

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The success of inclusive education in any context depends upon many factors. Teachers themselves are an essential component to ensure the quality of students' inclusion in the school environment. Preparing teachers does not simply mean providing prospective teachers with inclusive education skills; it is important to provide training and support for existing teachers as well. Building the capacity for inclusive education must include awareness raising activities as well as integrated pre-service and in-service teacher training programs to ensure that teachers are aware, ready and willing to bring inclusive education into action. The aim of this study was to examine the perception of teachers towards children with special needs in government elementary schools. A sample consisted of 200 teachers was drawn by using quota sampling technique to study the problem. In order to collect the requisite data, a questionnaire constructed by investigator was administered on the teachers working in government elementary schools imparting inclusive education. The result of the study revealed that there is a lack of professionally trained teachers and in order to provide education to children with special needs, at affordable cost, in-service training of teachers for inclusive education is a must and there is a need to evolve effective teaching-learning strategies by taking in to consideration the diverse needs of the CWSN. The teacher needs to employ a variety of teaching methods, approaches and tools to address the diversity of the group. Using multiple teaching methods is a means to enhance the academic success of students with varying learning styles and strengths.

Keywords: Children with special needs, Inclusive education, Teachers' perspective.

INTRODUCTION

The inclusion of pupils with special needs in ordinary schools and classrooms has gained significance in India and all over the world. It is presently a part of a large world-wide human rights movement, which calls for full inclusion of all people including those with special needs in all aspects of life. This concept of inclusive education enjoys a high profile around the world by virtue of its incorporation into the policy documents of numerous international organizations,

most notably the United Nations. Standards of UN policies such as those embodied in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) and the 1994 UNESCO Report on the Education of children with disabilities (Salamanca Statement) besides National Education Policies(1986) and Persons With Disabilities Act (1995). All these documents emphasize and affirm the rights of all children to equal education without discrimination within the mainstream education system. The underlying philosophy of inclusive education is a human rights issue.

Teachers are the backbone for developing Inclusive practices. They can make or mar inclusion. Teachers need to develop the capacity to improve and adjust the curriculum to deliver educational programs, which are appropriate for all children. A shift in philosophy is needed from a focus on deficits to an understanding that all children are capable of learning. Rather than placing responsibility for failure on the child or the environment, the task is to specify the conditions under which diverse students can achieve optimal learning success.

The school and the classroom provide space to the teachers to carry out inclusive practices, such as class-room transactions which includes pedagogical processes and instructional material used for effective teaching, besides a friendly environment. Often in the past, schools tended to ignore the diverse needs of learners. The practice of inclusive education hinges on an understanding of this diversity among learners and planning sustainable educational provisions responding to specific situations.

It is a reality that the existing teachers are the first generation practitioners of Inclusion, but fact is that it is a teacher only who can provide solutions to physical and learning barriers. Experience has also revealed that adequate training and support to regular teachers can enable them to provide solutions to barriers faced by CWSN at the school level. Teachers have developed teaching learning materials for CWSN and also indigenous barrier free environment.

Within the overall move towards Education for All, it is essential to ensure a concern with quality. This being the case, there will be a need to consider issues such as how can education systems, institutions and services within them, review their existing arrangements to provide adequate supportive measures to the teacher and child to make inclusive practices effective.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To study the perception of teachers towards children with special needs in government elementary schools of Himachal Pradesh.

Delimitation of the study

The present study was delimited in terms of the following:

- (i) The study was delimited to only 5 districts of Himachal Pradesh.
- (ii) The study was confined to Government Elementary Schools only.

Research Method

Survey method under descriptive method of research was used to conduct the present investigation. Survey method under descriptive method of research was used to conduct the present investigation as the method has been found to be very useful to collect the detailed description about the existing phenomena with the intent of employing data to justify current conditions and practices or to make intelligent plans for improving them.

Sample for the present study

In all 200 teachers working in the schools imparting inclusive education from five districts of Himachal Pradesh were included in the sample. However number of teachers who are working in schools where children with hearing impairment were studying is 67. The number of teachers working in schools having children with visual impairment is 89 whereas number of teachers working in schools with mental retardation is 108. The total number of teachers included in the sample is 200 as the categories mentioned above are not exclusive categories. For selecting teachers method of quota sampling was used. A list of elementary schools present in the selected five districts procured from respective DIETs. Forty teachers were selected from each of the five districts only from those schools from where CWSN were studying.

