type	Visually impaired
Duration of disability	Since birth, more since last 5 years
Highest education qualification	PG – Social work

"I wanted to do psychology (which required statistics) but most reputed colleges in Kolkata refused admission. Colleges in Mumbai though were more accommodating"



Motivation behind pursuing higher education

- Loves to teach children, understand their mentality, emotions and to provide her own perspective
- Wishes to work in NGOs and reach out to PwDs who are struggling with their health



Challenges faced, & what helped through the journey

- Parents are not very supportive
- Hostels for disabled did not have the requisite facilities
- Ramps are missing in most of the buildings
- Faculty has not been able to understand her needs and promote a comfortable environment



Assistance obtained/required

- Drishya (NGO) helped her as a professional artist
- Requires financial support and career guidance
- More empathy is required from faculty and government officials in dealing with PwDs
- Sensitivity training programs for the public
- Awareness related to facilities/benefits of the RPwD Act/disability certificate and specifics on how to avail these



Awareness related to programs, scholarships etc.

- Aware of the disability certificate, knows about benefits related to railway concession for escort and self, scribe for exams
- Knows about the RPwD Act
- Attended conference organized by National Convention of Youth with Disabilities (NCYD)
- Unaware of any government scholarships/schemes

Underlying Issues

Interview Excerpts - Individual

Savitri Gupta

Age	34
Disability type	Visually impaired
Duration of disability	Since birth
Highest education qualification	PhD

"There was an instance when a student with locomotor disability was given accommodation on the 9th floor"



Motivation behind pursuing higher education

- Her PhD is on the topic 'Vulnerability of Orphans in the context of Citizenship' as she wishes to promote self-reliance among poor orphans (like herself)



Challenges faced, & what helped through the journey

- Could not apply for government scholarships since she never had a permanent address proof; financial assistance was provided by friends
- Class material was not available in Braille, and were not shared in advance with the Visually Impaired students
- Faculty was not very supportive
- No separate walking lane for visually challenged; ramps were not available in hostels for locomotor disabled



Assistance obtained/required

- Director of the institute where she pursued her Masters assisted her in completing the admission application and scholarship procedures
- No additional support is required currently



Awareness related to programs, scholarships etc.

- Has a disability certificate, but is not aware of the benefits associated with it besides those related to admissions in education institutions
- Unaware of the RPwD Act

Underlying Issues

Interview Excerpts - Individual

Surya Narayana E

Age	22
Disability type	Speech and hearing impaired
Duration of disability	Since birth
Highest education qualification	B.Com.

"Pursuing education has not been difficult since a lot of other disabled students attended the same institutions"



Motivation behind pursuing higher education

- Parents wanted him (and his siblings) to study and get a source of livelihood; his parents are not doing too well financially, and he wanted to get a job to support them in the long-run
- Wishes to study more, but given his/his family's financial condition, his immediate goal is to support



Challenges faced, & what helped through the journey

- No major challenges faced; RDT (local NGO) has been providing assistance since a young age, and he has completed his education in institutions focused on speech & hearing impaired



Assistance obtained/required

- Youth4Jobs helped him build his work related skills, and getting a job with Big Basket
- Besides funding, he does not require any other support to pursue education
- Government could be more involved in monitoring and improving the quality of education in institutes focused on speech & hearing impaired; curriculum needs to change with greater focus on aligning with current job requirements



Awareness related to programs, scholarships etc.

- Not aware of government scholarships
- Aware of the disability certificate;
- RDT has been instrumental in assisting him with information related to pension schemes and other benefits for the disabled, requirements to avail them, etc.

Underlying Issues

Interview Excerpts - Individual

V Thirupathamma

Age	22
Disability type	Locomotor
Duration of disability	Since year 1 (polio)
Highest education qualification	M.Sc. – Organic Chemistry

"Despite getting an AIR of <300, I could not choose the specialization of my choice (Biotech) as tuition fees is required upfront, but getting scholarship money takes time"



Motivation behind pursuing higher education

- Wishes to be a researcher and find a cure for polio
- Plans to work in the corporate sector to earn enough to enroll in M.Sc. (Biotech) and continue pursuing her dream



Challenges faced, & what helped through the journey

- Support from family, teachers and friends has been instrumental in allowing her to focus on academics
- Repeated rejection from corporates during placements (often for illogical reasons)
- Youth4Jobs has been helping her improve her soft skills and in getting in touch with recruiters



Assistance obtained/required

- More empathy from society e.g. she was asked to travel to other cities for her interviews by companies, although they could easily have been conducted over skype/phone
- More measures for safety of PwDs – an app exclusively for PwDs where they can register complaints for mistreatment
- More awareness programs in villages regarding disability certificate and associated benefits (she got to know about it at age 9 from a bus depot. while applying for a bus pass)



Awareness related to programs, scholarships etc.

- Has a Disability Certificate and is aware of some of its benefits
- Gets INR 3,000 per month as pension delivered to her home (biometric validation),
- Has a bus pass and a bicycle (provided by the government)
- Aware of the RPWD Act but has limited knowledge of the specifics

Underlying Issues

Interview Excerpts - Individual

Uday Shankar Shiva Kumar

Age	29
Disability type	Locomotor
Duration of disability	Since birth
Highest education qualification	M.Tech.

