Quality For Some Or Quality For All: The Case Of Scholastic Backwardness

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"All right; who else is unfit for the school?" Principal says, "It is not that they are unfit for the school. Rather, this school is unfit for them. The school is unable to teach them what they have the aptitude for."

Gijubhai Badheka (1938)

The principal's remark reveals the limitations of school system to be inclusive for all. It is estimated that there are around 170 million children between 6 and 14 years of age in India and 56 to 70 million of them are not going to school and many of them may have dropped out of school due to scholastic problems. If nearly 20% of school-going children have scholastic problems, we could expect 34 million of them to be doing poorly in studies. Since a significant number of them would have special learning disability (SLD), we are looking at figures in excess of 15 million with this 'invisible handicap'. These figures, off-course, do not include the 14-18 year olds who have unfortunately not been included in Article 21A of the Indian Constitution as children requiring compulsory education. Therefore, we would expect to have almost as many children with specific learning disability in India as there are children with all the other disabilities put together. (**Naveen Thacker,** *President, IAP 2007)*

These statistics acquaint us with a stark reality that forces us to adopt a different perspective to understand and interpret the status of school education. The imperative to educate all has been accepted philosophically, politically and socially as manifested through the commitment for "Education For All" and the movement of 'No Child Left Behind'. Its realization in practice, however, continues to face challenges and problems. The present fast paced life- a fallout of globalization, liberalization and privatization- somehow raises uncomfortable questions. What are we doing for the people who do not run as fast as others? Whose fault is it? What is our role and responsibility in keeping everyone together? Are the equity and measure for equal opportunity sufficient in the development of our citizens? In the age of multiple intelligence and emotional intelligence the slogan of No Child Left Behind assumes significance. 'Education for All' appears as an achievable possibility.

 In this context the large number of students who are out of the purview of education for various reasons, or more specifically the 'ejects' and 'rejects' of the system, need an urgent attention. It also needs to be contemplated that the increase in resource allocation and expansion of infrastructure facilities has not been able to hold all the students in the schools. There could be a number of reasons for this, but the authors propose an inside view of the school.

An inside view of school- standardization versus differentiation:

School as an institution is so familiar that it is difficult to believe how different individuals concerned with it understand and interpret it. Flack and Osler (2000) state students' view of school as:

- *Students are often unclear about what school can offer them they feel as though they are expected to attend as they can get a job and because it is the law.*
- *School is a series of unrelated episodes.*
- *Students have little or no power in the learning process-school is done to them by teachers for their own good.*
- *The curriculum is a collection of subject areas and facts.*
- *Daily lessons just happen with little or no thought or preparation from teachers.*
- *School is independent of the 'real' world.*
- *If students did not attend school teachers would not get paid.*

Though the school may be perceived in the above manner, the purpose of schooling is to enable the learner to engage in the learning process. Learning is a process of nurture, in which a child must be comfortable and which must be enjoyable. It is never meant to be a means of meeting the personal needs of the parents, nor to win their hearts and not even for wining the rat race competition of the present environment. Unfortunately, the perception of learning as a process of "knowing oneself" and feeling joy in this process, accepting one's own limitation/s and developing one's "unique strength" for the positive development of oneself and subsequently of the entire world is waning. Education is a vital and the main instrument for the development of an individual. But this instrument and this education system is used as a production machine in which the raw material are our children who are unique entities and are endowed with totally unique potentials. Going against this, the schools attempt to develop each and every product (Child) as a standard product which is as per their own personal goal (here goal in terms of the school, in terms of parents, in terms of teacher or in terms of over all society). In this process there is a negation of recognition of individuality of learners in terms of socio-cultural background, physical and psychological aspects. In the present context, exposure poor and exposure rich background also may be considered as giving rise to these differences. Added to this is the imposition of parental ambition and their unsatisfied needs on their children. It appears then, that the child undergoes the learning process not for him/herself but for others.

There are other subtle factors at play in the process of schooling. The race for standardization often forces the adults (teachers and parents) to transfer their fears and phobias on children. Initial care and nurture generates trust in children, but fears and phobias develop the children as misfits. In the attempt to be 'running and racing in track for the common goal', some children become victims of comparisons. These comparisons are absolutely weird and unethical as these are between the aspiration/s of an adult and the inability of the child, the unique potential of a child with the unique potential of

another child, failure/s of one child with the success of a child who seems to have worked well at a particular age level. The comparisons are endless and so generalized at times that it makes a child feel, "what he or she knows and does, is meaningless, what adults and others do is worth knowing and learning". In short oranges and apples are being constantly compared where no comparison exists and is possible. A natural question here is: Are we educating or pretending to educate? Are we teaching or pretending to teach? Are our behaviors real or pretentious? It seems we are good actors and very nice pretenders. This statement, though a very strong and offending statement, is made deliberately. There is always a subtle difference between what is and what should be….. At every point of time we have harped loud and clear on what should be….. rather than what is….? The silent victim of all this is the child.

