

**Educating and Equipping the Visually  
Impaired- A Case Study of Jawaharlal Nehru  
Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired,  
Sikkim**

A Dissertation Submitted

To  
**Sikkim University**



In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the  
**Degree of Master of Philosophy**

By  
**Mecal Ongmu Lepcha**  
Department of Education  
School of Professional Studies

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## **DECLARATION**

I do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “**Educating and Equipping the Visually Impaired- A Case Study of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for Visually Impaired, Sikkim**” submitted to Sikkim University in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy in Education, is my original research work which is carried out by me under the supervision of Dr. Subhash Misra , Assistant Professor, Department of Education, School of Professional Studies, Sikkim University, Sikkim. Further, I declare that this dissertation has not been submitted in any form earlier for the award of any degree, diploma or certificate.

**Mecal Ongmu Lepcha**

Registration No.: 15/M.Phil/EDN/04

**We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.**

**Supervisor**

**Head**



**Sikkim University**  
(A Central University)

Department of Education,  
School of Professional Studies,  
Sikkim University,  
6<sup>th</sup> Mile, Samdur, Post Office: Tadong,  
Gangtok, Sikkim, INDIA – 737102.

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**“Educating and Equipping the Visually Impaired- A Case Study of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for Visually Impaired, Sikkim”**

Submitted by **Mecal Ongmu Lepcha** under the supervision of Dr. Subhash Misra,

Department of Education, School of Professional Studies,

Sikkim University,  
Gangtok 737102, INDIA

Signature of the Candidate

Countersigned by the Supervisor



**Sikkim University**  
(A Central University)

*Dr. Subhash Misra*  
Assistant Professor,  
Department of Education,  
Sikkim University,  
6<sup>th</sup> Mile, Samdur, Post Office: Tadong,  
Gangtok, Sikkim, INDIA – 737102.  
Mob. 081590-75607, 094180-65388  
Email: [smisra@cus.ac.in](mailto:smisra@cus.ac.in)  
[subhashmisr@gmail.com](mailto:subhashmisr@gmail.com)

---

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**Educating and Equipping the Visually Impaired- A Case Study of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for Visually Impaired, Sikkim**” being submitted by **Mecal Ongmu Lepcha**, M.Phil. (Education) student, for her degree of *Master of Philosophy in Education* has been carried out under my supervision and guidance and has not been submitted elsewhere for any degree or diploma. To the best of my knowledge it is fit for submission.

**Dated:**

**(Dr. Subhash Misra)**  
*Assistant Professor*  
**Department of Education**  
**(School of Professional Studies)**  
**Sikkim University,**  
**Sikkim-737102**

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### **1.1 International Status of Educating and Equipping Special Children:**

#### **Overall as well as Visually Impaired**

“Leave no child behind”. This statement which is mentioned in Article 3 of Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) has rightly stated that each girl and boy is born free and equal in dignity and rights.

There took great reformation from the segregation to inclusion for the differently-abled children. Educating children with these special delinquencies, so many policies, laws and acts were passed. In 1978, in Britain, the Warnock Committee Report<sup>1</sup> which is considered as a landmark in the history of education in the United Kingdom, listed essential provisions for children under the age of five years and included children with disabilities as one of its third top priorities. The Report has commonly described the diversity wherein distinction has been made amongst different forms of integration- locational, social and functional. The ‘locational’ integration relates to the physical location of special education provision. The special school and regular school share the same site. ‘Social’ integration relates to its social aspect, where children attending a special class or unit eat, play and interact with other children and possibly share organized lot of classroom activities with them. The third and the fullest form of integration is ‘functional’ integration. This is achieved where the locational and social association of differently-abled children with their peers leads to joint participation in

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<sup>1</sup> Hegarty, Seamus and Alur, Mithu. (2002). *Education and children with special needs; From Segregation to Inclusion*. India; Sage publications

educational programmes. Likewise in United States a massive programme called ‘Head Start’ was launched with the aim of improving childrens’ intellectual, social and emotional development which expanded at an unprecedented rate.<sup>2</sup> In 1994 in England, the Education Act or the Butler Act was passed to provide free secondary education for all pupils. In India, in the year 1944, the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) also passed a mandate for the education of the handicapped. As per the report, handicapped children were to be sent to special schools only when the nature and the extent of their defects made this necessary. The board emphasized that these children should not be segregated from normal children if they could be educated in the normal schools. Even the Kothari Commission (1964- 66), observed: “that the education of the handicapped should be an inseparable part of the education system”<sup>3</sup>. In the field of education and special education, the idea of oppression was linked with the notion that such oppression and subordination could not be met by ‘resistance’, leading to emancipation (Armstrong, 2003)<sup>4</sup>. Today, even though there are several legislative efforts for the education of the disabled, millions of children with disabilities continue to remain out of school or receive little or no education. Majority of children with special needs do not receive any formal education, in spite of the practice of inclusive education in some schools. Some children have health problems that interfere with their education. Almost all children with locomotor handicaps, sensory impairments, speech impairments and with mild and even moderate intellectual disabilities can be conveniently placed in ordinary schools. However, children with more moderate and severe intellectual deficits

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<sup>2</sup> Hegarty, Seamus and Alur, Mithu. (2002). *Education and children with special needs; From Segregation to Inclusion*. India; Sage publications.pp.16

<sup>3</sup> [http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/28831/8/08\\_chapter%201.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/28831/8/08_chapter%201.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Armstrong, Felicity. (2003). *Spaced Out: Policy, Difference and the Challenge of Inclusive Education*. Netherlands; Kluwer Academic Publishers.

and multiple handicaps will still have to be placed in special schools or classes depending on the nature and degree of disability.

Several special schools were established in the European and Western countries for the differently-abled. Laws and amendments on special education were enacted in United States of America. The same step was followed by England. The laws strengthened the right of a child with Special Educational Needs (SEN) to be educated in the mainstream unless it is incompatible with the wishes of his parents or the provision of efficient education for other children. The laws also discussed not to discriminate on the grounds of disability in regard to admission and other areas without justification.

Out-of-school children have suffered from a lack of differentiation and are frequently referred to collectively as “disadvantaged” or “marginalized”.

These terms ‘disadvantaged’ and ‘marginalised’ has their own individuality, particular contexts, characteristics and needs. Hence, inadequate information frustrates attempt to take steps to identify them and to design strategies to include them meaningfully in education policy and implementation. The result is that they remain excluded, illiterate, uneducated and above all, “invisible”. Children and young people with disabilities continue to be one of the most disadvantaged groups in all our societies. People with disabilities were sometimes represented from a social perspective as ‘oppressed’. (Abberley, 1987)<sup>5</sup>.

Accepting there is a problem and knowing what to do about it are quite different things of course. One way of making progress is to look across countries, observe different cultural and organizational structures, and in the light of this broader perspective look at one’s

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<sup>5</sup> Abberley, Paul (1987). The concept of oppression and the development of social theory of disability, *Handicap and Society*, 2 (1):5-19.

own situation with new eyes. It is not and must never be simply a matter of importing practice from elsewhere. What works in Western and European countries will not necessarily work in India. What can be transported are the principles that underlie effective practice. How these principles are embodied in provision will vary from place to place, and intimate knowledge of local contexts is necessary for this to happen. In the west there have been years of segregated practice with special schools available for all types of disability whereas in India, the disabled child has not as many options, there being not enough special schools available. Therefore, the rural child or the urban child does not have the option to go to a special school or to an integrated school.<sup>6</sup> The values of egalitarianism, social justice and moral ethics are values that need to have proper recognition in a society.

Social values and attitudes towards special education change over time. Factors such as political, social and economic contribute towards these changes. Education of exceptional children/ differently-abled is quite stimulating field for psychologists and educators and also for those who are concerned with the welfare of these children. In India, the exceptional children were completely neglected during the British regime excluding some blind schools which were first opened in Amritsar by the missionaries. These children were marginalized and were never given thought of educating them as the general attitude of the society those days was of hatred and compassion towards them. Many policies were evolved in the West as well in the European countries for the exceptional children and these policies in some way paved their way in India too. There was a sea change in attitude, a shift in ideologies that took place for the subject of integration in the

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<sup>6</sup> Alur, Mithu.(1998). *Invisible Children: A Study of Policy Exclusion*. Phd. Institute of Education, department of Policy Studies. University of London.

West as well as European countries. The 'Rights issue' was strongly raised and stressed by the disabled activists and they started propagating its importance throughout the country.

Mainstreaming is totally new teaching- learning administrative arrangements which has gained ground in 1980's. It has grown out of concern that all children (including physically and mentally handicapped) should receive education to which they are entitled and which they need. It lays emphasis on the idea that the individual needs of the child, not the label determine his educational placement. Inclusive education and mainstreaming has become a new label in the field of education and in policy making nowadays but these subjects are still highly debatable. At one hand we talk about mainstreaming and inclusive education and on the other hand there exist special or segregated schools.

Where nations hold hands to make education compulsory for all, there is a race in making which used to be just a dream before "Education for all" that they hold meetings, seminars at different levels in the hope to yield fruitful results and pass treaties, recommendations etc. to implement in making "education a reality for all" but the irony still lies; millions of children of school-going age are still out of school. Of those underprivileged ones are the physically disabled which are now better termed as differently-able. The Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989 and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) 2006 had shown a new path for thinking and planning for differently -able and making the "Right to Quality Education" a reality for all and "Right to Education" to all children irrespective of their background or state of life is an absolute priority. It was the first legally binding



international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights for children – civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. Among the differently -abled, a huge population belongs to the visually impaired category. The umbrella term “visual impairment” may be used to describe generally the consequence of an eye condition or disorder. The eye has different parts that work together to create our ability to see. When a part of the eye doesn’t work right or communicate well with the brain, vision is impaired. When a child has a visual impairment, it is cause for immediate attention because much learning typically occurs visually. When vision loss goes undetected, children are delayed in developing a wide range of skills. While they can do virtually all the activities and tasks that sighted children take for granted, children who are visually impaired often need to learn to do them in a different way or using different tools or materials or strategies. Central to their learning will be touching, listening, smelling, tasting, moving, and using whatever vision they have and the assistance of parents, family members, friends, caregivers, and educators may be indispensable in that process. However, students with low vision are often an overlooked majority in the population of children who are visually impaired. Difficulties of students with low vision are often not as apparent as they are for students who are blind. Transmitting the knowledge to those students with special needs is of utmost importance. Inclusive schools have to be well-equipped in all aspects to cater and deliver education for all children. Inclusive education strives to address the learning needs of children with special needs, with particular focus on those are subject to being isolated and excluded. Inclusive education speaks about education to promote opportunities for all children to participate, learn and have equal treatment irrespective of their mental or physical abilities. While the awareness of

inclusive education in schools is still going on, our educational institutions are sceptic about having both normal and special children studying in the same classroom. Unavailability of special teachers and infrastructures, unavailability of resources, unavailability of funds etc. are various issues which are creating hindrance in the path of inclusive education. Education for the different categories of differently-abled has not been identified properly. In spite of several policies, programmes and constitutional provisions many differently-abled children are suffering with various problems for proper education due to several factors like attitude, infrastructure, disability support services, unavailability of trained teachers, lack of equipments like technological aids and other devices, inappropriate curriculum and pedagogical practices, limited curriculum adaptation, lack of appropriate strategic plan and programme, inconsistency/ disharmony between various education providers i.e. inclusive and special schools. Visual impaired children need special training and education and most of them cannot be integrated in the main stream institutions. These children can be integrated to the main stream schools however; they too need support services such as accessible reading materials, regular counselling and guidance for parents and teachers which are not available on the ground. Introduction of special teaching methodologies in the main stream schools where the child is integrated is not prime concern. This is one of the reasons that the visually impaired students who are enrolled in the main stream schools do not have access to any support service, experienced special educators, speech therapist, occupational therapist, transportation facility, functional assessment and sensory stimulation rooms necessary for such kind of students due to which they are facing a lot of difficulty and not able to get quality education. <sup>7</sup>National Policy on Education (1986) emphasizes- Whatever feasible,

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.ncert.nic.in/oth\\_anoun/npe86.pdf](http://www.ncert.nic.in/oth_anoun/npe86.pdf)

education of children with loco-motor handicap and other mild handicaps will be common with the others; therefore, those children whose needs cannot be met in regular schools are to be enrolled in special schools. As soon as they acquire reasonable levels of daily living skills they will be integrated into the regular schools.

As per W.H.O. report (2012), the estimated number of people visually impaired in the world is 285 million, 39 million blind and 246 million having low vision; 65% of people visually impaired and 82% of all blind. The data available by NSSO on Census gives the prevalence that the number of disabled persons enumerated was 49,300 in rural and 26,679 in urban India. According to the survey estimates, the number of disabled persons in the country was 18.49 million during July to December 2002, and they formed about 1.8 per cent of the total estimated population. According to the census of 2011 the differently-abled population was 26.8 million in India. There was a rise of 2.21% within 2001 to 2011. India is now a home to the world's largest number of blind people. Out of the 37 million people across the globe who are blind, over 15 million are from India. Sikkim state has a population of approximately 10,790 visually impaired according to 2011 Census which means it constitutes 2.5% of the population. Being a state which has four districts and having population of approximately 6 lakhs, the number of special schools and rehabilitation centres across the state are only six in numbers and for the visually impaired students there is only one school in the state. Every year the number of visually impaired are increasing and the education for those children is still vague in Sikkim region. The only school for visually impaired in Sikkim is till class 5 only and after that some are sent to other inclusive schools and rest of them are left unchecked. The question arises whether one single school is enough to cater the need of special

children whose needs cannot be met in regular school and need special assistance and programme till they do not acquire reasonable levels of daily living skills for making them equipped with essentials to integrate them in regular schools.

In situations where the general school system does not yet adequately meet the needs of all persons with disabilities, special education may be considered, but it should be aimed at preparing students for education in the general school system. States should aim for the gradual integration of special education services into mainstream education. Integrated education and community-based programmes should be seen as complementary approaches in providing cost-effective training for persons with disabilities.

### **1.1 (i) History And Ideology: Segregation To Integration**

The first evolution of integration in the developed countries discouraged the old language that was used to describe children with disabilities to dispel the stigma associated with the negative labels of the past. The language that labelled the disabled children as imperfect was dispelled or we can say modified as in broader, more general term such as 'children with special educational needs'. This approach was regarded as a medical approach and known as the medical model.

Another evolution that took place was the recognition of early educational opportunities. This was observed that integrated classes offer more opportunities for children to acquire skills with their peer group than do self-contained special education classes.

In the year 1978, in Britain, the Warnock Committee Report which is considered as a landmark in the history of education in the United Kingdom, listed essential provisions

for children under five and included children with disabilities as one of its top three priorities.

The Education Act of 1981, reiterated that no disabled child should be sent to a special school 'who can satisfactorily be educated in an ordinary school'.<sup>8</sup> The role of 'parents in partnership' was emphasised as critical.

In the U.S.A in the year 1964, Lyndon Johnson then President launched a massive programme called Head Start with the aim of improving children's intellectual, social and emotional development and expanded at an unprecedented rate. This project opened 3,300 programmes for thousands of children right across America. It also became the largest pre-school programme in the world to admit disabled children. The federal mandate required that at least 90% enrolment fell below poverty line and at least ten per cent had to consist of disabled children.

The Education for All Disabled Children Act (1975) in the US was enacted which mandated that free, equal and appropriate public education be provided between 3 and 21 years for children and young people with special needs. This Act provided educational and other services to disabled children between the ages of 3 and 5 and also encouraged them to do so from birth. The impact of the legislation was that many universities in US got involved in the innovative researches on the problems of disadvantaged and disabled children. They were much involved in the solution to integrate and evaluate the problems of the disabled.

Americans Disabilities Act (ADA) 1990, signed by then President Bush on July, 26<sup>th</sup>, 1990 established clear and comprehensive federal prohibition of discrimination against

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<sup>8</sup> Alur, Mithu. (1998). *Invisible Children: A Study of Policy Exclusion*. Ph.d. Institute of Education, department of Policy Studies. University of London, pp. 92.

persons with disabilities in private sector employment in sought to ensure equal access for persons with disabilities to public accommodation, public services, transportation and telecommunication. This act gave job opportunities to the disabled.

Historical evolution according to Cole (1989) recounts that initially it was voluntary effort which made good the deficiencies in provision that existed. The intervention of the Government followed to create a national framework in which public and voluntary agencies acted in partnership to see that all children whatever their disability, received a suitable education.<sup>9</sup> The enactment and the introduction of these legislations and laws had many effects within the countries and worldwide. For example, changes in language and a broader definition of ‘special educational needs’ marked a change from ‘within the child to an interactive view’.

Detailed multi- disciplinary assessment and a ‘continuum of needs’ was recognised and close co-operation between special schools and ordinary schools were suggested.

As the trend towards nationalisation of experiences for disabled children gained pace, people began to question the efficacy of special school. Groups of disabled people and parent pressure groups spoke vociferously about the needs for normalisation and tolerance from society as a whole. Special schools not integration initiatives had to justify their existence (Hodgson, et al., 1984). There were enactment of legislations in many countries like Sweden, Norway, Italy, U.K., Canada, Denmark, France and Germany seeking integration or mainstreaming of children with special needs. The subject of integration versus segregation generated many debates. There was a sea change in attitude; a shift in ideology took change for the subject of integration. Ultimately,

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<sup>9</sup> Hegarty, Seamus and Alur, Mithu. (2002). *Education and children with special needs; From Segregation to Inclusion*. India; Sage publications.pp.16

integration took place because of the changes in the wider educational system that had evolved due to many factors.

The oppression for the people having one or more impairment, over the years, has not gone uncontested. On the contrary, many disabled people have consistently struggled for human dignity and for inclusion in mainstream society. The National League for the Blind and Disabled and the British Deaf Association, for example, were both run by disabled people.

The Salamanca Statement called for a policy shift which would require all schools in the regular school system to become inclusive schools and serve all children, “particularly those with special educational needs”. It stated that special needs education for children with disabilities and those with learning difficulties could not advance in isolation but must form part of an overall educational strategy which would call for major reform of the regular school.

Most of the students attending residential schools for students who are visually impaired have multiple conditions of special needs or have visual problems that are difficult to handle in the student’s home. Some lack the necessary services in their home communities. Some are enrolled because their parents prefer the concentration of special services that residential schools can provide (Heward, 2006).<sup>10</sup> It was not always this way. The trend in the enrolment ratio of students having visual impairment was very less in regular schools before but gradually the numbers increased in the residential schools. This gradual increase of students with visual impairments also affected the capacity intake in residential schools. Parents and the ward of the students children started

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<sup>10</sup> Heward, W.L. (2006). *Exceptional Children: An Introduction to Special Education*. New Jersey; Merrill Prentice Hall.

believing that their child could take part in the social and life skill activities in the general classrooms still being at home. As a result, students with visual impairments are now enrolled in general classrooms at their neighbourhood public schools. They and their teachers receive itinerant or consultative special education services to support their general classroom placements. Special education teachers are valued mostly for their commitment to serve a vast dimensional group of children with educational needs, which is one of the most hardest and most complicated jobs in the field of education (Payne, 2005).<sup>11</sup>

Early in 1992, the Programme of Action, while promoting integrated education, had also suggested a Pragmatic Placement Principle. It postulated that learners with disabilities who can be educated in general schools should be educated in general schools, and those studying in special schools should be transferred to general schools once they are ready to make the shift (MHRD, Programme of Action, 1992)<sup>12</sup>. This was endorsed in 1994 by the Salamanca Statement (statement issued by the World Conference on Special Needs Education) recommendations for an alternative role for special schools. Hence, special schools in their newfound identity would become a far more flexible resource, by working in partnership with and creating a response to special needs, not only in the alternative form of provision and intervention, but within the mainstream classroom, curricula, and pedagogies. Special and general education, in other words, are gearing for a significant move to come closer together.

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<sup>11</sup> Payne, R. (2005). Special education teacher shortage: barriers or lack of preparation? *International Journal of Special Education*, 20(1), 88-91.

<sup>12</sup> [http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/document-reports/POA\\_1992.pdf](http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/document-reports/POA_1992.pdf)



## **1.1 (ii) Understanding Visual Impairment**

Students with visual impairment may be described in a number of ways for differing purposes. The two major categorisations define students with visual impairments for legal purposes and for educational purposes. A person who is legally blind is eligible for a wide variety of services, materials and benefits from government agencies. For example, they may be provided with tapes and audio recorded books from the Library of Congress. Their schools can obtain specialised materials and books from the American Printing House for the Blind. They are also eligible for free occupational training, free mail service, and special income tax exemptions (Heward, 2006)<sup>13</sup>. Educational definitions are concerned with the changes or accommodations that will be needed to ensure that a student will receive the most appropriate and effective educational experience.

Educational definitions are more varied because visual acuity, the relative ability of the eye to see detail, is not the only factor in predicting visual functioning. According to Public Law 108-446 (IDEA), a visual handicap is a “visual impairment that, even with correction, adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term includes both partially seeing and blind children”. Two widely used terms are low vision and blind. Both groups can use Braille, but most students with low vision use some form of print for reading. Large- print texts or ocular devices help these students read.

In some countries the term vision impairment is replacing the older term visually impaired- often at the request of adults who have this disability. When a child is described as vision impaired it does not necessarily mean that he or she is blind; it means that the child has a serious defect of vision that cannot be corrected by wearing

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<sup>13</sup> Heward, W.L. (2006). *Exceptional Children: An Introduction to Special Education*. New Jersey; Merrill Prentice Hall.

spectacles. In the population of children with impaired vision there are those who are totally blind, those who are ‘legally’ blind, and those with varying degrees of partial sight.

There are at least three areas in which blind children and those with seriously impaired vision may need to be taught additional skills. These areas are mobility, orientation, and the use of Braille.

### **1.1 (iii) Mobility**

Blind students and those with very limited sight need to be taught mobility skills to enable them to move safely and purposefully in their environment. These skills include:

- Self- protection techniques
- Checking for doorways, steps, stairs and obstacles;
- Using auditory information to locate objects
- Long- cane skills;
- Using electronic travel aids such as ‘sonic spectacles’ with a sound warning built into the frame;
- Using a sighted guide.

Visually impaired needs sufficient mobility skills and confidence to negotiate the outside environment, including crossing the road, catching buses or trains, and locating shops. Increased mobility adds significantly to the quality of life for persons with impaired vision. Mobility training is usually regarded as a specialist area of instruction. While the classroom teacher and parents can certainly assist with the development of mobility and skills, a mobility- training expert usually carries out the planning and implementation of the programme.

### **1.1 (iv) Orientation**

Orientation is the term used to indicate that a person with impaired vision is familiar with a particular environment and at any time knows his or her own position in relation to objects such as furniture, barriers, open doors or steps. Mobility and orientation together are two of the primary goals in helping the blind student towards increased independence. Without these skills the quality of life of the visually impaired is seriously restricted.

### **1.1 (v) Braille**

Braille is of tremendous value as an alternative communication medium for those students who are visually impaired or whose remaining vision does not enable them to perceive enlarged print. Braille is a complex code so its use with students who are below average in intelligence is not always successful. Obviously if an individual's cognitive level is such that he or she would experience difficulties in learning to read and write with conventional print, Braille is not going to be an easier code to master. Surveys suggest that only 10 to 15 percent of the blind population reads primarily by Braille (Reddy et al. 2000)<sup>14</sup>. Therefore the notion, that all legally blind and totally blind students use Braille is false. However, if a child's intelligence is adequate the younger he or she begins to develop some Braille skills the better, as this will prepare the child to benefit from alter schooling.

### **1.1 (vi) Assistive Devices**

Children with physical disabilities can be helped to access the curriculum and participate more effectively in daily life through the use of assistive technology and also children with partial visual loss can be assisted. Many devices have been designed to enable the

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<sup>14</sup> Westwood, Peter (2003). Commonsense Methods for children with special educational needs- Strategies for the regular classroom. UK; Lightning Source, UK Ltd.

student to cope with the medium of print. The devices include magnification aids, closed-circuit television, microfiche readers, talking calculators, speaking clocks, dictionaries with speech outputs, 'compressed speech' recordings, and thermoform duplicators used to reproduce Braille pages or embossed pictures and maps. Low vision aids are magnification devices or instruments that help the individual with some residual sight to work with maximum visual efficiency. Some students with impaired vision benefit from modified furniture such as desks with bookstands or angled tops to bring materials closer to the child's eyes without the need to lean over, or with lamp attachment for increased illumination of the page.

Teachers may be able to use the general curriculum with some accommodations, changes that allow students access to the instruction, for students who have some functional vision. Individuals who are totally blind do not receive meaningful information through vision, but more readily through auditory and tactile learning methods. Those who are functionally blind typically use Braille for efficient reading and writing. They may use their residual sight for other tasks, such as travelling and doing daily chores.