"I want to get a PhD and become a lecturer"



Motivation behind pursuing higher education

- Pursued B.Tech. and M.Tech. because of interest in computers
- Always wanted to do well and do well academically



Challenges faced, & what helped through the journey

- Limited job opportunities given his disability; he had to get a job post college on his own which turned out to be difficult for him
- No major problems while attending university; commuting to the college and back was manageable since it was close to his residence
- Elevators within college buildings was really helpful



Assistance obtained/required

- Admission in education institutions was through special quota
- Youth4Jobs helped provide a training program in Finance; they helped set up an interview for him with Sutherland
- Requires scholarship and career guidance to pursue PhD



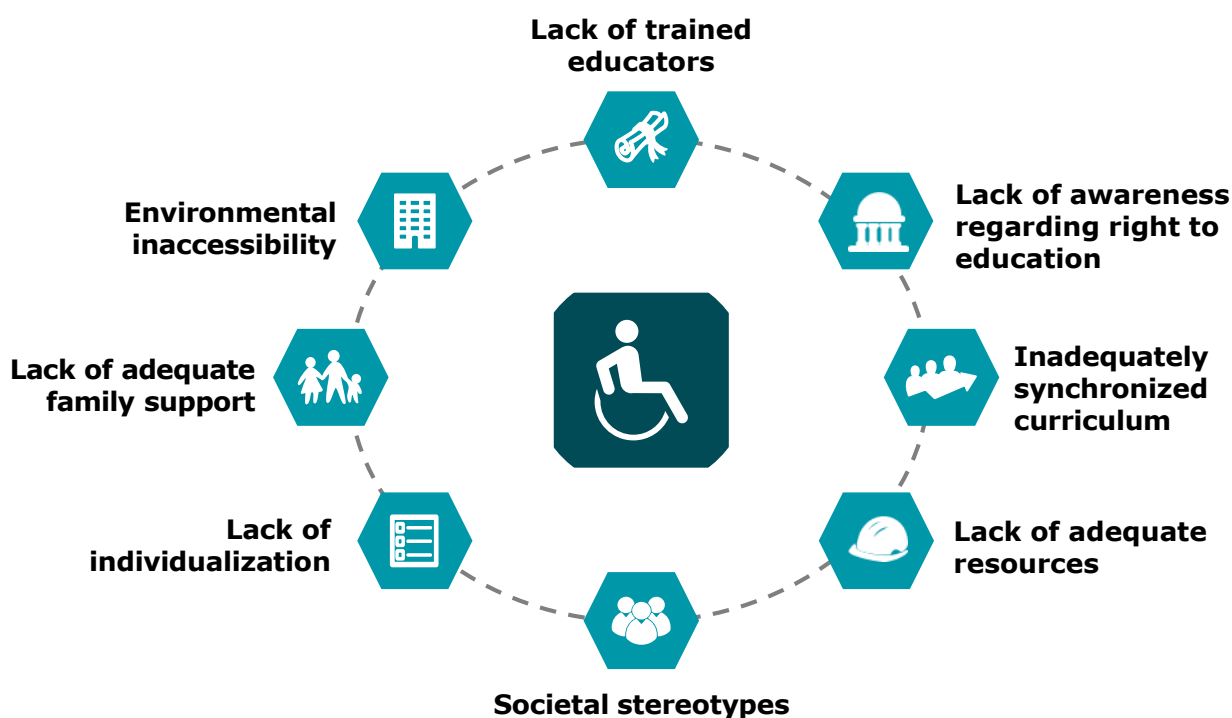
Awareness related to programs, scholarships etc.

- Has a Disability Certificate and is aware of some of its benefits
- Unaware of the RPwD Act

Underlying Issues

Key challenges faced by Disabled Individuals and Institutions

A peek into classrooms today will certainly reveal that they are no longer a homogeneous group because every individual is different in terms of their socio-cultural background, language, learning requirements, information absorbing ability, etc. Hence, as an education institution, it is absolutely essential to understand the areas of diversity, how they overlap and affect overall learning. A deep dive into the current situation reveals that grassroots level challenges still exist and adversely affect the idea of inclusive classrooms. Key findings emerging from the analysis shed light on deficiencies in almost every aspect of educational ecosystem, making it anything but inclusive.



Environmental inaccessibility: Disabled students continue to face infrastructural barriers in education institutions, such as lack of ramps and/or elevators in multi-level buildings, heavy doors, inaccessible washrooms, inaccessible transportation to and from institution, etc. Accessibility can move beyond passageways, stairs, and ramps to recreational areas, paved pathways, and door handles. A student with cerebral palsy, for instance, may not have the ability to grasp and turn a traditional door knob. Classrooms must be able to accommodate a student's assistive technology devices, as well as other furniture to meet individual needs.

Societal stereotypes associated with disability: Attitude towards disability is one of the major barriers to full participation of the disabled in the society. From pity, awkwardness and fear, to low expectations about what disabled people can contribute, stereotypical and negative attitude among administrators, parents, teachers and fellow students hold the disabled students back. These negative attitudes are often caused by a lack of knowledge and understanding. In the context of higher education, educators/fellow students with such beliefs are unlikely to promote a satisfactory and inclusive educational environment.

