# CHAPTER - I

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.0 Introduction

The present study entitled “Expanded Core Curricular Skills and Academic Achievement of Students with Visual Impairment in Inclusive Education for the Disabled at Secondary Stage” is about the level and extent of acquisition of expanded core curricular skills by the visually impaired students studying in Inclusive Education at Secondary Stage. This study is descriptive survey in nature implemented in Inclusive Education. Inclusive education is a type of Education in which regular (normal) and special needs learners are brought together in the same academic environment and classroom for the purpose of learning. The expanded core curriculum is a curriculum designed to go beyond the core components- math, reading and writing, and addresses the essential areas and experiences that are unique only to visually impaired persons (Pugh & Erin, 1999). These areas are unique and should be taught in addition to the core curriculum because they are specific to blindness.

In this chapter, the details in respect to Inclusive Education: Meaning and Concept, Current Trends in Inclusive Education, Visual Impairment: Meaning and Concept, Core curriculum of Visually impaired, Expanded Core Curricular Skills: Meaning and Concept, Rationale of the study, Statement of the Problem, Objectives, Hypotheses, and Delimitation have been given in separate captions.

## 1.1 Inclusive Education: Meaning and Concept

The adoption of inclusive education could be in realization of the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Right (United Nations, 1948) which stipulated that education is a fundamental human right. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) also

declared that children with or without disabilities have the same right to educational opportunities.

Education is the most essential component in the development and empowerment of individuals, and inclusion in education irrespective of the varied socio-economic differences and the differences in 'abilities' and 'disabilities' (Praisner, 2003), undoubtedly made this foundation much stronger (Ahmad, 2014). A school system emphasizing education for all should ensure the right of all children to a meaningful education based on individual needs and abilities (Johnson, 2002). Any child may experience a special need during the course of his educational years (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1994), and as a result, some children feel 'left-outs' and never entered school or entered only for a few years and, as repeaters, or become 'drop-outs' or 'pushed-outs', without their needs having been met. Thus leading to failure of schools to teach rather than their own failure to learn (Lindsey, 2007; Norwich, 2008). The geographical and social segregation of students with 'disabilities', from their 'non-disabled' peers, in learning and development, is further a failure of meaningfully integrating students in mainstream schools (Singh, 2003).

Inclusion should also ensure equal participation of all learners in a differentiated curriculum, and intra-curricular activities. Implementation of instructional strategies and methods that increased regular and special needs students' participation and progress in the differentiated curriculum is very essential for success in an inclusive setting.

Special needs students who are included in regular education classrooms are expected to be active participants in classroom instruction and to be challenged academically at the same level with the regular students. It is obvious that in inclusive classrooms, students learn in different ways. This is a challenge to teachers with diverse group of learners (MacLean, 2001). Ayres and Hedeen (1996) recognized that teaching the special-needs child requires a team approach with pre-determined common goals. However, Mostert

(1996) found that although the theory is that administrators and teachers will collaborate with parents and students, the reality is that these expectations are too high given time constraints.

According to MacBeath, Galton, Steward, BacBeath and Page (2005), “Though there are social benefits both for children with special needs and their regular peers, there is much less positive evidence that learning needs are being met across the whole spectrum of ability’. In the same vein, Upchurch (2007) was of the view that inclusion had a negative relationship with satisfactory learning and a positive relationship with unsatisfactory acting-out behaviors. He further stated that teachers may be unable to meet the diverse of needs presented by both regular and special needs students in inclusive classrooms; as students who do not understand what is being taught or who need to be challenged more, could become bored and frustrated. In line with the foregoing discourse, Campbell (2009), was of the view that students with special needs may affect the academic achievement of their regular classmates as demands on teachers’ attention made by students needing extra help might have a negative impact on the regular students. Again, it is anticipated that the academic achievement of students with special needs may be undermined if more emphasis is placed on academic curriculum as against life coping skills for them to be able to effectively function well in the society.

Fletcher (2010) indicated that while there is some evidence of positive effects of inclusion of students with disabilities, opponents of this idea maintained that there is less evidence of the overall benefit of inclusion on the classmates of students with disabilities.

The concept of inclusive education has brought with itself the much needed share of equality in approach for the education of the 'disabled' by giving them a levelled field to rightly exhibit their differential abilities, proving themselves capable enough to learn and perform together, at par with their non-disabled peers. With this change in approach, there also emerged the

need and challenge to adapt the teaching strategies or the ways of instructional delivery in the inclusive classrooms, to address the diverse learning needs of all learners in an equitable manner. Acknowledging the capabilities or 'differential abilities' of all learners, the education of children with special needs in inclusive schools became more of a shared responsibility between the different stakeholders involved (Ahmad, 2015a; Praisner, 2003); demanding a change in attitude, availability and accessibility of infrastructure, pedagogy, need-based methods and materials for instructional delivery, assessment and evaluation; and the much obvious issue of acceptance and accommodation at all levels in the education system (Ahmad, 2014; 2015b; Stainback and Stainback, 1984). Addressing the individual learning needs of all children, youth and adults, with a specific focus on those vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion; inclusive education was an approach implied to all learners, with or without disabilities, to be able to learn together through access to common pre-school provisions, schools and community educational setting with an appropriate network of support services, which can be possible only in a flexible education system that assimilated the needs of diverse learners and adapted itself to meet these needs, ensuring that all stakeholders in the system are comfortable with diversity and saw it as a challenge rather than a problem.

This new approach to education (inclusion) comes with several challenges which behove the school authorities and teachers to ensure that meaningful and intentional engagement of regular and students with special needs is done in a way that provides learning opportunities/activities and ensures that the environment is conducive to all students. Weiner (2003) is of the view that the teachers' moral obligation to be committed to expecting all students meet high standard of achievement and to provide an excellent learning environment is paramount in inclusive schools.

Inclusive education, more than mainstreaming the learners with special needs, is also concerned with identifying and overcoming all barriers for effective, continuous and quality participation of all in education (Ramchand

and Dummugudem, 2014; Ahmad, 2015a), and providing a 'least restrictive environment' (LRE) to satisfactorily afford children with disabilities a meaningful educational benefit, together with others, in an accessible physical and human environment (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, 2001; Gal, Schreur, & Engel-Yeger, 2010). Overtime, there has been a considerable shift in the understanding of 'disability', from the earlier medical interpretations of seeing 'disability' as a 'deficit' within the individual, to the concept of human rights and equitable opportunities for participation of all individuals (Wolery, 2000). The social model of disability sees the systemic barriers, negative attitudes and exclusion by society (purposely or inadvertently) as the ultimate factors defining disability. This explains 'disability' as resulting from the interaction of an individual's 'functional status' with the physical, cultural, and policy environments (Shakespeare and Watson, 1997), where if the environment is designed for the full range of human functioning and incorporates appropriate accommodations and supports, then individuals with functional limitations would not be 'disabled' and can actively participate in the society (Lang, 2001). Interventions, to be inclusive, should therefore not only be at the individual level, like medical rehabilitation, but also at the societal level, with provision of necessary support services, a universal design to make infrastructure more accessible, and a change in attitude and perception regarding disability; promoting inclusive education systems and community awareness programs to combat stigma.