Quality is an unending quest, so much so that we have applied almost any successful industrial formula to understand education in the "best and proven" factory model and industrial economic variables. Even if one views education as a commodity for the global market and its interest, the large number of people who are still outside the system is a concern. The focus, in this paper, is not on the people who are outside the system…. God has saved them! They can live their life according to their own wish and will without trying to pretend and imitate behaviors of 'animal school', where horses and donkeys compete. The parable is not meant to insult any animal, rather the authors would like to say that horse has a different potential and so has the donkey. Tortoise has different abilities than the rabbit… How can there be competition? Those children who cannot be a part of this comparison for various reasons become misfits.

Another aspect that creates a group of students who are misfits is the nature of knowledge which forms an integral part of the teaching learning process in schools. Subjects are to be taught in school, to prepare children for life. Yet, they create a complex for children as they grapple with the subject matter. Each teacher teaches a subject but does not teach the children. S/he emphasizes and focuses on the importance of one's own subject. Maths does not help in daily budgets and its calculations; language doesn't help in writing application. Environment science does not help in reducing environment problems and science does not help in reducing the health hazards that children face these days, life is lost in compartments and information jargons. Illich (1971) has made some very critical observation on the contribution of the present system of schools to learning. "A….. major illusion on which the school system rests in that most learning is the result of teaching. Teaching, it is true, may contribute to certain kinds of learning under certain circumstances. But most people acquire most of their knowledge outside school, and in school only in so far as school, in a few rich countries, has become their place of confinement during an increasing part of their lives." A loss of wholistic nature of knowledge makes it meaningless for children and they become misfits in the system.

This inside view of school focuses on that group of students who have become a part of the school system but do not fit into the system for various reasons as they cannot fit into the race for standardization. This group is in imminent danger of being the rejects of the schools education. **The focus of this paper is to look at the formal schooling system catering to a large section of children in the regular classroom and school**

situation. These children are 'normal' yet unable to perform and develop as per their potential.

School system: exclusion versus inclusion

The nature of school as a system and its functions may facilitate the process of holding the students in the school and facilitating their development. How do the policies and practices of the formal system perpetuate exclusion leading to the development of various forms of schooling and forcing the disadvantaged and the disabled to seek refuge in one of them? Parson (1999) has identified six functions of a school system: Custodial, civilizing, developing the national identity, skill building, credentialing and delivery of knowledge. The approaches to organizing each of these functional areas could be within a spectrum ranging from facilitating to forcing exclusion, as articulated in the following figure;

Functions of Schools leading to exclusion:

Custodial	Benign and nurturing or controlling and limiting
Civilizing	Democratizing and humanizing or subjugating and inducting
National Identity	Open and questioning or closed and nationalistic
Skilling Credentialing	Generic and flexible egalitarian and communitarian or specific and fixed elitist and competitive
Public knowledge	Conjectural and open or received and autocratic

Source: Parson, 1999

The schools have become systems of selection as against systems for nurture of every one. Ahmed (1975) argued, 'what is important is learning regardless of where, when, and how it occurs. There exists wide latitude in sources, location, times and tools of learning. Speaking about formal education he continues, "Formal schools have served as a gigantic sorting machine selecting a very small fraction of their clientele for entrance into progressively higher levels of formal education and dumping the vast majority by the wayside…It is coming to be recognized that education need not be equated with schooling and measured by years of exposure to schooling….the school's importance in relation to other means of education is not increasing, but diminishing." Inability to cope with the system, for whatever reason, leads to one's exclusion from it. If the schools as a system lead to exclusion of the students, then an understanding of the nature of these students; the nature of students' inabilities need attention. The next step would be how these inabilities can be handled and; how these students can be helped.

Understanding Scholastic Backwardness:

Learning problems do not occur without a context or environment. It is important to ascertain whether an inadequate environment could be the primary cause of the students' difficulty or are there any factors that are contributing significantly to inadequate performance. A very simplistic and symptomatic view of scholastic backwardness is the phenomenon in which a child is not showing performance of various types that s/he is expected to at a particular age and stage. The social-emotional, economic, underlying causes of this phenomenon can be medical, developmental, specific to some areas of performance, lack of infrastructure support, family background and family support and/or lack of teacher resource. These causes create a very broad base for understanding scholastic backwardness. All these causes are important in different ways and require attention of different types. Not all learning problems are necessarily learning disabilities. Many children are simply slower in developing certain skills. Because children show natural differences in their rate of development, sometimes what seems to be a learning disability may simply be a delay in maturation. To be diagnosed as a learning disability, specific criteria must be met. The criteria and characteristics for diagnosing learning disabilities appear in a reference book called the DSM (short for the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders). The DSM diagnosis is commonly used when applying for health insurance coverage of diagnostic and treatment services.

Scholastic backwardness can arise out of medical condition and non medical condition.

Medical condition	Non medical condition
Subnormal mental functioning	Social
Anemia	Economic
Epilepsy	Language
Malnourishment	Educational inclination
Vision	Family
Hearing	School Environment

The non medical causes for scholastic backwardness can be further classified as follows:

Non medical condition can be on account of emotional factors/environmental factors/ home factors

Emotional	Environment	Home
Chronic neglect	Noisy	Language
Sexual abuse	Unattractive schools	Malnutrition (poverty)
Parents getting divorced	Excessive Television viewing	Low education of parents
Death of a close person	Lead exposure	Parental attitude towards study (especially girls)
Chronic health impairment	Peer group influence	Unsatisfactory home environment (domestic violence, family stressor,

		adverse life events)
	Teachers' involvement	

The above tables illustrate the need to understand the cause of scholastic backwardness which may be a very simple cause like language barrier/ or home background or a complex one needing medical attention. At times it may be due to learning disabilities.

