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Organization and Administration of Special Schools in Himachal Pradesh: An Evaluative Study

Abstract

In this paper, an attempt has been made to study the organizational structure and administration of special schools exists in Himachal Pradesh. In this study survey method of research was used to evaluate the existing status of institutions for speech and hearing impaired children in terms of organizational structure and administration. In this paper sample was selected from six different populations (Heads, Teachers, Students and Hostel wardens) of special schools of Dhalli and Sundernagar. An infrastructure inventory and observation schedule was also used by the investigator to recheck and cross verify the facts as reported by heads, teachers, students & hostel wardens. Investigator physically observed the facilities available in the institutions. For the analysis of data percentage analysis was used. The findings revealed that there is need to improve and make the administration more effective and efficient for the healthy and harmonious development of children residing and studying in these schools.

Keywords: Special Schools, Disability, Teachers, Impairment and Social Justice.

Introduction

People with disabilities are also people with extraordinary talent. They are too often forgotten. When people with disabilities are denied opportunities, they are more likely to fall into poverty - and people living in conditions of poverty are more likely to develop disabilities. As long as societies exclude those with disabilities, they will not reach their full potential and the poor in particular will be denied opportunities that they deserve. We must work closely with our development partners to remove the barriers that exclude disabled people and ensure equality of opportunity for every member of society (as cited in a document of World Bank, 2006). Disability is the consequence of an impairment that may be physical, cognitive, mental, sensory, emotional, developmental, or some combination of these. It may be present from birth, or occur during a person's lifetime. A disability is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. Impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. Thus disability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body and

features of the society in which he or she lives. Impairment leads to disability. Due to impairment there is a reduction in functional ability. Just as impairment leads to disability, disability handicaps the individual. There is variation in definitions of different types of disabilities but the PWD Act (1995) which is built upon the premise of equal opportunity, protection of rights and full participation provides the definition of disabled person as a person suffering from not less than forty per cent of any disability as certified by a medical authority (any hospital or institution specified for the purpose of this act by notification by the government). As per PWD act (1995), disability means- blindness; low vision; leprosy-cured; hearing impairment; locomotors disability; mental retardation; and mental illness. The state government is determined to fulfil the constitutional obligation under 86th amendment which makes education a fundamental right of every child and to implement the Section 26 of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 which states that the appropriate government and local authorities shall ensure that every child with a disability has access to free education in an appropriate environment till he attains the age of 18 years. Provision has been made to provide 3% reservation in the admission of students with disabilities in the institutions especially at higher level, so that they can pursue higher studies and professional courses. For the protection of the rights of Persons with Disabilities and to ensure their equal participation in the development of the state, the Government of Himachal Pradesh is implementing the Persons with Disability (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 and National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disability Act, 1999 legislations.

As per Census of 2001, there were 1, 55, 950 persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Himachal Pradesh, which constitute approximately 2% of the total population. As a result of this survey total 66, 932 Persons with Disabilities have been identified out of which 10, 611 are Visually Impaired, 11, 924 Hearing Impaired, 36, 249 Orthopedically Impaired and 8, 148 Intellectually Challenged Persons. As per census of 2011, there are 1,55,316 persons with disability in Himachal Pradesh out of which 26076 are impaired in Seeing, 26700 Hearing Impaired, 8278 Speech Impaired, 32550 Movements Impaired, 8986 Mentally Retarded, 5166 Mentally Ill, 29024 any other and 18536 are having Multiple Disability (Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disability, 2011). The process of providing special education to physically disabled children in Himachal Pradesh is looked after by the two different departments namely Himachal Pradesh State Council for Child Welfare and Department of Social Justice and Empowerment. The State Government is implementing the provisions of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995. For the convenience of the present study, only two institutions i.e. School/ Home for Speech and Hearing Impaired Children (Boys), Dhalli (Shimla) which is being run by Himachal Pradesh Council for Child Welfare (HPCCW) and Institution for Children with Special Abilities (Girls), Sundernagar (Mandi) which is being run by Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of Himachal Pradesh were considered in this study.

