

NEPAL

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**The Current Situations and Future Trends of
Educational Practice for Children with
Visual/ Hearing Impairments
Practice and Its Outcome of Educational
Support in the Kingdom of Nepal**

About Nepal

Nepal is one of the landlocked countries in the world. The kingdom is also called as the country of the Mount Everest or the country of the Lord Buddha's and Sita's birthplace. The country lies between India and China. Physically the country is divided into three major regions i. e. the Tarai- the southern plain region having altitude of 1000ft. The hill region- having altitude of above 1000 to 7000ft where there are some mountains and some valleys. The Himalayan or the mountain region-which is above 7000ft to 29848ft and is the most difficult region for its overall development. The 16000ft line is called the snow line above which there is snow coverage throughout the year. The population of the country is nearly 23.1 million and the area is 147181 square kilometer. About one third of the land is higher mountain and without any vegetation but with snow throughout the year.

It is a mountainous country but has many issues for development. Some of the issues are poverty, difficulty of the transportation and communication, more population of disadvantaged group, low literacy rate, and society of the ethnicity, many spoken language and diversified culture. Priority and the strategy of the Government to solve these issues are to develop good access and quality education in the country.

The education system in Nepal comprises of one or two years of Early Childhood Development/ Preprimary schooling Program (for 3-5 years age group), five years Primary (6-10 years age group), three years lower secondary (11-13 years age), two years secondary (14 and 15 years age) and two years higher secondary education as school education. The higher education consists of 3 years Bachelor's degree, two years Master's degree and three years PhD program. The number of children and the institutions including the universities in Nepal are provided in the Annex I.

Special Needs Education Program

- "Inclusive education is a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs all learners in the classroom and in the school and thereby reducing exclusion within and from

education no matter what causes for exclusion could be" (Inspired by UNESCO, 2000).

- Inclusive education is an overall educational development process aimed to create well-coming schools and societies and to avoid any kind of discriminations.
- With inclusive education changes the focus from the defects or problems of the individuals towards problems in the education systems. The problem is not first of all to adjust students to the educational system the curriculum and the teaching; but opposite to change and adjust the educational system, the curriculum and teaching to the needs of all student by removing all sorts of barriers for learning.
- The two major interventions in the inclusive education are the school development activities and the formative research activities. These two interventions should be linked together and implemented simultaneously.
- The key problems and issues identified in Nepalese primary education for increasing access to the quality education and achieving the target of the EFA are- about 19.6% children of primary age group (6-10 years of age) are not enrolled in the schools, the dropout rates especially in grade one is high (13.6%), the promotion rate, and the repetition rates of the same grade are 44.6% and 41.8% respectively while the survival rate of the grade 5 is only 63.1% (DOE Statistics, 2000).
- It is realized that the children who are out of school are especially from the backward (Dalits) community, children at difficult circumstances (children at risk), children who are isolated due to difficult topography, socially and culturally backward communities and due to poverty, Maoist insurgency and language problems. The child labor, street children and disabilities are the other reasons for the children of not attending the schools on the regular basis.
- To address these problems, a piloting program, i.e. inclusive education was planned and implemented in Banke district (in 4 primary schools) in 2000, at Udaipur district (in 4 primary schools) in 2001 and at Kavre and Sindupalchok districts (in 2 primary schools from each district) in 2002.
- The piloting programs were the joint effort of the DOE, County of Copenhagen, and the Royal Danish University of Education under the agreement of Institutional Linkage Program between the HMGN and the DANIDA. Provisions are made to work together by the expert group from the Special Education Section (DOE) and the Resource Person from the DEO, County of Copenhagen and The Royal Danish University of Education.
- The expert group is working together with the schools on regular basis. This group visits the schools twice a year and organizes discussions, meetings and the workshops with the teachers or with the parents or with the children or with the School Management Committees separately or in the mixed groups. The progress and the outcomes made, the issues faced, the lack of coordination realized, and the future actions to be taken are discussed thoroughly in these gatherings. The consensus reached during the meetings, discussions and the workshops are implemented for the school development and further formative research activities. Provisions are also made to coordinate activities by the RPs from the DEO.
- The objectives of the piloting were to test the strategies on how to develop the quality

education through the implementation of Inclusive Education, develop the child friendly school environment for all types of children, development of the child focused environment, management of the classroom in creating situations of learning and teaching to all types of children, developing the learning materials suited to the culture and locality, mobilizing the community and developing and implementing the child focused curriculum.

