

GAPS AND HINDRANCES IN LAUNCHING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN PUNJAB

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ABSTRACT

The participation of disabled children in normal education settings with its true spirit and to avail right of education without discrimination in all aspects is main focus of inclusive education (IE). There are many tangible and non-tangible gaps and hurdles hindered in the implementation of IE. The purpose of this study was to highlight those problems and gaps to pave way to implement IE. It is true that total inclusion is not possible but is possible to some extent. We need to identify some barriers which may affect the true spirit of IE. In this regard comparative cross sectional survey was done. Data was collected through semi-structured Interviews from District administrative Heads of Govt. General Education, Special Education and experts of this program (if available) of the Punjab. Convenient sampling technique was used to select the sample. The data were analysed by using descriptive statistics. The results of the study showed various gaps in launching the IE. Results showed that there is structural, non-structural, financial, interactive, awareness, managerial & administrative gaps hindered in the implementation of IE.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Punjab, Special Education

INTRODUCTION

The alliance of the Nations adopted the universal declaration of human rights in 1948. The article No. 26 of it defined the right of appropriate education for every citizen without discrimination of race, colour, religion, gender, and shape. After this the system of segregated setup introduced for the persons with disabilities which called special education (Kazan, 2015). The United Nations demanded the right of education to all people to every signatory country at different forums, EFA (1990); ICRPD (2006); and CRC (2009), to re-examine their laws policies to promote necessary changes to provide with that persons with disabilities and guaranteed the same rights which are being provided to other persons. It defines a way to meet all the needs and circumstances of the law, to ensure compliance with these rules, in particular the inclusion, which may basic human rights of children and adults with disabilities. It should include the same basis for all laws and regulations prohibiting discrimination against persons with disabilities (UNICEF, 2007).

The term “Inclusive Education” manifest that the provision of education to special children within general education settings with the provision of special needs as the nature of disability demand. As policy paper of “sight saver” narrates and defines the notion of IE “This is an approach that encourages the presence, participation and attainment of all students in education. This may be in general schools, or in informal places of learning i.e. extracurricular sides. Inclusion spotlight on opportunities for equal participation, but with options for special assistance and facilities as required”(Bagree, 2011). IE focus on the

equality of opportunities in education without discrimination disability or ability. It is a continuous process of confronting and responding to the variety of needs of all pupils notwithstanding of elements i.e. disability, gender, age, ethnicity, language and geographical location (Ainscow, 2007).

Inclusion International Forum University of East London Dockland narrated in its Global Report “Better Education for All” that researches indicated presence of barriers against IE i.e. vacuum of political leadership and its accountability towards inclusive education, invisibility of persons with disabilities form educational system, less support from families, lack of professional knowledge of teaching staff to adopt curricular needs, poor quality educational system, poor coordination between demands, policy makers, parents, teachers and administrators, lack of awareness and public support for inclusion and weak accountability and monitoring system (UNESCO, 2003). The UNCRPD especially article No.24 demands for the establishment of IE system for all children. Proclaim for confrontation and to initiate strategies to ensure IE to all signatory nations. The target is now implementation of IE all over the common wealth and the world. The Article No. 24 of United Nation convention on the rights of persons with disabilities navigates many features of education for people at different stages. It emphasizes that there should be on priorities the encouragement for disabled children to attend school as a whole. It propounds that the inclusion is best option for the larger interest of the children whom are not taking education due to any disadvantage. Article No. 24 also inscription the education needs of the large number of disabled who are uneducated or under educated because they were unable to access education as normal children. It identifies the significance of enduring learning. This clearly include education at different levels for disables, like vocational training and higher degree programs to support their ability to work (Rieser, 2012). The Dakar framework for action makes reference to ensure IE for such persons who are facing disabilities and it may be ensured that their access to normal schools and also the faction of children which are most vulnerable and disadvantaged and demand for inclusive education practices. This forum reaffirmed the participants to ensure (EFA) and this may be possible via Inclusion channel (UNESCO, 2000).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) described in its issued research guide that the extra needs and disadvantages of disabled children can usually be met in an ordinary classroom when a teacher adopt the curricula and specific teaching style to suit the range of diversity which may found in an ordinary classroom. No doubt these adaptations required extra tools and extra ordinary creativity (UNESCO, 2001). There are many controversies on this practice as for last twenty years this topic is under discussion and there are many thoughts some in favor and some have against advocacy. No doubt there are number of arguments put by teachers, administrators, parents, educational leaders and intellectuals. There could be inclusion made and stimulating environment can be created to boost up the abilities of the disables by removing barriers (Berg, 2004).

