

THE ENABLERS AND BARRIERS TO THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY: INSIGHTS FROM THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CONTEXT IN BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education (IE) is an important factor for an effective educational environment in society. Inclusion in education involve in viewing every person equally and give them equal value, ownership of mind, increasing participation teaching-learning activities, restructuring cultures, policy, and practices to respond diversity is essential. The researchers intended to explore primary school's employee's perceptions about the implementation of inclusive education and sought to investigate the enablers and barriers of inclusive education on the context of Bangladesh. The data were gathered through qualitative method using a semi - structure interviews with six participants from primary school teachers and Upazila educators. Thematic analysis techniques have been followed to analyse the collected primary data and the findings have discussed using inclusive education literature and policy. The findings of the research suggest that, to establish inclusive education unerringly the barriers need to diverge and the teachers should get adequate support. Furthermore, the existing curriculum should be modified and some assistive program need to initiate. In addition, friendly collaboration should be grown among the teacher, parent and community for a successful implementation of inclusive education.

Keyword: *Inclusive Education, Decentralization, Opportunity, Program, Primary Education.*

INTRODUCTION

Inclusion promotes equity, participation, respect for diversity, compassion, care and entitlement as it is underpinned by values (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006 cited in Carrington et al., 2015). The process of IE offers a quality education for all by respecting diversity, different needs, abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of students and communities' emancipation all kind of deprivation (Begum et al., 2018). Also, the values of IE include all of the children into education in an effective way, here enrolling them is not the main thing rather equal participation and maintain quality education cycle is concerned (Zulfiqar et al., 2018). IE approach is a way to educate students with special educational needs and its strategy intended to include students with different abilities in regular schools (Kawser, Ahmed and Ahmed, 2016). Inclusive approach is to make a significant impact on the educational opportunities (Tahsein and Ahsan, 2016) and the process can be

viewed as a remover of barriers to mass participation. So, basically it identifies barriers and then ensuring that those barriers are eliminated (Mittler, 2012 cited in Loreman, 2017).

IE is trying to provide adequate education to the greater number of children to develop a comprehensive education system. Implementing IE in schools requires changing the negative conceptions of society, and to creating an inclusive community and achieve education for all children (UNESCO, 2009). Similarly, from the view of Bangladeshi Government, IE is a process of improving educational system which identifies limits and barriers and remove them for the need of children's quality education so that they can unleash their potential (Ahuja & Ibrahim, 2006 cited in Zulfiqar et al., 2018).

Inclusion tries to improve students' learning and also ensure maximum participation of all in their local school community (Srivastava, Boer and Pijl, 2013; Carrington et al., 2015). Mainly inclusion is not about giving better education to children with disabilities rather it is focusing on high quality education to all children (Kaplan & Lewis, 2013; UNESCO, 2009 cited in Ahsan and Sharma, 2018). Poon-McBrayer and Wong(2013) said that it is an educational process that reaches out to disabled children so that they could go in regular schools with other children and where they are equally treated. The main goal of inclusion is to make school accessible for all students regardless of their disabilities and this is the main basis of inclusion. However, inclusion becomes a very important factor, idea and aspect of education all over the world (Sharma, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

The National Education Policy (2010) was working towards building a quality inclusive education system in Bangladesh, and for that purpose, they are providing a framework which will support early childhood education. The Bangladesh National Education Policy (2010) has created potentiality to support the participation of not only children but also adults to become responsive according to the children's backgrounds, experiences, abilities, and needs. A sense of belonging and a supporting environment can be created by this process (Malak et al., 2014). The Ministry of Education of Bangladesh pointed that ensuring quality education for all children is a fundamental issue (Malak et al., 2013). However, the implementation of quality education for all kind of children has proven to be a difficult job from the social context of Bangladesh. Therefore, considering this matter as a real gap in the education sector, researcher working on the project so that the output of this research can help to identify the barriers and enablers for IE in Bangladesh primary school. Furthermore, this research study can give valuable insights and suggest a guideline to the practitioners and teachers to implement this policy more effectively.

Purpose of this study

The purpose of the qualitative research was to conduct and analyse an in-depth study of inclusive education policy. Through this particular study data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The focus was on identifying enablers and barriers that have been implemented inclusive education policy in primary schools of Bangladesh. Bangladesh has signed a lot of treaties and also has introduced a lot of policies and acts to support inclusive education. Many policies are made in Bangladesh for the betterment of children under different governmental consideration for example the Operational Framework for Pre-Primary Education (2008), the National Education Policy (2010), and the National Children Policy (2011) (Begum et al., 2018). Bangladesh Persons with Disability Welfare (BPDW) Act was made in response of fulfilling the commitments of Salamanca statement and Dakar Framework. The Act is widespread in terms of covering different aspects of persons with disabilities (Malak et al., 2013, p.4), but still couldn't implement successfully inclusive education in primary education. Through this study, the researcher tried to explore the barriers that hinder the successful implementation of inclusive education through perceptions of educational officials and teachers.

Significance of this study

Though there is no universal consensus on IE, generally its idea is based on social justice for all marginalized learners (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013) so that each of them can reach their full potential (Stegemann and Jaci, 2018). From the perspective of twenty-first century it is considered as the right of every child to be a part of mainstream society. It is seen as an international agenda which is running parallel to the objective of Education for All (Srivastava, Boer and Pijl, 2013). IE not only projects to include marginalised group in regular classrooms rather projects to include all the students to an umbrella education system (Malaket al., 2013). Thus, the finding of the research hope to provide a satisfactory framework for the teachers, students and policymakers so they can relate these to their previous knowledge and reflect on the insights that can be acquired from this research.

Research Question:

This study aimed to accumulate the perceptions of teachers and educational officials about the advancement in the implementation of inclusive education policy in the context of Bangladesh. The study set out to answer the following research questions:

- **What are the enablers and barriers to the successful implementation of inclusive education policy in Bangladeshi primary schools?**

Research Objectives

The following are the research objectives which would provide the information for answering the key question.