## 1.2 Current trends in Inclusive Education

Until recently, most conceptual literature on inclusive education was Western in origin, taking a ‘whole-school’ approach to institutional change (Peters, 2004), and influenced by the social model of disability. Children in special schools were seen as geographically and socially segregated from their peers, and the initial movement to vocationally integrate these students in mainstream schools (‘integration’) shifted to one where the whole school was encouraged to become more adaptable and inclusive in its

day-to-day educational practices for all students (‘inclusive education’). Pedagogy in particular was highlighted as the key to meeting all students’ educational needs by making the curriculum flexible, and so more accessible. By recognising that teaching methods which can make curriculum accessible to children with disabilities can also make learning accessible to all students, a teacher or school principal is well on the way to improving the overall quality of their school. In this way, inclusive education is not a disability-only issue, but an educational quality issue.

There is a growing, although not comprehensive, literature in the developing nations, which focused more on external factors with its ‘community approach’. In developing contexts with large numbers of out-of-school children, inclusive education tends to be more broadly concerned with school access and education deprivations for marginalised groups such as girls, ethnic minorities, poor families and disabled children. It seemed that there is currently an expanding discourse on inclusive education developing amongst some academics and teaching professionals in India, many of whom, like Mike Oliver (1996), see inclusive education as exclusively concerned with children with disabilities. This discourse is attempting to shift perceptions of disability from the medical model to the social model. However, there are many conceptual difficulties with the terms of integration and inclusion in India, which are often used interchangeably. Further, varying definitions of disability and subjective interpretations of what ‘type’ of child a teacher is willing to include in their classroom add to the confusion.

Even if a previously excluded child is given access to a mainstream classroom, what happens within that space can be anything but inclusive if the school quality is poor, they cannot access an inflexible curriculum, or they are ignored or bullied by the teacher or their peers. Tomasevski (2003) highlights how “…education is widely - albeit wrongly - perceived as inherently good. Getting all children to school is thus mistaken for their right to education.” It is worth noting that the concept of inclusive education in the mainstream as opposed to specialist segregated provision is a matter of

heated, inconclusive debate in the north, and yet it is seemingly being transferred unquestioningly as the panacea to the exclusion of children with disabilities in the south.

While in the developed nations, the discourse around inclusive education is primarily concerned with segregation as opposed to inclusion in the mainstream, in the developing countries the coverage of special schools is so limited that the discourse is concerned with inclusion being potentially the most cost and time-efficient way of improving access to educational institutions.

It may be that the promotion by the World Bank and Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development (OECD) of the cost-effectiveness of inclusion in the mainstream enabling both economic and social benefits may bear more relevance for resource-constrained governments and policy-makers than a child-rights approach.

## 1.3 Out of school children in Indian Context

India has the second largest education system in the world, with 200 million children aged between 6 and 14, around 25 million of whom are out of school. However, bearing in mind that apparently only 35% of children are registered at birth, others estimate between 35 to 80 million out-of-school children.

When considering understanding of, approaches to, and impacts of inclusive education, the inevitable diversity and complexity in a context of this size must be taken into account.

## 1.4 Conceptual understandings of Inclusive Education in India

Although it may not be appropriate to judge the adoption of the concept of developed nations in the developing countries from a western perspective, hasty use of such globalised terminology without engaging with the thinking behind it may present no more than empty rhetoric, whatever the context.

Singal (2005a) clearly perceives inclusive education as "…a concept that has been adopted from the international discourse, but has not been engaged within the Indian scenario." Many interviewees concurred with the opinions reflected in government documents that inclusion is about children with special needs, as reflected by a disabling condition. A handful of others argue that inclusive education should not be limited to children with disabilities, as it holds relevance for all marginalised groups.

Indian understandings of disability and educational needs are demonstrated through the interchangeable use of several English terms which hold different meanings in the developed nations. Mukhopadhyay and Mani (2002) stated that children with special needs or special educational needs tend to be perceived as children with disabilities in India. In contrast, the intention of Mary Warnock's term 'special educational needs', coined in the UK in 1978, was to imply that any child, with an impairment or not, may have an individual educational need at some point in their school career (e.g. dyslexia, or language of instruction as a second language) which the teacher should adapt to. This further implies that a child with a disability may not have a special educational need while their able-bodied peers could.

'Inclusive' and 'integrated' education are also concepts that are used interchangeably, understood as the placement of children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms, with the provision of aids and appliances, and specialist training for the teacher on how to 'deal with' students with disabilities. There is little engagement with the connotations of school, curriculum, and teacher flexibility for all children. These rigid, categorical interpretations of subtly different western concepts are perhaps a reflection of not only the government tendency to categorise and label but also a cultural one, most explicitly enforced through the rigidly categorised caste system.

While it is easy to criticise the apparent lack of critical engagement with these terms in India, this is perhaps a reflection of the weakness of local disabled people's organisations' (DPOs) political voice which have had

such an overt influence on the development of these concepts in the north. It may also reflect an unwillingness to engage with an understanding of social exclusion and the, "…barriers to entry and participation in the education system faced by children due to reasons other than impairment". However, it is worth noting that this political discourse has a 40 year plus history in the developed nations, while it is relatively new in the developing countries.

## 1.5 Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan: *Education for All*

Ministry of Human Resource Development (2006) in its Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) framework clearly states that "SSA will ensure that every child with special needs, irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability, is provided education in an appropriate environment. SSA will adopt zero rejection policy so that no child is left out of the education system. It will also support a wide range of approaches, options and strategies for education of children with special needs." Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) was approved in India in September, 2008 to replace Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) Scheme from 2009-10. The Scheme is 100% centrally funded.

The Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) is mainly responsible for education and rehabilitation of Children with Special Needs (CWSN). The Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) was set up as a registered society in 1986. On September, 1992 the RCI Act was enacted by Parliament and it became a Statutory Body on 22 June 1993.The Act was amended by Parliament in 2000 to make it broader based. The mandate given to RCI is to regulate and monitor services given to persons with disability, to standardise syllabi and to maintain a Central Rehabilitation Register of all qualified professionals and personnel working in the field of Rehabilitation and Special Education. The Act also prescribed punitive action against unqualified persons delivering services to persons with disability.

Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2008) on education states that:

"States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning".

## 1.6 Current educational status of children with disabilities

Differing combinations of structural factors such as caste, gender, religion, poverty etc. intersect with disability resulting in varied individual experiences, but the broad commonalities that shape the lives of people with disabilities in India transcend these divisions. Their lives are largely marked by poverty and marginalisation from mainstream social processes. A recent study by the World Bank (2007), for example, noted that children with disability are five times more likely to be out of school than children belonging to scheduled castes or scheduled tribes (SC or ST). Moreover, when children with disability do attend school they rarely progress beyond the primary level, leading ultimately to lower employment chances and long-term income poverty.