Review of Related Literature

In the present study for the review of related literature, investigator has gone through different sources of information by visiting the libraries of Himachal Pradesh University,

Shimla, Himachal Institute of Public Administration, Mashobra, and CRC Sundernagar. The investigator has also gone through International Dissertation Abstracts and different online resources (online journal, articles, research papers etc.). Looking into the past researches, one can find considerable diversity in the focus of the study, methodological and theoretical orientation, and findings of the available literature. In view of the importance of the review of related literature, in this study investigator has made an attempt to analyse the related research on status of education of speech and hearing impaired children, various facilities provided to them, their rehabilitation and academic achievement, and various problems faced in this area. The studies have been presented systematically right from 1946 up to 2016. During the review of Encyclopaedia of Educational Research and Survey of Research in Education it has been found that the first review of research in special education appeared in Encyclopaedia of Educational Research in 1982. In India, this area received attention from the Fourth Survey of Research in Education i.e. 1988 and research activity in special education has increased during the Fifth Survey of Research. In Fifth Survey of Educational Research, Jangira and Mukhopadhyay (1991) reported that first three surveys of research did not identify sufficient number of researches to warrant independent review of trends for this area. Up to, Fourth Survey of Research in Education, 60 studies (including the education of gifted) were identified and the number of studies reported on education of children with physical and intellectual impairments were 44. They further reported that research in the area of special education, as a subject of independent existence in literature on educational research, is a recent development. The scholars have explored different areas of education of children with disability.

Rationale of the Study

Disabled children are like non-disabled children except their specific disabilities. They have a strong desire for independent functioning. Even though the needs and problems of disabled children are related to their characteristics yet they have certain common needs and problems such as need for appropriate education need for independent functioning, need for respect for their individuality, etc. Education begins where medicine ends. It is of medical concern to provide a hearing aid to hard of hearing children. But teaching the children to use their residual vision or hearing capacities effectively is certainly an educational function. This warrants special education for these children. It is not possible to ensure optimum human resource development without developing the potentials of special children. Special equipment and additional training are quite necessary for teaching special children. Without special education/or training these children cannot develop independent living skills and social skills and will be more likely to become a liability. So special education for them is indispensable. After going through the review of related literature it has been found that, in India a very few studies have been conducted in this area, similar to this study. In India and Himachal Pradesh the present study - was very much needed and is quite justified on the plea of breaking new horizons in the area of role of special schools in the development of special children. The findings of this study will definitely awake different stakeholders about the instructional and infrastructural facilities yet to be required in these special schools for the harmonious development of these children.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were framed in this study:

1. To study the organizational structure of special schools for speech and hearing impaired children in Himachal Pradesh.
2. To study the administration of special schools for speech and hearing impaired children in terms of: Eligibility Criteria for Staff, Appointment of the Teachers, Admission Procedure of the speech and hearing impaired children, Record Maintenance and Conduct of Meeting

Methodology

In the present study survey method under descriptive method of research was used to study and evaluate the existing status of institutions for speech and hearing impaired children. The organizational structure and administration of these schools as perceived by heads, students, teachers, wardens and investigator have been studied in detail. All the heads, teachers, hostel and wardens of special schools constituted the population of the study. The sample was selected from - Heads, Teachers, Students, and Hostel wardens of special schools Dhalli and Sundernagar. An infrastructure inventory and observation schedule was also prepared by the investigator to recheck and cross verify the facts as reported by heads, teachers, students and hostel wardens. For the analysis of data method of content analysis and percentage analysis were used.

Findings of the Study

The findings of this paper are presented under two main headings A & B:

(A) Organizational Structure of Special Schools

Institution-I: (School/ Home for speech and hearing Impaired Children (Boys) Dhalli (Shimla) which is being run by H.P State Council for Child Welfare) - This school was started in the Year 1978-79 for speech and hearing impaired children and at that time 15 Hearing Impaired Children (Co-educational) were admitted in the School. Due to very small strength of students only one Head teacher was appointed for both the sections (visual impairment section as well as speech and hearing impairment section). In the Year 1985-86 the school was upgraded up-to 8th standard and also was affiliated to H. P Board of School Education Dharamshala. In the Year 2001-02, girls of the school were shifted to a similar School to Sundernagar, which is being run directly by Himachal Pradesh Government. In the Year 2008-09 the school was up-graded up to 10th standard and also got the affiliation from H. P Board of School Education Dharamshala in the same year. At present 85, speech and hearing impaired Students (Boys) are getting free education in this institution. This Institute has its own building on the land of Red Cross Society. The school is working under H.P State Child Welfare Council. The Central Government provides grant of 90% to this institution and 10% grant are being provided by the State Government. Financial administration is being looked after by H.P. State Child Welfare Council. During the year 2013-14, this institution received a grant of Rs. 81.56 lakhs and the expenditure was 81.56 lakhs. Students here are being provided with free boarding, lodging and educational facilities.

