

Research Article

Educational inequalities: An analysis of policy, law and government initiatives

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Abstract

The school culture of developing countries is less welcoming to fulfil the basic rights to equal and equitable educational opportunities. The attitude of school authorities is not academically catchy. It is totally commercial and for money-making objective. Their focus is similar with the intentions of the shopkeepers, who usually meditate that the buyers will inevitably come, and avail the paid services without any “shout aloud” or marketing strategy. Behind the compilation of this research-based concept paper the major interest and objective of the researchers was to highlight the gaps in achieving the global agenda of quality, equality and compulsory educational facilities for all children without discrimination. The Pakistani government has initiated many historical steps towards Education for All. Including; identification and admittance of all children aged 5yrs-16yrs without discrimination to their ultimate right to free and obligatory education. To accomplish the goal of quality education teacher should develop intellectual competency among their pupils, without any biases, equal and participatory approach in schools. Stakeholders must recognize that the education system followed by the inclusive approach is inevitable that benefits children from all groups by instilling lenience, recognition and gratitude for diversity. This would definitely work as a strong agent for school improvement. We need to disrupt the resistant factors by facilitating the education system in developing infrastructure, resource rooms and teachers’ training programs. There is a much-needed paradigm shift in policy and for educational administration is required, to execute reforms accordingly.

Key words: school culture, inclusive education, educational inequalities, gender biasness, appreciation of diversity, discrimination

Introduction

Quality of education means building the goals and objectives of education. This has been clearly outlined 71 years ago in a document prepared by Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) was undeniably groundbreaking manuscripts its prime focus was on human rights. This entails the advantages of schooling for young children and grown-ups to nurture in their intellectual, social and emotional capacities. Moreover it mainly focused on not only learning but also for the accomplishments, approaches and ethics. Education should be without gender discrimination and equal participatory rights should be ensured in all aspects of

education with safety and protection measures in and around the school premises. Education shall be provided free of cost, at least in the elementary level and rest of fundamental stages. Education till elementary grades level shall be compulsory. The education on technical, professional domains and higher education must available on equitable level and equally accessible. This document also stressed on the directed role of education by means of its coverage to personality development and support for fundamental autonomies. It shall be helpful in promoting empathy, acceptance and alliance without biasness among all states, ethnic or religious groups. Moreover, the parents among the stakeholders possess prime rights for the merit-based selection of the kind of education that shall be delivered to their children.

Afterwards all the movements for equal provision of rights for the children with diversified needs due to any problem or disability initiated with strong advocacy. Inclusive education system has been meaningfully interpreted now that all children without discrimination should be acknowledged by their neighboring schools and non-formal institutions by considering the appropriateness of their age applicable to regular classes.

So that they could be provided with all kind of support to learn, excel, contribute and participate in every aspects of school life. The present concept paper expected to review the determinations of the Government of Pakistan for the orientation and extension of the service structure for provision of all appropriate and relevant services as rights to elevate the quality of life of the persons with disabilities. For developing insight, all possible provisions for education form access to success, equality and equity of the rights and related services are analyzed in the line of direction of the policies of educational and 5 years (five-year) development plans.

Recent situational analysis of Pakistan:

As reported by an official document from the Govt. of Pakistan (2017), Pakistan is standing at among the 6th (sixth) highly populated countries in the world. Though, mostly social sector developmental indicators are lower while comparing different countries of the region and even the progress of different states in the world. By analyzing, Education Development Index (EDI), it is revealed that Pakistan deceits at the inferior level among the other countries in the region. Overall 25 million children from age range between 6 years to 16 year are found as out of school, which is extremely alarming condition. Consequently, Pakistan stands at first runner up from higher level at the index. This figure was found from the analytical report of EDI that worldwide we have among the countries with the maximum number of young children who are currently not registered in any school. The rate of abandoned cases of registered school children is more than 70% in public sector schools from early grades to higher secondary grades. Pakistan has failed to achieve the targets of EFA and MDG.

Out of the ratio of entire outlay at the countrywide level, the real education expenses are ranging from 7.4% to 10% only. However, it is hardly sufficient to endure the education structure at the current stage. Moreover, a much smaller ratio of the state's educational budget is reserved every year and most of the due development budget is not properly consumed due to a number of factors like pitiable management styles at different administrative levels. If we shall analyze annual expense allocation document of 2012-13, the expenditures for the category of developments were only five per cent (5%) of the total education budget allocated for the province of the Punjab, Six per cent (6%) in the province of Sindh, nine per cent (9%) for province of the Balochistan and twenty-two per cent (22%) in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Besides all, the level of low utilization from the allocated budget for the same year was only 23% in Punjab, 41% in Sindh, 72% in KP and 82% in Balochistan.

