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Sub Theme : Challenges and opportunities for inclusive education in varied systems.
Title : Recent Trend of Inclusive Education practices in Bangladesh for the learners with disability.
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Objective: To ensure equitable support towards creating obstacle free environment for learners with disabilities and improve the capacity of education service providers by removing existing challenges of education system.

Methodology: awareness and policy advocacy, capacity development, piloting and model demonstration and resource mobilization.

Brief/Description:

Inclusive education has been one of the most discussed educational agenda worldwide during the last two decades. In the developing countries like Bangladesh, inclusive education has been recognized as a key strategy to achieve the goal of Education for all. As a fundamental right, every child must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of education through an inclusive way.

Defining Inclusive Education

Bangladesh, in assistance with UNESCO-Dhaka office, had a consultative workshop in 2001 with different stakeholders and developed a working definition of inclusive education 'Inclusive Education is an approach to improve the education system by limiting and

removing barriers to learning and acknowledging individual children's needs and potential.' The goal of this approach is to make a significant impact on the educational opportunities of those: who attend school but who for different reasons do not achieve adequately and those who are not attending school but who could attend if families, communities, schools and education systems were more responsive to their requirements (Ahuja & Ibrahim, 2006, p.6).

Bangladesh Government Commitment:

The Constitution of Bangladesh spells in its article 17 that "(a) establishing a uniform, mass oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law. (b) relating education to the needs of society and producing properly trained and motivated citizen to serve those needs. (c) Removing illiteracy within such time as may be determine by law."

The World Conference on Special Needs Education in Cooperation with UNESCO held in Salamanca, Spain in 1994 reaffirmed the commitment to Education for All "(EFA)" by endorsing the "Framework of Action on Special Needs Education" recognizing the necessity and urgency of providing education for children with special education needs within regular education system. The Government of Bangladesh is a signatory country in the Salamanca declaration though special education needs in the mainstream education or inclusive education recognized later a decade in the country. In 1990, Bangladesh government passed *The Compulsory Primary Education Act 1990*. This Act declared primary education compulsory and free for all children. The Act also proclaimed that it is the responsibility of the Government to provide Basic education free of cost through the primary education system in Bangladesh. The government has formed a committee for Inclusive Education for the first time in 1999 under the Ministry of Education with the representatives of the Ministry of Social Welfare and UNESCO to promote education of children with disability in the regular mainstreaming schools. Gradually Bangladesh government enacted National Education Policy-2010. National Education Policy-2010 declined that "Eliminate discriminations on grounds of nationality, religion, class, disabilities and gender; build up an environment that promotes secularism, global-brotherhood, and empathy towards humanity and respect towards human rights." (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2010, p. 1-2). All children, irrespective of gender, special needs, ethnicity, religion, geographical location and economic status, are nurtured, valued and

loved; and have the best start in life for reaching their full potential.

Bangladesh government recognized and included of children with disabilities and their education through promote Inclusive Education System according to National Education Policy Guideline, Compulsory Primary Education Act 1990, Rights and protection Act 2013 for persons with disability While defining the rights of persons with disabilities, Section 16.8 of the Act declared that : Subject to availability of appropriate supporting environment in the institutions, pursue inclusive education or integrated education in all stages of education

It is an equal right of all citizens having disabilities to be enrolled and getting educational opportunities in every sphere of the education system in Bangladesh. Section 33 of the rights and protection Act 2013 for persons with disability clearly declared that any school refusing to enroll a person with special needs due to his/her disability will be considered as a discrimination and subject to be considered for serious punishable offence by the law. The Act also mentioned about ensuring support by the Government for implementing inclusive education.

In Bangladesh, there are three alternatives education system regarding the academic provision of children with disabilities named as: Special, Integrated and Inclusive education system. Besides these, there are some education programs are running such as home-based and distance education program practiced here by different government and non-government development agencies. Also Special education program are put into practice at primary level and Early Childhood and Care Education (ECCE)

The Ministry of Social Welfare (MOSW) is playing a vital and important role along with the Ministry of primary and mass education, ministry of Education for providing education to the student with disabilities in accordance with their special needs. The Ministry of Social Welfare has designed and planned some of its special and integrated educational institution with the need of disability concerned. The Ministry has arranged systematic teaching pedagogies, provided need based traditional educational equipment, materials, accessible settings and other interventions for the student with different types of disabilities which are very limited and just city based programme.

