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Title of the Research paper- Study of Support Services for Children with Special Needs in the State of Sikkim

Authors- Dr. Neena Dash, Assistant Professor, Deptt. Of Education, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab,India.

Anuradha Rai, Research Scholar, Deptt. Of Education, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab.

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to present the status of integrated education for children with special needs in the State of Sikkim ,to study the various support services required for children with special needs for their successful completion of primary education, to ascertain the academic support provided to children with special needs in the integrated schools, to study the administrative support given to the integrated schools for education of children with special needs,to study the support given by the parents to their children with special needs, to ascertain the community support for education of children with special needs in integrated schools and to give recommendations for effective support services.

STUDY OF SUPPORT SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN THE STATE OF SIKKIM

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Millions of the people have some type of physical, mental or emotional condition that significantly limits their ability to function successfully in our society. Until recently the most commonly used term to refer to people with such conditions was handicapped. However, the preferred word is disabled and later it has changed as children with special needs.

There are an estimated 600 million persons with one form of the disability or the other all over the world and 10 percent of this number is estimated to be in India. 98 percent of the disabled children are without any education (Disability, 2003). A recent article by Kenneth Eklindh of UNESCO states: more than 90 percent of disabled children in developing countries are not in schools(Education Today, Oct – Nov 2003). It happens due to lack of resources and support services. Thus, this study assumes significance.

India is the second most populated country in the world and its population is increasing day by day at a faster rate. Many government policies are targeting to bring the whole of country under the literacy

bracket, education is bound to touch the lives of the every single person. All children whether they are disabled or not, have the right to education in an appropriate ways as they are the future citizens of the country. All children have the right to learn together and deserve the best in life. They have the right to live in a world where they have hope and opportunity. They need special care and assistance without which they cannot fully develop their potential. Children should not be declared or discriminated against by being excluded or sent away because of their disability. There is no legitimate reason to separate children for their education. Children belong together with advantages and benefits for everyone. They don't need to be protected from each other. Therefore, it is necessary to provide special supports services for children with special needs to reach their full potential in school, and can make a successful transition to adulthood and the world of further and higher education. Thus this study serves the purpose.

The constitution provides the right to education to all citizens including the disabled. Article 29 (2) of the constitution provides that no citizen shall be denied admission to any educational institution to maintain by the state or receiving aid out of State fund. This also means that every child has right to receive education in an educational institutional of his choice which is preferably the neighborhood school. This also implies that every child with a disability has right to receive education in inclusive setting and the authority concerned cannot deprive the child of his right unless there are compelling reasons to do so. Article 45 of the constitution directs

the State to provide free and compulsory education for all children (including the disabled) until they attain the age of 14 years. Recently compulsory Primary education acts have been enacted by various States. This act requests parents to send their children to school. Of course parents of disabled children may like to send their children either to special schools or to inclusive schools depending upon the facilities provided to the children. Thus this type of study needs to be undertaken.

Sikkim, one of the 22nd States of India, which lies in Northeast region bounded by Nepal to the West and Bhutan to the East; by the Tibet Autonomous Regions of China to the North and Northeast and by the West Bengal to the South. Sikkim has population of 541,000 with the total area of 7,096sq.km. Although the population is less in comparison with other States but the value of education is increasing day by day and it is becoming more competitive. Although the population is less but it consists of different kinds of people – disabled as well as non disabled, therefore, in the year 2003 Human Resource Development Department (HRDD) has adopted integrated education through helping hand organization Gangtok (NGO) to make all disabled children educated in regular schools without any discrimination. Along with State Government Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is also m

Support Services

Provision of support services is of paramount importance for the success of education of children with special needs. In order to

ensure that, at all levels, external services are made available to children with special needs; educational authorities should consider the following.

Support to ordinary schools could be provided by both teacher education institutions and by the outreach staff of special schools. The latter should be used increasingly as resource centres for ordinary schools offering direct support to those children with special educational needs.

Within schools, children with special needs should receive whatever extra support they may require to ensure their effective education. Inclusive schooling is the most effective means for building solidarity between children with special needs and their peers. Assignment of children to special schools - or special classes or sections within a school on a permanent basis - should be the exception, to be recommended only in those infrequent cases where it is clearly demonstrated that education in regular classrooms is incapable of meeting a child's educational or social needs or when it is required for the welfare of the child or that of other children.

The vast majority of children with special needs, especially in rural areas, are as a consequence provided with no services whatsoever. Indeed, in many developing countries, it is estimated that less than 1 percent of children with special educational needs are included in existing provision. Experience, moreover, suggests that inclusive schools, serving all of the children in a community, are most

successful in eliciting community support and in finding imaginative and innovative ways of using the limited resources that are available.

Integrated education and community-based rehabilitation represent complementary and mutually supportive approaches to assisting those with special needs. Both are based upon the principles of inclusion, integration and participation, and represent well-tested and cost-effective approaches to promoting equality of access for those with special educational needs as part of a nationwide strategy aimed at achieving education for all. Legislation should recognize the principle of equality of opportunity for children with special needs in primary, secondary and tertiary education carried out, in so far as possible, in integrated settings.