Understanding Learning Disabilities (LD):

Learning Disabilities (LD) viz a viz scholastic backwardness are closely related. Children who are quite normal and yet at all times display learning problems suffer from learning disabilities. They write ***dab for bad*** and ***saw for was*** and ***unable to concentrate if there is a bit of noise.*** The National Advisory committee on handicapped children (USA) defined learning disabled children as follows:

"Learning- Disabled Children (LDC) exhibit disorder in one or more basic psychological process involved in understanding and in suing spoken or written language. The disorder is manifested in listening, thinking talking, reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic. They include conditions which are referred to as perceptual problems, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and aphasia, etc. They do not include learning problems which are primarily due to usual, hearing or motor handicaps, mental retardation, emotional disturbance or environmental disadvantage"

The National Joint Committee for Learning Disabilities (NJCLD, 1981) modified in 1985 is as follows: "Learning disabilities is a generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical abilities or of a social skills. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual and presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction. Even though a learning disability may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (e.g., sensory impairment, mental retardation, social and emotional disturbance) or socio environmental influences (e.g., cultural differences or inappropriate instruction, psycholinguistic factors) and especially with attention deficit disorders, all of which may cause learning problems, a learning disability is not the result of those conditions or influences"

The first definition of learning disability which gained wide acceptance was proposed by Kirk in 1962. He defined it as: "A learning disability refers to a retardation, or delayed development in one or more of the processes of speech, language, reading, spelling, writing or arithmetic resulting from a possible cerebral dysfunction and / or emotional or behavioral disturbance and not form mental retardation, sensory deprivation or cultural or instructional factors."

Children with LDs have difficulty in the way they take in, remember, make sense of, or communicate information. Learning disability is a disorder that affects people's ability to either interpret what they see and hear or link information from different parts

of the brain. These limitations can show up in many ways – as specific difficulties with spoken and written language, co-ordination, self control, or attention. Such difficulties, when they extend to school work can impede learning to read, write or do math. Other traits that may be present in a child with LD include unpredictable or uneven test performance, perceptual impairments, motor problems and behavior such as impulsiveness, poor attention span and difficulty in social situations.

Learning disabilities (LDs) remain "one of the least understood and most debated disabling conditions that affect children" (Lyon 1996). Learning disability is not a single disorder, but is composed of disabilities in any of the seven specific areas:
1. receptive language (listening)
2. expressive language (speaking)
3. basic reading skills
4. reading comprehension
5. written expression
6. mathematics calculation and
7. mathematical reasoning

These separate types of LDs frequently co occur with one another and also with certain social skill deficits and emotional or behavioral disorders such as attention deficit disorder.

A distinction has been made between LDs as an applied field of special education and LD as area of research on individual differences in learning and performance. In the former sense, the field shares many attributes with other political – social movements, while in the latter sense, it is a loosely jointed, interdisciplinary area of scientific inquiry (Torgesen 1991). The confusion and occasional conflict between these two aspects of the field has created many problems. Learning disabilities is an unusual discipline as it contains two contrasting aspects: one, intellectual and the other practical (Wong 1991)

Characteristics of Learning Disabled children:

John et. al., (2002) has identified characteristics of learning disabled children.
1. Discrepancy factor; a discrepancy exists between a child's ability and academic performance across one or more skill areas.
2. Academic learning difficulty: Academic problems exist in the area of reading, writing, spelling and mathematics.
3. Perceptual disorder: These include inability to recognize, discriminate and interpret sensation. It can be the area of auditory channel or/ and visual channel
4. Meta cognitive deficits: meta cognitive abilities involve the ability to use self regulatory mechanisms such as planning moves evaluating effectiveness of ongoing activities checking the outcome and remediating the errors.
5. Memory problems: Most students complain of poor memory. The learning disabled students fail to use strategies that non disabled students readily use. In addition, LD students may have difficulty because of their poor language skills.

6. Motor disorders: children with this problem are clumsy unable to skip or hop. Some exhibit fine motor difficulties such as in cutting with scissors.
7. Attention problems and hyperactivity: Many researchers have documented that many LD children have short attention span, distractibility and impulsivity. Some are restless and hyperactive
8. Social emotional problems: The prevalence rate of psychological disturbance is hog among the learning disabled children as compared to the normal children. A continuous failure in academics results in poor self concept and self esteem.

Based on above the learning disabilities of a child can be listed as follows:

1. Discrepancy between ability and achievement.
2. Poor academic achievement
3. Variation in performance in different field.
4. They are impulsive in behavior while talking and doing activity
5. Unable to concentrate on one activity
6. Easily distractible
7. Faulty perception
8. Poor memory
9. Unable to understand oral message
10. Get easily disturbed.

Learning disabilities lead to the issue of scholastic backwardness. These causes hamper a scholastically backward child from making normal progress in learning and mental development as compared to other children of similar age. Usually, s/he will not show expected performance. There can be number of problems due to which the child may be scholastically backward. One can decipher from the symptoms shown by the child in the classroom. Since the classroom transaction demands a child to construct knowledge, how the child processes, stores and retrieves the information needs to be understood.