### **1.1 (vii) Special Education and Special Schools**

The first special school for the blind in India was set up at Amritsar in 1887 by the Christian missionary known as Annie Sharp. Interestingly enough, throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century an unknown number of blind children were casually integrated with sighted children. They were casually integrated with the sighted children. The major tool of pedagogy was mainly oral repetition. Oral repetition was the major tool of pedagogy. Priscilla Chapman remarked on a blind girl in Calcutta in 1926, who 'from listening to the other children got by heart the Gospel.' (Chapman, 1939, as mentioned in Miles,

1996).<sup>15</sup> During the subsequent six decades several special schools came up in different parts of the country. As a result, there were about 50 such schools at the time of attaining independence. Blind children for the most part stayed in these institutions and received education along with some elementary trades that later led them to some kind of vocational rehabilitation. But due to scarce documentation, the researchers in the past 50 years are poorly informed about India's special educational needs and disabilities issues in the nineteenth century. However, not much was achieved through this system of education, in so far as their socio-economic rehabilitation was concerned. There were other concerns too – isolation from mainstream, standard of education and expensive nature of the system.

Special education means specially designed instruction which meets the special education and related needs of an exceptional child. It is distinguished from regular educational programme for non- exceptional children by some unusual quality, something uncommon, noteworthy. It is something special- special materials, special training techniques, special equipment and special help and facilities may be required for special categories of children having special needs.

Special education may sometimes differentiate from regular education by its curriculum, that is, by what is taught. For example, teaching self- help skills or training in reading and writing Braille is an important part of curriculum for visually impaired in special education institutions which are not found in regular education. In regular classroom, the school system dictates the curriculum, but in special education the child's individual needs dictate the curriculum.

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<sup>15</sup> Chapman, Priscilla. (1839). *Hindoo Female Education*. London: Seeley & Burnside.

Special education has the same objectives as those of regular education- human resource development through providing appropriate education to children, national development, social reconstruction, civic development, vocational efficiency etc. The social values and attitudes towards special education change over time. People with disabilities were sometimes represented from a social perspective as ‘oppressed’ (Abberley, 1987)<sup>16</sup>. Starting from 1900’s to the 21<sup>st</sup> century arguments on ‘social inclusion’ was widely used and argued. In the field of education and special education this idea of oppression was linked with the notion that such oppression and subordination could be met by ‘resistance’, leading to emancipation (Armstrong, 2003)<sup>17</sup>. Many factors influenced ‘special education’ such as social, political and economic influences. In a more practical sense, economic, social and political decisions of a kind are made in the day- to- day work of a school. The political and social views of staff and parents have a bearing on the way the school is organized. Economic decisions taken at school level reflect different priorities of different schools. More broadly, it is such interrelated social, political and economic factors that from the context in which Special education legislation is conceived, shaped and implemented.

Special schools were expensive to run but the support required to ensure full inclusion in mainstream schools was generally viewed as more costly (Cole, 1989)<sup>18</sup>.

Children with disability either study in a special school or in a regular mainstream school.

It is their choice if they want to join the mainstream school from the special school.

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<sup>16</sup> Abberley, Paul (1987). The concept of oppression and the development of social theory of disability, *Handicap and Society*, 2 (1):5-19.

<sup>17</sup> Armstrong, Felicity. (2003). *Spaced Out: Policy, Difference and the Challenge of Inclusive Education*. Netherlands; Kluwer Academic Publishers.

<sup>18</sup> Cole, Mike (1989). *Education, Equality and Human Rights- Issues of gender, ‘race’, sexuality, disability and social class*. Routledge; Taylor and Francis Group.

Special Education as a separate system of education for disabled children outside the mainstream education evolved way back in the 1880s in India. It was based on the assumption that children with disability had some special needs that could not be met in mainstream schools and therefore, they need to study in a separate school with other children having similar needs. Special schools exist all over the world in the form of day or residential schools, and also special classes are attached to the mainstream schools.

India had the maximum number of blind schools than for other categories of differently-abled till independence and the number expanded tremendously every year. Special schools are organized according to different categories of disability. Even though there are disadvantages of such schools as one of the major disadvantage is the students get less time to spend with their family and may take time to readjust with their families. Such schools which are residential are usually not built in their immediate environment and the children have to leave their families behind. Excluding these, there are many advantages as well of special schools. The special schools however, have some advantages like they can play an active role in giving resource support for the mainstream schools by providing specialized services. Also since the children are taught by a specialist having expertise on specific impairments, their needs may sometimes be understood better. In special schools children grow up with their disability peers and develop a common culture. But there are many advantages and disadvantages of special and integrated schools. The entire campus of the school is designed, equipped and staffed effectively and specifically to meet the needs of the visually impaired children. The school's responsibility is not only to impart education to these children. Apart from classroom teaching the school may help the child in their physical development,

orientation and mobility, vocational education and several other daily activities of life. Special schools are built to meet the overall development of the child. In a special school children grow up with their disability peers and develop a common culture. In spite of the benefits of inclusive education, if a child with disability is not getting the required resource support in the mainstream school and is not developing upto his/ her potential a special school remains a viable option.

### **1.1 (viii) Conflict of Resources**

In most countries it is usually the case that some individuals are denied their rights due to lack of resources. For example, a differently-abled child may not attend school because their parents are poor and cannot afford the child's school fees. Even though it is the child's right as a human being to attend school, the right is denied because of financial problems. This also clearly shows that rights also come with responsibilities; to be able to fully exercise some rights it is a person's responsibility to do certain things.

### **1.1 (ix) Persons with Disabilities Act (1995)**

To give effect to the Proclamation on the Full Participation and Equality of the People with Disabilities in the Asian and Pacific Region, the Parliament enacted the Persons with Disabilities Act (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Right and Full Participation) Act, 1995 which came into force with effect from 7th February, 1996. The Act desires the appropriate Governments and local authorities to ensure that every child with a disability has access to free education in an appropriate environment till he attains the age of eighteen years. It encourages promotion of integrated, residential education, functional literacy, non- formal education, education through open school or open universities. It desires initiation of research for designing and developing new assistive devices and



developing human resources. It also ensures reservation of at least three percent seats in the educational institutes for persons with disabilities. It also encourages preparation of comprehensive education schemes with a variety of facilities for such persons.

This Act has identified 7 categories of disability, both physical and mental. Chapter 5 of the Act pertains to Education. It directs the government to ensure that every child with a disability has access to free education in an appropriate environment till the age of 18 years and inter alia provides for the establishment of special schools, facilities for imparting non- formal education and education through open schools or universities to disabled children, organizing teacher training programmes, taking steps for adaption of curriculum, reform of the examination system, promoting research and providing various facilities to the disabled children. In this sector, while the special schools come under the preview of the Ministry of Welfare, the department of education has been making efforts to provide integrated education to disabled children with mild and moderate handicaps in normal schools.

### **1.1 (x) National Policy on Education (1986) and its Programme of Action (1992)**

The National Policy on Education 1986 and its Programme of Action 1992 suggest pragmatic placement principles. It postulates that a child with disability who can be educated in a general school should be educated in general school only and not in a special school. Even those children who are initially admitted to a special for training in plus- curriculum skills (that are required in addition to their regular school curriculum) should be transferred to general schools once they acquire daily living skills, communication skills and basic academic skills.

The Plan of Action (POA) also stresses that as education of children with disabilities in special schools is very costly, it will be ensured that only those children whose needs cannot be met in common schools be enrolled in special schools. Once they acquire communication skills and study skills, they will be integrated in common schools.

The national policy on education, 1986 brought the education of children with disabilities under the equal educational opportunity provision. However, this policy of stating the disabled children to be educated in general schools has not been fully achieved.

The government of India set up the Ramamurthy Committee to comment upon NPE (National Policy on Education) and POA (Programme of Actions) stipulations. Some of the specific observations made on the handicapped as stated in the NPE 1986 were as follows.

NPE advocated the policy of integrating the physically and mentally handicapped with the general community as equal partners. The POA mentioned the detailed measures to be taken, important amongst them being massive in-service training for teachers, orientation programmes for the administrators, development of supervisory expertise in the resource institutions like the SCERT and DIET, etc. It also called for provision of incentives like supply of aids, appliances, text books and free uniforms.

The NPE, so far as it relates to education of the handicapped, is inadequate in the following respects:

- i. It has not stressed the mobilisation of the total general education system for the education of the handicapped.
- ii. Special schools have been treated in isolation from other educational institutions from the point of view of providing the educational supervisory infrastructure,

leaving it to the Ministries of social welfare and Human Resource Department to co-operatively develop the same.

The merit of the Plan of Action is in its call for establishment of special schools at district and sub-district levels: curriculum development apart from provision of infrastructural facilities; and specific target setting for universal primary education of the differently-abled. While special schools for the education of those with severely differently-abled are rightly emphasized by the POA, they have not laid emphasis on multiple delivery of services in special schools. While single disability mode is required for research, development and rehabilitation work, for delivery of educational services, multi-service mode in special schools should also be given importance. This is particularly so because doctors, dispensaries, public health centres and development functionaries are multi-purpose in nature. The POA has not called for redefinition of the role of special schools.

### **1.1 (xi) A Pre and Post-Independence Overview of Education for the Visually Impaired**

There was no national organization for the blind in the country in the pre-independence days. Several smaller organizations working at the State or local levels did exist. However, the establishment of the National Institute for the Visually Handicapped at Dehradun was a welcome step. The Institute continues to be the largest single manufacturer of equipment needed for the education of the blind. The facility at the Institute is being updated and manufacturing procedures have been streamlined. Equipment is also being distributed through the institute's regional outlets at Chennai, Kolkata, Secundrabad, etc. Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), has set up some guidelines for students with visual impairment for eligibility. These guidelines focus on

the visual acuity of students. In addition to the visual acuity limitation, all students with disabilities served under IDEA must evidence need of special education services. In addition to the educational challenges resulting from visual impairments, this group of disabilities also results in a substantial financial burden for school districts and society. The financial impact on schools is directly related to the level of visual impairment and the resulting intervention needs of each student.

### **1.1 (xii) Central Social Welfare Board**

The ministry of welfare is the nodal ministry for the welfare of the differently-abled in India. The special schools' sector is dealt with by the Ministry of Welfare whereas integrated education is being dealt with in the education sector.

During the year 1960-1975 several committees were appointed by the govt. to look into child's welfare activities and these recommended that a comprehensive national policy was needed to take an integrated view of the need of children in socially disadvantaged areas. (Sood, 1987; Verma, 1994).<sup>19</sup> Subsequently many such policies came up after post-independence.

In 1974, the national policy for children declared 'children as a supremely important asset of the nation whose nurture and solicitude are the responsibility of the nation', and the national children's board came into existence (ibid.). It was with the 5<sup>th</sup> five year plan (1974) that a major breakthrough was made for the provision of early childcare by the state for children in socially disadvantaged areas, with the launching of the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), the largest preschool programme in the world.

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<sup>19</sup> Sood, N. (1987) An Evaluation of Non formal Preschool Education Component in Mangolpuri ICDS block, NIPCCD Technical Bulletin, April, 1.

Verma, A. (1994) Early Childhood Care and Education in India, International Journal of Early Years Education, Autumn, 2(2).

During the policy formulation stage, the issue on disabled children was not taken up in the discussion which made them subdued in the areas of services.

### **1.1 (xiii) Governmental Initiatives for the Visually Impaired**

After independence the government took up several initiatives and measures and also provided facilities and services to the visually impaired. One such step that the government undertook under the Ministry of Education, was the establishment of a unit for the welfare of the differently-abled in April, 1947 in Delhi in accordance with the recommendations contained in the 1944 'Report on Blindness'.

The Ministry of Education offered scholarships to those students in the levels of secondary schools and colleges.

In 1954, the Government of India established the Central Social Welfare Board which gave small grants to certain institutions and persons with disabilities including the blind.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was also launched by the Government of India in 2001 which stressed to pursue universal elementary education in a mission mode and the expenditure being shared both by the Central and the State government. SSA aims to ensure that every Child with Special Needs (CWSN), irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability, is provided education in an appropriate environment.<sup>20</sup> It also envisages adoption of zero rejection policy so that no child is left out of the education system. It also stresses on providing integrated and inclusive education to all children with special needs in general schools, as far as possible - with adoption of suitable alternative approaches in special cases. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan framework mentions that a child with special needs should be taught in an environment which is best suited to

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<sup>20</sup> NUEPA (2008). Education for all- Mid- decade Assessment. *Reaching the Unreached*. New Delhi; pp.26

his/her learning needs. It also envisages a specific grant @ Rs. 1200/- per CWSN per year to meet “the special learning needs” of Child with special needs.

In Sikkim, teachers are appointed as Resource teachers by SSA to look after educational needs and challenges of differently-abled children studying in government schools.

The table below are the important milestones taken by the Government for the differently-abled for the 1800’s till date;

1880’s	Establishment of special schools
1974	Formulation of Centrally Sponsored Scheme of IEDC
1992	The Rehabilitation Council of India Act
1994	The Salamanca Statement And Framework for Action
1995	The Persons with Disabilities Act
1997	Inclusion of IED in DPEP
1999	National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental retardation and Multiple Disabilities
2000	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
2005	Comprehensive Action Plan for Inclusion in education of children
2006	National Policy for persons with disabilities

### **1.1 (xiv) Transition of Special Schools**

Special schools have been set up in the past and provisions have been made for integrated education. At present, India has two parallel but separate policies on segregation and integration. Special schools for children with visual impairment, hearing impairment, and locomotor disabilities are streamlined to follow a curriculum that is almost in line with the general education curriculum. The plus curriculum and the adaptation of instructional methodologies are followed where necessary. Children with mental retardation on the other hand require a specialised curriculum to meet their specific educational needs.

Over time, however, there has been growing awareness that special education in special schools may be overly restrictive, and instead of working outside the mainstream classrooms, the special schools can work with, and provide support to, regular schools.

### **1.1 (xv) Equipping the Visually Impaired**

Many educators understand that students with disabilities and other exceptional needs learn appropriate social behaviours and develop friendships, collectively referred to as social skills, only when they have opportunities to interact with their non-disabled peers.

One of the most conspicuous failures of the Indian Educational system has been the failure to achieve universal education which is also one of the factors for the marginalization that has taken place. This remains the policy for educating one of the most vulnerable and weakest groups of society – cultural injustice which has become historically entrenched. Students with visual impaired can be successfully educated in general classroom settings. Those who are capable of reading print, with modifications, often require minimal curricular changes; those must read using Braille require significant changes. For students who can read print, teachers must still make

modifications in many day- to- day activities and in how they provide instruction in reading (Parker and Pogrund, 2009).<sup>21</sup>

Visually Impaired children can also participate in all the activities like the sighted ones, virtually. They can perform tasks if they are taught in a different way using tools and materials. In the same way, a visually impaired child can do activities if that involves using their other remaining senses.

Visually impaired children are exceptionally deprived otherwise there is nothing that cannot be done by the visually impaired. Strong national policies make teaching quality and learning a high priority that ensures all children in school actually obtain the skills and knowledge they are meant to acquire.

## **1.2 Rationale of the Study**

The disabled/disadvantaged group have often been the left out or the ‘have not’s of our community. Being born as visually impaired or any other disability (for some) is looked down as a curse or the effects of wrong doing in our previous birth in our country. This statement may sound controversial but the truth remains. The problem of education is one of the utmost reasons for illiteracy among different categories of disability. There are Special Schools and Integrated Schools as well but what those students think about the special schools, their choices and their perspectives towards these schools is important to study. The debate on whether such children grow better among others with the same disabilities or with “normal” children has also proved to be an ongoing one. But these are not the only aspects that are litigious. The Right to Education for the visually impaired is like a flute without its holes. It is the duty of those involved in the administration at every

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<sup>21</sup> Parker, A. T., & Pogrund, R. L. (2009). A review of research on the literacy of students with visual impairment and additional disabilities. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 103, 635–648.



level, researchers, academicians including the educational institutions and the parents to understand the problems of differently able children and to understand the necessity and extent for adopting different procedures, techniques and methods to encourage these children to take full benefit. In this process there is a need to understand the role of special schools in providing support in mainstreaming the differently able children. “Researchers study will be a voice for these people” and this encouraged the researcher to choose the topic. When one cannot see the world, education makes him/her travel the world. Education is an eye for the visually impaired. Hence, the researcher will make an attempt to conduct a case study on the only school for visually impaired in Sikkim i.e. Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Hence considering the background of education for visually impaired students in Sikkim the statement of the study is formulated as “Educating and Equipping the Visually Impaired- A Case Study of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired, Sikkim”.

### **1.4 Operational Definition of the Key Term Used**

Problems as in the study refers to the educational problems like lack of available options in regard to school subjects, inconsistency between various education providers and sectors, insufficient funding support for student disability, unavailability of trained teachers, lack of technological aids and other equipments and limited curriculum adaptation.

- a) **Educating** here refers to the process of giving instruction with a view to widen their knowledge and ensuring their progress in the school system.
- b) **Equipping**: refers to the adaptation of skills derived through education system to overcome the problems of their impairment.
- c) **Visually Impaired**: Visually Impaired persons are those who have significant loss or defect in vision due to impairment in one or both the eyes. In this study, visual impairments referred to both blindness and low vision who can learn only through tactile or auditory channel without the use of residual vision.

## 1.5 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study will be:

1. To study the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired Sikkim with regard to –
  - Status and objectives of the school
  - Infrastructural and Instructional facilities
  - Administration, planning and finance
  - Special support Services
  - Examination and evaluation
2. To assess the educational programmes and practices of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired students, Sikkim
3. To study the intervention strategies adopted by the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired to equip the visually impaired students.

4. To study the attitude and opinion of students, parents, teachers, administrators, community members towards Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute School for the Visually Impaired, Sikkim.
5. To study the contribution of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute School for the Visually Impaired, Sikkim towards the visually impaired students.

### **1.5 (i) Research Questions**

- What kind of programmes and policies are implemented by the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute of Visually Impaired Sikkim? How is Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute meeting the philosophy and goals set up for these kinds of schools?
- What kind of infrastructural and instructional facilities are being used at this school? Whether these facilities are set up in accordance to the needs of the Visually Impaired children?
- What kind of intervention strategies are being adopted by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the visually impaired? Whether they are able to deal with the special difficulties of the visually impaired? Is there adequate arrangement for mainstreaming the visually impaired students to get adjusted in inclusive environment?
- What is the attitude and opinions of parents, teachers, administrators and community members towards the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired?
- How is Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the visually impaired contributing towards the visually impaired?

## **1.6 Delimitations of the Study**

The study was delimited to one Visually Impaired School, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute School for the Visually Impaired situated in Namchi, South Sikkim. Data was collected from the administrators, teachers, students and parents of the students mainly using in- depth interview and observation. This study was delimited to all the students and their parents whose children are studying in this school, teachers, administrators, community members and members of civil society where this school is situated. The officers and officials of the Social Justice and Welfare Department, Sikkim and those who are associated with the institute was also the part of the study. The data was mainly collected using an in- depth interview, observation and through questionnaires.

## Chapter II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A literature review in any field is essential as it offers a comprehensive overview and recapitulation on the given scholarship from past to present. In this section, the review of literature has been categorized under two segments; reviews conducted abroad and in India. The literature reviews were done keeping the objectives and the research questions in mind. Some of the reviews were considered and taken in and may not be follow the objectives and research questions but these reviews were taken as they highlighted many such related areas that motivated the researcher's study.

#### 2.1 Reviews conducted in India

**Kamalam (1989)** in her study on 'Training the Angawadi workers in timely detection of disabilities in children' found out that as a result of participation in the training programme, a substantial number of the AWWs became knowledgeable about integrated education, reservation for employment and provision of loans for the disabled. The study also found out that the lack of interest from the parents' side to rehabilitate the disabled and lack of rehabilitation centres nearby for referral services were the difficulties encountered in offering a helping hand to the disabled.

**Mukhopadhyay and Sharma (1990)** in their study, 'Identifying teaching competencies specifically for integrated education of the disabled children' addresses the problem of identifying teaching competencies especially for the integrated education of the disabled children so that special support can be provided for these children in general classroom.

The main objectives was i) to study the attitudes of teachers towards integration of disabled children ii) to identify the general and specific competencies required for the integration of disabled children, iii) to infer implications for the teacher education programme and iv) to develop a tool for identification of teaching competencies for integration of visually disabled children. It was found out that the teachers had a positive attitude towards equal educational opportunity for disabled children in integrated classrooms. The male and female teachers did not differ in their perception of skills required for enhancing integration. In terms of pattern of ranking of competencies for integration, special schools did differ in their perceptions of pattern of ranking. However, it was found that more importance was given to competencies such as setting of a social goal, followed by planning teaching activities.

**Munuganardam (1990)** in his study ‘Development of teaching learning strategies in teaching for visually impaired children’ found out that the visually impaired children learned more science concepts when they were taught through the specially prepared teaching learning materials. The learning package on science teaching for visually impaired children was also found out to be effective.

One of the major findings of **Panda (1991)** in his study on ‘Attitude of parents and community members towards disabled children’ is that female parents had significantly more favourable attitudes towards the disabled children than the male parents whereas male parents showed more favourable attitude towards the educable mentally retarded and speech impairment children.

**Bhuyan (1991)** conducted a research on development of education among the physically handicapped students of Assam since independence. The findings were: (1) Most of the educational institutions for the blind were managed by voluntary organizations and the funds of the voluntary organizations were not adequate and government grants were also not sufficient as a result of which the institutions had been suffering from various problems arising out of the paucity of funds. (2) There was a lack of adequate number of qualified and specially trained teachers in all the educational institutions for the blind and the deaf and dumb. (3) There is a dearth of teaching aids and equipments in all the educational institutions of the blind. (4) The pay scales and service conditions of the teachers of the schools managed by voluntary organizations were very deplorable and there was the problem of irregular emoluments of the teachers in these institutions. (5) There are no proper hostel facilities in all the schools of the blind and food supplied to the boarders of the hostels of most of the blind schools was of a very low standard. (6) There were no proper facilities for vocational training in all educational institutions of the blind. (7) There were no provisions of making proper assessment of visual acuity of the blind students. (8) There was no medical unit attached to the institutions for regular check-up and assessment of health standard of the physically handicapped students. (9) There was no awareness among the parents regarding the existing educational and vocational facilities for the physically handicapped.

**Lal (1992)** attempted to study the personality, mutual perception, attitude and vocational preference of the blind and the sighted among the students of Delhi. The title of her research was 'A study of the personality, mutual perception, attitude and vocational preference of the blind and the sighted.' The sample comprised of 300 blind and sighted

boys and girls of standards IX to XII, institutionalized in schools for the visually handicapped in Delhi. One of the major finding was that the blind boys and girls and the sighted boys and girls differed significantly on all aspects of vocational interest record.

**Sharma (1998)** in her study “Mainstreaming the visually handicapped” found out that loss of sight does not produce any special behaviour among the blind. Maladjustment in society, family and especially in school and unsuitable school settings are the most prominent factors which lead to academic retardation of the visually handicapped. Her study also found out that after completing pre- primary education at special institutions, emphasis should be laid on placing the visually handicapped in integrated educational settings.

**Agarwal (2002)** conducted a study entitled “A comparative study of academic skills of visually impaired students studying in various educational settings” and reported that visually impaired students going to mainstream schools both in integrated as well as semi- integrated setting were good at problem solving and reasoning skills due to greater exposure to the subjects like Mathematics and science. The investigator concluded that visually impaired children should be admitted to mainstream schools in large numbers. Integrated setting should be promoted and strengthened. Special schools should be utilized to provide resource services as a supplement to integrated setting.

A paper discussing the need of digital libraries for blind users in India suggested by **Bhardwaj et al., (2005)** that the development at national level should be initiated so that this special category of users are not deprived of library services in this information age. The study suggested certain policies that should be incorporated in the strategy of the



library ensuring that library services to blind and print handicapped people should be of the same quality as that to common people, and special format materials should be treated on equal terms with all other materials.

## **2.2 Reviews conducted Abroad**

**Hebbeler (1993)** found that 98 percent of BVI students in local schools took at least one class in a regular classroom in 1990, and 83 percent spent at least three-quarters of their time in regular classes. The most common model of support for blind students in local schools is the itinerant teacher (Erin, 2003; Swenson, 1995).