Directed to a number of analytical studies conducted on per annual allocation of budget and its usage, by the government of the Pakistan during the recent past years, it was observed that low utilization

of allocated developmental was a common practice. Whereas disbursement on academic sector reported by some other countries of the region in comparison to Pakistan is significantly higher in terms of percentage of their GDP. According to a report by Pakistan Economic Survey 2015-16, the expenses on education sector is 4.6% of the annual GDP by Afghan government, then 6% by Bhutan, 5.2% by Maldives and 3.8% by India. As reported by “Education For All” Global Monitoring Report of the year 2016, many under developed countries around the globe are spending more than 4% of their GDP on education, which is a good sign of development and awareness indeed. It has been also mentioned in recent federal education policy document of Pakistan (2017). The reported findings of a survey conducted by World Health Organization (2011) on the basis of a survey report conducted for the year 2004, that the ratio of disabilities among the youth (above 18 years) was 15.6% to 18% in poor economic countries and 11.8% in strong economic states. Whereas the census report of the year 1998 reflected the proportion of the persons with disabilities at 2.49% in Pakistan. Most recent estimated reports emphasized that the persons with disabilities constitute about 2.54 % population of Pakistan.

International Classification of Functioning (ICF) has reported several handicapping conditions that restrict the access of children to education. There are almost about 1.4 million children belong to school going age bracket. But only just less than 5% of school-aged children with disabilities are enrolled in special education institutions and whereas rest of 95% children are out of school. Main reason of limited enrolments is the access of school because average distance of school from home to a special school is about twelve km (12km) as compared to less than one km (1 km) for the peers without disabilities (Govt. of Pakistan 2017).

The reported condition is one of the major threats to social inclusion and capacity buildings. There are a number of causes which contribute to the exclusion of such children from school education. Few of them mainly include unfriendly attitude from primary schools, inadequate number of special schools in the country, inadequate student capacity of existing schools, transport problems, poverty. Mostly special education institutions are located in urban areas. Most of the children with disabilities are residing in rural and far-flung areas that are why they are unable to approach their institutes. They can be declared as worst victims of a trio 3Ds consequence of disability, remoteness and destitution and need a mutual response.

Way to Think & Re-think: A historical transition

National and global educational initiatives and trends

The significance of education for each individual just as each country can't be denied and over-underlined. The significance of education has been expanded positively particularly if there should arise an occurrence of people with disabilities. This has been acknowledged as a generally accepted fact that training can assist them with changing in the public arena and intercede the impacts of handicaps. All around the world in a specialized curriculum, there are exceptionally planned novel guidelines to meet the assorted adapting needs and capacities of students with handicaps. Such kids experiencing the conditions that unfavorably influence their advancement in traditional instructive settings.

Plan International has supported the establishment of and has actively led international initiatives on education and awareness about children's right to education. During the year 2015 Plan international strived for educational rights of the children statistically proved that, in recent times the children have a higher chance to get enter in schools than. World widely the enrolment in primary education in developing countries touched 91% in 2015 (rise from 83 % in year 2000). Literacy rates among youngsters have upgraded globally from 83 % to 91 % between 1990 and 2015. Still there is a lot to do to eliminate gender discrimination, equality and equity of the rights to education.

The Government of Pakistan recognizes its responsibility to educate the children with handicapping conditions, first time in the report of Commission on National Education, 1959. Unfortunately, the proposal for the provision of education for these children was not documented until the Education Policy of 1972-1980. Then in the Fifth Five Year Plan (Pakistan Planning Commission, 1978), a limited amount was allocated to special education. In 1980s, a comparatively greater involvement of state was witnessed and the government increased budgetary provision for the domain of special education. Although, still the amount was not sufficient to meet the current needs of the persons with disabilities. In the Sixth Five Year Plan (1983-1988), the social welfare program rigorously focused on the extended provision of the level of support to existing bodies of social welfare and special education. Consequently, to overcome administrative obstacles, the Federal Directorate General of Special Education was established in 1985 along with their provincial counterparts. Today a considerable number of special education institutions are functioning under the control of the provincial governments for the children having diversified learning patterns and special needs.