Learning Disability as deficit in Information Processing:

Learning is processing information requiring complex processes in an individual. If information is not processed appropriately by any child, it may lead to learning disability. A precise understanding of the learning difficulties can be obtained if it is categorized into broad categories based on the four stages of information processing used in learning: input, integration, storage, and output.

- **Input**

    This is the information perceived through the senses, such as visual and auditory perception. Difficulties with visual perception can cause problems with recognizing the shape, position and size of items seen. There can be problems with sequencing, which can relate to deficits with processing time intervals or temporal perception. Difficulties with auditory perception can make it difficult to

screen out competing sounds in order to focus on one of them, such as the sound of the teacher's voice. Some children appear to be unable to process tactile input. For example, they may seem insensitive to pain or dislike being touched.

- **Integration**

    This is the stage during which perceived input is interpreted, categorized, placed in a sequence, or related to previous learning. Students with problems in these areas may be unable to tell a story in the correct sequence, unable to memorize sequences of information such as the days of the week, able to understand a new concept but be unable to generalize it to other areas of learning, or able to learn facts but be unable to put the facts together to see the "big picture." A poor vocabulary may contribute to problems with comprehension.

- **Storage**

    Problems with memory can occur with short-term or working memory, or with long-term memory. Most memory difficulties occur in the area of short-term memory, which can make it difficult to learn new material without many more repetitions than is usual. Difficulties with visual memory can impede learning to spell.

- **Output**

    Information comes out of the brain either through words, that is, language output, or through muscle activity, such as gesturing, writing or drawing. Difficulties with language output can create problems with spoken language, for example, answering a question on demand, in which one must retrieve information from storage, organize our thoughts, and put the thoughts into words before we speak. It can also cause trouble with written language for the same reasons. Difficulties with motor abilities can cause problems with gross and fine motor skills. People with gross motor difficulties may be clumsy, that is, they may be prone to stumbling, falling, or bumping into things. They may also have trouble running, climbing, or learning to ride a bicycle. People with fine motor difficulties may have trouble buttoning shirts, tying shoelaces, or with handwriting.

Specific learning disabilities

Deficits in any area of information processing can manifest in a variety of specific learning disabilities. These areas of learning disabilities can be broadly classified as difficulties in writing, difficulties in reading, difficulties in mathematics and difficulties in motor planning and non verbal abilities.

Difficulty in writing

A majority of students who receive services for LD have severe writing problems that persist over time (Graham and Haris, 1989, 1990). Writing related problems include errors in spelling, punctuations, capitalization and handwriting. It is beilieved that at least three factors may account for students difficulties in writing (Graham and Harris, 1990). First, their problems in producing text may interfere with other important writing processes, such as generating ideas. Second, their lack of knowledge about writing or their ability to access what they do know may impact on their ability to operate and deploy the cognitive process considered central to effective writing. Third, the cognitive moves or writing strategies employed by LD children may be immature or ineffective.

Speech and language disorders can also be called <u>Dysphasia</u>/<u>aphasia</u> (coded F80.0-F80.2/315.31 in ICD-10 and DSM-IV). Impaired written language ability may include impairments in handwriting, spelling, organization of ideas, and composition. The term "<u>dysgraphia</u>" is often used as an overarching term for all disorders of written expression. Others, such as the International Dyslexia Association, use the term "dysgraphia" exclusively to refer to difficulties with handwriting.

Difficulties in reading

The essential feature of reading disorder is reading achievement (that is, reading accuracy, speed, or comprehension as measured by individually administered standardized tests) that falls substantially below the expected level given the individuals chronological age, measured intelligence, and age appropriate education. Individuals who have difficulties decoding or recognizing words (that is, letter/ sound omission, insertions, substitutions reversals0, or comprehending them (that is, recalling or discerning basic facts, main ideas, sequence, or themes). They may also display other difficulties such as losing their places while reading or reading in a choppy manner (Torgesen and Wagner, 1998). The most common learning disability. Of all students with specific learning disabilities, 70%-80% have deficits in reading. The term "<u>dyslexia</u>" is often used as a synonym for reading disability; however, many researchers assert that there are different types of reading disabilities, of which dyslexia is one. A reading disability can affect any part of the reading process, including difficulty with accurate and/or fluent word recognition, word decoding, reading rate, prosody (oral reading with expression), and reading comprehension.

Common indicators of reading disability include difficulty with phonemic awareness -- the ability break up words into their component sounds, and difficulty with matching letter combinations to specific sounds (sound-symbol correspondence).

Difficulties in Mathematics
Poor mathematics achievement may be due to a variety of reasons. Difficulties in abstract thinking, language, reading, motivation and memory can impede the ability to learn mathematical skills and concepts. Hammel and Bartel 1986; Bley and Thornton, 1989)

Sometimes called <u>dyscalculia</u>, a math disability can cause such difficulties as learning math concepts (such as quantity, place value, and time), difficulty memorizing math facts, difficulty organizing numbers, and understanding how problems are organized on the page.

