

## **A Study on Barriers Faced by School Heads in the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Sindh, Pakistan**

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### Abstract

Several research studies have already been conducted since the inception of the Salamanca Declaration in 1994 till to this time. It has been found on the basis of available literature that implementation of inclusive education is still a challenge for different under-developed and developed countries of the world. Keeping this in view, it is essential to find out the barriers faced by the school heads in the implementation of inclusive education in Sindh, Pakistan. The current study aims to identify three types of barriers 1) policy-level barriers, 2) institution-level barriers and 3) community-level barriers. The population of the current study was 30 public primary-level schools in Karachi, Sindh from which 16 schools were randomly selected as the sample of study. A self-developed quantitative questionnaire consisting of 15 close-ended items was developed and distributed among the selected schools. The collected data were analyzed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The findings of the study revealed that there is no clear policy regarding the implementation of Inclusive Education in Sindh, Pakistan. The issues like untrained teaching staff and available facilities create problems for heads of ordinary primary level schools in order to implement inclusive education.

**Keywords:** barriers to inclusive education, school heads, implementation of inclusive education

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## **Introduction**

Inclusion is fastened to the fundamental right to education for all types of children with and without special needs. Article 24 of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), emphasized on the global shifting towards inclusion of differently abled children by improving education system and undertaking measures to fulfil the desired needs of differently abled persons (UN, 2006). The Government of Pakistan is an equal signatory of all universal education declarations including Education for All (EFA). Education for All is providing a guarantee of equal education opportunities to all types of children with and without special needs in the country. The population of Pakistan is about 208 million which is the sixth most population in the world (UNICEF, 2019). The country practiced significant transformation over the years which influenced its social, economic, and political development. After the approval of the 18th amendment in 2010, the powers of educational institutions were decentralized from the federal to the provincial level (UNICEF, 2017). The function of education institutions was connected to provincial governments (UNESCO, 2013-2017). After devolving of education institutions to the provinces various challenges were identified in the education system of the country. The challenges included the lack of expertise and capacity to implement programs and develop plans at the provincial level (Ibid). Moreover, vital steps were taken by the government of Pakistan towards the right to education for all children aged 5-16 years, the government seriously concentrated on reforming of curriculum, capacity building of teachers, and refining governance in the education sector (World Bank, 2019). These challenges directly or indirectly impact the inclusion of children, especially children with special needs, who face difficulties accessing ordinary schools, non-availability of good learning material, and trained staff. The key aim of this study was to know about the existing educational barriers faced by school heads for promoting inclusive education and principles of inclusion in general classroom settings. The key difficulties and challenges also remained the focus of this study.

## **Literature Review**

### **Innovations Of Pakistan Towards Inclusive Education in Pakistan**

- National Policy for Persons with Disability was adopted by the government of Pakistan in 2002.
- In 2005, Islamabad Declaration was signed by the Government of Pakistan with the consultation of provinces.
- In 2006, the accessibility of Persons with Disabilities was adopted in view of the Islamabad Declaration.
- In 2008, Convention was signed on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- In 2011, the convention was ratified on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- In 2013-2014, Laws were passed by Baluchistan, Punjab, and Sindh provinces in support of Inclusive Education.
- In 2017, National Education Policy was adopted, National Curriculum Framework was approved. Free Compulsory Primary and Secondary Education Act was adopted by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- In 2020, the Government of Pakistan passed the ICT Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act.

Moreover, Pakistan made efforts to the placement of legislative frameworks to achieve the outset goals of international conventions on the rights of differently abled children and inclusive education (UNICEF, 2021). Policy legislation and framework in Pakistan regarding Inclusive Education

The Constitution of Pakistan (1973) amended in 2012 delivers a strong framework for equal rights to education without any discrimination in education (Article 26). Article 25-A of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan bounds the sitting government to free and compulsory education for all types of children aged 5-16 years (The Constitution of Pakistan, 2012). Pakistan has made desirable efforts to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of every child to put in place a legislative framework for achieving the international convention goals. Moreover, the Government of Pakistan outlined a common framework for the inclusion of differently abled children in general education through policies at the national level.

