Inclusive Education Practices in Australia (Victoria) and Pakistan: Readiness of School Education System, Teachers' Training, Pedagogy, Curriculum and Assessment

Fauzia Khurshid[1]
Muhammad Shahid Farooq[2]

Abstract

This research compared inclusive teaching practices in Pakistan and Australia, focusing on early interventions, pre- and in-service teacher training, inclusive curriculum and pedagogy, assistive device provision and assessment methods for learners with disabilities and special needs. A qualitative analysis, using structured interviews, explored the current state of inclusive education practices in both countries. In Australia, education is primarily a government responsibility and inclusion are systematically integrated into all school systems. This is supported by policies, legislation and guiding documents. While separate schools exist for children with specific learning needs and disabilities, the overall approach is to welcome and support all learners, without discrimination, in mainstream schools, enabling them to reach their full potential. In Pakistan, inclusive education practices are currently hindered by several barriers. These include a lack of support and vision for understanding the importance of inclusion, insufficient resources for training teachers and allied staff and a general lack of preparedness among mainstream teachers for pedagogy and assessment in the mainstream setting. The research highlights the urgent need to transform the existing mainstream school system by allocating adequate financial and physical resources so a workable model could be developed to promote inclusive practices in the mainstream schools. Findings will create a foundation for inclusion, allowing schools to effectively welcome and support children with special needs and disabilities on the analogy of Australia.

Keywords: *Inclusive education practices, readiness school*

1.   Director Monitoring, Directorate General of Special Education, Punjab, dr_f_khurshid@yahoo.com
2.   Chairman Department of Advanced Studies in Education University of the Punjab, Lahore, shahid.ier@pu.edu.pk

Introduction

Inclusive education is a process of the elimination of barriers of participation and providing facilitations to all students, so they could access of learning in the mainstream classes. Inclusive education means, "To do something for the assurance that all learners despite their differences obtain the chance of being part of the same classroom as other learners of their age and they get opportunity of being exposed to the curriculum, suits best possible to their potentials".

Every special learner is unique and requires love and acceptance due to their special need from their associates. because most of them born with some sort of confinement, with proper planning and preparation of inclusion they may be able to vigorously take part as equal citizen in all aspects of society and community life. Learners with special needs refer to all those who have need of adjustment to the normal process of education due to problems of hearing, visionary, physical, learning and intellect. In other words, these learners have some kind of impairment for which generally term disability is commonly used. Disability refers to any limitations experienced by the disabled in comparisons of able persons of similar age group. A disability is inability to do something, a diminished capacity to perform in a specific way (Brackenreed, 2008).

Since inclusive education is three decades old concept, after Salamanca conference this concept was popularized across the World. UNESCO's mission on inclusive education stated that "Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions" (Article 3, Salamanca Framework for Action). "Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building and inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system" (Article 2, Salamanca Statement).

Australian Bureau of Statistics revealed that in 2019, 65 % of Australian students were enrolled in public sector, 20 % enrolled in Catholic and the only 15 % enrolled in the schools established in under independent sector (ABS 2020). All types of schools are bound to run national policy & legislation and can cultivate their own strategy, finance and transformation endorsed across relevant schools. Graham, in research arrived to the agreement that what inclusive education should be in appearance. According to him defending this argument is not as easy because this is controversial and impassioned in nature. Several

researchers try to define inclusive education and believe that this paradigm extensively accepted definitions which were offered in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2016. But for many these definitions are still vague and uncluttered for understanding (Graham, 2020).

A meta-analysis was performed in the context Australian special education research conducted from 2005 to 2015 and literature reviewed to identify trends, topics and issues during that period. Content analysis was performed, and result revealed a robust focus on inclusive teaching practice, behavioural and emotional disabilities management and imparting social skills in the mainstream classrooms. It seems that research conducted during that time followed, rather than led changes in education policy. If research has tendency to influence policy and conversant about contemporary practices it will be required to accomplish inclusion and equity for all learners in more appropriate way (Forlin, 2015).

Boyle & Anderson (2002) conducted a qualitative review and discuss the justification for inclusive education in Australia context of broader international setting. It was pointed out that a detached instructive facility is growing in many countries across globe, including Australia. Inclusive education demand has been growing for non-inclusive context. They explored three main justifications against and for inclusive education: educational, social and the economic. Evidence existed that inclusive education is justified in Australia across these areas. There is a scarcity of research which could pointed out that inclusive education is not constructive for all learners of mainstream schools. In contrast, research portrayed that inclusive education carries an economic benefit to being fully inclusive, but it may not be comprehended as a prospect for cost saving in the education sector but rather as proper deployment of resources to ensure effective education for all students no matter what their background. The confirmation for educational and social benefits proven massive from students and parents reporting. Process of the implementation of inclusive education can be oppressed with difficulties if there is lack of acceptance of inclusive education.

