



## REVIEW OF RESEARCH



### CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE MOVE TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:THE CASE OF SELECTED SCHOOLS OF HAWASSA TOWN; ETHIOPIA

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#### Abstract

This study was aimed at identifying challenges and opportunities to the move towards inclusive education. It also investigated the attitude of teachers towards people with disabilities. In addition, it assessed the existing opportunities that can enable to realize inclusive education. The study was conducted on a sample of 104 teachers, 6 principals, special needs education professional, and supervisors and 6 children with different disabilities from Nigiste furra, adare, tabor and ediget bandinet schools. The findings reveal that majority of teacher participants have positive attitude towards people with disabilities, however still considerable number of teachers have problems related to attitude towards people with disabilities. Isolation and discrimination by others, high costs of instructional materials for students with disabilities, unaware of the existing laws and conventions and poverty among parents of children with disabilities are socio-economic factors that were impairing the inclusion process. Moreover, the finding revealed that lack of instructional materials, existence of long and rough terrains to schools, limited monitoring and supervision, rigid nature of the curriculum and

inflexible teaching style, lack of commitment among teachers, presence of negative attitude and practices, incompatible curriculum to the students' ability, overload among teachers and inaccessible school environment remained leading school related factors. Furthermore, the finding disclosed that issues of identification of students with disabilities, knowledge of the existing types of disabilities and teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills of teaching children with disabilities are found to be unreliable and affecting the process of inclusion in schools. The finding also

revealed that, training on knowledge and skills for teachers, proper material provision, creating accessible school environment, curriculum modification and adaptation, maintaining cooperation among stakeholders and creating opportunities to generate income among parents of children with disabilities as measure that should be taken for successful inclusion. Finally the study identified Existence of policy on the area, higher institutions and NGOs, better short term



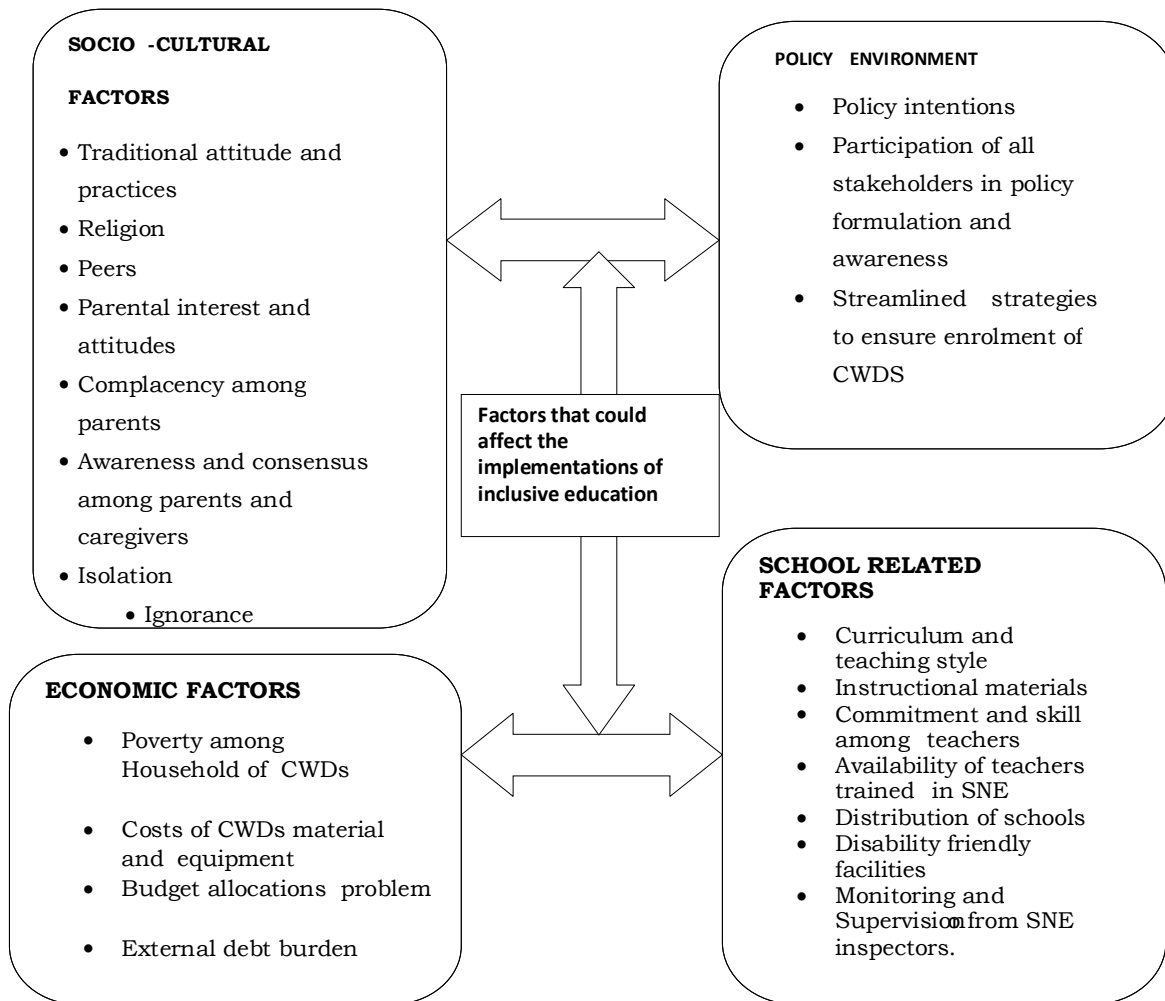
*training opportunities for teachers, progressively changing attitudes of teachers were found to be enabling situation for inclusion.*