- To identify the enablers for successful implementation of inclusive education policy in Bangladeshi primary school.
- To examine the barriers for successful implementation of inclusive education policy in Bangladeshi primary school.
- To overcome the barriers for successful implementation of inclusive education policy in Bangladeshi primary school.

LITERATURE REVIEW**Importance of Inclusive Education**

According to United Nations about 650 million people have disabilities. 12% of the 6 billion world population are discriminated and deprived of their rights of living. Without emancipating this deprivation and exclusion, society cannot move towards becoming an inclusive progressive community (Šiška and Habib, 2013). Therefore, social justice cannot be achieved if students are separated because of gender, class, race, ability in school. The concept of social justice is a strong theoretical consideration for IE practitioners (Ahsan and Mullick, 2013). It is important that children and young people should have access to education and it is also important that they could take part fully in school activities and have desired outcomes from these (UNESCO,2009). IE has given the highest priority to equal right of education for all though they have diverse circumstances (UNESCO, 1994 cited in Tahsein and Ahsan, 2016).

According to Ahsan and Sharma (2018) IE is a way to address problems of all learners who are regularly deprived from accessing education. However, according to Šiška and Habib (2013, p.402) “to provide all children with a general education, we may ignore individual potential. On the other hand, in order to emphasise individual needs we may lower the standard of education”. IE involves all students to have right to be included at local school, to actively participate with others in learning, to be valued as members of the school community, and to have access to a system that ensures quality education best suited to their unique competencies, skills, and attributes (Ainscow, 2000 cited in Begum et al., 2018).

These findings are relevant to the proposed study and as for ensuring inclusive education, we need to have deeper understanding about its policy in the perspective of international as well as Bangladesh.

Enablers of Inclusive Education

Primary and pre-primary education section policies also promote the values of IE. Some of these policies are ensuring physical and mental assistive supports like native language acquisition, introducing flexibility in school schedules in faraway areas and building separate toilet for girls (Ahsan and Mullick, 2013). One major milestone of policy change is the National Plan of Action Phase II (NPA II), which the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) has developed to ensuring basic primary education for all by 2015 and it is to be executed between 2003 and 2015. According to the official order respective authorities include all the children enrolled under primary education, acquiring quality education, and accomplishing the primary education proudly (Ahsan and Mullick, 2013 p.155).

Recently large initiatives have been taken in primary education, the Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-II) (2003–2011) and Third Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-III) (2011–2017), reports inclusive education as a process to reach its main goal of quality improvement of education (Begum et al., 2018). Enhancing the role of the school community satisfying the needs of children with social, economic proficiency is the main objective of PEDP II innovation grant (Ahsan and Mullick, 2013). Primary Education scholarship project was officially introduced by the government to financial support more than 5 million disadvantaged primary school students living in rural area. This project aim is to enhance child enrolment rate and attendance rate, decrease the dropout rate and ensure quality education for all school going children (Ahsan and Mullick, 2013, p.157).

There are two important activities that promote decentralization; SLIP (School Level Improvement Plan) and UPEP (Upazila Primary Education Plan). SLIP encourages community involvement and to empowerment of members. SLIP expects that parents, teachers, members of School Management Committees (SMCs) and local communities would work collectively to improve the quality of learning. UPEP involves local government officials so that they could take a decision to implement the plan at school level (Ahsan and Mullick, 2013, p.156). The principle aim of Reaching Out-of-School Children (ROSC) is to minimize the number of out-of-school children through better access to quality education. The project is working for those children who do not go to school yet (Ahsan and Mullick, 2013, p.157). According to Bangladesh National Education Policy (2010), the Government has started Mother Tongue-based Multi Lingual Education. BRAC is one of the largest NGO supporting inclusive education and the ManusherJonno Foundation (MJF) aided Education for Ethnic Children (EEC) schools and mother-tongue based (MTB-MLE) schools (Begum et al., 2018). The physical punishment has been prohibited in Bangladesh because of media and parental pressure (Malak, Deppeler and Sharma, 2014).

The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) is recently executing the Primary Education Development Programme Phase 3 (PEDP 3) and inclusive education is identified as an important component (MoPME, 2015 cited in Ahsan and Sharma, 2018). Because of it Government has made remarkable achievements in improving student involvement and increasing the participation of girls in primary education where the net enrolment rate is 97.94% among them boys' net enrolment is 97.62% and girls' net enrolment is 98.27%, as reported in the Annual Primary School Census (Ahsan and Sharma, 2018, p. 84). However, it was not an easy task to implement inclusive education as it has to face many difficulties which have influenced the procedure of transforming the policy into practice (Malak et al., 2014).

Barriers of inclusive education

According to Allan (2013) and McAuliffe (2018) has talked about the three variations of barriers which are environmental, structural and attitudinal barriers. An inaccessible physical environment is a type of environmental barrier. The structural barriers can be observed by a school's organization and operations. The belief and values as well as the assumption about a child's capacity to participate and achieve something in a lower extent means the attitudinal barriers. Mainly attitudinal barriers arise from unexplained assumptions, too much judgemental views and misconceptions superstitions (McAuliffe, 2018).

According to Malak et al. (2014) teachers' negative attitudes towards IE and inadequate professional development are the significant obstacles to implementing IE in Bangladesh. The major barriers to inclusion is that, though teachers have prior experience they are not willing to help the special needs children as well as they are not optimistic about the learning ability of the children of additional needs (Mullick, Deppeler and Sharma, 2012). Moreover, an attitudinal barrier work in the case of the teachers who have training, but not interested to welcome special needs children (Mullick, Deppeler and Sharma, 2012). Due to the limited inclusive education programme, teachers only have seven days of training in this area, but they are not following the guide lines of the training, rather they are willing to exclude disable children from their classroom, either due to limited understanding or lack of resources. Also, teachers are showing more negative attitudes to children needing high levels of support (Ahsan and Sharma, 2018). If the attitudes of other students and school staffs are not supportive, then disabled children are safer in special schools (Donohue and Bornman, 2014).

