

## Factors Distressing the Quality of Special Education Centers

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### Abstract

*Present research was intended to examine the factors that are distressing the education of special students studying at the special education centers of the Punjab. Study was investigative in nature, therefore, qualitative approach was adopted to discover the under consideration phenomena. Foremost objectives were to ascertain factors which are hampering the quality of education delivered to special children at special education centers and to discover the interventions through which quality of education delivered to special children can be uplifted. Through stratified random sampling method 30 centers were selected for the data collection. From these centers 100 special children, 220 parents and 30 heads were contacted for data collection. In this study several open ended questions were asked from respondents, analyses was performed through content analysis. Findings make it clear that there is lack of facilities in the special education centers, desired services according to the needs of special children are also missing in many centers. It was reported that in many centers furniture fixture and physical infrastructure were not disabled responsive. There is insufficiency of assistive devices and staff (Teaching and non-teaching staff). Quality education in quality settings is fundamental right of the special persons, for the improvement of special education centres stakeholders' attention is urgently required, there is a dire need to revamp special education centres. With proper planning and interventions centres may able to accommodate educational requirements of each special children in accordance with quality standards.*

**Keywords:** Special deucation, quality, special education centres

### Introduction

Diversity exists universally; all of us are different in terms of our competencies, discernment due to diversity is not acceptable. Special People differ in terms of their bodily and intellectual capabilities; despite of physical or mental challenges they have certain remarkable abilities through which they can learn, adapt and develop ingenious ways to adjust in the society if properly educate. Generally disability covers complete life period of the individuals, incapacities that are neurological or sensory in nature

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converted in a constant mate; for better handling of this condition recognition, modification and adjustments are required. For this attention of Government, policy makers and health care institutions destined for persons with disabilities is vital. It also call consideration of community, parents and peer groups.

For person with disabilities education is a power tool that can change their fate, if properly focused on the individual differences of the learners (differences due to disability, social support and other psychological variations). Education has paramount significance in all cultures, it train human minds that accounts for extensive self-efficacy (McGrath, 2012).

It is not possible for person to act / behave appropriately without appropriate education; human capacities can be refined to the unlimited degree through education and training which eventually enlighten cognitive processes including critical thinking and decision making (Schinkel, 2017).

It is a common fallacy that special education is only least important branch of general education system; this impression is flawed, because special education in numerous means more demanding and difficult than general education. Special education is intended to impart education to each students by keeping in view special educational requirements. Special education is grounded on discretely intended and analytically scrutinized prearrangement of teaching methodologies, modified materials in disabled friendly settings whereas, general education is dealing with normal students in general /common environment.

As per the UN convention of rights of Persons with Disabilities Persons with Disability (CRPD) people who have enduring intellectual, bodily or sensory damages /deficiencies, that in alliance with various obstacles can obstruct their active involvement in their day to day life activities. Overall in Pakistan, the condition of special persons is not upright, due to lack of knowledge, scarceness and falsehoods. This is also true that majority of special persons live in poor conditions.

In fact special persons deserve special consideration of the Government and civil society; they require proper medication, care, education and rehabilitation facilities to become beneficial citizens rather than becoming burden on society. Special person those have entrance to educational institutions are in slightly improved condition because through education and appropriate preparation they attain their potentials (Qamar, 2014).

Walsh (2018) carried out a research to explore the inclusion of special children and study perception of the teachers about inclusion of special students in mainstream. Data was collected though interview of early childhood teachers from a university-based child care center located at Reggio Emilia, Italy. Participants were asked to explore their feelings and opinions on effusively including children with disabilities in their

classrooms. Results led to the identification of four key themes: Firstly each one is valued in the classroom secondly supplementary training is required, thirdly support from administrators, peers, specialists, and therapists and finally experience nurtures success. This portrays that teachers needed backing from administrators, colleagues, consultants and needs desired training for successful inclusion of children with disabilities.

Oluremi (2012) carried out a study to explore the impact of the services/ facilities on the academic output of special children enrolled in general education schools of Southwestern Nigeria. Finding revealed that facilities like, instructional materials, hearing aids, Braille, hand railings and minor lavatories were not accessible in general education schools and amenities like separate resource rooms, wheel chairs were accessible but not in good condition. Number of trained staff was also insufficient. Finding lead to the conclusion that insufficient amenities and resources available to special children in the general schools would lead to meagre academic output.

### *Context and Rationale*

Today developed nations are concentrating on training and education of special persons in well-organized way. As a matter of fact in Pakistan like other segment of the society special children are also fronting numerous dares due to ineffectual plans and deficient resources. In our country special education is not inclusive, in exclusive environment special education is providing. It covers different forms of special children, physically challenged, hearing impaired, visually impaired and mentally retarded students. Teaching is no doubt one the challenging task but when one talk about teaching to special children, then it became more challenging. These challenges include lack of special schools, lack of motivation on the part of special children & parents, lack of facilities and lack of budgetary allocation to the special education institutions. Despite of all challenges special education institutes are functioning and imparting education.