Community-based rehabilitation should be developed as part of a global strategy for supporting cost-effective education and training for people with special educational needs. Community-based rehabilitation should be seen as a specific approach within community development aimed at rehabilitation, equalization of opportunities and social integration of all people with disabilities; it should be implemented through the combined efforts of people with disabilities themselves, their families and communities, and the appropriate education, health, vocational and welfare services.

Children with special needs should receive additional instructional support in the context of the regular curriculum, not a different curriculum. The guiding principle should be to provide all children with the same education, providing additional assistance and

support to children requiring it. The acquisition of knowledge is not only a matter of formal and theoretical instruction. The content of education should be geared to high standards and the needs of individuals with a view to enabling them to participate fully in development. Teaching should be related to pupils' own experience and to practical concerns in order to motivate them better.

Local administrators and school heads can play a major role in making schools more responsive to children with special educational needs if they are given necessary authority and adequate training to do so. They should be invited to develop more flexible management procedures, to redeploy instructional resources, to diversify learning options, to mobilize child-to-child help, to offer support to pupils experiencing difficulties and to develop close relations with parents and the community. Successful school management depends upon the active and creative involvement of teachers and staff, and the development of effective co-operation and team work to meet the needs of students.

School heads have a special responsibility in promoting positive attitudes throughout the school community and in arranging for effective co-operation between class teachers and support staff. Appropriate arrangements for support and the exact role to be played by various partners in the educational process should be decided through consultation and negotiation.

The educational team, rather than the individual teacher, should share the responsibility for the education of special needs

children. Parents and volunteers should be invited to take an active part in the work of the school. Teachers, however, play a key role as the managers of the educational process, supporting children through the use of available resources both within and outside of the classroom.

Pre-service training programmes should provide to all student teachers, primary and secondary alike, positive orientation toward disability, thereby developing an understanding of what can be achieved in schools with locally available support services. The knowledge and skills required are mainly those of good teaching and include assessing special needs, adapting curriculum content, utilizing assistive technology, individualizing teaching procedures to suit a larger range of abilities, etc. In teacher-training practice schools, specific attention should be given to preparing all teachers to exercise their autonomy and apply their skills in adapting curricula and instruction to meet pupils' needs as well as to collaborate with specialists and co-operate with parents.

Appropriate technical aids to ensure the successful operation of an integrated education system must also be provided. Integrated approaches should, therefore, be linked to the development of support services at central and intermediate levels.

A high percentage of disability is the direct result of lack of information, poverty and low health standards. As the worldwide prevalence of disabilities is increasing, particularly in the developing countries, there should be joint international action in close

collaboration with national efforts to prevent the causes of disability through education which, in turn, would reduce the incidence and prevalence of disabilities, there by further reducing the demands on the limited financial and human resources of a country.

International and regional meetings covering issues related to education should ensure that special educational needs are addressed as an integral part of the debate and not as a separate issue. As a concrete example, the issue of special needs education should be put on the agenda of regional ministerial conferences organized by UNESCO and other intergovernmental bodies.

Types of Support Services

Realizing the goal of successful education of children with special educational needs is not the task of the Ministries of Education and schools alone. It requires the co-operation of families, and the mobilization of the community and voluntary organizations as well as the support of the public-at-large. The various types of services are as follows:

1. ACADEMIC SUPPORT
2. ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT
3. COMMUNITY SUPPORT
4. PARENTAL SUPPORT
5. PEER SUPPORT

Academic Support

Academic support is the most important support to ensure appropriate education for special needs children. Academic support consists of the following measures: provision of instructional materials for children with special needs; providing specialized help to children with special needs in the resource room; modifying/ adopting the curriculum to suit to the needs of special needs children; rectifying the deficiencies of children with special needs; improving the quality of teaching; taking personal care of special needs children; showing positive attitude towards children with special needs; adopting innovative teaching practices; providing remedial instructions to children with special needs and establishing linkage with special schools and utilizing the expertise and resources of special schools.

Teachers should adopt innovative practices while teaching special needs children. Participatory teaching, peer tutoring, cooperative learning, co-teaching or team teachings are some of the practices which are useful for such children.

Ways of establishing linkages with special schools are teachers consult and seek the advice of special school teachers; special school teacher visits to school regularly and discuss with teachers about their problems and the solutions; severely handicapped children enrolled in the school are referred to special schools for their preparation; severely handicapped children who have completed their preparation in special schools are readmitted in the school; instructional materials are borrowed from the special schools.

Children enrolled in special schools who need specialized help may be referred to special schools or that specialist teachers working in special schools may be requested to provide special assistance and services to such children. For this purpose, there should be linkage between special schools and the inclusive schools. When this linkage is not established, the child with special needs loses the game.

Teaching special needs children in inclusive setting is not simple as it may appear. Teachers may not be able to deal with the situation individually. There is, thus, a necessity of collaboration and consultation among teachers. Lack of collaboration and consultation among teachers is a barrier to provide quality education to children with special needs.