Rationale

No doubt, inclusive education is a challenged concept, with the essential practices and connotations wavering county to county. To determine about inclusive education, it is important to ponder indigenous concepts about rights of the children, school structure, social norms and

other local situations. This is fact in some country's inclusion is limited to the extent of language and in actual altering slight to uphold the inclusive practice. According to Slee 2013and Smith 2015 "around the world the educational jurisdictions embraced terminology of inclusive education and financed substantial funds for creating schools more inclusive exclusion rests a real and existing threat." In the context of Pakistan, purist of inclusive education is still a challenge for school education system, despite of education policy of 2017 and empowerment of person with disabilities act of 2022. Schools working under schools' education department and literacy and non-formal education principally do not admit children with disabilities, instead of giving admission they are creating obstacles due to erroneous assumptions about the special children' physical, social, communicative, intellectual and literacy skills. Today, developed countries of the world are far ahead from developing countries in establishing inclusive education system, some of them almost shelved the 'special school' system, therefore, present study planed so could learn from the experiences of Australian education system for smooth progression of inclusive education in Pakistani mainstream schools.

Problem Preview

Obviously enough countries differ in term of their economic conditions, condition of inclusive education is far better in developed countries due to need fulfillment of desired uplifting in the prevailing system of education whereas, picture of inclusive education is relatively changed in developing countries. In developing countries like Pakistan, implementation of inclusive education is at a theoretical level, stakeholders are cognizant of the plus points of inclusion but unable to fulfill desired needs associated with this system due to lack of focus.

Education is a way through which fundamental changes can be induced in the society, in this scenario focus on various interrelated dimensions can bring desired uplifting for the implementation of inclusive education in accordance with education policy of 2017. On the basis of literature available in this filed, it is reflected that transformation is required in the existing education system for implementation of inclusive education along with this some modifications are also required in the scheme of studies of teacher's education program because in this way skill teachers can be prepared who must be wiliness of teaching in inclusive setting. Teachers attitude towards inclusive education desired modification because at present vast majority of school education teachers

having negative attitude towards inclusion, awareness is required to modify attitude of teachers towards inclusive education because most of the schoolteachers are neither trained nor desired to get training of inclusive education due to unknown reasons.

In addition to teachers training several other factors are also playing significant role in the successful implementation of inclusive education, like desired alteration in the physical infrastructure of schools, provision of assistive devices, incentive for children with special needs and disabilities on equitable basis in mainstream settings.

In advanced countries like Australia, inclusion is prevailing through education system by implementation of inclusive education policy at practical level, but in Pakistan inclusive education is still at theoretical level because stakeholders do not have spare time to ponder on it. Practicing side is still waiting in the context of public sector schools. Some private sector schools are offering inclusive education, but they are charging high payments. Generally, children with special needs and disabilities are belonging to poor segment of the society who cannot afford to pay heavy dues to the private sector. Consequently, such children (those who do not have access to public sector special schools) are excluded from the system of education.

Interestingly, inclusive education practices are not too technical which mainstream teachers could not grasp, many solutions are inside the mainstream classroom like, applications of access, innovative pedagogy, provision of resources. By improving above said resources, inclusive education could be implemented on equitable basis in the mainstream settings.

To the implementation of inclusive education, inclusive education policy ought to be developed through foresting the teachers' knowledge, skill and attitude. Through effective teacher education, teachers can be trained well bestow to perform well with higher self-efficacy, understanding and expertise to handle the challenges of inclusive education in real classroom settings. For the acquisition above changes Pakistani is standing still in half the way when compared with developed nations. Time comes to device a clear-cut strategy so no one can excuse himself or herself in implementing and enacting of inclusive practices in mainstream education.

Henceforth, there is a need to learn best practices from the experiences of the developed country so, conscious efforts can be initiated for the implementation of inclusive education in developing country like Pakistan. Keeping in view the successful implementation of inclusive education in Australian context, it is imperative to study and examine the inclusive teaching practices in Australian context with reference to

inclusive teacher training (pre and in-service), inclusive curriculum, inclusive pedagogy, provision of assistive devices and method of assessment being used for learners with disabilities and special needs.

Objectives

1. To make an analysis of inclusive teaching practices and education in Australian context with reference to practical aspects of early interventions, acceptance of inclusive education, teacher training pre and in-service, inclusive curriculum, inclusive pedagogy, availability of assistive devices and assessment for diverse learners.
2. To make an analysis of inclusive teaching practices in Pakistani context with reference to early interventions, inclusive teacher training (pre and in-service), inclusive curriculum, inclusive pedagogy, provision of assistive devices and method of assessment being used for learners with disabilities and special needs.
3. To make comparative analysis of inclusive teaching practices in Pakistani and Australian context with reference to early interventions, inclusive teacher training (pre and in-service), inclusive curriculum, inclusive pedagogy, provision of assistive devices and method of assessment being used for learners with disabilities and special needs.