Difficulties in motor abilities and non verbal abilities

Nonverbal learning disabilities often manifest in motor clumsiness, poor visual-spatial skills, problematic social relationships, difficulty with math, and poor organizational skills. These individuals often have specific strengths in the verbal domains, including early speech, large vocabulary, early reading and spelling skills, excellent rote-memory and auditory retention, and eloquent self-expression.
Sometimes called motor planning, dyspraxia refers to a variety of difficulties with motor skills. Dyspraxia can cause difficulty with single step tasks such as combing hair or waving goodbye, multi-step tasks like brushing teeth or getting dressed, or with establishing spatial relationships such as being able to accurately position one object in relation to another.

Despite these real problems, teachers must become knowledgeable and skilled to assess child's educational and emotional needs, collect and analyze important data; and prepare relevant individualized educational programs. This is possible only when teachers are prepared or empowered in such a way that they are able to identify and attend to the LD children in their classes and school. The teachers will have to be empowered to diagnose the learning disability of children in the classroom in the teaching learning process itself. Observation will lead to identification, the next step would be to get expert help (multidisciplinary approach) for the child.

Diagnosing the Causes of Learning disabilities:

Although obtaining a diagnosis is important, even more important is creating a plan for getting the right help. Because LD can affect the child and family in so many ways, help may be needed on a variety of fronts: educational, medical, emotional, and practical.

Each type of LD is diagnosed in slightly different ways. To diagnose speech and language disorders, a speech therapist tests the child's pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar and compares them to the developmental abilities seen in most children that age. A psychologist tests the child's intelligence. A physician checks for any ear infections, and an audiologist may be consulted to rule out auditory problems. If the problem involves articulation, a doctor examines the child's vocal cords and throat.

In the case of academic skills disorders, academic development in reading, writing, and math is evaluated using standardized tests. In addition, vision and hearing are tested to be sure the student can see words clearly and can hear adequately. The specialist also checks if the child has missed much school. It's important to rule out these

other possible factors. After all, treatment for a learning disability is very different from the remedy for poor vision or missing school.

There are several causes of learning disabilities. Some major causes can be stated as: medical problems, below average intelligence, specific learning disability, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, emotional problems, poor socio- cultural home environment, psychiatric disorders, environmental causes and, significant stress to the parents.

Medical condition can be severe or easily controlable.

Severe medical condition which needs intense medical attention	Medical condition which is not severe and can be controlled easily
Leukemia	Asthama
Thallasemia major	Vision
Hemophilia	Hearing impairment
Diabetes mellitus	Neuro behavioural deficits
Congenital Hypothyrodism	ADHD

The medical problems include: Preterm birth, Low birth weight, Malnutrition, Worm infestation, Hearing impairment , e.g. otitis media, Visual impairment e.g. refractive error, Asthma, Allergic rhinitis, Epilepsy (and anti-epileptic drugs), Cerebral Palsy, Leukemia, Thallasemia major, Hemophilia, Diabetes Mellitus, Congenital Hypothyroidism, Sleep disordered breathing (habitual snoring)

The Below Average Intelligence problems include: (i) Intelligence (measured as IQ score): most important prognostic variable, (ii) Borderline intelligence or "slow learners" (IQ 71 to 84), (iii) Mental retardation (IQ ≤ 70) e.g. Down syndrome, (iv) Risk factors: prematurity, meningitis, severe head injury and (v) Usually have history of delayed milestones.

The battle with LD becomes complex as it is not only improvement of scores but at stake is the entire personality of the child and their family. Children with LD often absorb what others thoughtlessly and/ or unintentionally say about them. They may define themselves in light of their disabilities, as "behind," "slow," or "different." Sometimes the children don't know how they're different, but they know how awful they feel. Their tension or shame can lead them to act out in various ways--from withdrawal to belligerence. Having a child with a learning disability may also be an emotional burden for the family. Parents often sweep through a range of emotions: denial, guilt, blame, frustration, anger, and despair. Brothers and sisters may be annoyed or embarrassed by their sibling, or jealous of all the attention the child with LD gets.

Every child needs to grow up feeling competent and loved. When children have learning disabilities, parents may need to work harder at developing their children's self-esteem and relationship-building skills. Self-esteem and good relationships are as worth developing as any academic skill.

Dealing with Scholastic backwardness:

Scholastic backwardness is not a phenomenon unique to the contemporary times. The ancient Indian education system dealt with it in its own way. The "gurukul education" though it was given to Kshatriya's and Brahmins, was inclusive and given to all the students based on the unique potentials of the learners. Apart from general life education special skills were developed in the learner. "These Gurukuls or Rishikulas were the seats of learning and students were required to live with their "guru" or teacher and learn by precept as much as by actual study and debates. In this ancient system of education (the guru-shishya parampara) all children were taught together, be it under a shady tree or in the Gurukul (school) ,whether normal, gifted or physically or intellectually disabled and were seen as worthy of the benefits of education, each according to her or his abilities. It was inclusive education in the truest sense. There were no special schools catering exclusively to specific disabilities or learning difficulties. Students found incapable of academic learning were given options to learn other occupations, which they could do easily, such as tending cattle, gardening or housework. This was rightly seen as an opportunity to be usefully employed and was not thought derogatory but prevented the hierarchy of the educated and the uneducated.