**Thomas et al. (1998)** have analysed the Somerset Inclusion Project, which drew its inspiration from a special school in Canada (Shaw 1990). The Somerset Project centred on the Princess Margaret School for Physically Disabled Pupils. In 1992 it was a day and boarding special school. However, on closing in 1997, it had managed to include the vast majority of its pupils successfully in mainstream. This study gives many insights into the management of change, not least because one of its authors, Dave Waker, was the head teacher of Princes Margaret and effectively oversaw a process that was to leave him without a job. It was concluded that with vision and careful planning special schools can successfully change their work in such a way to enable their mainstream partners to include children even with serious disabilities. One of the clearest findings has been that while many mainstream staff was highly skeptical about the inclusion project before it started, they had changed their views entirely after several months of seeing it in practice and were fulsome in their support of inclusion.

**Kinnell et al., (2000)** highlighted the importance of having a clear policy statement, budgetary provision, staff training, partnership between libraries, service evaluation, materials provision with a selection strategy, equipment procurement in public libraries to better serve people with visual impairment.

**Opdal et al., (2001)** found in their study that 90% of participants suggested that schools should change in terms of the buildings and classroom sizes, and should have electricity and supply special desks and other furniture to be suitable for inclusion.

In the interview conducted by **Snyder (2005)** Telephone Interview on Educational Placement Options for Blind and Visually-Impaired Students it was found out that short stays at residential schools involve intensive training in specific skills (e.g., Braille and orientation and mobility skills), which can be especially useful after a student experiences a decrease in vision. For instance, after a decrease in vision, a student may need training in the use of assistive technology that was not previously required. Short-term placements vary in length from a week to several months.

One study of **Wehbi (2006)** on challenges faced in inclusive education in Lebanon found that the curriculum was not adapted to cater for varying needs of children. Similarly, teachers in Zimbabwe indicated that the curriculum was examination oriented, and thus failed to support inclusive education. For inclusion to succeed modification of the curriculum is vital (Memisevic & Hodzic, 2011).

**Lewis & Little (2007)** conducted a study with an intention of providing insight on the current situation of inclusive education in four countries, namely Nepal, Tanzania, Vietnam and Zambia. The findings of the study in all the four countries revealed that,

teachers are not educated enough in sign language, use of Braille materials, preparation of hearing aids, tactile diagrams and maps etc. to be able to face the challenges of inclusive teaching. It was also found out that teacher education is insufficient in the components of inclusive education. Finally, the study revealed that rigid curriculum is also a problem for implementation of inclusive education. Teaching methods and examination systems are centrally controlled contradicting with the efforts to make inclusive environments for all children regardless of their learning differences.

**Hersh & Johnson's book (2008)** Assistive Technology for Visually Impaired and Blind People helped in the understanding of the aim of assistive technology. The technology helps persons with disabilities to overcome the gap between what they want to do and what the existing social infrastructure allows them to do. It consists of equipment, devices and systems that can be used to overcome the social, infrastructural and other barriers experienced by disabled people that prevent their full and equal participation in all aspects of society.

A study conducted by **Alves et al., (2009)** indicated that teachers specified the need for infrastructure and pedagogical support in order to effectively use assistive technology in education of students with visual impairment.

The physical designs of some school buildings are very likely to hinder access for pupils with disability (Abbot, 2006). **Daveta (2009)** found in her study that inadequate facilities, including the general structure of school buildings and school compounds, were identified by teachers as contributing factors to the non-inclusion of students with disabilities.

**Simon et al., (2010)** conducted a study in Spain with the aim of analyzing the process of inclusion to students with visual impairments. The study found out that schools do not have appropriate teaching and learning resources to help students with visual impairments learn better in inclusive classrooms. Additionally, the study found that, there is a lack of collaboration and participation of parents in the educational affairs of their children. Moreover, the findings revealed that; teachers do not have enough knowledge of inclusion and how to teach students with visual impairments in inclusive classrooms.

The study by **Kesikta & Akcamete (2011)**, sought to determine the degree to which the professional standards for Turkish teachers of students with visual impairments were addressed during pre-service training and the degree to which the in-service teachers of visual impairments implemented these professional standards. Findings of the study showed that, there is insufficient knowledge and skills among teachers regarding implementation of inclusive teaching for students with visual impairments.

**Mwakyaja (2013)** in his study, *Teaching Students with Visual Impairments in Inclusive Classrooms: A Case Study of One Secondary School in Tanzania* was to investigate ways general teachers teach students with visual impairments in inclusive classrooms and the challenges they face in teaching them. The study intended to find out the extent to which teachers collaborate with special needs teachers and parents of students with visual impairments for effective teaching. Findings showed that, collaboration between general teachers and special needs teachers through co-teaching is lacking because of scarcity of special needs teachers and lack of commitment among teachers. It was also found that, collaboration between general teachers and parents of students of visual impairments is

lacking due to the fact that, these parents are living outside the region so they cannot manage to come every time they are needed.

### **Summary of the review**

Many researchers like Simon et al., (2010), Mwakyeja (2013), studied on special education and inclusive education of the visually impaired children. Researchers found that visually impaired children learned more concepts when they were taught through the specially prepared teaching learning materials. Mwakyeja (2013) has also revealed that teachers are not educated enough in sign language, use of Braille materials, preparation of hearing aids, tactile diagrams and maps etc. to be able to face the challenges of inclusive education. Despite this the curriculum and evaluation pattern are also not favourable for making inclusive environment for the differently-able in inclusive education system. Panda (1991) and Sharma (1998) studies also shows that the attitude of the society and the parents towards visually impaired children also effect the academic retardation of the visually impaired. As our National Policy on Education 1986 has rightly said the need of inclusion along with the provision of special schools for special children whose needs cannot be met in regular schools and need special assistance and programme till they do not acquire reasonable levels of daily living skills for making them equipped with essentials to integrate them in regular schools. History is evident that how in the name of making basic education we played with the primary education of the country and many students suffered without having education, the same thing is happening with inclusive education also. Inclusion is necessary and beneficial but we should not forget the fact that special schools are also our necessity to make the special children fit for getting inclusive education in the inclusive education system. There were

many blind schools exclusively for the visually impaired and as pointed by Mrs. Kiren Kherr, Member of the Legislative Assembly many blind schools are being shut down. This reveals the necessity to know the reasons behind the shutting down of these schools and the problems, patterns, practices of such kind of schools. Whether the special schools are able to meet the need of differently –abled? What are the outcomes of these schools? These questions gave birth to the idea for the present research to study the programmes, practices, strategies adopted in special school and the problems they are facing and the outcome they are giving.

# **CHAPTER III**

## **METHODOLOGY**

The present research was a case study of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired of Namchi, South Sikkim. The focus of the study was the intervention strategy adopted by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute of Visually Impaired for the education of the visually impaired students. It study was also to find out how the education of the school is helping and equipping the visually impaired children of the Sikkim. It allowed the investigator to go in-depth and generate an intensive data which were useful for understanding the phenomena. Since, it was a case study; the cases of the study was taken from the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired, Namchi, Sikkim and data was collected from the students, parents or guardians, teachers along with the principal, administrators and community members. Interview, observation and informal conversations, analysis of documents has been used as primary tools for gathering information. Initially, critical incident technique (Chell, 1998)<sup>1</sup> interview protocols were developed to elicit rich data (Gilbert 2001)<sup>2</sup> on experiences. Initial data analysis the interview style shifted to lightly structure in- depth narrative interviews, a technique requiring the interviewer to limit interventions to the flow of the interview to elicit rich and full narrative accounts (Wengraf, 2001)<sup>3</sup> of the school. Triangulation of data was employed by contrasting students' information with that of regional directors,

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<sup>1</sup> Chell, Elizabeth (1998), "Critical Incident Technique," in *Qualitative Methods and Analysis in Organizational Research: A Practical Guide*, Gillian Symon and Catherine Cassell, eds. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 51-72

<sup>2</sup> Gilbert, Nigel (2001). *Researching Social Life*. New Delhi; Sage Publications Pvt.Ltd.

<sup>3</sup> Wengraf, Tom (2001). *Qualitative Research Interviewing*. New Delhi; Sage Publications.

programme coordinators and librarians in order to enhance validity of the data. All interviewees were audio taped to supplement the written interview notes. The audio taped information was used to clarify and enhance the written notes during data analysis.

### **3.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH**

In the light of Creswell (1998)<sup>4</sup>, there are three main factors that determine the nature of a research. First, researchers “choose a qualitative study because the topic needs to be explored”. The nature of this research was to explore about the provision and support given to those students. It explores how the students studying in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired were being educated and equipped. Second, in this research, the researcher went out and talked to the people, students, administrators etc. face to face for information and this agrees with Creswell’s point of view of qualitative research that the research should be conducted in natural settings and “the researcher is an instrument of data collection” who goes to the field to gather data in the form of words or images. Third, the collected data would be carefully analysed in order to find the meanings of informants, and the view of the topic will be presented in details (Creswell (1998)<sup>5</sup>. Hence, it was determined that a qualitative research could better match the research questions and the set objectives.

### **3.2 CASE STUDY**

The case study is potentially the most valuable method known for obtaining a true and comprehensive picture of individuality. A case study is a comprehensive study of a social unit of society, which may be a person, family group, institution, community or event. As

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<sup>4</sup> Creswell, John W. (1998) Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five traditions. New Delhi; Sage Publications Pvt. Ltd. Pp.14

<sup>5</sup> Creswell, John W. (1998) Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five traditions. New Delhi; Sage Publications Pvt. Ltd. Pp.14



such, for the present study case study technique is used. Case study is not a method of data collection; rather it is a research strategy, or an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon by using multiple sources of evidence.

Mitchel (1983:192)<sup>6</sup> has also maintained that a case study is not just a narrative account of an event or a series of events but it involves analysis against an appropriate theoretical framework or in support of theoretical conclusions.

Through case study a researcher can obtain a real and enlightened of personal experiences which would reveal man's inner strivings, tensions and motivations that drive him to action along with the forces that direct him to adopt a certain pattern of behavior. Information collected under the case study method helps a lot to the researcher in the task of constructing the appropriate questionnaire or schedule for the said task requires through knowledge of the concerning universe.

### **3.3 RESEARCH TOOL**

(i) **Interviews:** The major way in which qualitative researchers seek to understand the perceptions, feelings, experiences, and knowledge of people is through in- depth, intensive interviewing, not just open ended items on questionnaire.

For the following study, an interview schedule was prepared to find out the attitude and opinion of the students, teachers, parents, teachers and administrators. The schedule was sent for the expert validity to the professors of different departments and after consulting and receiving their feedback the schedule was drafted for the final time. The interview schedules which were both structured and unstructured were prepared to elicit the required information from the subjects.

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<sup>6</sup> Mitchell, J.C., (1983) Case and Situation Analysis, Sociological Review: 31(2).

Structured interview involves the use of a set of pre- determined questions of highly standardized techniques of recording. Thus, it lets the interviewer to follow a rigid procedure laid, asking question in a form and order prescribed.

In unstructured interviews, the interviewer is allowed much greater freedom to ask, in case of need, supplementary questions or at times he/ she may omit certain questions if the situation so requires. Unstructured also demand deep knowledge and greater skill on the part of interviewer. The main drawback of unstructured interview is that it is time consuming and difficult while analyzing the data or the responses.

(ii) **Observation:** Observation is another method used for data collection in qualitative research. The difference between the use of observation in quantitative and qualitative research lies in the degree of flexibility and freedom in what and how to observe, and in recording and analyzing the data generated through it. This method was used in the study by the researcher to collect in- depth data by using observation schedule. The schedule was later studied and analyzed

(iii) **Self- made questionnaires:** Self- made questionnaires were also used to supplement the other tools which were also constructed through an expert validity to elicit the relevant data among the students, teachers, community members and administrators of the school. Observation sheet was prepared to collect the data and record it which was later analyzed. Questionnaires were prepared for the teachers, students, community members, parents of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired.

### **3.4 THE PROCEDURE**

After being granted the permission from the departmental head and supervisor to conduct the study, the researcher went to the Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department

of Government of Sikkim, Tadong to ask for the permission letter for the research work in the particular school i.e. Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired, Namchi.

The researcher had to stay in and around Namchi for almost 3 months for her study. The researcher started her work after explaining the head of the school, the headmaster about her project and ultimately the permission was granted. Rapport was built initially with the students, teachers and the other teaching and non- teaching staff. Observation was documented in the personal sheets and the interviews were all recorded.

### **3.5 QUALITATIVE ANYALSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

Qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. Richardson (2000)<sup>7</sup> reminds us that qualitative analysis and writing involve us not just in making sense of the world but also in making sense of our relationship to the world therefore in discovering things about ourselves even as we discover things about some phenomenon of interest. Data collected through audio taped interviews, questionnaires, observation, casual conversations were examined, transcribed and compared with the field notes to identify insights, themes and concepts. Pictures were also captured which has been presented in the preceding chapters. Since case study approach to qualitative analysis constitutes a specific way of collecting, organizing and analyzing data; in that sense, it represents an analysis process. All the data once organized were analysed in a thematic way. Thematic analysis and interpretation was used in this research. Thematic analysis is a foundation method for qualitative analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Thematic analysis involves searching across a set of data, for

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<sup>7</sup> Richardson, L. (2000). Writing: A method of inquiry. Handbook of qualitative inquiry. CA; Sage Publications.

example a number of interviews, to find repeated patterns of meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2006)<sup>8</sup>.

Qualitative interpretation begins with elucidating meanings. Interpretation, definition, involves going beyond the descriptive data. Interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, making sense of findings, offerings explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings, and otherwise imposing order on an unruly but surely patterned world. The analysis of the content has been done using thematic analysis in the study.

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<sup>8</sup> Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology, University of Auckland and University of West England, 3, 77-101.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **AN ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION**

#### **4.1 Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually**

##### **Impaired: An Introduction**

There is always an ongoing question and debates among the professionals of differently-abled for which system is better; the integrated or the special? This question has not yielded any satisfactory answers till now. For visually impaired, two such programs to educate the visually impaired and low vision came into surface in 1700's and 1900's. One being the special school and another one was integrated school. The first educational program was the special school where the visually impaired and low vision children studied and stayed together. Often the special schools are residential much unlike the integrated school. In integrated schools, the visually impaired students attend a regular school nearby their house. They study with other sighted or normal children in a regular classroom and receive extra support and services from the teachers who have specialization in the particular field.

There are many government, private schools and colleges in Sikkim state. The topic of Inclusive Education came up in many national and international meetings and seminars. This co- incidentally brought in many changes in the structure of existing Special schools around the world. Special schools were not only to educate the special children but also to act as a resource centre. It had to act as a support system to equip the visually impaired children studying in special schools as well as to those studying in mainstream schools with vocational skills. The commitments and decisions were stated in the papers and

documents like the Salamanca Statement (1994), Creating Inclusive Schools (2002), For All Children to Succeed (2005), Inclusive and Special Education Review (2005), and in the Education Act (as amended in 2006). Inclusive education overshadowed the existence of special schools. One of the reason was Inclusive education was much economical than special schools. Many reforms have taken place in the education of the differently-abled. Although inclusive and mainstreaming has been the latest topic to be discussed for the education of the visually impaired, the existence of special schools cannot be ignored.

Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute is the only existing grant-aided residential and day provision school for the visually impaired in Sikkim. It is about 6 kilometres away from Namchi town, in Boomtar area, South Sikkim. Established in the year 1987 the school was being run by the National Association for the Blind, Sikkim till 2014. Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the visually impaired has now been undertaken by the Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department of Government of Sikkim. The land area of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired is 3.2400 hectare overall including the land where the building has been built up. It has been more than a decade that this school is trying to cater the requirements of the visually impaired children of the state of Sikkim. This is a residential school. The school serves to impart education as well as equip the students with their disability into many vocational skills. Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired imparts elementary education so the school is only till class five but the school has been providing residential facilities to those visually impaired students admitted into inclusive for further education. After getting the basic elementary education the children who are studying here are then

transferred to other mainstreaming schools in around Namchi particularly to Girls' Senior Secondary School and Boys' Senior Secondary School. Those who wish to pursue further studies are then admitted to Namchi Government College. Residential schools for the visually impaired are no longer secluded from the normal life nowadays. Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute acts as a passage to channel those students who require adjustment and provides special training to get adjusted in the society in normal settings. The school, parents and the community is a linkage to strengthen and check quality education. Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired has been maintaining rapport with the local regular mainstream schools and is providing them students every year. Census (2001)<sup>1</sup> claims to account more than 10,000 visually impaired people in the state of Sikkim. This is the only special school for the visually impaired of Sikkim state. It is debatable whether or not special schools should exist where main emphasis is given to mainstreaming and inclusive education in this era. Also what would happen to those special schools if we sent all the visually impaired to normal schools or for inclusive education is of concern.

When there was no organisations to take up the cause of the differently-abled children in the State, a voluntary group was formed named as National Association for the Blind based on the initiatives taken by Mrs. Trithy Talyarkhan who was the wife of then Governor of Sikkim, Mr. Homi J. H. Talyarkhan in the year 1981. After the formation of the NGO, one such special school was opened in the State which was known as Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Handicapped or the Blind School. The school remained as a voluntary and private provision with no government help till 2012.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.rehabcouncil.nic.in/writereaddata/vi.pdf>

The school was started on 15<sup>th</sup> September, 1987 in the panchayat ghar which was provided by the Rural Development Department, Namchi. The enrolment then was only 6 children with one trained blind teacher. The idea to make it residential came later when it was found out that the majority of the students belonged from a very poor financial background. So, the school extended support to those children by giving them free residential facilities with every necessary amenities including food, uniform and lodging free of cost. The children were assigned with two house mothers to look after them. The classes were only two; Pre A and Pre B. Later on, the school shifted to the newly constructed building which had ten rooms to meet the requirement of those special children. Slowly, the basic infrastructures required for the school like the Braille typewriters, teaching aids and equipments, clothes, furniture etc .were collected through the help of various social organisations of the state and outside. Most of the important items were purchased by the school with the school's fund.

The entrance of the school building on the top holds the board which reads “Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Handicapped”, one of the double letter ‘p’ being missed humorously can tell the story about the journey the school has had since its inception. The board still holds the word “handicapped” which is an imperfect language to label the visually impaired or the differently-abled. Nowadays, the language ‘handicapped’ which was always used to describe children with disabilities of the stigma associated with their negative doings in their past has been discouraged world- wide. Therefore, ignoring the board, the school is known as Jawaharlal Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired officially instead of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Handicapped. Through



the official letter heads, documents etc. the change in the name from the word 'handicapped' to 'visually impaired' is officially used.

In new legislation, the term handicap is no longer used (Pope and Tarlow, 1991).<sup>2</sup> It is pertinent to state that language is a powerful instrument. How something is called has important implications for the way it is spoken about and how it is handled. The shift in language from 'handicap' to 'differently-abled' is being largely used around the world. Even in India, the present Prime Minister Narendra Modi said<sup>3</sup> the mindset towards differently-abled people must change and the word 'viklang' (disabled) should be replaced with 'divyang' (endowed with special faculties). "What I want to do is change the mindset about differently-abled people. When I say let's use the word 'divyang', it is about that change," he said at a public meeting after distributing wheelchairs, electronic hearing aids and skill certificates to the differently-abled people.

Established by National Association for the Blind, Sikkim Branch with the aim to impart education for the all-round development for the visually challenged children of the State Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired was started to work for the advancement of social, economic, educational and mental development of the visually impaired children of Sikkim. It is noteworthy to add that this school was the winner of 1999 National Awards for recognition of its contribution towards child care and human services. The school has been established to impart education to the visually impaired that are looked down in our society as the lesser privileged and equip them to earn and learn simultaneously. It is said that special schools should have deep learning and

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<sup>2</sup> Pope, Andrew M., & Tarlow, Alvin R. (Eds.) (1991). Disability in America: Toward a National Agenda for Prevention. Journal of Disability Policy Studies, Vol. (3).

<sup>3</sup> PM Narendra Modi suggests use of 'divyang' for persons with disability in his 'Mann ki Baat', dated 27<sup>th</sup> December, 2015.

understanding of students with additional learning and support needs. Hence, it cannot work alone on itself without the involvement of other agencies like community, parents and administrators. Special school with residential facilities require more cost and infrastructure. Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute has been fortunate enough to avail the basic facilities so far. The main resources of the institute is generated through government grants, donations from charitable trusts and individuals and other fund raising efforts of the State Branch of National Association for the Blind. Despite of all, it needs great appreciation for the work being done by the National Association for the Blind so far in establishing and for the smooth functioning of the school till 2014 and also for continuous support in providing these deprived children of their rights through education and placements. Though the school has now been taken over by the Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department of Government of Sikkim, the role of National Association for the Blind of the state has not ceased yet. The organisation is still acting as an interim facilitator over the school's several programmes.

The thought of making the school a residential one came to the administrators later when they found out that many of the students were facing problems as they were from different localities and districts. Also the parents' economic condition did not allow the children to study in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired as it did not provide any hostel facilities. So, taking into account these factors as primary one the school decided to provide residential facilities for the visually impaired students. Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for Visually Impaired then became a residential school offering free education along with lodging facilities to the visually impaired.

Since the school's inception in 1987 the school has been contributing a lot in educating and equipping the visually impaired children. So, the present study is to focus how and in what way is the school meeting the demands of the visually impaired children.



(Pic.1. Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired, Boomtar, Namchi)

## **4.2 Status and Objective of the School**

The main objective of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute is to impart education for the all-round development of the visually challenged children of the state, Sikkim and to prepare these children to attend mainstream schools. It also equips the children with some basic vocational skills like candle- making, cane weaving, envelope making and basket-making. As much as possible the students are encouraged to pursue academic studies along with the vocational skills but for those who are unable to cope up with their academic studies after certain stage they are send to impart vocational training through the institute to various other states.

### **4.3 Infrastructural and Instructional Facilities**

To educate and equip the visually impaired children it is important to have a conducive environment as well as efficient equipments. The physical environment (classroom layout and appearance, classroom arrangement, furniture arrangement etc.) contribute a lot to promote active-learning method.

The classroom environment significantly influences what students learn, identifying and analysing classroom requirements allows teachers to anticipate or explain problems a given student might experience. The ways in which teachers present content or skills to students and evaluate whether learning has occurred are the essence of teaching and are crucial for accommodating children with special needs. Teachers can use a numerous kind of different approaches to teach the content and skills to bring out the learning outcome from a student. The physical environment of the school, including buildings and the school area, could be barriers for inclusion. Special School exist to help the students to adjust into mainstreaming or inclusion. Overall, the infrastructure and the instructional facilities constitute a major role for the establishment of effective teaching- learning process. A pleasant physical environment and a supportive infrastructure are likely to improve access to education for all children (Polat, 2011).<sup>4</sup>

#### **4.3(i) Infrastructural Facilities**

The physical layout of the classroom can be a major consideration in providing inclusive educational opportunities for students with visual impairments. In order to navigate successfully in the classroom and building, they need to have an understanding of the physical layout of the building and classroom. The physical fabric of buildings can be a

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<sup>4</sup> Polat, F. (2011). Inclusion in education: A step toward social justice. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 31(1), 50-58.

problem in embracing inclusion. Some school buildings are not suitable for children with disabilities or Special Educational Needs and this can cause problems for children with SEN (Drudy and Kinsella, 2009).<sup>5</sup>

### **4.3 (i)a. The School**

Gideon, John and others (1992)<sup>6</sup> have defined residential school as: “A school in which the pupils are provided dormitory accommodation and live apart from normal family environment other than holidays and weekends.” Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired is a residential school. Like all the special schools for the visually impaired this school has also been trying to provide complete education and care for the visually impaired children. The special school like Jawaharlal Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired however, have some advantages like they can play an active role in giving resource support for the mainstream schools by providing specialised services. Also since the children are taught by a specialist having expertise on specific impairments, their needs are understood better.

The physical infrastructure of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute’s campus consist of a school building, a playground, separate hostels for both boys and girls, toilets, a vocational centre, staff quarters, a kitchen cum dining rooms and a garden.

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<sup>5</sup> Drudy, S. and Kinsella, W. (2009). ‘Developing an Inclusive System in a Rapidly Changing European Society’, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 13:6,647 — 663

<sup>6</sup> Gideon, John; Sobti, Alka; and Rawat, V. S. (1992) *A Dictionary of Special Education*, New Delhi; Creative Publishers, P. 137

**Table 1. The school's profile**

School building	Nos.
Hostel with attached toilets	2
Vocational Centre	1
Kitchen cum dining rooms	1
Playground	1
Garden	1
Toilet	1
Staff quarters	2

Separate quarters are allotted to the headmaster and for the hostel superintendent.

Attached to the hostel, the house masters are given separate rooms also.

- **Office:** There is one office in the school which also serves as a staff room for the teachers. Various certificates, medals and letters of appreciation are displayed inside the office. The office is managed by the office assistant.
- **Computer room:** Altogether there are twelve computers out of which 6 are in the working condition. All the students of all the classes are clubbed together inside the computer room during the last period of the class. There are taught together. Each computer is shared by two students sometimes.
- One separate building which serves as a kitchen and dining rooms for the children is there next to the school building. One cook is also there who manages the kitchen section and resides nearby the school. She gets ample help from the students in cutting, peeling the vegetables etc.