Government documents also describe marked variations in the provisions envisaged for different marginalised groups. Historically, SCs/STs have had a strong political lobby since independence and this is reflected in the provisions made for them. Article 46 of the Constitution makes a straightforward commitment to promoting the 'special care and education' of SC/ST populations, whereas Article 41 referring to children with disabilities, states:

The State shall within the limits of its economic capacity and development make effective provision for securing the right to work, old age, sickness and disablement.

The clause, within the limits of the State's economic capacity and development, greatly reduces the expectation of urgent action that is seen in Article 46. Such caveats have had a significant impact on the national

planning process. Majumdar (2001), analysing educational provisions for various disadvantaged groups across different states, sums up the scenario for children with disabilities as:

Apparently, nothing is available other than a few government scholarships, facilities in the form of a couple of institutions for boys and girls and institutes for training teachers for the disabled…for the mentally disabled, no conscious developmental scheme is focused on by any of the states.

Even though various efforts have been made in the recent past, both the rates of educational participation and outcomes of education, remain very poor for children and young adults with disabilities. Illiteracy rates for this group remain much higher than the general population and school attendance continues to lag behind that of non-disabled peers.

Based on National Sample Survey data, the World Bank (2007) report categorically stated that, “it is very clear that both educational attainment of all Persons With Disabilities and current attendance of Children With Disabilities (CWD) are very poor and far below national averages” Data suggests that people with disabilities have much lower educational attainment rates, with 52 percent illiteracy against a 35 percent average for the general population. Illiteracy levels are high across all categories of disability, and extremely so for children with visual, multiple and mental disabilities (and for children with severe disabilities across all the categories). Equally, the share of children with disabilities who are out of school is around five and a half times the general rate and around four times even that of the ST population. Even in states with good educational indicators and high overall enrolments a significant share of out of school children are those with disabilities: in Kerala figures stand at 27 percent and in Tamil Nadu it is over 33 percent. Data also indicates that across all levels of severity, Children with Disabilities (CWD) very rarely progress beyond primary school.

Experience in the past had shown that this category of learners were usually managed and educated in special schools; specifically meant for people with various disabilities; while normal learner (learners without disabilities ) were and are still usually educated in normal or conventional schools. In recent years however, and especially in the wake of the Salamanca Declaration of 1994, the idea of establishing inclusive schools has been projected the world over.

The Government of India in the past decade has launched many new initiatives in terms of legislations, policies and schemes in order to address the educational needs of children with disabilities.

In the 1990s international aid agencies recommended that poverty reduction programmes specifically target people with disabilities in addition to other disadvantaged groups (Asian Development Bank 2002, World Bank 2004).

These Millennium Development goals have provided the framework for government intervention in India, contributing to legislations and programmes for inclusive education as cost effective and quality options for all children with disabilities.

In response to these concerns the Government of India implemented a Comprehensive Education for All (EFA) initiatives, the 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan' (SSA) in 2003 and promulgated three new policies on the education of people with disabilities,

- The Action plan the Inclusive in Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities (IECYD), 2005
- The National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, 2006 and
- The Right to Education Act 2009.
- All these initiatives are aimed at meeting EFA goals (2010)

Of all persons living with disability, 35.9% are children and young adults in the 0-19 age-group. The Right to Education 2009 being in force from April 2010, the focus is on the advocating both at the policy level and community level for the resourcefulness of schools for an inclusive environment so as to include all children specifically children with disabilities.

## 1.7 Education of Children with Special Needs

Children with Special Needs (CWSN) are subjected to negligence, segregation, deprivation and discrimination because of physical and mental characteristics, and the wide-scale negative social attitude towards them.

Under SSA, focus during the 11th Plan was to mainstream children with special needs (CWSN) in regular schools, and support their participation in the schooling process. At the beginning of the 11th Plan, 26.37 lakh CWSN were identified under SSA, of whom 22.16 lakh were enrolled in schools, and an additional 2 lakh provided support through other interventions, such as home based education. Currently, the number of CWSN identified under SSA stands at 30.28 lakh: 26.46 lakh CWSN are enrolled in schools and another 2.41 lakh CWSN are provided support through school readiness and home-based education. The current coverage of CWSN under SSA, thus, stands at 28.87 lakh. These efforts need to be continued and strengthened in the 12$^{th}$ Plan Period and efforts intensified to facilitate their access and participation by providing children assistive devices, providing schools with barrier-free access, engaging resource teachers, etc.

The RTE Act promises new stimulus to the education of CWSN, irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability, for education in an enabling inclusive environment. Teacher Qualifications notified by NCTE under section 23 of the RTE Act recognised persons with Special Education (D.Ed and B.Ed Special Education) as teachers on par with other teachers and the deployment of such teachers in general schools for optimum utilization is a positive development. MHRD has also moved for an amendment to bring children with cerebral palsy, autism and multiple

disabilities within the purview of the RTE Act, and to provide for home based education for children with very severe and profound disability The key focal areas for inclusive education of CWSN in the 12th Plan would be identification of 'hidden' CWSN, development of human resource for support services, and infrastructure and material support for inclusive education.

### 1.7.1 Physical and Social Access

Physical access of CWSN entails systematic identification of CWSN, as also removing barriers that prevent them from attending schools. As per the Census 2001, there were 40.90 lakh children with disabilities; the current identification of CWSN through SSA is 30.28 lakh. Hence, there is a gap of 10.62 lakh CWSN. Identification of CWSN will therefore become a very important component of social mapping exercises initiated by the States.

### 1.7.2 Special Training for School Readiness

Every child with special needs should be provided support to participate in the schooling process in neighbourhood schools. The Special Training provision under SSA would be utilised for school readiness programmes for children with disabilities. This training may be residential, non residential or even home based, as per their specific requirements.

### 1.7.3 Entitlements and Support Services

All entitlements and incentives provided to children in the 6-14 age groups under RTE will also apply to CWSN, with requisite modifications: Braille books, large print educational material, etc., instead of text books, or transportation from home to school and back would be from the respective mainstream financial sources. Besides entitlements guaranteed to other children,

CWSN may need specific assistive devices, for which the allocations earmarked for inclusive education will be utilised. The core essential support services for enabling children with disabilities to access and be retained in

schools would be category specific and made available as per the needs of the child.

The support services should include resource room support and reform of physical infrastructure to ensure development of schools as inclusive spaces for education of all children.

### 1.7.4 Architectural Barrier

Architectural barriers in schools will be removed for easy access, and school buildings made accessible by incorporating not only ramps, but accessible classrooms, toilets, playgrounds, laboratories etc. Funding for barrier free access will be sourced from the civil works budgets under SSA. Development of innovative designs for schools to provide an enabling environment for children with special needs will be an important part of the programme.

