



Evaluation of methodology and strategies used by inclusive education resource teachers to teach children with special needs.

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Abstract

The right to live with dignity and self-respect as a human being leads to a continuous analysis of policies and services aimed at marginalized sections. The development of a nation is contingent upon education that contributes to the holistic development of a person irrespective of its gender, caste, religion, and socio-economic background, with or without any disability or challenges. The inclusion of CWSN is seen in terms of physical access, social access, and quality of access as the key interventions suggested under SSA. To achieve the goal of inclusion, SSA in different states has adopted different approaches for preparing children with special needs (CWSN) for schools. The objective of this paper is to examine the methodology and strategies used by inclusive education resource teachers to teach and evaluate the progress made by special need children and the number of such children made competent to study in the regular class room. The evaluation of inclusive education was done in 12 out of 22 districts of Punjab. A total of 66 primary schools and 59 CD blocks were covered. To seek answers to the queries made in the stated objective interview schedules-cum-questionnaires were administered to the concerned personnel during the field study. The data collected from 60 inclusive education resource teachers using numerous sources required simple statistical treatment such as, frequencies and percentage.

Keywords: Methods and strategies, inclusive education resource teacher, evaluation, children with special needs

1. Introduction

The mandate of RTE Act (2009) is to provide free and compulsory education to all children of 6-14 years. Thus the three aspects of SSA are **access**, **enrolment** and **retention** of children in this age group. RTE Act stresses the importance of preparing schools to address all kinds of diversities due to caste, gender, disability, culture and religion.

The major objective and thrust of SSA is on providing meaningful and quality Inclusive education to all children with challenges, irrespective of kind, category, and degree of disability. The ultimate aim is mainstreaming of all children with special needs in neighbourhood schools by developing full potentiality of these children, and promoting effective participation of all.

Inclusion settings allow children with and without

disabilities to play and interact everyday, even when they are receiving therapeutic services. Educators generally say that some students with special needs are not good candidates for inclusion. Inclusive education practices fully rely on active learning, authentic assessment practices, applied curriculum, multilevel instructional approaches and increased attention to diverse student needs and individualization. This also includes special training for school readiness programmes in the form of home **schooling** and **residential schooling**.

2. Objective

To examine the methodology and strategies used by inclusive education resource teachers to teach and evaluate the progress made by special need children and the number of such children made competent to

study in the regular class room.

3. Research methodology

Descriptive exploratory survey design was employed in this study. As per design of the study,

the evaluation of inclusive education was done in 12 out of 22 districts of Punjab. The study was conducted in following districts.

Region wise the following districts were included in the study as shown in table 1

Table-1 : Region by districts

| Majha Region | Doaba Region | | Malwa Region | | |
|--------------|-------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| Amritsar | Hoshiarpur Jalandhar | Kapurthala | Faridkot Fatehgarh Sahib | Fazilka Mukatsar | Patiala Ropar MohaliLudhiana |

Since the study was to be conducted in schools where the Resource Rooms were available, the selection of schools became purposive in nature, combined with the technique of random selection out of the entire list of schools in a CD block. Sampling techniques involved a combination of purposive and random selection of schools.

This objective was assessed with respect to:

- Methodology and strategies used by Inclusive Education Resource Teachers, to teach.
- Methods used to evaluate the progress made by CWSN.

(i) Methodology and strategies used by resource teachers to teach CWSN

Methodology of teaching CWSN varies from disability to disability, depending on the need and requirement of specific disability.

When the Resource Teachers were questioned

about the techniques or methods they use to teach CWSN, they informed that this task was mainly handled by the Inclusive Education Volunteers, who were provided guidance and necessary support by them. They admitted that their main job was school visits, and visit the Resource Room to assist IE volunteers in teaching of need specific skills and to provide remedial assistance to CWSN studying in regular classroom;.

In view of their mobile nature of work i.e. travelling from school to school, they hardly get time to remain in the Resource Room and teach specific skills in accordance with the need of the disability of the children. But they mentioned the techniques used to teach CWSN, with the help of teaching- learning material, aids and equipment.

Item: Describe the methods and strategies used to teach the CWSN

The responses to the question have been tabulated in table 2 below:

Table-2 : Methodology of Teaching CWSN

| Visual Impairment | Hearing Impairment | Intellectually Backward | Autism | Cerebral Palsy |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Oral Work, ● Touching, ● Use of Braille | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use of bold letters ● Flash Cards ● Lip movement ● Mirror | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Blocks ● Puzzles ● MR Kit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Blocks ● Flash cards ● MR Kit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Physiotherapy, Exercise etc. |

Source: IDC Survey Data, 2016-17

For visual impairment the common classroom techniques involve oral work, touching the objects, and use of Braille. For hearing impaired children, bold letters, flash cards, lip movement are commonly used techniques.

With intellectually backward and autistic children, blocks, puzzles and MR kits are the devices used to keep them occupied in class.

Physiotherapy in the form of exercise is used as a classroom technique with Cerebral Palsy

children.