Tools Used

Keeping in view the nature of study, questionnaire for teachers was developed by the researcher to collect relevant information.

Data Collection

To collect the required information the researcher personally visited each institution and collected the requisite information from the sample of 200 Teachers. Rapport was established with respondents before presenting the questionnaire by emphasizing the purpose and importance of study. It was ensured that no item left unanswered. If any of the respondent experienced any difficulty in answering any question that was clarified to him/her.

Statistical Techniques Used in the present study

For the analysis of data obtained with the help of tool used in the study, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. The perceptions obtained from teachers were analyzed through method of content analysis and percentage analysis.

Data Analysis and interpretation

The item-wise analysis of the information provided by the teachers of the government elementary schools is as under:

Professional qualification, Training and identification of Different Types of CWSN

The required information showing teachers’ Professional qualification, Training and identification of different Types of children with special needs is tabulated as under:

Table 1.1: Professional qualification, Training and identification of Different Types of CWSN

S.No.	Item	Yes	No	Yes % age	No % age	
1.	Professional Qualification dealing with CWSN	11	189	5.5	94.5	
2.	Pre-Service Training on Inclusive education	4	196	2	98	
3.	In-service Training on Inclusive education	198	2	99	1	
4.	Satisfaction with Training	177	23	88.5	11.5	
5.	Training Dealing with Different Types of CWSN	Visually Impaired	196	4	98	2
		Hearing Impaired	196	4	98	2
		Physically Impaired	196	4	98	2
		Mentally Retarded	195	5	97.5	2.5
		Speech Impaired	194	6	97	3

6.	Whether training sufficient to implement inclusive education	36	164	18	82
7.	Identification of Children with Special Needs	179	21	89.5	10.5

It is evident from Table that only 5.5% of the teachers are having professional qualification dealing with children with special needs. All these teachers have undergone an in-service three months FCSE (Foundation Course in Special education) course. Further, 94.5% of the teachers do not possess professional qualification dealing with children with special needs. Thus the above analysis indicates the lack of professionally trained teachers to deal with CWSN.

Above table shows that only 2% of the teachers have undergone pre-service training on inclusive education, whereas 98% of the teachers do not have any pre-service training on inclusive education. A vast majority (99%) of the teachers has attended in-service training programme on inclusive education, whereas the percentage of teachers who have not undergone any in-service training is 2%.

The above table shows that 88.5% of the teachers were satisfied with the training whereas 11.5% of the teachers were not satisfied with the training. Therefore we may conclude that majority of the teachers were satisfied with the training on inclusive education.

It is evident from Table that 98% of the teachers received training dealing with visually impaired, hearing impaired and physically impaired children whereas percentage of teachers who have not undergone training dealing with the above categories was only 2%. Further, 97.5% of the teachers received training dealing with mentally retarded children whereas only 2.5% of the teachers have not received any training dealing with mentally retarded children. Training dealing with speech impaired children was received by 97% of the teachers whereas 3% of the teachers have not received such training. From this analysis it may be inferred that majority of the teachers has received training dealing with different types of CWSN.

It is quite clear from Table that only 18% of the teachers responded that the training they received was sufficient to implement inclusive education programme, on the contrary 82% of the teachers were of the view that training was not sufficient to implement inclusive education programme. Therefore we may conclude that a majority of the teachers do not consider the training received as sufficient to implement inclusive education programme.

It is evident from Table that 89.5% of the teachers informed that they were trained to identify children with special needs, on the other hand 10.5% had no such training. Therefore we may

conclude that the training to identify children with special needs has been imparted to majority of the teachers.