- **The rooms/ classes:** There are altogether 6 classes starting from pre- primary to class five. There is one computer room, one room for the printing and binding of books and papers, one small Braille library, one office cum staff room and one extra room where the excess chairs and desks are kept.
- **Braille library:** The school has one Braille library.
- **Printing and binding room:** One room is kept as a printing and binding room where examination papers and other small paper works are processed. The peon is in charge of this room.
- **Playground:** One big playground is there which is near the school building. Many children from the school's neighbourhood come and play in the school's playground and make the best use of the slides and other playing models. There are some swings, see- saws, slides etc. in the playground of the school.
- **Garden of senses:** Recently one garden of senses has been built in the school compound by National Association Blind, Sikkim with the collaboration of State Bank of India. Toilets. A newly constructed school's latrine is there which is used jointly by the teachers as well as the students. It is nearby the school building so the students and the teachers can have access to it anytime without any difficulty. There is water facility inside the toilet.

The enrollment ratio of the visually impaired students in the school is only 12. Hence, the students of Class one and nursery are clubbed together and taught because of the less number of students in these classes. One separate kitchen with attached two dining rooms is there at the back of the school building.

The rooms looked old and required some renovation and the windows of the classes and other rooms were without the glass panes. During monsoon, many of the classes used to get disturbed because of the leakage in the ceiling. One of the teachers shared her experience by saying,

*.....when it rains the class gets disturbed and I have to shift the children to a dry place where the rain doesn't drip from the ceiling. When it thunders and there is a strong wind, it is difficult to close the windows and to stay warm as many of the window panes made of glasses are all broken.*

The unsuitable physical environments in mainstream schools, with inaccessible buildings and classroom spaces, have contributed to teachers' attitudes (Evans & Lunt, 2002).<sup>7</sup>

There are two separate hostel building allocated for boys' and girls'. Clean bathroom with toilet facilities are available. For each hostel there has been assigned one female hostel mother whose responsibility is to look after them. The role of house mothers is same like that of a real mother and that is the reason why they are known as hostel mothers instead of hostel warden. Special children require special care and attention. In this regard while doing informal casual conversations with one of the hostel mothers, she remarked.....

*.....we look at the visually impaired as an object of sympathy like who needs help all the time but being with them and spending 24X7 with them I forget that am surrounded by visually impaired children after looking at their activities which are so normal like us. They can do all the*

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<sup>7</sup> Evans, J., & Lunt, I. (2002). Inclusive education: Are there limits? *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 17(1), 1–14.



*work like us be it be rationing, shopping, cleaning etc. They are actually smarter than us.*

After their schools hours, the students are assigned with hostel chores like helping the cook in cutting the vegetables in the kitchen, cleaning the hostel rooms, rationing etc. To face the challenges of life the students are assigned these chores by the hostel superintendent. She lighted up saying this,

*“.....they have to know how to look after themselves. These chores which we are assigning to them will help them in their later years of their life. They will be able to live independently without any one’s support. “*

The students perform their duties obediently. Many of the students knew how to cook food. They help their parents whenever they go home during their holidays preparing the food and doing other household chores. All the students excluding the junior students follow the hostel duty. The junior students of Classes nursery and I are excused in this regard.

The school has a playground but the students were not seen playing and doing any activities which could help them in their physical development. Upon asking the headmaster and the teachers as well as the students why they were not playing, the answer of the students were all the same; they did not like playing. There were no equipments as such for the children to play around.



(Pic 2. Souvenirs and certificates displayed in the office of the school)



(Pic. 3. The playground of the school)



(Pic. 4. School's braille library)

#### **4.3 (i) b. Human Resource**

It is evident in past and present studies that resources, materials, equipment and an inclusive curriculum are also determinants of teacher attitudes towards inclusion and inclusive practices (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; Mapesa, 2006; Chireshe, 2011).<sup>8</sup>

The table below contains the list of all the teaching staff along with their credentials.

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<sup>8</sup> Scruggs, T. E., & Mastropieri, M. A. (1996). Teacher perceptions of mainstreaming/inclusion, 1958-1995: A research synthesis. *Exceptional Children*, 63(1), 59-74.

- **Teaching Staff**

**Table 1. List of teaching staff.**

Name	Date of Joining	Academic Qualifications	Any specialised training	Professional Qualifications	Trained/ Untrained	ST/SC/ OBC/ General	Subjects taught
Jiwan Rai	1988	XIIth passed	Typing course	T.T training	Trained	OBC	EVS, English
Samuel Subba	1993	Xth passed	Technical training course		Trained	ST	EVS.
Devima ya Chettri	1989	Xth passed	Training on Braille enrichment		Trained	General	Nepali
Chandra Maya gurung	1991	X <sup>th</sup> passed	Training on Braille enrichment		Trained	OBC	Eng, Braille
Gayatri Thapa	2002	B.A passed	Diplomain special education	Trained in numerous special education	Trained	OBC	Math
Mrs. Dechen Bhutia		XII <sup>th</sup> passed	Training on Braille enrichment		Trained	ST	Math, EVS, Hindi.
Mr. Pema Tamang	1999	10 <sup>th</sup> passed	Trained in Music (Sitar)		Trained	ST	Music
Mrs. Deepna Tamang	2014	XII <sup>th</sup> passed	Diploma in typing		Trained	ST	Eng, Braille.
Mr. Suk Bdr. Subba	2016	XII <sup>th</sup> passed	Computer training		Trained	ST	Computer

All the teachers are visually impaired except for the two who are sighted. The teachers were all appointed by the National Association for the Blind, Sikkim. Among these nine teachers, two have not been regularised. The table no.1 above has the list of all the teachers along with their educational and professional qualifications. The table above shows that all the teachers are trained.

When Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute was being run by National Association for the Blind, the recruitment of the employees of the school was done by the NGO itself. Specialised teacher in the particular field or having the knowledge how to deal with the visually impaired was taken into consideration. In- service training services was given time to time to the teachers. Those who were appointed without any specialised training then, were later provided in- service training. The only special educator of the school was sent for pre- service training by the Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department of the state Sikkim for a term period of 2 years diploma in Special Education from Tura, West Garo Hills, Meghalaya. After the completion of the training, she worked for some time in District Disability Rehabilitation Centre, Gangtok. Later in the year 2002 she was appointed as a Special Educator at Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired by the National association for the Blind. She has had received several specialised trainings on special education till now. After she gets trained attending these trainings, she helps her other colleagues to learn what has been taught in the training that she has attended.

- **Recruitment of the teachers**

Previously when the school was running under National Association for the Blind, the recruitment of the teachers was done by National Association for the Blind and now since it is handed over to the Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department, the teaching and the non- teaching staff both are recruited by the department itself. After the transfer of administration to the state government there has not been any recruitment so far through Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department.

All the teachers of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired were appointed by National Association for the Blind then and all belongs to Sikkim state itself. Those visually impaired teachers are the product of Mary Scott Home for the Blind, Kalimpong which falls under Darjeeling district, West Bengal. All of them have done their schooling through mainstream schools of Kalimpong after passing out from the residential school i.e. Mary Scott Home for the Blind. Majority of the teachers had received in- service teachers' training to teach the visually impaired after joining the school under the guidance of National Association for the Blind. One female teacher who was working in the Human Resource Development Department of Namchi as a clerk was sent to Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired and she is currently working in the school on deputation basis. She had been once a student of this school and had married one of the teachers of the same school. All the teachers had been serving their tenure in this school since more than 15 years and some of them are going to get retired also.

There is nine teaching staff including the computer teacher designated as assistant teachers. There is only one special educator in the school who is a graduate and rest of the teachers had undergone special training programmes and workshops to teach visually impaired children. These teachers were all appointed by National Association for the Blind, Sikkim. Out of nine teachers, two are sighted. Seven are regularized and one is getting the salary as a muster roll employee and one on deputation basis. The headmaster of the school is also visually impaired. The headmaster has done teachers training course for the visually impaired from BBA, R.K. Mission, Narendrapur, West Bengal in 1979 and a typing course from George Institute of Commerce. He was one of the founding

members of Disabled training centre in Pipaley in Sept. 1981 which is now known as Shelter Workshop in Jorethang under Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department. Having completed his schooling from mainstream school in Kalimpong, he has been appointed in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired as a teacher in the year 1988. Later he has been designated as a headmaster of the school since 2003. He teaches English and Environmental Science (EVS) to classes III and above.

Only one teacher is there who has done B. Ed in special education in Master Trainer in Multiple Disabilities from TURA, Meghalaya. She teaches Mathematics from class three onwards. There is one vocational teacher who had joined Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired in the year 1993 and has done matriculation from West Bengal in the year 1981. He is also visually impaired. He has done technical training course (Light engineering) from Blind Relief Association in 1991 and is also the founding member of Disabled training centre in Pipaley, West Sikkim. He teaches children to weave through cane and teaches candle and envelope making and many other vocational skills to the children. Apart from vocational skills, he teaches other subjects as well in the classes.

- **Non- teaching staff and the hostel staff's profile**

**Table 3. List of non- teaching staff and the hostel staff.**

Name	Date of joining	Designation	Professional skills/ Training
1. Nanda Kumar Rai	1995	UDC cum Accountant	English typing course/basic computer course
2. Geeta Sharma	2004	Hostel Superintendent	Mobility instructor for the visually impaired/Special Olympic Bharat coach training/diploma in typing course.
3. Devendra Pradhan	1987	Child Care Taker	None.
4. Rupa Rai	1990	House mother	None.
5. Arjun Darjee	2000	Office Peon	Basic computer Training/Duxbury Braille training/OB Recording Software training
6. Da Doma Rai	1993	Cook	None.
7. Ganga Prasad Rai	1998	Night guard	None.
8. Som Kumar Rai	1991	Sweeper	None.



The table below shows the list of non- teaching and hostel staff categorised as regularised and non- regularised.

**Table 4. List of Non- teaching staff and hostel staff as regularised and non- regularised.**

Designation	Nos.
<i>Office Clerk</i>	<i>1(Non regularised)</i>
<i>Hostel Superintendent</i>	<i>1 (Regularised)</i>
<i>Hostel Mothers</i>	<i>2 (Regularised)</i>
<i>Peon</i>	<i>1 (Regularised)</i>
<i>Cook</i>	<i>1 (Regularised)</i>
<i>Sweeper</i>	<i>1 (Regularised)</i>
<i>Watchman</i>	<i>1 (Regularised)</i>

The special teacher both with the general staffs is responsible to follow and maintain the Individualised Education Plan (IEP). This is the primary document that helps develop specific plans and outline to assess the students about their specific needs and their eligibility process. The assessment is done with the help of parents, community, specialists and the school. Accordingly, short- term and annual goals are set up and the child is assessed. The major components of the Individualized Educational Plan include statement of current level of performance, annual instructional goals, short-term objective, and statements detailing the special services to be provided and the degree of integration in the regular classroom, schedules for initiation and evaluation of services. The special education teacher conducts further curriculum based assessments to gather the types of

instructionally useful data which will be able to develop appropriate goals and objectives and to know where to begin instruction.

- **Students**

The number of students studying in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired has been described below in the table.

**Table 5. List of students studying in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute**

Serial No.	Class	Male	Female	General	SC	ST	Others	Total
1	I	3	0					3
2	II	3		1		1	1	3
3	III		1				1	1
4	IV		2	1	1			2
5	V	2	1		1	1	1	3

The number of students studying from class one (I-V) is twelve in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute. All stay in the school's hostel except for one child. He is a day scholar. The table above shows the list of students studying in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired. One girl child who was studying in pre-primary class was not brought back to school after the Puja vacation. She was having autistic characteristics as explained by the hostel superintendent. So, the strength of the students at primary level has decreased to 12 at present.

*"It was sad to let her go",* said one of the school teachers.

*“Well! We were helpless. She was having autistic characteristics. She used to bang her head herself against the wall sometimes and if one day any kind of accident takes places then it would be risky for us.”*

The hostel superintendent and the house mother explained.

The majority of the students belong from far- flung areas areas and villages of Sikkim.



(Pic. 5. Headmaster helping the students for the assembly)

**Table 6. List of Students studying in inclusive schools and colleges but availing the hostel facility**

Serial No	Class	Male	Female	SC	ST	General	Others	Total
1	VI		1			1		1
2	VII	2	1		1		2	3
3	VIII	2	1		3			3
4	IX	2			1	1		2
5	X		1			1		1
6	XI	2			1	1		2
7	XII	1	3	2	2	1		4
8	BA. 3 <sup>rd</sup> year	2				1	1	2

The visually impaired students admitted in regular schools and college for mainstreaming for further education but still being provided residential facility are 13 (XVIII) in numbers. The table above shows the list of those students.

- **Admission criteria in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute**

Admission in the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute is done through the following process;

- **Identification of visually impaired child**

The process of identifying the visually impaired children is done generally through the villagers, local community members and by organising free medical eye screening camps in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for Visually Impaired. An awareness campaign is held once the children are identified. This kind of programme is held by different non-

governmental organisations, hospitals etc. to create awareness regarding the education, rights of the visually impaired and also gives free screening tests to them in the State. During these awareness programmes and camps, many people come forward to take the free medical screening tests. This is the time when the NGOs and the health department come to know about the existence of visually impaired people in the State. During the screening and awareness programmes they are made aware of such special schools like Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired of Namchi. It is necessary therefore especially in the villages to organize awareness programmes about the rights of differently-abled and about their educational rights as well. The illiterate parents would then know about the existence of such special schools which caters to the educational needs of visually impaired children free of cost. The efforts of NGOs like the National Association for the Blind and Health Department of Sikkim has been contributing continually in bringing the awareness among the people.

➤ **Medical/ clinical assessment**

In order to get admission in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired. A medical certificate has to be provided by the ophthalmologist indicating the child's visual acuity. This certificate is mandatory while admitting a child in this school.

Looking at the cases of those children already admitted in Jawaharlal Nehru Institute for the Visually Impaired, the certificates were provided by the ophthalmologist but without the visual acuity.

➤ **Assessment through observation/ awareness**

Another way of identifying the visually impaired is through the teacher. A teacher teaching in other inclusive schools can also identify students having visual impairments on the basis of the child's behavior in the class and outside the class.

National Association for the Blind, Sikkim organizes such awareness programmes on visual impairment and provides medical facilities. It also makes projects wherein the teachers and the staff members of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute are engaged to go out to villages and identify children having symptoms of visual impairment.

The need of a child for special education for the visually impaired is confirmed by an ophthalmologist. The admission is open to both boys and girls without any discrimination of caste, creed, region, religion etc. provided the child is visually impaired and holds a certificate issued by the ophthalmologist. Also the ward/ parents should produce domicile certificate of the state and adhaar card along with the child's birth certificate as a proof of identity. Those children having visual acuity above 40% and certified as visually impaired by the doctors are accepted by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired.



(Pic 6. Students of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute during the morning assembly)

#### **4.3 (ii) Instructional Facilities**

The lack of instructional and other educational resources present roadblocks to a teacher's efforts to include all learners. And when there is a shortfall in materials and equipments, these students are severely affected. In order to prepare these students of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired for mainstreaming/inclusive education it was observed that the teachers were concerned about the resources they would need. As the researcher noted, the school did not have adequate or proper materials or resources for children, a concern also raised by the participants. Without appropriate resource materials a number of problems arise.

The types of instructional materials the school use have a major impact on the academic success of students with special needs.

### **4.3 (ii) a. Textbooks**

*Opportunity versus Accessibility* is what was seen in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired. School building with a residential facility and having a compound of 3.2400 hectares is not sufficient enough to meet the education of the students. If only opportunity is given and there is no facilities as such to avail these opportunities then the Right to Education for the visually impaired fails in this regard. There is a shortage of Braille books. The school has been managing till now to meet the education of the children by using the same books every year. In times when the syllabuses get changed then the school is obliged to follow the same old syllabus until the new transcribed version in Braille does not arrive in the school. It is not that this problem has not been highlighted by the teachers to the concerned department but usually by the time the books were printed in braille and reached the school, sometimes the session would get over by then. They have been facing problems whenever they wanted to continue with the same books printed in Braille the next year as many of the contents and syllabus would have been changed by then. Some teachers particularly the sighted ones are managing till now by borrowing the printed books from other regular government schools. The majority of the teachers teaching in the school are visually impaired so it becomes difficult for them to follow the track like their sighted colleagues. So due to the shortage of transcribed books into Braille the students have to suffer after they pass out from the school and join a new class outside Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired. Many a times, they are questioned why they did not learn the particular topic and has to a victim of embarrassment. The gap begins from then for them. The textbooks are provided to Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually



Impaired by the Human Resource Department of government of Sikkim. The pattern and syllabus of this special school follows the same CBSE pattern like that of other govt. schools and all the NCERT published books are send by Human Resource Development Department of the state to the school but these books has to be printed in braille for the convenience of the teachers and students. Braille format of the textbooks is necessary so there has always been a problem in getting the transcribed braille books on time. The teachers as well as the students had to face several challenges because of the shortage of braille books. Since majority of the teachers are visually impaired excluding two teachers who are sighted, the untimely deliverance of the textbooks has often led them to skip many important chapters and lessons

*“Opportunity without Accessibility is useless”*.....one of the teachers of the school quoted when discussing about mainstreaming. Integrated or mainstreaming education for the differently- abled is a good step provided all the facilities are there in the school otherwise it is useless.

#### **4.3 (ii) b. Teaching Aids**

Few teaching aids were available like a tactile globe, and a water cycle chart were found in the school. The other teaching aids were all old and disheveled.



(Pic.7. A tactile globe)



(Pic. 8. A tactile water cycle chart )

The special educator of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute knows and has the knowledge how to make teaching aids and learning materials for the visually impaired

and many times she had tried and made but it was not possible to access those materials every time. Therefore, she does not make it nowadays.

*‘If there had been some more sighted teachers in this school and if the materials would have been provided, then so many different things I could have made for these children’.* The special educator said.

#### **4.3 (ii) c. Teaching Learning Materials**

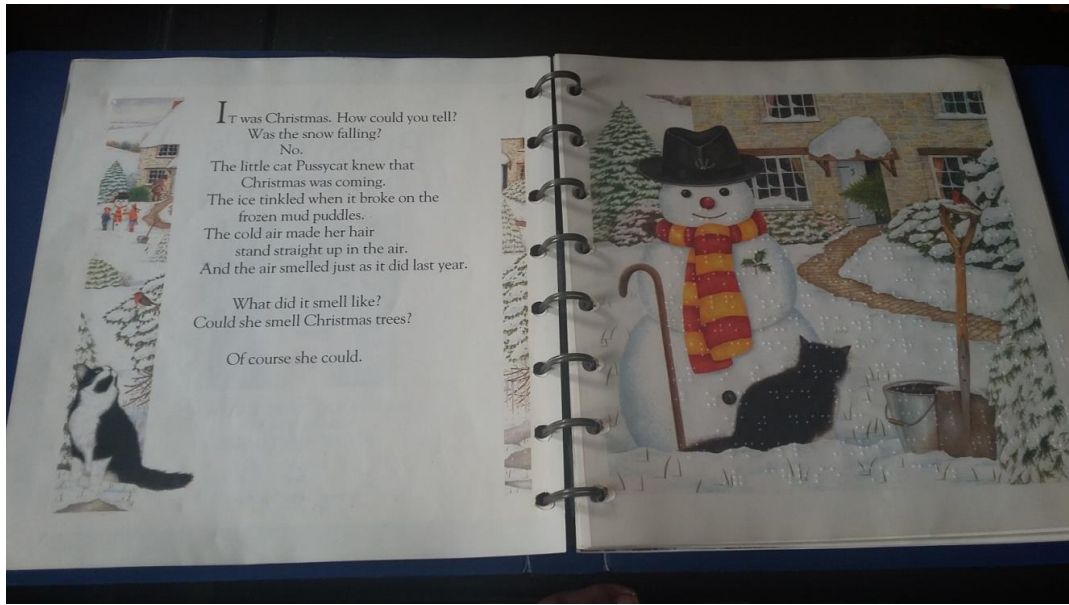
Special materials and equipment can enhance the education of students who have visual impairments. The nature of their disability has a significant impact on how instruction should be provided; however some general practices apply for most, if not all, students with these problems (Parker and Pogrund, 2009).<sup>9</sup>

The children have no access to new teaching learning materials till now. There were some old teaching learning materials for the pre- primary classes which were purchased by National Association for the Blind, contained some tactile alphabets along with pictures. There were some story books which were found in the office’s shelf which were gifted to the school through charitable organizations. Few teaching learning materials were also there which were gifted to the school by the students of DIET of the state.

*“Most of the teaching learning materials which are here are not perfect or proper and have become old as well.”*....one of the teacher said.

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<sup>9</sup> Parker, A. T., & Pogrund, R. L. (2009). A review of research on the literacy of students with visual impairment and additional disabilities. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 103, 635–648.



(Pic. 9. Scripted and transcribed story book)

**4.3(ii) d. Vocational Skills:** The school has one big hall just below the school building and has named it as Vocational Centre to develop the vocational skills like weaving, sewing, envelope and candle making etc. and also to develop the childrens' skill in singing, playing musical instruments. The centre has musical instruments like guitar, sitar, drums etc.

The vocational centre was found closed since the arrival of the researcher. Even though the information was provided that the students of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired were skilled in making candles, envelopes, cane weaving etc. still there was no such classes held during the researcher's observation. It was unfortunate to find out that the training was kept at halt after the materials were stopped being provided.

During one of the conversations, when asking the reason why the vocational centre was closed the teacher said,

*.....there are no teaching learning materials like canes and wax and proper teaching aids for the children to teach them in the school. How to teach them when there are no such materials that are required to teach them?*

It was observed during one of the interviews that the officer had no idea regarding the scarcity of teaching learning materials and the materials required for the vocational centre in the school. He himself was shocked to find out the reason why the centre had remained closed. Improper inspection, guidance along with awareness from the part of the department could deprive the children of their educational rights.

The students have much inclination towards music and Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired has been able to teach children how to play various musical instruments and sing as well. The children participate in musical programmes and concerts and have been able to bring award to the school several times. One teacher who is also visually impaired and a product of Mary Scott Home for the Blind, Kalimpong has been assigned as a music teacher in the school. Upon asking whether or not he conducts tests and examination to the students, his answer was positive. Apart from giving them the practical knowledge about various musical instruments and music, he gives the children the theoretical knowledge as well. He was proud to mention some of his ex- students name who had started music as their career and who are doing well in this field. He himself has done a 7 years course in playing sitar from Kolkata.

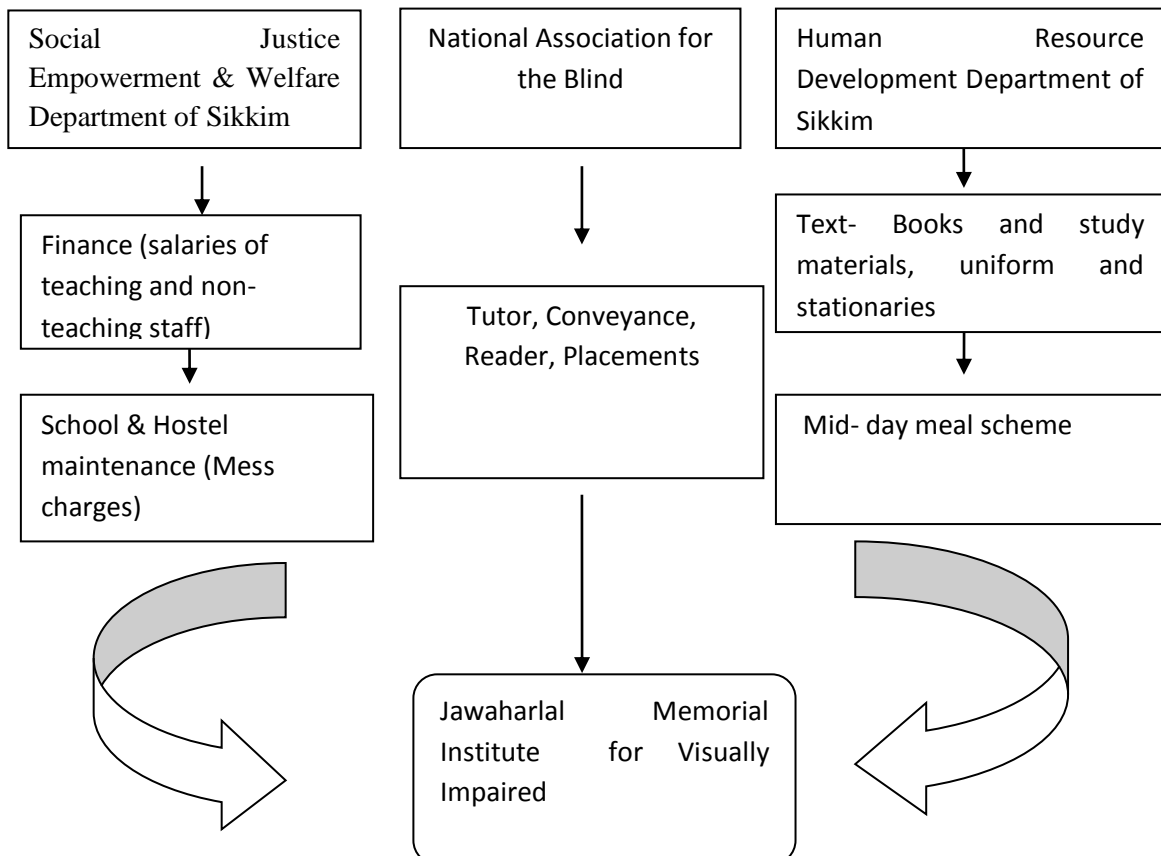


(Pic. 10. The vocational centre of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute)

#### 4.4 Administration, Planning and Finance

Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired provides free food and lodging facilities including clothing to their students.

