The Role of Special Classes, Resource Rooms and Other Arrangements in Regular Schools

Meeting Individual Educational Needs while Forming a Cohesive Society

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1. The Context

Nepal is a Democratic Republic country in South Asia situated on the lap of the Himalayas. Mt. Everest and Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, are the identity of Nepal. The Interim Constitution of Nepal -2006 has made basic education a Fundamental Right of people. The Three Year Interim Plan (2007/08-2009/10) has emphasized social inclusion. Nepal government has made a commitment to achieve the Education for All by 2015. Inclusive education is one of the priority areas of EFA and MDG. Nepal has taken various initiatives to introduce inclusive education through the provision of special needs children and resource classes through the integration model in regular classes/schools. Different types of schools are in operation in Nepal with various models of inclusive education to provide access to education.

2. Inclusionary practices toward regular schools

The departure from traditional system of segregated schools towards inclusive schools has been a story initiative in Nepal. To meet the educational needs of individual children, Nepal has adopted the following practices, the inclusive practice being the recent one.

A: Special School: The first initiatives to educate children with disabilities (CWDs) were establishing special schools. The first special school was for the blind and visually impaired children started in 1964 with an integrated approach to education. There was gradual expansion of special education in other parts of the country in later years.

B. Integrated education and resource class:

The Special Education Council was formed in 1973 to take responsibility of special education throughout the country. With the implementation of Basic and Primary Education Master Plan in 1992, primary education to children with disabilities mainstreamed in 1994 with integrated resource classes in regular schools. The main objective of the programme was to provide equal access of basic and primary education to all children including children with special educational needs. Based on inclusive pedagogy, 350 resource classes are operating in regular schools for primary level education and 18 integrated schools for blind and deaf children up to the secondary level of education.
C. Inclusive Education:

Inclusion is a right-based approach advocating equitable access of education to all children irrespective of their differences and virtually intending to create a society for all. With the aim of developing school for all, Department of Education has disseminated the basic concept of inclusive education. The resource class schools for CWDs are also considered as inclusive school. Efforts are being made to develop inclusive education resource centers at local level for promoting social inclusion, community participation and decentralization of educational services.

3. The Resource Class provision:

The government of Nepal is committed to provide education for all by 2015 by bringing all children to school irrespective of their special educational needs. Department of Education is running 350 resource classes for CWDs as part of regular school system to ensure full participation and equality. Integrated schools with resource room to work as the support centers for needy children and the schools with integration program for blind and low vision children are gradually moving toward inclusive school i.e. welcoming school for all. Resource classes are managed with residential facility attach with local community. The Resource Class Management Committee is responsible for managing residential facilities and overall activities of resource class. (CERID Report, 2004).

Before operating the resource class resource teachers get additional 45 days special training, and refresher and up-grading trainings in following years. Resource teacher is made responsible to operate the class and provide support to CDWs. The efforts are being directed to develop model inclusive school with adequate support mechanism to children needing special or individualized support.

4. Utilization of resource classes and other arrangements:

The resource classes operating now have significant role in providing specialized, individual and additional support to children, including their social or emotional adjustment and transition management. Moreover, assessment centers are part of the system that also supports children to assess and meet their individualized needs.

Utilization of Resource Class: Resource classes or rooms are the most important units established in regular school setting to facilitate the learning process of children with special educational needs. These classes are ment mainly for: managing transition from resource class to regular classes; assessment and need identification of children and providing care for social and emotional adjustment; provide individualized and special support such as remedial teaching, extra tutoring, counseling, mentoring, etc.; functioning as supplementary support system to CWDs and other needy children; motivating and preparing children with special needs to regular education; building up awareness among parents and local people fighting for right to education for all; develop a school for all or welcoming all regardless of their difficulties or differences; and promoting individualized pedagogical support to children.

Utilization of Assessment Center: Assessment center, one in each district, is used for screening and assessment of CWDs; early identification and intervention; counseling and referral service;
coordinating with related I/NGOs, CBOs, etc., and developing network for promoting access and quality of services.

