

Managing Diversity in Special Education: Challenges for Effective Teaching and Learning Process in Special Schools in Nepal

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Introduction

Nepal is a multicultural, multilingual, and multiethnic country most of the inhabited peoples are from diverse social, cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. The national census 2011 revealed that there are 125 caste/ethnic groups and 123 languages spoken as mother tongue in Nepal. Moreover, Nepal is a secular country with 81.34% Hindu, 9.04% Buddhist, 4.38% Islam, 3.04% Kirat and 1.41% Christians. While these five religions constitute more than 99% of the total population, the remaining less than one percent comprises Jain (0.01%), Prakriti (0.46%), Bon (0.04%), others (0.007%) and unspecified (0.23%). Addressing this issue has enormous implications for the education sector to reach out the diverse ethnic groups to provide education for all, especially with regard to provisions of special curriculum, textbooks and teacher training in their mother tongues (CBS, 2012; NLC, 2015).

The government realized the diversities in the country in terms of language, culture, social and educational status, women education, education for disadvantages group, education for people with special needs, play significant role in teaching and learning activities. In this regard, the government opened general, integrated, and special schools for people with disabilities and without disabilities. To fulfill this purpose there are 32 special and 22 integrated school with 380 resource classes are established in Nepal. Where 74,829 differently disabled children are enrolled (MOE, 2017).

The development trends show a rapid growth of school enrolment of school age children in the past few years, but the diverse background of the students play difficulty in teaching and learning activities in the special schools. In the classroom, there are diversity in speaking language, culture, and religion, and sex. Furthermore, the teacher may have his or her own language that is diverse from the medium of teaching and learning in the classroom. In this regard, most of the teacher deliver their subject matter or content in the classroom to their own techniques by using their own language specially in Nepali. This kind of teaching strategies may not be suitable in the diverse backgrounds of the classroom by observing the perspective of inclusive education.

Research Questions

1. What kinds of activities teachers do for managing diversity in classroom?
2. What are the challenges of effective teaching and learning process in special classroom?
3. What are the appropriate ways to improve the challenges of teaching and learning process in special classroom?

Research Methodology

Research Design

This research paper was based on interpretative paradigm with the theme of qualitative research design (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Cresswell, 2009).

Study Population

Districts	Schools		Participants	Number of Informants	Experiences
	Special	Integrated			
Kathmandu	2	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head Teacher • Teacher 	3	5 to 10 years
Bhaktapur	1	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head Teacher • Teacher 	3	7 to 13 years
Total	3	3	Head Teacher, 6 Teacher, 12	18	4 to 11 years

Tools for Data Collection

In-depth Interview

Focus Group Discussion

Documents Analysis (related journal Article, special education textbook)



Data Analysis and Interpretation

Collated data were edited, classified, categorized and analyzed (Cresswell, 2009) by generating different themes as per the research questions formulated at the beginning.

Results

The result of the study is mentioned below with the help of different research questions:

1. Teachers activities for managing diversity in classroom

▪ Poor Practice of Managing Diversity in the Classroom

The research result indicated that, most of the students were enrolled in the special classroom with diverse group including language, culture, religion, and socio-economic class. But the teachers and head teachers were not focusing the students' diversities in the classroom teaching. They were using same and general instructional strategies in the classroom to teach the students with diverse background.

2. Challenges of effective teaching and learning process

- Rigid Curriculum
- Lack of Teacher Training
- Lack of Content Integration
- Inadequate of Equitable Pedagogy
- Poor Practice of Scaffolding
- Low Opportunity of Self-Regulated Learning
- Insufficient Practice of Cooperative Teaching

3. Appropriate ways to improve the teaching and learning process

- Provide sufficient amount of teacher training and refreshing training
- Managing flexible curriculum
- Develop the resource materials with the theme of content integration
- Use equitable teaching strategies
- Build the strong relation between teacher and students and use the scaffolding practice
- Provide opportunity of self-regulated learning
- Focus students diversity while teaching
- Use cooperative teaching strategies

Discussion

Teaching students with diverse backgrounds is quite a challenging job for the teacher if they are not skilled and knowledgeable. Most of the students were not benefited from the diverse classroom teaching strategies and their achievement was also low. National Center for Educational Development (NCED) conducted thirty days special teacher training programme into three phases (ten/ten days training in three times) all over the Nepal (CDC, 2007; MOE, 2017). In this regard, most of the head teachers and teachers were not satisfied about the training given by NCED. They said that the special teacher training program is very short as well as training was only based on the theoretical aspect. In addition, the training program did not address the real situation of the school environment and the needs of the students.

The curriculum is a key aspect for all the learners and it is center of education, by how adequately it can support and accommodate the diversity and variability of learners (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014; CDC, 2007). In this regard, the research results indicated that it was very complicated to implement local (mother tongue) curriculum in diverse classroom specially in Kathmandu and Bhaktapur district. Because most of the schools located in this area, there were more than five different language speaking students were studied in one classroom. The study indicated that teachers and head teachers were not trying to apply equitable instructional techniques in the classroom as well as they were not provided the self-regulated learning time for students.

Teachers have the responsibility for assisting students to become independent learners as well as to structure the classroom environment to help students achieve the goal (Serna & Lau-Smith, 1995). Hence, the result of the study indicated that teachers and head teachers were not provided sufficient self-learning time for students. They were always teaching students by their own ways specially lecturer method. In addition, most of the teachers were not prepare the certain strategies or plan for teaching students such as, action plan, goal setting, goal planning, and self-management. In addition, most of the teachers and head teachers were using general instruction techniques to teach the students with diverse background, were not using the cooperative learning, taught by using Nepali language, and not using the scaffolding practice in the classroom. So that, such endeavors are directly or indirectly creating challenges in effective teaching and learning process in special schools.

Conclusions

Government of Nepal has made different provisions at policy level to increase the access in education and to manage the educational diversity for children with special needs. But in practice, these provisions were not realized effectively. Research participants had criticized on existing policy, provisions, teacher's quality, and mechanism. Hence, the research findings indicated that, poor practice of managing diversity in the classroom, teacher's training, rigid curriculum, imperfect content integration, inadequate pedagogy, poor practice of scaffolding, low opportunity of self-regulated learning, lack of content integration, and insufficient practice of cooperative learning plays the significant challenges for effective teaching and learning process in special schools in Nepal. These endeavors are not sufficient to address and maintain effective teaching and learning process in special schools.

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