1. In the light of the Biwako Framework, the Federal government approved the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities 2002, functionalized after the National Action Plan in 2006. The policy outline goals were to empower the persons with disabilities by providing facilities to them in society for their full integration, to ensure their participation in the programs and planning related to them, to make sure the safety and security of their rights like other citizens, and provide equal rights in the field of education, medical psychological, social, vocational training, rehabilitation, and employment without, any discrimination. However, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights states that until 2015, the set-out long-term strategies of the action plan had not been implemented yet.
2. In 2005, a declaration was signed by the federal government and provincial government heads with the title of Islamabad Declaration on Inclusive Education. The declaration ensures that “all children regardless of gender, abilities, disabilities, and socio-economic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds are treated with dignity and respect; have equal access to education, health services, work and all other aspects of life; are enabled to develop their full academic, physical, emotional and social potential; have access to learning material through appropriate media and technical devices; and develop confidence in their abilities, skills and prospects” (Ministry of Social Welfare, 2005).
3. While the National Education Policy (2009) titled differently abled children as handicapped children. The utilized term is against and problematic for inclusive education terminology. The key aim of the policy was to “equalize access to education through the provision of special facilities for girls and boys alike, underprivileged/marginalized groups, and handicapped children and adults” (NEP, 2009). Hence, the National Education Policy (2009) did not provide clear strategies to this end. In 2017, a new National Education Policy was approved, the focus of that was particularly on inclusive and special education. The policy aimed to expand the access of differently abled children in the education system and bring 50% of all differently abled children into the existing general education institutions at all levels (NEP, 2017).
4. The Government of Sindh passed The Sindh Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2013) which rebounds the goals of education for all children aged 5-16 years (The Rights of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2013) but the

Act did refer to inclusion or inclusive education or special attention towards from segregation of differently abled children and their transition to inclusive education.

The frameworks apply for intervention in the education system while policies emphasize, particularly the disadvantaged group, including differently abled children.

The above literature highlighted that there is still a need for a clear policy and legislation for the implementation of inclusive education in Sindh, Pakistan for the successful inclusion of differently abled children in the formal education system.

### **School-level barriers to the implementation of Inclusive Education**

The heads of general schools are facing lots of barriers in starting of inclusive education process some of them are given below:

#### **Curriculum Transmission Barriers**

The delivery of curriculum and teaching methods depend on the teachers or educators and it plays a pivotal role in an inclusive classroom. While implementation of a rigid and inflexible curriculum that does not allow and meet the learning needs of individuals can lead to learning collapse (Motitswe, 2012).

The irrelevant subject content, inappropriate learning materials, inadequate teaching methods, and resources, improper classroom management, and inadequate assessment methods can negatively affect on the education of children with and without special needs. Motitswe (2012) stated that one of the most important barriers to learning for differently abled children found the curriculum of general schools itself and the inflexible nature of the curriculum as well. Hence, the curriculum should be modified as per the needs of different learners especially children with needs and the curriculum should be learner-centered.

Zimba (2011) discovered that the existing curriculum was not modified as per the learning needs of differently abled children and to accommodate learners with a wide range of educational needs. The teaching of differently-abled students and the use of mainstream teaching

methods in an inclusive class create problems and challenges for learners and teachers as well.

### **Inadequate Assessment Process**

The term assessment is used to check the performance of students in a specific subject, area, or field. Assessment is providing required information regarding learners and their progress and it also strengthens the teaching and learning process (Muller, 2004).

Hence, assessment methods should also be considered as per the needs of differently-abled children.

### **Untrained And Teachers' Training Barriers**

The role of teachers is very important in quality education and it cannot be improved without quality training. Hull (2005) echoes that training provides continued assistance with various instructions and modified and adapted curricula to meet the needs of children with special needs. The continued absence of teacher training leads to ambiguity, low self-worth, insecurity, and a lack of modern technology-based practices in the class (Muller, 2004). This may develop hindrances toward inclusive education and enabling mechanisms.

The above literature suggests that the role of trained teachers is mandatory in the field of inclusive education because it needs particular attention to different teaching methods.

### **Inadequate Teaching and Learning Material**

Le Fanu (2005) stated that teachers should have information of knowledge about the different forms of disabilities that occur among children. The common differences include gender disparity, ethnic and cultural, linguistic diversity, academic and cognitive differences, social disparity, and sensory (retrieved from Research <http://www.ajod.org> ).