### 1.7.5 Convergence for Comprehensive Coverage of CWSN

Systemic convergence with School Health Programme must be ensured for medical and surgical interventions. Convergence with Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment should ensure that support for assistive devices under Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/ Fitting of Aids/ Appliances Scheme (ADIP) continues during the 12th Plan. Such convergence should extend to facilitating educational support to CWSN in orphanages, ashram schools, special institutions, leprosy homes, juvenile homes, Madarsas, maktabs etc. The residential schools, whether KGBVs or ashram schools should ensure that CWSN admitted.

All educational bodies such as NCTE, UGC, SCERT and DIETs need to set up and further strengthen the disability cells as laid out in the 11th Plan to strengthen inclusion of CWSN. The University Academic Council as well as Academic Authorities designated by the appropriate Governments under Section 29 of the RTE should include experts having cross-disability perspective as well.

### 1.7.6 Engagement of Special Educators / Resource Teachers

To begin with States may appoint a person with degree/diploma in special education as Resource Teacher (RT). The Resource Teacher may be posted at the block or cluster level to cover a group of schools where children with special needs are enrolled. The reason for appointing the resource teacher for a group of schools, rather than in every school, is because the number of persons with such qualifications is relatively small, the number of children with special needs in any single school may be very few with several schools in which no children with special needs are enrolled. As the numbers of persons with Special Education qualification increases they may be posted as general teachers to schools.

As an interim arrangement teachers who have been provided multi-category training of 10-15 days duration or have participated in the RCI Foundation Courses may be placed as Resource Teachers.

### 1.7.7 Teachers' Orientation and Training

The teacher training curricula in the country should be issues inclusive. All teachers' training at the elementary level needs to incorporate the challenges of diversity in classrooms with adequate focus on specific disabilities. All teacher training modules should be cross-disability. Hence, 12$^{th}$ Plan period should focus on promoting short term courses for the regular teachers.

### 1.7.8 Quality of Access to CWSN

Schools would have to be prepared to provide support services required by the CWSN: availability of a trained/ sensitized teacher, inclusive teaching practices, ongoing support from a resource teacher, and peer acceptance. School buildings, classroom spaces, furniture, equipments, seating arrangement, classroom organization, etc would have to be adapted to meet the varied and diverse educational needs of CWSN. For example,

space norms would have to be altered for a child with a special need using an assistive device, like wheelchair.

### 1.7.9 Curricular Areas

In the case of CWSN, giving space to each child to learn at his/her own pace should be the utmost priority. Greater attention should be given to the curricular needs of differently abled with appropriate modification in conventional curriculum models the mindset of the education department functionaries towards CWSN plays a key role in ensuring their inclusion or exclusion. It is important that they understand and appreciate the role and relevance of adapted curriculum, syllabus, textbooks and evaluation. The educational administrators would also have to view the diversity of CWSN as a resource in organizing classroom experiences. Hence training of administrators to this new approach adopted by RTE would be given critical importance in the 12th Plan Period.

### 1.7.10 School Management Committee and Parental Support

The School Management Committee (SMC) may include parents of children with disabilities, especially where number of such children is high to enable them to share concerns of children with disabilities. This initiative will enable parents of such children to participate in the activities related to management of the school and enable them to share relevant concerns and ensure implementation of disability friendly activities in the school. The SMC must ensure accessible location of the school and safety and security of all children and special attention to be given to adolescent girls with disabilities as they are more vulnerable to abuse and harassment with suitable provisions in the School Development Plan. This will also help in building awareness for other parents of CWSNs to bring their children to school, who may be keeping them back at home.

Peers, siblings and community members would be sensitized on how to support children with disabilities. Strong advocacy and awareness programmes should form a part of strategy to educate every child with special

needs. Inclusive education resource teachers may assist in mobilizing community volunteers for spreading awareness. These volunteers can be perceived as 'inclusion enablers' and would work as local agents for change. Development of IEC material to generate awareness about the inclusive approach of RTE would be an integral part of the programme implementation.

### 1.7.11 Interventions in the 12th plan

i. Support for inclusive education will continue to be provided at the rate of Rs 3000 per CWSN per annum, of which Rs 1000 will be available for engaging Resource Teachers.

ii. In the 12th Plan the key thrust of SSA will be on inclusive education to children with special needs in general schools.

iii. SSA will also support Special Training for school readiness of CWSN, education through open learning systems, and home schooling, wherever necessary, community based rehabilitation (CBR) and vocational education. The involvement of Resource Institutions will be encouraged.

The following activities will form components of the programme:

a. Identification of children with special needs.

b. Educational placement in general school, school readiness programmes/ home based education

c. Provision of aids and appliances, as needed

d. Resource Teacher/ General Teacher Training

e. Individualized educational plan

f. Community mobilization, parental training, and peer sensitization.

g. Other interventions, such as development and production of Braille books, large print material, or construction of ramps, disabled friendly toilets, etc. will be sourced from the regular budgets under the relevant components.

h. Engagement of resource teachers
i. Engagement of volunteers/care-givers for severe-profound CWSN
j. Involvement of NGO in CWSN related activities

## 1.8 Visual impairment: Meaning and Concept

The World Health Organization estimates that 80% of visual impairment is either preventable or curable with treatment. This includes cataracts, the infections river blindness and trachoma, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, uncorrected refractive errors, and some cases of childhood blindness. Many people with significant visual impairment benefit from vision rehabilitation, changes in their environmental, and assistive devices.

As of 2012 there were 285 million people who were visually impaired; of which 246 million had low vision and 39 million were blind. The majority of people with poor vision are in the developing world and are over the age of 50 years. Rates of visual impairment have decreased since the 1990's. Visual impairments have considerable economic costs both directly due to the cost of treatment and indirectly due to decreased ability to work.

Vision impairment, like other areas of disability, exists on a continuum. A loss of vision may range from total blindness (i.e., no reaction to light) to low vision (which may be corrected by glasses). For educational purposes, students are considered to be vision impaired when their degree of vision is assessed as causing, or having the potential to cause, a significant hindrance to their educational progress in a classroom setting.

According to World Health Organisation (1992), **Blindness** is defined as "Visual acuity of less than 3/60 in the better eye with the best possible correction as compared to that of 6/60 in India". The WHO functional definition, however, considers blindness starting at light perception or when a person has no usable vision. Similarly, a person with visual acuity better than 3/60 but equal or less than 6/60 is graded as "blind" in India, while WHO grades as low vision.

**Low Vision** is defined as “A person with low vision is one who has impairment of visual functioning even after treatment, and/ or standard refractive correction, and has a visual acuity of less than 6/18 to light perception or a visual field of less than 10 degrees from the point of fixation, but who uses, or is potentially able to use, vision for the planning and/or execution of a task”.

