# Including Children with Visual Impairment in General Class: Teacher's Lived Experience

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## Abstract

*This study aimed to explore the perception of general teacher with the major challenges while teaching students with visual impairment in general class. The qualitative research design with hermeneutics phenomenology was employed in the study. It also delineates how general teacher of integrated school use potential resource to assimilate children with visual impairment in mainstream setting. Four teachers from two integrated schools located in Kathmandu valley having different disciplines were purposively selected. The profound interview had been conducted in face to face situation through open ended questions in their existing position. The interview responses were transcribed as verbatim and triangulated among participants.The data were analyzed by using narrative analysis and thematic technique to develop theme under the insight of literature review. From the teacher's narratives, unusual behavior, problem of intention, uncertainty of job placement and unwillingness of reading were deduced as major challenges to include children with visual impairment in general class. The essence of study contributes to overview the challenges and adopts appropriate strategies to create inclusive environment in regular classroom. This also energize teacher to professional development from the lens of diversity management approach. The essence of study can contribute to set up inclusive atmosphere in regular class room and to energize professional development from the lens of inclusive approach.*

*Keyword: visual impairment, inclusive environment, uncertainty of job, problem of intentionality, diversity management approach*

## Introduction

Including children with disability evolves from the concept of fairness in society. This concept of inclusion is emerged from the Salamanca conference 1994. Actually inclusive education is the outgrowth of special education (Sucuoglu et al., 2010). It emphasizes education of students with diverse needs in mainstream setting (Amor et al., 2019). The major focus of inclusive education is to provide education to all types of learner by keeping in general setting with additional support (Soodak & McCarthy, 2013).

Inclusion responds to the diversity of needs of all learners without any discrimination in least restrictive environment (Miles et al., 2014). The inclusive approach creates supportive environment for students with special needs regardless of their condition (Imaniah & Fitria, 2018).The main essence of inclusive approach is to create harmonious society by ensuring sense of belongingness as citizen, interact and participate in the community (Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007) .This provides equal opportunity to resources and services and responsibility (Nandako et al., 2019). Inclusion and inclusive education have been interpreted as different way by nation depending upon the policy guideline (Lunde, 2020). Inclusive education is creating child friendly environment for all learners in the regular school setting. It allows to transformingenvironment in the favor of all learners. But inclusion covers broader area within and out the school system (Richards, 2015).

In the context of Nepal, according to the report provided by (CERID,2004), more than 10% of student of children are still out of school due to transportation problem, conventional thought, lack of awareness.The large number of children who are out of school represents the condition of disability.

The basic and primary education project (BPEP) (1991-2001) had planned to integrate children with disability to educate in general school within regular setting by providing resource class facilities. Under the same plan, the special education policy (1996) and Local Self Governance Act (1999) had been activated to create educational environment for disabled. Likewise, the Tenth Five year Plan (2002-2007) aimed to provide equal right to education for children with disability in least restrictive environment involving in sport activities. The ultimate aim of special education is inclusive education (Srivastava et al., 2015).

Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP)(1992) had given the emphasis on education of children with disability by providing resource room facility with integrative approach. But in existing situation of our community school, the resource rooms are not well equipped and resourced. Moreover, general teacher are not well trained for teaching in diversified class room. The children with disability in the general class are not taking cared by general teacher (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996) due to the lack of knowledge in diversity management. The policy has announced but has not managed inclusive teacher for diversified classroom. In mass teaching the students with disability are excluded (Wolery et al., 1995) from learning rights even though, the constitution has clearly mentioned their right in education. In this regard, this study aims to explore the teacher's perception while teaching students with disability in general classroom. This study has assumed to explore the challenges faced by general teacher in accomplishing instruction. So it is imperative to study how the children with disability are included to meet the goal of legislative provision and to ensure disability right in education.

## Theoretical Framework

This provides theoretical insight to overview an issue of the study. The major construct of theory has been used to analyze the quotation of participant. Theoretical lens utilized in this study support to draw major conclusion through discourse analysis.

### Social Model of Disability

Inclusive education is emerged from the concept of social model of disability (Yusuf & Yeager, 2011). It refuses the construct of medical model which is referred

to impairment specific to functional limitation. The social model conceptualizes that disability is idea of social restriction (Forlin et al., 2013). By this model, disability occurs when individual participation is limited on the basis of their specific organ dysfunction (Allan, 2014).Since physical and social problems related with disability are immersed with society, the political efforts are essential to overcome this problem. The political change can support to eradicate the socio-political barrier in the society (Allan, 2013). According to Smyth et al.( 2014), the political stability and transformation guarantees to ensure human right and social justice in education.

