

**EDUCATIONAL PROVISIONS FOR SOCIALLY  
DISADVANTAGED.**

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Socially disadvantaged learners are generally from socially disadvantaged section of the society. They may be gills, may be tribal children, may be children from non-tribal but poverty-stricken families, may be children who are physically handicapped. When one brands some children as socially disadvantaged, one compares facilities available to two groups of children-advantaged and disadvantaged. Such types of comparison are also done in developed countries, where a socially disadvantaged, might be getting more facilities than a socially advantaged person in a developing country. Thus, it is a relative term, whose measures may vary from country to country. The large majority of socially disadvantaged school going age group children come from poor families. According to estimation of world Bank, in spite of growing educational facilities for learners, by the end of the current century, there may be a large of school going age children employed in the labour force, which indicates that even after two decades, there will be a significant number of children who will go without receiving any education. Thus, the problem of making provision for education of socially disadvantaged children mil be there even in the coming century.

**Characteristics of Socially Disadvantaged Learner**

A socially disadvantaged learner has following characteristics:

**(a) Poor health conditions:**

Most of the socially disadvantaged learners do not get adequate quantity of food necessary for proper building of the body. They suffer from malnutrition and under nutrition. Malnutrition gives rise to mental apathy, a shortened span of attention, reduced mental powers and increased drowsiness etc. (Livingstone 1975). Palled (1981) pointed out that 60 % of children in the age group of 6-14, in India, suffer from nutritional anemia and protein calorie malnutrition and 22 % of school going children are victim of nutritional deficiency. Besides, there are large number of children who suffer from physical deformities that hampers normal learning procedures.

**(b) Maladjustment:**

Maladjustment is another important characteristic. Such a child lives in environments full of maladjusted, aggressive, and arrogant people, most of whom might have not any hope for betterment of their living conditions. They often are fatalistic in their attitude. They feel that they are destined to remain in such conditions. They are victims of superstition and taboos. The child staying in such environment often suffers from self-denigration and sees things as either positive or negative. He, while in school, fails to adjust himself with the children from comparatively better families in comparison to his own family, with respect to socio-economic conditions. His poverty also plays role in alienating himself from his peers. He is poorly dressed-'. He may not get pocket money for buying tiffin during school breaks. All these factors contribute to lack of self confidence in the child, who often do not even get parental encouragement to continue his studies.

**(c) Potential drop-out:**

A disadvantaged child is a potential drop out. His poverty or physical deformities may be source of humiliation for him. He also lacks in physical and mental abilities necessary for successful learning. He suffers from poor auditory and visual discrimination ability and severely impaired perceptual development He is generally a physical learner and is more open to visual and kinesthetic signals (Riesman 1962). He has generally low sense of auditory discrimination poor vocabulary, poor attention span, poor concept of size and time and limited conception of surrounding world (Silberman 1970). Large majority of such children have reading

difficulties (Rauch 1967). Such children are slow in cognitive style and lack in learning sets (Eisenberg 1967). Malnutrition, ill health, and unattractive school environment and school curriculum lead to wanting of interest of the child in the school (Govt, of India 1969), Present day education fails to attract tribal children as it fails to conform to their culture (Tripathy 1970). In such a situation, a socially disadvantaged child tends to drop out of the system. Again, a socially disadvantaged child often fails to compete with peers. He is generally unaware of the ground rules of success, which comes automatically to a child from socially advantaged parents. The children of educated parents, who bring with them good vocabulary and high measure of achievement motivation, are far more likely to climb successfully up the academic ladder than the children of the poor and uneducated, mostly coming from rural areas (Coombs 1977 and Govt, of India 1969). Culturally deprived and socially disadvantaged children are also educationally deprived ones (Mosley and Spicker 1975). Such children come to the schools with the problem of acculturation. These types of children lack the skills and habits necessary for meeting expectations of conduct in the school and fail in exhibiting virtues as punctuality, cleanliness, orderliness etc., cherished in the school. They do not possess effective communication skills, which is mostly attributable to the low quality of communication in the environment in which they are living. All these factors result in poor academic performance of most of the disadvantaged children. Added to this problem, is the problem of uniformly applicable curriculum for all types of children and its arbitrary yardstick of measurement. Such children thus become victim of left out, push out, push out and drop-out strategies employed by our defective educational system.

#### **Educational Provisions required for Socially Disadvantaged**

Various types of educational provisions are required for socially disadvantaged children. Some of the important provisions are mentioned below:

##### **(a) Establishment of residential institutions:**

Residential institutions will take the social disadvantaged a long way ahead in getting better education. They will get better environment in these schools. There will be more interaction between teachers and taught. There will be no problem of getting food or getting other ancillary facilities. There should be more numbers of residential schools than existing at present. There should be at least one residential school for physically handicapped students in each district. There should be at least one residential high school in each block having 25 % tribal population. Besides there should be residential tribal primary schools in each panchayat having 25 % of its population from tribal communities. Such residential schools should be also open to children from low economic status section of the society. Tribal children have been found to possess better intelligence than scheduled caste children (Rath et al. 1981). Therefore, the question of establishing residential institutions specially for scheduled caste children also need consideration. But these types of provision may perpetuate the evil of casteism. Therefore, it may be reasonable to have residential institutions opened for the children from the lower socio-economic group of the society irrespective of caste consideration. Such types of schools will also cater to the needs of children of the nomadic and semi-nomadic families.