Education situation:

- A milestone study was conducted by the DPE and CSID in 2002 reported that only 11% of the respondents received access to some sort of education in Bangladesh.
- The *Primary School Census 2010* of DPE (2011b) also reported that only children with mild disabilities were enrolled in the primary schools totaled 83,023 of which 47,029 were boys and 35,994 were girls.
- This census claimed slight increase of the enrollment of children with mild disabilities (DPE, 2011b).
- Despite such claim of increase, the enrollment number of children with disabilities in primary education is still very low (0.97% of total student population) considering the total number of children 85, 63,133 enrolled in primary education (DPE, 2011b).
- Recent *Bangladesh Primary Education Annual Sector Performance Report 2012* (DPE, 2012) of the Government of Bangladesh claimed that five types of children with disabilities (physical, visual, hearing, speech and intellectual) have been enrolled into education and
- Enrollment rate was increase by 5% per year compared to the baseline level in 2005.
- However, the same report claimed by quoting from the final conclusion report of the PEDP II that the enrollment rate of children with disabilities is not satisfactory for the following reason:

“due to the lack of institutional experience and capacity, opportunities for special needs, tribal and vulnerable children have not been created to the expected level” (DPE, 2012, p. 55).

Recent Trend of Inclusive Education in Bangladesh with Special Needs and learners with disabilities

The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) is responsible for basic education, comprising formal free and compulsory Primary and literacy and non-formal education. The Ministry of Education (MoEdu) is responsible for secondary and higher education; it also looks after the Madrasah (Islamic) education. Approximately about 700 NGOs are active in non-formal education, with some of them organizing and managing formal primary schools as well. The private sector manages the English medium schools where there is no barrier free access for learners with disabilities.

The launching of the sector-wide program Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-II) in 2004 marked a significant scaling up of government's commitment to EFA goals and for the first time recognized inclusive education policy under this project. Within Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), a Access and Inclusive Education Cell (AIEC) has established in 2005 that is responsible for initiating efforts in social inclusion. An Inclusive Education Framework has been developed which covers Gender, Children with Special Needs, Indigenous Children, and Vulnerable groups.

Strategies and action plans have been completed. AIEC has developed the action plan for Student with special needs and it has been implemented.

A part of the action plan for children with special needs in PEDP II took discriminatory actions against children with severe disabilities:

The issues associated with the inclusion of students with mild/moderate disabilities - the largest group of students with disabilities - differ significantly from those associated with the very small minority of students who have more severe disabilities. Mild/moderate disabilities include learning disabilities, emotional disturbance, and cognitive impairment. Students with mild/moderate disabilities present unique curricular and instructional challenges because access to and achievement in the general education curriculum is the primary goal of their inclusion (DPE, 2005, p. 8)

A recent review of inclusive education in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2007) found that PEDP-II has made important strides forward in terms of social inclusion during its first three years:

“It has brought to DPE and MoPME the language of social inclusion and a heightened awareness and understanding of its importance where it barely existed before. It has begun to take the first steps on the long road of bringing special needs children into schools. It has built thousands of new primary schools that incorporate ramps for use by children with disabilities. It has begun the task of supporting capacity development across DPE in terms of social inclusion issues and activities, including in monitoring and evaluation.”

Under the PEDP II, the DPE has issued a circular for the primary school to enroll the students with special needs who have reasonable amounts of disability in the beginning of the 2006. DPE conducted a baseline survey in 2005 and took initiative to identify students

with special needs. The baseline report revealed that 45680 children with disabilities need support in primary schools and among them significant number students with intellectual disabilities. DPE has moved to improve identification process of students with special needs. Under this project, government has redesigned the pre-service basic teachers training curriculum that is included inclusive education especially teaching method of special educational needs.

PEDP III is another strong and positive government program that covers IE very well. However, Implementation Guide of the PEDP III describes:

“Inclusive refers to groups of children underrepresented in schools such as: children with mild to moderate physical or learning disabilities, ethnic minorities, urban street children, tribal children, extremely poor children” (DPE, 2011a, p. 9).

PEDP-III is designed to underpin the quality of classroom participation through effective collaboration with the school community. It is anticipated that inclusion will become more prevalent in classrooms over the next ten years as a result of increasingly rigorous directives from the government of Bangladesh.