Recently, the special education institutions run by the federal government are devolved to the respective provincial governments although the attainment of the goal for the provision of services still has been trivial as compared to the need and problem facing by the persons with disabilities in the country.

Special education in five years plan

As reported by Fontana and Lari, (2006) the educational policies and practices in Pakistan have been historically influenced by the British rule (1757 - 1947). Even precise program for the persons with disabilities documented as "Services for the Physically Handicapped" in the First Plan of National Development (1955-60) but it was not ready to execute. The program had since been reiterated in the later four plans 1960 to 1983. In the Fifth Five year plan it was decided to establish four model special education institutes for children with disabilities in the Federal city, Islamabad, under the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.

Fontana and Lari, (2006) stated that in the 1980s, much greater government involvement was witnessed and increased budgetary provision for special education (though still inadequate) was done. The focus of Sixth Plan (1983-1988) was improvement of current conditions of institutes of special education and social welfare. After the establishment of Directorate General of Special Education the first National Policy for Rehabilitation of the Disabled was framed in 1986. The provision of all required facilities for providing both special schooling and integrated and comprehensive rehabilitative services to children with disabilities came under the Ministry of Social Welfare and Special Education (recently decentralized).

Special education in the educational policies of Pakistan

After the creation of Pakistan the obligation of the Government to educate its marginalized community was officially recognized first in the Commission on National Education (Pakistan Ministry of Education, 1959). But the proposal to provide education for these children was not made until the Education Policy 1972- 1980 (Dani, 1986). As a brief there is a short analysis of the educational policies of Pakistan to have a critical thought provoking on from where we took an initiative and now where we are? The Commission on National Education was purposely selected and adopted by the Government of Pakistan in 1958. It encompassed 10 eminent educational experts from various departments of education sector.

The Commission stressed that government should be responsible for "training of educators who will serve the institutes for the children with handicapped" including those institutes which are run by private sector. The focus of the Commission was following major areas as few of them are: i)-professional collaboration with the teacher of pupils with disabilities, ii)- general education sector should be combined with vocational education of the children with disabilities, iii)-the society is responsible for the education

and other care of such children iv)- community awareness and mobilization, vi)- the government owned the responsibility for the highly specialized training of teachers. In the Education Policy (1972-80) certain arrangements for special education were taken into consideration especially for the opening of new institutes and support the existing ones. It was also stated that the schools for the gifted children shall provide an entirely free augmented program all over the country without reference to their financial status or social background.

The public institutes for the educational and training requirements of children with special needs were not adequate in terms of educators, tools, resources and other physical services. The following programs were suggested in the policy regarding the education of children with special needs: Province wise analysis of existing educational facilities for education, Identification of potential institutes antidevelopment of projects to identify the need to strengthen existing institutions for PWDs. It was suggested that educational programs for children with disabilities include general physical education as well as the provision of the right kind of vocational education so that people with disabilities cannot become a burden on the problems of the nation. There was only one school in Pakistan to train teachers for deaf and dumb schools, it was planned to fund them at government expenses. Donor's organizations were suggested by the government for cooperation and coordination in opening more special schools. The curriculum and programs of special education were also developed according to the need analysis of the persons with disabilities.

Special education policies

The decade from 1983-1992 was declared as the decade of the disabled by United Nations. Subsequently, that carried out to attention the prerequisite to develop a national level strategy for dealing with the problems encountered by the all categories of persons with disabilities. The Directorate General of Special Education took a lead and established a National Policy for Rehabilitation of the Disabled in 1986 which was revised in 1988 for making it more appropriate to fulfill the emergent needs of community with special needs. The National Policy, 1986 was predominantly concerned with issues. A review of the 1986 Policy was undertaken and five categories of special needs education were stated in the policy.

Subsequently, the Government of Pakistan planned and formulated another policy on Special Education in 1999. Then finally, Government of Pakistan has introduced a new National Policy for Persons with Disabilities 2002. That policy was vigorously implemented. It was documented in National Policy for Special Education (1999) that the procedure of reintegration for individuals with disabilities was continuous one. Its major focus was on dire need to transform community attitudes towards disabilities and the media can play a fundamental in highlighting the success stories of individuals with special needs.

National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (2002) was recognized as the first mature Special Education Policy. It stressed on the fulfillment of need for the equal educational right, reintegration and taking care of the individuals with disabilities not only by the public but also by the private sector. The aim of this policy was empowering the communities with disabilities, without discrimination.

