

# Commentary on the Educational Planning: Dropout of CWSN and SLD Children in India

Veera Gupta\*

Department of Educational Planning and Administration, National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), New Delhi, India

## ABOUT THE STUDY

There has been significant development in identification, assessment, and educational interventions for children with specific learning disabilities (SLD) in India. It is heartening to note that policies are being formulated to facilitate their education. The very first encouraging development is towards the definition of specific learning disability. It was missing in policy documents until Right of Persons with Disability (RPwD) Act 2016 got enacted [1]. After defining the concept, another major development took place by RPwD rule, 2017 that has laid down roles and functions of schools and systems for the identification of children with SLD. It helped to clarify the procedure to be adopted by various agencies for diagnosis. The third milestone is the notification of department of empowerment of persons with disability of June 2020; it has clarified the confusion related to degree of SLD condition, assessment criteria and test (NIMHANS battery) to be used for SLD certification [2].

### Main policies

- RPwD Act 2016
- RPwD Rules 2017
- Notification June 2020

The UDISE data shows that enrolment of Children with SLD (CwSLD) is not more than one percent of total enrolment. The number is much less compared to the ratio of CwSLD in the population. As research have shown that if all children are identified the number may go up to 20-25 percent of the total population [3]. Further those CwSLDs who get enrolled are also not able to continue and progress in the educational system. Very steep decline in enrolment is observed in the enrolment of CwSLDs at classes VIth, IXth and XIth. The interpretation of the data reveals that if hundred CwSLDs are enrolled in class Ist, only 5 CwSLDs can reach up to senior secondary level. It means that if there are ten thousand total children, only hundred are identified as CwSLDs (one percent) and out of that only five could go up to senior secondary education (0.05 percent). Ideally the number could go up to two thousand five hundred. This gap is the target to be filled by educational planners (Figure 1).

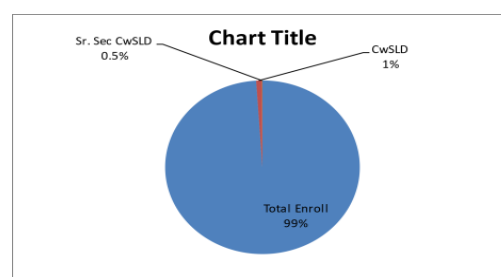


Figure 1: Chart title of children with specific learning disabilities (CwSLD).

To be retained in the system and to progress, it is crucial for a CwSLD to start with the educational intervention as early as possible. It helps in arresting the progression of the disability as well as reduces the gap between potential and performance. The analysis of 10 assessment report of CwSLD given by different clinical psychologists suggested that though tests have been prescribed but reports are at great variance [4]. There is great need to standardize the report formats as well because no two reports can be compared on tests used and for the scoring. It makes schools unsure about the interventions to be given. Moreover, Policy on quantification of the SLD condition was absent as late as up to June 2020. The RPwD Act mandates that to become eligible for provisions mentioned in the Act, the certification must state clearly that the condition of disability is more than 40 percent. In the absence of quantification, educational interventions were also absent. Under the circumstance, the provisions of the Act remained on paper only despite having intention to help CwSLD. Hence incomplete policy resulted in non-availability of educational provisions in the educational settings hence dropouts.

Besides the gap in the existing policies, one more lacuna remains to be resolved in the definition of the SLD. The definition of SLD should also include the concept of 'ADHD' in its ambit; it has got left out in RPwD Act. The definition doesn't cover attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in its ambit which is desirable. The ADHD is included in the international definition, in all academic documents, more so, it is observed as first sign by teachers and parents as obvious symptom. Because it is more prominently displayed condition out of five conditions namely dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and

\*Address to Correspondence: Dr. Veera Gupta, Associate Professor, Research Scholar, Department of Educational Planning and Administration, National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), New Delhi, India; E-mail: veeragupta@niepa.ac.in

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dyspraxia impacting children. These five conditions are clubbed together and are called as specific learning disability (SLD). These are nested together in an individual. These could be at variance in degree. Therefore, its omission in RPwD Act is impacting identification of children. Though, if we read the definitions of all the 21 disabilities, the symptoms of ADHD are covered in the emotional disorder. If the definition of SLD is not changed then, the notification of 2020 on assessment of SLD needs correction to include IDEA scale along with NIMHANS battery for assessment of SLD as ADHD is a comorbid condition.

We have covered a lot of ground for the education of CwSLD. A little more effort will lead to universalisation of enrolment, learning and hundred percent gross enrolments Ratio. It will help us to realise sustainable Developmental Goals as well.

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