Inclusion of children with disabilities in primary schools in Pakistan

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Abstract

Inclusion and participation are essential to human dignity and the exercise of human right (UNESCO, 1994, P.11).Although the government of Pakistan is committed to provide access to education for all children with disabilities, it is being hard to fulfil the commitment due to many barriers. People's negative attitude towards disabilities may be the major barrier of inclusion of these children in primary schools. Many people have discriminatory attitudes towards disabilities. Lack of teacher capacity to meet diverse learning needs of children with disabilities may be another reason for children's exclusion from primary education.

In this context, this research will focus creating a new knowledge about the enablers and the barriers of inclusion of children with a disability in primary schools in Pakistan. For this purpose, perspectives of professionals (head teachers and teachers) will be sought to determine why children with disabilities are not currently included in primary schools and what factors would need to be considered for their effective inclusion. The data generated will help the Government of Pakistan and NGOs in the process of policy and practice.

Key words: Inclusion; Participation; Inclusive Education; Segregated Education; policy and practice

Introduction

Globally a large number of countries are keen to arrange equal access of education for children with disabilities. Considering inclusion of children with disabilities in educational setting is one of the fundamental human rights (Gal, Schreur, & Engel-Yeger, 2010; Chabbott, 2013).These countries recognise that inclusive education is a powerful and meaningful means to improve people's attitude, abilities, knowledge and skills (Beiter, 2005).

Furthermore, major aims of inclusive education are to ensure the equal opportunities, meaningful involvement for the task of identification, challenge and participate to the elimination of injustices in schools and society (Kemmis, 1994). Major emphasis of inclusive education is enhancing the abilities and participation of all children with disabilities in primary education.

However, it is a challenge for developing countries to provide opportunities of education for children with disabilities. This is due to numerous reasons including education systems, government policies and resourcing, professionals' attitudes, social discrimination, lack of teachers' efficacy, lack of acceptance, lack of coordination among parents and professionals and physical environment (Eleweke&Rodda, 2002). Inclusion of children with disabilities in primary education setting provides learning environment in terms of engagement, attainment and behavioural change.

Local context Pakistan

This section presents a brief introduction on Pakistan and her history of special needs education with regard to some of prevailing barriers towards people with disabilities in inclusive education.

Pakistan, formally the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, is an independent state in South Asia with inhabitants of more than 186 million people, with around 10% having disabilities (Ahmed, 1993).The country is famous due to its language, geographic and cultural

diversity. The National Education Policy (NEP) of Pakistan (2009) asserts that education is a fundamental right for all and designed to meet the needs of everyday life.

The country is committed to make sure that all children irrespective of their differences such as abilities, culture, gender, ethnicity and socio economic background have access to quality education (National Education Policy, 2009), realising that inclusive education is acutely necessary for the long-term benefits of children with disabilities and the country itself. However, many people with disabilities are invisible, ignored and uncounted in the country. As a result persons with disabilities face several barriers in education.

Purpose of study

Children with disabilities in Pakistan are generally deprived of accessing inclusive education in primary settings for a number of factors highlighted in the previous section. This situation not only prevents these children from building a foundation for their education and development, it also denies their human rights and eventually perpetuates their exclusion from the broader community. This in turn leads to the development of a community in which many are excluded.

The aim of this research is to explore the enablers and barriers of inclusion of children with disabilities in primary schools in Pakistan. The data will be collected through interviews with professionals and special education policy document analysis. The study presents challenges faced by those who are involved in policy making, planning, resourcing and management of Pakistani schools to provide effective inclusive environment for children with disabilities. The perspectives on why children with disabilities are not included in mainstream education and what needs to be addressed currently in Pakistan for the effective inclusion will be identified.

Rational

It has been claimed that evidence-based or value-based knowledge is critical prior to initiating any plans and programs for young CWDs to ensure effectiveness and efficiency (Ainscow, 2013; Mc Gregor &Vogelsberg, 1998). Research is one of the main sources of such knowledge that tries to understand the multifaceted and complex relationship between people's attitudes and behaviours (Shakespeare &Kleine, 2013).

Barriers and enablers of inclusive education are a broader area of discussion in special education literature. However, very little has been discovered from the perspective of children with special needs regarding their learning challenges as well as experiences in inclusive environment.

