

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SINDH: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Ali Gul Bugti, Prof. Dr. Anjum Bano Kazimi The Implementation of Inclusive Education in Sindh: Challenges and Opportunities-- Palarch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology 18(6), 37-46. ISSN 1567-214x

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Opportunities and Challenges

ABSTRACT

The aim of conducting current study was to assess the challenges and opportunities facing in the implementation of inclusive education in selected public primary schools of Karachi. The focus of the current study was to highlight the challenges and opportunities of inclusive education in mainstream schools as per 21st century needs. The data were collected from two (15 boys & 15 girls) mainstream schools of Karachi. A five-point Likert scale was developed to collect the data after review of the literature. Which consisted of 10 close ended items and one open-ended questionnaire was developed which was consisted of 6 questions (3 for school heads and 3 for senior school teachers). The data for the current study was collected from school heads and one senior teacher of each school. The collected quantitative data were analyzed with help of frequency and percentage while qualitative data was analyzed briefly through the themes. The findings of study revealed that the schools have slight opportunities with lots of challenges like a lack of commitment, collaboration and awareness among teachers and parents towards children with special needs. These are actual challenges that delay the implementation process of inclusive education. It is concluded that challenges are creating hinders for implementation of inclusive education and it is recommended that government should provide special budget to schools for provision of special education material and equipment, training of teachers, took proper attention towards differently able children and implementation of inclusive education.

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Education is an essential instrument for development and change of any nation. It is important that it should be as per need of all human beings. Education is being considered as a basic indicator of social and economic development along with advancement of any country. Pakistan is trying to meet quality education for all, along with all supposed learning problems of differently able children.

The Salamanca conference was held in 1994 in Spain, more than two eras have been passed to this conference and concept, but the process of implementation of inclusion has not been properly started in Pakistan. Pakistan is continually trying to meet the target of 100% enrollment and provide quality education for all types of children along with differently able children of the country. Achieving the target of 100% enrollment is impossible without implementation of inclusive education system (Afaf, Hameed & Hina, 2015).

Inclusive education is a new field of research in Pakistan and has need to explore the challenges and opportunities of this field as well (Shaista Naz, 2015). The number of differently able children whose life is 5-11 years is increasing day by day and year by year (Shaista Naz, 2015).

Inclusive education gradually may take place in different types of early childhood education, but the consideration of context as a key factor affecting the high-level implementation of inclusive education. Furthermore, support and quality assessment need full consideration of global and inclusion quality, although these two aspects of inclusive education rarely considered together (Hiale, Eva Horn, 2019).

Inclusion or inclusive education is an approach through which the teachers are reacting, teaching and modifying their teaching styles to address the needs of differently able students in a general classroom (Brazil, Ford & Voltz, 2001). The National Centre on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (1994) defined inclusion as “Providing to all students, including those with severe handicaps, equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with the needed supplementary aids and support services, in age-appropriate classes in their neighborhood schools, in order to prepare students for productive lives as full members of the society”.

Furthermore, as per Swart (2004) “It therefore reflects a deep commitment to create an education system that values and respects diversity and supports all learners, educators and school communities to maximize participation and development of their full potential”.

When an organization changes its way of teaching in regular classes facilitating the differently able students with a syllabus than inclusive education takes place. Inclusive education cannot be implemented itself; it requires full concentration along with lots of efforts by providing the required equipment in mainstream schools.