Key challenges faced by Disabled Individuals and Institutions

Lack of specially trained educators: Lack of special training to educators is a major roadblock in improving the educational situation for the disabled students. While most teachers support special provisions to promote an inclusive learning environment, and are specialists in their particular subject matter, they are often unprepared to take up responsibility. Skills to communicate effectively or the basic awareness of the do's and don'ts for interacting with such students is often lacking. Scouting for experienced sensitized faculty members involves additional time and resources which often deters institutions from providing these students with the appropriate environment they need.

Unsynchronized education system: The curricula followed in disability-focused primary and secondary schools (primarily government-run or aided institutions) are not English-based. This translates to a major learning gap for students since most higher education courses and subsequent job opportunities have English as the mode of instruction/mandatory skill requirement. What follows is the student's inability to cope up with the highly demanding education/job environment.

Lack of resources to accommodate a broad range of differently-abled students : A number of interviews, supplemented by secondary research, suggest that even in institutions that offer courses specially designed for the disabled, the breadth of options available is limited. Often the institutions do not have facilities, technology or faculty to cater to students with varying areas of interest and are forced to follow a 'one size fits all' approach. To a large extent, this is the result of insufficient funding and lack of requisite attention from concerned departments. Consequently, students have no other option but to either enroll in the available courses and drop out later or not enroll at all.

Lack of awareness regarding the right to education: It has been widely observed that a significant portion of persons with disability lack the awareness regarding their right to education in institutions (private or government-aided), as laid out in the Constitution and prescribed by enacted legislations. The lack of awareness prevents them from gaining necessary exposure to skills' training that could increase their employability, thereby pushing them towards illiteracy, poverty and marginalization from mainstream society. Even with the increased focus on creating awareness regarding such provisions, a large section of the disabled population - especially ones belonging to low-income groups - remains oblivious and is forced to fend for itself with little or no support.

Inadequate individualization: Education providers often rely on blanket approaches to accommodation, rather than assessing each student on an individual basis. For example, some funding schemes rely on pre-set categories and labels; policies on grading system, examination aids, suspension and expulsion are at times rigidly applied and do not take into account a student's individual circumstance.

Lack of adequate moral support from families of disabled persons: There is ample evidence to suggest that if the family of a person with disability is either negative or totally resistant to enrolment into educational program, the student will most likely never have a chance at higher education (many consider this as one of the major reasons for low enrolment rates). While institutes often attempt to explain the upside of good education to families, little progress is seldom made. Without a robust ecosystem to cater to the end-to-end requirements of the disabled, which places minimal burden on the family, parents remain reluctant to undertake any initiative.

Key challenges faced by Disabled Individuals and Institutions

Conclusion:

While a number of issues and constraints to inclusive education can be highlighted, it is important to remember that the concept of inclusive education in India is in a very nascent stage and requires improvements to reach a respectable state. To this end, it might be worthwhile to analyze the policies of institutions that have had inclusive education as an area of focus for some time now. Looking at the existing programs might help provide solutions to some of the basic challenges, allowing more time to focus on researching innovative methods and findings ways to add value.

Given the issue of lack of education among disabled population is substantial, it is high time that the government starts perceiving inclusive education as a necessity rather than a policy preference. One must look at this section of the population as valuable resources rather than a liability. An addition of a significant portion of the population to the national workforce will most certainly result in a huge boost to the economy.

Human resource potential aside, without education, these individuals might not be able to fulfill their rights as citizens of the country.

"If we are to achieve a richer culture, we must weave one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place"

- Margaret Meade

Successful Models

Current State in Indian Ecosystem

Understanding the vision of Indian government and associated officials in charge is a critical step towards assessing current state of initiatives in place to promote inclusive education, performing a gap analysis (if any) with successful models worldwide and devising recommendations that would bridge the gap to desired state of educational inclusivity. To this end, tailored questionnaires were rolled out to select government officials with the objective to gather information around the state-sponsored programs/schemes underway and effectiveness thereof.

Below are some relevant extracts originating from the discussions:



Vision

DA Commissioner, Chennai

- The Government of Tamil Nadu is committed to the all round development of the differently abled and to having an inclusive society
- The Department of Welfare of Differently Abled focus its action towards taking preventive care and providing special education, employment, vocational training, social security and aids / appliances for the differently abled

District Differently Abled Welfare Office, Madurai

- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) promote inclusive education for people with disabilities
- They take surveys in rural and urban geographies and reach out to students who are dropouts and counsel them to reenrol in mainstream schools. 21 categories of disabilities are covered under this scheme



Awareness Schemes and Measures

DA Commissioner, Chennai

- Multiple programs are conducted for sensitization
- Various awareness activities are carried out through different mediums e.g., mobile therapy units (32 in operation currently)
- A web-portal is being developed to encourage corporate participation in infrastructure strengthening initiatives

District Differently Abled Welfare Office, Madurai

- Multiple channels are used for creating awareness e.g., camps, advertisements in local media, parent-teacher meetings and faculty sensitization programs
- Higher education awareness is created during district administrative meetings



Quota Enforcement

DA Commissioner, Chennai

- Grievance of non-compliance comes under the purview of the commissioner and relevant remedial action is taken

District Differently Abled Welfare Office, Madurai

- Action is taken against institutions for non-compliance
- Disabled students having difficulties in obtaining admission can approach DDAWO for assistance