**KEYWORDS:** Challenges, Opportunities, Inclusive Education

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In line with the millennium development goals and other documents, the ministry of education was designed special needs education strategy in 2006 and lasted to 1211 to make education accessible to children with special needs and marginalized groups. As stated in special needs/inclusive education strategy implementation guideline (MoE, 2012), the implementation of the strategy were some achievements like launching special needs education program, establishment of some resource centers, awareness raising program and data collection on students with disabilities. However, the strategy did not achieve its intended goals so that is paved a way for the introduction of another strategic plan. There are some options of modes of educational delivery for children with special needs. And among those the widely accepted one is inclusive education. That's why the ministry of education is developing different manuals and strategies to realize inclusive education in Ethiopian schools. Today inclusive education is a conceptual approach aimed at achieving quality education by accommodating all learners regardless of their physical, social or psychological differences (UNESCO, 1994). Inclusive education has many benefits for children with disabilities, marginalized children and for all learners. There is educational, social and economic justification for children with special needs to learn in regular class along with other children (MOE, 2012). Educationally it is the right for children with special needs to learn along with their age mate, socially it is a means of creating inclusive society and economically it costs less to establish and maintain schools that educate all children together than to set up a complex system of different types of schools specialized in different groups of children. However, the move towards inclusive education is not smooth. There are many factors that hinder the implementation of inclusive education in the country. According to Gezahagn and Yinebeb (2009), a limited understanding of the concept disability, negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities and a hardened resistance to change are the major barrier impeding inclusive education. In addition, Lewis (2009) stated that unclear Ethiopia's government vision towards inclusive education as another factor that hinders inclusive education implementation.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK



## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The ultimate purpose of this study is to explore challenge and opportunities of inclusive education in the selected schools and to implicate what shall be done to full realization of inclusive education. More specifically the study is conducted to meet the following specific objectives

1. To investigate the attitude of teachers towards people with disability
2. To point out major factors that are hindering the move towards inclusive education
3. To identify opportunities to move towards inclusive education
4. To propose suggestions thereby teacher educators and others can play great roles in realize inclusive education in Ethiopian.

## 3. METHODS

In this section, the research design, the samples and sampling procedure, the instruments, data collection procedures and techniques of data analysis are presented.

### Research design

For this study descriptive research design was followed to meet the intended objectives.

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### Participants of the study and sampling method

The data sources of this study were school supervisors, school principals, teachers and students with disability in the selected primary schools. Four schools were selected among 21 primary schools found in Hawassa town. From these schools, ample sizes of study participants were included for the study. The teachers that were included as study participants were from pre-primary, primary first cycle as well as primary second cycle. In addition, to make the study gender sensitive, proportional numbers of male and female teachers were considered from all the three levels. By using stratified random sampling technique among 196 (80 male and 116 female) teachers 104 (39 male and 65 female) were selected. To make the sample more representative proportional number of teachers were included from pre-primary, primary, 1<sup>st</sup> cycle and 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle levels.