Gap: The Resource Teachers mentioned about the aids and equipment used in Resource Rooms, but they did not explain the other techniques and strategies of teaching CWSN.

Apart from that, they reported that there is no continuity in their teaching CWSN on daily basis. So by the time they visit the school the next time, the children are likely to forget what was taught to them last time by the Resource Teacher.

For the assessment of the methodology of teaching, the IE volunteers were interviewed. They supplied detailed information of teaching to differently abled children by using need specific techniques to be employed in the classroom. The data are presented in section I, Part F.

ii) Evaluation of the Progress Made by CWSN

The evaluation of the progress of the CWSN is based on their achievement of the goals set for a particular period i.e. for a week/month/session, which are inbuilt in the Individualised Education Programme (IEP). A few questions in this regard were addressed to the Resource Teachers.

Item: Mention the techniques used to evaluate the progress of the CWSN

Procedure followed for the evaluation of CWSN: Goal Setting

Assessment of the progress made by CWSN is based on the goals set for Individualised Education Programme (IEP) for a particular child. As per instructions from the SSA and guidelines provided by the D.S.Es, minimum of six goals are to be selected for preparing IEPs.

In the schools visited for evaluation, the Madras Development Programming System (MDPS) tool is used for preparing IEPs. In most of the schools in district Faridkot and Ludhiana, FACP tool (Functional Assessment Checklist for Programming) is also used along with MDPS to prepare IEP. In the selection of goals parents of CWSN are also involved sometimes. After three months, the achievement/progress made by the child is assessed in accordance with the set goals. If the goal is not achieved, the goal is repeated.

The goals set in IEP are as follows:

- Teaching and training in Activities/skills of daily living (ADL) such as training in eating, toilet training, bathing, grooming, brushing teeth, proper sitting etc.
- Behaviour modification skills
- Social skills

- Academic skills: Reading, writing, numerals, counting numbers.
- Recreational skills such as Dance, skit etc.
- Physical fitness skills: Games and sports.
- Pre-vocational skills
- Cooking/stitching for girls (in certain cases only)

Regarding the techniques used to evaluate the progress made by CWSN, the Resource Teachers mentioned about the achievement of goals set in IEP. The goals involve teaching and training in acquisition of skills of: Daily living, academic skills, social and behaviour modification skills; recreational and physical fitness skills and also prevocational skills.

After setting up goals in IEP for a particular period of time, the evaluation of the progress made by the child is done on the basis of acquisition of these skills in required period of time, depending on the level of disability of the child.

Question: Do you involve professionals in designing IEP for CWSN?

It was revealed during the interview that the IEPs were prepared by the IE volunteers only, therefore the involvement of professionals was bare minimal as reported by 5 (8.3) of the respondents.

Strategies Used to Teach CWSN and Implement them in Goal Setting

Q: Are you adequately trained to implement strategies to teach and use them for achievement of goals of individualised educational programme?

Response: Out of 60, 41 (68.3%) Resource Teachers said that they were provided training to implement the strategies for achievement of goals. **When asked to mention some of the strategies, they failed to verbalize/give the right response.**

From among the 19(31.7%) RTs, who said NO to the question, their plea was that short-term training programmes were not sufficient to attain proficiency and expertise to learn, teach and implement strategies for goal setting or for the achievement of goals of IEP.

Evaluation of CWSN with Lesser/Mild Disabilities

In case of children with less than severe disabilities evaluation of the progress made by them is done by IERT or IE volunteer in the Resource Rooms on the basis of goals set in IEP on quarterly basis. When the children are successful in achieving goals set for that period, depending on their level of cognition, comprehension and capability, they are sent to the regular classroom in primary or upper primary classes.

Evaluation of Children Who are Mainstreamed

In response to the queries regarding the evaluation of mainstreamed CWSN, according to the IERTs, the CWSN who are mainstreamed or sent to regular classrooms are evaluated by the classroom teachers along with peers. The evaluation practices include classroom tests, or written examinations. The grading system is followed as a measure of progress/achievement of the child. The IERTs used the term ‘paper marking’ as a technique used for evaluation of CWSN in classrooms.

However in case of CWSN in regular classroom, though there is a relaxation in scoring, most of the CWSN, most of the time, are placed in Grade E.

This practice defeats the purpose of IEP and goal setting considered to be useful practice in Inclusive Education.

Q: It is believed that the expectations of parents of CWSN are higher than progress made by children? If yes, how do you tackle this problem?

Responses are recorded in the table 3 below:

Table-3 : Dealing with High Expectation Parents

| Responses | Parents with High Expectation | | | Approach to Handle High Expectation Parents | | |
|-----------|-------------------------------|------|-------|---|----------------|-------|
| | Yes | No | Total | Counseling the parents | Not Applicable | Total |
| N | 52 | 8 | 60 | 52 | 8 | 60 |
| % | 86.7 | 13.3 | 100 | 86.7 | 13.3 | 100 |

Source: IDC Survey Data, 2016-17

In response to the question, 52(86.7%) of the Resource Teacher mentioned that the parents’ expectations are unrealistically higher than the progress made by children with special need and they counsel the parents accordingly. But 8(13.3%) of RTs did not have the problem of dealing with high expectation parents.

