

# Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs at Elementary Stage in Himachal Pradesh

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**Abstract:** *The objective of the present study was to study the position of implementation of inclusive education elementary stage in Himachal Pradesh. The other objective of the study was to study the perceptions of various stakeholders regarding problems to the implementation of inclusive education in Himachal Pradesh. It may be seen from the results that the position of implementation of Inclusive education was not up to mark. In the nut shell it can be concluded that the status of implementation of Inclusive education in Himachal Pradesh was not satisfactory. The school heads were perceived significant problems to inclusion by all stakeholders.*

**Key Words:** *Inclusive education, Children with Special Educational Needs (CwSNs), Himachal Pradesh.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Right of every child to education was strongly reaffirmed by Jomtien World Declaration of Education for All (1990). Furthermore the Standard Rule on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disability (1993) was an important resolution to improve the educational conditions of these people. The children with special needs will also constitute a focus group as a part of Inclusive Education in this overview. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) proclaims that everyone has right to education. Yet Disability has not been defined in the Constitution. But what has been said is that no child shall suffer any disability on the ground of his religion, belonging, gender, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them in regard to their excess to public places, shops and the use of wells and tanks etc. The constitution has however described the following social groups as those for whom special legislations may be made without discriminating with the rest of people of India. These are women, children and those belonging to the socially and educationally backward classes. The constitution maker did not find it necessary to identify other social groups such as the aged or the disabled for whom separate legislation could be made.

## 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:

Hegarty and Alur (2002) in their book titled 'Education and Children with Special Educational Needs (CwSNs): From Segregation to Inclusion' reported a study presented in a seminar titled 'Integrated Education for CwSNs: A Matter of Social Justice and Human Rights' organized in Delhi in 1997. The study examined the reasons for dropping out of students with special needs from mainstream schools before enrolling in a special school. Out of many reasons identified, one reason was that students repeatedly failed in their class and were asked to leave by teachers or administrators, and many of these students with disabilities were teased for their 'failure'. It was reported that teachers in mainstream schools erased the lessons on the board before the time students with disability copy them. It was also found that many students never moved up beyond nursery level classes and found it embarrassing to be in lower classes with children younger than them. The students with special needs had very limited friend circles. Sometime they felt isolated. This made them hyperactive and developed behavioral problems in them and ultimately they were forced to leave the school. A knowledge gap was found within the government. It was observed that most 'higher up' policy makers, planners and administrators have heard of inclusion, but they were not aware of the provisions made by the government for inclusive education. Roy (2007) conducted a situation analysis of inclusive education programme in the state of Madhya Pradesh for Sight savers International, Madhya Pradesh. The study reported that awareness among parents, community and implementing officials in the state was not at the desired level, there was a need for developing awareness among the stakeholders.

The National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP), New Delhi conducted a survey in 2009 to know the status of education of the disabled in the country. Three hundred and twenty two (322) universities and three hundred and nineteen (319) schools were contacted during the survey and out of these one hundred and nineteen (119) universities and eighty nine (89) schools responded. The result showed that only 0.1 % of the disabled students were in universities and 0.5% in the mainstream schools. The figure indicated that a considerable neglect of the disabled persons still prevailed in the society.

### 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To study the position of implementation of inclusive education at elementary stage in Himachal Pradesh.
- To study the perceptions of various stakeholders regarding problems to the implementation of inclusive education in Himachal Pradesh.

### 4. DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

- The present study was delimited to investigate the implementation of inclusive education in four districts of Himachal Pradesh.
- The present study was delimited to 56 government schools of total schools that are either designated as inclusive schools or getting grants from state of Himachal Pradesh for inclusive education.

### 5. METHODOLOGY:

In order to accomplish the objectives of the present study the Descriptive method of research was used.

**5.1 SAMPLE** - The sample of this study was drawn from 4 districts comprising 56 schools. The district of the research were selected i.e. Kangra, Una, Mandi. The multistage random sampling technique was used for drawing schools and secondly, in the selection of subjects for the study. The sample strength of stakeholders was confined to 56 administrators/school heads, 112 teachers, 112 parents of CWSNs and 56 CWSNs from inclusive schools.