Most of these differences are interrelated with each other and also implanted in different contexts. For example, without consideration of traditional beliefs, the understanding problems faced by girls' students is very difficult. Mukhopadhyay et al., (2013) observed that a school offering inclusive education with a long history of regular classes took to support and collaborate with special educators. They used ideal strategies for teaching in

an inclusive classroom such as large and bold fonts for visually disturbed students, peer tutoring for visually impaired students, and team teaching.

The culture of Pakistan is different from other countries, so the problems faced by children with special needs are different. Pakistan is trying to achieve a 100% enrollment rate in the country but still failed to do so because there is no inclusive education institution in the rural context of Sindh, province. Except, the education of differently abled children and fully ensuring of inclusive education in rural contexts of the country, especially in Sindh achieving a 100% enrollment rate is a dream for the Pakistani community.

### **Community Level Barriers**

The involvement of community members and parents of differently abled children is very essential for the implementation and decision-making of inclusive education in general schools. The involvement and interest of parents can be increased with motivation sessions, seminars, workshops, and offering the right of their participation in decision-making of schools. The community-level barriers simply are:

1. Lack of information about the education of differently abled children and inclusive education in the community.
2. The reluctance of parents of children with special needs to explore their disability and make early decisions for their education and rehabilitation.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The current study aimed to explore the barriers which create hurdles in the process of inclusive education in province of Sindh, Pakistan. The main focus of the study was on policy, school, and community level barriers.

### **Methodology**

A quantitative approach was used in the current study. The study was descriptive. A self-developed close ended questionnaire was administered among the 20 heads of public primary level schools in Karachi, Sindh to know their ideas related to barriers to inclusive education in general schools.

## Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

30 heads of public primary-level schools in Karachi city were population of current study from which 16 public primary level schools and their heads were randomly selected as sample of this study. Keeping in view the prefix or gender of schools, the researcher selected an equal number of schools from both (boys and girls) sides.

## Ethical Consideration

All ethics related to this study were highly considered by the researcher. Gender, race, ethnicity, age, and institution were excluded because these have no direct or indirect relevance to the study. Moreover, the collected data was only used for the research purpose and provided information regarding the topic kept confidential and secret.

## Data Collection

The data was collected with the help of close ended questionnaire which comprised of 15 items. The main researcher visited all selected schools himself and described the purpose of the study to the participants. Each item was briefly explored with participants. The collected data was only utilized for research. Enough time was provided to the participants on their demand as they can easily explore their views and opinions related to the study.

## Data Analysis

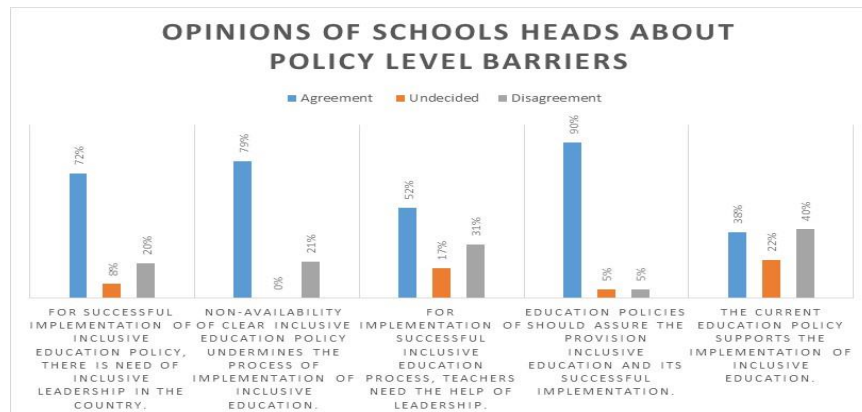


Figure :1 Graphs were used to analyses the collected data



The aforesaid graph shows that existing educational policy which is being implemented at public primary level schools does not support the successful implementation of inclusive education. The graph also illustrates that participants were in favor of a new and clear education policy for inclusive education.

Analysis: It is analyzed that government should design a new education policy with clear strategies for the successful implementation of inclusive education. If the government is sincere and tries to get 100% enrollment and meet the purposes of all national and international declaration then the implementation of inclusive education cannot put be aside.