Methodology

This qualitative research employed a comparative approach to explore the phenomenon under investigation. To achieve objective 1, the Victorian Department of Education was contacted to obtain approval for site visits to public primary and secondary schools. Following ethical approval and informed consent from participants, data were collected through interviews and open-ended questionnaires. The study included government and private secondary schools, as well as kindergartens**.**

To achieve objective 2, data were collected from schools working under the Federal Directorate of Education and Provincial school education Departments. Following approval from the respective Directorate Generals, Public sector schools were visited to explore the phenomenon under investigation. After obtaining informed consent from participating school heads contacted.

Population & Sample

Australia: (Victoria) Purpose sample of six heads of the institutions, 3 from the secondary schools and three from the kindergartens, they were

interviewed through structured questions regarding inclusive teaching practices in their institutions.

Pakistan: for data collection six public sector schools from ICT and provincial headquarters were selected (ICT 2 schools, 1, school from each province of Pakistan). For data collection head of the institutions were interviewed regarding inclusive teaching practices in their institutions.

To make an analysis of inclusive teaching practices and education in Australian and Pakistani context with reference to practical aspects of early interventions, acceptance of inclusive education, teacher training pre and in-service, inclusive curriculum, inclusive pedagogy, availability of assistive devices and assessment for diverse learners. Data were collected through qualitative interview method through open ended questions, collected data were synthesized and analyzed to see a broad picture of inclusive practices in both countries.

Content Analysis of Public Sector Secondary Schools of Australia

In the context of Australia, a purposive sample of six heads of the institutions, 3 from the secondary schools and three from the kindergartens were collected from Victoria, they were interviewed through structured questions regarding inclusive teaching practices in their institutions.

In Australia, most of the heads possessed master's degrees with BS in teacher training program. All teachers working in these schools are well equipped with concept of inclusive education and provides through which these intuitions running fully cognised the needs of inclusion.   As far as the dues are concerned same, procedure is for every child, no hidden charging is taking from the families of children with special needs and disabilities in the name of providing extra care. System is there through which education and special needs are covered by government.

1. Institutional Values and Policies:

i. **Theme: Commitment to Inclusivity:** Heads of the schools emphasizes providing the best educational opportunities for all students, regardless of background or learning needs, based on a cultural ethos. Policies focus on fostering a sense of belonging for all students.

ii. **Theme: Legal and Ethical Frameworks:** Heads of the schools 'approach was grounded in Australian disability legislation and Islamic principles that prioritize supporting vulnerable individuals.

2. Implementing Inclusive Education:

i. **Theme: Support for Diverse Learners:** Heads of the schools provide integration aides, speech therapists and access to external allied health professionals. Visiting teachers also available for this purpose.
ii. **Theme: Addressing Challenges:** Heads of the schools acknowledge challenges related to teacher understanding, adequate modifications and parent acceptance and support.
iii. **Theme: Collaborative Approach:** Heads of the schools works with teachers, parents and students to develop strategies, monitor progress and provide support. IEPs are developed and NDIS funding being utilized.
iv. **Theme: Promoting Inclusion:** Heads of the schools actively promote inclusion through information sharing, participation in programs like "Focus on Ability," and celebrating diverse cultural events. Inclusive language and values are emphasized.
v. **Theme: Accessibility and Modifications:** Heads of the schools focus on catering to student needs through IEPs, NDIS funding and adjustments to content, environment, presentation and assessment.
vi. **Theme: Open Communication and Community Engagement:** Heads of the schools holds open days, cultural celebrations and information nights to connect with the community and parents.

3. Education for Children with Special Needs:

i. **Theme: Value and Importance:** Heads of the schools emphasize the equal value of education for all children, including those with special needs.
ii. **Theme: Differentiated Approach:** Heads of the schools recognized that education for children with special needs often requires modifications, adjustments and sometimes curriculum modifications, compared to the standardized Victorian curriculum followed by mainstream students.

4. Addressing Exclusion and Prejudice:

i. **Theme: Education and Awareness:** Heads of the schools believes that knowledge is key to combating exclusion. They share information about disabilities with staff and the community.
ii. **Theme: Promoting Acceptance:** Heads of the schools foster acceptance of student diversity, especially given its diverse student population. Exposure to different cultures is seen as a strength.

iii. **Theme: Accountability and Reporting:** Heads of the schools have policies and procedures in place to address exclusion and prejudice and takes these matters seriously.

