

Baseline assessment of special education schools in public sector, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan

Sheraz Ahmad¹, Atta Ullah², Muniba Akram³, Sohaib Ali⁴, Shazia Gul⁵

*Paraplegic Center Peshawar¹, Rehman Medical College², University of Peshawar³,
Peshawar Medical College⁴, Department of Social Welfare⁵*

ABSTRACT

Education is a basic human right. Children with disabilities (CWDs) need the most and get the least of Education. Quality data about the special education facilities in developing countries like Pakistan can guide reforms. This study undertook the task to evaluate the situation of special needs education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). This study will serve as a bench mark for future actions.

A Questionnaire based survey was conducted across the public sector special education schools in KP between August and October 2013. Data was analyzed with SPSS V.16.0. The questionnaire included sections about infrastructure, number of students, co-curricular activities and provision of personal assistive devices.

Out of 28 responding schools, 2 (7%) are metric, 5 (18 %) are middle and 21 (75%) are primary level. Out of 27, Schools for hearing impaired were 10 (37%), MR & PH are 6 (22%), for visually impaired are 7 (26%) and special education complexes for cross disabilities are 4 (15%). Parent teachers association (PTA) is part of 80% schools. 19 (70%) schools are in rented buildings. 9 (36 %) have hostels while average distance of schools (all situated in Urban areas) from main bus stand is 4.16 Kilometers. 12 (46%) schools (n=26) participate in sports with 12 schools (57%: n=21) have a play ground. 3 (27 %, n=11) institutions have audiologist, 4 (40%) schools having physiotherapist(s) and only 3 (11%) schools are having psychologist(s) at service where needed. No eye care exists at Blind schools (n=7) or complexes (n=4). Majority of Hearing aids are self-purchased and most of tricycles are provided by government. Situation of special education in KP is worrisome. Deficient and inaccessible infrastructure is catering negligible number of potential beneficiaries/ children with disabilities. Previous policies and National Action Plans special education is shelved awaiting implementation.

Keywords: Special Needs Education, Children with Disability, Persons with Disability, UNCRPD, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Access this article online	
Publisher	Website: http://www.ndpublisher.in
	DOI: 10.5958/2230-7311.2016.00015.5

According to Britannica, special education, also called special needs education is the education of children who differ socially, mentally, or physically from the average to such an extent that they require modifications of usual school practices. Special education serves children

Address for correspondence

Paraplegic Center Peshawar

E-mail: drsheraz.ak@gmail.com

Submission: 22nd January 2016

Accepted: 26th April 2016

with emotional, behavioral, or cognitive impairments or with intellectual, hearing, vision, speech, or learning disabilities; gifted children with advanced academic abilities; and children with orthopedic or neurological impairments.¹ However, the guiding principle for and after the Salamanca Statement Framework For Action is that general schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions.²

An overview of UN Factsheet on Persons with Disabilities shows that around 15 % of the world's population, or estimated 1 billion people, live with disabilities. Of these 1 billion people 80 % live in developing countries (UNDP). According to Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, on average, 19 per cent of less educated people have disabilities, compared to 11 per cent among the better educated and women reporting higher incidents of disability than men.³

UNICEF says, 30 per cent of street youth have some kind of disability. UNESCO reports that Ninety percent (90%) of children with disabilities (CWDs) in developing countries do not attend school. *"The global literacy rate for adults with disabilities is as low as 3 percent and 1 per cent for women with disabilities, according to a 1998 UNDP study".⁴*

Education is key to success. Whether to excel in formal economy, informal sector or self employment, quality education is essential. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) as a province stands first population under 15 years of age with 47.20% as compared to National average of 43.40 %. Also, KP has the lowest economically active population of 19.41 % and literacy ratio of 35.41 % compared to National statistics of 22.24 % and 43.92 % respectively^{5,6}. In that case, at 2.12 % population of KP living with disability and poverty puts them at double disadvantage in KP. These facts make special needs education at KP all the more important. However, no published data exists that give any idea of the current facilities of special needs education in KP. This study intends to evaluate the current situation of special education in KP and set Benchmarks for years to come.

Methods and Material

A questionnaire based survey was conducted in public sector special education schools in KP between August

and October 2013. The study was invoked through the recommendations of Reforms working group for special education at Department of Social Welfare. Administrative approval for the study was granted by Directorate of Social Welfare. 28 schools out of 39 returned the questionnaire (R.R 72.4%). Questionnaires contained detailed questions about infrastructure, Human resource, curriculum, co-curricular activities and administrative affairs. Data was analyzed by SPSS V 16.0.