**5.2 STATISTICAL TECHNIQUE USED** - In the present study, the data was analyzed, using appropriate statistical techniques, in the light of the objectives set forth for the investigation. The data collected through observation schedule, and perception scale was tabulated and entered into the master sheet.. The data was analyzed by using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The frequency of responses was converted into percentage for the purpose of analysis. The mean was calculated to know the inter-district variations in implementation and compare the implementation status based on demography of the schools..

### 5.3 TOOLS USED

- Observation Schedule-In the present study, observation schedule developed having 60 items divided into 8 sections/dimensions.

These 8 dimensions were as follows:

- Identification of Children with Special Needs (CwSNs).
- Functional and Formal Assessment of CwSNs.
- Provision of Aids and Appliances
- Training of Teachers on Inclusive Education
- Resource Support
- Provision home based education
- Awareness and community mobilization on inclusive education
- Miscellaneous provisions on inclusive education

It is evident from this observation schedule that it sought factual information based upon the provisions of inclusive education in SSA. The items of the schedule were to be responded in 'yes or 'no' the scoring was done by giving a 'score of '1' to each 'yes' or 'no' response indicated that the implementation of the standard was not being done by the concerned school. The reliability of the observation schedule was determined through SPSS. The Split-Half Method and Cronbach's Alpha was employed to ensure the reliability of the tool. The reliability for Split-Half method was found.72. The reliability coefficient for Cronbach's Alpha was found 0.77.

- Perception Scale-The perception scale contained 30 items in all, divided into 3 sections, namely perception towards physical problems, administrative problems and attitudinal problems. Each section contained 10 items.

The subjects were asked to indicate 'to a great extent', if they feel that the item statement appears a significant/ absolute problems to the inclusive education CwSNs, 'to some extent', if they find that statement is a problems but the 'degree' to which it act as a problems is of moderate level/ of average importance, 'not at all' if they believe that the statement is not at all a problem, scoring of the scale was done by calculation the frequencies and assigning the numerical weight of 2, 1 and 0 to responses marked as 'to a great extent', 'to a great extent', 'to some extent' and 'not at all' respectively. The score value for each item was calculated with the help of the formula given follows.

Score Value=number of 'to a great extent' response\*2+number of 'to some extent' response\*1+number of 'not at all' \*0.

The rating of the items was calculated by dividing the score value of each item with N i.e. total number of respondents in a particular category. This enabled the researcher to locate the severity degree/extent of a problem to which it prevented the implementation of inclusive education, as perceived by a particular category of stakeholder. The formula used for rating each of the items is given below:

Rating of the item=Score Value/N.

## 6. ANALYSIS:

The overall status of implementation of eight dimensions of inclusive education across the four districts of Himachal Pradesh has been presented in the Table 1

**Table 1**

### Miscellaneous Provisions on Inclusive Education

Sr no	Dimension	Number of Standards Surveyed	Number of Standards Met
1	Identification of Children with Special Needs (CwSNs)?	11	3
2	Functional and Formal Assessment of CwSNs?	11	11
3	Provision of Aids and Appliances?	6	2
4	Training of Teachers on Inclusive Education?	9	7
5	Resource Support	11	4
6	Provision of Home Based Education	4	0
7	Awareness and Community Mobilization on Inclusive Education?	4	0
8	Miscellaneous Provisions on Inclusive Education?	4	0
	Total	60	27

It is implied from Table 1 that out of total 60(100%) standards surveyed during the study, 27(45%) standards were met by the sample schools. The maximum achievement was recorded across the State on meeting the norms for the functional and formal assessment of CwSNs. The implementation of provision on training of teachers on inclusive education was found good. The positive picture illustrated by these findings sharply contrast the implementation results on Home-Based Education, awareness generation and community mobilization, resource support, identification of CwSNs and meeting the norms on miscellaneous provisions for CwSNs namely organization of sports, sending CwSNs on tours and excursions, and conducting cultural activities for active participation on CwSNs since these provisions were least implemented or not at all implemented across the State.