School management committee are formed considering the representatives from parents, teachers, and local community. They are not supportive to teachers who are implementing IE (Ahmed and Mullick, 2013). Moreover, they are inactive in most of the primary school (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2008). Schools situated in remote areas have minimum monitoring (Cambridge Education, 2016). There are no ramps and slopes in most of the school of Bangladesh, therefore, children with wheelchairs face difficulties for this reason to physically access the school, classrooms and toilets (Kawser, Ahmed and Ahmed, 2016; Zulfiqaretal., 2018). According to Donohue and Bornman (2014), up to 70% of children of school-going age with disabilities

are out of school. It is mentioned that lack of ambiguity and poor implementation of the policy as main causes for lack of improvement in this important area. Similar barriers also have been identified in Bangladesh by Mullick, Deppeler and Sharma (2012) where the lack of a clear concept of inclusive policy in the field level is a barrier for the poor implementation of inclusive education.

Primary education of Bangladesh is facing a teacher shortage. It is found that there are 73 activities, academic or non-academic which are performed by the teachers continuously. Due to this excessive load they are unable to make good preparation for teaching (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2008). In Bangladesh the teacher student ratio is high. It became quite impossible for the teachers to give attention to each and every student in the classroom (Kawser, Ahmed and Ahmed, 2016). Poverty is a major barrier for disadvantaged children that are hampering the implementation of inclusion in remote areas (Begum et al., 2018).

Disable children in developing country mostly do not go to school because parents thought that they are unable to learning rather they are disrupted by other learner. In addition, parents who have never been to school thinks that there is no reason to send their children to school rather they should go for some earning (Begum et al., 2018). Furthermore, parents of the disable children see their children as burden and they are averse to send them to school (Mullick, Deppeler and Sharma, 2012). Attitude of society towards disable children is not so good. Disability is viewed as the result of past deeds which was done in previous life by individual. So it is a significant barrier to the inclusion (Sharma et al., 2013).

Teachers limited understanding and expertise is a vital problem in creating effective learning teaching activity (Mullick, Deppeler and Sharma, 2012). Traditional training program is out of date as it is incomplete, theory based and not enabling the teachers to support effectively (Ahsan and Mullick, 2013). Teachers of mainstream schools are not properly trained for handling special need children and most of the time teachers are not willing to take training because they feel it is an extra burden (Kawser, Ahmed and Ahmed, 2016). Only the head teachers of primary schools have gone through the inclusive training process. Other school teachers and secondary level teachers did not receive any training on inclusive education till now (Ahsan and Sharma, 2018). Lack of preparation of teachers is one of the biggest problems in the development of inclusive education in developing countries (Sharma et al., 2013).

In Bangladesh study have found that though a significant number of disable children admit in primary level but this number gradually decrease in upper level. A large number of them drop out because they are unsuccessful to have the promotion into next grade (Zulfiqar et al., 2018). Research found that although teachers support inclusive education but they actually think that children with disabilities should have separate classroom for better learning (Donhue and Bornman, 2014). In developing countries where regular schooling has been improved a lot of barriers are causing hamper to serve full inclusive practice (Sharma et al., 2013).

Successful implementation of inclusive education

Several strategies have been suggested for overcoming barriers considering local context, cultural differences and teachers' need (Sharma et al., 2013). To implement the inclusive education successfully, it requires to decentralize and empowerment of school level leadership to strengthen the participation of different stakeholders (Ahmed and Mullick, 2013). The successful implementation of inclusive education depends on the activities of school principals because they can start the inclusive culture in the school and also have the ability to successful implementation of inclusive education by identifying the barriers and overcome the barriers through different initiatives (Zollers, Ramanathan and Yu, 1999; Aniscow, 2002, cited in Donohue and Bornman, 2014). School instructors should struggle to increase the value of diversity to the wider community through campaigns (Mullick, Deppeler and Sharma, 2012). The wider community can be understood the value of diversity, if they are given power and take part in co-curricular activities. This taking part can alter the views and intentions of community people (Ahmed and Mullick, 2013). Teacher can support easily to increase children learning efficiency with the help of technology. It also creates an environment where all children will get opportunity to expand their knowledge (Corkett and Benevides, 2015).

The issues of disability ought to be attached into the school educational module and in the teacher training modules so that negative attitudes towards individual children with special needs can be removed (Kawser, Ahmed and Ahmed, 2016). According to Ahsan, Sharma and Deppeler (2012) inclusive education can be achieved by reducing class size. Being a developing country Bangladesh is struggling to address IE despite attempts to develop awareness and provide relevant training for teachers to remove negative attitudes (Malaketal., 2013; Ahsan, Sharma and Deppeler, 2012). Educators must have satisfactory training, also need appropriate support from higher authority and the wider community in order to ensure effective inclusive

education everywhere in the world (Frankel, Gold and Ajodhia-Andrews, 2010 cited in Donohue and Bornman, 2014). A developing country can provide more effective inclusive education for their pupils by developing flexible curriculum according to children need and context-appropriate policies and practices (Forlin, 2013). Also, curricula should be modified to children's ability, interests and needs (UNESCO, 1994).

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

The study aims to reveal important things of inclusive education policy which includes different experiences and perceptions from teachers and education officials. While considering the methodology of this study, qualitative approach seemed to be more perfect for researcher. According to Bell and Waters (2014) the major objective of qualitative research was to realise the participants' perceptions of the world as this kind of research generally emphasises on their experiences. A non-numerical and semi-structured way as well as to give an in-depth description of an inquiry, was the key desire of the qualitative research (Boudah, 2011). According to Menter et al. (2011) quantitative data cannot give a detailed account of the participant's experience, but it could help researchers with identifying general patterns. The aim of this study is to identify the barriers and enablers of inclusive education in Bangladesh context. This research needs to identify the complex issues following semi-structured interview from the primary school employees under the contextual knowledge.