It is argued that providing for persons with disability was based on the theory of Karma and a way towards a better life in the next birth .Whatever the motivation the fact remains that even as far back as 187 BC mention has been made of mental retardation (Garba Upanishad) ,Patanjali included disabled persons for yoga therapy, and in the 4th and 5th C BC .during the Maurya Dynasty, Kautilya passed an edict banning both verbal and behavioral abuse of persons with disabilities recognizing their right to property and employment . Later King Ashoka established hospitals and asylums .But a significant milestone was around the 1st C B.C according to a legend which tells us the story of a king who was told that his three sons were "dull witted". The crucial question now was "Who would look after his kingdom after the king was no more?" So, he began a nation wide hunt for someone who would be able to tutor his dull witted sons. The search ended, we are told , with Visnusarman a courtier who assured the king that he would devise special ways of teaching the royal pupils .The legend goes on to tell us of how Visnusarman developed his strategy for education using a collection of animal fables , which taught the princes matters related to diplomacy and values honored universally This resulted in "The Panchatantra ", the ancient Indian collection of animal fables from around 1000 BC, and is perhaps the first book on special education. So, in India, we have a rich cultural legacy for inclusive education and India has always been there." (Balasundaram 2005).

A perspective on inclusion in education has been a part of ancient Indian educational heritage which helps to prevent the marginalization of   people who experience unfavorable circumstances in life. It is an approach to the education of students with disabilities that is based on what all members of a free society deserve in order to become fully participating members--a fair chance to find a place in their own communities.

Nurturing an Enabling Environment for scholastically backward children

If 'Education for All' is to be made an achievable reality, developing 'Schools for All' is the way to achieve it. Fedrico Mayor, the former director general of UNESCO, observes:

"Schools for all" – institutions which include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs. As such, they constitute an important contribution to the agenda for achieving education for all and for making schools educationally effective (Mayor 1994). The ethos of the school should be so developed that the learning difficulties are not viewed as stigma but only as a challenge which needs to be overcome. Beare and Slaughter (1993) define 'good schools' for the twenty first century which supersede the 'industrial and material framework' with features such as:

- Good schools believe that every student can learn can is willing to learn.
- In good schools, it is safe for students to be curious, to play with ideas, to experiment and do make mistakes.
- Good schools do not burden either their students or their staff so heavily that time for enrichment, time to reflect, time to participate in recreation or artistic or professional or other educational pursuits are crowded out of the programme.

Sudbury model democratic schools demonstrate how the individual freedom and the free interaction of the members of the school: children, young and adults promotes achievement of learners. The individual freedom and age mixing in the school which allows for "social learning", "learning through play" and the learning of non-cognitive skills such as persistence, reliability, self-discipline, stability, dependability, perseverance, consistency and motivation also promote learning and achievement.

An accommodating and an inclusive perspective of learning disabilities among children is to be developed by the adults (teachers and parents), peers (classmates) and the learning disabled children themselves. Identification of learning disabilities is to be followed by a remediation program.

Remediation- A multidisciplinary approach:

Scholastically backward children need urgent and sensitive attention. There may be more than one reason for scholastic backwardness of a child. A multidisciplinary approach to dealing with scholastic backwardness is recommended. It can comprise of pediatrician, ophthalmologist, otolaryngologist, counselor, clinical psychologist, child psychiatrist, special educator, teachers and parents.

Some steps suggested for it are: (i) Refer early for evaluation, (ii) Information from the parents, school principal, classroom teacher and school counselor is crucial ,(iii) Information should clearly describe the child's behavior, social functioning and the academic difficulties.

Common cause for scholastic backwardness in children is learning disability, which should be managed through intensive individualized one on one remedial training in a very supportive environment. A good therapist-child relationship is essential. Behavioral and emotional problems should be managed through behavior therapy and psychotherapy. Motivational counseling and life skills training have an important role in improving the motivation and time management of children. Family counseling and parental guidance are also necessary.

The management of special learning difficulties in the more time-demanding setting of secondary school is based more on providing provisions (accommodations) rather than remediation for example, exemption from spelling mistakes, availing extra time for written tests, dropping a second language and substituting it with work experience, dropping algebra and geometry and substituting them with lower grade of mathematics and work experience. Some steps at a system's level which will arrest scholastic backwardness are: (i)Teachers trained to suspect emotional problems, Special Learning Difficulties and ADHD so that they are diagnosed and treated early, (ii)School meal programs (midday meal), (iii) Regular vision and hearing screening camps in schools, (iv) Improvement on economic condition , (v) Accessible health facilities for women & children.

Technology facilitates overcoming of human limitations. Computer based assistive technology and low tech devices can be of help. Computer-based assistive technology involves using keyboard devices such as Alphasmart or personal computer at the desk may be a more efficient way for some children to take notes in class. "Co-Writer" or other "word prediction software" helps to type out an entire word or phrase after a child types in a few initial letters. This can speed up the rate of typing reports or lecture notes, for older kids and teens. "Unimanual" one-hand keyboards exist to help students with hemiparesis (significant weakness or paralysis of one hand). Using "Read and Write" (TEXTHelp), or Arkenstone's WYNN software (EVAS Ability Pro), which allows the computer to "read aloud" text that has been scanned in, or typed by the student, may help some students with reading and writing, and often is motivating and fun for those who like computers.