Significance of the study

The perspectives about people's attitudes, teachers' efficacy, parental empowerment, resources and coordination to the effective inclusion of CWD as an outcome of this research will contribute to the development of the contextually appropriate and research-based policy, (Forlin, Chambers, Loreman, Deppeler, & Sharma, 2013 ; Slavin,2002).While there is minimal literature on inclusive education in Pakistan, recent research has identified that the main reason for policy failures in the past was due to lack of awareness and skills to initiate or implement inclusive education for children with disabilities (Hameed, 2003).

This research will enhance my professional and learning to more effectively support and implement inclusive education for primary level for CWD in the country.

Research Question

The overarching question shaping the focus of this research is:

How children with disabilities (CWDs) can be included in primary schools in Pakistan?

Sub Questions

1. What inhibits the inclusion of CWDs in primary schools in Pakistan?
2. What supports the inclusion of CWDs in primary schools in Pakistan?

Literature Review

For the purpose of this proposal, the following section introduces key literature, which has been reviewed to shape the research focus and develop an in-depth understanding of inclusion of CWDs in primary schools in Pakistan, barriers and supports in primary education setting.

Connecting with the research questions, the literature review first discusses the benefits of inclusive education for CWD, then barriers and supporting mechanisms. The review is exhibited more concisely due to restriction of word limit.

Barriers to inclusive education

This segment focuses on the barriers of inclusive education for CWDs in primary level in Pakistan.

The constitution of Pakistan has guaranteed the rights for children aged 3 to 16 years to accessing free education. According to the law, other forms of marginalized groups of children are being included. However, children with disabilities are the only exceptional case in the marginalized group of children as they are not included in the policy (Hameed, 1993).This restraining policy demonstrates that decision makers and administrators do not have sufficient background information regarding disability to take the initiative to incorporate inclusive education for CWDs.

Enablers of inclusive education

Booth and Ainscow (2002) identified a set of 12 essential factors for the effective inclusive education for CWDs, which can provide a framework for the enablers of inclusive education. These factors are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Supporting factors of inclusive education

1	Definition	7	Funding
2	Use of evidence	8	Support and challenges to schools
3	Leadership	9	Responding to diversity
4	Policies, planning and processes	10	Special provisions
5	Attitudes	11	Partnership
6	Structures, roles and responsibilities	12	Staff development and training

Booth and Ainscow (2002), believed that all factors are vital to creating inclusive learning environments designed to promote children's equitable access, participation and achievement in education. These factors interact to form appropriate organizational structures, define their functions, generate necessary funding, and develop professionals required for the inclusive education. However, due to the lack of any universally accepted definition of inclusive education it remains a contested concept. This lack of clarity often leaves professionals confused as to a precise concept of inclusive education and what supports it at a level of effectiveness (Lewis, Chard, & Scott, 1994 ; Synder, Garriot & Aylor, 2001 ; UNESCO,2009 ; Odom & Diamond,1998; Miles & Singal, 2010).

Schaffner and Buswell (1996) also identified 10 critical components to support effective inclusion. The components are included in table 2.

Table 2. Enabling components of inclusive education

1	Strategic plan with philosophy	6	Technical assistance to staff
2	Strong leadership	7	Flexibility
3	Accommodate diversity	8	Adopt effective teaching approach
4	Networking	9	Celebrate success
5	Ensuring accountability	10	Enhance knowledge about the change process

The elements suggested by Booth and Ainscow (2002) and Schaffner and Buswell (1996) should be addressed by a policy with a broad vision and outcomes for the inclusion of CWDs in primary schools. The factors discussed by Booth and Ainscow (2002) and Schaffner and Buswell(1996) may be relevant to Pakistani context and these factors may contribute to identifying the enabling factors regarding the inclusion of CWDs.

Research Methodology
Research Design

The research will employ a qualitative case study in order to acquire a richer understanding of professionals' perspectives about the factors associated with creating an enabling environment to the inclusion of CWDs in primary schools over time.

Employing a qualitative design, the research will obviously consider the core characteristics of this design, such as: describing the phenomenon as they are; collecting data in the natural setting; emphasizing processes rather than products of the research; and using an inductive analysis approach in data analysis (Bogdan &Biklen, 1998).With this approach, the data analysis begins with the field data towards theoretical interpretations. Furthermore, as a flexible framework of research, the design allows a few alterations in the research process when it is required.