Apart from resource class and assessment center, accommodation facility, Braille books, supportive devices and teaching learning materials are provided, and teacher trainings are managed for reaching all children particularly special educational needs.

5. Issues and challenges:

Creation of inclusionary setting to ensure equitable access for all children together with special needs children; individual support to children with special educational needs in a large classroom; reaching all children with special educational needs who are still unreached; representative management to ensure participation of the target groups; dealing with special/inclusive education dichotomy to move toward inclusion; linking special needs/inclusive education with overall EFA movement; restructuring school education system in terms of financial sustainability, structural setting and its duration;

amount of exposure and its duration for resource/inclusive teacher; life skill education and experience of trainers; availability of and appropriacy of support services; inadequate knowledge and skill in teachers to assess and support CWDS; and true decentralization of educational services with increased participation of the stakeholders in planning and execution of the policies and programs are now being the issues and challenges in Nepalese context.

6. Innovative efforts: Strikingly visible are the following efforts of the government to meet the special educational needs of individual children.

**Inclusion of Deaf Children**: Janata Namuna Higher Secondary School Biratnagar, has developed a model of inclusion of 55 deaf children in regular classes with other hearing students. The students learn sign language under regular curriculum in resource class up to grade three through resource teachers. They study together with hearing friends in regular classes from grade four onward. Resource teachers train regular staffs in sign language who teach both deaf and hearing children in the same class using basic signs and total communication methods. Interesting enough, both deaf and hearing students are studying together successfully creating an example of social and educational inclusion. The achievement level of deaf students in their class is comparatively better than that of hearing students. Thus, such practice has set a good model challenging the slogan “No Inclusion for the Deaf”. (Please refer to DVD- “Our School”)

**Inclusive Classroom - Lalitpur and Tanahun model**: After establishing the special resource class support to CWDS for their integration in regular schools, the inclusive classroom schools are locally managed to ease the access of children with different disabilities to schooling in regular class based on the inclusive pedagogy. Adarsha Saula Secondary School, Lalitpur and Shukla Primary school, Tanahun are such example. Such a management has changed the attitude and behavior of the whole school system towards meeting the individual needs of children with special educational needs.
7. Way Forward:

- Disability issue has been incorporated in regular teacher training package to develop the capacity of teacher for supporting CWDs.
- Small center and itinarent teaching for children with intellectual disability has been more successful for providing educational and counselling services locally.
- Scholarship, Braille books and teaching learning materials are provided.
- Assessment Centers are established; and coordination with I/NGOs has been the implementation strategy.
- Parent's involvement has ensured through Resource Class Management Commiitee, Parents' Teachers Association, and mostly through managing residence for CWDs.
- Teacher management and training programme has been prioritized.
- Initiatives have taken to scale up inclusive education to address the needs of all children from regular school setting.

References:

Education for All Core Document, 2004-09, Ministry of Education, Keshermahal, Nepal
The Interim Constitution of Nepal (2006), Government of Nepal
The Three Year Interim Plan (2007 - 2009), National Planning Commission, Nepal
Prasad, Laxmi Narayan, (2003). Status of People with Disability in Nepal,
The Economic Survey (2008), MOF, Government of Nepal
Q1. What are the key points for the success in including deaf students in regular school?
A1. – Government and local government system help it.
   – Member of CBR (Community Based Rehabilitation) made efforts to collaborate with School.
   – Teacher use total communication skill and they use talented students for support.
   – Above of all, teachers dedication is the best key for success in regular school.

Q2. Could you explain the assessment center? Is it managed by government? What kind of people are working in the center?
A2. Government manages the center. Assessment center supports to local education and resource room. Ten professional members are guiding member and they have a technical team.

Q3. What is the strategy or policy to use the collaboration with NGO?
A3. Government has policy to collaborate with NGOs for implementing programs effectively. In the case of special needs education, the ministry has Institutional Linkage programs. The collaboration is made mainly for resource sharing for effective implementation. In the case of Braille book production, special teacher training, advocacy and Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) programs, NGOs are contributing to government.