Under PEDP3, inclusive education aspires to go beyond each child’s right to attend school, and endeavours to meet the learning needs of all children, including those from marginal groups. This approach not only develops the capacity of the school as a whole to serve all children, but also benefits society as a whole by nurturing positive, well-motivated citizens and recognising that everyone has a contribution to make.

The Journey of CDD towards Inclusive Education

Centre for Disability in Development (CDD) has been at the forefront of development initiatives to improve inclusive/mainstream educational provision for learners with disabilities through implementing disability inclusive development projects/programmes in Bangladesh. At present, we are involved in shaping the SDG-2030 Development Agenda so it advances the programmes of ensuring educational rights of children, youths and adult people with disabilities in collaboration with The Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), the directorate of secondary and higher education (DSHE), as the pioneer government

organization along with number of NGOs working in inclusion, has been influential through its effort in implementing learner friendly inclusive environment in the primary, secondary and higher education sector since 1997. A series of experimental pilot inclusive education projects focused on learners with disability have been initiated by CDD in formal and non formal education sectors for accelerating and contributing targeted inclusive education initiatives.

CDD has been contributed to achieve target goals of following strategies approaches initiated by the government of Bangladesh

While PEDP-I & II have been in focus of including students with diverse needs in regular classes, PEDP-III is designed to underpin the quality of classroom participation through effective collaboration with the school community. It is anticipated that inclusion will become more prevalent in classrooms over the next ten years as a result of increasingly rigorous directives from the government of Bangladesh.

CDD's Initiatives

Inclusive education is increasingly promoted as a strategy to achieve Education for All. In Bangladesh the Government has made efforts to promote inclusive education by reconsidering teacher training curricula to feature inclusive education and disability issues through policy advocacy by CDD along with other different NGOs.

Till 2018 June CDD organized foundation skills training to teachers, education officers and education programme managers from government and non government development sectors under different inclusive education projects Total: 2511 participants, Male participants: 1550, Female participants: 961.

CDD also addressed basic needs of ensuring quality education supports for approximately 40,000 (forty thousand) children/youth and adults with disability in government and PNGOs education system.

CDD provided expertise supports of developing teachers and education officers training curriculum/manuals led by DPE along with others development agencies together.

CDD has been established low vision resource centres for ensuring active meaningful inclusion in existing education process. Continuously providing clinical assessment need based optical/non optical aids to the learners.

To ensure meaningful engagement in education by learners with visual impairment CDD has been established Braille press where producing Braille books. For mathematical intervention CDD also producing arithmetic board which is very costs effective and reachable by all.

To up hold the optimum capacity by the learners with visual impairment CDD provided accessible laptop computer including required screen reader software among approximately 150 higher secondary and higher education level students.

Towards strengthening special and integrated education system run by the department of social services including private sectors CDD provided capacity development supports to the teachers. Provided Braille and math training manuals join collaboration with development partners and DSS together.

CDD has been initiated clinical hearing assessment and provides need based hearing aids including maintenance and counselling training to the users/parents. Also promote and developed Bangla sign language in consultation and collaboration with concern expertise persons from hearing impaired community including different government and non government expertise organizations which enhanced inter personal communication in between peoples with hearing impairment and without hearing impairment community.

According to strong policy advocacy and influences by CDD along with other hearing impairment focused development organizations now the Bangladesh government has been included in electronic media broadcasting during broadcasting news. Also declared 7 February as national Bangla sign language awareness day in Bangladesh.

CDD organized policy advocacy dialogues and series of national level workshops with education policy makers and involved quality monitoring process of different CDD projects towards changing negative attitudes and promoting inclusive education for learners with disabilities mainstreaming education system.

Outcomes

In regards to attitudes towards disability and inclusion in Bangladesh, there is a sense that things are moving forwards positively in a number of areas including: a movement from charity and medical models of disability to a more social model; and a gradual change from teacher centered to learner centered pedagogical approaches in schools and classrooms. Most of CDD PNGOs are now considering and addressing inclusion process of the learners with disability in existing education programmes including number of other development organizations in Bangladesh through influencing and providing need based technical supports by CDD.