Irregular CWSN

As the situation is, the CWSN are not very regular in the class. The main reason being the delay in release of transport allowance which is not regular and on time. Because of this parents do not/cannot afford to spend on transportation of the child to school in auto rickshaws. Subsequently the progress of non-regular children is hampered. The goals set for them to achieve in the stipulated period cannot be achieved as the child’s performance is not up to the mark.

These are the constraints because of which the child’s progress is slow, but the parents are not ready to accept as they are ignorant of the phenomenon. Under the circumstances, the Resource Teachers follow the approach of **counseling the parents**, as mentioned by 52 (86.7%) of them. They try to convince them that:

- The performance of the CWSN is linked with

the number of goals achieved by the child.

- It depends on the capability of the child to reach the goals on time and also on the fact that whether he/she is regular in the class.

If these conditions are not met, the performance of the child is not up to the mark, and he/she lags behind. Then the IERTs give extra time to the CWSN in Resource Room also.

According to the Resource Teachers there is a tremendous pressure on them because of the parents, and also because of their mobile mode of work they depend more on I.E. volunteers. But counseling the parents is an integral part of their routine work.

iii) Difficulties faced while performing the job

In addition to the evaluation/assessment of knowledge and teaching capability, proficiency to teach children of other/all disabilities, methodology and strategies used to teach and evaluate the progress made by CWSN, and numbers of children made competent to study in regular classes, the Resource Teachers were asked to enumerate the type of difficulties they face while performing the job. The following table 4 records the problems stated by the Resource Teachers.

Table-4 : Difficulties Faced by Resource Teachers

| Difficulty | No. | % | Difficulty | No. | % |
|-------------------------------|-----|------|--------------------------------|-----|------|
| Lack of Proper Resource Rooms | 3 | 5.0 | Not Adequate TLM | 8 | 13.3 |
| Official Work | 11 | 18.3 | Difficult to achieve IEP goals | 6 | 10 |
| Unsafe HBE | 6 | 10.0 | Mobile mode of job | 2 | 3.3 |
| Transportation | 16 | 26.7 | Non-cooperative Parents | 2 | 3.3 |
| No Response | 6 | 10 | | | |

Source: IDC Survey Data, 2016-17

Out of 60, 6 (10%) of IERTs did not respond to the question. 3(5%) of the IERTs complained about lack of proper Resource Rooms to work, because of an improvisation of the space on sharing basis. Similarly 8 of the respondents (13.3%) faced the problem of not getting proper or adequate teaching learning material as per day-to-day requirements. The burden of official work as handling of dak etc was reported by 11(18.3%) the IERTs. But most important of all was the problem stated by 7 (11.7%) of the IERTs who expressed that it is not only difficult to handle children with severe difficulties but also it is difficult to achieve IEP goals. 6 of the Resource Teachers (10%) reported that HBE was not safe especially for the young women, and also parents do not cooperate. Mobile mode of job and the transportation were also the problems expressed by IERTs by 2 and 16 of them in respective order.

Objective: To Assess Whether Resource Teachers Trained in Teaching Children of One Disability are Proficient to Teach Children of Other/all Disabilities.

Unlike special schools for exceptional ability children, Resource Rooms cater to children of multiple disabilities. For example, children with impairments in vision, hearing and orthopedics, multiple disorders, autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation etc. Thus a Resource Teacher is expected to handle children of different needs and challenges in the same class.

To assess whether Resource Teachers are capable of handling a group of children with myriads

of problems a few questions in this regard were also added in the interview.

Do you think you are proficient in teaching children with different kinds of disabilities? If yes, how do you manage children of varied needs in the resource room?

Out of 60 Resource Teachers, 38 (63.3%) of them considered themselves to be capable of handling children with different needs. Because out of 38, 32 of them mentioned that they had 15 days training in multiple disability. Of the remaining Resource Teachers who considered themselves to be proficient in handling multiple challenges, 5 (8.3%) of them collaborate with other IERTs of different specializations. One of them mentioned that apart from 15 day training, cooperation is enlisted from the IE volunteer, or seek guidance from the D.S.Es.

A look at the table 3.1 depicting Bio-Data of the Resource Teachers, reveals that all 60 of them had specialisation in disabled children, in different categories as 33 of them had training in mental retardation, 14 RTs (23.3%) had specialisation in Hearing Impairment (HI), 10 (16.7%) in Visual Impairment (VI), 2 of them had training both in MR and HI. Maximum of Resource Teachers i.e. 33 were specialist in Mental Retardation.

On the basis of the specialisation mentioned by Resource Teachers and also their approach in seeking help from specialists, and teachers in other areas, whenever required, it seems that **they are quite capable of handling children of different abilities.**

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