For a visually impaired student, the three areas that impact the learning experience most significantly are 1) the core curriculum, primarily is academic skills, 2) compensatory skills, as an alternative way to access the core curriculum, and the 3) expanded core curriculum, a curriculum that is designed to meet the unique needs of persons who are visually impaired (Hatlen, 1996).

## 1.9 Curriculum: Meaning

Derived from Latin word “Currere” meaning is “to run”. It is a runway(one runs to reach the goal) or a race course referring to the course of deeds and experiences through which children grow and mature in becoming adults for success in adult society . It is totality of all the learning to which students are exposed during their study in the school. It is content, programme of planned activities, intended learning outcomes, cultural preservation, experience, and agenda for social reconstruction.

The term curriculum refers to the lessons and academic content taught in a school or in a specific course or program. Curriculum typically refers to the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn, which includes the learning standards or learning objectives they are expected to meet; the units and lessons that teachers teach; the assignments and projects given to students; the books, materials, videos, presentations, and readings used in a course; and the tests, assessments, and other methods used to evaluate student learning. An individual teacher’s curriculum would be the specific learning standards, lessons, assignments, and materials used to organize and teach a particular course.

Today, curriculum matters-as Pugach (2001) aptly states. But special educators are not accustomed, neither by training nor by inclination, to plan programs following state curricular frameworks of core subject areas (Fisher & Frey, 2001; Hock, 2000).

Howell and Nolet (2000) offered a palpable definition of curriculum: “A curriculum is a structured set of learning outcomes, or tasks, that educators usually call goals or objectives. Students are expected to learn the information specified in the curriculum so that they will have the skills needed to transition from childhood into adult life. Curriculum is intended to prepare students to succeed in society. Consequently, the material in the curriculum comes from someone's analysis of what society requires for success.”

According to Armstrong (2015), Curriculum is defined as “the planned or formal specification of content and skills to be taught”.

## 1.10 Concept of Core Curriculum

The core curriculum are the skills which all students, sighted or blind, are expected to learn by the time they reach high school education (National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 1999). The existing core curriculum consists of Language Arts, Mathematics, Health, Science, Fine Arts, Social Studies, Economics, Business Education, Vocational Education, and History. The core curriculum is the state standards.

Students who are visually impaired are held to the same state mandates as their sighted peers in inclusive education with regard to the development of skills in the core curriculum. However, in order to have an equal opportunity to acquire those skills, adaptations must be made to the curriculum so that visually impaired students can access the same reading, writing, arithmetic, and other curricula activities that their sighted peers are receiving.

## 1.11 An alternative mode: Compensatory Skills

Hatlen & Stryker (1996) stated that Compensatory skills are the alternative way to access the core curriculum. Because of the methods and techniques used by specialized teachers of the visually impaired, there is virtually no curriculum or learning experience that sighted students receive, which cannot be adapted for a visually impaired learner (Pugh & Erin, 1999).

Core curriculum is required for all students and equal access is mandated, does not mean it is equitable for all students. By making something equitable, a “level playing field” must be established for all parties. Stainback & Stainback (1996) focused that in order to obtain a level playing field, the instruction and content being presented and assessed must be common to all students. For blind and visually impaired children, even modified concepts addressed in the core curriculum cannot fully be visualized or perceived. In order for these students to obtain equitable educational experiences, instruction cannot be limited to the core curriculum.

Because compensatory skills only address modifications in the general curriculum, experiences that are unique to persons who are visually impaired and specific to their disability may not be addressed. For visually impaired students to have equitable experiences there must be specific instruction that expands beyond the core curriculum and its access through compensatory skills.

Children with vision impairment in inclusive education classrooms require adaptation such as Braille or large print of the core curriculum or academic subjects studied from kindergarten through to high school programme. These children also require competencies in an expanded core curriculum. The expanded core curriculum is considered a unique educational curriculum for students with vision impairment who are learning to access information that is acquired casually and incidentally by sighted learners.

## 1.12 Expanded Core Curriculum: Meaning and Concept

The National Advisory Council of the National Agenda has adopted the following statements as their own Core Curriculum for Blind and Visually Impaired Students, Including Those with Additional Disabilities:

- Blind and visually impaired students are entitled to receive the same education as they would get if they were sighted.
- Vision loss results in limited opportunities for children and youths to acquire information and knowledge casually and incidentally from their environment.
- Inability or limited ability to learn visually in an incidental manner means that blind and visually impaired learners will need to acquire these educational experiences through instruction.
- Blind and visually impaired students, therefore, have two sets of essential educational experiences: (1) regular curriculum offered to all students and (2) learning experiences required because of vision loss.
- Both sets of educational experiences are vital if the student is to be successfully prepared for adult life.
- Therefore, the Core Curriculum for blind and visually impaired students consists of both the regular curriculum and an expanded curriculum designed to compensate for lack of visual learning experiences (National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments, Hatlen & Stryker, 1996).

In addition to all the core curricular areas included in the general educational curriculum, students with a visual impairment need to be assessed and receive instruction in very specific skills that have been demonstrated to be potential problem areas for persons with a visual disability (Wisconsin National Agenda, 2001).

The expanded core curriculum is a curriculum designed to go beyond the core components- math reading and writing, and address the essential areas and experiences that are unique only to visually impaired persons

(Pugh & Erin, 1999). These areas are unique and should be taught in addition to the core curriculum because they are specific to the disability of blindness. The eight areas in the expanded core curriculum are learned incidentally and through modeling for sighted persons, but for those with visual loss there is little or no opportunity to learn these skills. Through sequential systematic instruction by a knowledgeable person, visually impaired persons have the opportunity to acquire these skills that are necessary to be successful. The expanded core curriculum is initially designed to construct community concept development for blind individuals (National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youth with visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities, Hatlen & Stryker, 1996). The eight areas that are identified within the expanded core curriculum include Compensatory Academic skills, Social Development, Recreation and Leisure, Orientation and Mobility, Independent Living skills, Technology, Career Development, and Visual Efficiency skills (Hatlen, 1996). This curriculum is a longitudinal process that requires instruction by a person who is knowledgeable about these exceptionalities.

### 1.12.1 Academic Skills vs. Functional Skills

A differentiation between compensatory academic and functional skills must be established since these are terms that are commonly confused. Hatlen (1996) identifies compensatory academic skills as those skills that blind and visually impaired students need to access all areas of the core curriculum and the development of organizational skills, concept development and a communication mode such as Braille or large print. Mastery of compensatory skills usually means that the visually impaired student has access to learning in a manner equal to that of sighted peers. Functional skills refer to those skills that students with multiple disabilities, non-academic learners, need in order to develop the skills that are necessary for play, work, socialization, and hygiene.