Types of Facilities Available to CWSN

The table pertaining to the information provided by the teachers' regarding type of facilities available to the CWSN is as under:

Table 1.2: Types of Facilities Available to CWSN

S.No.	Facilities	Yes	No	Total	Yes % age	No % age
1.	Resource room	3	197	200	1.5	98.5
2.	Special Education Counseling	--	--	200	--	100
3.	Ramps	63	137	200	31.5	68.5
4.	Sound isolation	--	200	200	--	100
5.	Special material in class	--	200	200	--	100
6.	Itinerant teacher	--	200	200	--	100
7.	Co-teaching	--	200	200	--	100
8.	Electricity	48	152	200	24	76

From the abovementioned details it can be inferred that only a few schools have built ramps (31.5%) for CWSN, which reflects the major hurdle to the barrier free education to such children. Further only a few schools (24%) have the provision of electricity. Similarly other required facilities as mentioned above are also available in a few schools only.

Methodology of Teaching

The analysis of information pertaining to methodology of teaching being used by the teachers for teaching students with different types of impairment is provided as under:

Hearing Impairment

The number of teachers teaching children with hearing impairment in the sampled school is 67. The analysis of data pertaining to methodology of teaching students with hearing impairment is given below:

Table 1.3

S.No.	Item	Yes	No	Yes % age	No % age
1.	Whether Seek the Attention of Student with Hearing Impairment before Interacting with the Class	67	--	100	--
2.	Whether Use the Sign Language for children with hearing Impairment	55	12	82.08	17.92
3.	Whether Use Lip Reading Mode for Children with Hearing Impairment	17	50	25.37	74.63
4.	Whether Check the Effectiveness of Hearing Aid	54	13	80.60	19.40

It is evident from table that 100% of the teachers informed that they seek the attention of a student with hearing impairment before communicating with the class. Therefore it can be inferred that in all of the cases teachers usually engage the attention of a hearing impaired student before making communication with the other normal children of the class. 82.08% of the teachers revealed that they use sign language for children with hearing impairment whereas 17.92% of the teachers informed that they do not make use of sign language for hearing impaired child. So it can be concluded that majority of the teachers makes use of sign language for children with hearing impairment. 74.63% of the teachers informed that they do not use lip reading mode for children with hearing impairment whereas 25.37% informed that they use lip reading mode for children with hearing impairment. 80.60% of the teachers check the effectiveness of hearing aid of hearing impaired students; on the other hand 19.40% of the teachers do not check the effectiveness of hearing aid of such students. Therefore we may conclude that in majority of the cases teachers check the effectiveness of hearing aid, however a

small percentage (19.40%) of the teachers do not check the effectiveness of hearing aid of such children.

Visual Impairment

The number of teachers teaching children with visual impairment in the sampled schools is 89. The analysis of data pertaining to methodology of teaching students with visual impairment is given below:

Table 1.4

S.No.	Item	Yes	No	Yes % age	No % age
1.	Whether Call the Children by Name before Giving Verbal Instruction	89	--	100	--
2.	Use of Braille, Large Print, Magnifying Glass and Tape Recorder	26	63	29.2	70.8
3.	Whether provide Tactile Aids and Repeat the Content Frequently for Conceptual Development	58	31	65.1	34.9
4.	Use of Oral Tests and Scribes	64	25	71.9	28.1

It is quite clear from table that 100% of the teachers call the children with visual impairment by name before imparting them verbal instruction .Therefore we can conclude that 100% of the teachers call the visually impaired children by name before imparting him/her verbal instruction. Thus the analysis reflects the concern of the teachers towards visually impaired children. 70.8% of the teachers do not use Braille, large print, magnifying glass and tape recorder for children with visual impairment only 29.2% of the teachers make use of Braille, large print, magnifying glass and tape recorder for children with visual impairment. So it may be concluded that in majority of the institutions there is no use of Braille, large print, magnifying glass and tape recorder for children with visual impairment. 65.1% of the teachers provide tactile aids and repeat content frequently for conceptual development for children with visual impairment whereas 34.9% of the teachers do not provide tactile aids, and repeat frequently for conceptual development for children with visual impairment. 71.9 % of the teachers use oral tests and

scribes for children with visual impairment whereas 28.1% of the teachers do not make use of these. Therefore we may conclude that a majority of the teachers make use of oral tests and scribes for children with visual impairment.