Results

Results of our study show that out of 28 responding schools, 2 (7%) are metric level, 5 (18 %) are middle level while the rest 21 (75%) are primary level. Certificates awarded to students till middle level i.e. Class 8 are awarded by the concerned schools. Out of 27 schools responding to specialty question, Deaf schools are 10 (37%), MR & PH are 6 (22%), education complexes for cross disabilities are 4 (15%), schools for visually impaired are 7 (26%). Parent teacher association (PTA) is part of 80% schools. 19(70%) schools are in rented buildings and only 8 (30 %) are in Government-owned purpose built Buildings. 9 (36 %) schools are having hostel facility, although all of them are in Urban areas and inaccessible for Rural CWDs. However, only 9 (36%) schools are having boarding facility. Average distance of schools from main bus stand even in urban areas is 4.16 Kilometers. 88% of schools have no canteen(s) and 12 (46%) schools (n=26) participate in regular sports' tournaments with 12 schools (57%) out of 21 responding to the question have a play ground. Two of the seven deaf schools and only one complex (n=4) have audiologist at service. Only 4 (40%) schools are having physiotherapist out of the 10MR&PH and education complexes combined. There are no eye care services at Blind schools (n=7) or complexes (n=4). 3 (11%) schools are having psychologist. Hearing aid ever distributed by Government is to 25% of the schools, self-purchasing is at 50% and NGOs plus Government provided aids to another 25%. 43% of white canes are distributed by Government, 43% of white canes by NGOs and 14% of white canes are self-purchased. Sources of tricycles' distribution include 25% from NGO, 25% from private purchased and 50% from government.

Discussion

Under article 24 of United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), states are obliged to provide PWDs education on the basis of equal opportunity without any discrimination. Inclusive education (not to exclude CWDs from general education on the basis of disabilities) is a cornerstone under this convention.⁷ The same is applicable to Pakistan being signatory of the UNCRPD. In Pakistan Education of CWDs fall under the ambit of Ministry of social welfare and Special Education. This ministry is responsible for special education and integrated rehabilitative services for person with disabilities since 1988 i.e. after the seventh five years plan of Pakistan planning commission.⁸ After the 18th constitutional amendment in Pakistan, Ministry of social welfare devolved from federal to provincial governments. Calculating for total population of KP as 177, 44,000, population under 15 turns out to be 8375168. Calculating the figures for CWDs at the rate of 2.12%, the total number of CWDs as per 1998 census is 177,553.⁵ Children under 15 years of age in KP surpass the national average in all provinces. At the time of this study total number of students enrolled in all the 28 participating schools 2142 students were enrolled with an average of 77 students per school (mean for boys 57, mean for girls 20). The overall enrolment ratio and especially the male female ratio is worrisome and female enrolment is much lower than report published by UNICEF. Grey literature reveals that the total number of CWDs in the entire public sector Special education centers is 3500 (1.97 % of the total Children with Disability). Teacher student ratio is 1:11 compared to 1:9 in country paper of Pakistan presented at Asia Pacific International Seminar on Special Education. ⁹Only two of the 28 schools are affiliated with Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education and two are up to metric level, five are middle where as twenty one (75 %) are primary schools. Primary schools are with no skill development or vocational training. This is in contravention to the National Plan of Action (NPA) 2006 which urged for the up gradation of all special education centers (SECs) from primary level incrementally. The NPA 2006 also asks for initiation of certificates/ diploma courses in Special Education at provincial level from 2010 onward

with no progress so far.¹⁰ Amidst this discussion, concerns about PWDs reaching higher education are genuine when only 1.56% general public in KP and 1.58 % nationally acquire master level education. Only 0.40 % in general public have got a professional diploma/ certificate courses (population census report 1998). All the 28 schools surveyed have no provision for inclusive education which is a failure to full fill action point# 6 of the NPA and shy away from the Dakar Framework for Action.¹¹ Also no inclusive education policy is being introduced so far as deemed actionable by 2007 onward in NPA. These shortcomings have been highlighted by other authors in the past as well.¹² It is worth mentioning that only 8 schools (30%) are in purpose built buildings while 19 (70%) are in rented buildings that are not disabled friendly. Similarly thorough deliberation needs to be given while deciding the site accessibility, population density and other environmental factors while starting a special needs school as recommended in a previous study.¹³ In our study 68 % (n=17) schools are situated in residential area with average distance of 4.16 Km (n=26) from main bus terminal. All of them are situated in district head quarter with only 36 % (n=9) having hostel and only 11 % (n=3) having canteen facility. Non availability of play grounds in 42% of the responding schools is worth mentioning. Other results of our study pertaining to provision of assistive devices and books are on the contrary to what the UNCRPD and NPA 2006 recommends. We need to learn from good practices in our neighborhood i.e. India where rigorous legal framework exist and being implemented to make education free and accessible.¹⁴ Curriculum and accessibility in terms of ways and means of knowledge transfer are also warranting attention as depicted in a recent study by Bushra and Rukhsana Basir.¹⁵