### 1.12.2 Social Interaction Skills

Socialization begins at infancy with a baby and its caregiver through eye gazes, gestures and smiles. But for parents of infants who are visually impaired, there is no or little reciprocation of such visual cues (Adelson, 1983; Als, 1982; Frailberg, 1977; Friedman, 1986), increasing the risk of attachment issues for the child with both parent and eventually peers. Further research indicates that visual impairments affect social development, including self-esteem, social competence, and the maintenance of friends (MacCuspie, 1990, 1996; Warren, 1984, 1994), especially those friendships with sighted peers (Warren, 1994). Because blind and low vision individuals cannot learn social interaction skills in a casual and incidental fashion, they require learning experiences that derive through sequential teaching (Sacks, 1992). In the year 1993, Sacks stated that areas within social development requiring systematic instruction include physical skills-such as eye contact, gestures, body language, and inappropriate movement; and assertiveness training-appropriate tone of voice, assertive behaviour rather than passive or aggressive, ability to make positive statements, and self advocacy skills.

### 1.12.3 Recreation and Leisure Skills

Students who are visually impaired have often been limited from recreational activities. The study compared the lifestyles of blind, low vision, and sighted youths, revealing that most visually impaired students were engaging in few or no recreational activities (Wolffe & Sacks, 1997). Further research indicates a correlation between children's athletic and academic abilities and their social standing among peers (Kekelis, 1992).

Adaptations can be made to most recreational activities to enable a visually impaired person to participate. These adaptations may include modifying the environment, such as installing a railing around the inside of a track so a visually impaired person can run independently, or orienting the visually impaired person to the recreation setting. Five effective methods to orienting the visually impaired person to the recreational space

are: 1.Describe simply the general dimensions, 2.From the doorway, identify boundaries using compass directions, 3.From the doorway, walk around the entire perimeter of the room, 4.Using the door as a reference point, walk to each major object with returning to your point of reference in between, and 5.Find a second reference point and repeat the first four tasks. Recreational activities for visually impaired students should be encouraged and be based on their abilities, not their limitations.

### 1.12.4 Technology (Assistive)

Technology has enabled blind persons to access information that was otherwise unobtainable. With the onslaught of e-mail, telecommunications, CD-ROM, and the Internet, the availability of assertive technology has grown exponentially. Devices such as Braille displays, Braille printers, Braille note takers, and speech synthesizers facilitate blind users to benefit themselves, to manipulate information otherwise only available to sighted persons (D'Andrea & Barnicle, 1997).

Technology enhances communication and learning, and expands the world of blind and visually impaired persons in many ways. Instruction in this area should be a continuous process in education that is consistent with the advancements in the technological world. Wolffe (1999) suggest that students' fields of interest should be linked with their instructional goals when developing technology skills. Critical points to be considered by the teacher should include what type of technology the students use, and if that technology will be used in the workplace. If not, when will the students be using technology that is comparable to the workplace? It should also be determined where students can have access to such training. Technology is now allowing for more job opportunities for visually impaired persons in more diverse fields than ever before (Wolffe, 1999).

### 1.12.5 Orientation and Mobility

Blind and sighted children do not have the same spatial and sensory understanding of their environments. This is partly due to the fact that a sighted child's conceptions of his environment are based on his observations, and a blind child's conceptions of his environment are based on his ability to explore it (Baird & Goldie, 1979). If a visually impaired child is not able to explore his environment systematically, his perceptions about the world are limited and misconceived. Through orientation and mobility instruction (orientation meaning where a person is in the immediate environment, and mobility meaning the ability to physically move and be safe visually impaired persons have a systematic way not only to explore their environment, but also to learn to the greatest extent possible from the environment through which they are passing (Hatlen, 1996).

Instruction in Orientation and Mobility is ultimately to enable visually impaired persons to move purposefully in any environment, familiar or unfamiliar, and to function safely, efficiently, gracefully, and independently (Hill, 1986). Instruction in this area is valuable to the individual because it goes beyond the capabilities of getting from point A to point B. Instruction also has many intrinsic values including psychological, physical, social, economic, and daily living skills (Hill, 1986). All of these areas are enhanced and facilitated through the independence that derives from appropriate orientation and mobility instruction.

### 1.12.6 Independent Living Skills

An activity encountered on a daily basis is often learned incidentally through observation, for example making a sandwich. But for students with visual impairments, these activities of daily living require systematic instruction to assist in independence, concept and skill development. Instruction in daily living skills should begin in preschool with focus on toileting, dressing, and mealtime (Barraga & Erin, 1992), and carry over to elementary school where focus should be directed at managing self-care

and personal possessions. By high school, instruction in this area should emphasize the individual's responsibility to grooming, self-care, and organizational skills in regards to personal possessions (Barraga & Erin, 1992).

Daily living skills need to be instructed in a way that will promote "best practice" so the student will be able to generalize the skills into different and realistic settings. For this reason, instruction should not always occur in the classroom during school hours, but during optimal learning times when learning can derive from everyday experiences (Koenig & Holbrook, 2000). These optimal times may include before school hours when a student is trying to coordinate his clothes for the day and pack a lunch or after school when dinner needs to be prepared and chores are being done. These are experiences that would be more meaningful when instruction to the student is facilitated in a realistic environment, not necessarily in a classroom.

### 1.12.7 Career Education

The transition from student to employee for all students, visually impaired and non-disabled, involves the development of many areas including awareness of internal and external abilities, interests, values, increased self-confidence and self control, decision making regarding careers, planning, problem solving, job variations and access into those fields (Healy, 1982, cited in McBroom & Tedder, 1993). DeMario, Rex, and Morreau (1990), found that students with visual impairments are not mastering the skills necessary for successful employment after graduating from school. Further research indicates that only 25% of persons who are visually impaired and between 21 to 64 years are employed (McNeil, 1993). Career education is a vital area to the expanded core curriculum because much of what we perceive the work world to be is based on prior visual experiences (Hatlen, 1996). Non-disabled persons learn these visual experiences incidentally, but for the blind and low vision learner general instruction assumes the basic skills. DeMario, Rex, and Morreau's (1990) study further discusses and identifies dependability, positive

work attitudes, personal-social skills, good communication skills, and a wide range of independent living skills as general skills that are necessary for employment and those areas in which visually impaired persons are not acquiring by graduation.

Wolffe (1996) identifies the essential elements in designing a career education program for students with visual impairments; career awareness, preparation, placement, maintenance, and mentoring. Many career education programs have been developed using Wolffe's design (Mclnerney Leonard, Allura, & Simpson, 1997) to intervene and improve the quality of career education that is being taught, or not being taught, to blind and low vision students before it is too late. In turn, this provides learning experiences and eventually an increase in employment for people with visual impairments.

### 1.12.8 Visual Efficiency Skills

Two people with the same clinical acuity measures or functioning may use their vision differently. One individual may use their vision more efficiently and successfully to complete task or retrieve information from their immediate environment (Corn & Koenig, 1996), then the other individual does. Through adequate instruction, individuals with functional vision can learn how to use their vision more efficiently, feel comfortable using it in unfamiliar environments, and adapt the environment to make it more accessible for themselves (Corn & Koenig, 1996).