Mental Retardation

The number of teachers teaching children with mental retardation in the sampled schools is 108. The analysis of data pertaining to the use of methodology of teaching such children is given below:

Table 1.5

S.No.	Item	Yes	No	Yes % age	No % age
1.	Whether the Skills are Broken Down in to Simple and Short Steps	108	--	100	--
2.	Whether provide Self-Care skills, Social skills and Communication Skills to Children	108	--	100	--
3.	Use of Demonstration, Concrete Materials, Sound and Touch Techniques	81	27	75	25
4.	Rewards, Praise and Pats for Motivating Students with Behavioural Problems	108	--	100	--
5.	Use of Peer Tutoring and Co-operative Techniques to Facilitate Learning	102	6	94.5	5.5

It is apparent from table that 100% of the teachers make use of the methodology of breaking down the skills into simple and short steps for facilitating learning among children with mental retardation. 100% of the teachers informed that they provide self-care skills, social skills and communication skills to children with mental retardation. Therefore we may conclude that in all the cases teachers are making an endeavor to provide self-care skills, social skills and communication skills to children with mental retardation. Thus the analysis further indicates that teachers are encouraging children with mental retardation in learning their basic skills. 75% of

the teachers make use of demonstration, concrete materials, sound and touch techniques for children with mental retardation. Only 25% of the teachers informed that they do not use demonstration, concrete materials, sound and touch techniques for such children. So it may be inferred that a majority of the teachers make use of demonstration, concrete materials, sound and touch techniques for children with mental retardation. 100% of the teachers use rewards, praise and pats for motivating students with behavioural problems, indicating the use of motivating techniques by majority of teachers for modifying behavior of children with behavioral problems. 94.5% of the teachers use peer tutoring and co-operative techniques to facilitate learning; on the other hand 5.5% of the teachers do not use peer tutoring and co-operative techniques to facilitate learning. So it can be concluded that a good majority of the teachers make use of peer tutoring and co-operative techniques to facilitate learning.

Individual Attention to Children with Special Needs

The requisite information pertaining to paying individual attention to children with special needs while teaching in classrooms as provided by teachers is as under:

Table 1.6: Individual Attention to Children with Special Needs

Sr.No.	Response	No. of Teachers	% age
1.	Yes	200	100
2.	No	--	--
	Total	200	

Above table shows that 100% of the teachers pay individual attention to CWSN during teaching in the class. Therefore we may conclude that individual attention is paid to CWSN during classroom teaching.

Attending a Child with Hearing Impairment

The table below presents the information with regard to various means being used by the teachers to attend a child with hearing impairment during classroom teaching.

Table 1.7: Means Adopted for Attending a Child with Hearing Impairment

Sr. No.	Criteria	Yes	No	Total	Yes % age	No % age
1.	By speaking in front and softly to the child	54	13	67	80.60	19.40
2.	By providing seat to the child as close to the teacher as possible	67	--	67	100	--
3.	By ensuring the child a face to face interaction with the teacher	67	--	67	100	--
4.	By providing a seat to him/her from where he /she can see the black board very clearly	65	2	67	97.01	2.99
5.	By encouraging him/her to always use the hearing aid	55	12	67	82.09	17.91
6.	By teaching the hearing impaired child in only one language	61	6	67	91.04	8.96

From the abovementioned details we may conclude that majority of the teachers adopt different means and methods to attend a child with hearing impairment. They speak softly in front of the child. They provide seat to him/her as close to them as possible. They provide seat to child so that the child can see their face comfortably while they speak and also can see the black-board distinctly. They encourage the child to use the hearing aid constantly. They teach hearing impaired child in one language. However a smaller percentage of teachers do not apply such measures in their classroom. The analysis thus further indicates that in most of the classrooms hearing impaired children are attended effectively by taking in to consideration their special needs.