**Support Service in Inclusive Class**

Inclusive classroom is classroom containing students of various diversities such as age, caste, ethnicity, language, disability and many more. These aforesaid diversity demands verities needs which are imperative challenges for inclusive teacher (Shippen et al., 2005). Addressing the challenges is becoming major issue for teachers who handle the class room of diversified needs (Syed & Özbilgin, 2009). The government need recruit well trained, efficient and resourceful teacher. In such moment the children with varieties of needs can get appropriate support from respective teacher for their social and educational development. Inclusive classroom may contain children of special educational needs having different challenges(Sanchez et al., 2019). In such case teacher need to have adequate knowledge and skill to teach such types of students (Farrell, 2012).

**Paraprofessional Support**

The specific support provided by the skillful person at the request of schooladministration during school hours refers to paraprofessional support (Giangreco et al., 2001). The paraprofessional support is more vocational and practical. To address the diversity of learning needs in the classroom, teacher needs paraprofessional support. The paraprofessional includes psychologist, social workers, doctors, occupational therapist, speech and language therapist and assistant teacher (Vassiliki et al., 2011) .

The undergoing research seeks to explore the feelings of a general teacher from the inclusiveprospective (Shippen et al., 2005). The investigator realizes that there is strong need to investigate disability specific prospective for gainful learning. The major concernis confined to measuringthe degree of receptivity and tension of the teacher (McHatton& McCray, 2007) towards inclusion of children with visual impairment. The research questions for this study were as follows:

**Research Questions**

What is the lived experience of teacher while including children with visual impairment?

How do teacher perceive about the challenges in teaching children with visual impairment?

## Methods and Procedures

This study employed the phenomenology as a qualitative research design which studies lived experiences and shared meaning of similar experiences (Creswell et al., 2006). This approach pertains to study the teacher's experience in their professional career in teaching students with disability in regular setting for ensuring inclusive education. The experience and feeling of teacher who teaches in general class are incorporated to construct knowledge from the social setting. The participants who stood inthis studies had long years of experience in teaching and learning activity along with diversified class room. Furthermore, they had taught for long time of

general class having children with disability particularly students with visual impairment. Purposively four general teachers from two schools located in Kathmandu valley were selected as research participants.The teachers who were participated in this study had long years of teaching in general school having children with disability. Regarding to ethical issue the participants were taken informed consent and taken permission from head teacher of school by sending request letter. Confidentiality had been maintained by using pseudo name and avoid of personal information to be examined. Interview guidelines were finalized by the expert judgment to gather the robust information. In depth interview were taken from the participant by open ended question. Interviews with the participants were recorded by audio recorder. Recorded interview responses were transcribed as verbatim and developed code. Data analysis had been accomplished by developing themes from the quotation of participants. Similar codes were organized to generate organized theme. The similar themes were re organized to obtain main theme of the study. The major themes were described on the basis of ground data and they were compared and contrasted with data to data and data to literature to arrive in conclusion.

## Result and Discussion

This section embraces the consequent derived from the information obtained by profound interview with research participant. Extracted result had been discussed with theme of literature and interaction with participant. Overall discussion had been organized by incorporating with the following theme based upon the study objectives.

### Lack of interaction with sighted peers

The reciprocity of relationship among the students in class room reflects the effective involvement in classroom (Jindal-Snape, 2005). The mutual relationship between children with disability and without disability create peaceful and sound environment in instruction (Salleh & Zainal, 2010). In this context, Participant T1 said as:

> I teach mathematics in class IX including children with visual impairment. Most of the students are of without disability. Generally I place the students with disability in front bench but they are unable to see white board and just they belong to my instruction with audio instruction. They try to interact with students having no disability but they bully to children with disability. They are not sensitized andawardedabout disability and exhibit negative feelings while interacting with disabled peer.

> In this assertion the prospective teacher tend to optimize the possibility of inclusion by placing them at front but they are less likely to be benefited from the classroominstruction. Only the sighted peer can access the regular instruction of teacher with the help of visual material. In class they should depend on audible things but it is less useful in the case of practical subject. Sometimes,students with visual impairment need to grasp of knowledge by visible demonstration but it lacks for children with visual impairment. In frequent asking to the same question, students with visual impairment may feel regret with the non disable counterparts. To overcome this situation, school need to organize orientation program about condition of child in the school and extend positive attitude for them so that the children with visual impairment could think they are still together with sighted peers. Another Participant T2 assumed:

> In my class whole class is composed of children with physical disability. Large number of students with varieties of need are studying over therein deliver instruction focusing on normal students who have no disability do not have the knowledge of sign language for deaf. There is more number of students in my class so the students with physical disability cannot get time for actively participating in class room. They cannot get opportunity to seat at front.