Administrative Support

Administrative support is another important measure for implementing children with special needs. This includes the following- visit of supervising officer/ Education Officer to the schools; giving feedback to teachers for increasing their efficiency; financial assistance to schools for implementing education for children with special needs; constructions of resource rooms in schools or in the centre schools; maintenance of resource rooms; providing in- service education to teachers and the headmasters; deputing teachers to visit model inclusive schools outside the State/ country and monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

For effective implications of education for children with special needs, administrators are expected to be familiar with the concept,

objectives and practices of inclusive education. Such familiarity will help the administrator in supervision, monitoring, control and for providing leadership to the headmasters of schools.

It is evident from various literatures that District Education Officers and the Block Level Education Officers rarely visit schools due to some or the other reasons. Even when they visit schools they do not give any specific feedback to the teachers about what they are doing and how they are doing. In such cases, the very purpose of supervision is lost.

Schools expect financial assistance from the Government to meet their contingency expenditure for purchase of aids and equipments, and other instructional materials, removal of architectural barriers and other environmental modifications. When such assistance is not provided by the Government, other agencies such as Rotary club, Lions Club, business houses, industries, NGOs, parent teacher associations and voluntary agencies should come forward to provide assistance in the form of finance or supply of materials to schools.

A resource room is an administrative arrangement for meeting the needs of children with disabilities. Specialized help can only be given to such children in the resource rooms. Thus schools should have resource room facilities. Resource rooms can be constructed either with assistance from the Government or from other agencies. Once the resource has been constructed it must be maintained properly and used for the purpose for which it has been constructed.

Community Support

Involvement of the community or social intervention is a necessary condition for the success of education of children with special needs. The community can intervene in the programme in the following ways: participating in the decision making process; meeting the expenses of constructing the resource rooms; sending out of school children to school; encouraging disabled children to attend school regularly; providing or helping the teachers trained in special education; providing the salary of the resource teachers; providing aids and equipments to the schools; supervising the work of teachers; and giving feedback to them; helping in dealing with the problems of the handicapped girl child; monitoring the progress of education of special needs children in the locality and transforming the school into a community school.

Local administrators should encourage community participation by giving support to representative associations and inviting them to take part in decision-making. Community involvement should be sought in order to supplement in-school activities, provide help in doing homework and compensate for lack of family support. Mention should be made in this connection of the role of neighbourhood associations in making premises available, the role of family associations, youth clubs and movements, and the potential role of elderly people and other volunteers, including persons with disabilities, in both in-school and out-of-school programmes.

As voluntary associations and national non-governmental organizations have more freedom to act and can respond more readily to express needs, they should be supported in developing new ideas and pioneering innovative delivery methods. They can play the roles of innovator and catalyst and extend the range of programmes available to the community.

Parental Support

A crucial barrier to effective education for special needs children is non- involvement of parents in the process of educating children with special needs. In most cases parents send their children to school but they are not involved in any aspect of inclusion such as assessment, decision making and education of their children. They are alienated from the school. Moreover, a lot depends on community participation. Non- involvement of parents may act as a barrier for successful education of special needs children. Community awareness programme and parent contact programme will motivate parents and community for their involvement in the process education for children with special needs.

Involvement and cooperation of the parents in the education of special needs children is very important. They should discuss timely with the teachers and seek their guidance and the most important thing is the interest of the parents. Until and unless if parents are not interested in the education of their special needs children, the school cannot alone transform their dreams into reality. They should show positives hopes for the future of their special needs children by

providing them required instructional materials. Their encouragement and help and involvement in the education of their special needs children are very necessary.

The education of children with special educational needs is a shared task of parents and professionals. A positive attitude on the part of parents favors school and social integration. Parents are privileged partners as regards the special educational needs of their child, and to the extent possible should be accorded the choice in the type of education provision they desire for their child.

A co-operative, supportive partnership between school administrators, teachers and parents should be developed and parents regarded as active partners in decision-making. Parents should be encouraged to participate in educational activities at home and at school, as well as in the supervision and support of their children's learning.

Governments should take a lead in promoting parental partnership, through both statements of policy and legislation concerning parental rights. The development of parents' associations should be promoted and their representatives involved in the design and implementation of programmes intended to enhance the education of their children.

Peer Support

Children with special needs may be enrolled in the regular class, but they may not be accepted and respected by their age peers. Under this circumstance, the child with a disability may be teased

and bullied by their peers. This acts as a major barrier for education of children with special needs. Peer rejection can be avoided by encouraging children to develop friendships.

The peers should help a child having special needs in learning and offering remedial tutoring, if required. The peers should also offer general assistance like helping a locomotors impaired child in carrying his/ her material.

For the full development of children with special needs the non-disabled should accept their disabled peers. They should make friendships with their disabled peers and should play with them so that they cannot think themselves as inferior. Children with and without disabilities should learn together and completer their assignment cooperatively and if teachers ask non- disabled children to provide tutoring to their disabled peers.

Peers rejection and acceptance also plays an important role for the education of children with special needs. If non- disabled children accept them and help them they can enjoy the school environment.aking progress towards integrated education.