Institution-II: (Institution for Children with Special Abilities (Girls), Sundernagar (Mandi), which is being run by Department of Social Justice and Empowerment) - This school was started in 1990 for physically disabled children. In 1998, when the state government adopted integrated education for disabled plan of NCERT based on New Education Policy (1986), this institution was taken over by the state government. It is working under and on support of Government of Himachal Pradesh. All its employees receive their salaries from Department of Social Justice and Empowerment. During the year 2013-14 this school received a grant of Rs. 16.04 lakhs and the expenditure was 15.86 lakhs. At present 100, speech and hearing impaired children (Girls) are getting free education in this institution. They are also being provided with free books, uniform, boarding and lodging facility.

(B) Administration of Special Schools

Administrative Hierarchy in Institution-I is as: President- His Excellency the Governor of H.P, Vice-President- Hon'ble Lady Governor, Chairman- Chief Minister, Vice-Chairman- Hon'ble Minister Department of SJ&E and General Secretary- Nominated respectively. Besides these, there is supporting staffs which include Account Officer, Principal, Special Teachers, Warden/Accountant and fourth class employee.

Administrative Hierarchy in Institution-II is as: Hon'ble Minister Social Justice & Empowerment, Chief Secretary Social Justice & Empowerment, Director SCs, OBCs & Minority Affairs cum Joint Commissioner Disability, Deputy Commissioners disability, District Welfare Officer and Tehsil Welfare Officer respectively. Administrative hierarchy also includes Principal, Assistant Superintendent and Staff Members.

HEADS

Academic and Professional Qualifications: Heads in both the special institutions possessed post-graduation as their academic qualification and diploma/certificate courses in the field of speech and hearing impairment as their professional qualification.

Teaching Experience: Heads of both the special schools were having experience of more than 30 years.

Salaries: Heads are getting satisfactory salaries in both the special schools.

Nature of Appointment and Selection Criteria: As far as nature of appointment of heads of both the special schools is concerned, they were appointed on regular basis. Head at special school Dhalli was selected directly through the Department of H.P. State Child Welfare Council, whereas head at special school Sundernagar was appointed through Himachal Pradesh Public Service Commission.

Admission Procedure for Students: Students in both the special schools are admitted on the basis of medical certification and disability percentage. In special school Dhalli medical certification is mandatory.

TEACHERS

Academic and Professional Qualifications: Majority of the teachers in both the special schools were having post-graduation as their academic qualification and diploma/certificate courses in the field of speech and hearing impairment as their professional qualification.

Teaching experience: Teachers in both the special schools are experienced in the field of teaching speech and hearing impaired children as majority of them are having teaching experience more than 5 years

Salaries: Teachers serving in both the special schools are getting different amount of salary per month in comparison to each other. Majority of them are getting handsome amount of salary i.e. above Rs. 10, 000 and up to Rs.15, 000. In Sundernagar half of the percentage of the teachers is getting salary above Rs. 15, 000 per month. Further, majority of them are appointed on regular basis.

Nature of Appointment and Selection Criteria: As far as the nature of appointment of teachers in the special school Dhalli is concerned, all the teachers are appointed on contract basis. The institution is deficient of regular teaching staff, which in a way is a big hindrance in the smooth functioning of the institution. In special school Sundernagar majority of the teachers are appointed on regular basis and a very few of them are serving on contract basis. It was also found that majority of the teachers in both the special schools were selected through their concerned departments.

Objective of Teaching in the Institution: As far as the objective of teaching in these institutions is concerned majority of the teachers in both the schools have joined these schools to earn their livelihood. The number of those who want to help the handicapped students and those who want to get a new experience by teaching them is comparatively less.