Attending a Child with Visual Impairment

The table pertaining to the information provided by the teachers with regard to adopting various means to attend a child with visual impairment during classroom teaching is given below:

Table 1.8: Means Adopted for Attending a Child with Visual Impairment

Sr. No.	Criteria	Yes	No	Total	Yes % age	No % age
1.	By providing seat to him/her in front or close to the black board and if possible near to a window	77	12	89	86.51	13.49
2.	By saying orally while writing on black board	76	13	89	85.39	14.61
3.	By using descriptive words such as straight, forward, left, etc. in relation to the student's body orientation	61	28	89	68.54	31.46
4.	By identifying yourself by name	21	68	89	23.6	76.4
5.	By naming a child when you address him/her	89	--	89	100	--

From above analysis we may conclude that in majority of the cases teachers make use of diverse techniques to attend a child with visual impairment. Majority of the teachers provide seat to child in front or close to the black board and if possible near to a window. They speak while writing on the black board. They use descriptive words such as straight, forward, left, etc. in relation to the student's body orientation. They identify themselves by their names while communicating to them. They call them by their names while addressing them. Thus analysis further indicates that individual attention is being paid to visually impaired children in schools by taking in to consideration their varied needs.

Attending a Child with Mental Retardation

The table 4.78 shows information provided by the teachers with regard to adopting various means to attend a child with mental retardation during classroom teaching.

Table 1.9: Means Adopted for Attending a Child with Mental Retardation

Sr. No.	Criteria	Yes	No	Total	Yes % age	No % age
1.	By presenting everything to the child in concrete form	91	17	108	84.26	15.74
2.	By presenting the task in small steps	101	7	108	93.5	6.5
3.	By making frequent repetitions	99	9	108	91.7	8.3
4.	By using the principles of joyful learning like playway method	102	6	108	94.5	5.5
5.	By giving the child work which develop eye-hand co-ordination	80	28	108	74.07	25.93
6.	By training the child to develop his/her concentration with the help of teacher made aids	73	35	108	67.6	32.4

The above analysis reflects that majority of the teachers apply different measures to deal with mentally retarded children in their classroom in order to facilitate their learning and helping them to concentrate on the content matter. They present content to the child in concrete form, task is presented in small steps, frequent repetitions are made and principles of joyful learning like use of playway method are used in the classroom. Further, the teachers give such work to children which develop eye-hand co-ordination. They train the child to develop his/her concentration with the help of teacher made aids. However, a lesser percentage of teachers ranging from 5.5% to 32.4% do not adopt such measure for mentally retarded children in the classroom.

Provision of Remedial Teaching Programme for Children with Special Needs

The requisite information pertaining to the provision of remedial teaching program for children with special needs as provided by the teachers is as under:

Table 1.10: Remedial Teaching Programme for Children with Special Needs

Sr.No.	Response	No. of Teachers	% age
1.	Yes	43	21.5
2.	No	157	78.5
	Total	200	

It is evident from table that only 21.5% of the teachers provide remedial teaching to CWSN whereas 78.5% of the teachers do not provide remedial teaching to CWSN indicating thereby that remedial teaching programme is available with only a small percentage of teachers whereas majority of them do not have such programme for CWSN.

Type of Available Remedial Teaching Programme for CWSN

When discussed about the remedial teaching programmes for CWSN with teachers who have claimed that they provide remedial teaching to mentally retarded children further revealed that they make use of multisensory approach. Some of the teachers also provide these children mental and physical help and encourage them to do small tasks. Teachers also revealed that they also use teaching learning materials (TLM) for such children. Remedial teaching to such children is also provided through Adhar and Adhar plus programmes launched by SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan).

FINDINGS

In the light of analysis and interpretation of data, the following findings were laid down.

- The majority of the teachers possessed JBT as professional qualification. A very small number of teachers are simply matriculate and only three (1.5%) have 10+2 as basic qualification. A very smaller percentage (4.5%) of the teachers had B.Ed as professional qualification and only three teachers had M.Ed as professional qualification. None of the teachers in these schools found to have M.Phil degree and Doctoral degree.
- The majority of teachers do not possess professional qualifications dealing with children with special needs.
- Only 2% of the teachers have undergone pre-service training on inclusive education, whereas 98% of the teachers do not have any pre-service training. A vast majority (99%) of the teachers has attended in-service training programme on inclusive education and is

satisfied with the training imparted on inclusive education. Majority of the teachers has received training dealing with different types of CWSN and do not consider it as sufficient to implement inclusive education programme. All the teachers have received training to identify children with special needs.