The Concept of Inclusive Education in Pakistan And Its Implementation

Pakistan is being considered as an underdeveloped country in the field of education and spending only 2% of GDP on education. In the National Education Policy (2002) the government of Pakistan decided and directed to offer equal educational opportunities for all types of differently able children of the country. Education for all and providing equal educational opportunities will help to meet Sustainable Development Goal (SDG.4) and 100%

enrollment in the field of education. The concept of inclusive education was properly started with 2013 in Pakistan. A pilot project was started in the province of Punjab and enrolled 18 children with special needs in neighboring mainstream schools. The project was started on the basis of giving guidelines and a committee was constituted to plan, check and carry out the project comprised on speech therapist, psychologists, special education teachers and headmasters (Afaf, Hameed & Hina 2015). The project was the first step towards implementation of inclusive education. Separate educational institutions are available in Pakistan and other developing countries as well for children with special needs. The children with special needs are less supported, to include them in a general education system which is called integration that's why the needs of children with special needs are not achieved and fulfilled. The key factors are competition in schools, inadequate funding and examination's pressure (Kleitman, Gibson, 2011).

One of the most important resistance is lack of availability and commitment of school leaders. The involvement of local and national community is essential who can help and support to the parents of unprivileged children who are in communication with teachers and their children (OECD, 2012). The training of teachers and guidance can easily remove the resistances of inclusive education.

Implementation of Inclusive Education in Sindh

The wing for special education was established on 6th April 2006 before this it was responsible of Bureau of Curriculum and Extension Wing Jamshoro, Sindh to carry out under the direction of Education and Literacy Department, Government of Sindh. The separate department for children with special needs was established in October 2011, under RoB (January 2012).

With continuation of Notification vide No. SORI(S&GAD) 2-4/021(Special Education) dated 03/01/2011 Government of Sindh, SGA&CD defined the department's role as given below:

- 1.To educate and welfare all types of children with special needs or persons especially blind, deaf, dumb and mentally retarded.
- 2.Restoration of all types of children or persons.
- 3.Matters related to service, except entrusted to the Services, General Administration & Coordination Department (SGA&CD).

It became the responsibility of the provincial government to educate all types of children in the province after the 18th amendment to the constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan. There were twelve special education institutions in Sindh and all were devolved under supervision of Sindh government, which were run by the federal government before. The number of special education institutions exceeded and reached in 48 with the following facilities. Anjum et al., (2021) recommended that the diversification about age, gender and other elements needed sensitivity. The researchers further recommended that awareness about discrimination and responsiveness of students' various requirements, focused teaching styles and encouragement could meet the

needs of different abled students and help in maintaining an inclusive environment in the class.

In the Sindh the differently able children have some challenges yet that result their exclusion from the mainstream of society and create hindrances for achieving their basic political, social and economic rights. A lot of challenges make their lives underprivileged, unrestricted, illiterate, malnourished, ignored and vulnerable. Their life is a struggle for them on a daily basis to survive. Even they belong to urban or rural areas these are common problems and they are facing these. A number of factors are affecting of this pathetic situation are different and varied, including unemployment, poverty, social segregation, attitudinal, institutional, environmental and economic obstacles. Sletved (1981) reported entitled “Special Education in Sindh Province” that certain problems are here in mainstream education to be faced in special education. Some the problems are: 1) Availability of incomplete facilities, 2) lack of motivation among teachers, supervisors and parents, 3) unwillingness of teachers to experiment with new methods of teaching, with new educational material and attitude towards children. Anjum & Wajiha (2018) concluded that training of teachers and parents can play a vital role and can bring significant change in attitudes as well as towards implementation of inclusive education. A lot of time has been passed to the concept of inclusive education or inclusion, but it could not have implemented in the province of Sindh. This study aims to find the challenges of not an implementation of inclusive education in mainstream schools of Sindh along with opportunities.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1.To find out the practical opportunities for providing the inclusive education in selected mainstream schools of Karachi.
- 2.To find out the everyday challenges to apply inclusive education system in selected mainstream schools of Karachi.
- 3.To recommend and suggest possible solution keeping in view challenges and opportunities for providing inclusive education in selected mainstream schools of Karachi.

Research Questions

- 1.What are best practical opportunities for providing inclusive education in mainstream schools?
- 2.What are best practical challenges in providing inclusive education in mainstream schools?
- 3.What suggestions and recommendations should be provided for removing current challenges and proper implementation of inclusive education?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The current study deals with mix method qualitative and quantitative by purpose. The issue of implementation of inclusive education is not only limited in selected mainstream schools, but it is the burning issue of the

education field. To find the existence hurdles in the implementation of inclusive education, the current study was conducted in Karachi.