5. Community and External Relationships:

i. **Theme: Collaboration with Other Schools:** Heads of the schools participate in local sports days with other schools.
ii. **Theme: International Connections:** Heads of the schools have a sister campus in Indonesia.
iii. **Theme: Community Involvement:** Heads of the schools encourage parents' involvement through open days and events.

6. Teacher and Staff Development:

i. **Theme: Professional Development:** Teachers are encouraged to participate in professional development activities.
ii. **Theme: Training and Support:** Heads of the schools provide training and support for teachers on inclusive practices.

7. Continuous Improvement:

i. **Theme: Policies and Practices:** Heads of the schools have policies in place, including child safety standards, to guide its work.
ii. **Theme: Ongoing Evaluation:** Heads of the schools continuously seeks ways to improve its inclusive practices.

8. Areas for Potential Growth:

i. **Theme: Community Relations with Special Needs Focus:** While Heads of the schools engage with the broader community, there seems to be limited specific outreach to integrate children with special needs into the wider community.
ii. **Theme: Sharing Best Practices:** While Heads of the schools have a sister campus, the interview suggests limited sharing of inclusive education best practices with neighboring schools. Heads of the school's view this as the department's responsibility.
iii. **Theme: Formalized Guidelines for Diversity:** While policies exist, the interview hints at a need for more formalized, documented guidelines for handling student diversity in the classroom.
iv. **Theme: Parent Receptiveness:** Heads of the school's mention parent receptiveness as a challenge, suggesting a potential need for more parent education and support programs.

This thematic analysis provides a structured overview of the interview responses. It highlights Heads of the schools ' strengths in its commitment to inclusion and the supports it provides, while also identifying areas where further development might be beneficial.

Qualitative interview structured questionaries Responses of Kindergartens

1. Core Values and Philosophy:

i. **Theme: Inclusion as a Fundamental Right:** The heads of kindergartens emphasized that every child has the right to be included, and that environments and teaching strategies must be adapted to ensure participation. "Inclusion is rule not choice" highlights this core belief.

2. Implementing Inclusive Practices:

i. **Theme: Accessing Support and Resources:** The heads of kindergarten actively seeks funding (ISS), participates in training and partners with local allied health professionals and agencies to support children and educator development.
ii. **Theme: Collaboration and Partnerships:** Working with allied agencies, specialists and families is crucial for implementing strategies for special learners.
iii. **Theme: Accessible Environment and Resources:** The heads of kindergarten provides accessible environments (flat surfaces, lifts and large spaces), a variety of materials and works with families to provide adaptive equipment.
iv. **Theme: Individualized Planning:** Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) are developed for children with special needs.
v. **Theme: Inclusive Curriculum and Practices:** The heads of kindergarten focuses on creating inclusive curriculums and engaging in "teachable moments" to foster inclusion.

3. Significance of Education:

i. **Theme: Holistic Development:** Education is seen as vital for the holistic development of *all* children, impacting mental health, social interactions and preparation for school. Early intervention is emphasized for children with special needs.
ii. **Theme: Learning Life Skills:** Education provides opportunities for all children to learn essential life skills.

iii. **Addressing Challenges and Issues:**
iv. **Theme: Funding and Resources:** Securing adequate funding and resources is a recurring challenge in kindergartens.
v. **Theme: Parent Cooperation:** Parent cooperation and engagement are sometimes lacking towards the education of special child.
vi. **Theme: Educator Knowledge and Training:** Educator knowledge and training on inclusive practices are identified as areas for improvement.
vii. **Theme: Connecting with External Organizations:** Difficulties in connecting with allied health professionals and other organizations pose challenges.

5. Strategies for Inclusion:

i. **Theme: Building Educator Capacity:** The kindergarten invests in educator training, mentoring and professional development to improve their ability to implement inclusive practices.
ii. **Theme: Raising Awareness and Reducing Prejudice:** Creating awareness, talking to the community, demonstrating acceptance and using inclusive resources (like books) are key strategies.
iii. **Theme: Promoting Social Inclusion:** The heads of kindergarten works to build relationships with the community and local institutions, although this is described as "in progress."
iv. **Theme: Open Communication and Collaboration:** Open and honest conversations with children, families and educators are emphasized.

6. Specific Initiatives:

i. **Theme: Inclusive Support Subsidy (ISS):** The ISS is a significant resource for supporting inclusion.
ii. **Theme: Code of Ethics:** The kindergarten adheres to a code of ethics in implementing inclusive policies and procedures.
iii. **Theme: Celebrating Diversity:** Providing Halal and vegetarian meals demonstrates a commitment to catering to diverse needs.