At present hundred and forty six special education centers are operational in numerous tehsils of Punjab province. Admissions are also increasing day by day but students and parents are concerned on the quality of services available for education. At times parents of the special children are not prepared to take the liability of the scholastic and entertaining requirements of their own (special) children and impugning administration and teachers for not effectively providing education. Overall in our country grooming of special children is not as striking as in the developed countries. Today we are living in the world which is advance in communication, we can learn from the experiences of western countries in the field of special education (Singal, Govt. of Punjab Special Education Department, 2018).

Study in hand was planned to discover various undercurrents which are creating dissatisfaction among students, parents and management.

### *Problem Statement*

Study was designed to ascertain the factors that are distressing the education of special education centers, study would also discover the intrusions through which eminence of the services of the these centers can be raised.

### *Objectives of the Research*

1. To ascertain various factors which are hampering the quality of education delivered to special children at centers
2. To discover interventions through which eminence of special education can be uplifted.

### **Operational Definitions**

#### *Special Education*

It refers to specially planned guidelines to meet the distinct desires of special children. This includes exclusively scheduled and analytically monitoring arrangements of instruction, modified equipments, materials. In this study special education has been seen as the education which is delivered by public sector institutions to physically challenged, mentally challenged, visually impaired and hearing impaired students (Watson & Peter, 2005).

#### *Special Education Centres*

Centres are intended to educate students of 4 main disabilities such as, students with mentally challenges, visual impairments, hearing impairments and physically challenges underneath same rooftop.

### **Methodology**

Current study was exploratory, data was collected through open-ended questionnaires, prior to data collection district establishment was contacted to visit centers. After asking authorization special education centers visited. Head of the centre informed about the research purpose, assurances of confidentiality was also delivered to them.

#### *Population*

Population encompassed students, parents and center' Heads.

#### *Sample*

Population of study was encompassed special children, parents and head of special education centers hence, for the collection of data stratified random sampling

seems suitable. Consequently population was divided into 3 sub-groups and sample of only 100 special children, 220 parents and 30 heads of the special education center was collected from only thirty centers of the province Punjab.

### *Research Questionnaires*

In this study qualitative approach was used to ascertain various factors which are hampering the quality of the education delivered to special children and to discover the interventions through which quality of the education can be uplifted. Matter was enquired through opened questionnaires. Questionnaires were cautiously planned by using plan language. Priop to data collection research questionnaires' reliability and validity were established. Content validity of questionnaires was established by linking every item with the research objectives by experts' judgement. Reliability of the questionnaires were established through inter-raters method.

### *Data Collection*

Data was collected from special education centers located at Bahawalpur, Multan, Lahore, Sargodha and Rawalpindi.

### *Research Questions*

1. What kinds of students are registered at the centers?
2. Do special education centers have sufficient facilities?
3. What is the situation of staffing at special education centers?
4. What is the availability of tools and assistive devices in special education centers?
5. Does the evaluation procedure of the special education enters is according to needs of special children?
6. Are parents and special students contented with service delivery of the special education centers?

From Heads following questions were enquired:

1. What is required to improve the service delivery of special education centers?
2. Do you have sufficient financial resources to carry out day to day tasks of the special education centers?
3. Who are the stakeholders for the capacity building of special education centers?

### **Data Analysis**

#### *Question 1: What kinds of students are registered at the centers?*

Parents and special children are of the view that in special education centers only visually impaired, mentally challenged, physically challenged and hearing impaired students can be registered. It was also described that heads that special education centers do not enroll students with multiple handicaps, sever mentally

retarded, slow learners and above fourteen years old children, through this way numerous special children dispossessed of from process of education.

*Question 2: Do special education centers have sufficient facilities?*

Parents and special children replied that there is a lack of facilities in the centers, for example, many centers working in hired building therefore, class sizes are not adequate, and ramps wash rooms were not in good condition moreover, furniture fixture available is neither sufficient nor disabled friendly. Provision of incentive was also not encouraging in special education centers.

*Question 3: What is the situation of staffing at special education centers?*

It is replied by most of the resonidents that special education centres were facing acute shortage of teahing and nonteaching staff, many teaching posts were unfilled. To cater this heads sometimes employed untrained/unskillful teachers through school management counsel (SMC). This staff lacks skills of handling special students. Non teaching staff like attendents, conductors, drivers, Ayas are also playing important role in the management of special children, it was discovered that there is deficiency of non teaching staff in centres. Insufficiency of supporting staff creats hardships in the management of physically challenged students (while pick and drop to centre and going to bathroom).

