Analysis of Current Learning Reality of Students with Physical Disabilities in Nepal

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Abstract

Purpose: The government of Nepal has been striving to provide equal rights, access and opportunities to the disabled students in education, health, and employment sector for a long time. However, such attempts have not been effective, sufficient, and suitable until the date. In this regard, the main purpose of this study was to analyze the current learning reality of students with physical disabilities especially in Nepalese context.

Method: The study was based on interpretative paradigm followed by qualitative research design. Both head-teachers and teachers (four head-teachers and eight teachers) were selected, as core respondents of the study from four schools (two integrated and two special schools) by using purposive sampling method. In-depth interview and document analysis were used as prominent tools for data collection, which was an open and exploratory in nature.

Results: The results of the study indicated that students with physical disabilities did not have proper access to curriculum, most of the students are taught in integrated school with normal students, and classroom instruction was not suitable and effective. In addition, lack of disabled friendly environment, negligence in diversity management, low use of assistive technology and lack of transition planning, which adversely affected physically disabled student’s learning achievement.

Conclusion: Therefore, this study offers proper policy provision to ensure the educational rights of the students with physical disabilities by solving these problems.

Key words: Physical disability, effective learning, transition planning, curriculum, diversity management

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I. Introduction

Disability is a multi-dimensional and composite construct and there is no universally accepted and smooth definition of disability. Definition of disability not only differs across countries but it may also fluctuate within a country from legal, political and social lens (Singal, 2009) and Nepal is no exception. Due to diverse understanding, it is very difficult to find reliable data about the prevalence of disability in Nepal.

Nepal does not have a long history in the field of special education. Many schools even in the field of general education were opened after the dawn of democracy in 1951. The education sector did not pay proper concentration towards disabled children and they were considered as a family burdens and a result of sin (CERID, 2004). Thus, the concept of providing education to the disabled person and making them able to survive independently in contemporary society was come into practice lately especially after several conferences organized by world community with combine attempts. CERID (2006) has also indicated that there is a shortage of qualified and trained teachers in various areas of disability. Due to these reasons, providing educational opportunity to the children with special needs and disabilities is a foremost challenges prevailing in education sector.

Nepal Government introduced the Special Education Program since 1964. However, systematic and planned effort of development and extension of special education was come into practice after National Education System Plan enforced in 1971 and then the Special Education Council was formed in 1973 as per the guidelines of the Plan (Nepal Law Commission, 2017).

The total population of Nepal is 26,494,504 and among them around 2 percent (513,321) of the total population of Nepal reported having some kinds of disability. Among them, 34.1 percent population is still illiterate (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012), and out of total primary school age children, 3.4 percent do not have access to primary education till the date (Ministry of Education, 2015) in one side. On the other, 12,853 (5.6%) teachers at basic level and 7,074 (12.2%) teachers at secondary level are still untrained (Ministry of Education, 2015). Similarly, the teacher-pupils ratio at basic as well as secondary level is 26:1 (Department of education, 2014). This data depicts that many school age children did not have the golden opportunity even in primary education. Beside this, there are 32 special and 22 integrated schools with 380 resource classes where 74,829 differently disabled children are enrolled (Inclusive Education Policy 2017). Thus, Nepal government has been investing large chunk of