That policy was launched with the great acceptance as it was established with authentic contextual statistical data and information provided by National Census, 1998 about current number of special children and persons in Pakistan. The number and categories of different disabilities within the well-defined population of persons with disabilities were indeed great source of valuable guide lines for the program planning as per their percentage and population ratio. As among the disabled population the persons with Physically Handicapping conditions were identified as 19%, the persons with mentally handicap & Insane were 14%, with multiple disabilities were as 8.21%, visually impaired persons were 8.6%, hearing impaired were 7.40%,

Whereas others but not classified included as disabled were identified 43.33%.

Following were the prime focus areas of the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, 2002: early intervention, assessment and medical treatment, education and training for the purpose of mainstreaming, vocational training, employment and rehabilitation, research and development in the areas of medicine, social work, psychology, vocational training, engineering and technology, advocacy and mass awareness, sports and recreation, design of buildings, parks and public places and wellbeing of institutional arrangement/mechanism.

Brief about working of special education department, Govt. of the Punjab

As Farooq (2013) reported similarly as Hameed (2013), that at least six percent (6%) of school going age children in Pakistan are suffering from certain kind of disabilities. Upper cited statement and figure reflected that approximately children with certain disabilities between the age ranges of 5-18yrs are four million, who are out of school. There is a very less number of students who are attending schools, which is almost less than 50 thousand (represents the population less than 5%). It is indeed a very terrifying reality that reflects almost 95% children out of school. Shockingly they are missing in all arranging as none of the EFA plans has paid attention to up this issue up until now. Absolutely they are "imperceptible children". Be that as it may, the major inquiry remains, can the fantasy of 100% enrolment of young kids work out without including this enormous portion of our populace? It is guileless to feel that any powerful chief request will drive these children into schools. It won't occur any-way. We should change the mentality of government funded schools area. Our school is dull like a retailer who believes that the clients will naturally go to the shop with no showcasing. They will need to act like a business person who puts forth all attempts to draw in its customer. Pakistan has as of late made various recorded strides towards Inclusive Education under the casing work of Education for All.

These incorporate; acknowledgment of access of all children matured 5-16 including disabled children to free and necessary schooling as a crucial directly through protected alteration during April 2010, and sanction of UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on fifth July 2011.

Overall in the province of Punjab, there established two hundred and thirty-seven (237) institutes for the education of children with special education needs up-to Tehsil /Town level. It was felt that, there should be provision of quality education and specialized training to the special needs students. Purposely provincial level incentives were being took into account and following facilities were being provided to the special needs students; academic and vocational/technical training, free of cost pick and drop facility, free of cost uniform and books, per month stipend, Braille books, guidance services for the parents, recreational activities and sports training.

To provide the facility of higher education such students, the provincial government established two (2) Degree college, one in Lahore and other is in Bahawalpur. As there are already three professional training colleges are fulfilling the extensive requirements of training, Govt. Training College for the Teacher of the Blind and Govt. Training College for the Teachers of the Deaf. Govt. In-Service Training College for the Teacher of the Disabled Children is consistently arranging professional training for the In-Service teachers and staff.

Department of Special Education Punjab:-

For tending to the diversified learning needs of children with disabilities a number of activities have been taken under the government of Pakistan, NGOs, INGOs, and UN agencies. There is a lack of an in-depth analysis of these initiatives in Pakistan. The regular government school system in Pakistan functions independently of the special school system.

Department of Special Education of Punjab province has been taken following steps in order to provide quality education as basic universal right of children with disabilities:-successful implantation of cochlear in sixty children with hearing impairment, delivery of 508 buses for free pick and drop service, allocation of sufficient fund for the construction of disability friendly buildings, establishment of audiology clinics for students with hearing impairment and centers for low vision for students with visual impairment, provision of talking books to cater the needs of students with visual impairment, establishment of computer labs in special education centers.

Law for IE in Pakistan

As reported by Rukhsana, (2015) a former federal secretary, recently official discussions on inclusive education system are particularly getting importance in Pakistan. The reason behind this is as the government is in the process and under stress to establish framework of legal rights of persons with disabilities social and educational inclusion to fulfill its global commitments with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), as the status of quality education in every province is terribly poor. A number of research studies conducted under State advisory mainly focus on the opinion of youngsters with disabilities reflected that they wish to be included with other children but they don't have enough confidence. It is evident that without appropriate legislature, the schools related to public and private sectors will not be prepared to manage and accommodate the children with diversified needs.