#### ADMINISTRATION, PLANNING AND FINANCE



Overall the school is working under Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department of Sikkim and it is administered by the department officials of South District, Namchi in collaboration with the Human Resource Development Department. The head office is in Lumsey, Tadong, Gangtok. The textbooks and the uniforms are provided by the Human Resource Development Department, Namchi. The hostel mess fees are borne by the Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department of Sikkim. The school has included in their body the community members like;

- District Commissioner, Namchi,
- Joint Director (Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department of Sikkim, Namchi),
- Block Development Officer, Namchi,
- Officer of Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department of Sikkim, Namchi).

National Association for the Blind, Sikkim is still attached with the school. The body is supporting the visually impaired students who are admitted in inclusive schools, residing in the hostel by providing them a tutor, reader and conveyance facilities. They also guide them for vocational training and guide the students for placements in other institutes.

#### **4.5 Special Support Services**

Under Education of Persons with Disabilities Act it has been stated that the Schools for the differently-abled will be located within easy traveling distance. Alternatively, viable travel arrangements will be made with the assistance of the community, State and NGOs.

As such, the role of National Association for the Blind of Sikkim, a non- governmental organization has been providing the students of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute many aids which are discussed below.

➤ **Garden of senses**

National Association for the Blind has handed over the school to Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department, Sikkim. Still they provide some support services to the school to some extent. The garden of senses which is within the school compound has been built by the National Association for the Blind to develop the rest of the senses of the visually impaired children. In a unique initiative, the National Association for the Blind (NAB) planted a “Garden of Senses” for the visually challenged children of the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute on 14<sup>th</sup> of July, 2015 in Boomtar, Namchi. Different aromatic and medicinal plants provided by Forest and Horticulture departments were planted in an artistic manner in the premises of the Institute as an extension of Paryavaran Mahotsav, 2016 under the sponsorship of State Bank of India. The garden of senses has collection of medicinal herbs and plants which has smell and can be easily identified by the children when they smell them or touch them. This is to help develop their senses. The main point of the idea was that the visually challenged children have often more advanced perception of their other faculties. It is hoped that the Garden of Senses would help in nurturing their bond with nature. A total of over 150 herbs like aloe vera, asparagus, lavender, rosemary, thyme, tulsi, etc. and fruit trees like guava, papaya and orange were planted. The program was coordinated and led by Mrs. Jayshree Pradhan, President of National Association for the Blind, along with their team. Students of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired accompanied by



volunteers from Namchi Government College and National Service Scheme (NSS) took part in the program.

This garden is not just a garden of plantation of samplings of different varieties but has been developed and created with the aim to bring the visually impaired children of the institute closer to nature and learn more about flora, fauna and varieties of vegetation through their insight power of touch and smell.

It was suggested by the director of National Association for the Blind that this garden of senses to be included in the school curriculum to encourage the students learn the varieties of plants through their senses of touch and smell and that periodicals and reports on the activities connected to the garden of senses has to be submitted to his office.



(Pic. 11. Garden of senses)

➤ **Reader**

National Association for the Blind till date has been helping those students admitted to regular mainstreaming schools and residing at Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired. A reader has been hired to help those students curb their problem so that their education does not get hampered. The organization has kept one female reader for them who helps them during their study hour. The reader read the notes aloud for the visually impaired students staying in the hostel. After hearing, these students then make their copy their own exercise copy in Braille for their future reference. She helps the students from evening starting from 5:30 pm.

➤ **Tutor**

National Association for the Blind has assigned one tutor for subject Mathematics subject especially to help those children staying in the hostel and who are studying in other inclusive schools. The teacher comes everyday in the morning from 6 am to 7:30 am to help those children who have difficulty in learning Mathematics. National Association for the Blind has been taking care of the salary of the tutor.

➤ **Conveyance**

Those students who study in inclusive settings or regular schools, outside Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired and staying in the school's hostel, National Association for the Blind has provided a vehicle for them for their transportation. The driver picks them up from the entrance of the school and drops them after school. But for those visually impaired students studying in colleges manage on their own. They have to bear their transportation expenses and facility themselves.

### ➤ **Eye Screening Camp**

National Association for the Blind also provides free medical eye screening and tests often and they give referrals services for those prospective students. The last time the school had the free eye screening camp on 10<sup>th</sup> April, 2016 in collaboration with the Greater Lions Eye Hospital, Siliguri at Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute premises predominantly for the benefit of the students of the Institute. The doctors referred nine students of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired to Greater Lions Eye Hospital, Siliguri for the review. The camp provided free consultation and free screening to the students as well as the teachers of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired. These types of camps are also conducted by government hospitals. Medical teams from each hospital reach patients in rural areas by conducting free eye camps. Students are screened for various eye diseases; those who require cataract surgery are transported to the base hospital, treated, returned to the camp site and followed up all free of cost. If the condition is serious then they are referred to other hospitals outside the state.

It is pertinent to mention that Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired was started by National Association for the Blind. National Association for the Blind is still helping the school whenever there is a delay in getting the help from the concerned department. In order not to deprive the students of those things which can act as a barrier in pursuing their education National Association for the Blind has been providing them the facilities like conveyance, tutor and a reader and the salaries are all being paid by them only. Although the conveyance for students admitted into inclusive schools, students were meant to give pick and drop facility but the owner of the vehicle

provides pick up facility only due to the untimely payment of the fares. There is only one student who goes to Namchi Government College and for him the conveyance is not given as his college route is different than that of others.

### ➤ **Social Support**

The school gets fund in cash and kind through different organizations and people. The received fund goes to the school's fund which is used whenever there arises a need. Some sponsors to buy necessary equipments for the school. The school has been getting sponsors, fund etc. Previously the collected fund used to be taken care of by the National Association for the Blind, in paying off the salaries of the staff and for other amenities. Now, the fund received from charitable organizations are all taken care of by the school managing committee.

### ➤ **Social inclusion**

There are two sighted teachers and majority of the non- teaching staff are also sighted. The visually impaired teachers share a cordial relationship with them. They talk; share their problems with each other. Their disabilities do not stop them in approaching a sighted person. The students studying in inclusive schools also have many sighted friends. The students share the same traits and habits like sighted ones when they together in the class, in the playground and in hostel. The children can go by themselves to do rationing, shopping and even to town without the help of cane.

The students of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute though were not found playing around in the playground still it was informed that the students participate in sports. The school had once participated in the Javelin throw competition and had won the medal in

Guwahati. The students participate in cultural and musical activities organized by the many governmental organizations.

➤ **Extra- curricular Activities**

The school once in a year, usually at the end of the session or the beginning of the session organizes field trip and visits. The children are taken to participate in these extra-curricular activities. The finance is borne through the school's fund only. The students are invited to participate in many cultural programmes as well. Extra- curricular activities for all children are essential. This is an important parameter not only for promoting inclusion outside the classroom among students but also for unfolding of the diverse potentials and talents of both children with and without disabilities.

➤ **Assistive or augmentative technology and software to access the curriculum/ Educational or Rehabilitation Assistive Devices:**

Assistive technology is an important part of an inclusive classroom. An assistive-technology device is any piece of equipment that is used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability. An assistive technology is any service that directly assists a child in the selection, acquisition or use of an assistive technology device according to the Technology- related Assistance for individuals with Disabilities Act of 1998. Computer- generated large print, Braille translations and synthesized speech can assist students using computer- assisted telecommunication devices.

Under the Assistance for Disabled Person to Purchase (ADIP) scheme launched by the Government of India, the National institute for Visually Handicapped (NIVH) has been

distributing low vision devices as well as Daisy players which are a talking book for the visually impaired children of the north east region and Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired was also provided with the Daisy players. Daisy player is a talking book which contains the NCERT books from classes' nine to twelve.

To help the children to bridge the gap created by the scarcity of text- books printed in Braille, the school is working on software to access the curriculum especially for those outgoing students who gets admitted to normal schools, the school is working on software to access the curriculum. This software is called as DAISY which can store up all the chapters contained in a book line by line in English as well as in the vernacular language which is by default in Nepali. This Daisy is a mobile book which can be carried by any student and can be played on anytime.

#### **4.6 Examination and Evaluation**

Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired is a state government special school, affiliated to Central Board of Secondary Education, New Delhi. Keeping their dexterity in mind the school conducts examination only twice in a year. The questions are prepared by the school teachers themselves. Other times, when it is set up by the Human Resource Development Department then it is sent to the school to omit or add the required questions. They have two examination; half yearly and yearly.

The questions are sent to the school to have the teachers view on the set questions. Due to the unavailability of Braille text- books timely, the syllabus cannot be met sometimes. So, when the questions come to the school the teachers chalk out and edit these questions and are sent back to the department. The school does not follow Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation.

Like any other government schools, this school also provides mid- day meal to the children. Some of the teachers also participate in this meal. The expenses of the midday meal are sanctioned by the Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department of Sikkim.

## **4.7 Educational Programmes and Practices**

The educational programmes and practices of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired follow a different pedagogy than the regular schools. It is more challenging and requires perseverance to teach a child who is visually impaired.

### **4.7(i) Concept Formation**

A concept is a mental representation, picture, or idea of what something should be. A concept is formed by grouping objects, events, or experiences together by what they have in common. For the visually impaired the formation of concept is very important to use the other remaining sense organs of their body.

The teachers along with the hostel superintendent and hostel mothers of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute makes sure that a visually impaired child admitted in their school learn about the knowledge of their body parts how they function and move. They teach the students the various ways the different parts of the body can move. As compared to other sighted children, visually impaired children have very poor body movements because they have not developed good concepts about their bodies. Therefore, once the child joins the school, the first and the foremost training is given to wake up their other remaining senses.

- **Body Concept:** They teach the students about the concept of body, its different parts and functioning like how the legs walk, how the fingers move etc.

- **Spatial Concepts:** One of the goals as teachers of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute is to help the visually impaired children learn the ideas and information which help them understand the world around them. Many of the students admitted in the school are brought to the school without any knowledge about relationship between objects and them. While conversing on this topic with the hostel superintendent, she told that many children pick up many of these words in daily interactions but they do not understand others. And without the knowledge of these spatial concepts it will be difficult for them as well as the teacher to introduce them a lesson.
- **Environmental Concepts:** A visually impaired child has to learn the basic concepts about the environment. These concepts help the child to learn how the space around her is organized. This will help the child keep her orientation when travelling and planning travel routes. Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute helps the students to learn the concepts using their own bodies, like walking up- hill or down, jumping, waving etc.

#### **4.7(ii) Pre- Braille Training**

For a visually impaired child to make him/ her understand the concept of Braille is a herculean job but not impossible though. It takes more time and patience while dealing with visually impaired. Before beginning to teach braille reading and writing skills, the teachers of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute helps the child develop good tactual discrimination and finger dexterity (ability to move fingers). If a child has had only limited experience in using his hands, then time is spent in developing tactual



discrimination and finger dexterity before the braille alphabet is introduced. When the students join the school, the teachers do not introduce them directly to stylus or braille instead they help them develop their finger dexterity and tactile discrimination. This is done by making the students squeeze the water out of sponges, kneading putins and making figures out of it, pop bubble wrapping plastics etc. These are the exercises to make the fingers strong and develop the discrimination power through touch. Many times the aids are not available so the teachers takes special care and attention to develop the child's senses or sensory training with the help of simple locally available. Since they cannot see, it is important for the visually impaired child to get acquainted with objects with the help of their remaining senses of hearing, touching and smelling so that he/ she can get familiarized with the embossed codes of Braille. This helps the child to develop the tactile sense and familiarize it with the concept of an embossed and tactile script like Braille.

Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired uses Britain's Braille which is also known as Unified Braille which is a contraction Braille. They have short cut methods for spellings and words. The codes play the major role in unified English Braille. Except Math subject, all the other subjects use the same Braille whereas Math has a different code which is known as Nemeth Code. For vernacular subject like Nepali they have a different Braille which is known as Nepali Bharati Braille. This is used for all the Indian languages. Bharati Braille alphabets use a 6-dot cell with values based largely on English Braille. Letters are assigned as consistently as possible across the various regional scripts of India as they are transliterated in the Latin script, so that, for example, Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, and English are rendered largely the same in Braille. It is a largely

Unified Braille script for writing the languages of India. There was almost complete absence of a common Braille Code for Indian languages. About 10 different Codes were being used by schools in different parts of the country. There was no Braille printing facility, nor a unit for the production of basic assistive devices. In November 1950, Bharati Braille came to be accepted as the National Code. Thereafter, the Central Braille Press and the Workshop for the Manufacture of Braille Appliances – the first ever such unit in the country came to be established in Dehradun.

#### **4.7(iii) Pre-Braille Worksheets**

In Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute once the child has had a variety of experiences in developing tactual discrimination and finger dexterity, the teachers introduce a series of pre-braille worksheets. These worksheets are exercise copies for the visually impaired. These worksheets provided to the students train them to move his hands from left to right, identify the location of braille dots, identify the differences among braille dots and increase tactual awareness. These worksheets are given to the child to use his/ her hands and tactual sense to feel braille without having to worry what letters the dots represent.

#### **4.7(iv) Braille Reading**

After the worksheets are familiarized to the students, reading is introduced in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired as soon as the child starts to learn to write the braille alphabet. The teachers help the students in reading the Braille by making them touch the embossed dots line by line in the early stages. There are other steps that a child is given training like the knowledge of Braille contractions and slate Stylus.

#### **4.7(v) Learning Computer**

There is one computer teacher who is the ex- student of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired. He had joined the school as a computer teacher in the year 2016 and was working before in the Information and Technology Office, Gangtok. The last period for all the classes has computer class and the students are all clubbed together in the computer room and taught theoretically and practically. It was surprising to see the curiosity and excitement of the students when the bell's gong for the last period went. So, to get the students acquainted with the computers, initially keyboard orientation is done by the teacher. The students are familiarized with the typing keys and the accent of the computer. For visually impaired, the computer has talking software which gives the command to the students. So, it is difficult for the students to understand the accent at the first go. After the students gets familiarized with the keys and the accent then the teacher proceeds ahead. By getting the keys and accent orientation training the students will get to know the keys which once pressed is accompanied by the voice of the computer. In this way one will come across to know what they are typing. So typing and familiarizing with the accent is the basic knowledge that the child has to develop. Since the computer teacher happened to be one of the first batch's students, he also shared few of his experiences of his school life. During his time, his batch did not have choice of subjects in the higher secondary level at regular mainstreaming schools. They were obliged to choose Humanities. When he was asked to give an opinion on inclusive schools, he said....

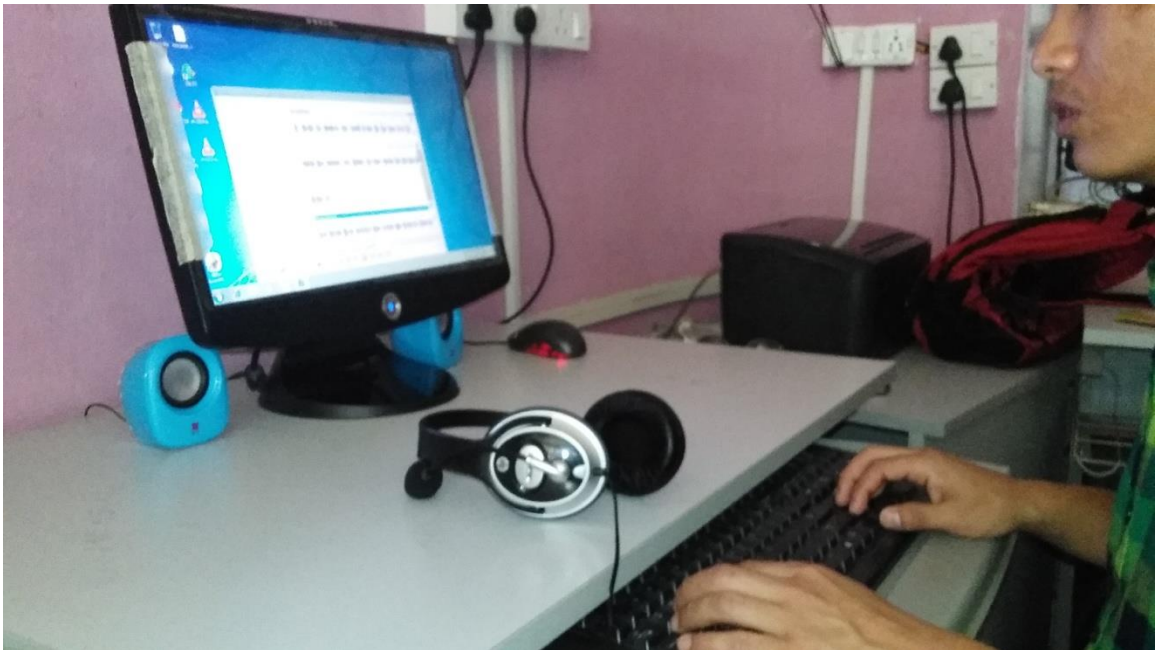
*“Inclusive education is good but infrastructure should also be there.”*

The students of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute are taught how to use Microsoft word and the basics of computer. Other than this they are also given tests and examination from time to time. The students enjoy their last period because they get to play with the computers. All the classes from pre- primary to class five have their last period as computer class so they are all clubbed and taught together. There are ten computers overall in the laboratory out of which six are in the working condition. Two students sit on one computer during their class. The teacher is working presently with one assistive software known as DAISY (Digital Access Information System) which is a digital talking system which contains the whole book with chapters and exercises. This software is developed to help the students get access to books as there is a shortage of printed Braille books for the students. So this DAISY comes as a substitute. It was very interesting to see the reader reading the books, chapter wise, slowly and accurately which gets recorded in the computer. After the reading is completed the teacher, edits the sentences after hearing the recording and saves it in the software. If, any correction is required then the reader is asked to read the passages again.

This DAISY once it gets ready then the students can carry it and get access to the particular subjects or chapters by playing it on. This is very helpful for the students as well as for the teachers if the printed Braille books are delayed in reaching the school. It takes quite a time to develop this system and once it gets ready the students and the teachers can take the help of this DAISY but if the syllabuses get changed then the whole process of making the DAISY gets failed.



(Pic.12. Students in the computer room)



(Pic.13. The computer teacher busy in making the DAISY book)

#### **4.7(vi) Learning Mathematics**

There is only one special educator who is also a graduate among the teachers who teaches Mathematics from class III onwards. She used to teach Environmental Science initially.

She is the only special educator of the school and has undergone several trainings like;

- Orientation course for teachers in special schools for facilitating integration of visually impaired children from Dehradun.
- Workshop on teaching children with low vision from Tura Meghalaya.
- Master trainer course on education of children with visual and multiple disabilities including Deaf blindness supported by Hilton/Perkins school for the blind, USA– Mumbai and Chennai.
- Training course on Braille Enrichment, Dehradun.
- Workshop on guiding the parents of children with Visual Impairment, Tura Meghalaya.
- Orientation training on prevention and early detection of developmental disabilities for social organisation working for disabilities from National Institute of public cooperation and child development from Guwahati.
- Promotion of better understanding and comprehension and comparison of education system (disabilities) between two countries India and Japan. Japan International Cooperation Agency from Tokyo, Japan.
- Master trainer course for upgrading Braille capacity of special school in north east region, Bethany Society, Shillong.

Many times she is called upon as a guest faculty by the DIET (District Institute of Elementary Teacher's Training) of Namchi to train the prospective teachers. It was

observed that mostly all the training was attended by her only and on asking the reason, she replied by saying,

*.....whenever any call letter for training or to attend programmes comes to the school, I am sent unanimously to attend that. Out of the two sighted teachers here in the school I am bit young in age than the other teacher... The other teachers are all visually impaired and maybe they feel uncomfortable to travel around in a short span of time. Moreover, I enjoy and I am always ready to learn new things and being a special educator I cannot back down from my responsibilities. I have no complains for that. I get the training and give training as well when I come back to my fellow colleagues.*

On asking how she introduces a child to learn Mathematics, she pointed out that it is very important for a child to know ABACUS and the Taylor frame simultaneously. Taylor frame is a mathematical device which contains small holes/ boxes within a wooden frame and small long metal beads which has to get inserted into those holes. The technique to insert these long metal beads into the holes is tedious. The bead if tilted left or right or sideways has all the mathematical formulas like subtraction, addition, multiplication etc. She also gave insight on the codes and script as in what kind is used in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired India has been following Britain's Braille which is known as Unified English Braille which contains contraction (short form) letters whereas American Script contains full spellings or the full form. So, except in Mathematics in all the other subjects this same Britain's Braille or Unified English Braille is used. Nemeth code is used for Mathematics. The Nemeth Braille Code for

Mathematics is a Braille code for encoding mathematical and scientific notation linearly using standard six-dot Braille cells for tactile reading by the visually impaired. The code was developed by Abraham Nemeth.

The interest towards mathematics and choosing science as a stream after their secondary examination was found to be negative among the students. None of the students were interested in taking up science or mathematics as their subject after their board exams which also diverted the researcher's study into knowing the reason behind this. The school had been for many years had been following the old method of teaching mathematics so National Association for the Blind, sent the special educator of the school to get trained in Nemethic Code. After the training the teacher has been teaching mathematics as her main subject to the students of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired and also she has been providing training to her colleagues as well. Due to the scarcity of mathematical devices and science equipments and teaching aids in the school and the fund, the teacher had to skip certain lessons from the syllabus. And these children when mainstreamed into normal/ regular schools had to and still are facing problems when dealing with mathematics. Hence, they prefer other art subjects and it is not that they dislike the subject but they don't have access to avail these devices. The outgoing students have one mathematics tutor who comes every morning from 5:30 am till 7:30 from outside. Whatever doubts and problems the children had faced in the school outside, they discuss with the tutor and solve the problems. Geometrical problems and certain lessons are skipped by the students and the reason is obvious. There are no such mathematical devices for the students in the normal schools as well and any trained special teacher who could devote their time to these students to teach them. On asking

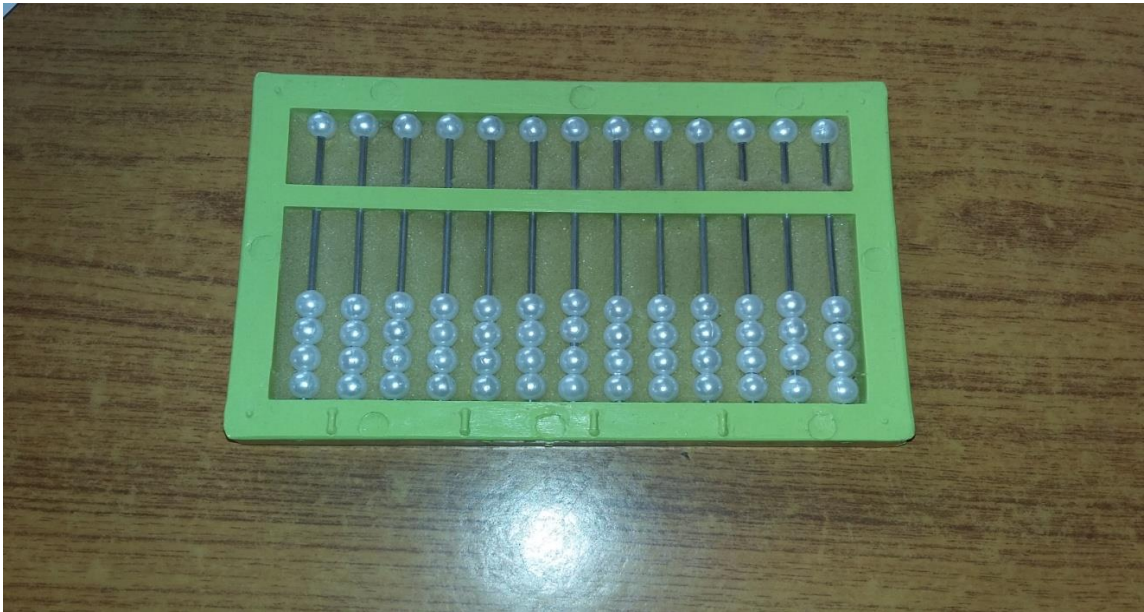


whether or not they approach help to their concerned subject teacher if they are facing any problems, all the students had the same answer which was.....