Because students who are visually impaired do not acquire visual skills in efficiency incidentally, direct instruction is essential from a knowledgeable individual. Factors affecting visual efficiency in students include personal attributes-onset of visual impairment and self concept, visual attributes-type of visual impairment and severity, expectations of the visually impaired persons social network, role models, instruction in efficiency skills, additional disabilities, and cognitive and sensory factors (Corn, DePriest & Erin, 2000). An optical device, non-optical devices and other instructional strategies, as determined through assessments, are considerations when developing visual

efficiency skills in students with low vision. By teaching students to depend on their vision rather than using tactile or auditory modes as their primary function they can be more independent, have more information readily available and have a better understanding of their environment.

Access to the core curriculum is essential, but it is not enough for the visually impaired. The expanded core curriculum goes beyond the core curriculum, which is math, reading and writing; and compensatory skills, which is the way those materials are accessed. The expanded core curriculum exposes blind and visually impaired students to concepts and experiences that would otherwise only be acquired through incidental learning and modeling (Sacks, 1992).

In the delivery of the expanded core curriculum for students with vision impairment, Hatlen (1996) affirms that the additional learning experiences contained in the expanded core curriculum are not easy to implement. The components of the curriculum require time to teach and their importance does not diminish with age or competency. The certified vision teacher is responsible for the assessment, instruction and evaluation of the curricular areas. Programming is necessary to accommodate the time involved in addressing the competencies required in this curriculum. Children need to have the necessary transition skills to progress from school to adulthood (Hatlen, 1996).

## 1.13 Rationale for the study

The purpose of education is to assist students to acquire life competencies. These competencies apply to all children; however, for those with severe loss of vision, special considerations are required to facilitate their acquisition. Education is more than academic subjects. It involves a holistic, outcomes approach to education which focuses on effective communication, social competence, independence, and preparation for employment and future life (Blatch, 1997). Only with well established life competencies can

individuals with vision impairment become fully functioning, participating and valued members of society.

Special needs students who are included in regular education classrooms are expected to be active participants in classroom instruction and to be challenged academically at the same level with the regular students. It is obvious that in inclusive classrooms, students learn in different ways. This is a challenge to teachers with diverse group of learners (MacLean, 2001).

Curriculum developed for sighted students is available and achievable by students with vision impairment who have a foundation in experiential learning (Hatlen, 1997). Equality of educational opportunity, with a full entitlement to a broad balanced curriculum and access to the full regular school curriculum is their right (Arter, 1997c). Educational goals should be the same as for other students and should reflect a quality educational environment that provides for all students and ensures that all students have equal access to learning (Gale & Cronin 1998). To achieve these goals, however, some adaptations and modifications to the curriculum may be required (Arter, 1997c). The students with vision impairment who attend their local school can be expected to follow the regular curriculum taught in that school and to achieve academically with their classmates (Blatch, 1997). Telec, Boyd, and King (1997), and Blatch (1997), however, emphasise that students with vision impairment have specific needs which must be addressed to ensure that educational outcomes are achieved and “special factors” are taken into consideration in educational planning.

Cropp (1985) discusses the curriculum constraints for students with vision impairment in inclusive settings. He pointed out that time, equipment, staffing expertise, physical environment, resources, teacher attitudes, school structure (timetabling, restriction of subject choices) and the need to gain access to areas of the expanded curriculum may restrict access to the

provision of equality of educational opportunity, or as Hatlen (1997) put it, to “the opportunity to be equal”.

Gale & Cronin (1998) acknowledge that the visual impairment limits places on access to the curriculum and emphasise student’s unique educational needs. They argue that the student with vision impairment is a member of the class who “is more similar to, than different from her sighted peers” and as such must be treated in the same manner as all other students.

Blatch (1997); Telec, Boyd & King (1997) explained that students with vision impairment require access to two types of curriculum if they are to receive an appropriate education. One is the general curriculum which incorporates the Key Learning Areas and the set of Essential Learnings as directed by Education Authorities, and the other is an expanded core curriculum which may also be referred to in the literature as “dual curriculum” or “disability specific core curriculum”. In order to ensure that students with vision problems can gain access to the regular school curriculum, different teaching strategies may be needed, the content adapted and a disability specific expanded core curriculum delivered (Blatch, 1997).

An expanded Core Curriculum is designed to address the unique needs of students with vision impairment. The areas they need to access relate specifically to their vision loss. Hatlen (1997) agrees that there is more to the education of students with vision impairment than the curriculum provided for sighted students.

Components of the expanded core curriculum present educators with a means of addressing the needs of visually impaired students. Each area in an expanded core curriculum can be further defined to address educational issues confronting these children and to assist parents and educators to fulfill their needs.

Hatlen's (1996) expanded core curriculum was first brought to national attention by Corn, Hatlen, Ryan, and Siller (1995) in response to the

Improving America's Schools Act of 1994. Corn, Hatlen, Ryan, and Siller (1995) has argued that states and school districts ought to be held accountable for ensuring that blind and visually impaired students receive adequate and appropriate instruction in these expanded core areas as well as in common core areas. Out of that work, a national agenda for educating blind and visually impaired children has identified a number of goals around which national consensus in the field has emerged (Corn & Heubner, 1998). Insistence on the primacy of Hatlen's expanded core curriculum is a critical component of that agenda.

Students who are blind or visually impaired can, with appropriate curriculum adaptations and instruction, meet the goals of the school core curriculum. However, the very nature of blindness and/or visual impairment requires that a wide range of experiences and concepts often casually and incidentally learned by students that are sighted in the home, school and community must be systematically and sequentially taught to the blind or visually impaired student. Thus the core curriculum necessary for students who are blind or visually impaired is larger and more complex than that for sighted students and is referred to as the expanded core curriculum.

While some of the expanded core curricular skill areas are interrelated each is recognized as an area of study that warrants specific curriculum instruction. Furthermore, it is essential for students who are blind or visually impaired to develop competencies in each of these areas in order to reach their potential to live independently, have appropriate career opportunities, and live rewarding and fulfilling lives.

The extended core curriculum for students with vision impairments is made up of requirements, not elective topics. It includes a range of compensatory academic skills and the use of alternative communication formats. These include communication modes (Blatch 1997) which involve the use of braille, large print, tactile, audio, electronic, and low vision devices (Gale & Cronin, 1998; Hatlen, 1997; Pagliano, 1998). In addition, the

development of competence in orientation and mobility, social interaction skills, independent living skills, recreation and leisure skills, career education, the use of assistive technology, and visual efficiency skills (Blatch, 1997) are also important aspects of the “extended Core Curriculum”.