As there are many controversies revealed and there is plethora of thoughts. Now it is time to implement those concepts which are argued up till now. Before we may go for implementation we need to explore and review the gaps and problems in the implementation of inclusive system of education. In this regard this research was planned and deployed to highlight those problems and gaps. Many practices have been done in the world and as well in Pakistan. But yet this practice is under the way in Pakistan. It could not be treated about its spirit and not much attention is deployed to promote this concept especially in developing country like Pakistan where there are plenty of issues still present in the normal educational

system or as a whole educational system. By the help of this study we did try to gather facts and figures to estimate the intensity of the problems and issues. We also did try to examine structural problems in thy way of launching this program. By this study and with the help of findings of this study we may be able to plan to launch and to plan strategies to meet the gaps which may occurred in launching. By the help of this study we may also be able to define or suggest some parameters to remove or minimize those gaps which can be occurred in launching Inclusive Education in Punjab.

According to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics current demographics of population of Pakistan 2015. Pakistan's estimated population is 180.54 Million and Punjab is most populous Province of Pakistan which has about 61 % of total population. According to the White Paper Budget 2015-16, Rs. 310.201 billion may be apportioned for education in the FY 2015-16, which is 26.90% of the total budget. But this amount is not enough much to meet the educational needs of normal children yet in Punjab over 3.8 million illiterate people living. These figures indicate that millions of people about the age of 15 years unable to read or write in any language of the world. Literacy rate has sustained at 58% over the past two years and Pakistan looks set to miss the millennium development goal M.D.G for education. Where there are many issues with normal education in Pakistan and as well in Punjab than the mission of launching of Inclusive system may face huge problems and obstacles.

OBJECTIVES

The focus of this study was to highlight the issues and problems which occurred or which are likely to be occurred in the future while launching of inclusive education for persons with disabilities. For this purpose study worked with following objectives.

1. The aim of this study was to highlight the problems, issues and barriers or gaps in launching Inclusive Education for special students.
2. This study aimed at to pinpoint different sectors in educational settings which may create problems in launching Inclusive process.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study conducted to find out answer the following questions:

1. What are legislative or policy issues?
2. What are structural issues at schools level?
3. What are behavioural issues?
4. What are gaps at Administrative level?
5. What are other common issues?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was qualitative in nature. Data was collected through semi-structured Interviews from District administrative Heads of Govt. General Education, Special Education. Sample size of the research project was 16 District Administrative heads both from normal and special education. Convenient sampling technique was used to carry out the research project. In this regard semi-structured Interviews having 5 questions were held with selected sample participants. The data was collected by semi-structured interviews. It was done through descriptive coding technique.

FINDINGS

Table 1. Inceptive codes and main categories of data collected via semi- structured interviews

<i>Main Sectors</i>	<i>Small Categories</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%age</i>
<i>Legislative Policy gaps</i>	Policies (General Education, Special Education) do not support this program.	13	81
	Difference in guidelines	11	77
<i>Physical Structural gaps</i>	Irrelevant design of buildings	10	63
	Inappropriate furniture	12	75
	Unavailability of ramps, walking supports and slipping free surface	13	81
	Stigmatization, labeling	12	75
<i>Behavioural gaps</i>	Behavioural problems of persons with disabilities	12	75
	Behaviour of staff and parents	9	56
	Classroom Management	7	44
	Time table	11	77
<i>Administrative</i>	Management of special services	10	63
	Staff management	7	44
	Examinations/Evaluation	12	75
	Lack of financial resources	13	81
	Lack of equipment	12	75
<i>Other common</i>	Different demands of curriculum	13	81
	Lack of Human resources (Teaching& supporting staff)	9	56
	Lack of professional skills of educators of Normal set up	12	75
	Language and communication gap.	13	81
	Lack of support from society and parents.	9	56

Above table shows the figures about the issues in launching Inclusive Education, when researchers asked question about the policy gaps, 81% respondents attributed in their responses that both current polices do not support Inclusive Education programme. They said that there is no any clear guideline in polices for Inclusive Education programme, 77% respondents argued that there are different guidelines in both policies, One of respondents said “ polices are developed on the basis of true facts and figures but unfortunately we have wrong estimates and figures”.