*.....we feel awkward and uncomfortable to ask them for extra help. 'What if they scold us?'*

It was observed that the students had this pre- concept notion towards their teachers that their teachers would not be willing to help them or give them extra time. It is not that those teachers do not express their willingness to help the students; they do but the visually impaired students are maybe shy or hesitates to approach their teachers out of the fear that they may get negative response from them.

For the primary class there is one visually impaired teacher who teaches mathematics. She has completed her schooling from mainstream school of Kalimpong, West Bengal.



(Pic.14. An Abacus)



(Pic. 15. The Taylor Frame)



(Pic. 16. Teacher teaching the fraction to the student)

#### **4.7(vii) Learning Language**

Vernacular language which is Nepali and Hindi in the school is taught by two female teachers who have been working in the school since many years.

The teaching of English and Nepali both is done orally. English language is taught by the headmaster of the school. The teacher reads and the students listen or sometimes follow their teacher through their term book which is the transcribed Braille book. Recitation and vocabulary development as well as pronunciation is done orally followed by exercise work. All the students were much inclined towards these two subjects.

Regarding the handwriting to be neat and clean, how it is assessed when asked to one of the teachers, she said.....

*.....while writing when the child punches the letters deep and makes a hole or skips the paragraph or the line we will come to know that their handwriting is not good.*

For the pre- primary classes, there are two female teachers who are visually impaired and have done their schooling from Kalimpong. They teach English, Hindi, Nepali and Braille to these students. The one teacher who has been deputed in the school also helps in teaching the primary classes. She is an ex- student of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired.

The students are made to understand certain concepts like bursting a balloon, prick, hurt by doing a demonstration method. On asking how this is done, the teacher made the concept clear to the students like bringing a huge balloon and then gave a pin to one of the student. The student was asked to put the pin near the balloon. When the balloon burst, all the children got frightened because of the sound. This was one of the ways the

students were introduced to new concept like prick, burst etc. Sometimes the teachers also escort the students to the garden of senses to make them aware of different herbs and plants.



(Pic. 17. Headmaster teaching English to a student of class III)

#### **4.7(viii) Learning Science**

Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute has classes till V only so the school has a book *Environmental Studies*, which covers all the three subjects like science, history and geography. The teachers of the school teach the students orally and follow demonstration method too. When the students have to be taught about a particular topic like 'leaf' then the teacher take the children outside and make them touch the real leaf. Other times the teacher bring the tactile form of a leaf and then make the students touch the leaf. By doing this, the students learn the concept of a leaf. The child is asked to touch the edge of the tactile card to understand its construction. In this way, the students are introduced with the chapter.

#### **4.7(ix) Orientation and Mobility Training**

It is of utmost importance for the student to recognize his/ her class, toilet, water taps, playground and hostel. So, for the first timers it is the responsibility of the teachers, hostel masters and staff members to help in developing the child's mobility skill with the help of cane. The benefits of carrying a cane while in public places gives security to the visually impaired and this training is given to the visually impaired students. Mobility can be assisted by technology. Electronic travel aids include electronic canes, devices held in the hand, or mounted on the chest or head, spectacles or on a wheelchair. They require special training to be used safely and effectively. The main principle is that the equipment emits light beams or ultrasound waves that contact objects in the person's

path. The device then emits a sound or vibrates. They may use the world- wise positioning system, a digital map database and a digital compass (Sardegna et al., 2002)<sup>10</sup> None of the children in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired were found using cane stick while walking around. The stick was not being used perhaps they were comfortable with the familiar surroundings of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired.

It is important to accommodate and assimilate about concepts to the visually impaired children. Since they cannot see, their other remaining senses need to be awakened and sharpened. There are ways and means to help the visually impaired visualize about concepts.

#### **4. 8 Intervention Strategies**

Under this head there are some intervention strategies that are provided to the visually impaired students of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired collectively by the Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department of Sikkim and National Association for the Blind.

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<sup>10</sup> Sardegna, J., Shelly, S., Rutzen, A. R. and Steidl, S. M. (2002). The Encyclopedia of Blindness and Vision Impairment. New York: Facts on File Library of Health and Living, pp.77



(Pic. 18. A student trying to pluck some guavas)

#### **4.8(i) Residential School**

One of the best intervention strategies that the school is doing is Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial is providing the residential facilities to the visually impaired students free of cost. The school has also been providing the food and lodging facilities free of cost to the passed out students admitted in inclusive schools. This is the best intervention that is being followed so far by the school.



(Pic.19. Girls' hostel)

#### **4.8(ii) Scholarships**

Scholarships to the children of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired are received only once in a year of Rs. 2500 yearly.

#### **4.8(iii) Midday Meal**

The midday meal is provided to the students every day in the school. The teachers also participate in this meal. The expenses of the midday meal are given by the Human Resource Development Department of the state.

#### **4.8(iv) Parents Teachers Meeting**

The headmaster along with the other teachers feel that it is important to have parents and teachers' meeting every month where both the parties can sit and discuss about the child's progress. The school had tried to hold meeting every month but the parents were unable to attend several times. The parents discussed and shared their grievances with the



teachers why they could not come and why it was impossible for them to attend the meeting every month. Since majority of the parents were from far places where accessibility was the main problem and going back from Namchi to their respective places the same day was another problem. The headmaster of the school told that they discuss the student's progress to their parents on the day when they come to take their children away for vacation or when they come to drop them. This was the only way where they could meet the parents.

#### **4.8(v) Placement**

Since its inception in the year 1987, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired has been developing many professionals and personalities like teachers, physiotherapists, office assistants etc. The institution keeps a track of those students who pass out from the school. The school not only prepares the students to get admitted into other regular schools but also assist them to get admission. Apart from these it also helps them to rehabilitate to get employment for those students who don't want to pursue studies further.

It was found out that many of the students preferred to go for parlour training and Braille printing training. On asking them why they preferred that the answer was...

*It is not that I hate studies, but I cannot memorize many things and maybe it is because of my age. I am getting old day by day so I don't want to waste my time studying; instead would love to go for any other type of technical training where they allow visually impaired people like myself.*

National Association for the Blind takes the initiatives to send those children of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute who desires to go for vocational and technical training and institutes like Blind Relief Association New Delhi. Many of the past students had received their training from selected cities of the country and are engaged in the profession. For those who are unable to continue higher studies these students are send for professional, vocational and technical training. This is not to let these children be a burden for the society but to help and contribute to the society and to be self- reliant.

“Historical evolution according to Cole (1989)<sup>11</sup> recounts that initially it was a voluntary effort which made well the deficiencies in provision that existed. The Intervention of the government followed to create a national framework in which public and voluntary agencies acted in partnership to see that all children, whatever this disability received a suitable education.” In this regard, the role of National Association for the Blind as an NGO and the Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department of Sikkim has been putting in their effort to educate and equip the visually impaired of the state.

All the visually impaired teachers had mobile phones where they had saved the contacts of their friends and families. They had necessary knowledge about new gadgets, internet, mobile phones etc. For them to use these is not a Herculean task.

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<sup>11</sup> Cole, Mike (1989). Education, Equality and Human Rights- Issues of gender, ‘race’, sexuality, disability and social class. Routledge; Taylor and Francis Group.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Overview of the Chapter**

This chapter is to listen to and record the hardships, the struggle and endeavours that Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired has been experiencing to educate and equip the visually impaired of Sikkim State. The data has been collected successfully through interviews, observations and conversations. Researcher's judgment, systematized data collection and analysis, and participant verification were, therefore, important aspects of the analysis. Hence, this chapter presents the findings, analysis, discussions of the study and will highlight on the recommendations evolved from the present study. The chapter will conclude with some discussions and recommendations.

#### **5.2 MAJOR RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The challenge of qualitative analysis lies in making sense of massive amounts of data. This involves reducing the volume of raw information, sifting the trivial from the significant patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal. Ideas for making sense of the data that emerge while still in the field constitute the beginning of analysis; they are part of the record of field notes. Sometimes insights emerge almost serendipitously.

This chapter discusses the major elements that emerged from the study taking the objectives and research questions along with discussions.

## **Theme 1: Programmes and policies**

It has already been discussed earlier in the previous chapter about the mission and vision of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired. The study revealed that the teachers had fair knowledge about the school's mission and vision. They agreed that the laid down objectives of the school was being met by the school in developing a self-reliant individual. This was supported when the researcher came to know that many of the school's staff was the product of the same school. The objectives were laid down by National Association for the Blind, Sikkim.

Since, the school's mission and vision was nowhere to be found in written but one of the staff gave the researcher an old magazine of National Association for the Blind. It must be noted that the school has been handed over to the Ministry of Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department in the year 2014 only. The mission and vision of the school was independently kept by the National Association for the Blind, Sikkim. The mission and vision along with the objectives was written in the magazine. The questions were asked how these objectives, mission and vision were being met by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute so far. Many of the responses from the participants who were the teachers and the staff of the school were not clear. Some did not know about the mission and vision of the school and some knew but could not remember.

After the school being transferred into the hands of Ministry of Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department of the State, there were certain confusion in the minds of the teachers and the staff of the school. The transition in the pattern of administration and functioning from the NGO to the Ministry of Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department has been a sudden one. They were not sure

whether the vision and mission set up by the NGO would remain the same or would change. One of the main objectives of the school is to help and prepare the visually impaired children into mainstreaming schools. The school is till class five. All those students after getting elementary education from Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute gets admitted into other regular schools of Namchi district only. The school also equips the children with some basic vocational skills following the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995, which had laid a Comprehensive Action Plan for including children and youth which covers different sectors;

- (1) Early Childhood Care and Education
- (2) Elementary Education
- (3) Secondary Education
- (4) Higher and Technical Education
- (5) Vocational Education.

This school has been trying to equip the students with variety of skills like candle making, basket making, envelope making etc. in the school only. There is one separate vocational centre which acts like a resource room where the children are equipped with the knowledge of the vocational skills. Apart from these, music is also taught in the school. These training skills are being given to the students to help them develop social skills, pairing them with other students and providing cooperative goals, opportunities for playing games, telling-stories, or singing songs together encourage interaction. The school arranging such training for the students helps these visually impaired students to inculcate social habits and skills. Vocational training allows the students to prepare for future training at other vocational skills training centers. It is very important to equip the visually impaired in these skills. Currently, lack of funding in the industrial art has resulted in the closure of this vocational centre/ resource centre. Therefore during the time of research, the vocational centre cum resource centre was found closed.

The school being residential, it facilitates those visually impaired students admitted in other inclusive schools for further education who were still being provided residential facility in the school's hostel till their school's completion. The past students of Jawaharlal Memorial Institute have become qualified in numerous disciplines including physiotherapy, teaching, audio typing, clerical work, music and other professional careers.

Many students after the completion of elementary education from Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute have got enrolled into technical institutes and professional institutions. The special educational program followed by the school was Individual Education Plan (IEP). This plan is developed for those exceptional students to help them meet their needs. The plan contains the routine, their educational expectations, strategies and specific curriculum adaptation to help the need of the child. The special educator of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Nehru for the Visually Impaired follows it whenever there is a requirement for such plan. Another such program is the Activities of the Daily Living Skills (ADL). The researcher when showed her curiosity to learn more about it, the special educator of the school highlighted about ADL<sup>1</sup>. Some children are there who are unaware of the daily living skills like taking care of oneself, unknown towards health and hygiene, cleanliness etc. Highlighting on this, the teacher said,

*“.....They have been kept in an enclosed environment at home that is why they are completely new to these daily living skills like brushing your teeth, combing your hair, taking bath, toilet time- table etc.”*

In situation like this, the teacher introduces the child to the Activities of the Daily Living Skills through a Calendar system. She told that she have had actually implemented it

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<sup>1</sup> Activities of the Daily Living Skills.

once to a girl child and had seen the progress. The student, a visually impaired girl from East Sikkim, Rumtek area did know anything about toilet habits, cleanliness, time- table etc. She was put on a Calendar system. This system is a time- table, which is made to make the exceptional children accustomed to certain environment under controlled settings. This develops their cognitive behaviour and gradually the progress can be seen through their activities. For example, if a child has to be taught about time- table for games period of the school, the teacher will go to bring her from the hostel every day. She/ He will place a skipping rope (or any playing object) in her hand. The child will feel it and then she will be brought to the playground. This exercise would be continuously done till the child is confident. In this way the child will come to know that the period is games period and that she/he would have to go and play. The same process was used to teach that girl student and during the interview the special educator also became emotional while describing about her student. The task was challenging and yielded good results. That particular child showed tremendous improvement. Even though the vocational centre was temporary closed because of the scarcity of materials, the children were found playing guitar and other musical instruments whole heartedly. They were making the best of the available resources. The students are also taught playing guitar, sitar, drums etc. Including these those who have interest in singing are also encouraged.

## **Theme 2: Infrastructural and Instructional Facilities**

Certain classroom accommodations will enhance the quality of programs for students with visual problems. After taking the interview of few teachers (mostly sighted) it was found out that the biggest instructional challenges for them is how to convey primarily visual material to students with limited vision. They knew how to handle the students

who were partially impaired but the instructional materials were not there for them to teach them hence all categories of visual impairment received the same mode of instruction. Special materials and equipment can enhance the education of students who have visual impairments. Some materials (e.g., large- print materials) are not appropriate for all and must be considered in light of individual needs. Vision specialists can help teachers select appropriate materials and equipments. Teachers must carefully ensure that all instructional materials for students with visual impairments are presented in the appropriate medium for the particular student (Corn et al., 1995)<sup>2</sup>. The need of the materials was highlighted to the concerned department but the materials were not provided yet. This may be because of the unavailability of centers, institute nearby the region also.

The leaked ceiling and the broken window panes of the classrooms makes the transfer of learning in the classroom unsuitable. In the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities it has been mentioned that barrier free environment enables a person with disabilities to move about safely and freely. Hence, even though it is said that hundred percent financial assistance would be given for the modification of architectural barriers, books and stationary, equipment cost, financial assistance for purchase of instructional material, equipment for resource rooms etc. not much of these statements has been in practicality. However, it was observed that the students were much keen towards computer education. Many of the students also wanted to choose their profession which had computers to deal with. Their interest in technology awed the researcher. If the visually impaired students

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<sup>2</sup> Corn, A. L., Hatlen, P., Huebner, K. M., Ryan, F., & Siller, M. A. (1995). The national agenda for the education of children and youths with visual impairments, including those with multiple disabilities. New York: AFB Press.



are given access to computer training it can give them a vast resource that can have a profound positive impact on their education

The school do not follow Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation pattern of examination. The teachers found it difficult to follow because of several things. Especially these children were special and they need to be handled in a most effective way. Visually impaired children require time and patience to deal with much like the other impairments. Therefore, the school do not follow certain curriculum and requirements like other regular school still studies are augmented with instruction in compensatory skills including life skills, mobility, orientation, keyboard and computer skills and Braille are there. Focus is also given on life- skills and vocational skills.

Technology helps make classroom materials available in accessible formats much more quickly than in the past. One of the biggest challenges that Blind and Visually Impaired students face in the classroom is gaining access to textbooks and other classroom materials in a timely fashion. Apart from the other challenges, the scarcity of text- books are being supplemented by audio- books for the students who are studying outside. The main concern of the participants who were the teachers of the school showed was the unavailability and delay in getting the transcribed books. Special schools develops special curriculum for subject areas that might be more difficult for the visually impaired children. Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute has computers to facilitate the students with Information technology computer knowledge. One of the advantages of special school like Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired is that teachers can take their time to understand the behavioural problems of a child with visual impairments. Since the class size is small to a smaller teacher to a student ratio, it is

easier for the teacher to provide individual attention. The way classroom is physically organized can affect student learning and behavior in a number of areas (Kerr & Nelson, 1998)<sup>3</sup>. Carefully arranged classrooms can decrease noise and disruption, improve the level and quality of student interactions, and increase the percentage of time that students spend on academic tasks (Paine, Radicchi, Rosellini, Deutchman, & Darch, 1983)<sup>4</sup>. The school's name board outside the school building bears the old name of the school even though officially the name has been changed.

Scarcity of the transcribed braille books makes teaching difficult for the teachers. They are unable to complete the syllabus many times. Unavailability of the resource materials from the concerned department has kept the vocational centre stagnant.

There was negligence from the department's side and the resource teachers' side that proper equipments were not provided to the school for the education of the visually impaired children.

### **Theme 3: Intervention Strategies for Mainstreaming**

Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired provides free residential facilities to the visually impaired students. Not only to the students studying in the school but it continues to provide the lodging and free fooding facilities to those visually impaired students admitted in inclusive schools. All the students stay in the hostel only.

Those students admitted in inclusive schools are also provided mathematics tutor, conveyance facilities, and free medical tests all borne by the National Association for the

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<sup>3</sup> Kerr, M. M., & Nelson, C. M. (1998). Strategies for managing behavior problems in the classroom (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

<sup>4</sup> Paine, S., Radicchi, J; Rosellini, L., Deutchman, L & Datch, C. (1983). Structuring your classroom for academic success. Campaign, IL; Research.

Blind and the State Government. Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute also equips the children with vocational skills in the school. Those who want are unwilling to continue academic studies are also sent for technical and vocational training other training centres outside the State.

Vocational Centre or the resource centre was found closed. Upon asking the reason for it being locked it was mainly because of the shortage and scarcity of learning materials. When it was under National Association for the Blind, it was opened and the students were taught skills like weaving by canes, candle, envelope making and other life- skills. And the students get to learn and play the musical instruments sometimes. Being in regular schools and not getting proper monitoring whether these children are getting proper facilities or not is a failure from the part of our system. These students have to rely on the reader and the assistive informative technology like DAISY, tape recorders etc. to get access to education. There is only one reader in the hostel and it is not possible to read all the notes to all the students at one go.

The students have knowledge about mainstreaming and inclusive education. After interacting with the students it was observed that they preferred having schools nearby and this school being upgraded till secondary or senior secondary. The reason was obvious they didn't have to struggle much as they are doing now. They were not getting the required help like they used to get in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute. Majority of them opined that being included into inclusive mainstreaming schools would have been better if only the teachers would have been able to help them in the same way that they used to get in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired. Special school personnel emphasized this point, too. They stated that children whose

educational needs cannot be met at an inclusive school should at least start the primary level at a special school and, after reaching a certain level, transfer to an inclusive school.

The students studying in the school had much the same thinking or opinion about the school as the ones who were studying in inclusive schools.

It is essential to remember that the fact that student social relationships might not occur spontaneously does not mean that inclusive practices are unsuccessful. It is the prime responsibility of the teachers to ensure that peer relationships grow. In regard to inclusive education, the teachers as well as the students stressed that accessibility should be given the priority. The students attending the inclusive schools faced problem every time in finding a writer during their examinations. This makes them nervous and helpless.

#### **Theme 4: Attitude and Opinions of Parents, Teachers Towards Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute For Visually Impaired.**

- **Parents**

Parents are included throughout the entire planning and implementation process of inclusion. They have in- depth knowledge of their child's personality, strengths, and needs and can make substantial contributions to the inclusion effort.

Parents' feedback and attitude towards the school was one of the objectives of the research. Majority of the parents praised the school and its administration. Very few knew about inclusive or mainstreaming schools. Through their interview it was observed that they were glad that their ward was studying in a school which is providing care and concern to their visually impaired children. Some of the students had joined the school late because their parents thought that after doing medical treatment their ward would be able to see again. One such case was found who was from Gangtok and was obliged to

bring his son to Namchi as there were no other special schools nearby. He had admitted his son late because of the late discovery of his son's visual loss and also many doctors gave him different opinions because of which he was busy taking his son from one hospital to another. His son was studying in a normal school before. So, suddenly when he lost his vision, he was suggested to bring his son to Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired.

Through the interview of the parents it was revealed that the parents had no complaints and any negative feedback towards Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired and its hostel. They were satisfied with the education offered by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired to their children. One of the elder brothers of one student shared this,

..... *“Before my brother joined this school, he was an unruly child. He never used to do his chores at home and was very naughty but after he came here, I have seen a drastic change in his behavior.”*

The parents feel that Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired would help build the future of their visually impaired sons and daughters. Talking about their responsibility whether or not they would like to send their ward for higher studies, one parent said,

*“If he wants, then he can.”*

Through interviews and observation it was found out that some parents had very less knowledge about the rights of differently-abled. They were ignorant about mainstreaming and inclusive schools. Some parents do not dream high for their children because of the fact that they cannot see.

- **Students**

An interview was conducted among the visually impaired students residing in the hostel. These students have completed their elementary schooling from Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired. After their completion, they preferred to stay in the school's hostel only and continue their further studies. They are all admitted into inclusive schools and college.

Mostly all the students of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired have been going to the other inclusive schools after their completion from the school. Students go to school themselves after getting a recommendation letter from the head of the institution. There are total 18 students who are admitted into other inclusive schools but residing in the hostel of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired. The girls' go to Namchi Girls' Senior Secondary Government School and the boys to Namchi Boys' Senior Secondary Government School. The collegians go to the only Government College of Namchi which is in Kamrang, below Namchi town.

Inclusive education does not mean just enrolling a child with disability without adequate or proper teaching resources and materials; it should not be a sink or swim situation (Giangreco et al., 2008)<sup>5</sup>.

Upon getting to know their attitude towards the school many of the responses towards their *alma mater* was positive. They were grateful that the school was providing them hostel facility and other amenities. They were obliged towards their teachers, their house masters for taking care of them away from home. They love their school and miss studying there but at the same time they like to study in inclusive schools as well. The

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<sup>5</sup> Giangreco, M. F, Doyle, Mary Beth, Suter, Jesse C. (2008) Italian and American progress toward Inclusive Education: Common concerns and future Directions. *Life Span and Disability* XVII, 1 (2014), 119-136.

students have few sighted friends in their school. The students hail from other neighbouring districts and areas of Namchi. They cannot think of staying outside the hostel as the hostel is free of cost and they get the necessary facilities which they might not get if they stay alone outside. Trying to know their attitude towards special schools, the students unanimously said that the visually impaired child should get admitted first in special school. This kind of school forms the foundation for them like the knowledge of Braille and other subjects. Here, (Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute) caters their need individually whereas this kind of special treatment in other schools are rarely found.

Regarding integrated/ inclusive education majority of the students said that inclusion is good with the proper infrastructure. But if only inclusion is there and no such infrastructure is available then it is useless. In this context, some of the students expressed their views and their experiences being in other inclusive schools. They are treated sympathetically which they respect but they want the teachers to treat them like the other normal sighted students.

*“....Sometimes we are sidelined because of our disability. We get the advantage of our disability in skipping so many activities in the school. We feel good when we are not interested. But sometimes, we feel we are neglected or separated. We feel we are the part of the class but not the whole....”*

They are grateful as well that the schools and colleges where they are admitted for giving them the opportunity to study. They were obliged that they were accepted in these schools despite of their disability but there was observed some kind of dissatisfaction among the students in regard to the infrastructure. They have many difficulties in normal

schools and colleges initially to adjust to new environment. They have very less sighted friends and on asking why they said that they feel comfortable being around with their own peers. One or two students added on this point that they hesitate approaching the sighted classmates as in they feel intimidated suppose if their classmates reject them. This has been the reason why whenever they have to borrow the notes, they face difficulty in getting one. There is less involvement in other co- curricular activities of the school. The inter- personal relationship with the classmates and also with their teachers were found to be very rare.

When the researcher questioned whether or not they are facing any problems related to study materials and in completing their syllabus, the students' response was,

*“.....once it so happened that in the new school, we were asked whether we had studied this and that chapter in the previous class. We became blank as we had no knowledge about that chapter and topic.”*

In such instances, the teachers had to teach whatever was available to them so many of the chapters were missed in this regard.