On the other hand, purposive sampling method was employed to select participants for focus group discussion and interview. A total of six participants were participated in the focus group discussion. This group comprises principals, supervisors and professionals on the area. Similarly by using purposive sampling method a total of 6 students with different disabilities were interviewed on challenges and opportunities of the move towards inclusive education.

### Tools of Data Collection

The methods of data collection that were used for this study were questionnaire, focus group discussion and interview method.

### Methods of Data Analysis

To meet the first objective, investigate the attitude of teachers towards people with disability, descriptive statistics was computed. On the other hand, to point out major factors that are hindering the move towards inclusive education, the second objective, frequency distribution was computed with their respective percentage. Qualitative analysis was conducted to meet the third objective, identifying opportunities to move towards inclusive education. Indeed the response of focus group discussion and interview participants were presented in detail in terms of verbal expression. Finally, to deal with the fourth objective, suggestions measures that should be taken, both quantitative (frequency and percentage) and qualitative data analysis were done.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This part provides a summary of findings and interpretation of the results. The findings of the study are discussed based on the research questions.

### Teacher attitude towards people with disability

One of the factors that strongly influence the education of students with disability is attitude of teachers towards students with disability. To assess how much attitude affect the inclusion process attitude of teachers was measure and found out that teachers have marginally positive attitude towards people with disability. This means that on the attitude scale that the scores range from 0 to 120 the average score was 65.96 with standard deviation of 3.65. This indicates the attitude was marginally positive. Lewis (2009) and Soodak, Podell & Lehman, (1998) as cited in Woodcock (2013) consistently found that teachers had more positive attitudes towards students with social and physical disabilities. Similarly, Dagneu (2013) also reached at a conclusion that teachers have positive attitude towards people with disability and inclusion process of children with disability on his study conducted on teacher, CWDs, principals and peers on his study aimed at assessing Factors Affecting the Implementation of Inclusive Education. However, the mean 65.96 and the median score 66 from possible minimum score 0 tells us that there the attitude of teachers towards people with disability is not dependable. There are considerable numbers of teachers who have attitudinal problem towards people with disability. This is consistent with the finding from focus group discussion that almost all participants raise attitude as a major problem. Similarly, students

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participated in the interview described that all teacher do not accept them with love and compassion as non disabled students. MOE (2012) reached at exactly the same finding based on the assessment and stated that attitude as a main challenge that require a lot of efforts. In line with this, studies by Hoover et.,al. as cited in MASHIYA (2003) reported the existence of negative attitude of teachers towards people with disabilities.

### **Major Factors that are hindering the move towards inclusive education**

Obviously our move towards inclusive education is challenged by so many factors. In this study the factors were assessed by categorizing them in to three clusters: socioeconomic factors, school related factors and factors related to teachers competence in teaching children with disabilities.

#### **Socio- economic factors that hinder inclusive education**

In this study, isolation and discrimination by others, high costs of instructional materials for students with disabilities, unaware of the existing laws and conventions and poverty among parents of children with disabilities remained major factors that influence the process of inclusion. This was supported by teachers, principals, supervisors, Special needs education professional and students with disabilities involved in the study. This finding was supported by assessment by MOE and stated that antagonistic social and cultural belief that discriminate and isolate and economic factors are among the leading challenges that are making inclusive process difficult. Similarly, Winter and Raw (2010) found that general access to education is affected by high educational costs and household poverty. In addition, high incidences of poverty (UNESCO 2005) limit CWDs from accessing services, even with the introduction of Universal Primary Education.

#### **School related factors that hinder inclusive education**

The finding disclosed that lack of trained teachers, lack of instructional materials, existence of long and rough terrains to schools, limited monitoring and supervision, rigid nature of the curriculum and inflexible teaching style, lack of commitment and presence of negative attitude and practices among teachers were major school related factors that are affecting the effort towards inclusion. In addition to this the finding from focus group discussion and interview revealed that incompatible curriculum to the students' ability, overload among teachers and inaccessible school environment as factors related to school existing situations.