As for physical barriers is concerned, 63% district heads pointed that current structure of general education schools is not able to provide barriers free environment to Persons with disabilities as the designs of buildings are irrelevant. One of heads from special education argued “inclusion is not possible as there is various mobility issues in normal education set up”. About 75% participants pointed that the furniture do not meet the needs of special needs of PWD’s, 81% respondents mentioned that there are no proper availability of ramps, walking supports and slipping free surface. One of respondents said “children who mobile on wheel chairs may not be able to have access to classrooms as there are no ramps and suitable entrance of classrooms”

When researchers asked about behavioural issues, 75% heads responded that negative behaviour is there like stigmatization and labelling to give challenge to this programme. One of respondent form heads of general education asked “parents of normal children think that children with special needs can be element of wastage of time for even our normal children and also parents of special needs also with views that our children would have to face labelling”. 75% percent respondents argued that there are different types of behavioural/psychological issues associated with disability like rigidity, isolation, shyness etc which may be problematic elements normal learning process. 56% respondents asked that staff working in general education due to lack of awareness may not accept this challenging task. One of respondents form general education said “some disable children even have no control on their bladder and some have epilepsy problem, some have other clinical issues like asthma, TB, lungs issues, heart diseases, in case on epileptic shocks or in some other emergency situation normal children may take its psychological negative impacts and may fire off to go to sit with them in classroom”.

When researcher asked about the management, 44% respondents replied that there could be management issues like classroom management, 77% respondents pointed that there may be clashes in time table management. One of respondent said “normal children have energies to take consistent educational sessions but special children special physically handicap need to take physiotherapy services to relax muscles, so it would be difficult to manage these children in general time table” 63% participants were with arguments that there may be management issues to include special services i.e. psychotherapy, speech therapy, physiotherapy while working with ordinary class, 44% respondents argued that there may be number of professionals required to meet the diversified needs of special children to manage them within normal education settings. 75% participants replied that in case of inclusion and to give proper learning to PWD’s we need also to adopt proper evaluation system than we may have to adopt different evaluation techniques which may create different challenges, One of respondents said “in evaluation system of normal children we need to assure quality, equality, perfect competitive circumstances but in case of evaluation of PWD’s we need to adopt some supportive, relax, conducive situation to help them and their competition may also be excluded from normal children, as a result it would be another exclusion” .

When researchers inquired about other common issues, 81% respondents form district heads argued that there are serious financial issues, meanwhile 75% asked that due to lack of financial resources we may be unable to meet special needs of special children as plenty of equipment is required to meet special needs of persons with disabilities in normal education set up. One of respondent said “ Every disable child have different kind and range of disability and to manage his/her disability there are plenty of equipment required and it is not possible to meet such type of needs in current financial provisions”. While talking on curriculum, 81% respondents said that persons with disabilities have different learning speeds and capacities; it is difficult to accommodate them in current general educational settings, 56% respondents talked about the lack of human resources to accommodate persons with

disabilities, 75% participants argued that there is lack of professional skills to tackle children with different needs in an ordinary classes. One of respondents said that “training and development is key factor to achieve goals and without having skills and experience to deal persons having special needs is herculean task”. 81% participants pointed that there are serious gaps of communication special with deaf and dumb children, while talking about society support, 56% respondents pointed that due to lack of awareness about basic rights of PWD’s society may not support this programme.

CONCLUSIONS

Responses show that there are plenty of gaps/barriers present there to give challenge to dream of implementation of Inclusive Education program in the Normal Education of Punjab. Study indicates that there are legislative, behavioural, managerial, and structural and some other common issues (lack of financial resources, lack of equipment, lack of trained professional staff, lack of support from society, parents, different demands of curriculum, lack of advocacy and language and communication problems) which can create problems in launching Inclusive Education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above sated results, subsequent recommendations can be put forwarded to plan to meet those gaps or to remove those barriers.

1. There should be revision in both Educational Policies according to the demands of United Nations Organization to ensure (EFA) and UNCRPD especially article 24 which clear demands for the establishment of inclusive education system for disable children.
2. There should be clear cut guidelines for planning and development department to plan educational development projects by ensuring LRE.
3. A full flagged awareness campaign should be launched to create awareness about the rights of PWD’s and for society to invite them to participate in rehabilitation process as well in the launching IE.
4. There should be trainings for the heads of the institutions of the general education schools to make them skilful to manage persons with disabilities in Normal education schools.
5. There should be more funds for general education set up to arrange equipments, teaching material, assistive technology, to modify inappropriate building structure, to provide trainings to teaching & supporting staff, to provide special needs and all other facilities incentives which are being provided to children with special needs in Special Education set up i.e. pick and drop, free uniform, free education, free books, free counseling, free diagnostic & assessment facilities and free aids (mobility, hearing, magnifying glasses, CCTV, large Print, audio, video and resource rooms).

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