It has been discussed in the previous chapter regarding the instructional materials. Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute is not the only institute that lacks in this regard. So many studies and researches have highlighted on the limited number of infrastructural facilities. Whether it is any special school or integrated, mainstreaming schools this problem has always remain as a constant topic for discussions on the education of the differently- abled. There is a lack of instructional materials for improving access of visually impaired children to appropriate curricula to ensure equal educational opportunities as pointed by the students. Furthermore, a child with severe visual



impairment is likely to require additional support in developing social and life skills. For instance, on asking the students whether they participate in any co- curricular activities of the school, one of them said,

*“.....Nobody ask us whether or not we want to participate.*

*Maybe they don't approach us because we cannot see”.*

While talking with them, I observed that they had low self- confidence being around sighted students. Whether they liked Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired being upgraded till at least secondary or senior secondary, all the participants' response was same.

*.....It would have been nice as the teachers teaching in Jawaharlal Nehru*

*Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired are like us; they know us and*

*our problems.*

Some of the primary students wished having special schools nearby their home. Some gave their thoughts in getting admission into other regular schools nearby their home.

Students studying in other inclusive schools but residing in the school's hostel also opined that sometimes they are more an object of sympathy rather than of help. They are taken in just for the sake of it rather than for actually knowing them. From the unavailability of Braille textbooks to finding a writer they have always been a subject of negligence in inclusive schools. A number of factors, such as lack of knowledge, resources and administrative support, can interfere with successful integration of visually impaired students. This situation may be all the more present in regions where support services are sporadic and difficult to obtain due to the limited availability of itinerant teachers and other professionals. It is difficult for the latter to offer services on a frequent

basis when they have a high caseload and the students are spread out over a wide territory. Consequently, students with visual impairment find themselves all the more removed from the potential advantages of vision aids and do not necessarily have access to the general education curriculum in the least restrictive format. Inclusion is not a simple matter, and it is definitely not only about placing a blind child in a classroom with sighted peers. On asking these students about Resource Teachers, they had no clue about who they were and about their responsibility. Without special educator placing the differently-abled students in an inclusive school is baseless. Every school should have a special educator or a specialized teacher who knows how to deal with special children. The students who were studying in inclusive mainstream schools had their own story to tell. The problem in finding a writer to being accepted as other sighted students in schools and many other grievances were there. These all has been described in the previous chapters.

- **Teachers**

Many of the teachers have been teaching in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute since more than 7 years. They have seen and witnessed the changes and the transition of the school since its inception.

The teachers threw light on the enrollment ratio of the students which were decreasing day by day. The numbers were decreasing every year. Though the teachers were happy for the visually impaired children, concern was there as to what would happen to their job if there is no student left to teach in the school. Many of the teachers were not qualified enough to teach in inclusive schools. Since the children belonged to far flung areas of Sikkim and some from outside the state too, the researcher approached the teachers how

the children get admitted in the school. It was found out through the interviews that the teachers were sent by National Association for the Blind to villages to find out blind children and motivate the parents to send their ward to Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired. Even after the transfer of administration to Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department such kind of projects are still made by National Association for the Blind to bring the visually impaired children to Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired. The school is a residential one that is why hostel is considered as one of the important organ of the school. So many of the teachers in this regard, opined that the hostel should have been looked after by National Association for the Blind only. Their administration and management over the hostel was appropriate and many facilities were provided to the children than at present. When asked the reason, they did not want to mention that.

Upon asking whether they feel existence of special schools should be there or not then all of them said that special schools has to be there. It is not possible for a visually impaired child to get enrolled directly into normal or regular schools without the knowledge of Braille or without the orientation and mobility training. The child cannot be asked to sit among the sighted students randomly as they need for adjustment. Hence, to enhance their psychomotor development their left out domains has to be nurtured which can be met only in special schools.

One of the teacher of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired rightly said, “Opportunity without accessibility is useless” when discussing about integrated schools and mainstreaming. In inclusive schools and mainstreaming schools if the differently-abled students are not provided the facilities, and then it is useless to

discuss about inclusive or mainstreaming. If there is no special educator or a specialized teacher who can understand the special needs of these children in regular schools, then it is ironic.

The school lacks behind several important instructional and learning materials. The school has only one Special educator and the responsibility is not entirely on her hands to make the teaching aids for the children. Visually impaired children require tactile learning materials and aids and it is not always possible for one single teacher to manage the cost of materials required to make these. The teacher displayed the teaching learning materials that she had made to the researcher. She was keen to bring in many other positive changes in the school and shared her ideas to the researcher. The unavailability of the materials required to make the aids was found to be one of the main reason that she considered herself as helpless.

The enrollment ratio of the visually impaired students in the school was found to be decreasing. This is because of inclusive education that the visually impaired are directly sent to inclusive schools and there is less awareness of special schools like Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired among the parents.

The rich experience of the teachers spent in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired has equipped them as well to deal with the visually impaired children.

- **Community Members**

The community members play an important role in the smooth functioning of special schools for the betterment of the differently-abled children and students. When all the schools and community members meet together time to time, starts a network and work together to make this network strong then the mechanism will function well.

The members were aware of the functioning of the school. They are occasionally invited to attend meetings by the school. Their participation is equally appreciated. Some of the village members are also a part of the community members of the school. The information gathered through them could not be a futile one though. He was newly appointed in that region and he had very little knowledge about the school. Regarding, the villagers opinion, they feel that in terms of job opportunities, the visually impaired are liable to get job fast than the sighted ones. They have witnessed this since the establishment of the school in the area. They feel the visually impaired are same like them and do not have any negative feelings or superiority complex towards them.

One of the villagers rightly said,

*“.....The intelligence level of the visually impaired is commendable. They organize birthday parties and feast and we are also invited.”*

Many of the teachers and the ex- students of the school stay in the neighborhood and they are very social. Their inter- personal relationship is good with the villagers.

After having few casual conversations with the village community members of the school, it was found out that the villagers knew each and everything about the school and about each student. It may also be because some of the employees are of that school that they get to hear about the happenings of the school. The villagers had seen and witnessed Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired since its inception. They feel that National Association for the Blind was much better in control than that of Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department. The cleanliness of the students was of concern to some. They felt that proper care are not being given to them as the uniform and their hygiene has gone worse after Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare

Department has taken over the school from National Association for the Blind. Timely inspection is not done and sometimes when it is done they hardly go to the hostel was what many pointed.

## **Theme 5: Contribution of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired**

The students who were studying in inclusive mainstream schools had their own story to tell. The problem in finding a writer to being accepted as other sighted students in schools and many other grievances were there. These all has been described in the previous chapters.

Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired has been a champion in developing their students into a successful people. Till date, mostly all the students of this school are working and are employed in government and non- governmental organizations. In spite of the institution's trifle weaknesses and problems, it is commendable to mention that till date, mostly all the students of this school are working and are employed in government and non- governmental organizations.

Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired has been catering the needs of special children. Starting from the admission till the successful completion of the schooling, it is looking after the visually impaired children.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Visually impaired individuals vary to a great extent in the perception of the world, beginning from blindness to partially sighted. The severely impaired are sent to special schools and others to regular schools. Others here are those children who have partial impairments related to visual loss.

Criticising the segregation policies of the Indian government, Baquer and Sharma (1997) have pointed out that “...separate special education systems lead to social segregation and isolation of the disabled, thus creating separate worlds for them in adult life. Inclusive education has the potential to lay the foundation of a more inclusive society where being “different” is accepted, respected and valued. The school is the first opportunity to start this desirable and yet difficult process. It is difficult because it is wrought with fears and apprehensions on the part of parents, teachers, and other children.”

Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all (UNESCO, 1994)<sup>6</sup> So, for the successful implementation of inclusive education in regular schools, a school should provide the necessary facilities and special equipments. Many such recommendations have been given below;

The teaching aids for the visually impaired are to be made keeping in mind their disability and their other sense organs. The responsibility rests on the teachers and the resource teachers under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan how to make and get access to teaching aids.

- Awareness should be made among the normal children regarding the differently-abled. They should also accept them as themselves. Special schools prepare the visually impaired children to get adjusted into society and mainstreaming schools.

In the same way, the sighted children should welcome these children in their schools.

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<sup>6</sup> The Salamanca statement and Framework for action on special needs education. Adopted by world conference on special needs education: Access and Quality. Spain; Salamanca.

- If possible, every State should have its own Braille printing press. If not within the state then at least nearby the State which will save time in getting the transcribed Braille books in time to the visually impaired students.
- If special schools are to act as a resource centers then the governing body must ensure to keep these centers updated in terms of music, art and craft and training programs. The infrastructure should be able to fulfill the demand of what actually a resource center should be.
- The books published by NCERT should have a general exercises/ activity work for special children too.
- Inclusive not only theoretically but this has to be applied practically in all the schools. A teacher appointed as a special teacher in inclusive schools should possess the knowledge of Braille. This has to be made compulsory for all the resource teachers.
- Sex education and vulnerability to sexual assault are critical issues for people with visually impairments and those interested in their welfare. Sex education is therefore a must for the visually impaired adolescents.
- As Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute take its work forward it will also be important to continue to provide professional development opportunities for the staff of this special school as they continue to act as resources for others.
- The Ophthalmologist along with Optometrists should provide a certificate indicating the child's visual acuity in the medical paper instead of just defining the visual loss. It should clearly mention about the type/ category of blindness.



- Teachers for the visually impaired should be proficient in all aspects of Braille and handwriting for students with low vision. They should have up- to- date knowledge of technological advances and devices and the ability to determine the devices' usefulness to individual students.
- The physical organization of the classrooms and the use of space, including wall areas, lighting, floor space and storage can be improved. Wall areas can be used for decorating with tactile pictures and paintings and the children can be involved into this.
- The doors of the school have to be renovated as the wooden pillar in the middle of the door acts as a hindrance for the visually impaired students and teachers while walking in and out. The school building is in need of an immediate renovation.
- Similar case studies may be conducted to know the effectiveness of inclusion for visually impaired children.
- E-class for the effectiveness of education for the visually impaired can be considered.
- A proper plan and model along with necessary facilities and accessibility has to be provided and described for the education of the visually impaired.
- A study on the implementation of RTE for the visually impaired in inclusive schools can be conducted.
- There was found a very poor co-ordination between the Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department and Human Resource Development in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute. A regular inspection and meetings between the two departments would strengthen their collaboration and mechanism.

- Guidance and Counseling is also very important for the visually impaired. As these students stay in the hostel, away from their homes, sometimes they may feel some mental, psychological, physiological changes within themselves. Since, there is no particular teacher assigned as a counselor, the headmaster sometimes gives them spiritual counseling voluntary.

There are many other recommendations and suggestions for the education of the visually impaired but these are few which are mentioned above. These are only the researcher's viewpoint and have nothing to do or concern over the study conducted in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired.

#### **5.4 CONCLUSION**

The challenge for governments when they make a commitment to providing education for all children, on an equitable basis, is how to expand the national education system, so that it can cater for the large number of previously out-of-school children. It may also be necessary to work with NGO partners in special schools which may have been providing education to small numbers of mostly urban children with disabilities. NGOs are also providers of pre-school education. Some special schools may be under the responsibility of ministries other than the ministry of education, such as ministries of social welfare, ministries of health and community may provide early identification and intervention services for infants and young children with disabilities. Community-based programmes may play a role in finding out-of-school children and helping families place them in special or regular schools. The expertise of NGO providers and special school personnel and teachers should be used during the process of developing more inclusive schools. They can act as advisors to the ministry and as resource teachers and support personnel in

the regular school system. They can also play a role in on-the-job training for teachers in regular classrooms, providing experience in special classes and advising in regular classes. In between the midst of discussion and debates on the education of the visually impaired, we should not be so engrossed into it that we get diverted from the main topic. Whether inclusive or segregated, regular or mainstreaming, the first priority should be the welfare of the differently-abled. What suits the best or facilitate these children has to be taken into consideration. Most of the students attending residential schools for students who are blind or visually impaired have multiple conditions of special needs or have visual problems that are difficult to handle in the student's home. Some lack the necessary services in their home communities. Some are enrolled because their parents' prefer the concentration of special services that residential schools can provide (Heward, 2006)<sup>7</sup>. Over the years, things have improved, diagnosis has become multi-disciplinary, education has become the emphasis and trained professionals are available. Hence, the need for integration and mainstreaming is more felt. Mainstreaming is an approach that emphasizes integration and as such it is the antithesis of the earlier institutionalization movement which emphasized segregation. To minimize inequalities, disparities and imbalances in education for the differently-abled, inclusive education was introduced. Inclusive education was introduced to get education on equal footing for the disadvantaged groups. Special schools are equally responsible in preparing the visually impaired for mainstreaming. The major purpose of the special education administrative organization is to provide and maintain those environmental conditions in schools that are most conducive to the growth and learning of children with special needs.

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<sup>7</sup> Heward, W. L. (2006). *Exceptional children: An Introduction to special education*. Upper Saddle River: Merrill/ Prentice Hall.

# CHAPTER VI

## SUMMARY AND DISCUSSIONS

### 6.1 Introduction

There took great reformation from the segregation to inclusion for the differently-abled children. Educating children with these special delinquencies, so many policies, laws and acts were passed. In 1978, in Britain, the Warnock Committee Report<sup>1</sup> which is considered as a landmark in the history of education in the United Kingdom, listed essential provisions for children under the age of five years and included children with disabilities as one of its third top priorities. The Report has commonly described the diversity wherein distinction has been made amongst different forms of integration- locational, social and functional. The 'locational' integration relates to the physical location of special education provision. The special school and regular school share the same site. 'Social' integration relates to its social aspect, where children attending a special class or unit eat, play and interact with other children and possibly share organized lot of classroom activities with them. The third and the fullest form of integration is 'functional' integration. This is achieved where the locational and social association of differently-abled

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<sup>1</sup> Hegarty, Seamus and Alur, Mithu. (2002). *Education and children with special needs; From Segregation to Inclusion*. India; Sage publications

children with their peers leads to joint participation in educational programmes. Likewise in United States a massive programme called 'Head Start' was launched with the aim of improving childrens' intellectual, social and emotional development which expanded at an unprecedented rate.<sup>2</sup> In 1994 in England, the Education Act or the Butler Act was passed to provide free secondary education for all pupils. In India, in the year 1944, the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) also passed a mandate for the education of the handicapped. As per the report, handicapped children were to be sent to special schools only when the nature and the extent of their defects made this necessary. The board emphasized that these children should not be segregated from normal children if they could be educated in the normal schools. Even the Kothari Commission (1964- 66), observed: "that the education of the handicapped should be an inseparable part of the education system"<sup>3</sup>. In the field of education and special education, the idea of oppression was linked with the notion that such oppression and subordination could not be met by 'resistance', leading to emancipation (Armstrong, 2003)<sup>4</sup>. Today, even though there are several legislative efforts for the education of the disabled, millions of children with disabilities continue to remain

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<sup>2</sup> Hegarty, Seamus and Alur, Mithu. (2002). *Education and children with special needs; From Segregation to Inclusion*. India; Sage publications.pp.16

<sup>3</sup> [http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/28831/8/08\\_chapter%201.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/28831/8/08_chapter%201.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Armstrong, Felicity. (2003). *Spaced Out: Policy, Difference and the Challenge of Inclusive Education*. Netherlands; Kluwer Academic Publishers.

out of school or receive little or no education. Majority of children with special needs do not receive any formal education, in spite of the practice of inclusive education in some schools. Some children have health problems that interfere with their education.

Where nations hold hands to make education compulsory for all, there is a race in making which used to be just a dream before “Education for all” that they hold meetings, seminars at different levels in the hope to yield fruitful results and pass treaties, recommendations etc. to implement in making “education a reality for all” but the irony still lies; millions of children of school-going age are still out of school. Of those underprivileged ones are the physically disabled which are now better termed as differently-able. The Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989 and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) 2006 had shown a new path for thinking and planning for differently -able and making the “Right to Quality Education” a reality for all and “Right to Education” to all children irrespective of their background or state of life is an absolute priority.

Several special schools were established in the European and Western countries for the differently-abled. Laws and amendments on special education were enacted in United States of America. The same step was followed by England. The laws strengthened the right of a child with

Special Educational Needs (SEN) to be educated in the mainstream unless it is incompatible with the wishes of his parents or the provision of efficient education for other children. The laws also discussed not to discriminate on the grounds of disability in regard to admission and other areas without justification.

Social values and attitudes towards special education change over time. Factors such as political, social and economic contribute towards these changes. Education of exceptional children/ differently-abled is quite stimulating field for psychologists and educators and also for those who are concerned with the welfare of these children. In India, the exceptional children were completely neglected during the British regime excluding some blind schools which were first opened in Amritsar by the missionaries. These children were marginalized and were never given thought of educating them as the general attitude of the society those days was of hatred and compassion towards them. Many policies were evolved in the West as well in the European countries for the exceptional children and these policies in some way paved their way in India too. There was a sea change in attitude, a shift in ideologies that took place for the subject of integration in the West as well as European countries. The 'Rights issue' was strongly raised and stressed by the disabled activists and they started propagating its importance throughout the country.

The National Policy also considers the role of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) sector as an important mechanism to provide affordable services to complement the endeavours of the Government. The National Association for the Blind, Sikkim has been still providing support services to the visually impaired children of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute and as well as to those students who are admitted into inclusive schools.

Mainstreaming is totally new teaching- learning administrative arrangements which has gained ground in 1980's. It has grown out of concern that all children (including physically and mentally handicapped) should receive education to which they are entitled and which they need. It lays emphasis on the idea that the individual needs of the child, not the label determine his educational placement. Inclusive education and mainstreaming has become a new label in the field of education and in policy making nowadays but these subjects are still highly debatable. At one hand we talk about mainstreaming and inclusive education and on the other hand there exist special or segregated schools.

## **6.2 Rationale of the Study**

The disabled/disadvantaged group have often been the left out or the 'have not's of our community. Being born as visually impaired or any other disability (for some) is looked down as a curse or the effects of



wrong doing in our previous birth in our country. This statement may sound controversial but the truth remains. When University Grants Commission the highest body for higher education is trying its best to curtail the problem of higher education for the visually impaired and many such other disabilities by providing Braille Libraries, Speaking Computers and by offering various facilities to avail education for the visually impaired, there still exist a huge gap in the education of the visually impaired at the school level. The problem of education is one of the utmost reasons for illiteracy among different categories of disability. There are Special Schools and Integrated Schools as well but what those students think about the special schools, their choices and their perspectives towards these schools is important to study. The debate on whether such children grow better among others with the same disabilities or with “normal” children has also proved to be an ongoing one. But these are not the only aspects that are litigious. The Right to Education for the visually impaired is like a flute without its holes. It is the duty of those involved in the administration at every level, researchers, academicians including the educational institutions and the parents to understand the problems of differently able children and to understand the necessity and extent for adopting different procedures, techniques and methods to encourage these children to take full benefit. In this process there is a need to understand the role of special schools in

providing support in mainstreaming the differently able children. “Researchers study will be a voice for these people” and this encouraged the researcher to choose the topic. When one cannot see the world, education makes him/her travel the world. Education is an eye for the visually impaired. Hence, the researcher will make an attempt to conduct a case study on the only school for visually impaired in Sikkim i.e. Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired.

### **6.3 Statement of the Problem**

Hence considering the background of education for visually impaired students in Sikkim the statement of the study is formulated as “Educating and Equipping the Visually Impaired- A Case Study of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired, Sikkim”.

### **6.4 Operational Definition**

Problems as in the study refers to the educational problems like lack of available options in regard to school subjects, inconsistency between various education providers and sectors, insufficient funding support for student disability, unavailability of trained teachers, lack of technological aids and other equipment and limited curriculum adaptation.

- a) **Educating** here refers to the process of giving instruction with a view to widen their knowledge and ensuring their progress in the school system.
- b) **Equipping**: refers to the adaptation of skills derived through education system to overcome the problems of their impairment.
- c) **Visually Impaired**: Visually Impaired persons are those who have significant loss or defect in vision due to impairment in one or both the eyes. In this study, visual impairments referred to both blindness and low vision that can learn only through tactile or auditory channel without the use of residual vision.

## **6.5 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study will be:

1. To study the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired Sikkim with regard to –
  - Status and objectives of the school
  - Infrastructural and Instructional facilities
  - Administration, planning and finance
  - Special support Services
  - Examination and evaluation

2. To assess the educational programmes and practices of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired students, Sikkim
3. To study the intervention strategies adopted by the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired to equip the visually impaired students.
4. To study the attitude and opinion of students, parents, teachers, administrators, community members towards Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute School for the Visually Impaired, Sikkim.
5. To study the contribution of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute School for the Visually Impaired, Sikkim towards the visually impaired students.

#### **6.5(i) Research Questions**

- What kind of programmes and policies are implemented by the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute of Visually Impaired Sikkim? How is Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute meeting the philosophy and goals set up for these kinds of schools?
- What kind of infrastructural and instructional facilities are being used at this school? Whether these facilities are set up in accordance to the needs of the Visually Impaired children?

- What kind of intervention strategies are being adopted by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the visually impaired? Whether they are able to deal with the special difficulties of the visually impaired? Is there adequate arrangement for mainstreaming the visually impaired students to get adjusted in inclusive environment?
- What is the attitude and opinions of parents, teachers, administrators and community members towards the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired?
- How is Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the visually impaired contributing towards the visually impaired?

## **7.0 Delimitations of the Study**

The study was delimited to one Visually Impaired School, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute School for the Visually Impaired situated in Namchi, South Sikkim. Data was collected from the administrators, teachers, students and parents of the students mainly using in- depth interview and observation. This study was delimited to all the students and their parents whose children are studying in this school, teachers, administrators, community members and members of civil society where this school is situated. The officers and officials of the Social Justice and Welfare Department, Sikkim and those who are associated with the

institute was also the part of the study. The data was mainly collected using an in- depth interview, observation and through questionnaires.

### **7.1 Review of Related Literature**

A literature review in any field is essential as it offers a comprehensive overview and recapitulation on the given scholarship from past to present. In this section, the review of literature has been categorized under two segments; reviews conducted abroad and in India.

**Kamalam (1989)** in her study on ‘Training the Angawadi workers in timely detection of disabilities in children’ found out that as a result of participation in the training programme, a substantial number of the AWWs became knowledgeable about integrated education, reservation for employment and provision of loans for the disabled. The study also found out that the lack of interest from the parents’ side to rehabilitate the disabled and lack of rehabilitation centres nearby for referral services were the difficulties encountered in offering a helping hand to the disabled.

**Mukhopadhyay and Sharma (1990)** in their study, ‘Identifying teaching competencies specifically for integrated education of the disabled children’ addresses the problem of identifying teaching competencies especially for the integrated education of the disabled children so that special support can be provided for these children in general classroom.

The main objectives was i) to study the attitudes of teachers towards integration of disabled children ii) to identify the general and specific competencies required for the integration of disabled children, iii) to infer implications for the teacher education programme and iv) to develop a tool for identification of teaching competencies for integration of visually disabled children. It was found out that the teachers had a positive attitude towards equal educational opportunity for disabled children in integrated classrooms. The male and female teachers did not differ in their perception of skills required for enhancing integration. In terms of pattern of ranking of competencies for integration, special schools did differ in their perceptions of pattern of ranking. However, it was found that more importance was given to competencies such as setting of a social goal, followed by planning teaching activities.

**Thomas et al. (1998)** have analysed the Somerset Inclusion Project, which drew its inspiration from a special school in Canada (Shaw 1990). The Somerset Project centred on the Princess Margaret School for Physically Disabled Pupils. In 1992 it was a day and boarding special school. However, on closing in 1997, it had managed to include the vast majority of its pupils successfully in mainstream. This study gives many insights into the management of change, not least because one of its authors, Dave Waker, was the head teacher of Princes Margaret and

effectively oversaw a process that was to leave him without a job. It was concluded that with vision and careful planning special schools can successfully change their work in such a way to enable their mainstream partners to include children even with serious disabilities. One of the clearest findings has been that while many mainstream staff was highly skeptical about the inclusion project before it started, they had changed their views entirely after several months of seeing it in practice and were fulsome in their support of inclusion.

**Kinnell et al., (2000)** highlighted the importance of having a clear policy statement, budgetary provision, staff training, partnership between libraries, service evaluation, materials provision with a selection strategy, equipment procurement in public libraries to better serve people with visual impairment.

**Lewis & Little (2007)** conducted a study with an intention of providing insight on the current situation of inclusive education in four countries, namely Nepal, Tanzania, Vietnam and Zambia. The findings of the study in all the four countries revealed that, teachers are not educated enough in sign language, use of Braille materials, preparation of hearing aids, tactile diagrams and maps etc. to be able to face the challenges of inclusive teaching. It was also found out that teacher education is insufficient in the components of inclusive education. Finally, the study revealed that rigid



curriculum is also a problem for implementation of inclusive education. Teaching methods and examination systems are centrally controlled contradicting with the efforts to make inclusive environments for all children regardless of their learning differences.