Current State in Indian Ecosystem



Student Enrollment and Retention

DA Commissioner, Chennai

- Government provides free education, accommodation, learning materials and assistive devices
- Cash incentive scheme of INR 1,500 has been introduced in grade 10th and 12th to promote education and reduce dropouts
- Depending on the level of education, government scholarship schemes ranging from INR 10,000 up to INR 1,50,000 are provided

District Differently Abled Welfare Office, Madurai

- 22 government special schools and 50 government aided institutions enroll children with disabilities and provide special education
- Tuition fees is exempted in government and government aided schools and colleges
- Scholarships, bus passes, and other accessories (laptop, audio recorder etc.) are made available
- New buildings (as per government norms) are being constructed under special supervision to accommodate various kinds of disabilities e.g., signboard access for the hearing impaired, tactile flooring for Visually Challenged, ramp facilities for wheel chair access to Locomotor Disability etc.



PWD Helpline

DA Commissioner, Chennai

- Helpline is present with the availability of both, telephonic services and a physical counter

District Differently Abled Welfare Office, Madurai

- Helplines don't exist but are in the process of being established



NGO Support

DA Commissioner, Chennai

- DDAWOs are working in collaboration with over 400 NGOs in all 32 districts to increase awareness amongst education institutions and disabled students
- Various sensitization programs are conducted in conjunction with NGOs

District Differently Abled Welfare Office, Madurai

- DDAWO attends events organized by NGOs to share information about the various schemes and facilities available for disabled students
- NGOs who wish to provide assistance in this space need to register with DDAWO. They are invited in DDAWO events to understand about its activities and to devise ways to collaborate

Successful Models

RPwD Act compared to equivalent US legislations

While the 2016 RPwD Act is a step in the right direction towards promoting inclusive education, there is scope for making it more specific and elaborative, especially in its directives towards higher education institutions.

Equivalent Acts in US – namely Title II of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act – though certainly not perfect, can serve as a good reference on how to have specific higher education oriented guidelines and best practices.

SCOPE AND POSSIBLE AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

Category	RPwD Act*	ADA/Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act*
Academic program adjustments & accessibility	Discusses about provision for “necessary support” in “environments that maximize academic development” without mentioning specifics	Provides for suitable adjustments such as rescheduling classes to an accessible location; written outlines or summaries of class lectures, allowing use of note takers or record lectures, substituting specific courses required for completion of degree requirements; communicating course requirements & syllabus prior to the beginning of class, assignments, due dates, grading criteria - both oral and in written form; early enrollment options to allow time to arrange accommodations etc.
Assistive devices & aids	Encourages “promoting” the use of “appropriate augmentative and alternative modes” without mentioning specifics (outside of Braille and sign language as an example)	Provides for appropriate auxiliary aids and services to ensure effective participation by students. Articles and materials that are required for course work must be accessible to all students enrolled in that course. Various types of aids are specified like taped texts, notetakers, interpreters, readers, videotext displays, television enlargers, talking calculators, electronic readers, Braille calculators, printers, typewriters, telephone handset amplifiers, closed caption decoders, open and closed captioning, voice synthesizers, specialized gym equipment, calculators or keyboards with large buttons, reaching device for library use, raised-line drawing kits, assistive listening devices, telecommunications devices for deaf persons, etc.
Examination	Mentions an allowance of “suitable modifications” (only) by giving examples such as extra time for completion of exam, facility of scribe, etc.	Provides for appropriate accommodations such as allowing a student extended time to complete a test or providing a distraction-free space, sign language interpreters, readers, or alternative test formats (such as substituting multiple choice exams for written exams, or vice versa), give oral rather than written answers and present a tape containing the oral examination response. Testing accommodations are also required of agencies which administer entrance exams.
Grievance redressal mechanism	NA (Act mentions a grievance redressal mechanism but not specific to higher educational institutes)	Practically every institute in the US must have a person — referred to as “Section 504 Coordinator”/“ADA Coordinator”/“Disability Services Coordinator” — who coordinates the institute’s compliance with Section 504, Title II of the ADA, or both. The institute needs to have grievance procedures, including steps to ensure that a student may raise his/her concerns fully and fairly, and provide for prompt and equitable resolution of complaints. Student handbooks usually describe the steps that one can take to start the grievance process. If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the institute’s grievance procedures or wishes to pursue an alternative to those procedures, he/she can file a complaint against the institute with the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) or in court.