Sample and Sampling

The sample of this study was consisted of fifteen mainstream school heads and fifteen senior teachers of same selected schools of Karachi. The simple random sampling technique was used to select the schools, HMs and senior teachers. Keeping in view the two different categories of respondents stratified sampling technique was used and created two different Strata, one school heads and other one senior teacher.

Data Collection

Two different questionnaires were used for data collection. One was close ended consisted of 10 items and other one was open ended consisted of six questions. Each and every question was briefly discussed with participants. The researcher collected data himself by visiting selected schools. Enough time was given to the participants as they can easily share their views about the study.

Ethical Consideration

The background, sex, ethnicity and race of participants was not considered in this study because these have no importance and nothing with the idea of research and issues of inclusive education. The collected data were only used for research purpose.

DATA ANALYSIS

The open-ended questions were analyzed with help of themes, while close ended questionnaire was analyzed statistical expression, tabular presentation and percentage.

S.No	Items	Responses		
			Frequency	Percentage
1	The school compound is comfortable for children with special needs	Yes	6	20
		No	24	80
		Total	30	100
2	The class rooms are reachable for differently able students.	Yes	4	13.3
		No	26	86.7
		Total	30	100
3	Have school community trust and believe on inclusion of children with special needs with other children?	Yes	8	26.7
		No	22	73.3
		Total	30	100
4	The ordinary students take part in different activities with different able students	Yes	2	6.7
		No	28	93.3
		Total	30	100
5	Extra ordinary/ special	Yes	0	0

	services are being provided to the children with special needs by school community.	No	30	100
		Total	30	100
6	Washrooms, classrooms, rest areas and other facilities are reachable to children with special needs.	Yes	8	26.7
		No	22	73.3
		Total	30	100
7	The area of sports is comfort for different abed students.	Yes	4	13.3
		No	26	86.7
		Total	30	100
8	There is positive interact between normal and children with special needs except break and entry time.	Yes	9	30
		No	21	70
		Total	30	100
9	The curriculum is adapted from anywhere for children with special needs.	Yes	0	0
		No	30	100
		Total	30	100
10	Teaching method is comfortable for all type of children with special needs in mainstream classroom.	Yes	10	33.3
		No	20	66.7
		Total	30	100

The results of table 1.1 show that the respondents were disagreed with all items. This indicates that here is need of work to implement the inclusive education in selected public mainstream schools of Karachi.

ANALYSIS OF OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS ASKED FROM SCHOOL HEADS

Challenges and Opportunities for Implementation of Inclusive Education

When asked about above question they replied that they have some information about international declarations and signatories done for the education of children with special needs. They further said that the concept of inclusion started Salamanca conference, Education for All and United Nations declaration on the right of children, but these declarations have no importance and nothing in our education system of the country and only one province of the country is trying to meet these declarations. As about challenges, they said there are the lot of challenges that create hindrances in implementation of inclusive education like parents and teacher's attitude towards differently able children, lack of information about inclusive education system, no proper attention of provincial and district educational authorities for implementation of inclusive education, unavailability of adequate resources and material, inadequate budget and large class size.

Identification and Assessment of Children with Special Needs

When asked about above question the school heads replied that they have no multidisciplinary team to identify the differently able children for inclusive

education services. They further said that we are unable to admit the visual, hearing and other problem children in mainstream schools.

In addition, when it was asked to school heads about assessment and identification of children with special needs, they said they have no proper mechanism to identify the children with special needs properly. They included different signs which were shown by the children. They said watery eyes, red eyes and crossed eyes, etc. They are unable to assess them further and they did not give admission them in mainstream schools.