Qualitative approach was adopted aiming at greater understanding of inclusive education from the perspectives and experiences of teachers and educational officials. Identifying or exploring attitudes, behaviour and experiences through interviews or focus groups made the qualitative approach more reliable. From fewer participants it attempted to get an in-depth opinion.

Data Collection Tool

Online platforms (Skype and messenger) and phone calls are used to conduct one to one semi-structured interviews with the participants, in order to explore their understanding of inclusive education policy and practice in the classroom (Denscombe, 2010). The possible length of the interview time was approximately 30-45 minutes. The benefit of the quantitative questionnaire was to provide a lot of information from a wide range of respondents (Menter et al, 2011) though it did not allow following up questions for clarification but in this work researcher aimed in-depth understanding of the respondent's experiences. So, a semi-structured interview was considered to be the most appropriate tool for data collection in this study.

The method of qualitative interviewing was flexible and the researcher obtained non-numeric data from respective participants with follow up questions which helped the researcher to gain a better concept about social world (Menter et al., 2011). Though it's having a major disadvantage of time consuming to structure, conduct and interpret the interview (Buckler and Walliman, 2016). Semi-structured interviews made the process more inclusive both the researcher and the participants and it helped to gather in-depth information. Unstructured interview produced a great deal of data and it was difficult to analysis (Dawson, 2009). The researcher asked each participant the same question to know the answer to the research question and remained flexible so that other related information could be collected (Dawson, 2009).

Sample

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill(2009), stated that, sampling is the most crucial component for collecting the primary information. A purposive sample of 6 participants was used in this qualitative semi-structured interviews. The researcher interviewed primary teachers, an Upazila Education officer, an Assistant Upazila Education officer and an Instructor (URC) in this research project. The researcher contacted the participants to clarify outline the purpose of the study and the reason why they had been chosen. Email was sent to the responded informing them about the aims of the research and so on. All of them were very interested about the study because they hoped this study may provide the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education with some ideas in order to solve the existing problems and difficulties in inclusive education policy. After seeking the permission to interview them the researcher started working. Acceptance letters were returned to the participants via email.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis was a personal process with some rigid rules and procedures (Dawson, 2009). Preparing data for analysis, then reducing the data into just through a process of condensing and representing the

data into figures, tables, or a discussion were called data analysis (Creswell, 2013). It involved identifying themes. Interviewing in this approach usually generated audio or video recordings, notes and transcripts (Menter et al., 2011). Usually researcher identify key text, colour up thematic areas, highlight important points to code and annotate the materials (Menter et al., 2011). The researcher constantly reviewed data concept, pattern and development progress (Boudah, 2011). Starting with the reading then codifying, then elaborating the concepts from coded data gradually brought out the final report. Notes about thoughts, codes process all summed up in the final report (Boudah, 2011). Therefore, the thematic analysis would be followed in this research work.

The familiarisation, transcription, organisation, coding and analysis were the five stages of collecting data through semi-structured interviews with open ended questions (Lacey and Luff, 2001). Any significant things should be considered while analysing the data for example patterns, differences, similarities- in search for meaning (Lacey and Luff, 2001). In order to avoid errors, the researcher listen the recorded repeatedly and notes were being taken and transcribed. Through reading of the interviewed transcripts for familiarisation purpose, codifying data and highlighting emergent codes and comments noted in the margin was needed. After these careful considerations themes were named and investigated for significance in relation to the research questions. The final report provided the participants voiced researcher flexibility with complex descriptions and interpretation of the problem.

FINDINGS

Exploring the concept of inclusion among educational officials and primary school teachers is the aim of the study. These findings are interpreted from the point of views of respondents and are presented as main themes. The sub-sections which emerged from the main theme of exploration are correlated with the aim and objectives of the study. Also, the findings will be discussed in relation to literature reviews. This research follows the thematic analysis, major findings which evolved in relation to research questions which are presented and discussed with quotes from the respondents to the open-ended questions. The themes are supported with appropriate extracts to make the findings of the study more credible. That is why part that includes result and analysis is important to fulfil the aim and objectives of the research.

Themes from Interview- Perception Of Education Officials And Teachers.

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Sub-categories</u>
1.Perception of inclusive education(IE)	Inclusion, Importance.
2. Enablers of IE	Provide supportive device and increase physical facilities, Ban corporal punishment, Started Stipend programme, Started ROSC (Reaching Out of School Children) Project, Started School Level Improvement Plan(SLIP) and Upazila Primary Education Plan(UPEP), Provide training.
3. Barriers of IE	Unclear policy, Poverty, Lack of facilities, Inactive School Management Committee(SMC), Insufficient monitoring, Negative attitudes of teachers and parents, Negative attitudes of society, Lack of training and knowledge, Workload, large class and lack of teachers.
4.Successful implementation of IE	Inclusive culture, Raising awareness, Provide adequate training, Reduce class size, Provide necessary resources, Reform structure, School Feeding Programme(SFP), Team work, Parental involvement.

Perception of Inclusive Education

Based on the interview questions, the respondents had different points of view when answering the question about the perception of inclusive education.

The question was asked what their understanding about inclusive education. Participants sounded motivated to work without race and religious discrimination in school.

“Children of all race and religion will be studying under the same umbrella at the same time in the mainstream of the school.” (Participant 1)

“IE is a method in which there will be no discrimination in the class and all children with disabilities will be taught together in the same curriculum in the same classroom.” (Participant 6)

According to Malaket al. (2013) and Ahsan and Mullick (2013) children of all religion, races and even the children with disabilities are put under the same umbrella of school without any discrimination in IE method. Therefore, working above the race, religion, and any physical disabilities satisfy IE which was focused in the participant 1 and participant 6 comments.