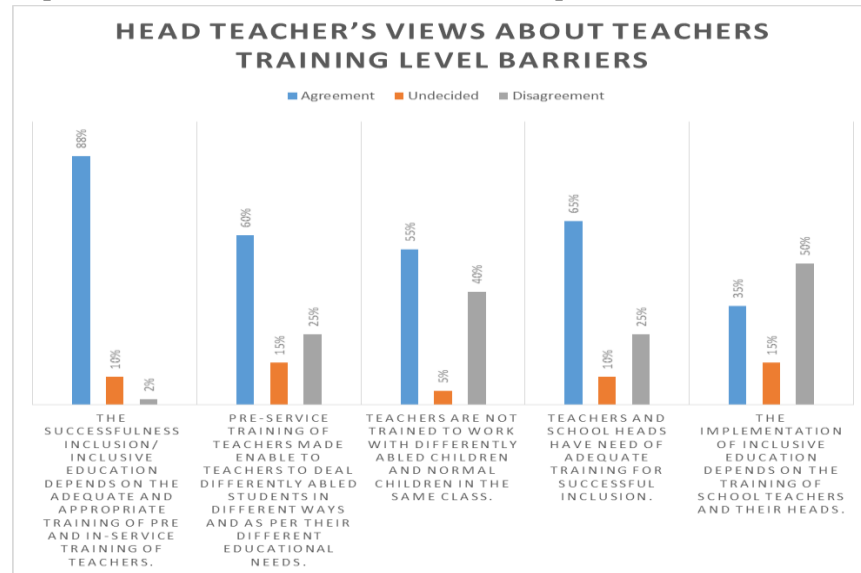


Figure 2: Head Teachers view about teachers training level barriers

The above graph shows that the successful implementation of inclusive education is depending on the competency of teachers, training of school heads and teachers and different teaching strategies of teachers.

Analysis: it has been found that proper implementation or process of inclusion is impossible without trained teachers and trained school heads. Moreover, the training of school heads and teachers is equally important for successful implementation.

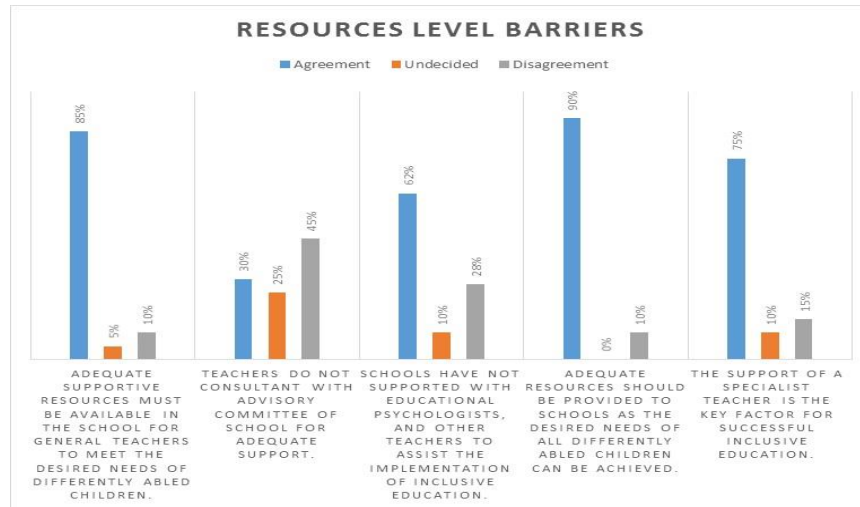


Figure 3: Resources Level Barriers

The above graph shows that the availability of adequate resources as per the needs of differently abled children is essential for the inclusion of normal and differently abled children in an ordinary classroom.

Analysis: It has been found that the availability of adequate resources, special education teachers, supported staff, and an advisory committee for consultation of teachers is very essential for the execution of the inclusive education process. Despite, basic facilities and resources the implementation of inclusive education is like dream.