##### **(b) Provision of special curriculum:**

There should be special curriculum for socially disadvantaged children. Scheduled caste primary school children have been found to be poorer in intelligence than their peers from scheduled tribe and Brahmin population (Rath et al. 1981). In the same study, scheduled tribe children were found superior to Brahmin children and scheduled caste children pertaining to specific types of aspirations and achievement involving finger operation and skills and in vigilance to monotonous types of auditory ^stimulation and signal detection. Gokulanathan (1979), in a study on students of classes X and XI of Assam schools, found that tribal children had higher achievement motivation. It may be argued that the students having higher achievement motivation can only go to class XI level, otherwise, there environment will make them drop out from the school early. These studies

point out the need for having special curricula for socially disadvantaged children. Of course, this may not be necessary for all scheduled tribe or all scheduled caste children, some of whom might be better in respect of parental education and socio-economic status than many non-tribal and non-scheduled caste children. The best step is preparation of a variety of curricula for specific age groups and allowing children pick up specific curricula depending on their abilities. An ideal curriculum should have limited and specific goal (Wood 1970). In this connection, it may be worthwhile to mention the experiments being conducted at certain classes of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, where graded work sheets are prepared by the teacher and the child picks up the one for which he or she is fit. Such types of practices also in practice in schools of developed countries. Again, standard textbooks are not helpful (Schueller 1965). The teachers should be free to prepare varieties of textbooks.

**(c) Provision of remedial teaching and extra class hour:**

There should be provision for remedial instruction and wherever possible extra schooling for socially disadvantaged children. This should be done with specific discrimination in favour of them. Remedial teaching is essential for disadvantaged children (Pringle 1965, Ministry of Education 1966). Wherever, possible, schools should employ remedial teachers, for imparting instruction to socially disadvantaged children during school hours, when they are to follow a different curriculum than followed by their peers in the general class and for imparting instruction to such children after school hours or before school hours, when they are expected to follow the same curriculum as being followed by children coming from advantaged group. Now a days, it is a practice in urban areas to give facilities of private coaching to rich school children. Therefore, in spite of special provision for extra schooling in schools for disadvantaged children, the advantaged children will continue to get more guidance. To start with, such extra teaching facilities outside school hour may be made available at least in one school, catering to the needs of surrounding schools.

**(d) Provision of compensatory pre-school education:**

Socially disadvantaged children are also poorer in vocabulary. In India, there are 1651 dialects. The tribal children often find it difficult to follow the state language. Therefore, they need preferential pre-school education, which can help them in overcoming the language difficulty. Preschool years are most fruitful for prevention of language difficulties (Pingle 1965). Again, Silberman (1970) points out that exercise of mind, early in life is essential for the future development. In India, attempt have been made in giving such types of compensatory pre-primary education by establishing pre-primary centres in low literate tribal blocks of the country (Mohanty 1980). This scheme provides free reading and writing materials, a school bag, a pair of dresses and a mid-day meal to children. Since last four years, it has been in operation and the effects have been found to be helpful for the target population. However, a detailed evaluation of the programme is yet to be done. Such types of compensatory pre-school education programme (e.g., Head Start of U.S.A.) have been found helpful for the target population. These types of programme need to be made available not only for tribal but for all socially disadvantaged children-physically, emotionally, culturally, and economically.

**(e) Provision of mid-day meals, reading and writing materials and dress:**

Socially disadvantaged children should be supplied with mid-day meals, reading, and writing materials and dress. In a school for such children run by Aurosikha Agarbati Unit of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry at Udhavi village in Auroville of Tamilnadu state, the children come to the school early morning, take bath in the school, wear the school dress after their bath, take breakfast, study, have lunch, then study and in the evening go back to their homes, leaving the school dress back in the school. This type of provision helps solve the problem of keeping the dress clean, taking proper bath, combing hair, applying oil. On the day of visit to the said school, by the author, an attendant was seen combing the hair of a girl student. These children need such type of care. The provision of mid-day

meal scheme introduced in Tamilnadu state has been found very much effective in boosting up primary school enrolment. This idea has also been followed up by Andhra state. It needs to be taken up by remaining part of the country, at least for socially disadvantaged children—from tribal, non-tribal and scheduled caste communities. This will help to ease the problem of child labour. While making mid-day meal provision, one should make provision for dress, reading and writing materials. It may be better, if in non-residential schools, dresses are kept in the school and used by the students, while they are in the school.