However, one educational official said it is not possible to ensure all children education.

“Some teacher think it is an extra burden so they discourage parents to admit mainstream school. Also, they said there are no additional facilities at our school for your children, it is better to admit special school”. (Participant 2)

This result is similar to that found by Donhue and Bornman (2014) as said teachers often agree with the notion of inclusion and express their positive opinion, but they believe that if they want to fulfil the needs of disabled children, it will be better to teach them separately which was also focused in participants 2 comment.

Importance

It was asked to the participants why inclusive education is necessary for primary education in Bangladesh. Participant replied that:

“Inclusive education is a special requirement for ensuring quality education for all children.” (Participant 1)

“It is inclusive education that ensures the equality and rights of education for all.” (Participant 6)

Therefore, based on the above statements of participants 1 and 6 it could be said that inclusive education act to ensure the quality education for all children (Begum et al., 2018) and enhance equal participation in school (Zulfiqaret al., 2018) as earlier discussed in literature.

But one participant described differently, “the presence of the children with disability is assured through inclusion but it is difficult to ensure quality education for children with disability.” (Participant 5)

This finding is supported by Zulfiqar et al. (2018) view that a significant number of children with special needs admit at primary school but their participation is continuously decline in the upper grade. Moreover, among those children a significant number of them are not successfully promoted to the next class and dropped out from the school.

Enablers of Inclusive Education Policy

The question that I put forth to the participants was that what are the enablers to the implementation of inclusive education policy. They replied various initiatives have been taken to bring all children to schools specially those who are physically challenged in society.

Provide Supportive Device and Increase Physical Facilities

Both teachers and educational officials said that:

“We provide some logistic support at the school level, some assistive devices for physically challenged children such as wheelchairs, eyeglasses, crutches.” (Participant 1)

“Most of our schools are accessible. They have access to the class and there is a ramp and every school have a separate toilet for girls and there is sufficient space to move the wheelchair easily in the classroom.” (Participant 2)

In line with the qualitative data of this study and the work of Malak et al.(2014) refers that most of the government primary schools have a ramp to enter into the classroom with a wheelchair and the doors of the newly constructed rooms have been widened. In every school there are distinct toilet facilities for girls (Ahsan and Mullick., 2013).

Ban corporal punishment

All participants revealed that the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education of Bangladesh have issued the circular on the condition that students cannot be punished physically (Malak, Deppeler and Sharma, 2014).

“Physical and mental punishment is totally prohibited in primary school.” (Participant 2)

“Physical punishment has been prohibited from schools in order to create fearless and joyfulness environment in the classroom.” (Participant 5)

Started Stipend Programme

All participants mentioned that students did not come earlier from remote areas, now everyone comes to school. Stipend program has increased the attendance rate of children to school by inspiring financial support (Ahsan and Mullick, 2013).

“Stipend programme started now all over the Bangladesh. By providing stipends, we have been able to bring the children to school, so the child attendance rate in schools is increasing.” (Participant 3)

“Many children who did not come to school due to difficulties now come to school in view of this money.” (Participant 4)

Started ROCS project

All educational officials stated that the Reaching Out-of-School Children (ROSC) project was providing quality education for those children who had never been enrolled to any school or had enrolled but drop out of school.

“ROCS school has been set up for children falling out of schools. Where children are involved with child labour, children who are falling down are being educated at school.” (Participant 1)

“ROCS school has started its journey for disadvantaged children who do not enrol or dropout from school due to poverty.” (Participant 2)

This result is corresponding to that found in Ahsan and Mullick (2013) defined that the main goal of ROSC is to reduce the number of children who are out -of -school and giving them a privilege to have quality education.

Started SLIP and UPEP

All participants stated that UPEP and SLIP both of this plan works for the development of quality education of children by decentralizing the power from upper level to root level (Ahsan and Mullick, 2013).

“UPEP involve local government leader and government officials at the Upazila level for providing different devices for students with special needs at the school.” (Participant 4)

“Various materials are purchased through SLIP by empowering the local community and the school decides on it.” (Participant 5)

Provide Training

All the education officials and teachers reported that a lot of teachers got training and all head teacher got inclusive training. PEDP II has provided widespread training of administrative officers, teachers and considerable numbers of SMC members (Malak et al., 2014).

“A lot of money has been spent for the professional development of the teacher and SMC members. From each school, the head teacher has got training on IE.” (Participant 2)

“We have trained in IE and we are teaching in schools according to the training.” (Participant 4)

Therefore, the above discussed issues (sub-themes) enables the IE policies and its implementation in the school which is effective for inclusion environment by providing possible facilities to the primary school going pupils.

Barriers of Inclusive Education Policy

During data collection it was asked to the respondents what are the barriers to the implementation of inclusive education.

Unclear policy

Almost of the respondents replied:

“There is no clear idea in our national education policy about the role of teacher, parents, and community to ensure inclusive education for special needs children.” (Participant 1)

“The concept of teachers is not clear about the implementation process of inclusive education policy.” (Participant 5)

Therefore, based on the above comments of participant 1 and 5 it could be said that lack of clarity in the policy is responsible for the poor implementation of inclusive education in the regular classroom as earlier discussed in literature by Mullick, Deppler and Sharma (2012).

Poverty

The education officials and teachers reported that poverty is the most significant barrier to provide education to children. Moreover, most of the children come to school from poor and disadvantaged family, their parents are not conscious about children education.

“Because of family financial problems and not understanding the value of education some parents are not interested to send their disable children to school.” (Participant 1)

“Parents who never been schooled, they involve their children in work. They seem it is better to earn instead of going to school.” (Participant 2)

This finding is supported by Begum et al. (2018) reported that because of financial problems, people are not conscious about their child education. Also, the parents who are illiterate not understanding the value of education and they involve their children in work.