7. Areas for Growth and Development:

i. **Theme: Formalizing Community Partnerships:** While efforts are being made, building strong, formalized partnerships with neighboring institutions and the wider community seems to be an ongoing process.
ii. **Theme: Connecting Local Inclusion to International Standards:** This is not currently a focus.

iii. **Theme: Consistent Knowledge and Training for Educators:** While training is provided, ensuring all educators have consistent and in-depth knowledge of inclusive practices is an area to focus on.

iv. **Theme: Measuring Impact:** The responses focus on *actions* taken, but there's less mention of how the *impact* of these actions is measured and evaluated to ensure continuous improvement.

This thematic analysis provides a structured overview of the kindergarten's approach to inclusive education. It highlights their commitment, the resources they utilize and the challenges they face. The "Areas for Growth and Development" section points to potential areas for future focus. In the context of Australia all states follow a well-developed policy for the provision inclusive practices. In addition to this in all states and territories a wide range of placement opportunities are available with structured approach to ascertain that needs of students with disability. For addressing the needs of children with disabilities needs based procedures design to determine the support level and decision making about schooling in the mainstream. For the support of children with disabilities special schools are also there and in mainstream setting for the special learners in-school support also available through multidisciplinary teams, supplementary staffing and special plans. At secondary level additional pathways are also offered which are diligently linked to transitions to post school options. In **Australia**, inclusion is rule not choice and mostly education is the duty of Government and inclusion scheduled throughout all school systems. Inclusion is supported by of policies, legislation and directorial documentation, although separated schools existed for various forms of children with special learning needs and disabilities. As Inclusive educational practices desired that all learners, without any discrimination are greeted and supported in mainstream schools to reach their complete potential. In line with Victorian inclusive education practices (Australian) there is a need to accept the right of each person and without any discrimination all children should be included in the mainstream education surroundings. Since policies of inclusive education were developed in 1980s and 1990s in Australia, Victorian public schools followed same and put more focus on implementation of inclusive education plans and practices.

In Victoria the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD, 2013a) is committed to deliver system of inclusive education which guarantees that all learners have equal access to a quality education which come across their varied needs. In addition to inclusion learners with special needs and disabilities have access to other placement in special schools. In Victoria there are more than 80 special schools, which are helping children having any king of disability,

including hearing impairment, autism, intellectual disabilities and behavioral or emotional complications.

In Victoria a program is running for children with disabilities, this is an additional funding program for schools, catering learners with moderate to severe disabilities. Eligibility is determined by an external assessment agency for at least 24 extra supports. For this a questionnaire used to the extent of educational support needed to specific learner. In addition to this a separate resource program there to help teachers in the preparation of proper programs named as "Abilities Based Learning and Educational Support" (ABLES) it helps them in the acquisition of assessment tools, teaching strategies and means which will enable them to plan effectually and teach according to the individual learning needs of each learner. Including this child with special needs and disabilities can get additional support of speech pathologists, psychologists, youth workers, social workers and visiting teachers. In order to ensure the access, support an early identification and intervention program is also running. At senior secondary level students having disabilities can access a several programs which concoct them for post-school experiences. This includes Vocational Education and Training in School, Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning and Special School Programs, (VETiS) and School Based Traineeships &Apprenticeships learning program.

In Victoria education emphases on two levels named as in-class support and whole-school practice. Practices include an In-class level presenting alternate curricula, formation of individual education plan through quality teaching to all learners. Good practices at whole-school level comprised of support structure, access to equitable learning opportunities, adjustments to cultures and school policies. Such good practices effect of the learning outcomes for learners with special needs and disabilities.

In the context of Victorian education context two viewpoints were reviewed, practices for inclusion at the school level and classroom level. It was brought to the notice that legislation of Australia and Disability Standards for Education, 2005 supportive to inclusive practices for the children with disabilities and special needs practiced by keeping in view the aspects of participation, collaboration, curriculum sustenance and students' wellbeing. Review of the disability standards made, and it revealed that education benefactors must take rational steps to design curriculum in a way that all students including students with disabilities able to take part in the educational experiences of assessment and certification requirements of the program on the similar root as a student without disabilities without undergoing discrimination. Heads are of the

view that substantiation of good practices relative for assisting teachers contains applicable endowment of services to sustenance inclusive practices. At classroom level for the worth teaching practices collaboration and support required school- wide. Here school heads and coordinators can play an important role in nurturing and supporting quality teaching.

On inclusive education policy also stated the procedures and responsibilities that ought to be followed by all staff including, teachers, principals, regional assistant directors and regional directors. The supports offered at each level disseminated and components of the support available to staff and students includes a broad range of services in the form of nursing services, assistive technology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech-language pathology for the children with special disabilities.

