



STATUS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS: REVIEWS ON CHALLENGES AND REMEDIATION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CHANDIGARH

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Abstract

In the past few years, focus on children with disabilities has resulted in greater awareness and increased sensitivity towards these children. Central and State Governments have taken a number of initiatives to improve the enrolment, retention and achievement of children with disabilities. Research conducted earlier has evident that there are three important areas to be focused upon which are structural and environmental modifications, social and policy changes and lastly improved institutional resources. Inclusive education in Government schools of Chandigarh is largely facilitated by centralized scheme SSA & RMSA now merged into single scheme called Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan. This paper is an attempt to highlight the status of inclusive education including challenges and their possible remediation from the perspective of various stake holders of inclusive education functioning in Chandigarh. School structure in Chandigarh involves model and non model schools excluding private schools. Stakeholders of inclusive education basically are the group who can even be called as prosumers includes CWSN children, peer group, both general and special education teacher, head of the school or Principals and supportive staff. To begin with head of the school, principals acknowledges the role of resource room in effective implementation of inclusive education involving children with disabilities whereas they require some orientation about legislations and schemes such as universal design of learning and differential instructions. Some schools in Chandigarh still do not have barrier free infrastructure. Support extended by administration is adequate but teachers should be indulged more into capacity building programmes. Interaction between general and resource teachers need to be improved for better coordination. CWSN studying in these schools have admitted that they enjoy and participate in various classroom activities. Adequate arrangements for therapeutics, medical care etc to be made for CWSN at School as well as for home based education. Efforts to be made by the CWSN In-charge towards adapted curriculum best suitable for the CWSN.

Keywords: Prosumers, Differential instructions, CWSN, Samagra shiksha abhiyan, SSA



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Introduction

Inclusive schools are constructed and planned with a vision and principle that believe in culture of rights, social justice and equity. It believes that all children are not the same, and accepts diversity as strength rather than a problem. Children learn in different styles and

relate success more with the learning of life skills and social skills than scoring high marks in exams.

Children with Special Needs (CWSN) often finds difficult to learn through traditional methods of teaching, resulting in poor scholastic performance which further leads to dropout from school. This could be the result of lack of trained manpower, poor disabled friendly educational infrastructure, Barriers including Physical, systemic and attitudinal. This paper is an attempt to highlight and review stakeholders dealing with Children with Special Needs (CWSN) which includes children with disabilities, Resource Teachers, General Teachers, Principals and care takers/attendants.

Indian Government took many initiatives for enrolling and providing education to children with disabilities in segregated schools but in 1974, a scheme named Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) was launched for integrating children with disabilities into the general schools.. In the year 2000 Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was launched to provide education to all whereas in the year 2009-10 scheme of Inclusive Education for the Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) was initiated which was merged with Rashtriya Madhmiyak Shiksha Abhiyan in 2013. Lastly as one of the major milestone Rights of persons with disability Act 2016 (RPwD) have been enacted wherein 21 types of disabilities have been categorised and treated as beneficiaries.

Chandigarh is a Union Territory constituted on 1st November 1966 situated on the foot hills of Shivalik range being first planned and most attractive city of India it is also known as '**CITY BEAUTIFUL**'. Chandigarh serves as a joint capital of Punjab and Haryana states. It is spread over in 114sq.km.

Chandigarh has a population of 960787 as per 2011 census. It has higher literacy rate of 86.43 as compared to other states.

There are 195 schools in Chandigarh including Government Schools, Government. Aided Schools, Kendriya Vidyalayas/Navodaya Vidyalaya /Air Force and Private Schools.

There are 109 government schools in Chandigarh. The medium of instructions in all the government schools are English and Hindi. Schools under Chandigarh Administration are affiliated with Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).

Chandigarh has been very proactive in implementation of Policies related to inclusive education.

Under the Integrated Education for Disabled Children Department of Education, children with disabilities are sought to be integrated in normal school system. Full assistance is being provided to states and UTs for education of the children suffering from certain mild disabilities in common schools with the help of necessary aids, incentives and specially trained teachers.

The following types of disabled children are covered under this scheme:

- Children with locomotors handicaps i.e. Orthopedically Handicapped.
- Mildly and moderately hearing impaired.
- Mild to moderate Intellectual disabilities
- Partially sighted children
- Children with multiple handicaps
- Children with learning disability

Now with the implementation of Samagra Shiksha and RPWD Act 2016, types of disabilities covered has been increased to 21 along with homes based services. Presently 4300 students with different types of disabilities are enrolled in Govt. Schools of Chandigarh. Various initiatives have been taken under the scheme to retention and quality improvement.