The research participants will be interviewed to explore their experiences about the reason of exclusion of CWDs in primary schools in Pakistan. Interview questions will be developed and pre-tested before employing to check its adequacy.

Field notes will be used as a major instrument for data collection. The field notes will be arranged as the chronological index system. This system keeps the orderly records of dates and the participant responses to the interview questions (Saldaña, 2003).

The interviews will be audio recorded and listened to repeatedly along with making notes, so that the participant views are transcribed and analysed accurately. Each interview will be of 60 minutes.

Research Site and Sampling

The research will use the purposeful sampling method. With this method, the researcher deliberately concentrates on some relevant and important cases, rather emphasizing on the representation (Coyne, 1997; Hancock et al., 1998; Mays & Pope, 1995). Therefore, three inclusive education centres for CWDs in three districts (Lahore, Multan, and Faisalabad) of Pakistan will be the research sites. With regard to the sampling of the interview respondents for the three cases, an educator and head-teachers of each inclusive education for CWDs will be selected purposefully. These inclusive education centres for CWDs staffs are directly engaged in development of policies regarding pedagogical activities of CWDs in the inclusive education for primary level schools.

Types of participants	Number of participants
Educators from inclusive schools	5 + 5 +5
Head teachers	1+1+1

Trust worthiness of the research

Credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability are crucial facets of qualitative research because they maintain the accuracy of the research. Therefore, the researcher should use several strategies to ensure these four aspects in the research (Barbour, 2001; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2008). Since the research will be employing multiple methods like interviews and document review; both method and data triangulation techniques will enhance the credibility and dependability of the research(Shenton, 2004). Data obtained from different sources will be compared and contrasted for maintaining the credibility. A debriefing technique will be applied to uphold the credibility and dependability of the interviews (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, &Spiers, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Creswell, 2012).

Data Analysis

Data analysis will be undertaken simultaneously with the interviews (Bertrand, Brown, & Ward, 1992).To begin with, I will write an analytical memo based on the field notes and document review to conceptualize and interpret the data thoroughly. The analytical memo is useful to capturing and recalling all of the data including key words, phrases, cues and suggestions and hence, the memo writing will be continued for the entire data analysis phase (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As recommended by Yin (2014), I will use the following strategies for data analysis,

- putting information into different arrays
- making a matrix of categories and placing the evidence within such categories
- creating data displays-flowchart and other graphics
- tabulating the frequencies of different events
- Putting information in chronological order (pp.135).

In accordance with Bertrand, Brown and Ward (1992) and Stewart and Shamdasani (2014) a margin code will be used to investigate the perceived changes and development regarding the categories and sub-categories over study period. Axial coding will be used to interconnect the data generated as the categories and sub-categories. This will help avoid the risk of analysing data generated from different sources in isolation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In addition, the relevant theoretical assumptions regarding the inclusion of children with disability in inclusive education for CWDs will be used to guide the data analysis process.

Research Ethics

Research ethics is a professional and personal code to conduct research honestly. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) and Hennink, Hutter and Bailey(2010) state that researchers should have an ethical obligation to provide justice for research participants as well as to meet research standard such as; ensuring freedom of participation; keeping the confidentiality of the participants perspectives; being honest to the participants and respecting their culture. For complying with these standards, the researcher will request the research participants about their voluntary participation and withdrawal from the research whenever they want.

The researcher will try not to harm the research participants physically, culturally or psychologically. The researcher will ask for their consent to participate in the research. Similarly, the anonymity and confidentiality of their identity and perspectives will be guaranteed by using pseudonyms and keeping all study data, including the field notes memos, interview tapes, and transcripts in a locked metal file cabinet in researcher's office. The data will be destroyed after a reasonable period of time (Hennink et al., 2010).

Timeline and Budget

Estimated timeline and budget is as follow.