In inclusive settings adaptive curricula is a good practice to support learners' diversity. Discerning the curricula to cater the individualized learning needs of the children with special needs and disabilities has converted a key aspect of inclusion, which desired sizeable expertise, planning and training on the part of teachers. In the context of Victoria usage of three dimensions curriculum for learners with disability. For implementation directions are available to determine a starting point for students with disability and usage of three dimensions of the Australian Curriculum named as curriculum, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.

Individualized education planning plays important role for learners with disability and special need in general, in the context of Victorian school education it is like a foundation of the good practices for catering for the individualized needs of the learners. While developing IEP, main stakeholders including parents and learners taken on board. Individual education plans would enable learners to learn in effective way and can be used within a personalized environment of learning. For cater the learning needs of the special learners in Victoria there is a mechanism of funding for Schooling in Australia according to learners' need.

There is a need of adjusting the mainstream school setting in accordance with unique learning needs to the learners with special needs and disabilities. Teaching learning setting is conducive for inclusive education and teachers are well trained to cater the learning needs of students.

Content Analysis of Public Sector Secondary Schools of Pakistan

Since second objective of the study was to make an analysis of inclusive teaching practices in Pakistani context with reference to early

interventions, inclusive teacher training (pre and in-service), inclusive curriculum, inclusive pedagogy, provision of assistive devices and method of assessment being used for learners with disabilities and special needs. As type of research was exploratory; therefore, qualitative approach was applied, to attain the objectives of the research. For the attainment of this objective, structured interviews were conducted 6 heads of public sector schools, 2 from ICT 4, from each province. To dig out this phenomena interview method was applied heads were contacted at their workplace and interviewed about inclusive practices at their institutions.

i. **Awareness vs. Implementation:** Heads are generally aware of inclusive education but lack official directives for its implementation. Some students with mild physical and visual impairments are enrolled, but early interventions are lacking.

ii. **Teacher Training Gap:** Teachers have minimal knowledge of inclusive education due to its absence in teacher education programs. In-service training is limited and primarily theoretical.

iii. **Premature Discussion:** Discussions about inclusive curriculum, pedagogy and assistive devices are considered premature at this stage.

iv. **Barriers to Implementation:**
   1. **Lack of Direction:** No clear guidelines or orders from higher authorities.
   2. **Teacher Resistance:** Teachers are reportedly unwilling to take on the responsibility of inclusive education.
   3. **Untrained Teachers:** Lack of teacher training in inclusive practices.
   4. **Unprepared Physical Settings:** Schools lack the necessary physical adaptations.
   5. **Lack of Awareness:** General lack of awareness about inclusive education.
   6. **Teacher Education Gap:** Teacher education programs don't prepare teachers for inclusive classrooms.
   7. **Lack of a Workable Model:** No clear, practical model for implementing inclusive education.

i. **Overall Readiness:** Heads believe the mainstream education system is currently unprepared to accept children with special needs and disabilities. They express anxiety and concern about implementing inclusive education due to these significant barriers.

In the context of Pakistan execution of inclusive education is still hampering due to lack of preparation of school education department, at present mainstream education system is not ready to accept children comprising of special needs and disabilities. Heads were anxious and

oppressive for implementation of inclusive education due to certain barriers, such as no clear directions for the provision of inclusive education from higher authorities, teachers are not willing for this task, untrained teachers, unprepared physical settings. In addition to this lack of awareness of the concept of inclusive education also hampering access of special learners to mainstream settings. Heads were of the view that at present teacher education program is also silent to produce teachers for this task. In addition to heads of the institutions and teachers are not familiar to cater the needs of children with disabilities due to unavailability of a workable model for implementation of inclusive education.

The third objective of this study was to make comparative analysis of inclusive teaching practices in Pakistani and Australian context with reference to early interventions, inclusive teacher training (pre and in-service), inclusive curriculum, inclusive pedagogy, provision of assistive devices and method of assessment being used for learners with disabilities and special needs.

Content analysis comparing three key themes across the three perspectives:

1. Educator Training and Preparedness:

i. **Australian Schools:** Provides training and support, but acknowledges challenges related to teacher understanding. Professional development is encouraged, but there's a need for more formalized guidelines for handling student diversity.
ii. **Victorian Kindergartens:** Invests in educator training, mentoring and professional development. However, they also identify "educator knowledge and training" as an area for improvement, particularly the need for *consistent* and *in-depth* knowledge.
iii. **Pakistani School Heads:** Report a significant "teacher training gap." Teachers lack knowledge due to its absence in teacher education programs and in-service training is limited and theoretical. Teacher resistance is also mentioned, potentially linked to this lack of training.
iv. **Analysis:** All three perspectives identify educator training as crucial. The Australian schools and kindergarten are actively working on it, though both recognize the need for more consistent, in-depth training. The Pakistani schools' heads' perspective highlights a more systemic problems, with teacher education programs failing to address

inclusive practices. This suggests a need for changes at the teacher training level, not just within individual schools.