- A majority of the institutions do not have provisions for education of CWSN. Only a few schools (31.5%) have built ramps for CWSN and provision of electricity (24%). Similarly other required facilities such as resource room special education counseling, sound isolation, special material in class, Itinerant teacher and co-teaching are also available in a few schools only.
- Teachers usually engage the attention of a hearing impaired student before making communication with the other normal children of the class. A majority of the teachers (82.08%) makes use of sign language for children with hearing impairment. A majority of the teachers (74.63%) do not use lip reading mode for children with hearing impairment whereas a small number of them use lip reading mode for children with hearing impairment. In majority of the cases, teachers (80.60%) check the effectiveness of hearing aid; however a small percentage (19.40%) of the teachers does not check the effectiveness of hearing aid of such children.
- 100% of the teachers call the visually impaired children by name before imparting him/her verbal instruction. Thus the analysis reflects the concern of the teachers towards visually impaired children. In majority (70.8%) of the institutions there is no use of Braille, large print, magnifying glass and tape recorder for children with visual impairment. A majority of the teachers (65.1%) provide tactile aids and repeat content frequently for conceptual development. Further a majority of the teachers (71.9%) make use of oral tests and scribes.
- 100% of the teachers make use of the methodology of breaking down the skills into simple and short steps for facilitating learning among children with mental retardation. In all the cases teachers are making an endeavor to provide self-care skills, social skills and communication skills to children with mental retardation. Thus the analysis further indicates that teachers are encouraging children with mental retardation in learning their basic skills. A majority of the teachers (75%) make use of demonstration; concrete materials sound and touch techniques for children with mental retardation. Only small percentage (25%) of teachers does not make use of these methods for children with mental retardation. 100% of the teachers use rewards, praise and pats for motivating students with behavioural problems, indicating the use of motivating techniques by majority of teachers for modifying behavior of children with behavioral problems. Further a good majority of the teachers make use of peer tutoring and co-operative

techniques to facilitate learning. Only a small percentage (5.5%) of the teachers is yet to adopt these innovative techniques to facilitate learning.

- The majority of teachers adopt different means and methods to attend a child with hearing impairment. They speak softly in front of the child. They provide seat to him/her as close to them as possible. They provide seat to child so that the child can see their face comfortably while they speak and also can see the black-board distinctly. They encourage the child to use the hearing aid constantly. They teach hearing impaired child in one language. However a smaller percentage of teachers do not apply such measures in their classroom. The analysis thus further indicates that in most of the classrooms hearing impaired children are attended effectively by taking in to consideration their special needs.
- In majority of the cases teachers make use of diverse techniques to attend a child with visual impairment. Majority of the teachers provide seat to child in front or close to the black board and if possible near to a window. They speak while writing on the black board. They use descriptive words such as straight, forward, left, etc. in relation to the student's body orientation. They identify themselves by their names while communicating to them. They call them by their names while addressing them. Thus analysis further indicates that individual attention is being paid to visually impaired children in schools by taking in to consideration their varied needs.
- The majority of teachers apply different measures to deal with mentally retarded children in their classroom in order to facilitate their learning and helping them to concentrate on the content matter. Frequent repetitions are made and principles of joyful learning like use of playway method are used in the classroom. Further, the teachers give such work to children which develop eye-hand co-ordination. They train the child to develop his/her concentration with the help of teacher made aids. However, a lesser percentage of teachers ranging from 5.5% to 32.4% do not adopt such measure for mentally retarded children in the classroom.
- A majority of the teachers (78.5%) do not have remedial teaching programmes for CWSN whereas remedial teaching programme is available with only a small percentage of teachers.
- When discussed about the remedial teaching programmes for CWSN with teachers who have claimed that they provide remedial teaching to mentally retarded children further revealed that they make use of multisensory approach. Some of the teachers also provide these children mental and physical help and encourage them to do small tasks. Teachers also revealed that they also use teaching learning materials (TLM) for such children. Remedial teaching to such children is also provided through Adhar and Adhar plus programmes launched by SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan).

CONCLUSION

From the above results and findings it can be concluded that teachers play a vital role in dealing with children with special needs. A programme of inclusive education becomes successful in schools if teachers are professionally trained and have a great deal of knowledge about their identification, intervention and methods of teaching them. In current scenario it is imperative to prepare such teachers who can deal with CWSN in an effective way.

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