Conclusion

Little has been done so far to include CWDs in education. Both National Action Plan 2006 and UNCRPD seem distant dreams so far. Looking at the worrisome picture of basic education for CWDs, genuine worries emerge for their status in higher education. With exception of few, all the schools are primary level and not affiliated with any Educational or technical board.

Limitations

Our study didn't include private/ charitable Special Needs schools. Also, a sizeable chunk of public sector schools' data is missing. Our study didn't extract sufficient information about the Qualification of teachers and cost-benefit analysis and curriculum matters of the Special Education system. Having access to district wise disability statistics with its comparison to SNE enrollment ratio could have given a comprehensive view.

Recommendations

1. Future researchers should include schools we missed in our study.
2. Same study should be repeated periodically to track progress.
3. Future studies should also focus on technical and allocative efficiency of government spending on special education.
4. Studies on curriculum and teachers' qualification, induction and fitness for the job are also recommended for research.
5. Similar study should be carried out to understand the situation of persons with Disabilities in higher education.
6. Similar studies are needed to evaluate special needs education in private sector..

Footnotes

1. "Special education: Patterns of instructional adaptation" 2008. 30 Apr. 2015 <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/558532/special-education/242124/Patterns-of-instructional-adaptation>>
2. "thesalamanca statement framework for action - Unesco." 2002. 30 Apr. 2015 <http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA_E.PDF>

3. "UN Enable - Factsheet on Persons with Disabilities." 2007. 30 Apr. 2015 <<http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=18>>
4. "Employment for persons with disabilities Fact Sheet - the ..." 2007. 30 Apr. 2015 <<http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/toolaction/employmentfs.pdf>>
5. "DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS - 1998 CENSUS | Pakistan ..." 2013. 30 Apr. 2015 <<http://www.pbs.gov.pk/content/demographic-indicators-1998-census>>
6. "POPULATION BY SELECTIVE AGE GROUPS | Pakistan." 2013. 30 Apr. 2015 <<http://www.pbs.gov.pk/content/population-selective-age-groups>>
7. "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities." 2008. 30 Apr. 2015 <<http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>>
8. "Special education in Pakistan: in the perspectives of ..." 2011. 30 Apr. 2015 <[http://www.savap.org.pk/journals/ARInt./Vol.1\(2\)/2011\(1.2-21\).pdf](http://www.savap.org.pk/journals/ARInt./Vol.1(2)/2011(1.2-21).pdf)>
9. AWAN, MMH. "PAKISTAN." 2005. <https://www.nise.go.jp/kenshuka/josa/kankobutsu/pub_d/d-240/d-240_17.pdf>
10. "Government of Pakistan - Bevy Solutions." 2010. 30 Apr. 2015 <http://www.bevysolutions.com/downloads/national_plan_of_action_2006.pdf>
11. "The Dakar Framework for Action - unesdoc - Unesco." 2002. 30 Apr. 2015 <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001211/121147e.pdf>>
12. Ahmed, M. "Policies for Special Persons in Pakistan Analysis ... - to current." 2011. <<http://berkeleyjournalofsocalsciences.com/Feb%201.pdf>>
13. Jaffar, A. "Investigating Special Needs Children in Skardu District ..." 2015. <<http://www.ajms.co.in/sites/ajms/index.php/ajms/article/view/977>>
14. ARYA, RAJNISH KUMAR. "Education of Children with Special Needs: A Critical Analysis with Special Reference in Chhattisgarh State of India."
15. Akram, Bushra, and Rukhsana Bashir. "Special Education and Deaf Children in Pakistan: An Overview." *Journal of Elementary Education* **22.2**: 33-44.