Review of Related Literature

Keeping, in view the importance and necessity of the related literature, some studies having direct or indirect bearing on the present work are reviewed in order to carryout the study with more precision and objectivity. The studies are as follows:

Pathak (1984) conducted a study on disabled children in normal schools. The major findings of the study were most of the disabled

children came from families with poor economic background. 63 of the 79 children's father had studied only up to higher secondary or below. Parents of 46 children had a family income below 500 rupees per month. Most of the disabled children were from large families having four to five children. The disabled children were somewhat reserved, emotionally stable, satisfactorily adjusted but low in scholastic ability, demanding and easily excitable, obedient, vigorous and not very tense. Over all adjustment was average. Emotional adjustment was average. The few problems which disabled children faced were fear of the school, difficulty with classroom learning, and inability to participate in co curricular activities.

Cowasji (1985) studied the effectiveness of the orientation programme for teachers working in the integrated education in Rajasthan. The major findings of the study were the academic and professional qualifications of the teachers were of the expected level and all of them were trained. They had adequate experiences of teaching normal students as well as those covered by these schemes. The special reference rooms in these schools were in good conditions. The number of beneficiary boys belonging to schedule classes was greater than that of those from schedule tribes. No one was trained in English teaching. Psychological and medical test were taken in all the schools. There was improvement in pronunciations and spelling after the orientation.

Singh and Prabha (1987) evaluated integrated educational facilities for physically handicapped in the schools of Bihar. The

facilities granted by the Government were not availed of by the schools. The facilities available in the schools were not enjoyed by the students for whom they had been provided. The schools were utilizing only 33 percent of the resources allotted for this propose. The admission policy was defective. Physically handicapped students were well adjusted within their families but there was lack of communication between such students and their non- physically handicapped fellows. The resource teachers were not trying to bridge this gap. The schools had not taken advantage of the training facilities extended to them for the resource persons for the handicapped students. None of the schools had a separate resource room; facilities like grants of books and stationary were not being availed of by some schools.

Rai (1991) did a study on cooperation- based learning strategies for disabled and non- disabled children in integrated setting. It has been found that cooperative learning experiences promote a close relationship between the disabled and non- disabled. When learning situations are structured cooperatively and they worked together, they interact in positive ways, feel supported and encouraged to achieve. The five major sets of strategies for structuring cooperative learning includes clearly specifying the objectives of the lesson, decisions about placing of students and size of the group, explaining the task, positive interdependence and learning activities in students, monitoring the learning groups intervening to provide the task assistance, and evaluating students in their achievement.

Galis (1994) examined on attitudes and beliefs of special and regular educators in the state of Georgia. It was found that most responders strongly agreed that it is important to make modifications for students who need adaptations to benefit from a particular instructional environment. The responders also believed that special education provides a valuable service for children with disabilities. It is important for students' progress to be graded according to ability rather than only with standardized measures. They further opined that maximum size of the classes should be reduced when students with disabilities are placed in regular classrooms.

Grolnick & Slowiaczek (1994) conducted a study including three dimensions of parent involvement. The results found the indirect associations between some types of parent involvement and student motivation, which then led to improved performance. It was also found that not all types of parental involvement led to improved performance.

A study by Barrafato (1998) revealed the extent to which supports such as school funds and resources, parental and teacher attitude, in service training, and planning contribute to the successful inclusion of children with disabilities at the early childhood level. Results demonstrated that overall the children were socially integrated and adjusted to their settings. All teachers and parents identified certain factors which must be in place to successfully integrate children in regular classrooms. The importance of teachers' aid,

increased support services, appropriate in service training for teachers and smaller class sizes were stressed.

Harton (1998) investigated the opinions of parents of disabled and non-disabled elementary children regarding inclusion of disabled students in regular education classes. Results indicated that parents with disabled children had more favorable opinions about inclusion compared with non-disabled children. Parents of disabled children were more accepting of inclusion than were those with non-disabled children in inclusive settings. Parents' answers differed depending on the type of disability being included. Regardless of their child's disability or inclusion status, the ranking of disability types from most acceptable for inclusion to least acceptable were: social, sensory, motor, academic and behavioral.

Mendez (1998) conducted a study to investigate the effect of teachers' perceived role stress, perceived self-efficacy, and support for research based effective teaching behavior on their attitude towards inclusive education. The results of the study indicated that support for research based effective teaching behavior not only had an indirect effect through role stress, but also had the most direct effect on teachers' attitude towards inclusive education. Teachers' efficacy beliefs did not contribute to the hypothesized models. The inclusion of students with special needs in regular education classrooms has become a major focus of current educational reform, and regular education classroom teachers' will play a significant role in the educational experiences of children with special needs who are

integrated in the regular education classrooms. Given that a relationship exists between attitude and behavior, the attitude of teachers' towards inclusion related issues will play a significant role in their interactions with children with special needs and hence, influence the quality of these students' experience.

In a study by Treder (1998) entitled Teacher effectiveness and teachers' attitude towards children with special needs- implication for inclusive setting. The results of the study indicated adoptive and appropriate student behavior deemed to critical to a successful adjustment in their classrooms, and inappropriate and maladaptive students behavior were deemed to be unacceptable in their classrooms. The study also found that more effective teachers' indicated greater interaction with special needs students and indicated higher level of promotion of inclusive practices in their schools.