Now a day's lot of positive changes can be seen to ensure education for learners with disabilities in all stages throughout the country. These can be pictured as below:

- a) Learner-centred teaching is well established in teacher training and management
- b) Schools and teachers are linked to resources and expertise on disability and special educational needs.
- c) There is a clear accountability framework for ensuring access to inclusive education.
- d) The assessment system promotes flexible assessment and testing.

But still there are many gaps and challenges can be found:

- a) Inclusive education is not practiced everywhere in Bangladesh;
- b) All types and level Children, youth and adults with disability are not enrolled in mainstream education;
- c) Comprehensive Accessible educational environment is not ensured;
- d) Education pedagogy is not fully disability friendly;
- e) Capacity on disability & inclusive education is not developed adequately among teachers, trainers and other concerned authorities;
- f) Coordination among different educational departments and stakeholders are not effective;
- g) Education materials for teachers and learners with disability are not supported adequately etc.

Recommendations to resolve barriers

There has been on a limited scale and confined to minor disability. As a result there is a lack of understanding of appropriateness of teaching and learning materials for students with

disabilities and teachers have felt insufficiently prepared to deal with such a diversity of needs within their classrooms.

So, negative attitudes towards people with disabilities are still persistent across the education hierarchy in Bangladesh as well as in local communities and there is a need for more advocacy work to challenge negative perceptions of disability, promote positive attitudes towards disability and inclusion and reinforce the right of all children to education.

- Teacher training
- Education officers and policy makers training,
- SMC members training,
- Parents/care givers training,
- Curriculum modification considering inclusive teaching/learning strategies
- Parental motivation and counselling
- Provision of involving print and electronic medias to raising awareness
- Community involvement including DPOs/BPOs to mitigate demands of alternative communication supports, sign language skills supports and BRAILLE system skills supports
- Resource mobilization from particularly disability professionals
- Strengthening coordination and cooperation among the concern education support providing government bodies.
- Strengthening GO/NGOs Inter-sectorial cooperation
- Changing the peers, parents of other learners without disability, education authority, teachers' and community's attitude through policy advocacy and campaign
- Removing the barriers of education through physical, social and psychological means
- Provision of proper assessment of the individual needs and develop mitigation strategies
- Provision of personal skills building through social and mobility/DLS training
- Provision of need based assistive devices and education materials
- Provision of need based therapeutic intervention plan from early childhood for the learners with neurological disability,
- Provision of education stipend for all learners with disability to minimizing additional costing due to impairment
- Provision of needs based optical/non optical devices for learners with low vision as per confirmation of screening /functional assessment of impaired vision in the schools

- Provision of including disability issues and their adapted teaching/learning strategies in the teachers development course curriculum as compulsory subjects
- Provision of micro teaching with different types of learners with disability during pre services or in services teachers training
- Provision of using special/integrated schools as practice/micro teaching centres
- Provision of introducing Braille and sign language as compulsory subject in the Teacher's development training curriculum
- Provision of including disability orientation and their potentialities in the regular compulsory text books considering psycho social factors from pre primary class up to the next classes under social science subject.

Teachers Role in an Inclusive Class

Teachers are the most important part of any educational system. They have been “variously referred to as an artist and an architect; a scientist and a psychologist; a manager and a mentor; a controller and a counselor; a sage on the stage; a guide on the side; and more” (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, P.7). In an inclusive society the “Teachers today are charged with providing effective instruction to a diverse population of learners who bring to the classroom a wide variety of cultures, languages, learning styles, and abilities as well as disabilities”(Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2012, p.2).

Inclusive Education does not focus on learners perceived deficits rather it focuses on the individual strengths of the learners. It also tries to help the learners with disabilities to blend with the normal life of the school and the community. (World Bank, 2003) So the teachers of an inclusive school have to take the responsibility of both learners without disability and their differences along with the learners with disabilities and their differences. To accomplish success in this endeavor “necessary accommodations have to be made in the curriculum, as well as in the teaching strategies: (Kibria, 2005, p.44).

Conclusion

For encouraging inclusive and special education the Government of Bangladesh has introduced stipend for the student with disabilities by the MoSW. Government has

signed and ratified UN Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities. The Government has also ratified Optional Protocol. The Government has appointed 46 focal point of different Ministries and Departments to over see the rights of the persons with disability including education. As a result Government has promised bound to create educational facilities for the student with disabilities. Both forms of special and inclusive education could be the excellent solution of education for all including student with disabilities.