*Question 4: What is the availability of tools and assistive devices in special education centers?*

Assistive devices are playing very important role in order to overcome the challenges of disability. Availablity of assistive devices and teaching aids were asked from respondents. Rely to the question asked make it clear that special education centers were not energized with the desired assistive devices. Devices like braille frames, Perkin Brailers, hearing aids and computer were not according to need of students. Even wheel chairs and hearing aids were not available to all students.

*Question 5: Does the evaluation procedure of the special education enters is according to needs of special children?*

Evaluation process is one of the old companion of teaching learning process, evaluation system prevailing in special education centers was not appealing, most of the students and parents were not happy from this system. At present cumulative evaluation system prevalent in special education centers; at the completion of academic years, primary and middle examinations are being held under directorate general of special education Punjab. This system is not suitable to many students generally respondents recommend formative evaluation which may be designed by the classroom teachers/psychologists.

*Question 6: Are parents and special students contented with service delivery of the special education centers?*

Parents and students are better evaluators of the services, their happiness from the educational services is the indicator of better performance of the staff but parents as well students are apprehensive due to the reasons that centers are housed in rented buildings, buses available for the pick and drop of special children are not sufficient and assistive devices are not available. However, parents and students were contented with incentives delivered to their children.

*Research Questions from Heads*

**Question 1:** What is required to improve the service delivery of special education centers?

*What is required to improve the quality of the education and service delivery of special education centers?*

Heads were requested to stipulate the ways through which service delivery of the center could be enhanced. After analysis responses recognized 4 fundamentals factors to be emphasized.

*Students*

Special student is the fundamental factor around him/her whole system is rotating, head of the centers are of the view that quality of special education centers can be enhanced by following accelerations:

1. Least obstructive setting may be delivered to special children along with this students may be delivered assistive devices in classroom setting.
2. Job oriented and skill based education may be imparted to the special children.
3. Physical training is very necessary for special children; at present in most of the centers seat of Physical training instructor is not sanctioned, there is dire need that one post of physical training instructor may be approved in each and every special education center.

*Teachers*

1. Special education is a vigorous field, in order to comply the unique needs of the special students refresher courses may regularly be arranged.
1. At present many posts are vacant, for quality enhancement all vacant posts of teachers may be filled on priority basis.
2. Teachers may create a learning environment that support individualized and collaborative learning needs of the students.
3. Audio and video aids must be delivered in class rooms and it is essential for the teachers to operate these aids meritoriously.

4. Teachers may have sovereignty to adjust and develop curriculum which is according to special learning needs.
5. At present there is no plan for the occupational training of students with hearing impairment and mentally retardations and no post of occupational trainer is sanctioned in any center, seat of occupational trainer may be delivered at special education.

#### *Parents*

1. Parents have special place in the lives of their offspring, parents who are having special children their role become more demanding for the facilitation of special children. Awareness about parental role should be delivered to the parents so they can set appropriate expectations from their children.
2. Counseling may be given to parents so they can adjust their standards according to disability of their children.
3. Parents may also attend monthly parents' teachers meetings.
4. Parents may be concentrated more on their children education and advancement in its place of focusing on incentives.

#### *Administration*

1. Special education department and respective education authorities can intercede by providing adequate budget and assistive devices. They can organize seminar and workshops on disability for members of civil society.
2. In most of the centers post of headmaster/headmistress was vacant and in-charge heads (who are generally classroom teachers or Psychologists) was holding additional charge of head, this practice should be discontinued and full time head may be appointed.
3. In many centers no clerical staff has been posted due to this most of the time heads ought to do clerical tasks therefore, clerical staff may be posted.
4. For safety and security of the special children it is important that cameras may be installed in all classrooms and play areas.
5. Government may provide purposely built buildings for special education centers.

*Question 2: Do you have sufficient financial resources to carry out day to day tasks of the special education centers?*

In response of question no. 2 most of the center's Head replied that budgetary allocation is not sufficient for smooth working. They further replied that sometimes to cater the urgent needs administration has to depend on humanitarians. Budget delivered to centers must be according to the demands of the centers, so they can spend for the improvement of service delivery.



*Question 3: Who are the stakeholders for the capacity building of special education centers?*

It was enquired from Heads of special education centres that who are the stakeholders for the capacity building of centers? Most of them responded that only person could not uphold quality education. Prominent stakeholders can include officers from special education department, Education authorities, Heads, teaching staff, psychologists, speech therapist and parents. Department of special education Punjab may be formulated a comprehensive policy for the betterment of these centers.

Maximum heads were of the view that head of the institution can play an active role in the capacity building of the centers by working as an effective organizer. Teaching staff can also play a role in the venture, as well trained, experienced teachers who can work wholehearted can inspire advanced mental processes in special children.