#### **Teachers' knowledge and skills to teach children in an inclusive classroom**

Teachers level of knowledge and skills of inclusive education is a curtail factor that affect the process of inclusion. Here, there are three issues to consider: identification of students with disabilities, knowledge of the existing types of disabilities and teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills of teaching children with disabilities. With respect to identification the finding revealed that majority of teachers reported that they don't have any type of children with disabilities in their class. This probably attributed to teachers' poor skills of identifications of children with disabilities. This is supported by finding from focus group discussion. Participants were revealed that due to different factors teachers are not aware of diversity among students especially those children with minor defects. This finding fits well with MOE (2012) that teachers also manifest poor skills of identification of children in a class. With regard to knowledge of teachers with the existing types of disabilities, all participants know about visual, hearing, physical and health impairments. More than half of research participants also know all types of disabilities. However, the result disclosed that teachers more know about disabilities that can be easily noticed physically while some disabilities that are difficult to recognize remain unknown by a considerable number of research participants. Finding of teachers' knowledge and skills of inclusive education revealed that majority of respondents can provide support for children with disabilities, can identify children, and can satisfy the needs of all students and plan and work together to support children with disabilities. However,



majority of teachers do not think that all children with disabilities could learn, do not believe that children with disabilities were benefited in their class, did not know where to go when support is needed and did not have students profile. The result of this study also fit well in to the study of Allen and Cowdery (2012) who reported that teachers working with ordinary schools lacked competence to educate pupils with special educational needs. Likewise, Lewis (2009) found that teachers lacked special approaches and methods in order to facilitate the process of learning in integration. Similarly, Ahmed Esmael(2010) reported in his finding that teachers lack experience and adequate training inclusive education program.

### **Measure to be taken to realize inclusive education**

One of the objectives of this study was to recommend possible measures that should be taken to support the process of inclusive education. The analysis disclosed the following measures:

- Providing sensitization and awareness raising training,
- Training of teachers in SNE
- Provision of materials and equipments
- Ensuring environmental accessibility
- Special consideration for students with disabilities
- Provision of training to school leaders to work jointly with other stakeholders
- Proper utilization of funds
- Revision of curriculum
- And exerting efforts to generate income to parents of children with disabilities.

The above findings are consistent with all studies reviewed for this research. Allen & Cowdery (2012), UNESCO (2009), Corbett & Norwich (2005) and MASHIYA (2003) similarly suggested the roles of training on skills of knowledge, environmental accessibility, cooperation and collaboration among stakeholders, production of professionals on the area, provision of materials and equipments to support the move towards inclusive education.

### **Existing opportunities of the move towards inclusive education**

On the attempt to assess the exiting opportunities of inclusive education, the study revealed the following findings:

- There was policy framework and strategies that support the process
- There was change in attitude among teachers towards inclusive education
- There were institution who provide training of how to teach children with disabilities
- There were NGOs who ready to support this children
- There were short term training opportunities for teachers by GOs and NGOs
- Enrollment of children with disabilities in regular schools is increasing form time to time

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the above major findings the researchers arrived at the following conclusions.

1. Though majority Teachers' attitude is positive towards people with disabilities still there are a considerable number of teachers who have a attitudinal problem towards people with disabilities.
2. There is isolation and discrimination by others, high costs of instructional materials for students with disabilities, unaware of the existing laws and conventions and poverty among parents of children with disabilities are challenges of inclusive education.
3. Lack of trained teachers, lack of instructional materials, existence of long and rough terrains to schools, limited monitoring and supervision, rigid nature of the curriculum and inflexible teaching style, lack of commitment among teachers, presence of negative attitude and practices, incompatible curriculum to the students' ability, overload among teachers and inaccessible environment were making inclusion difficult.

4. Many teachers have a problem related to skills of identifications of children, understanding of the natures of disabilities and pedagogical knowledge and skills of teaching children with disability.
5. Training on knowledge and skills for teachers, proper material provision, creating accessible school environment, curriculum modification and adaptation, maintaining cooperation among stakeholders and creating opportunities to generate income among parents of children with disabilities should be done to assure the process of inclusion.
6. There are good opportunities of inclusive education. These includes existence of policy on the area, higher institutions and NGOs, better short term training opportunities for teachers, progressively changing attitudes of teachers and increased enrollment rates of children with disabilities.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

From all the study process and findings we would like to forward the following recommendations about practical implications and further investigations.

1. Continuous Sensitization and awareness raising trainings should be provided for teachers
2. Pedagogical skills of teachers should be enriched through continuous training especially in relation to teaching children with disabilities.
3. Teachers should be thought how to identify and help a specific group of disabilities
4. Material provision and environmental accessibility should be maintained in schools
5. Alternative curriculum/curriculum modification and adaptation should be carried out
6. Enforcing the existing laws and policies on the areas of inclusive education

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