- Curriculum modification and development of IEP
- Evaluation guidelines for CWSN
- Capacity building of general teachers: orientation programme for school teachers
- Learning corners for CWSN.
- Support services in special resource centers
- Therapy campus for CWSN at cluster level.

This write up is documented based on experiences, observations, interactions with stake holders and some research conducted in span of last 4-5 years in Chandigarh with direct involvement of authors.

Inclusion of Children with disabilities can only be successful when the entire factor which contributes in inclusion makes effort to realise it. It is not possible if the persons involved in direct or indirect are not cooperative and dedicated towards it as we call them as stake holders.

Prime stake holder are students with Special Needs who are having disability such as intellectual disabilities hearing impairment, visual Impairment, autism spectrum disorder,

learning disability and other types of disabilities. Head of the schools who are primarily responsible for the management and implementation school activities are also important factor.

General education teachers are those teachers who basically trained to teach normal children and school subject but have very important role in handling students with disabilities in inclusive classroom. General education teacher plays an important role and links between special need students, Resource teachers.

Resource teacher or CWSN In-charge is a trained professional placed in a regular school to promote inclusion. He/she co-ordinates and streamlines various efforts made by Education department and schools. Each school especially government schools have trained professional in-charge for works/duties related to implementation of inclusive education.

Peer group is the same age students studying in same class. This is the group where cultural diversity is visible and students acquire most of the skills which contributes in holistic development. Supporting Staff and their sensitization is very important for the purpose of effective inclusion of students with special needs

Status of Inclusive education-

Chandigarh School Education system through Samagra Shiksha (earlier Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan) provides inclusive education to all the Children with Special Needs through general schools, open schools, non-formal education system. Samagra Shiksha has broken the barrier and included pre-schooling and senior secondary classes to achieve the goal of compulsory education upto 18.

Management structure for Samagra Shiksha and inclusive education thereof-

Management/administrative structure involve Administrator as president of Governing council, Advisor to Administrator and Secretary as Vice-President and Chairmen respectively. At mid level it has 2 segregations such as State Project Director dealing with administrative issues and Joint Director (Academics) concerned with teacher training, research work and capacity building of Samagra Shiksha functionaries. Coordinators, CRC along with resource teachers works in collaboration to provide children a variety of exposures.

Reviews on various Observations and Challenges faced by different Stake holders-

The fact has been evident and inferred that **School Principal** have expressed their consent over up -gradation of training and knowledge by all the stake holders including capacity

building training of in-service teachers, moreover they have optimistic views towards enrolment of CWSN in mainstream schools and success of inclusive education thereof. All school Principals is aware of Major policies and schemes available for children with disabilities. Head of the schools have also commended the role of barrier free environment in promoting inclusion effectively. Somehow it was also felt that Schools Principal must be sensitized more to attend various seminar, conferences organized for children with disabilities. This effort will definitely transform their attitude and outlook towards children with disabilities.

While interaction, observation with **various students having special needs** it was estimated that these children do enjoy coming to schools and participates in various curricular and co-curricular activities. Their social skills tend to improve and by the time they acquire various other important skills. The facilities related to distribution of aids and appliances needed to made more even along with certification issues however resource teacher guides them fully to the extent possible but major problem is with illiterate parents to lower socio-economic status. Students are also satisfied with the extent of infrastructural arrangements provided by Administration such as handrail, ramps, toilets etc. Class teacher's effort to enhance the participation of all students was also commended by students. It can also be concluded that CWSN require more need based curriculum or adapted curriculum to fulfil their desires. Here as a challenge it can be mentioned that facility of resource room should be made more accessible to meet the educational needs of students on regular basis. Teachers dealing with Children having disabilities should be competent enough to provide differential instructions and teaching strategies.

General teachers are also important in order to ensure the inclusion and retention of CWSN. Various in-service training and orientation programme has been organized under Samagra Shiksha to improve the knowledge and awareness among regular teachers. General teachers say that they provide instructions based on learning preferences of students in other words it can be said that general teachers provide compatible instruction based on learning styles of individual whereas some of general teacher struggle with providing instructions based on learning preference.

In-charge coordinating various activities and dealing with children having special needs are satisfied with the quantum of training but they want improvement in terms of quality training to be imparted and should be given more hands on experience and professional development

programme. They also appreciate the sufficiency of support given by school administration. Resource teachers are playing proactive role in interacting and coordinating with the other staff at various issues encountered by students with special needs and their family members. In spite of all above recommendations it was strongly felt while interacting with the professionals that mode of employment bothers and brings fatigue in their motivation and functioning.