*Select excerpts have been modified and included for ease of understanding

Successful Models

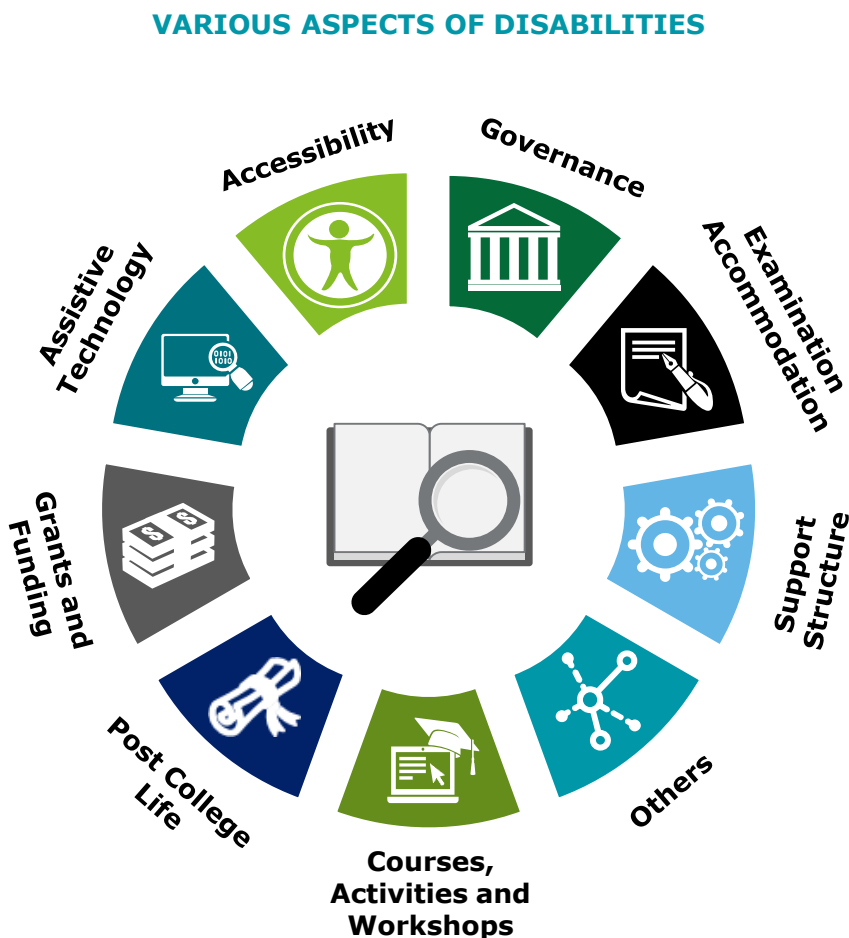
International Best Practices

To achieve the vision of promoting inclusive education, there is an urgent need to not only strengthen existing practices and policies, but to also develop new innovative solutions tailored specifically for the Indian high education ecosystem. To this end, a good starting point would be to look at some of the best practices prevalent internationally.

Comprehensive research covering both primary and secondary sources was conducted, though given that the world of education institutions is vast, efforts were focused around understanding the best practices amongst well established US Universities.

"I can't change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination."

- Jimmy Dean



International Best Practices

Governance



- Common minimum admission requirements for all students (disabled or otherwise) as instituted by the Registrar's office/governing body
- Decentralized autonomy in terms of course selections and academic modifications/accommodations* i.e., department/faculties provide the final recommendation and sign off on qualifying exams, deadlines, grading, time taken for test completion, time tables at the dissertation level, etc.

**Provision of accommodations, although at the discretion of the department/faculty, do not alter:*

- a) *Fundamental requirements of a program/course e.g., no relaxation on attendance requirements if it is a metric instituted by the governing body for course completion*
- b) *Technical standards of a program/course i.e., certification or licensing requirements*

Support Structure



- User-friendly university website detailing documentation requirements, processes, available support network and resources etc.
- A formal "Academic Coaching Program" wherein a professional coach/academic advisor works closely with PWDs to create individualized learning strategies. Guidance is provided around study habits, project management, task breakdown, goal setting, self-advocacy etc.
- Well established alumni network offering mentorship, assistance with transition to life during college and after graduation (employment opportunities) etc.
- Collaborative study sessions with peers and study mentors
- Voluntary (or even paid) peer group programs providing additional assistance relating to mobility around campus, academics etc.
- Provision to use the assistance of certified service animals
- Speech, hearing and eye clinics providing free (or at nominal cost) consultation and treatment recommendations

Assistive Technology



- Centre for trying out various available assistive technologies and for free consultation sessions with trained staff members on the suitability of such technologies
- Dedicated areas for computing with adjustable-height work surfaces and specialized hardware/software that is periodically updated with latest versions
- Availability of assistive devices at free or nominal charge
 - Software - screen reader, magnification, specialized reading/writing, voice recognition, on-demand description service, audio description, note taking etc.
 - Hardware - smart-pens, adjustable furniture, closed circuit televisions, videophones etc.
 - Others - FM amplification system, portable transmitters, four-track cassette recorders, talking calculators, raised line drawing kit, Braille information etc.

International Best Practices

Accessibility



- Adopting multiple methods to make course material more accessible and easier to comprehend which include but are not limited to
 - Creating online presentations and quizzes as a substitute for lectures
 - Closed-captioned presentations with an active transcript
 - Reducing duration of lectures where possible and investing more in one-on-one interactions
 - Converting lecture PPTs to FLASH presentations with voiceovers (also easy to upload, edit etc.) and following it up with short exercises and quizzes
 - Converting books/materials into formats such as large prints, hard copy Braille etc.
 - Digitizing relevant media
 - Timely communication and provision of printed material in accessible format well in advance of the start of the class
- Provision of free (or at nominal charge) services such as sign language interpreters and lab assistants for academic activities
- Free transportation services for students with locomotive disabilities (or tie-ups with local operators for services at a nominal charge)
- An interactive campus map (application) allowing users to navigate between buildings/campuses by providing relevant directions and locations of handicap accessible entrances and restrooms
- Campus storage units for students with mobility impairment
- Provision to move a course from a room deemed inaccessible to another room

Examination Accommodation



- Streamlined procedures and well-defined policies in applying for examination accommodations
- Adopting multiple methods to accommodate individual requirements of PWDs
 - Extended test time and allowance of extra breaks in between tests (for the purpose of medication, trip to restroom, etc.)
 - Availability of reader, scribe, oral and sign language interpreter, Braille slate etc.
 - Provision of taking exams in alternate test formats (e.g., Braille, large-print test book, large-print answer sheet, recorded audio) or via special computers i.e., with an ergonomic keyboard, keyboard with touchpad, screen magnification, selectable background and foreground colors, trackball etc.
 - Allowing for special lighting, adjustable table or chair, cushion, distraction reduced environment, etc.