"Low-tech" devices can be used. Some students will write more easily using rubber tripod pencil grips, slant-boards for holding paper, or weighted pens that are designed to reduce hand-tremor. These and other devices can be recommended and tried out with an Occupational Therapist or Assistive Technology expert. Using an audiotape recorder to record longer reports or essay exams, and handing in the tape, may help students to express their knowledge without being penalized by slow, awkward, illegible, handwriting. This may require pre-instruction in how to outline and organize the report, and how to "dictate" clearly.

The challenge is not only to construct and use appropriate remediation programs for disabilities related to English and regional languages, but also to do between that to administer a remediation program that begins to close the gap between them and there

age level peers. In a research it was found that the student in India and abroad were able to read English text of similar level properly, but when it came to comprehending the text the Indian children were unable to do it. To improve reading comprehension one needs to know how the information is processed and also to improve the information processing skills. Das et. al. (1990) have given the PASS program to study the role of cognition. (PASS: Planning, Attention –arousal, Simultaneous and Successive processing). Attention should be paid to the process of learning and not just the content, for if the process is correct it could be internalized to master more complex matter at a later stage. Proper remedial education corrects deficiencies in the learning process of LD children, and improves their learning effectiveness, thus decreasing number of drop outs from school.

Individualized remediation specific to reading, writing and arithmetic

Reading
Steps for remediation

- When you introduce a new word: Talk softly and clearly
- Make the child familiar to new words.
- Make him learn the spellings by colour coding.
- Make the child learn through proper pronunciation.
- Make the child learn the meaning ,so that he can use it in a sentence.
- Make sure that the usage is appropriate
- Continuous repetition of word.
- Grammar (doing word-verb ,so by adding ing = whispering).

Writing
Remedial for writing
Some aids as used for enhancing reading skills can be used for developing writing skills.

Simple ways to teach writing:
- Project picture on the board.
- Label objects in the pictures.
- Ask the child to read the words.
- Ask the child to make sentences from the words.
- Ask the child to make a story of these sentences. (orally)
- The teacher will write down.
- Then the child will arrange the sentences in proper sequence.
- Then the child will copy with the help of the teacher.

Putting the thoughts properly
- Then the child will copy without the help of the teacher. Will ask the child to repeat orally and the
- Special educator will write.

- Will make different Flash Cards and then ask the child to put in proper order.
- Will tell story and will ask the child to put the story in proper sequence.

Disorders of spellings

- Spelling is a far more complex activity than reading. It involves recalling words from memory, using vocal and motor skills.
- Spelling errors are quiet common among learning disabled children. In view of it a systematic work study technique is used in the following sequence: "look at the word –say the word—look at the word—read the word—write the word – check your spelling—repeat"
- Students may be asked to spell the word properly and clap softly for each vowel sound. It may be used to correct spelling.
- Choose the correct word.

Arithmetic

Steps for remediation in arithmetic

Ashlock (1972) has developed instruction steps for removing arithmetical errors for learning disabled children. Some of the steps are as follows:
1. use manipulative such as buttons and chips to teach numbers
2. use visual materials and give reinforcements
3. use graph papers for alignment difficulties
4. time line, coloured chalks, markings are helpful for attention to cues.
5. sample problems should be given for each assignment
6. avoid distraction as far as possible
7. use of displayed charts, playing cards, calculator, language marking are quite useful.

- Other steps that can be taken are: directionality from right to left in addition and subtraction, direction in division is from left to right.
- Visual perception child gets confused between addition and multiplication, between subtraction and division, child gets confused between numbers like 6 and 9, 3 and 5.
- Teaching maths language:
    Add, together, both, plus, sum, more, all,
    Multiply, by, cost of many, product, into, cross,
    Minus, take away, remove, difference, balance, left
    Division, share, distribute, cost of one, quotient, remainder, equal, by, distribute

- Teaching money Have a coin box with coins of 10,20,25 & 50 paise.
- Show the coin and ask the child to find the similar coins. (10,20,25,50)
- Then teach : $10+10 = 20$
- $10+10+10 = 30$

- Then combine 2 coins 10+20= 30
- 20+20= 40
- 10+10+20=40
- Play market with the student.

Teaching time:
- Events in time
- What time do you get up? Etc.
- Teach time by hour.
- Teach time by half hour.
- Teach time by quarter hour.
- Teach time by 10 minutes.
- Time problems.

Reading problem sums:
- Child should know the Maths language.
- Child should be familiar with commonly found Maths language.
- Child should understand the problem

What I know? What I want? What is to be done?
- Read the word problem
- Underline the key words
- Put the sign
- Write the statement
- Do the arithmetic calculation
- Child should be able to visualize the problem. Fractions can be taught with the help of Pizza.

Dealing with scholastic backwardness: Challenges for Teacher Preparation

Teacher education lies at the heart of addressing scholastic backwardness among children. A comprehensive teacher education program which deals not only with the skills and competencies but also with the appropriate attitudes is essential. To a large extent differentiated instruction equips a teacher to deal with scholastic backwardness. Scott et al. (2003) extensively reviewed the literature on Universal Design and identified nine principles that can be implemented at any level.

1. Equitable use. Instruction is designed to be accessible to students with diverse abilities.
2. Flexibility in use. Multimodal instruction provides for student choice.
3. simple and intuitive. Instruction is designed in a predictable manner with unnecessary complexity.
4. Perceptible information. Instruction is communicated effectively to each student regardless of student's sensory abilities.