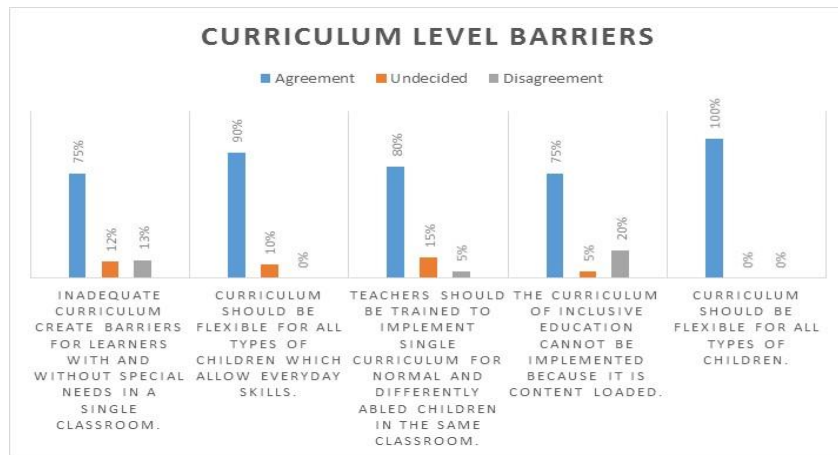


Figure 4: Curriculum Level Barriers

The aforementioned graph shows that the existing curriculum that is being implemented in primary level schools of Sindh is not flexible and inadequate for inclusive education. The existing curriculum needs modification as per the needs of differently abled students.

Analysis: As per views of respondents, implementation of an inclusive education curriculum is not an easy task. It is content-loaded for all types of children. It should be flexible for all children at the same level. Through the existing curriculum implementation of inclusive education is a little bit challenging.

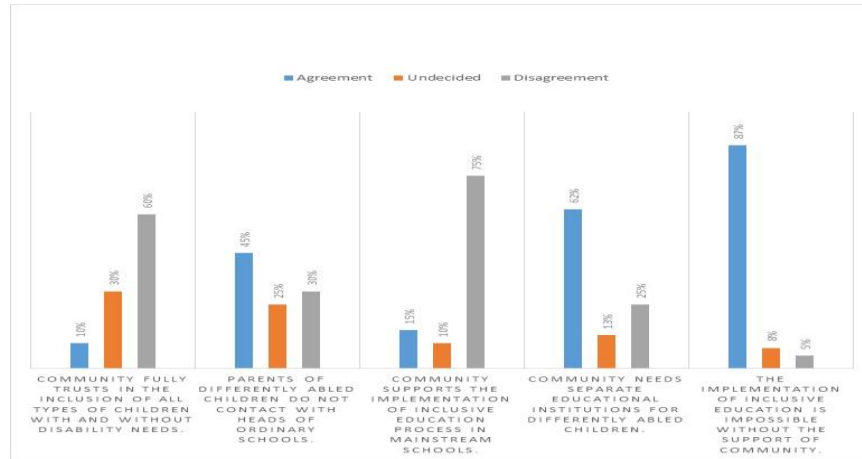


Figure 5: Community Level Barriers

The graph illustrates that the community has no trust in the inclusion of differently abled children with normal children. According to the responses of respondents parents of differently abled do not contact the heads of normal schools they believe in separate educational institutions as per the needs of their children. The respondents viewed that the successful process of inclusive education cannot be achieved without the support of the community or parents of differently abled children.

Analysis: It has been found that participation of parents of differently abled children and trust of the community is essential for the successfulness of inclusive education.

## **Findings**

1. It has been found that the existing curriculum was not flexible for all types of children with and without special needs in the same class in Sindh.
2. Teachers were not trained as per the needs of differently abled children and implementation of an inclusive education curriculum.
3. The policy did not support the implementation of inclusive education.
4. A separate educational policy along with clear strategies was required for the successful implementation of inclusive education in Sindh.
5. Flexible building, basic facilities such as ramps, wheelchairs, availability of washrooms, required teaching and learning material and curriculum were not provided to mainstream schools for differently abled children.
6. The community did not believe in the inclusion of normal and differently abled children in a single classroom.
7. Parents of differently abled children did not communicate with heads of ordinary schools for the education of their children.
8. Seminars, workshops, training programs, awareness drives, and other awareness acts were not arranged for parents of differently abled children and their parents.

## **Recommendations**

1. It is recommended that awareness about inclusion or inclusive education should be included in pre-service and in-service teacher training manuals.
2. A clear inclusive education policy should be developed for the successful implementation of inclusive education in Sindh.
3. Adequate teaching and learning materials should be provided to the school for the offering inclusive education.
4. The buildings including all basic facilities as per the needs of differently abled children should be upgraded.
5. Awareness programs should be arranged in schools for parents of differently abled children in Sindh.
6. The community should be invited and mobilized for the inclusion of differently abled children in ordinary schools.

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