Yuen and Westwood (2001) studied on integrating children with special needs in Honkong secondary schools: teachers' attitudes and their possible relationship to guidance training. Results suggested that the teachers did not hold particularly favorable or supportive attitudes towards the policy of integration. While the majority supported the underlying principle that it is every child's right to learn in a regular classroom, most were uncertain about the actual practicalities of such placement. In particular, negative attitudes were expressed concerning the feasibility of integrating students with behavioural problems, and those with severe visual or hearing

difficulties or with mental handicaps. Most positive attitudes were expressed towards integrating students with physical disabilities and those with mild health or speech problems.

Cambra (2003) examined students with special educational needs in the inclusive classroom: social integration and self concept. The results indicated that the special needs children have a positive self concept although it is significantly lower than that of their counterparts, especially in the social and academic dimensions. The paper argues that while school integration is a necessary condition facilitating social integration of special educational needs children- and consequently improving their self concept. It is not in itself always sufficient for optimization of both these aspects of socio- effective development.

Bradshaw et al (2004) conducted study on special education in United Arab Emirates in relation to anxieties, attitudes and aspiration. Findings of an ongoing study about the attitudes of teachers and pre service teachers towards the integration of children with special needs into regular schools across the United Arab Emirates have been discussed. As the country continues its dramatic period of change as a nation, changes in the education of children with special needs will occur at a rapid rate. For success in the change process information on the attitudes and anxieties of the major stakeholders needs to be investigated and addressed. The findings of study would contribute to the literature base. Finally, the

educational implications and recommendations will be explored within the social, religious and cultural contexts of the country

Dash (2004) investigated the community support services for the disabled and autistics in Orrisa. The major findings of the study were that none of the disables are being benefited by the support systems extended by the professional or by the key community members. As per the opinion of the community members VHWS around the community are hardly extend their support to these members. TBA is so untrained that they are incapable enough to render their labor services at the time of child delivery which act as the sufficient sources for creating a disable. Teachers had not played a major role on teaching mobility or orientation skills, daily living, and home economic skills to student, they had learnt it from their parents before being institutionalized from friends after institutionalization. Teachers were confined only in imparting educational and vocational skills. Similarly religious leaders are rendering all sorts of superstitions training to the community members which at a greater extent are restricting the parents of disable for pursuing better treatment services.

Chang (2005) revealed on the perception and needs of the preschool educators toward children with disabilities. The major findings of this study were as followed Preschool educators attitude toward young children with special needs turned positive through time went by. In order to provide better services to children, preschool educators made some changes as follows attitude and expectation

toward children with different needs; adjustment of class management; self-empowerment providing support from school partners. In regard of teaching children with special needs, educators faced some barriers as follows: difficulties between the curriculum adjustment and class management, lack of professional training in problem solving; lack of effective support from school partners. Through experience, preschool educators expect services as follows: opportunities of effective professional training; building available school-based support network.

Dash (2005) studied the causes of failure of children with special needs in the regular classroom. The study has revealed that regular teachers have identified the deficits within the child such as lack of motivation, deficits work habits, poor interpersonal relationships and communication skills and passive academic involvement. The factor responsible for failures of such children as reported by research teachers are teaching methods are not responsive to students' characteristics, time needed by the students are not allowed, remedial instructions are not given by the teachers, students progress are not monitored by the teachers, supportive learning environment are not created in the class and lack of parental care, encouragement and help are the main causes of failure of children with special needs in the regular classroom.

Jessie et al (2005) examined teacher perceptions on what a functional curriculum should be for children with special needs. It has been found that curriculum planning for the intellectually disabled

must be forward looking, giving due consideration to the students' current and future needs, sensitive to the environments in which the individuals will ultimately be expected to adapt and function after leaving school.

Skarbrevik (2005) revealed the quality of special education for students with special needs in ordinary classes. The findings showed that resources made available by the municipalities had an impact on equality as well as adequacy. This was also found for the availability of teaching materials, which had a significant impact on the quality of the reading, writing and arithmetic, and for students with psychological problems, are reported. Although the students' scored low on social inclusion as assessed by the teachers, the parents reported that most of them thrived well or very well at school.

Ali et al (2006) evaluated an empirical study on teachers' perceptions towards education of children with special needs in Malaysia. The main finding shows that, in general, teachers have positive attitudes towards children with special needs. The findings also show that collaboration between the mainstream and the special education teachers is important and that there should be a clear guideline on the implementation of inclusive education. The findings of the study have significant implications to the school administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders who directly and indirectly involved in implementing inclusive education.

Carter (2006) attempted to study on the development of special education service in Thailand. It has been found that the government

of Thailand has historically provided a limited number of educational opportunities for individuals with special needs but has recently demonstrated movement toward a more comprehensive educational system. The educational policy has not only begun to expand the incorporation of services for children with special needs but has also introduced efforts to include children with special needs in regular education classrooms.