- The four principles of inclusive education i.e. every child has rights for education, all children can learn, every child is different and the increase of the educational achievements is directly related to the mobilization of the stakeholders (teachers, parents, the community, and the SMC) were discussed with the stakeholders in the meetings and agreed upon the principles.
- The emphasis given by the inclusive education for the meaningful teaching and learning are the activities should be child focused, the teachers should create teaching- learning classroom environment, and the students should have opportunities to have self-learning environment (by observation, touch, application, thinking etc).
- The major strategies taken are - to maintain good and deep coordination between the civic society and the school to create conducive environment for learning to the children and share responsibilities to all the stakeholders, to start the educational and social activities by the children that are beneficial for the society based on the needs of the society, to share responsibilities among all the stakeholders to provide equal access of quality education to the disadvantaged children, to create child friendly school environment for all types of the children in the society, as far as possible to manage the learning materials that are available locally and to develop quality education acceptable by the stakeholders.
- The persons involved in this piloting are - the consultants from the County of Copenhagen and the Royal Danish University of Education, the expert group from Special Education Section of DOE, DEO officials (RPs, Section Officer, the DEO in the respective districts), the representatives of the CBOs, the parents, representatives from the disadvantaged community, students, representatives of the political parties, the social workers, business people and the women group.
- Although the Special Education Section of the DOE takes the responsibility of the implementation, the decisions taken by the stakeholders are implemented by all concerns.
- The outcomes so far received are - there is tremendous improvement in the classroom management, the personnel records of the children are prepared, the barriers of learning are being identified, the teachers have been able to identify the learning ability of the children, the teachers have started in preparing the teaching materials locally and

Present Status Of Special Education

The main objective of Special Education Program is to give equal access to primary Education for disabled children. Principally all children are different. That's why Department of Education, special education section is trying to develop different kind of appropriate teaching learning methods, materials supplement teaching helping aids and necessary equipment or resources for

children with disabilities. Now we are supporting Major four groups.

1. Children with deaf and hard of hearing.
2. Children with Blind and low vision.
3. Children with Mental Retardation
4. Children with Physical handicap.

Under the BPEP II special education is provide to the children with these four kinds of disability (Mild to moderate, non severe) in a Inclusive way. To achieve this goal SNE program has guided the following strategies.

1. To train manpower for awareness raising, disability wise training skill and screening and assessment of disabled children.
2. To operate the resource classes focusing on the population of the children according to the report of national status and school mapping programmes.
3. To provide the opportunities of education in the resource classes or in the ordinary school near the home.
4. To establish district wise assessment center.
5. To increase partnership with NGOs in different SNE programmes.
6. To revise and develop teacher training package to be implemented through teacher training institution and NGO's.
7. To support supervision monitoring and follow-up for district level and school level special education program.
8. To provide teaching learning materials, helping aids or equipments brail lip books and other resources.

Now Department of education has successfully implemented 3 years program under BPEP II and major achievement are as follows.

1. Special needs education program under BPEP has covered in 47 districts out of 75 districts.
2. 228-resource class in different school of 35 districts is operating and 44 resource classes will be add in this fiscal year 2002.
3. 30-assessment center has been established in 30 districts. Each assessment center has a technical committee.
4. More then 3500 physical disable children have got a opportunities to study with scholarship.
5. The special education section DOE with the support of Danish University of education and the county of Copenhagen has been piloting inclusive education programmes in four districts (Banke, Udayapur, Kavreand sindhupalchock.)

6. Other programme like awareness programme, teacher training, and instructional material are developed and distributed.
7. Braille textbooks are distributed to primary, lower secondary, and secondary schools.