General education teachers and resource teachers should work together collectively to increase the competencies of general teacher so that they can identify or screen children who may have disabilities in regular classes. Training on providing compatible instructions to students with disabilities is also an area where general education teachers need more training. In a study conducted by Agnihotri and Sood (2015) it was found that for a successful implementation of inclusion in education system, the mainstream schools should be equipped with resource rooms, go for collaborative consultation, and adopt cooperative teaching. Interaction of special peers with general peers is a matter of concern knowing the disabling condition of child.

Peer not only enhances the co-operation among other students but also enhances the opportunities to construct and synthesize complex ideas, skills and values by the students themselves. Peer group brings social motivation which helps in achievement of classroom goals. Peer group is the important source of interaction of special peers with general peers is a matter of concern knowing the disabling condition of child. Other peers are also optimistic about the inclusion of Children with disabilities in regular schools. During the sensitization programme conducted by the teacher trainees at various schools of Chandigarh it was found that students without disability are aware of basic major information about children with disabilities like what terms to be used, whether to help them or not etc. Under Samagra shiksha time to time various integrated activities were organized to promote social inclusion. It would be beneficial if the peers are provided with some orientation programme or training about understanding the disability by the administration. But it is also promising to accept the fact that children without disability finds problems in understanding certain issues faced by peer with disabilities such as sharing of feelings managing problem behaviour etc

Supportive staff encompasses a broad range of persons handling and managing children with disabilities. Role of supportive staff can never be under estimated while handling children with disabilities. These are the one who looks after other work along with caring of children

with disabilities which enables them to access educational facilities in any education institution. Like general teachers they have some unique needs which can only be full filled by these individuals. It has been expressed by the supportive staff and attendants that they can manage and handle the children with disabilities like escorting them to the classroom etc. Moreover as children with development and other disabilities starts imitating other children without disabilities they tend to minimize unskilled behaviours rather they learn certain skilled behaviour. For the better functioning of supportive staff and attendants training is utmost required about handling and managing the problem behavior of children. Attendants have also expressed that they get cooperation from resource teacher whenever they encounter any problem while handing these children. They also feel free to report administration while encountering any other issue.

Children with disability who are receiving home based education need more structured intervention programme in terms of therapy and education. It will also enable them to receive medical, educational and other services.

Children availing home based education and services grabs more attention as service facilitation must be improved in terms of making children accessible to schools so that they can avail other benefits and facilities. Adequacy was observed in terms of receiving of aids and appliance provided by the Government but frequency of visit of resource teacher should be enhanced. More focus should be given on training and empowering parents.

Summary of reviews on status and challenges

The above reviews guide us to two important factors leading to successful inclusive practices which are specialized training and support of various resources.

Training is such a component which is vital for development of any individual and entity all the components/stake holders except principal requires training in different aspects of services being facilitated to children with disabilities such as orientation, curriculum adaptation, differential teaching strategies etc. attitudinal barrier, management and rehabilitation of CWSN is largely influenced by the level of knowledge and awareness of different stake holders and this problem can be sorted out through training only. Therefore a step towards effective training is expected from time to time

Without support of resources one cannot think of effective learning of CWSN in schools. Resource support provided in terms of materials and equipments are adequate but still there is a scope of even distribution of materials in all the centers and make it more accessible and

usable for children with disabilities. It was also observed from various schools that therapeutic services are not being properly facilitated. Hence steps must be taken towards providing effective medical and therapeutic intervention of these children.

Remediation/suggestions-

- The concept of Universal design must be adopted for creating a barrier free environment to the schools.
- It would be highly appreciated if Care givers training could be imparted to supportive staff and attendants to look after the CWSN.
- General education teachers must ensure more involvement between peers and CWSN.
- Efforts to be made to bring CWSN to school who are being given home based training as transport facilities could be enhanced in reaching out to unreachable.
- Fund allocation should be scrutinized from time to time to ensure its adequacy as sometimes it was found that inappropriate allocation of budget leads to some hidden dissatisfaction among the stakeholders.
- Adequate arrangements for therapeutics, medical care etc to be made for CWSN at School as well as home based.
- Efforts to be made by the CWSN In-charge and class teachers towards adapted curriculum best suitable for the CWSN as Samagra shiksha has already initiated to prepare worksheets chapter wise for each subject involving general educators.
- Orientation program including hands on training workshops to be organized for general education teachers for better understanding of inclusion.

Conclusion

Further research and progress monitoring can help in analyzing status and extent of implementation of inclusive education on routine basis. The above mentioned practical implication must be addressed for reducing barriers in implementation of inclusive education in Chandigarh.

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Observation made by the teacher trainees

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