Dunn (2006) studied on classroom teachers' referral criteria for special education services. The results of this study indicated a combination of student characteristics that teachers observed (inattention, lack of comprehension, inability to complete tasks in the allotted time, and poor test performance) and what teachers inferred. The implications of the research for classroom and special education practices in particular are discussed.

Koutrouba and Vamvakari (2006) highlighted factors correlated with teacher's attitudes towards the inclusion of students with special educational needs in Cyprus. The findings of this research confirm that the provisions in the new laws have adopted the right course of action, although teachers' feelings of inadequacy, non- Special Educational Needs (SEN) students' circumspection and SEN students' hesitation have not yet been satisfactorily addressed.

Gaad & Khan (2007) conducted a study on primary mainstream teachers' attitude towards Inclusion of students with special educational needs in the private sector. The major findings of the study indicated that one of the main challenges facing primary

mainstream teachers in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) stems from the current educational movement towards inclusion. It is an international phenomenon, a process that emphasizes providing special education services to students with special educational needs within the regular classrooms. An analysis of data collected indicated that primary mainstream teachers in Dubai in the private sector favors traditional special education service delivery models over full inclusive practices. These teachers felt students with special educational needs lack skills needed to master the mainstream regular classroom course content. The teachers also expressed that the heavy teaching load in the mainstream classroom makes it hard to meet the needs of students with special educational needs in the private sector. However, results also indicated that teachers perceive additional training, support from administrators, and access to related services and resources as necessary in order to meet the needs of their students with special educational needs in the mainstream education setting.

Kalyva et al (2007) examined on Serbian teachers' attitude towards inclusion. It was found that Serbian teachers held overall slightly negative attitudes towards the inclusion of children with SEN, with teachers with experience in teaching children with SEN holding more positive attitudes towards inclusion in comparison to teachers without such experience. No differences were observed in teachers' attitudes towards inclusion according to their years of teaching experience.

Rose et al (2007) investigated on Estonian vocational teachers' attitude towards inclusive education for students with special educational needs. The paper concludes that whilst most teachers in Estonian Vocational Schools demonstrate positive attitudes towards the greater inclusion of students with special educational needs, concerns remain with regards to the readiness of these schools to accept such pupils onto existing courses. Training of teachers emerges as a critical factor in promoting inclusive practice and there is evidence of the support provided to a cohort of teachers through training courses having positively influenced attitudes and expectations.

Dart (2008) conducted a study on provision for learners with special educational needs in Botswana: a situational analysis. This paper considers the support of children with special educational needs in Botswana. It has been found that Botswana is a middle-income country that has seen rapid economic expansion in a short period of time. Revenue has been used to expand the social sector including education. Attitudes towards people with disability appear to be changing to become more inclusive but there is still evidence that many are still on the fringes of society. There are strong policy statements on the provision of special education. Policy has moved to an inclusive model but practice lags in the field. Most provision for children with special educational needs is at units for particular categories of disability attached to ordinary schools. The majority of these are at primary schools. There is a drive to build support for

pupils in the ordinary school and classroom. This is slow in developing but might speed up in the near future as all newly trained teachers now have elements of special needs education as part of their initial training. Non-governmental organizations play a key role in Pre School and vocational training for students with special needs and also in provision for hearing impairment. However they struggle with funding and staff training. Issues of poor coordination between key stakeholders, a lack of curriculum development and a shortage of specialist staff all conspire to limit the effectiveness of provision.

Dempsey (2008) examined on the processes and outcomes in family-centered services for Children with special needs. The results shows that the importance of being family centered when providing services to children with a disability and their families has gained currency in the research and practice literature. A growing body of evidence has validated many of the theoretical links between the help-giving practices of staff and desirable outcomes for families with a child with a disability. However, it is clear from the research to date that the relationship between the provision of family-centered services and the achievement of positive outcomes for children and their parents is complex and is yet to be fully understood.

Mulholland and Blecker (2008) revealed on parents and special educators: pre- service teachers' discussion points. It has been found that most educators have little or no training in family involvement and pre-service teacher training in this area is at best limited, the purpose in this effort was to increase the opportunities for pre-service

teachers to interact with special educators and parents of special needs children through an interview assignment designed to help them gain a fuller understanding of each of their roles and the need for partnerships.

Schmidt and Cagran (2008) studied self concept of students in inclusive settings. The study results indicate that, in comparison to their hearing peers, integrated students with a hearing impairment have a lower academic and social self-concept, as well as a general self-concept but a higher physical self-concept. There are differences among students with a hearing impairment in both the individual dimension and general self-concept. There are no statistically significant differences between the class with integrated students, on the one hand, and the class without them, on the other; however, there is a noticeable advantage for the students from the class with integrated learners over the other class serving as control group in all three individual dimensions as well as in general self-concept.