Lack of facilities

According to respondents lack of facilities is a major problem to implement IE. Physical environments and communication system are not friendly for the children with disabilities. There is lack of user-friendly toilet for which children in wheelchair face difficulties to go to toilet (Kawser, Ahmed and Ahmed, 2016; Zulfiqaretal., 2018).

“There is no accessible toilet in primary school for children with special needs.” (Participant 1)

“It is also a big obstacle that the infrastructure and the communication system and the roads that may not be suitable for them.” (Participant 3)

Inactive SMC

All teachers focused that they need support from the school management committee to implement IE. But SMC are not active in most of the primary school. They are not willing to take any responsibilities to implement IE policy (Ahmed and Mullick, 2014; Transparency International Bangladesh, 2008).

“There are committees in every school but inactive and committee members just come to the school but they do not take any responsibilities.” (Participant 4)

“They are not interested to take any action after becoming a member of the school management committee.” (Participant 5)

Insufficient monitoring

All participants stated that monitoring should be increased at the school level in order to ensure successful implementation of inclusive education. Monitoring is not sufficient to the schools which are located in remote areas (Cambridge Education, 2016).

“Intensive inspection is needed in each school. Teachers routinely carry out the traditional way of their teaching activities due to a weak monitoring system.” (Participant 2)

“If the monitoring is more emphasize, especially if the officials at the Upazila levels get more concerned about schools then the teachers will be more active.” (Participant 5)

Negative attitude of teachers and parents

All educational officials stated that the implementation of inclusive education depends on the teacher. But all teachers do not show positive attitudes towards children who needs extra support to continue their schooling in mainstream school (Ahsan and Sharma, 2018). Parents are less confident about their children learning and safety (Begum et al., 2018).

“Teachers have a negative mentality towards students with special needs who needs more support.” (Participant 1)

“Parents of many special need children think that my child cannot learn anything at school, but other students will bother him/her.” (Participant 5).

Negative Attitude of Society

All teachers expressed that there is a superstition exist in our society. People believe that disabled children are cursed. It is considered as a result of parents evil deeds. Punishment comes from a spiritual order of God (Sharma et al., 2013).

“There is a convention in our society that the children with special needs are cursed. Community people do not allow children with special needs easily. They think this sort of inclusive education thinking it a waste of time, money and energy.” (Participant 6)

Lack of Training and Knowledge of Disability

All participants indicated that the teachers are somewhat unable to response according to the need of inclusive classroom because of lack of proper training and lack of knowledge about inclusive education.

“The teacher needs to be trained in order to handle special need children. The training that the teachers receive is not enough.” (Participant 1)

“Assistant teachers do not know anything about inclusive education, the only head teacher has been given training.” (Participant 2)

“We got inclusive training but it is not enough, we need more training for children with special needs and inclusive education policy.” (Participant 4)

Lack of trained teacher and lack of sufficient knowledge about inclusion is a major barrier to handle the special needs children (Ahsan and Sharma, 2018; Sharma et al., 2013; Kawser, Ahmed and Ahmed, 2016; Mullick, Deppeler and Sharma, 2012) which discussed at earlier in the literature review.

Workload, large class size and lack of teachers

All respondent claimed that they are interested in inclusion, but lack of teacher, workload and large class are creating a major problem to successful implementation. Teachers cannot involve all children in classroom activities due to large class size. Because of excessive workloads, they do not get enough time for preparation of regular teaching activities (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2008). In most of the case teachers are not sufficient in comparison to students' numbers. It is very difficult to involve all children in teaching learning activities (Kawser, Ahmed and Ahmed, 2016).

“The common scenario in the maximum school is the number of students is high compared to the number of teachers. It was really difficult for teacher to teach effectively.” (Participant 2)

“Due to the extra classes, the teachers are not prepared to involve all children in the classroom activities.” (Participant 3)

“The teachers are busier in other official activities, which hinders their attention to the child-centric. Also, there is a lack of teachers for this reason they have to take more classes.” (Participant 5)

It is important to resolve these barriers in order to practice inclusion policies in school.

Inclusive culture

All educational officials and teachers expressed the similar opinion to implement inclusive education. At first we should create an inclusive culture in school. The head teacher of the school can create inclusive culture by starting different types of initiatives of the school with the cooperative participation of another teacher, parents, local people, SMC members and make the school environment more inclusive friendly (Donohue and Bornman, 2014).

“To create an inclusive school culture in the school and outside of the school with the participation of local people and all teacher and committees.” (Participant 1)

“Creating an inclusive friendly environment in the classroom and making schools attractive to all students including children with special needs.” (Participant 3)

Raising awareness

All participants expressed that an awareness program is necessary to encourage the parents of disabled children and community people to reduce negative attitude towards inclusive education.

“To increase the value of diversity, head teacher can arrange an educational program for the member of the school management committee, parents and prominent persons in the area.” (Participant 1)

“In order to increase the value of disadvantaged children and special needs children in the wider community we can arrange different types of an educational campaign in school premise.” (Participant 6)

According to Mullick, Deppeler and Sharma (2012) school principle can arrange different types of educational programs with the help of wider community so that they could realize the value of inclusive education. The involvement can change the attitudes of local community (Ahmmmed and Mullick, 2013)

Provide adequate training

All education officials and teachers stated that adequate training will help the teacher to be more prepared to face any challenges of IE. Issues of special needs children will be included in training modules.

“In order to successful implementation, it is necessary to change teachers’ attitudes towards disability through training.” (Participant 1)

“It is important to include disable children issues in all teacher training modules so that they can handle easily children with special needs and engage them in teaching-learning activities.” (Participant 3)

Training will help teacher to change their negative attitudes towards children with disability (Malaketel., 2013; Ahsan, Sharma and Deppeler, 2012). In teacher training programme disability issue need to be included (Kawser, Ahmed and Ahmed, 2016).