Heading	Estimated time duration
Ethical application	3 months
Literature review	3 months
Recruitment	1 month
Piloting	1 month
Conducting interviews	4 months
Transcribing, interpreting, and analyzing data	8 months
Writing, editing and publishing	4 months
Total	24 months

Estimated cost

heading	Estimated cost

Communication	10,000 PKR
Printing	30,000 PKR
Photocopy	10,000 PKR
Travel	20,000 PKR
Transcribing data	50,000 PKR
Stationary	15,000 PKR
Total expenditure	135,0000 PKR

1. **Strengths and Limitation of the study**

This research will be limited to the inclusive education for children with disabilities in the three districts in Pakistan. Inclusive settings are community-based, schools-based and NGO-supported. Thus the study will deal with both government and NGO schools and hence, the findings of this research may not be generalizable within the broader context of inclusive education for CWDs (Flick, 2009). However, the results of this research will provide some new insights to successfully provide inclusive education services in a related setting.

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Appendices
Appendix 1 summary
Appendix 2 Interview Protocol

Research Project: Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs in Nepal: Perceptions of Professionals and Parents.

Opening:

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. This session is about to discuss how could CWDs be included in ECED program in this organization.

This discussion will take about an hour. The focus of the discussion will be on practices of your organization for the inclusion of children with a disability in ECED programs. The discussion may contribute to the further development of the effective inclusion of CWDs in ECED within your organization and it may contribute to initiate policy by the government and the other organizations in the country.

Questions

1) How long have you been including CWD in your ECED program?
2) Why did you begin this program?
3) What types of CWDs are included in your ECED program?
4) How did you find CWDs in the community?
5) How could you develop professionals to educate CWDs in ECED?
6) How could you make barrier free learning environment?
7) How could you generate resources for the inclusion of CWDs in ECED?
8) How could you coordinate with various agencies and professionals?
9) Did you apply different strategies to meet learning and development needs of children with a disability?
10) If yes. What are they?
11) If no .Why?
12) How could you coordinate with the parents of children with and without a disability?
13) What do you think will help for further improvement in the inclusion of CWDs?
14) What are the outcomes of the inclusion of CWDs in ECED?

Appendix 3 Focus group protocol

Opening:

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. This program is about to discuss how and why CWDs are included in ECED programs in Nepal. This discussion will take about an hour. The focus of the discussion will be on the enablers and inhibitors of the inclusion of CWDs in ECED programs in Nepal.

Questions for Professional working with the Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations

1) Are there currently any inclusive ECED for CWDs in some parts of the country?
2) If yes. What types of CWDs are included?
3) If no. Why CWDs are currently not included in ECED programs in Nepal?
4) Why the inclusion of CWDs is essential in Nepalese ECED program?
5) Do you think your perceptions help to commence any policies for the inclusion of CWD in ECED?
6) If yes, how does it help?
7) If no, why it does not help?

8) What do you believe prevents ECED programs from including CWDs?

9) What do you believe supports ECED programs from including CWDs?

Questions

For ECED Educators

1) Are there any CWDs in your ECED
2) If yes. What types of CWDs are included?
3) If no. Why CWDs are currently not included in ECED programs?
4) Why the inclusion of CWDs is essential in Nepalese ECED programs?
5) Do you think your perceptions help to commence any policies for the inclusion of CWDs in ECED
6) If yes, how does it help?
7) If no, why it does not help?

8) What do you believe prevents ECED programs to include CWDs?

9) What do you believe supports ECED programs to include CWDs?

Questions

For People with a disability

1) Are there currently any inclusive ECED for CWDs in some parts of the country?
2) If yes. What types of CWDs are included?
3) If no. Why CWDs are currently not included in ECED programs?
4) Why the inclusion of CWDs is essential in Nepalese ECED program?
5) Do you think your perceptions help to commence any policy programs for the inclusion of CWDs in ECED?
6) If yes, how does it help?
7) If no, why it does not help?

8) What do you believe prevents ECED programs to include CWDs?

9)   What do you believe supports ECED programs to include CWDs?

Questions

For parents with and without a disability

1)   Please tell me about the inclusion of CWDs in ECED program?
2)   Are there any inclusive ECED centers for CWDs in your community?
3)   If yes how many and what types of CWDs are included in these ECED?
4)   If no why are there not any inclusive ECED centers for CWDs in your community?
5)   Why the inclusion of CWDs is essential Nepalese ECED program?
6)   Do you think your perceptions help to commence any policy programs for the inclusion of CWDs in ECED?
7)   If yes, how does it help?
8)   If no, why it does not help?
9)   What do you believe prevents ECED programs to include CWDs?
10) What do you believe supports ECED programs to include CWDs?

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