In this assertion,classroom diversity is composed with varieties of disability including children with physical disability,hard of hearing,deaf and many more. They are having different types of characteristics need different type of support. In the existing scenario of regular class these all types of children are not benefited at a time due to the lack of sufficient skill in regular teacher. The teacher of today is not trained by such type and so he is unable to fulfill the demand of such diverse learner. In such context, every teacher is previously trained before the job placement. The government needs to establish the policy of having such qualities to be recruited in teaching profession. The minimum eligible qualification need to meet the knowledge of diversity management in the regular class. In the favor of above statement, participant T3 expressed,

> I have not seen the children with visual impairment and sighted students are actively co-operating each other. The children with visual impairment are alone with them and are not supported by friends in doing class work. The children with visual impairment easily submit their work in a time of class but children with disabilitycannot do so. In this moment I feel more fatigue and unsatisfactory about instruction. Student cooperation is essential but they donot maintain cooperation and student with disability remains unsupported from their friends.

The assertion reveals that the general class room is not becoming inclusive class room. In the inclusive class room all types of diversities are equally responded and students with disability need to feel we are together with. Integration of seating arrangement in the same class is not inclusion. In the inclusive class room the children with disability are highly welcomed by children without disability. The general teachers need to ensure the mutual interactive environments within the student circle without any discrimination. He is able to modify instruction method and material so that all types of children can entertain with available resource. The teacher must generate the strategies to communicate and collaborate among children with full of effort. The general teacher create free and frank environment by facilitating children with additional need.

**Unusual behavior at class room**

The overall activity exhibited by the students in the instructional time represents the student's behavior at class room (Erin & Spungin, 2004). Ifa student shows cooperative and collaborative behavior in class, the teaching learning environments will be smooth and run across goal oriented mission.For this context Participant T1 alleged:

> The student with disability show unusual behavior in the class room. When I start teaching they are engaging in another activity. Icannot understand their intention and continuously they are on the wayside. I think they are disturbing to students without disability. By the fear of

mine the students without disability cannot exhibit their tension but realizing. By the name of inclusion, they are feeling odd and uneasiness.

Some of the students with disability are not suffered from single type of impairment. Those who are identified by one type of disability are simultaneouslyassociated with another disability. In such context children of one disability shows withdrawal symptoms due to the effect of other disability. In this situation, childrencannot tolerate silently and disturb to others in the time teaching. In such situation, the teacher need to screen and access the child when he comes to school with disability certificate. The present conditions of children need to be identified and the interventions need to be modified if he possesses another type of disability. Another Participant T2 maintained:

> There is no appropriate physical infrastructure in school for visual impairment. Transition problem and mobility challenges always disturb their learning. The number students in my class are more than standard size. So the children with visual impairment arrive late than the class starting time. In such they are imposed to sit by a side and in congested area. The students with low vision need to sit at back side of class. In such condition they are unable to see the white board and writings on the board. School is not providing assistive devices in the class and pdf reader software.

In frankly speaking, the existing scenario of physical infrastructure is not happening disability friendly. In some place, new infrastructure set up are somehow disable friendly but not sufficient. In addition to this, the children with disability are still suffering from the transportation problem. In the constitution, fundamental rights are promulgated as the children with disability have the right to be educated in their local community but in practice it is happening so. The students with visual impairment need to walk more distance to come to school. In such moment they need more time and present at school lately. At that time the front seats are already occupied and they need to have a seat at back side of the class room from where they feel hard of hearing. Thestudent with low vision is completely unable to see writing on white board. To overcome this situation the teacher need manage seat for children with disability at front permanently to ensure inclusive education in the classroom. To address the need of children with visual impairment, the teacher must provide assistive technology and make them using speech synthesizer optical speech recognizer software. In the favor of above statement Participant T3 thought:

> In the integrated class I cannot notice about the situation of children with visual impairment whether they are sleeping mode or not. While I was teaching mathematics, they do not write in their Braille. Any time I propel to write in their slate but they deny doingthat. I found one student with visual impairment is found making head down and not responding well.

In this assertion, the students with visual impairment are not interested to study mathematics because most of the mathematical symbols are not developed in Braille. The presentation by drawing is impossible for them and they are less likely to read algebra and geometry. The students with visual impairment think that reading mathematics is not applicable for them in their future because of visual deficit. General

knowledge of mathematics is sufficient for them and so they dislike to study in math period. Sometimes they go to resource class and learn music. In such condition, to fulfill the weight age of curriculum, curriculum development centre needs manage the optional subject as like music for them. Likewise, another Participant T4 said:

> I teach Nepali in the general class. Some students with visual impairment write down my voice in their slate with stylus. Some of the students exhibit unusual behavior in the class teasing to others and making disturb to other children without disability.The children with visual impairment are not willing to study in the mass of students. If the students with visual impairment could write in their slate, it takes time to arrive the translation from the resource class. Due to the late arrival of translation, the students with visual impairment will have delay of feedback. As a result, the learning performanceof those children will be unsatisfactory.