Reduce class size

All participants stated that for the better implementation of inclusive education policy it is important to reduce class size.

“If we want to successful implementation of inclusive education at first, we need to reduce class size.” (Participant 2)

“To ensure inclusive education, appoint more teacher is a crying need because in our country the number of teachers is less compared to the student.” (Participant 6)

These results reflect those of Ahsan, Sharma and Deppeler (2012) work who also found that for the successful implementation of inclusive education it is necessary to reduce teacher-student ratio.

Provide necessary resources

All educational officials and teachers emphasise resources such as the modern classrooms, adequate devices, teaching-learning materials that government must ensure for implementation of inclusive education in all schools.

“Classrooms should be based on modern technology. Provided adequate teaching-learning materials and adequate devices for children with special needs.” (Participant 2)

“For conducting joyful teaching-learning activities in each class we need multimedia projectors and different types of materials for decorating classrooms.” (Participant 4).

According to Corkett and Benevides (2015) technology is essential for creating an effective learning environment and increase learning opportunity for all learners.

Reform structure

All participants stated that while developing curriculum and designing a policy it is necessary to think at first students' needs. Considering all children learning ability curricula should be modified (UNESCO, 1994). Curriculum should be reform to consider learners needs and policy should follow a unique framework to implement effective inclusive education policy (Forlin, 2013).

“To overcome the barriers of inclusive education inappropriate curriculum must be rectified and purified in that way so that it should be in favour of all students.” (Participant 2)

“First of all, through the experts, the government will create a project guideline where inclusive education policy included. Inclusive education will be designed to a unique framework.” (Participant 3)

School Feeding Programme(SFP)

All participants stated that most of the learners are from poorer families and for this reason very often they come to school without breakfast.

“School feeding should be arranged in every school in remote areas. Then it will be possible to implement inclusive education.” (Participant 3)

“They do not want to come to school because of their weakening physically for a long time. Children should be encouraged by taking the steps of school feeding programme.” (Participant 5)

According to Zenebe et al. (2018) children with disadvantaged are benefited most from SFP. Lack of nutrition diminishes their cognitive development and also reduce their learning ability. But SFP meets their nutrition demand and increase school enrolment, attendance, participation and reduce drop out.

Team work

Maximum number of the participants emphasised that teamwork is very much needed for the implementation of IE. Team work can create an environment where head teacher can engage and encourage all stakeholders to work in a harmony for better implementation of inclusive education (Kawser, Ahmed and Ahmed, 2016).

“In order to achieve inclusive education, teamwork is important. The head teacher will lead the team and engage all stakeholders in team activities.” (Participant 3)

“A team or a committee can also play an important role to do any difficult work easily. To establish an inclusive education system, we must be working together.” (Participant 6)

Parental involvement

All the officials stated that parents' involvement is very much needed to ensure proper implementation of inclusive education. If parents are involved, they will aware of sending their children to school for their development and take the responsibility they need to perform (Srivastava, Boer and Pijl, 2013).

“If the parents are engaged in school activities, then inclusive education can be more successful.” (Participant 1)

“Parental involvement has a great impact on inclusive education.” (Participant 3)

Therefore, the above discussed subthemes are considerable factors to implement successful implementation of IE policies in the Bangladesh primary school education sector.

DISCUSSION

This research reveals the current condition of inclusive education in Bangladeshi primary schools. By identifying the enablers and barriers, it paves the way for other researcher to investigate this more comprehensively. As the negative factors are discussed here the policymakers can consider this while making future decision. Highlighting different factors helps to understand more deeply about the implementation of inclusive practice. It bears the additional significance of the existing knowledge about it as it offers new doors to look inside this matter.

Aiming at the successful implementation of the inclusive education this study proceeds by exploring the facts and pointing out the enablers and barriers, and then this study tries to solve the problems with some recommendations in the context of Bangladesh. Through one research question and three research objectives, the research aim is formed. A brief discussion has been made on them here again. As previously noted the research question is: What are the enablers and barriers to the successful implementation of inclusive education policy in Bangladeshi primary schools? Also, as noted earlier the first research objective was:

To identify the enablers for successful implementation of inclusive education policy in Bangladeshi primary school.

At all we can say that the findings indicate the different understanding of different participants about inclusive education and its issues including comments from teachers and officers. The enablers of the successful implementation of inclusive education are pointed. These enablers include supportive devices for the disable children such as eyeglasses, wheelchairs; physical facilities such as ramps, separate toilet for girls; banning physical and mental punishment; stipend program; training of professional development; empowering local community started SLIP and UPEP; started ROCS project for drop out children. These findings also explores relation of enablers and successful implementation of inclusive education.

The second research objective was:

To examine the barriers for successful implementation of inclusive education policy in Bangladeshi primary school.

The researcher previously finds barriers of implementing inclusive education. These barriers include lack of clarity in the education policy; sufferings due to poverty; lack of proper facilitation; problem in communication system, physical environment; inactive school management committee; inadequate monitoring; children with special needs want to go to school but the attitude of others is a barrier. Some of the people are still superstitious. Difficulties of handling diverse learning needs, work load, lack of teachers, lack of resources, large class and some other problems. Then parents are not conscious, teachers are also averse towards disable children are causing successful implementation.

The third research objective was:

To overcome the barriers for successful implementation of inclusive education policy in Bangladeshi primary school.

Previously includes necessary issues for the successful implementation of inclusive practice in Bangladesh. All the stakeholders have to perform together to create this learning environment. In order to make such environment class size should be reduced and the teacher- student ratio should be maintained effectively. Teamwork is very much important to have such a goal implemented. Parents, teachers and others should impart actively. Curriculum should be reformed, school feeding program should start and adequate materials, devices should be given for the implementation of inclusive practice. Training program is also needed to make the teachers skilful and adapt with this new method. These findings show us what is needed to do for the successful implementation of inclusive education for all in the context of primary schools of Bangladesh.