Shammari (2008) investigated the extent of parental involvement in improving students' level in special education programs in Kuwait. The researcher found that the students' progress recorded a significant influence from their parents' involvement in their special education programmes. Most of the parents of these students with special needs actively participated in school meetings and followed their children's progress in the special education programmes. Parents agreed that their children benefited through these special education programmes and their level of progress

improved based on parental involvement, school plans, and the special education teachers' strategies of engaging parents in meetings, activities, projects and decisions. However, all administrators, teachers and others in the special education programs must concentrate on older parents who did not involve and participate as much, as described in the results of this research.

Zascavage et al (2008) conducted a study on recruitment of special educators within high school peer support groups and effectiveness of recruitment. The teacher shortage in the United States of America is a complicated balance of supply and demand. Within this balance, special education contains some of the most severe deficits, (American Association for Employment in Education, 2000; Centre on personal studies in special education, 2004), deficits that are particularly severe in inner city and poverty areas. This study examined the role, high student peer support groups can have in recruiting future special educators. They contented that when addressing emergency educational needs, identification of potential educators became the fundamental first step in an effective recruitment strategy.

All the studies referred above show that much that have been done in the field of parental support, academic support and administrative support in abroad, but very few studies are directly conducted on support services for children with special needs in India. Review of related literature reveals that still a lot needs to be done in the field of support services for children with special needs in

India and particularly in Sikkim. So, it was on this understanding and to fill this gap the investigator decided to take up the present study for investigation.

Operational Definitions of the Terms Used

Support Services- Support services are the additional services provided for children with special needs to meet their educational needs in integrated schools.

Children with Special Needs- Children with special needs are those who differ from the average to such a degree in physical or psychological characteristics, that school programs designed for the majority of children do not afford them opportunity for all round adjustment and optimum progress, and who therefore need either special instruction or in some cases special ancillary services, or both, to achieve a level commensurate with their respective abilities.

Objectives of the Study

1. To present the status of integrated education for children with special needs in the State of Sikkim.
2. To study the various support services required for children with special needs for their successful completion of primary Education.
3. To ascertain the academic support provided to children with special needs in the integrated schools.
4. To study the administrative support given to the integrated schools for education of children with special needs.

5. To study the support given by the parents to their children with special needs.
6. To ascertain the community support for education of children with special needs in integrated schools.
7. To give recommendations for effective support services.

Delimitations of the Study

1. The present study is confined to 15 integrated schools in the State of Sikkim.
2. It is confined to primary level only.
3. The study is delimited to four districts in the State of Sikkim namely South, East, West and North.
4. The present study is confined to students with special needs enrolled in 15 schools.
5. It is delimited to the period from 2004-08.
6. It is delimited to VI, HI, OH, LD, MR children.

Method of Research

For the present study, the investigator decided to adopt Descriptive survey method. In the present study the descriptive method of research is found to be the most appropriate one as it effectively studies support services for children with special needs.

Population and Sample

Sampling Frame

There are total numbers of 284 primary schools in the State of Sikkim, out of which integrated education has been implemented in 15 schools. The present study was conducted in 15 integrated schools. Therefore 15 headmasters and their 84 teachers constitute the sample of the study.

Sampling Size

In order to conduct the present study the investigator collected data from 15 integrated schools, 15 headmasters and their 84 teachers (including headmasters).

Sampling Area

The present study has been undertaken in 4 (four) districts in the State of Sikkim. These four districts which have been purposively selected for the purpose of convenience are located in four different zones of the State such as North, East, West and South. The districts which are located in these districts are Mangan, Gangtok, Geylzing and Namchi respectively. All the schools located in the above mentioned districts have been covered under the present study, their number being 15. Out of 15 schools covered under the present study 10 are located in rural areas and the rest are under urban areas.

Sampling Technique

The investigator used purposive sampling technique for the present study.

Tools Used

To achieve the authentic, genuine and accurate information about the support services for children with special needs from the

teachers and headmasters of Integrated Schools, the investigator developed the two tools i.e.

1. School Information Schedule (for Headmasters).
2. Questionnaire for Teachers.

Development of Tools

Framing of a good questionnaire takes a great deal of time and hard work. In order to make the study reliable and comprehensive the questionnaire was prepared by the investigator. On the basis of study of literatures i.e. books, journals, and discussion with experts, headmasters and teachers a list of items was prepared separately for each questionnaire. The investigator had prepared two tools, one for School Information Schedule i.e. for headmasters and another one for teachers. These questionnaires were sent to 10 experts. Out of 10 experts approached, 4 experts offered their views and suggestions for further refinement of the tools. Depending upon the suggestions received from the experts the questionnaire were revised and refined. After obtaining their views the final version of the tools were prepared for use by the investigator in the research project. In the final version of School Information Schedule consisted of 15 questions and questionnaire for teachers consisted of two parts A and B. Part A consisted of General information about teachers and part B consisted of different types of support services. All the statements had two options either in yes or No. The respondents were asked to tick (√) one of the options as per their choice.

Collection of Data

First of all the investigator went to Human Resource Development Department (HRDD) of Sikkim, to conform the total number of Primary Schools in the State of Sikkim and out of them how many schools have adopted integrated Education for Children with Special Needs.