Psychologist and speech therapists are also working along with teachers, they can take active role in the capacity building of the centre if delivered assistive devices and resource. Parents are always important part of the learning process of special children without active parental engagement capacity building of the special education centre cannot assured. Parents presence in SMCs meetings can be very encouraging, their suggestions and feedback can open new avenues for enlargement.

### **Discussion**

In this research exploratory design was used to discover information about the area of research. Foremost objectives of the study were to ascertain various factors which are hampering the quality of education delivered to special children at centers and to discover interventions through which eminence of special education can be uplifted.

As far as the provision of assistive devices concerned, the situation was not very encouraging. There was lack of braille frames, Perkins, Braille papers, hearing aids, speech trainers, computers in most of the centers. Along with this, wheelchairs available at centres were also insufficient.

A research study was carried out to explore the impact of school facilities on teachers and students outcomes. In the milieu of teachers of special children, facilities influence teacher's recruitment, retention, obligation and efforts. In the milieu of special children, facilities influence health, behavior, and engagement and academic achievement. Results make it clear that without adequate services and resources, it is extremely perplexing to assist large numbers of special children without proper facilitation (Center for Evaluation and Education Policy CEEPA, 2015).

It is essential that stakeholders effort in an organized way and devise some plan/policy that can ensure effective service delivery to special children. The teachers

working at special education centers may produce conducive learning atmospheres that cater individualized learning needs and promote collaborative learning environment positive social interaction, active engagement of the learners. Parents are important dynamic part of the education process when it comes to special children, no doubt there active participation is valuable in educational process. They should be given voice in how educational institutions educate their children (Hallahan & Kauffman, 19991).

### **Results and Conclusions**

On the basis of the results, it is established that; physical substructures such as building, classrooms, computer lab (ICT) facilities were existed in special education centres but in y very derisory condition to outfit the special needs of students. Arrangements like classes, schoolyards and toilets were not effortlessly reachable to physically challenged students. Generally physically challenged students were not contented with the physical facilities available at centres. There is deficiency of ramps, wheel chairs and walking frames.

Financial allocations in various heads of the accounts were also insufficient; though eight hundred monthly paid to special children on at least seventy five percent attendance but result exposed that many special education centers were not paying monthly scholarship because of deficiency of budget.

Findings exposed the admission policy for special education centers; admission policy dejected the slow learners, multiple disabled, severely retarded and children of above fourteen.

In special education centers, speech therapists and psychologists were employed to outfit the developing needs. They have to manage behavioral issues of special children but due to lack of teachers, most of psychologists and speech therapists were involved in the process of teaching.

### **Recommendations**

Keeping in view findings to this study it is suggested that while dealing with special children it is important to focus the individual differences of the learners, cognitive and behavioral aspects of special learners must not be ignored. Physical settings of centers must be according to the needs of each learner. It is essential that every staff member should be receptive to the requirements of the special learners in an outstanding way. During the research, it was informed that numerous posts of the teachers are vacant in the centers, without providing teaching staff quality cannot be enriched, so recruitment on the vacant posts is urgently required.

This is fact that imparting successful education is near to impossible without the involvement of parents and caretakers. In the special centers though SMCs are working but SMCs are not fully functional therefore, it is recommended that special education centers may call SMC meetings monthly.

It was discovered that in these centers up-to-date text books were not available. To assertion quality, it is therefore, suggested that 1 students may be delivered up-to-date text book in the beginning of new academic year.

There is lack of assistive devices for special studens in special education centers, inorder to provide quality education assistiv devices may be propvided to each learner without discrimination.

Special education is a vibrant field, single approach is not suitable for all special learners, to prepare teachers with innovative inclinations therefore, it is suggested that updated training, awareness discussions, conferences may be frequently organized .

For the assessment of special children cumulative system is main system is popular in the centers it is therefore, suggested that instead of cumulative system formative evaluation system may be used.

No doubt special children' basic need is special envirnoment; but at present many special education centres are working in hired buildings that are not significantly built, it is recommended that purposely designed buildings may be constructred for the special children.

Parents can impact positivly on the educational pursits of special children therefore, it is vital that parents may provide awarness about how to help special children in behaviraul and educational pursits.

For reassurance of quality in the education of special children there must be coordination between special school, health care professionals, and parents, so they can coordintae and share knowledge to handel the needs of special children in more operative ways.

### *Significance of the Study*

Quality is one of the substantial debit in Pakistani education system education. Like other education institutions, quality of special education is also intimidated. Special education centers are at risk due to lack of staff, assistive devices and budget. Discoveries of this research can be helpful for stakeholders, including policy makers, admistrative department, heads and educators.

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