Availability of Adequate Teaching and Learning Material, Instruments and Resources

The question was about the availability of special education material, instrument and resources like library services etc. They replied there is no any reference books and other special education material and equipment in schools. When asked about the school environment, they said the environment of the school is not conducive for children who are using wheelchairs and who have visual problems can create problems in teaching and learning process of ordinary classroom students in some extent. They further said that they can make the environment of school conducive for differently able student and can easily adjust them.

ANALYSIS OF OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS ASKED SCHOOL TEACHERS

The Teaching Methods Used by Teachers to Teach and Address Differently Able Students

When it was asked teachers about teaching strategies of teachers, they said they have different teaching methods to teach the students with special needs in common classroom. They have believed on lesson presentation effectively. They said group discussion, lecture method and pair work can help to make students active in all activities of the class.

Availability of Teaching Learning Resources, Material and Equipment for Differently Able Students

When inquired about the adequacy and availability of teaching, learning resources, material and equipment for children with special needs, they said nothing to ease the students with special needs. They further said the government should provide the required teaching and learning material along with required materials and equipment as an inclusive education system can be implemented.

Availability of Physical Conducive Environment

About above question they said the environment of the school is not conducive for students who are using wheelchairs and have visual problems specially. They said this can definitely affect on teaching and learning process of school.

The last question was about suggestions and recommendations for proper implementation of inclusive education in mainstream schools it was suggested and recommended that all needed material and equipment should be provided by government and resource room should be fully equipped as per need of students with special needs. The teachers should have need of training to enhance and update the existing knowledge and proper use of skills and teaching methods to teach the students as per their abilities.

FINDINGS

It was found that the school heads have information about international declarations and agreements of the United Nations.

The schools have no mechanism for identifying the problems of different able children, they believe in children whatever they show themselves.

The teachers were ready to use different teaching methods to meet the need of students with special needs, but they have need of more training compared to global situations.

It was found that school heads were facing a lot of challenges in implementation of inclusive education due to unavailability of teaching and learning material, instruments and equipment as per need children with special needs.

Regarding the conduciveness of the school environment, it was found that the environment of the school was not conducive for differently able students.

CONCLUSION

The main aim of this study was to find out the implementation of inclusive education in 21st century challenges and opportunities. In order to meet the answers of the basic questions the study concluded following important points:

- The available opportunities were very little and did not pave' the way of implementation of inclusive education in mainstream schools. There were lots of challenges in the way of implementation of inclusive education. Some of them were the attitude of teachers and parents towards differently able children, lack of awareness about inclusive education, no proper attention from district, local and provincial governments towards inclusive education, inadequate resources and material and untrained teachers etc.

- The schools have no any proper mechanism to identify the needs of differently able children. And there was no periodic assessment plan for children with special needs.

- The teachers were not trained to admit differently able children in mainstream classrooms.

- While, the teachers were agreed to use different teaching strategies to meet the needs of differently able children.

- There was the unavailability of special educational material and equipment in mainstream schools.

- No any basic facility found for children with special needs in selected mainstream schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It was recommended that schools should make a proper mechanism for proper assessment of children with special needs and for periodic assessment because if the requirements/ needs of students were not fully assessed it can create problems to meet their needs.
2. The mainstream schools should have to admit the children with special needs.
3. The government should allot the special budget for provision of required material or equipment for differently able children.
4. An important attention is required towards implementation of inclusive education system and facilitation of children with special needs.
5. Further training programs should be arranged for teachers as they can promote their skills and teaching methods as per need of children with special needs.

Motivation of Study

The work of this article described conducted in Karachi, Pakistan. The main purpose of conducting this study was to know the challenges and opportunities of inclusive education and its implementation in the 21st century. Inclusive Education is a new trend in our country. Inclusive Education started two decades before from Salamanca Conference. Pakistan was a member of that conference. Unfortunately, after two decades the implementation process of inclusive education was not completed in overall countries. The basic aim of this study was to know the reasons, challenges, resistances and barriers of not implementing inclusive education along with opportunities as well.

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