In the second phase the investigator visited 15 primary schools district wise and met respective Headmasters and acquainted them about the subject and requested them to fill the question contained in the schedule. In order to get relevant responses of teachers and Headmasters, they were first convinced that the information provided by them will be kept confidential and will be used only for the purpose of research work. Then the researcher met every teacher and requested them to fill the questionnaire and asked them to express their views and answers without any hesitation and pressure. The investigator gave a brief description about the questionnaire to the teachers in the beginning. They were told the objectives of the study and motivated to give their responses.

Then the questionnaire were distributed among the teachers and the questionnaire were got filled upon the spot. At last she thanked the teachers for their kind cooperation. In this way the investigator collected the data.

Statistical Techniques Used

The data were analyzed by calculating the frequencies and percentage item wise and keeping in view each objective of the study.

Main Findings

1. Even though integrated education has been implemented in Sikkim in the year 2003-04, but right now it has not been working in a proper way. All the teachers working in the integrated schools are general teachers. None of teachers have acquired any training in special education. None of the schools have a resource teachers, resource rooms, aids and equipments for educating children with special needs.

The study has found that 133 children with special needs have been enrolled in 15 integrated schools during the year 2003-08 and 27 special needs children have been dropped out from the year 2003-08.

The present study has also revealed the factors of dropout of special needs children. The main factors are as given by 84 teachers are:

The factors with in the child and their Personal reasons, lack of interest and motivation of the child.

The factors pertaining to the teacher are lack of untrained teachers, lack of personal care by the teachers, unsuitable teaching- learning practices, lack of collaboration and consultation among the teachers for the education of special needs children, lack of specialized help by the teachers and lack support by the teachers.

The factors concerning schools are the lack of unavailability of instructional materials, lack of linkage with special schools and lack of aids and equipments.

Family and home factors include lack of instructional materials provided by the Parents for the education of their special needs children and lack of parental involvement in the education of their special needs children.

2. Academic Support

It has been found from the present study that instructional materials either procured or developed for education of children with special needs are not available in all the integrated schools. None of the schools have a resource room from where the special needs children get any specialized help. The schools do not have any aids and equipments for the education of children with special needs. The study reveals that teachers do not take personal care of children with special needs. More than 60% teachers do not collaborate and consult among themselves for the education of special needs children. The study has found that there is no linkage between special schools and integrated schools. Out of 15 integrated schools only 1 school have linkage with special school. 2.38% teachers are still adopting traditional teaching. But above all the teachers have a positive attitude towards children with special needs.

3. Administrative Support

So far as administrative support is concerned the present study has found that most of the schools are located in rural areas therefore, district inspector of schools mostly visit the schools once a year. Although sub- inspector visits the schools three or six times in a month, even then the teachers do not get any feedback from them.

The present study has also revealed that the integrated schools neither get any financial support from the government nor through any other agencies for educating children with special needs.

4. Community Support

The present study has found that community involvement is not encouraging in Sikkim. Community involvement is noticed in the form of participating in the awareness programme, sending out of school children to the school and encouraging the handicapped children to attend the school.

5. Parental Support

It has been found from the present study that more than 41% teachers have reported that the parents do not cooperate and discuss with the teachers for the education of their special needs children. More than 71% teachers have reported that the parents do not provide any instructional materials and do not actively involve themselves in the education of their special needs children. The study also reveals that even though the parents do not actively involve in the education of their special needs children but they have a positive hope for the future of their special needs children.

6. Peer Support

The present study reveals that more than 95% teachers have reported that the non- disabled peers accept their disabled peers and make friendship with them. They play, sit and learn together. But the study reveals that more than 27% teachers have reported that the

non- disabled peers do not provide peer tutoring to their disabled peers. But in overall the investigator had found a good relationship between disabled and non-disabled peers.

Educational Implications

1. Government should take measures to improve the education of special needs children by providing them instructional materials and aids and equipments in the school.
2. More concentration should be given on administrative support. Administrator should visit schools regularly and should provide financial support for the education of special needs children.
3. Lack of parental support is one of the main causes of failure of special needs children. Thus, Parents should provide encouragement, help and should involve in the education and provide remedial instructional material for the education of their special needs children.
4. Teachers play an important role for the upbringing of children especially with special needs children. They should provide healthy environment, should take personal care of special needs children, and should teach them according to their needs in the school to boost the academic success of special needs children.
5. Government should emphasis more on academic support. At present there are 15 integrated schools in the State of Sikkim but none of the schools have any resource rooms and resource

teachers available for the education of special needs children. They are directly integrated in the regular classrooms. All the teachers serving in 15 integrated schools are general teachers and providing education to special needs children through regular classrooms. Therefore, it is essential to provide better resource facilities, aids and equipments in the integrated settings.

Suggestions for Further Studies

1. A comparative study of support services for Children with special needs in integrated setting and inclusive setting.
2. Study of academic support services for children with special needs in secondary level of education.
3. Effect of peer tutoring and cooperative learning strategies on academic achievement and interpersonal relationship of children with special needs.
4. A comparative study of support services for children with special needs in special setting and inclusive setting.
5. Study of parental support for children with special needs in higher level.
6. Study of community support for children with special needs on both government and private schools.

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