5. Tolerance for error. Instruction anticipates variation in students pace and skills.
6. Low physical effort. Minimize nonessential physical effort.
7. Size and space appropriate for use. Instruction considers students body size, posture, mobility, and communication needs.
8. A community of learners. Instruction promotes interaction and communication between students.
9. Instructional climate. The climate is welcoming and inclusive with high expectations for all students……

Teaching and Learning Methodology:

The attempt to create an inclusive environment in school to accommodate the misfits- scholastically backward children requires to move away from content based and teacher directed pedagogy. Primary schools particularly should use activity centered pedagogy and local resources that stimulate children and keep them engaged and involved. Other forms of pedagogy such as peer tutoring and child to child learning, group and collaborative learning and more innovative methods would become the practice of curriculum transactions in an inclusive environment. These methodologies have strengths to keep children engaged, involved and participating in the learning process, a necessary component of inclusion in schools. A true collaborative learning pedagogy can develop only in a heterogenous student population and not in "exclusive" schools. Some components of such teacher education program are presented below.

Attitudes and beliefs

Bandura (1986) defined self efficacy as "peoples" judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute course of action required to attain designated types of performances. It is concerned not with the skills one has but with judgments of what one can do with whatever skills one possesses". Bandura also affirmed that self efficacy beliefs develop in response to four sources of information. These are enactive experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and physiological and affective states. Enactive experience implies that success in the performance of a given task will increase the self efficacy of the person who has successfully performed the task. The vicarious involves experiences where other people are seen to succeed or fail and how that can affect one's own self efficacy. Verbal persuasion, if realistic, can encourage efforts that are more likely to increase efficacy through success, while physiological and affective conditions such as stress can also affect self efficacy.

Researches have found a consistent relationship between characteristics of teachers and the behavior or learning of students. Teachers with high efficacy tend to experiment with methods of instruction, seek, improved teaching methods and experiment with methods of instruction, seek improved teaching method and experiment with instructional materials. Self efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think,

motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes.

Teacher training in India is not well adapted to enhance 'inclusion' by encouraging teachers to value and respect the local knowledge their pupils bring into the school. Dyer et al.(2004) argue that teacher training in India reflects the international dominance of the 'skills-and knowledge- based paradigm' that leads to the imposition of 'training devised by external and decontexualized "experts". But teachers' attitudes and beliefs, and those attitudes and beliefs themselves reflect contexts in which teachers have grown up, taken their professional training, and now practice' (ibid.:) Thus teachers deploy their own lenses and parameters for interpreting and reflecting the social world to their learners. Until teachers' beliefs and the way they play out in local contexts are 'recognized, explored, and their implications taken on board, current modes of teacher training through in service training is highly unlikely to fulfill the explicit premise (ibid.)

Skills and competencies
Dealing with variety
The student teachers will have to be trained to deal with chaos, differentiated instructions, multiple intelligence, multicultural settings and varieties of exposure some children may come from exposure rich environment some may come from exposure poor environment.

Scaffolds and tolerance for errors
Teachers will be required to prepare a broad framework within which the students can discuss the given case. They will also have to provide proper environment for the students to discuss. The environment has to be non threatening and nurturing one where every individual feels valued and a contributing member. Student teachers will have to be trained to design the Scaffolds. As all the students do not have same levels of learning and exposure a teacher needs to develop scaffolds in the process to help the child, the given scaffold may provide just a broad guideline for the student to follow and not a very detailed process. The student teachers also need to work on tolerance for errors and develop immense patience and imagination to allow students to explore and reach at their own pace.

Formative assessment
Evaluation is the integral part of the teaching learning process. Teachers need to develop the skills of formative assessment to weave assessment in the teaching learning process as process is equally important as the product itself. Summative assessment leads towards standardization while formative assessment leads to differentiation. In formative assessment also there needs to be a combination of formal and informal assessment. Informal assessment helps the scholastic backward child as it is invisible to the other children and also to him/herself. Yet, it provides 'the red flags' to an alert teacher to identify scholastically backward child and help him/her.

Reflective log

As the designs in the constructivist paradigm are evolving type the teachers need to learn the art of writing journal and developing a reflective log. As these two will provide some kind of guideline for further development of the course and also be a better indicator of students understanding.

In the above process of looking at the teacher education program the challenge is to cater to the variety of learners and their learning style. Also the quest to develop individual learner and accordingly provide the learning experiences in a differentiated manner.

Conclusion

Schools play a crucial and formative role in the intellectual, cognitive, emotional, social and moral development of a child. Scholastic backwardness usually engenders feelings of anxiety and inadequacy in children. This in turn can have negative impact on the emotional and social functioning of the child. Hence learning problem is an issue of concern not only for students, but also for parents and all the professionals involved in child welfare. Scholastic backwardness is seen in 20 -30% of school going children. If scholastic backwardness is not managed properly, it will cause significant academic stress in children leading on to somatoform disorders, anxiety disorders, depression and even deliberate self harm. Hence any child with difficulty in reading or arithmetic skills or deterioration in academic performance should be evaluated and managed scientifically at the earliest. Improvement in academic performance will help the child to excel in future life.

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