RESEARCH IMPLICATION

According to the researcher, it is important to value the opinions of participants because they are experienced and teachers and educational officials who are involved in this process of inclusion. The teacher is the key person who implements inclusive education policy in school. On the other hand, education officials are supervising the teacher and whole process. They know the scenario in context of Bangladesh and they know why inclusion is not being successfully implemented even though government has taken a lot of initiatives at

policy level. All participants reported that we have some opportunities through stipend programs as it plays a major role to increase children's attendance in school. Also, SLIP and UPEP are other two major initiatives to encourage local involvement and most importantly to work collectively to ensure quality education for children in school. But teachers in the study expressed they faced many difficulties to implement inclusive policy. They are interested working for inclusion, but they are not clear about the policy; they do not have enough training, knowledge about disabled children; even SMC are not co-operating with them. Also, they are failing to implement inclusion due to heavy workload and large classes. On the other hand, educational officials have more emphasized on negative attitudes and insufficient training of teachers which are responsible for successful implementation of inclusive education policy.

The findings are concluded with an outline of the contribution to genuine knowledge about inclusion. Barriers and enablers faced by the promoter of inclusion is portrayed here. It is certain that some of the teachers will work in this implementation without preparing themselves properly. However, this study shows us how they feel about it and the respondent will have to explain the concept of inclusion from their own understanding. Identifying specific problems are very important and through this we can find solution for existing problems. To understand the current condition comprehensive analysis of barriers are needed. Without it the application might hinder. So this is for the benefit of all educational officer, policy makers and teachers to perform better. Findings of chapter 4 include enablers which will facilitate not only disabled children but also normal children. A number of initiatives to be taken such as providing assistive devices, starting stipend program, starting SLIP and UPEP program, starting feeding program. Some of the teachers have been trained but they fail to perform accordingly because of some problems such as lack of resources, materials, personnel, negative attitude, load of work. For weak monitoring they are averse to perform actively. Moderating these issues will help to ensure quality education as committed for the right of all children.

This study will bring out the barriers of implementing successful IE in primary school context in Bangladesh. Therefore the necessary action could be recommended to overcome the barriers. There are wide ranging social benefits including opportunities to educate the disabled and disadvantaged children. The IE enablers will help the vast number of students to work under the same study environment. The research outcome will also help to develop the growing knowledge of literature in the context of IE as well as the growing knowledge of school curriculum in the context of Bangladesh.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

In this part some recommendations are given from the factors which were explored. This proposition will help to overcome the barriers. Any of the factors cannot be ignored because they have individual importance. The education policy is unclear. This finding is supported by Mullick, Deppeler and Sharma (2012) who also identified that lack of clarity of education policy is a significant problem of effective implementation. So the proper guidelines should be given for ensuring role and responsibilities of the stakeholders. To create an inclusive culture in school so that all community people get opportunity to work together (Donohue and Bornman, 2014). The educational programme can play a significant role to increase awareness (Mullick, Deppeler and Sharma, 2012). More training program is needed (Malaketal., 2013; Ahsan, Sharma and Deppeler, 2012) and the curriculum should be redesigned according to the need of children (UNESCO, 1994). Effective monitoring is needed to increase teacher better performance in school so that the implementing process can sustain. All stakeholders should work together like a team so that inclusive education can be ran swiftly in the school (Kawser, Ahmed and Ahmed, 2016). A process of professional development can be presented for understanding the real meaning of inclusion. SFP is necessary to increase disadvantaged children active participation in school (Zenebeetal., 2018). Technology based classroom is important to create joyful learning environment (Corkett and Benevides, 2015). Even the parents should be involved all types of school activities because they are equally important as they spend most of the time with the learners (Srivastava, Boer and Pijl, 2015).

There are few literatures which have recommended separate classroom for the disabled children (Donohue and Bornman, 2014). However most of the literature supported same class room for all students (Malaketal., 2013). It has come out from the interview that maximum number of participant supports same class room for all students. A very few, just one of the participant among 6, kept opinion for separate class room pointing out that separate class may be more helpful for disabled to teach them specially. However, other participants recommended to keep the disabled students with the students in the mainstream schools, so that they can cope with all the children in one class. The main objective of SLIP is to involve local people by empowering power decentralization so that community people work together for ensure quality education in schools (Ahsan and Mullick, 2013). Although every school has a committee, it does not work accordingly. The committee member's involvement is minimum (Ahmed and Mullick, 2013) which has come out from the participant interviews and

literature review. Though there is a need of training for the teachers but those who has received training even does not practice attitudinal activities to the students (Mullick, Deppeler and Sharma, 2012; Mullick et al., 2012). According to Ahsan and Mullick (2013) students get enrolled in the primary school and successfully complete the primary education. However, according to (Zulfiqar et al., 2018) though students are getting enrolled in school but they do not complete the primary education. So, students drop out from the school is one of the matter that against to ensure the IE in the society. Sometimes general education for all children may lead to ignore the individual potentiality. Conversely, individual needs may reduce the standard of education (Šiška and Habib, 2013). Hence it's a controversial thing but has to be sorted to ensure the IE in the society.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, IE plays a vital role to address and remove any kind of discrimination from the education system. Therefore, IE in the context of primary school in Bangladesh is working to make a positive educational environment with diversity avoiding discrimination. The recommendations of this study will help the policymakers, teachers, parents, trainers, and future researchers. The information that emerged from this research is important, especially the enablers and barriers of IE in the context of Bangladesh. Therefore, this research will reveal the possibility of inclusive education in Bangladesh and how the enablers can be used to reduce the barriers. The findings identified enablers and barriers of IE. These findings add to the growing body of evidence about the enablers and barriers of IE. The research found that a more positive range of outcomes required to be achieved through the promotion of IE in Bangladeshi primary schools.

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