When we look back we'll see that the conception of inclusive education system is not novel for us as it lies under the philosophy of our religion. In the year 2007, the UNCRPD (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities) was presented and endorsed by Pakistan in 2011. In Pakistan the status of provincial government schools for the children with special education needs, is very despicable. Disregarding the fact that these are few in number and most children from rural areas do not have physical and financial access. Moreover, in rural areas most of the times the teachers and district education officers both are habitual for being absent from their duties. In-service teachers' training programs are insufficient. In addition, there is a resistant force that strongly favors segregated education system for children with special education needs as any change may render them redundant. As claimed by a famous British educationist Peter Mittler (2000) the concept of inclusion should be considered equally significant for both, the system of education and the policy for social inclusion. Inclusion "involves a process of reform and restructuring of the school as a whole" to tailor the diversified needs of children with different disorders and aptitudes.

Stakeholders must realize that there are great benefits of introducing inclusive education system for children not only with special needs but also for all groups in society. This would also indoctrinate patience, recognition and gratitude for diversity around us. It is economical to transmute all mainstream institutes into inclusive schools. This can be done with the provision of empowering infrastructure and in-service teachers' training. Rukhsana (2015) also stressed that the government of Pakistan must establish the law for the implementation of inclusive education system as early as possible, by giving the target of two years to accomplish. Only then will the public- and private-sector schools take the necessary steps to develop an integrated and inclusive education system for all.

Discussion and Conclusion

The education and rehabilitation services for the persons with disabilities are not up to mark in the developing countries including Pakistan. At the foundation of Pakistan (1947), the efforts at government level directed towards nation building and educational provisions for children with disabilities were not

very remarkable. However different non-governmental organizations (NGOs) started their services at large scale for the persons with disabilities. But the coverage of services were only and mainly for the urban communities. In different educational policies of Pakistan, special education for the children with special needs was given importance to some extent, but due to lack of planning those documented statements couldn't be executed as per the principle. From the discussion of this research paper it is also reflected in the subsequent national plans of educational reforms for all, could not be fully implemented due to a number of barriers. These mainly include the lack of administrative support, funds, trained personnel's, etc.

The public authority expanded the attention on a specialized curriculum in 1980s impacted by some global occasions. These occasions incorporate the International Year of the Child (1979), the International Year of Disabled Persons (1981), and the Decade of the Disabled (1983-1992). Accordingly, significant number of custom curriculum foundations (still deficient) was set up and the undeniable specialized curriculum strategies were defined. It is need of an opportunity to grow the custom curriculum benefits so the most extreme number of exceptional populace might be profited and for the rebuilding of winning scholarly culture, the perspectives and practices with the goal that we can beat disparities by the arrangement of equivalent and fair +educational openings.

Inclusive education can't be a financial measure. Additional help arrangements will be costly, yet without them qualitative schooling can't be ensured. Although basic changes may appear to be acceptable practice, nations ought to guarantee that changes can be actualized appropriately practically speaking. External skill ought to not exclusively be utilized in working with the youngster, however particularly for making school staff more able to manage the particular requirements of the kid and kids with comparative necessities. Educational arrangements on explicit instructive necessities require assessment.

Recommendations

The challenges, Factors and remedies for developing quality education for all, must be taken as an imperative action to deal with the educational crisis. There is need for an emergent consideration that the government of Pakistan immediately focus to intercede the resistant factors through the improvement in physical and organizational structure, improving the resource rooms services to facilitate the students with diverse learning needs, in-service teachers' training programs, planning of assessment procedures, adaptations in curriculum and instructions and also for the planning and adaptations in evaluation procedures. There is a crucial need for planning and executing reforms in educational policy, law, management, to streamline the predominant cultural, attitudinal and practical approaches. Without these reforms the major paradigm shift cannot possible.

The greatest challenge to achieving this is the need to tackle some persistent inequalities. These are few of the barriers to progress: economic challenges including financial shocks and crises, inequitable or low spending and governance challenges in the education sector, poor quality education, lack of parental and community support for education, gender inequalities
Whereas the few but foremost documented remedial suggestions are: free, compulsory and appropriate education, quality education reforms, parental consensus on placement, vocational training and job placement, priorities for equal education, the policy and law of institutes, equal access without discrimination, transition and completion, accountability and participatory governance in education system.

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