Note: Universities often get their relevant facilities accredited by certifying bodies (e.g., National College Testing Association for US colleges) to ensure that best practices are maintained and improved upon on an ongoing basis

International Best Practices

Courses, Activities and Workshops



- Comprehensive summer study program with a focus on:
 - Bridging learning gaps
 - Getting an early start on the formal class curriculum
 - Skill development
- Empowerment and self-defense workshops on physical and verbal strategies to counter violence
- Self-paced online courses and workshops to help adjust with college life
- Adaptive sports facilities, programs and events
- Study abroad programs (tie-ups with disability departments of other universities)
- Priority enrollment for PWDs so as to better manage college course schedules and address accommodation requirements in a timely manner
- Varied learning support programs and self-development activities aimed at improving academic performance (and improving student retention)
- Workshops on better navigating college administrative activities and peer relationships

Grants and Funding



- Collaborative sessions between students, faculty and administration to build proposals around obtaining additional funding
- Easily accessible federal grants, scholarships and donor funding of both, monetary and non monetary nature
- Readily available information - via multiple platforms such as university website, posters, brochures etc., regarding academic aid options

Post College Life



- Exclusive corporate placement programs and career fairs
- Provision that allows for a part of the placement process to be conducted online
- Tie-ups with various organizations to assist with job and internship opportunities (e.g., Workforce Recruitment Program, The American Association of People with Disabilities)
- Continued training and support by the university for up to one year post graduation

International Best Practices

Others



- Streamlined process for registering with the university disability office
- Access to regional helplines managed by NGOs or local government authorities that provide information on available education opportunities
- Tie-ups with community resources providing training modules, information and other resources to help better prepare for college admissions
- Online application and scheduling process for connecting with academic counsellors
- Comprehensive information on accessing campus alerts and emergency notification tools
 - Information on campus-wide emergency preparedness features and procedures, as well as building-specific plans and designated waiting areas
- Strictly enforced non discrimination policy
- Multiple avenues of grievance redressal (e.g., central grievance department, disability coordinator, academic counsellor etc.)

Path Forward

Our Understanding

Initial research on challenges faced by individuals and education institutions, in conjunction with the insights obtained from primary interviews, revealed variety of reasons responsible for a sorry state of enrolment of disabled students in higher education institutions. In addition, a careful analysis of best-in-class operating models across the globe, spanning from community colleges to premier management institutions, reveals glaring deficiencies in the current Indian ecosystem.

Basis the analysis of various aspects of the issue, it is evident that the entire gamut of underlying challenges can be clubbed under a few key themes. Hence, the solution/recommendations suggested in this section target the aforementioned themes and attempt to provide a comprehensive set of activities that could be adopted for successful implementation.

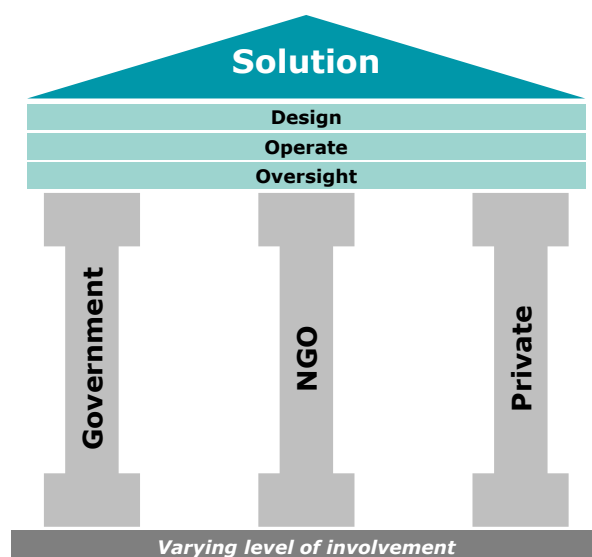
Approach to Recommendation

The recommended activities have been categorized under various phases: **Design, Operate and Oversight**

- **Design:** Includes activities entailing understanding of the requirements and structural setup
- **Operate:** Includes activities that involve on-ground implementation and are ongoing in nature
- **Oversight:** Includes activities that involve monitoring implementation and tracking progress

A key element introduced in the solution approach is assigning of responsibilities of key activities to one of the stakeholders: **Government** (includes government-run or aided institutions), **NGO** (non-governmental organizations working in the field of disabled upliftment) and **Private** (private institutions or corporate players). A clear communication regarding ownership of activities will help expedite the overall process and set adequate accountability.