2. Resources and Support:

i.   **Australian Schools:** Provides integration aides, speech therapists and access to allied health professionals. They use IEPs and NDIS funding. Accessibility and modifications are emphasized. They acknowledge challenges related to parent acceptance and support.

ii. **Australian Kindergartens:** Actively seeks funding (ISS) and partners with allied health professionals. They provide accessible environments and a variety of materials. They also mention "funding and resources" as a recurring challenge.

iii. **Pakistani School Heads:** Mention "unprepared physical settings" as a major barrier. They also point to a lack of direction from higher authorities, which likely includes resource allocation.

iv. **Analysis:** All three perspectives recognize the importance of resources. The **Australian** schools and kindergartens are proactive in seeking and utilizing available resources, though both still face challenges. The Pakistani schools' heads' perspective underscores the lack of resources and support from higher authorities as a significant impediment. This suggests a need for increased funding and better resource distribution to support inclusive practices.

3. Collaboration and Partnerships:

i.   **Australian Schools Heads:** Works collaboratively with teachers, parents and students. They have open communication and community engagement initiatives. They also collaborate with other schools and have international connections.

ii. **Australian Kindergartens Heads:** Emphasizes working with allied agencies, specialists and families. They are building relationships with the community and local institutions.

iii. **Pakistani Schools Heads:** While not explicitly stated, the lack of a "workable model" suggests a need for better collaboration and partnerships. Teacher resistance also hints at potential breakdowns in collaboration within schools.

iv. **Analysis:** The **Australian** schools and kindergarten demonstrate a stronger focus on collaboration, particularly with external agencies and families. While Pakistani schools' heads don't directly address collaboration, its absence is implied in the challenges they face. All

three perspectives suggest that stronger partnerships between schools, families, external agencies and teacher training institutions are essential for successful inclusive education.

Overall Comparison

The analysis reveals that while all three perspectives (school, kindergarten and ICT school heads) identify similar key areas (educator training, resources and collaboration) as crucial for inclusive education, they differ in their experiences and approaches. The school and kindergarten are actively working within their contexts to address these challenges, while Pakistani schools' heads' perspective highlights systemic issues that need to be addressed at a higher level. The analysis also points to the importance of moving beyond awareness to action and the need for ongoing evaluation and improvement of inclusive practices.

Based on the results, it can be concluded that the implementation of inclusive education in Pakistan is hindered by several barriers. Therefore, it is necessary to eliminate these obstacles through awareness campaigns, fostering a shared vision among key stakeholders in the education system by highlighting the benefits of inclusion and emphasizing their inherent responsibilities.

Pakistan faces a clear deficit in capital, human resources and physical infrastructure, all of which are crucial for the success of any project. Effective inclusion requires appropriate resource allocation. Without adequate investment, positive outcomes cannot be expected. Therefore, deliberate efforts are needed to strengthen the school education system. This includes policy reform, providing physical resources, improving school accessibility (including entrances), creating inclusive classrooms equipped with the necessary facilities on an equitable basis, building accessible restrooms and developing safe playgrounds.

Teacher training is another critical component requiring focused attention. The teacher education program needs to be reviewed and modified, including adjustments to pre-service curricula, to produce skilled teachers with positive attitudes toward inclusion. Teacher training initiatives should address both in-service and prospective teachers. Furthermore, training is also required for support staff working in inclusive settings. To achieve these goals, collaborative planning among various stakeholders is essential to transform current

mainstream schools in accordance with international best practices, such as those used in Victoria.

Discussion

The main objective of the study was to make comparative analysis of inclusive teaching practices in Pakistani and Australian context with reference to early interventions, inclusive teacher training (pre and in-service), inclusive curriculum, inclusive pedagogy, provision of assistive devices and method of assessment being used for learners with disabilities and special needs. Findings revealed that in Australia inclusion is embedded in education system, every child has right to get quality education in their neighboring school. Medical and rehabilitative needs of the children with disabilities also fulfilled through education system. Teachers are trained and skillful having expertise in devising of individualized education plan for each child by ensuring the provision of assistive devices for children with special needs and disabilities.

In Pakistan at present in ICT and four provinces general school education system is not fully prepared for to implement inclusive education in mainstream schools due to number of reasons, schools are reluctant to accept such children because their teachers are not ready for this task, instead of granting admission they are creating obstacle due to erroneous assumption about special children' physical, social, communicative, intellectual and literacy skills.