Training in the Concerned Field: Teachers in both the special schools are well trained and having degrees and diplomas in the concerned field.

SPEECH AND HEARING IMPAIRED CHILDREN

Causes and Hereditary History: As per data collected by the researcher and the school record, in majority of the cases the cause of disability was by birth (92% in Dhalli and 85% in Sundernagar). In a small percentage (4% in Dhalli and 7% in Sundernagar) the students were suffering from this disability due to accident. The disability due to heredity was 4% in Dhalli and 8% in Sundernagar. The relations of the students suffering from hereditary disability included parents, grandparents, siblings, uncle- aunts and cousins. Only in two cases (one in Dhalli and one in Sundernagar) siblings of the speech and hearing impaired children were also found to be suffering from the same disability without any hereditary history.

Age of Entry into the School: A higher percentage of students (38% in Dhalli and 36% in Sundernagar) joined their respective special school in class one, in the age group of 7 to 8 years and next higher percentage of students (30% in Dhalli and 32% in Sundernagar) joined the same class in the age group more than 8 years. The number of students who joined the school in the age group of 5 to 6 was 12% in Dhalli and 8% in Sundernagar and those who joined school in the age group of 6 to 7 were 10 and 18% respectively. Another category of students who joined these special schools in later stages (more than 9 years) was 10% in Dhalli and 6% in Sundernagar. The reasons for their late entries into these schools were late identification of their disability and low awareness level of their parents about special schools.

HOSTEL WARDEN

Academic and Professional Qualification: Hostel wardens in both the special schools possess qualification up to post-graduation and are having professional degrees and diplomas in the concerned field.

Experience: Hostel wardens in both the special schools were experienced. Hostel warden at Dhalli was having experience of 6 years and warden at Sundernagar was having an experience of 32 years as she is also the head of the institution.

Nature of Appointment and Selection Criteria: As far as the nature of appointment is concerned the hostel warden at Dhalli has been appointed on contract basis whereas special school Sundernagar was not having any hostel warden. Head of the institution has been appointed as an officiating hostel warden. In both the institutions wardens have been appointed by the concerned departments i.e. H.P State Child Welfare Council and Department of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Training in the Concerned Field: Both the hostel wardens are trained and possessed degrees and diplomas in the concerned field.

INVESTIGATOR VIEWS

Heads, teachers and hostel wardens in both the special institutions are well experienced, trained and having degrees and diplomas in the concerned field. Heads of both the schools are appointed on regular basis. Teachers in special school Dhalli are appointed on contract basis whereas, majority of the teachers in Sundernagar are appointed on regular basis and a very few of them are serving on contract basis too. Hostel warden at Dhalli has been appointed on contract basis whereas special school Sundernagar was not having any hostel warden. Head of the institution has been appointed as an officiating hostel warden. Students in both the special schools are admitted on the basis of medical certification and disability percentage. It was found that a higher percentage of students in both the special schools joined their respective special school in the age group of 7 to 8 and more than 8 years. Some students joined these special schools in later stages (more than 9 years) too. The reasons for their late entries into these schools were late identification of their disability and low awareness level of their parents about special schools.

Educational Implications

The purpose of educational research is not only to contribute new facts to the field of education for the sake of knowledge alone but it should also yield some recommendations for the improvement in educational process and practices. It should be oriented to practical or applied aspect also. For the protection of the rights of Persons with Disabilities and to ensure their equal participation in the development of the state, the Government of Himachal Pradesh is implementing the Persons with Disability Act, 1995 along with other Acts. Investigator evaluated these schools and found that schools are lacking in instructional, infrastructural and special facilities as well. The government of Himachal Pradesh should work on making proper budgetary provisions, providing skilled man power and other special facilities for the smooth and effective working of these schools. It was found that the heads and teachers appointed in these schools were qualified and trained in the concerned field. It is suggested that the concerned authorities should conduct regular refresher courses and orientation programmes in the concerned fields to update and refresh the knowledge of the

teachers. Teachers working on contract basis should be regularized as per the policy of the government in time bound manner so that they can give due emphasis to their duties and have full job satisfaction.

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