

# Major Issues in the Implementation of Integrated Education in Nepal

## ▶ Introduction:

Integrated education is the process of mainstreaming where students with disabilities attend classes alongside their non disabled peers.

Integrated education promotes communication and interaction between the students with and without disabilities.

Integration is important because it is the stepping stone to inclusive education. Inclusive education refers to full participation of students with disabilities in a mainstream setting.

Nepal has a number of integrated schools such as Bal Mandir, Laboratory School etc.

# Objective of the Research

- ▶ It is important to study what are the obstacles that are causing a hindrance to the effective implementation of integrated education in Nepal. There is a lack of existing data and previous research work in this field in Nepal. Therefore, this study was carried out to answer the questions:
  - ▶ What is the current situation of integrated education in Nepal?
  - ▶ What are the main problems that are being faced in the implementation of integrated education in Nepal?

# Research Method

- ▶ Qualitative research method was employed along with descriptive research design.
- ▶ 150 teachers from special as well as general schools were surveyed in Kathmandu Valley.
- ▶ Data was gathered with the help of open ended interview questionnaire.
- ▶ Teachers were asked about the difficulties they face in integrated education in their classrooms.
- ▶ The collected data was analyzed in a descriptive manner.

# Results

## Current Situation of Integrated Education in Nepal

- ▶ Statistical evidence published by the Government of Nepal (2009) reveal that officially around 1.1% of primary aged children in schools were disabled (Ministry of Education, 2009–2010).
- ▶ Nepal has ratified a number of international human rights treaties, including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which articulates that children with disabilities are entitled to the same rights as other children, including the right to inclusive education.
- ▶ Although in theory the government promotes an inclusive education policy, in practice, it supports a system of segregated resource classes designated for children with disabilities in mainstream schools and separate schools for deaf, blind and children with physical and intellectual disabilities. While it takes time to transition from resource classes and special schools to a fully inclusive education system, the government has not done enough to ensure that children with disabilities attend school and that the education system is accessible, appropriate, and of good quality for children with disabilities, particularly those with intellectual disabilities. Furthermore, the government's inclusive education policy does not offer a clear plan for the integration of children with disabilities, particularly intellectual or developmental disabilities, into mainstream schools.
- ▶ Recent evaluations carried out in Nepal (CERID, 2006, 2008) have acknowledged that, despite various shortcomings, government-funded pilot projects in selected districts have resulted in more disabled children being included in regular classrooms and in teachers from these districts often being very positive about new inclusion-based teaching methods and materials.

## Main Problems in the Implementation of Integrated Education in Nepal

1. **Resources:** A common problem faced by the teachers is the lack of appropriate instructional and educational materials for children with disabilities.
2. **Infrastructure:** Most of the schools are not disabled-friendly thus making integration more difficult.
3. **Class size:** The number of students in the classroom is too large for a single teacher to manage well. It is very difficult to pay attention to the needs of each student individually.
4. **Social stigma:** Local beliefs and superstitions play a role in marginalizing children with disabilities. For e.g. “sins of a past life”, “curse from god” etc.
5. **Cultural and linguistic diversity:** As Nepal is a multi ethnic and multi racial country with more than 100 languages spoken in the country, teachers sometimes face communication gaps with their students.
6. **Teacher training:** Many teachers do not have appropriate special education training to deal with students with disabilities.
7. **Attitudes of parents:** Sometimes parents are not cooperative as they are not willing to accept that their child has a disability.
8. **Education system:** Teachers mentioned that problems arise due to poor governance and poor education system in Nepal.

## Discussion and Conclusion

- ▶ The results have revealed that there are a number of issues that have been identified regarding the implementation of integrated education in Nepal in the present times. Efforts are being made by govt. and non-govt. agencies to promote integration of students with disabilities into the mainstream settings. However, still there is a long way to go in terms of fulfilling the educational needs of such students in a holistic manner. There is a need for skilled manpower as well as resources, materials and infrastructure. Furthermore, changes need to be made to the educational system as a whole to make it more well versed to deal with the needs of children with special needs.