Another relevant metric included in the structure is '**Level of involvement**' which, quite literally, highlights the level of effort to be undertaken by each stakeholder. This metric has been derived after careful consideration of various factors such as number of activities owned by a stakeholder under a solution, corresponding quantum of effort required (e.g. drafting of standard operating procedures requires substantial effort) and related impact/value on implementation of overall solution. This metric is subjective in nature and has been derived basis our own discretion.



Proposed Recommendations

*E*stablishing disability-focused helpline/centers to address enrolment queries

Level of involvement

Government* 

NGO 

Private Players 

*Including govt. funded education institutions

IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH	Key stakeholders		
	Govt	NGO	Private
Design			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand target region (district wise) requirements by considering factors such as number and concentration of disabled students, local language, education and income levels, etc. 	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create setup plan in conjunction with relevant stakeholders to align on specifics around cost, number and locations of centers/helplines, basic infrastructure requirements, etc. 	✓	✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify POCs responsible for each helpline, and set up standard operating procedures and KPIs such as number of disabled people served resulting in subsequent enrolment to education institutions, etc. 	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create smartphone apps customized for local requirements to convey key information 	✓		✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish regular cadence between POCs and other key stakeholders to obtain up-to date information on relevant topics such as enrolment requirements, curriculum design, employment opportunities for PwDs, etc. 	✓	✓	✓
Operate			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain state-wise live database of PwDs to understand hit rate, and devise/update outreach plans 	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create targeted awareness and advertisement campaigns on relevant offline (local newspapers, billboards, panchayats, prominent NGOs, SHGs, forums, etc.) and online platforms (Government/private websites, WhatsApp, Facebook, etc.) 	✓	✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refresh data being relayed via helpline/apps, through inputs by key stakeholders 	✓	✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide tailored guidance/counselling around potential options by understanding individual requirements through analysis of data points such as disability type, education level, financial background, area of interest, current location, etc. 	✓	✓	
Oversight			
By Government appointed officials who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess plan performance of helpline centers through established KPIs and surveys 	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilize resources where necessary to meet plan shortfall 	✓		

Proposed Recommendations

Customizing curriculum to align with latest education and job market requirements

Level of involvement

Government* 

NGO 

Private Players 

*Including govt. funded education institutions


IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH	Key stakeholders		
	Govt	NGO	Private
Design			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand nature of currently available disabled-centric jobs and underlying requirements (e.g. education qualifications, key skills, level of interaction across teams required, etc.) 	✓		✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipate future employment trends and consider innovative technological enablers to identify new avenues for placement of disabled workforce 	✓		✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with NGOs/special educators to modify curriculum or create tailored courses (wherever possible) to inculcate technical skills relevant to current job market, resulting in improved employability 	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance soft skills through inclusion of English language in curriculum of state-run primary and high schools, helping satisfy the basic requirement for premier higher education institutes and companies 	✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve accessibility to curriculum material for disabled students by utilizing innovative methods such as digital content, voice recorders, smart boards, FM system, horseshoe-shaped classroom formation, etc. 	✓	✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with institutions to define placement policies preventing biases against disabled students by recruiters 	✓		
Operate			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess current skill level of disabled student pool and define a customized training program for each individual considering key development areas 	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education institutions to coordinate efforts with NGOs to implement revised curriculum and conduct training in line with identified requirements (e.g. representatives from various NGOs conducting classes for communication skills, aptitude, logical reasoning, etc.) 	✓	✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodically refresh database of disabled-centric skills/jobs, to keep abreast of evolving requirements warranting further curriculum revisions 	✓		
Oversight			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education institutions to monitor program effectiveness by tracking key metrics such as number of disabled students placed, disabled employee retention rate, average career progression, etc. 	✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish touchpoints with corporate POCs to review performance of disabled graduates and undertake course correction, if required 	✓		✓

Proposed Recommendations

Building a community support network for disabled students

Level of involvement

Government* 

NGO 

Private Players 

*Including govt. funded education institutions

IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH	Key stakeholders		
	Govt	NGO	Private
Design			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a differently-abled student welfare focused committee at each institution; with representation from NGOs, current student body, PwD alum, faculty and administrative staff 	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align on committee's key objectives, execution plan, standard operating procedures and cadence with overseeing authorities (e.g. Vice-chancellor) 	✓	✓	
Operate			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake various support initiatives, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Building (and periodically refresh) an exhaustive alumni database, creating awareness of its existence and potential benefits ◦ Initiating a 'Buddy Program' in collaboration with NGOs, focused on understanding the grassroots level challenges being faced by the current PwD batch. ◦ Organizing recurring information sessions wherein PwD alumni (along with company representatives) share experiences (educational and professional), and address PwD concerns/queries ◦ Coordinating with families of disabled students to gain a holistic understanding of the challenges faced • Update initiatives based on feedback from buddies, alumni, corporates, families of PwD and student body 	✓	✓	✓
Oversight			
<p>By HOD/Vice Chancellor who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews committee's performance against the plan during recurring touchpoints basis initiative updates such as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Incremental updates to alumni database b) Information sessions conducted and planned c) Updated action plan basis feedback received from alumni, families of PwDs and buddy program 	✓		