The district wise variations for overall implementation of 8 dimensions on inclusive education have been presented in the Table 2

**Table 2**

### District wise variations in implementation of Inclusive Education in the State of Himachal Pradesh

Sr no	District	Mean
1	Mandi	4.42
2	Kangra	4.14
3	Solan	3.89
4	Una	3.64

It is evident from Table 2 that the overall implementation of inclusive education different districts across the State was varied. The schools of Mandi district were ahead to the schools of other three districts in overall implementation of inclusive education.

Perception scale developed for parents reveals that the parent's perceived lack of encouragement by the heads of the school to classroom teachers to use technology in the classroom as the highest problem to the implementation of inclusive education. Among the top ten problems, inaccessible mid-day meal area was placed at the bottom. Out of ten top problems perceived by parents, five problems were related to administrators, three to negative attitudes whereas two problems were associated with inaccessible physical infrastructure. In the opinions of parents, the biggest problem that hinders the implementation of inclusive education was related with administrators.

Perception scale developed for parents reveals that the teachers perceived lack of encouragement by the head to classroom teachers to use technology in the classroom as the highest problem to the implementation of inclusive education. Among the top ten problems, the negative opinions of the respondents on educational settings for CwSNs find last place in the hierarchy. Out of ten top problems perceived by teachers, eight problems were related to administrators whereas two to the negative attitudes. The teachers did not find any physical factor among the top ten problems that impedes the implementation of inclusive education.

Perception scale developed for heads of the institution/administrators reveals that the head of the institution perceived faulty appointment norm as the highest problem to the implementation of inclusive education. Among the

top ten problems, inefficiency of head to organize activities on inclusive education was rated as the bottom. Out of top ten problem perceived by heads, six problems were related to administrators, three to negative attitudes whereas one problem was associated with inaccessible physical infrastructure. In the opinions of heads, these were the biggest problem to the implementation of inclusive education

Perception scale developed for CwSNs reveals that the CwSNs perceived faulty appointment norms of special teachers as the highest problem to the implementation of inclusive education. Among the top ten problems, inaccessible mid-day meal area was placed at the bottom. Out of top ten problems perceived by CwSNs, five problems were related to physical infrastructure, three to administrators whereas two problems were associated with attitudinal problems. In the opinions of CwSNs, the biggest problems to the implementation of inclusive education were the inaccessible infrastructure.

## 7. CONCLUSION:

The inclusive education under SSA was launched by the government of India in 2003 with an objective to increase the enrollment of CwSNs at elementary stage by providing them accessible and quality education. This was in-line with policy of government to achieve the target of universal elementary education. However, the finding of this study show that the objectives set by the government 15 years ago has not been met so far. The position of the implementation of inclusive education was not found up to mark. It was noted that 55% of overall survey standards were not being fully implemented by the sample schools. The identification process, as carried out by the sample schools for CwSNs, was flawed. The positive side of implementation status was that the aspect of functional and formal assessment was fully implemented by all the schools. The quality of aids and appliances provided to CwSNs was found good

The study found school administrators a problem to the implementation of inclusive education. Only 6 standards out of 25 were fully met by heads (administrators) of the sample schools. This would imply that the provisions of inclusive education mentioned in SSA framework were not being adequately complied with majority of school heads. The head of the schools miserably failed to encourage the teachers to use technology in classroom, prepare and use the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) etc. Some of the reasons for administrative problems are that the heads lacked autonomy, motivation and relevant training to practice the philosophy of inclusion. This study suggests a need to work on these three issues since autonomy is closely associated with motivation and planning.

In the nut shell, it can be concluded that implementation status of inclusive education in Himachal Pradesh was not satisfactory.. The school heads were perceived significant problems to inclusion by all stakeholders. The problems may be overcome by creating awareness and providing training on inclusive education, recruiting special teachers at school level to meet the specific demands of CwSNs within the classroom and by getting the support from parents. Involvement of parents and CwSNs is essential while planning construction and classroom activities and providing transport facilities in consultation with teachers and administrators. The stakeholders have a vital role as partners to the implementation of inclusive education and identification and removal of problems to its success.

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