The current situation of children with blind and low vision

The first step toward the provision of special education in Nepal is said to have been taken in the year of B.S. 2021 with a group of blind students to get integrated education in regular school. In B.S 2026 Nepal blind and disabled association was established as the first NGO directly related with disability. Gradually in the year of IYDP 1981 association for the welfare of the blind (NAWB) was established and it is well functioning yet in the field of schooling programmes, teacher training, related material and Braille book production. Now blind and low vision children are getting study opportunities by three channels. They are,

- a) Under special education council.
- b) Under department of education.
- c) Under NGOs/ INGOs

a) Special education council providing grants to the school through selected NGOs since 1971. School level National special sports competition and school level special culture competition including visual impaired children has organized in each year by the council. Under SEC only one segregate type and 10 integrated blind schools are providing education following the general curriculum. School management committee and resource teacher manage the educational material for the teaching and extra curricular activities. Many blind children have completion higher education in different faculty.

b) Since 1999 special education section under DOE has given the responsibility to formulate, lunch and monitor the special needs education program in the integrated approach. Now the program has covered 47 districts out of 75 districts. the major activities for visual and hearing impairment children under department of education are follows.

Awareness program.

It is estimated 5.5% of the total population in Nepal need special education. It is expected this program intends to created awareness among a wide range of participants about special needs education focusing the need of visual and hearing impairment children. This program includes orientation, meetings, and face-to-face workshop program with relevant stakeholders both at the central and local levels.

Teacher training program

This program intends to set up a replicable model for training of teachers and implementation

of inclusive schoolings. We have a series of teacher training programs they are,

Awareness trainings

This training is given to ordinary primary school teachers. During this training the teacher will become aware of,

- Different types of disabilities.
- Symptoms and behavior.
- Screening techniques.
- Classroom management

After the training the teacher will be able to admit low vision and some mildly hard of hearing children in their classroom.

○ Basic training (Self study)

The training is for 5 months and includes

- Classroom management.
- Method of teaching basic reading skills,
- Method of teaching basic writing skills,
- Method of teaching basic mathematical skills,

This training is divided into 5 phases or units. Each unit has 1 resource book for 1 month self study. An introductory orientation is held prior to each phase/ unit. During 1 month study a group of participants meet weekly to discuss and share experiences related to the study.

○ Special training

Special training is the third step in the special education teacher training system. The special training provides practical skills to teachers to enable Braille skill, mobility skill, daily life skill, tactual skill, etc for visual impairment children and sign language skill, speech therapy, total communication etc for hearing impaired children.

○ Refresher and up grading training

Refresher and up grading training has been designed to support more skills to refresh and upgrade the knowledge of teachers depending on the needs of districts.

○ Running of resource classes

Resource classes are established in the districts according to the need on the basis of the school mapping program. The classes run within the primary school system in order to prepare

the student to be included in general classes with other students. There are 59 resource classes in regular school for visual impaired children and 112 resource classes are running for hearing impaired children. Both type of children are studying same general school curriculum. Each resource classes have at list 10 students with residential facilities. During the resource classes period visual impaired children can learn Braille skills, delay living skills, mobility, social behavior, use of material, reading and writing skills. and hearing impaired children can learn total communication , delay living skills, social behavior, use of material, reading and writing skills etc. Resource teacher has given the responsibility to launch the resource classes .The resource classes management committee has formulate by the local community.

○ **Assessment center**

As part of development of special needs education in Nepal the department of education has planned to establish educational assessment center in all districts of Nepal. Now we have 35- assessment center are functioning in 35 districts. Principally all children are different that's why we cannot support any body with out need identification through screening and assessment. DOE is focusing to the whole assessment of the child. For visual and hearing impaired children first of all we take allot of information about child. Then another step we refer to the assessment center for whole screening and assessment. After screening and assessment center makes a individual educational plan for the child.

Development and reproduction of educational material

Special education program needs a comprehensive strategic plan and lot of material for its initial stage. Department of education is providing concrete, semi concrete and abstract materials, tools, equipment, Braille textbook, sign language book and other relevant material for visual and hearing impaired children and DOE also funding for local material production by student.

Visual impairment/blindness is mostly influencing mobility and information presented visually. Therefore such students will be able to able to follow ordinary education if the transport to the school can be arranged and if the teaching is considering the students special needs including Braille reading and writing.

In some cases the visual impairment can be cured or reduced through operations or use of glasses. It is important that the special education services are combined with health services.

School with blind children will be supported by teacher education and supervision, supply of special materials and part time skill training at a blind center at district level. The main model for support is individual support in the home school. For students with too big mobility special education will be offered based on stay in a accommodations