

## Students with Hearing Impairment and Their Access to Inclusive Education in Nagpur City, India: An Exploratory Study

**Authors :** Avanika Gupta

**Abstract :** Education plays a significant and remedial role in balancing the socio-economic fabric of a country. Inclusive education is considered as the most appropriate mode of teaching students with hearing impairment (SwHI) by various national and international legislations. But inclusive education is still an evolving concept among the disability studies scholars and policy makers in India. The study aimed to examine accessibility of SwHI in mainstream schools if there are special provisions for SwHI. The study also intended to identify if the provisions are same for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Using stratified random sampling technique, a school was selected from each of the six administrative zones of Nagpur city. All the selected schools had primary and secondary level education and were co-educational in nature. Interview with principals of these schools and focused-group- observation method showcased lack of accessibility for SwHI in attending schools. Not even a single school had a hearing impaired student, either deaf or hard-of-hearing depicting the double marginalization of SwHI. This is despite the fact that the right to education is a fundamental right in India, and national legislation on disability has special provisions for ensuring educational opportunities to SwHI. None of the schools even had an Indian Sign Language (ISL) instructor. Both observations seemed cause and effect of one another. One of the principals informed that they have seats for all students with disabilities but they usually lie vacant due to lack of awareness among the parents. One school had 2 students with locomotive impairment while another had a student with visual impairment. Principals of two special schools were also interviewed to understand the reason behind the low enrollment rate of SwHI in mainstream schools. Guardian preference, homogeneity, relatable faculty, familiar environment were some of the chief reasons mentioned. Few suggestions for the policymakers, teachers, guardians and the students are also recommended so that Indian education system could become inclusive in true sense.

**Keywords :** deaf, hard-of-hearing, inclusive education, India, Nagpur, students with hearing impairment

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