A person who is visually impaired and who has a command of expanded core curriculum skills as well as knowledge of common core subjects is fully equipped to be competitive in the workforce. This person is then in a position to contribute to the economy, rather than being dependent on governmental assistance. However, the average national unemployment rate for people who are blind or visually impaired is a disappointing 70% (McDonough, Sticken, & Haack, 2006).

Special education modifications, equipment, resources and special considerations such as extra time, realistic expectations and special formats are critical aspects of the provision of literacy learning opportunities for students with vision impairment. Modifications maybe required in curriculum, learning strategies (compensatory or adaptive skills), materials and devices (media), classroom management (teaching techniques) or to the environment (architectural and other physical barriers). Appropriate educational materials, highly qualified support services (which include qualified and credentialed teachers and orientation and mobility instructors) also facilitate access to the existing regular school curriculum (Hatlen, 1997). Blatch (1997) states that access to the curriculum is achieved through the provision of specialised services, and a cooperative effort between regular education teachers and specialist teachers who, Hatlen and Curry (1987) emphasise must be trained in effective methods to meet the unique educational and developmental needs of students with vision impairment.

Best (1992) addresses the issue of national curriculum. He argues that in the United Kingdom, the introduction of the national curriculum affects the education of students with vision impairment in three ways. This occurs in the skills needed to carry out activities; in the standards set in the Standard

Assessment Tasks (SATs) and the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE); and in the prescription of the subjects to which a great deal of teaching time should be allocated. The skills needed to carry out activities in the SATS and the GCSE may be particularly difficult or even impractical for many students with vision impairment according to Best (1992). He asserts that the standards set in the SATs and in the GCSE in Great Britain may not be appropriate for children with no useful vision. He points out that to be accessible to children who are blind, test items which include diagrammatic material may need altering. Another area of concern expressed by Best involved the level of academic and cognitive development children needed to have reached to successfully respond to test items. He explains that these items need to be written in language that students can understand. Best highlights the need for children with vision impairment to have access to additional curriculum areas such as orientation and mobility, Braille, keyboard and vision training. He argues that the allocation of teaching time to particular subject areas results in restricted time given to additional curriculum areas and that instruction in disability specific subjects may have to be taught after school hours.

The expanded core curriculum must become the unifying issue among educators for visually impaired students. It must first be adopted by the profession as the education needed by blind and visually impaired students. Once the profession has adopted the expanded core curriculum, it then takes on the enormous task of carrying the curriculum message to parents, administrators, and the public at large. The message must transcend fiscal issues, conflicting philosophical and political positions, and the doubts and misgivings of educators and parents. The spotlight must be on the individual child, and must begin with a thorough assessment of the child, one that covers every area of the expanded core curriculum. Using assessment results and invaluable information from parents, goals and objectives must be developed for the individual child, based on assessment. If assessment has truly covered every area of the expanded core curriculum, then there will likely

be goals and objectives for each area. Someone must meet, or orchestrate the meeting of, all goals and objectives. This will be the professional teacher for visually impaired children. Care must be taken that the competencies contained in the expanded core curriculum receive equal attention to academic competencies, as stressed in the existing curriculum. Thus the review of literature revealed the significance of expanded core curricular skills for students with visual impairment.

A thorough literature survey revealed that there are hardly studies available on the expanded core curricular Skills for the academic outcomes of students with visual impairment in Indian context. Hence a study was planned which intended to bring out the level and extent of acquisition of expanded core curricular skills among visually impaired students in inclusive school and its impact on academic achievement of visually impaired students at secondary stage.

## 1.14 Statement of the Problem

The problem is worded as **"Expanded Core Curricular Skills and Academic Achievement of Students with Visual Impairment in Inclusive Education for the Disabled at Secondary Stage"**.

## 1.15 Operational Definition

### 1.15.1 Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)

The Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) in the study refers to skills such as i) Academic Skills, ii) Career Education, iii) Independent Living Skills, iv) Orientation and Mobility Skill and v) Application of Technology that are needed by students with visual impairments due to their unique disability-specific needs. In each component there are different sub skills. The sub skills were assessed with specific devices and techniques.

### 1.15.2 Academic Achievement

Academic Achievement refers to a student's success in different subjects with the support of Expanded Core Curricular Skills in Inclusive Programme.

### 1.15.3 Visual Impairment

Visual Impairment in the study refers to students with blindness having loss of vision and low vision with visual acuity less than 6/18 studying from IX to XII Standard are included for the study.

### 1.15.4 Inclusive Education for the Disabled

Inclusion in education describes an approach wherein students with special educational needs spend most or all of their time with non-disabled students. This study involved students with visual impairment studying in Inclusive education at Secondary school level.

## 1.16 Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Study the level of acquisition of Expanded Core Curricular Skills among blind and low vision students separately.
2. Study the effect of Expanded Core Curricular Skills on Academic Achievement of blind and low vision students separately with respect to Gender and Grade.
3. Study the influence of Expanded Core Curricular Skills on Academic Achievement by considering Grade as covariate among blind and low vision students separately.
4. Analyse the relationship between Expanded Core Curricular Skills and Academic Achievement among blind and low vision students separately.
5. To find out the correlation between Academic Achievement and Expanded Core Curricular Skills.

## 1.17 Hypotheses

1. There is no significant effect of Expanded Core Curricular Skills on Academic Achievement with respect to Gender and Grade among blind and low vision students separately.
2. There is no significant influence of Expanded Core Curricular Skills on Academic Achievement by considering Grade as covariate among blind and low vision students separately.
3. There is no significant relationship between Expanded Core Curricular Skills and Academic Achievement with respect to blind and low vision students separately.
4. There is no correlation between Academic Achievement and Expanded Core Curricular Skills.

## 1.18 Delimitation of the study

1. The study was limited to only visually impaired students.
2. The study was limited to only 5 areas of Expanded Core Curricular skills.
3. The study was confined to only secondary and higher secondary grade students.

## 1.19 Organization of the thesis

The present study **"Expanded Core Curricular Skills and Academic Achievement of Students with Visual Impairment in Inclusive Education for the Disabled at Secondary Stage"** is organized and reported under the following five chapters:

1. The first chapter starts with Inclusive Education: Meaning and Concept, Current Trends in Inclusive Education, Visual Impairment: Meaning and Concept, Core curriculum of Visually Impaired, Expanded Core Curricular Skills: Meaning and Concept, Rationale of the study, Statement of the Problem, Objectives, Hypotheses, and Delimitation of the study.

2. The second chapter deals with review of related literature which refers to researches done on topic similar to the present study.
3. The third chapter describes in detail procedures and methods that were used in collecting and analysing data. The aspects discussed here include selection of samples, methods adopted in the study, construction of tools, pilot study, administration of the tools and data analysis procedure.
4. The fourth chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data in detail. The relevant data are presented in the form of tables.
5. The fifth chapter reports the summary of findings, recommendations and suggestions for future research. At the end, bibliography and appendices are presented.