**(f) Provision of home visit:**

There should be provision of home visit by the teachers, especially for disadvantaged children. Working with families help culturally deprived children (Sacadat 1965). The parents from disadvantaged group need guidance in experiences that help better achievement by students. Home visits can give encouragement to a weak learner. The learner can get individual attention of the teacher. The guardian of the learner can also get opportunity to clear his or her misgivings, if any, regarding school programmes. Such types of home visits are also seen even as part of duty of teachers of countries like U.K. (Mohanty 1979). The said author also found it useful for children of a rural school and also for children of an urban school. In the former's case, it increased "parental participation in school activities and increased percentage of attendance in school and in latter's case, it improved the academic achievement of students undergoing an experimental modern mathematics curriculum in a Delhi school and also simultaneously clear misgivings of parents about the experimental curriculum. Thus, home visit is a good technique, and should be made part of duty of each teacher, especially for socially disadvantaged children.

**(g) Provision of extra resources in school:**

There should be provision of extra resources in school for the use of socially disadvantaged children. There should be possibility of getting special equipment or aids needed for education of physically handicapped children. There should be reference materials for use of socially disadvantaged children, of all categories.

**(h) School wise appointment of teachers:**

Many schools of country are managed by Government or semi-government agencies, where a teacher can get transferred from one school to another. Such situations are more common in case of primary schools. In such systems, teachers often do not want to work in rural and tribal areas. They prefer to work in urban areas, where they may earn extra money by undertaking private tuition or by doing some others business. Again, they may not get adequate facilities for befitting education of their children in rural and tribal areas. There is also the question of lack of suitable communication facilities. One might be required to walk on foot for 10 hours at a stretch to reach the school from nearest bus stop. Again, the question of dialect used in the area, not only brings in communication problem for the teacher, but also endangers the vocabulary of the teachers own children. Therefore, a teacher, once appointed in these types of schools, goes on trying for his transfer to a better school. Such possibility does not encourage him to learn the language and habits of his present school, so that he can do better work at least for the period for which he has to function there. Again, if a teacher is to be appointed for a particular school, there can be preference for a candidate from that cultural milieu or knowing the dialect being spoken by the people of the surrounding area. In such a case, a candidate, in this age of tough competition for getting jobs, will be motivated to learn various dialects, even before getting appointment.

**(i) Incentives for teachers:**

There should be incentives for teachers of socially disadvantaged. For instance, there should be additional payment for teachers knowing brail], knowing a tribal dialect, knowing use of hearing aid, and even for working in a tribal and hilly area. There should be residential accommodation for teachers working in hilly areas and tribal areas. Wherever possible, couples should be placed at same place of work and special consideration

be made in appointing both in the teaching profession. This will reduce the truancy of teachers, found in tribal areas. Teachers as a lot, go under severe strain. Such incentives will help improve the condition of education of socially disadvantaged children.

**(j) Special training of teachers:**

Special training should be given for teachers of socially disadvantaged children. While simpler training is necessary for each teacher, rigorous training may be necessary for teacher to work in schools for physically handicapped or tribal residential schools or in residential schools for socially disadvantaged children. Such a teacher has to be expert in preparing various types of school curricula. His method of teaching has to be geared to individual child's style of gathering information (Riesman 1962). His method has to make the learner himself involved in method of teaching (Mitchel 1968). The teacher has to select appropriate method and curricula to suit individual learner needs (Burt 1972). An effective teacher meets the students on equal terms. The teacher of socially disadvantaged children should have the faith that such children can learn (Kames 1979). Again, such types of children require more use of concrete experiences. Therefore, such teachers should be experts in multimedia and innovative techniques (Johnson 1968). Teachers should be trained in highly sophisticated curriculum development (Schueller 1965). Thus, there is, a need of organising special training course for teachers of socially disadvantaged children. Such courses can also be organised, keeping in view specific target population. A training course for teachers can be organised for a school situated

a tribal area speaking a particular dialect e.g., Saura. Such teachers need to be trained in the said tribal culture and also given education on the Saura dialect. This will make them better teacher. It is unfortunate that such types of provisions do not exist. If such types of training programmes are arranged and preference is given to the candidates possessing such types of training for appointment in specific schools, then the teacher training programmes can be self-financed out of tuition fees from trainees.

**Conclusion:**

Various types of educational provisions outlined above are to be considered for providing equal educational opportunity to all citizens of a democratic country. The non-socialistic and developed countries have a system of community schools that very suits such needs. Such types of schools are needed very much for Indian situation. There is also the need for examining the existing facilities for socially disadvantaged children and augmenting them in a systematic manner. There should be specific attention on children coming from low socio-economic strata of the society, even though they may not belong to scheduled caste or scheduled tribe population. Among the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe population, the former is mostly staying in the same environment as with non-scheduled caste and non-scheduled tribe population and often is subjected to various social pressures and complexes, whereas the tribal population often remains in isolated habitations away from non-tribal population and does not get chance to become victim of social pressures and social complexes which are faced by scheduled caste population (Rath et al. 1981). Such comparisons can be made between scheduled caste population and beggars from other castes. Hence, there should be provisions for children coming from low socio-economic strata of the society. These provisions are needed for appropriate development of the potentialities of each child.

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