Proposed Recommendations

Creating an environment promoting inclusivity in higher education institutions

Level of involvement

Government* 

NGO 

Private Players 

*Including govt. funded education institutions

IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH	Key stakeholders		
	Govt	NGO	Private
Design			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an Equal Opportunity Cell called “Smart Inclusion Centre” within each institution 	✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and socialize surveys, conduct interviews with faculty/staff and inspect current infrastructure to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Understand special teaching requirements of SWDs, and the efforts/resources required to bring them at par with non-disabled students Assess baseline sensitivity of the institution towards disabled students 	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an action plan by analyzing survey/interview data and leveraging global/local best practices for promoting inclusivity 	✓	✓	
Operate			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize events such as workshops, interactive sessions and outdoor activities for faculty and administrative staff to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Create awareness towards types of disability and issues thereof Delve into myths associated with disability Educate on do’s and don’ts when interacting with PwDs, etc. (Note that best practices suggest having multiple events with smaller group in an informal setting wherever possible) 	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inculcate special training such as sign language and basic braille among staff members to promote effective communication with PwDs 	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement key activities to satisfy learning requirements for disabled students. (e.g., extra classes, summer school to prepare for upcoming semester, provision of additional time during exams, relaxed grading system, etc.) 	✓	✓	
Oversight			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal Opportunities Cell to review policy effectiveness by rolling out follow-up surveys/interviews 	✓		

Proposed Recommendations

Creating a comprehensive financial support network for disabled students

Level of involvement

Government* 

NGO 

Private Players 

*Including govt. funded education institutions

IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH	Key stakeholders		
	Govt	NGO	Private
Design			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create state-wise committees focused on providing financial aid to disabled students aspiring to enroll or currently enrolled in higher education institutions 	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold discussions/roll out surveys to concerned stakeholders (e.g. Smart Inclusion Center within each institution, village/district SHGs, NGOs, etc.) to understand financial aid requirements (considering factors such as number of eligible disabled persons, course completion costs, etc.) 	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State committee to establish guidelines for: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Assessment of cases for financial aid (considering factors such as student's family background, income level, level of disability, etc.) b) Incentivizing completion of courses/achievement of course milestones for disabled students already enrolled 	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise funds for the program by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Incentivizing private players to provide funds, through tax benefits b) Collaborating with NGOs (funds through independent sources) 	✓	✓	✓
Operate			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and launch campaigns targeted at raising awareness about financial aid program and associated details 	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish regular cadence with local SHGs/NGOs as well as 'Smart Inclusion Centers' to gather data on aid requirements (includes regular financial aid as well as milestone-specific incentives) 	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collate and analyze data collected from various sources and electronically disburse funds to each student 	✓	✓	
Oversight			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Govt. appointed officials to monitor state committees' performance by tracking KPIs such as budget vs. disbursement, student retention rate, course completion rate, etc. 	✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State committee to review program effectiveness by rolling out follow-up surveys/interviews 	✓	✓	

Proposed Recommendations

Crafting focused awareness campaigns related to education initiatives for the disabled

Level of involvement

Government* 

NGO 

Private Players 

**Including govt. funded education institutions*

IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH	Key stakeholders		
	Govt	NGO	Private
Design			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a database of initiatives (financial and non-financial) currently in place to promote higher education among disabled students. These could include, but are not limited to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Financial aid programs run by the government/govt. aided institutions b) Initiatives undertaken by govt./NGOs to promote inclusive education c) CSR programs run by corporates/private players supporting education for disabled 	✓	✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand target audience in each region to strategize tailored campaigns to disseminate relevant information (e.g. through print ads, television & social media campaigns, door-to-door outreach, community meetings & workshops, etc.) 	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with private contractors (marketing firms) to create awareness campaigns highlighting initiatives as well as associated benefits that could be derived (e.g. dedicated helpline/centers for enrolment queries, list of NGOs working in the domain, facilities/amenities available to the disabled to complete education, etc.) 	✓	✓	✓
Operate			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement customized awareness campaigns with the help of identified stakeholders (NGOs/SHGs/local panchayats/state governments/private players) through various channels(e.g. career fairs, door-to-door outreach, digital, print etc.) 	✓	✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a live database of ongoing and upcoming initiatives for future awareness campaigns 	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote disability-focused education institutions by rolling out best-in-country rankings (similar to the rankings for conventional colleges for science, arts or commerce streams) 	✓		
Oversight			
By state govt. appointed officials who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor campaign effectiveness by tracking KPIs such as enrolment rates, course completion rates, etc. • Roll-out periodic surveys/conduct interviews aimed at analyzing variance in baseline vs current awareness levels among target groups 	✓		

About Youth4Jobs

Youth4Jobs



Youth4Jobs focusses on skilling of youth with disability to the needs of the industry. Its rich experience of working with governments, multilateral agencies & companies has been leveraged for skilling PwD. Today, Youth4Jobs is the largest organization in this space with a presence in 32 locations in 17 states of India. It has won several awards, national and international.

Youth4Jobs works at various levels:

- Setting up placement linked skilling centers for less educated youth with disability from rural areas, across the country
- Working with educated youth with disability in colleges
- Offering comprehensive solutions to mainstream hiring of Persons with Disabilities in the corporate workforce
- Providing a holistic learning experience in schools of the disabled to prevent dropouts and increase education levels
- Supporting artists with disabilities through its start-up, Not Just Art (www.notjustartglobal.org)
- Supporting work on policy which includes studies, industry research and country strategy for multilateral agencies