**Hersh & Johnson's book (2008)** Assistive Technology for Visually Impaired and Blind People helped in the understanding of the aim of assistive technology. The technology helps persons with disabilities to overcome the gap between what they want to do and what the existing social infrastructure allows them to do. It consists of equipment, devices and systems that can be used to overcome the social, infrastructural and other barriers experienced by disabled people that prevent their full and equal participation in all aspects of society.

### **Summary of the Review**

Many researchers like Simon et al., (2010), Mwakyeja (2013), studied on special education and inclusive education of the visually impaired children. Researchers found that visually impaired children learned more concepts when they were taught through the specially prepared teaching learning materials. Mwakyeja (2013) has also revealed that teachers are not educated enough in sign language, use of Braille materials, preparation of hearing aids, tactile diagrams and maps etc. to be able to face the challenges of inclusive education.

The disabled/disadvantaged group have often been the left out or the 'have not's of our community. Being born as visually impaired or any other disability (for some) is looked down as a curse or the effects of wrong doing in our previous birth in our country. This statement may sound controversial but the truth remains. The problem of education is one of the utmost reasons for illiteracy among different categories of disability. There are Special Schools and Integrated Schools as well but what those students think about the special schools, their choices and their perspectives towards these schools is important to study. The debate on whether such children grow better among others with the same disabilities or with "normal" children has also proved to be an ongoing one. But these are not the only aspects that are litigious. The Right to Education for the visually impaired is like a flute without its holes. It is the duty of those involved in the administration at every level, researchers, academicians including the educational institutions and the parents to understand the problems of differently able children and to understand the necessity and extent for adopting different procedures, techniques and methods to encourage these children to take full benefit. In this process there is a need to understand the role of special schools in providing support in mainstreaming the differently able children. "Researchers study will be a voice for these people" and this encouraged the researcher to choose the topic. When one cannot see the world,

education makes him/her travel the world. Education is an eye for the visually impaired. Hence, the researcher will make an attempt to conduct a case study on the only school for visually impaired in Sikkim i.e. Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired.

## **7.2 Methodology**

The present research was a case study of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired of Namchi, South Sikkim. The focus of the study was the intervention strategies adopted by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute of Visually Impaired for the education of the visually impaired students. It study was also to find out how the education of the school is helping and equipping the visually impaired children of the Sikkim. It allowed the investigator to go in-depth and generate an intensive data which were useful for understanding the phenomena. Since, it was a case study; the cases of the study was taken from the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired, Namchi, Sikkim and data was collected from the students, parents or guardians, teachers along with the principal, administrators and community members. Interview, observation and informal conversations, analysis of documents has been used as primary tools for gathering information. Triangulation of data was employed by contrasting students' information with that of regional directors, programme coordinators and librarians in

order to enhance validity of the data. All interviewees were audio taped to supplement the written interview notes. The audio taped information was used to clarify and enhance the written notes during data analysis.

### **7.2(i) Qualitative Research Approach**

In the light of Creswell (1998)<sup>5</sup>, there are three main factors that determine the nature of a research. First, researchers “choose a qualitative study because the topic needs to be explored”. The nature of this research was to explore about the provision and support given to those students. It explores how the students studying in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired were being educated and equipped. Second, in this research, the researcher went out and talked to the people, students, administrators etc. face to face for information and this agrees with Creswell’s point of view of qualitative research that the research should be conducted in natural settings and “the researcher is an instrument of data collection” who goes to the field to gather data in the form of words or images. Third, the collected data would be carefully analysed in order to find the meanings of informants, and the view of the topic will be presented in details (Creswell (1998)<sup>6</sup>. Hence, it was

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<sup>5</sup> Creswell, John W. (1998) Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five traditions. New Delhi; Sage Publications Pvt. Ltd. Pp.14

<sup>6</sup> Creswell, John W. (1998) Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five traditions. New Delhi; Sage Publications Pvt. Ltd. Pp.14

determined that a qualitative research could better match the research questions and the set objectives.

### **7.2(ii) Case Study**

The case study is potentially the most valuable method known for obtaining a true and comprehensive picture of individuality. A case study is a comprehensive study of a social unit of society, which may be a person, family group, institution, community or event. As such, for the present study case study technique is used. Case study is not a method of data collection; rather it is a research strategy, or an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon by using multiple sources of evidence.

Through case study a researcher can obtain a real and enlightened of personal experiences which would reveal man's inner strivings, tensions and motivations that drive him to action along with the forces that direct him to adopt a certain pattern of behavior. Information collected under the case study method helps a lot to the researcher in the task of constructing the appropriate questionnaire or schedule for the said task requires through knowledge of the concerning universe.

### **7.2(iii) Research Tool**

**Interviews:** For the following study, an interview schedule was prepared to find out the attitude and opinion of the students, teachers, parents, teachers and administrators. The schedule was sent for the expert validity

to the professors of different departments and after consulting and receiving their feedback the schedule was drafted for the final time. The interview schedules which were both structured and unstructured were prepared to elicit the required information from the subjects.

Structured interview involves the use of a set of pre- determined questions of highly standardized techniques of recording. Thus, it lets the interviewer to follow a rigid procedure laid, asking question in a form and order prescribed.

**Observation:** Observation is another method used for data collection in qualitative research. This method was used in the study by the researcher to collect in- depth data by using observation schedule. The schedule was later studied and analysed.

**Self- made questionnaires:** Self- made questionnaires were also used to supplement the other tools which were also constructed through an expert validity to elicit the relevant data among the students, teachers, community members and administrators of the school. Observation sheet was prepared to collect the data and record it which was later analyzed. Questionnaires were prepared for the teachers, students, community members, parents of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired.

#### **7.4 The Procedure**

After being granted the permission from the departmental head and supervisor to conduct the study, the researcher went to the Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department of Government of Sikkim, Tadong to ask for the permission letter for the research work in the particular school i.e. Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired, Namchi.

The researcher had to stay in and around Namchi for almost 3 months for her study. The researcher started her work after explaining the head of the school, the headmaster about her project and ultimately the permission was granted. Rapport was built initially with the students, teachers and the other teaching and non- teaching staff. Observation was documented in the personal sheets and the interviews were all recorded.

#### **7.5 Qualitative Analysis and Interpretation**

Since case study approach to qualitative analysis constitutes a specific way of collecting, organizing and analyzing data; in that sense, it represents an analysis process. All the data once organized were analysed in a thematic way. Thematic analysis and interpretation was used in this research. Thematic analysis is a foundation method for qualitative analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Thematic analysis involves

searching across a set of data, for example a number of interviews, to find repeated patterns of meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2006)<sup>7</sup>.

Qualitative interpretation begins with elucidating meanings. Interpretation, definition, involves going beyond the descriptive data. Interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, making sense of findings, offerings explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings, and otherwise imposing order on an unruly but surely patterned world. The analysis of the content has been done using thematic analysis in the study.

## **8.0 Findings**

- The study revealed that the teachers had fair knowledge about the school's mission and vision. They agreed that the laid down objectives of the school was being met by the school in developing a self- reliant individual.
- This school has been trying to equip the students with variety of skills like candle making, basket making, envelope making etc. in the school only.
- The school arranges vocational training for the students helps these visually impaired students to inculcate social habits and skills. Vocational training allows the students to prepare for future training at other vocational skills training centers.

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<sup>7</sup> Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology, University of Auckland and University of West England, 3, 77-101.



- Even though the vocational centre was temporarily closed because of the scarcity of materials, the children were found playing guitar and other musical instruments whole heartedly. They were making the best of the available resources.
- The school do not follow Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation pattern of examination.
- Therefore, the school do not follow certain curriculum and requirements like other regular school still studies are augmented with instruction in compensatory skills including life skills, mobility, orientation, keyboard and computer skills and Braille are there. Focus is also given on life- skills and vocational skills.
- Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Impaired provides free residential facilities to the visually impaired students. Not only to the students studying in the school but it continues to provide the lodging and free fooding facilities to those visually impaired students admitted in inclusive schools. All the students stay in the hostel only.
- The students have knowledge about mainstreaming and inclusive education. After interacting with the students it was observed that they preferred having schools nearby and this school being upgraded till secondary or senior secondary.

- Majority of the parents praised the school and its administration. Very few knew about inclusive or mainstreaming schools.
- The visually impaired students residing in the school's hostel but studying in inclusive settings cannot think of staying outside the hostel as the hostel is free of cost and they get the necessary facilities which they might not get if they stay alone outside. Trying to know their attitude towards special schools, the students unanimously said that the visually impaired child should get admitted first in special school.
- On asking these students about Resource Teachers, they had no clue about who they were and about their responsibility. Without special educator placing the differently-abled students in an inclusive school is baseless.
- “Opportunity without accessibility is useless” when discussing about integrated schools and mainstreaming. In inclusive schools and mainstreaming schools if the differently-abled students are not provided the facilities, and then it is useless to discuss about inclusive or mainstreaming.
- The cleanliness of the students was of concern to some. They felt that proper care are not being given to them as the uniform and their hygiene has gone worse after Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department has taken over the school from National

Association for the Blind. Timely inspection is not done and sometimes when it is done they hardly go to the hostel was what many pointed.

- The problem in finding a writer to being accepted as other sighted students in schools and many other grievances were shared by the visually impaired students admitted in inclusive schools.

### **8.1 Recommendations**

- Awareness should be made among the normal children regarding the differently-abled. They should also accept them as themselves.
- If possible, every State should have its own Braille printing press.
- If special schools are to act as a resource centers then the governing body must ensure to keep these centers updated in terms of music, art and craft and training programs.
- Sex education and vulnerability to sexual assault are critical issues for people with visually impairments and those interested in their welfare. Sex education is therefore a must for the visually impaired adolescents.
- A study on the implementation of RTE for the visually impaired in inclusive schools can be conducted.
- Guidance and Counseling is also very important for the visually impaired. As these students stay in the hostel, away from their

homes, sometimes they may feel some mental, psychological, physiological changes within themselves.

## **8.2 Conclusion**

Most of the students attending residential schools for students who are blind or visually impaired have multiple conditions of special needs or have visual problems that are difficult to handle in the student's home. Some lack the necessary services in their home communities.

Over the years, things have improved, diagnosis has become multi-disciplinary, education has become the emphasis and trained professionals are available. Hence, the need for integration and mainstreaming is more felt. Mainstreaming is an approach that emphasizes integration and as such it is the antithesis of the earlier institutionalization movement which emphasized segregation.

Inclusive education was introduced to get education on equal footing for the disadvantaged groups. Special schools are equally responsible in preparing the visually impaired for mainstreaming.

Special education is an integral part of the total educational enterprise, not a separate order. In any school system, special education is a means of enlarging the capacity of the system to serve the educational needs of all children.

The particular function of special education within the schools (and the education departments of other institutions) is to identify children with

unusual needs and to aid in the effective fulfilment of those needs. Both inclusive or regular and special school programs play a role in meeting the educational needs of children with exceptionalities. A primary goal of educators should be to help build accommodative learning opportunities for children with exceptionalities in regular educational programs. In the implementation of this goal, special education can serve as a support system, and special educators can assist regular school personnel in managing the education of children with exceptionalities.

When the special placement of a child is required, the aim of the placement should be to maximize the development and freedom of the child rather than to accommodate the regular classroom. Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute, being the only special school for the visually impaired is educating and equipping the visually impaired children. It has been advocating the needs of visually impaired children and of the concept of individualization that special education can come to play a major creative role in the mainstream of education.

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**APPENDIX I**

**Observation-sheet of the visually impaired children**

Name.....Class..... Date of Birth.....Age.....  
 Father’s Name.....Mother’s Name.....Village/ Town.....  
 Mother tongue.....Religion..... Category: Gen/ OBC/ SC/ST (Please specify.....)

**Personality Profile:**

Items	5	4	3	2	1	0
<b>Initiative and Perseverance</b>						
Is self motivated?						
Works well with minimum directions						
Works well with constant guidance						
Able to work independently						
<b>Work Habits</b>						
Very careful worker						
Usually neat						
Inconsistent						
Sense of Responsibility						
<b>Participation in Group Work</b>						
Contributes readily						
Takes part occasionally						
Does not participate readily						
Does not participate at all						
<b>Conversation</b>						
Able to comprehend and follow instructions easily						
Able to converse						
Pronounces words correctly						
Speaks fluently						
<b>Braille Script</b>						
Like to write						
Has neat hand writing						
Forms letters well						
Write letters correctly						

**Educational Profile:**

	5	4	3	2	1	0
<b>Interest in School Subjects</b>						
Mathematics						
English						
Hindi						
Nepali						
Social Studies						
Science						
Art and Craft						
Music						
Games and Sports						
Yoga						
<b>Interest in vocational subjects</b>						
Canning						
Weaving						
Wax Making						
Envelope Making						
Music						

## **APPENDIX II**

### *Interview schedule for the administrators/ teachers*

#### **Status and objectives of the school**

1. What was the main objective behind in establishing JNMI in Namchi?
2. What objectives are being achieved in your school?
3. What is the mission of this school and how is it achieved?
4. What are the physical infrastructures available in the school?
5. Does the school have disabled- friendly infrastructure? If yes, please specify.
6. What are the equipments and amenities that are available in the school and how are they used to educate and equip the visually impaired students?
7. Since the school is residential what are the facilities available and how is it catering the need of visually impaired children?
8. Do you have library facility in the school? If yes, what kinds of books, magazines and other reading materials is available keeping in view the special need of the visually impaired children?
9. How does your school provide computer education to the visually impaired students? Please specify.
10. What kind of indoor and outdoor games and sports facility are available and how they are utilized for the physically impaired?
11. Does the school have provision for guidance and counseling? If yes, then how is it implemented?
12. What are the instructional facilities that are available in the school?
13. What are the vocational skills which are provided to the students of JNMI and how are they able to equip them?

14. What are the ICT resources available in your school and how you utilize it in your teaching learning processes?
15. What kinds of teaching aids are used in the classes to meet the special needs of the children?
16. What are the planning and strategies for making your class more learner- friendly? What kinds of reading materials are available for the students and how are they utilized?
17. What kind of co- curricular activities are organized by the school for the visually impaired students?
18. What is the admission criteria and process for admission in the school and hostel?
19. What is the administrative structure in the school for its smooth functioning? Please specify with their respective roles and responsibilities?
20. What are the sources of income for the school? Please specify the budget and the governmental/ non- governmental support?
21. What is the role of community members in management and administration of the school?
22. What is the role of NGO in the management and functioning of the school?
23. What is the role of parents in planning, management and functioning of the school?
24. What are the physical, social, cultural developmental activities organized in the school like games, sports, fete, gymnastics, music, art, dance- drama, exhibition, assembly etc.?
25. What kind of leisure activities are organized by your school and the hostel to encourage and equip the visually impaired students like singing, playing musical instruments, reading story books, coin collection, picnics etc.?

26. What kind of vocational skills are provided to equip the visually impaired students?
27. What kind of special support services are provided to the visually impaired students to facilitate them?
28. What kind of welfare activities are offered to visually impaired students?
29. What is the examination and evaluation pattern to evaluate the visually impaired students of the school?
30. Does your school follow continuous and comprehensive assessment? If yes, on what basis are the students evaluated?
31. What measures you take to foster discipline among the students in the class and hostel?
32. What are the educational programmes implemented to educate and equip the visually impaired students? Please specify in detail.
33. What are the special activities which are organised by JNMI to equip the visually impaired students?
34. What kind of intervention strategies that are adopted for the visually impaired to impart education?
35. How are the visually impaired students prepared for mainstreaming? Please specify the arrangements that have been made for them?
36. What is your opinion about JNMI? Whether it is able to cater the needs of the visually impaired children?
37. What is your opinion about inclusive schools and such kind of special schools?
38. Do you feel there is still the need of special school? If yes, why and how can they be utilized?
39. How is JNMI contributing for the visually impaired children?



## **Appendix III**

### **Interview questions for the students**

*The purpose of this study is to collect data about the attitude and opinions of students towards JNMI for the visually impaired. Collected data will be confidential and it will be used only for research purposes.*

1. What class are you studying in?
2. From which year have you joined in this school?
3. Since when have you been VI?
4. Was it tough to learn Braille?
5. Which are your favourite subject/ class?
6. How many friends do you have?
7. Who is your best friend and why?
8. Do you enjoy being at home or in this residential school?
9. What are the subjects that are taught in your class?
10. Do you know how to read Braille?
11. What do you do in your leisure time?
12. Do you like to study in JNMI? Why?
13. Any good thing that you like about JNMI?
14. Do you regret that the school is only up to class four?
15. While teaching in the class does your teacher use any teaching aids like tape recorder, radios, film slides etc?
16. What do you miss the most being in the hostel?
17. Where would you like to go after the completion from this school?
18. Do you always play with your sighted peers in the village? If not, why?
19. Do you love to sing? Have you participated in any of the competition held at your school?

20. Do you have computers in your school? Do you know how to use it?
21. Do you get study hour in your hostel?
22. Which is your best sport?
23. What do you all do during the weekends or during the holidays in the hostel?
24. Do your parents come often to visit you in your hostel?
25. When was your last exam? When is your final exam?
26. What is your dream for your future?
27. Do your get books on time?
28. Do you understand whatever lessons the teacher teaches in the class?
29. Has your school taken you for field visit, picnics, outings etc?
30. Do you clean your room regularly?
31. How many students are there in your class?
32. How many teachers come to teach you in your class?
33. Do you know how to use computers? Theoretically or practically?
34. Describe your school in few lines.
35. Does your institution provide you any transportation facilities for outing etc?
36. How many stairs do you have to step to reach your class? Do you use a walking cane?
37. What is your parent's dream about you? Do they share with you or do they think that you can get any job after your education?
38. How can you contribute towards the society?
39. What is inclusive education? Any idea?
40. Where would you like to study after your completion from JNMI?

41. Could you tell me about areas where you feel it is particularly important for the teacher to assist/help you? What kind is important to you?
42. Who is your role model? Why?
43. Do you miss your friends outside school? How many friends do you have outside JNMI?
44. What do you want to become in the future?
45. To what extent do you feel that your needs as a VI student are being met? Do you feel that support staff and teachers have sufficient knowledge about you in order to provide the right support?

## **Appendix IV**

### **Interview question for parents**

*The main purpose of this interview is to study the attitude and opinion of parents towards Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute of the Visually Impaired. Collected data will be confidential and it will be used only for research purposes.*

1. How many child/children you have? Girls/ Boys
2. How many children are studying in JNMI?
3. How did you feel when you first came to know your child is blind? What did you do?
4. What medical treatment did your child get? If you did, please specify?
5. What do you think about the cause of your child's blindness?
6. When did your child first go to school?
7. Since your child became blind, is there any help you get from different bodies? If any specify?
8. Is there any organization that helps your child to enable him educated and be a better person? If any, mention the name of the organization, and what it did to your child?
9. When did your child first go to school?
10. How did you come to know about JNMI?
11. To what extent are you satisfied with the admission policy of JNMI?
12. JNMI being residential has many advantages, what are these according to you?
13. Why did you decide to send your child to this school?
14. What factors influenced you in making this decision?
15. What is your view about the hostel facilities of JNMI?
16. Any kind of changes that you have observed in your child after joining the school?

17. Since JNMI is a residential school, how confident are you that your child is secure?
18. Are you emotionally satisfied for sending your child to that school?
19. How often do you go to see your child or attend PTA meeting?
20. How far is JNMI contributing to the development of your child?
21. Do you think there are adequate resources in this school to cater for children who are visually impaired?
22. What resources would you consider essential for teaching visually impaired children?
23. How much does your child share about the hostel life to you?
24. Do you think he/she loves being in JNMI or do you think he/she is obliged as there is no other schools around?
25. Has the school helped your child in getting the basic education?
26. After the completion from JNMI, where have your child joined?
27. How far has JNMI helped in enrolling your child in mainstreaming into other schools?
28. What is the confidence level of your child before and how is it after joining the school?
29. Do you think JNMI is equipping your child? If so, how is it doing so?
30. Which is better for your child JNMI or normal school?
31. What do you think your child would prefer JNMI or other normal schools?
32. Do you think that there should be more schools like JNMI in our state? If so, then please specify why?
33. What changes has been in JNMI after the Social Welfare Department has taken the institute under their administration? Which do you think is better, JNMI with NAB or with SWD?
34. Do you bring your child home during the holidays?

35. When at home does your child share with you the experiences that he/she had in his/her hostel? If yes, please elaborate....
36. Is JNMI hostel free of cost?
37. What do you hope your child will achieve in this school?
38. Do you put some effort to help your child be effective in his/her education? What is it?
39. Do you believe that a blind child can be as effective as the sighted ones if necessary support is given?
40. If there anything you think being parents you should have done for your child's educational success but did not? What is that? Why do you think you failed to do?
41. How many times are you invited to attend the programmes organized by the school?
42. Are you satisfied with the training of your child/children at JNMI?
43. Do you think your blind child/children would be able to learn better social living in society after getting education from JNMI?

## **Appendix V**

### **Interview questions: General questions for Teachers**

1. How long have you been teaching in JNMI?
2. Where were you working before joining this school?
3. What are your educational qualifications?
4. What do you teach? Which subject?
5. Who recruited you to teach these children?
6. Have you done any specialization in this area to handle the visually impaired children? If yes, please specify.
7. How many classes do you have to teach per day?
8. Which are the subjects that you teach?
9. To what extent do you think that the medical examination of children is done each month from the institution?
10. To what extent you are satisfied with the admission policy of the institution?
11. How many batches have you taught so far in JNMI?
12. Has there been observed any kind of improvement initially and after joining JNMI among the students? If yes, please specify.
13. What mode of teaching do you use in teaching these children?
14. Do you get in- service special training for the development of instructional materials? If any other training or orientation, please specify.
15. Do you have to report and maintain the progress of each and every child to the principal/ administration? If so, then to whom and how do you do that?
16. Why JNMI, why not other normal schools?
17. Do you discuss with parents about the educational progress of children?
18. Do you do a regular meeting for parents and organize parent groups?

19. Does the school provide any such facilities/equipments such as cassette recorder, Dictaphones, talking books, optical aids, optacon, brailers, typewriters etc. to teach in the classroom?
20. Are you specialized in using Arithmetic slates, dissected wooded relief maps and globes to teach the VI?
21. Are examination and tests given to the students? Who prepares the question paper for the students and what are the parameters under which they are evaluated?
22. What are the everyday challenges that the teachers face in educating these children?
23. Any suggestion how these challenges can be met?
24. How do you handle gifted child among these children in the classroom?
25. Does the age and gender difference among the students makes any differences in their concept towards life?
26. How do you cater to the needs of visually impaired children?
27. Students can often be quite demanding, how do you cope with the extra demands of 'disability' students?
28. What subjects are taught in the school?
29. How do you give help to VI to participate in different tasks/ co-curricular activities at school?
30. Do you have to face any teaching difficulties in the class?
31. How does JNMI help in getting opportunities for the teachers to learn and grow?
32. What kind of teaching method do you use while teaching in the class?
33. What kinds of challenges are faced while teaching the students in JNMI?
34. Do you prepare a lesson plan before you go and teach in the class/ what kind of planning is done before teaching in the class?
35. Do you have students with special needs in your classroom other than blindness?
36. Do you think that the needs of the majority of children with VI are met in your classroom? In what way?



37. What do you understand by the concept of inclusive education? What do you think would the children be able to cope themselves up into inclusive school after JNMI?
38. To what extent do you feel that you understand the needs of the student's disability, that you have sufficient knowledge about him/her in order to provide appropriate support?
39. Tell me about the support areas that you think are important for you to assist the student? Are there any areas of support that you think you should not get involved in?
40. Are there any areas where you encounter conflicts in your relationship with the administrators or you feel it is not appropriate for them to assist the student?
41. Are there any areas where you have experienced conflicts in your relationship with your students?

## **APPENDIX VI**

### **Interview Guide for the community members**

1. Have you been to JNMI? What kind of idea do you have about the school?
2. JNMI is situated in your area so what do you feel about this?
3. Do you think the VI child/children would be able to learn better social living in society after getting education in the institute for VI in JNMI? How?
4. Do you think the education the children are getting there in JNMI will be helpful for them in the future? How?
5. Anyone you know who has studied from there and is presently well settled?
6. Should special schools like JNMI continue to exist for the VI or do you think that it should not? If not then why?
7. Since you are the community member, you must know where the students go after the completion of their schooling from JNMI?
8. Do you have children? Do they have any VI friends studying in JNMI school? If yes, then do you mind your children playing with them?
9. Any kind of awareness programme held by National Association of the Blind in the village?
10. Who runs JNMI? Have you had ever encouraged your friend/ family members to send their VI child to JNMI?