This is indeed true that each child has a basic right to education, child given opening in mainstream education system so he/she could achieve and uphold a standard level of learning along with peer group, each child has exclusive individuality, interests, capacities and needs of learning therefore, system of education must be planned and put into practice keeping in view extensive diversity, unique learning needs and distinctiveness. There is a need of adjusting the mainstream school setting in accordance with unique learning needs to the learners with special needs and disabilities. Teaching learning setting is conducive for inclusive education and teachers are well trained to cater the learning needs of students.

Conclusions

In Victoria inclusive education implementation is embodied throughout education systems and supported by of clear policies. Although separate schools existed for various forms of children with special learning needs and disabilities. Such schools do assessment and build the capacity

of children for mainstreaming. Policies of inclusive education were developed in 1980s and 1990s in Australia, Victorian public schools followed same and put more focus on implementation of inclusive education plans and practices.

Here all learners not only greeted in mainstream schools to reach at their maximum potential but also supported by various non-Governmental organizations to fulfill needs health care and assistive devices.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis, here are recommendations to improve inclusive education practices, focusing on actionable steps:

1. Development of a robust national policy on inclusive education desired which may not just be a statement of intent, but a detailed framework with a clear definition of inclusive education within the Pakistani context, specifying which learners are included (disabilities, learning difficulties, marginalized groups, etc.). Specific goals & targets desire through setting measurable goals (e.g., percentage of students with disabilities in mainstream schools by a certain year) and timelines for achieving them. In addition to this funding mechanism ought to outline that how inclusive education will be funded, including budget allocations for resources, teacher training, and infrastructure. Establish mechanisms to monitor progress, evaluate effectiveness, and hold schools accountable for implementing inclusive practices also desired for strong footing of inclusive education.

2. For resource mobilization and allocation, it is important to address the resource gap through needs assessment, assessment of resource needs at the school level (infrastructure, assistive technology, learning materials, and specialized staff. in addition to this allocation of funds based on the needs assessment, ensuring equitable distribution of resources to schools also desired. Exploration of partnerships with private sector organizations and NGOs to supplement government funding for inclusive education initiatives also need of the time.

3. Overhauling of the teacher training programs also desired to make inclusive education a core component of both pre-service and in-service teacher training. Emphasize practical, hands-on training on adapting curriculum, differentiating instruction, using assistive technology, and managing inclusive classrooms also desired. Offer continuous professional development opportunities for teachers to update their skills and knowledge in inclusive practices.

4. Curriculum adaptation and development desired and Adoption of UDL principles in curriculum development to make learning

accessible to all students, regardless of their learning styles or abilities. For special learners' curriculum may be flexible enough to be adapted to meet the individualized needs. Availability of accessible learning materials (e.g., braille textbooks, large print materials, audiobooks also needed in mainstream education system.

5. Make school buildings and grounds accessible to students with disabilities (ramps, elevators, accessible restrooms, adapted playgrounds). Provide assistive technology and devices to students with disabilities to support their learning and participation.

6. Foster collaboration between education, health, social welfare, and other relevant ministries to provide comprehensive support to students with disabilities and their families. Actively engage parents in the education of their children with disabilities, providing them with information, support, and resources.

    Above recommendations can be helpful in providing a starting point for building a truly inclusive education system in Pakistani context.

Applied Significance

The findings of this research offer a comprehensive roadmap for the Pakistani education system to implement inclusive education in institutions under the school education department, literacy programs and private sector schools, drawing parallels with Australian inclusive education practices. These findings will sensitize stakeholders within the Pakistani education system, prompting them to develop a practical action plan for the timely and effective implementation of inclusive education nationwide. This will facilitate access for children with special needs to mainstream schools, which are generally available in most communities. Inclusive education is an undeniable reality and the future of mainstream education. The unnecessary delay in its implementation in Pakistan must end. This research identifies various gaps hindering the practice of inclusion within the mainstream education system, revealing stakeholder hesitancy to take action. The study indicates that the lack of training and a clear implementation mechanism are primary reasons for this inaction. These findings can be valuable for policymakers, the 2017 National Education Policy acknowledges the challenges facing inclusive education and sets a target of 50% participation for children with special needs and disabilities in mainstream institutions at all levels by 2025. The current state of implementation is far from this goal, demanding the attention of policymakers to strengthen the system through the allocation of necessary human and capital resources. While this undertaking is substantial, it is also essential and morally sound. It requires commitment from both

federal and provincial school education departments. Ultimately, these findings will enable the Pakistani education system to meet international commitments and fulfill Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The research provides a comprehensive way forward for implementing inclusive education across various educational sectors in Pakistan, informed by Australian best practices. It will motivate stakeholders to create actionable plans and open doors for special needs children to access mainstream education, readily available in their communities for children without disabilities.

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