In this assertion, students with visual impartment arenot having single disability in the class. Some of the students are suffering another type of associated disability that may affect to study. Some are additionally affected by autism and emotional disability. Such type of additional disability may cause other problem that result to disturbance for mainstreamlearning. In the regular class there is not the provision of assistantteacher. Moreover,the general teacher cannot understand Braille and writings of the student who are having disability. In the students with visual impairment cannot receive immediate feedback from the general teacher due to the late arrival of translated works. The schools need to manage the assistant resource teacher in the class who can assist to general teacher for translation and co-teaching in particular situation.

**Problem of intentionality**

The willingness required for paying attention in class while having the class refers to intentionality in reading. Having said as above the lack of attentive behavior creates the problem of intentionality which obstructs to engagement in class room activity.T4 asserted:

> When I begin instruction in my class, some of the students with disability are not engaging in the class. Due to their unusual behavior, I cannot accomplish work plan in the daily routine.

Mitigating inappropriate behavior is major challenges for general teacher. Sometimes they express negative feeling towards education which is unsupportive for reading. They say that what they do after reading. The psycho social development is apparent to pessimistic thought in future. Soin such type of thought in life certainty, they try to exhibit withdraw system in class. In such type of attention I sometimes feel boring.

**Uncertainty of job placement**

The situation of not receiving job depending upon their choice is termed as uncertainty of job placement. In most of the observed cases the children with visual impairment are seemed as unemployed due the concept that individual with visual impairment cannot contribute to mass production (Crudden & McBroom, 1999). In this context Participant T2 declared:

> In my school the students with visual impairment arealways worried about job. After the completion of their reading they are not allowed

to stay more in school. They are imposed to get out from school because of schools premises. They feel fear about the fare well program organized by school. Ending of one is not starting of new one in their life. Instead; they want to stay throughout the life within school because they are familiar in school.

The above statement shows that teaching students with visual impairment is just dropping water in sand. The children with visual impairment are secured by the job after graduation from school. Generally, company and employment agencycan't not accept individual with disability in job market. Only thought is that they cannot contribute in mass production. Further more individual with visual impairment are unable to perform the task of risk work. In this way visual impaired people are excluded from the job. In such condition, the children with visual impairment are thinking about uncertainty of future. Thiscircumstance makes children with visual impairment not motivating in learning activity. To mitigate such thinking, state need to guarantee the job for the appropriate areas.

Regarding on the above context Participant T3 uttered:

Children with visual impairment feel happy when they stay at school. In school they get residential facility with full scholarship. They entertain and spend time with full of happiness and joyful. Within school they get pleasure with their counterparts and get education with Braille by resource teacher. Likewise they learn music and independent skill at school. When they tend to get out from school and falls to the anxiety of survival at outer world.

In the above assertion, children with visual impairment are not adequately skilled within school. When they get residential facility in school,they are happy and become sad when school time is going to over. This is apparent that education provided for them in school is insufficient to run their future career. Education provided for children with visual impairment is just giving privilege among children without disability. The knowledge generated by the provision of writer in exam is unable to carry out the load of life. By the end of school life the children with visual impairment cannot get maturity in learning except preliminary ideas of Braille which is only the option of teaching.

**Unwillingness for reading**

It refers to the lack of willingness in learning with non disable counterparts. In most of the cases the children with disabilitycannot see the future after acquiring education (Jessup et al., 2010). It is seen that the legislative provision has not specified the job placement for individual with disability. Research has shown that people with disability can not contribute to mass production and most of the employers are reluctant to grant opportunity for individual with disability (Crudden & McBroom, 1999). Further, Participant T4 expressed:

I tend to motivate students with disability for reading and learning to make their better future. I encourage them to labor hard in learning. Their unanswerable question is where to engage after passing out from school?I try to encourage them to have better and skillful learning from general class like as non disable counter parts. But they refuse my statement with the stick of

unemployment. In such queries, I am not providing reliable answer for that question.

In this statement, teacher lacks to convince students in reading. The better thing is, aim of basic level education is to acquire basic knowledge in daily life. It supports to maintain daily life in general way. Itgives knowledge about how moral life can be achieved and how the simple life can be run with the basic wings of learning. So, students with disability need to be encouraged by providing the essence of daily living skill required for life.Moreover, Participant T2 remarked:

> In my class children with visual impairment donot express their will in reading. When I start teaching to students, they show passiveness and keepsilence. Going near to them and I sack to their body to be attentive. They express that we donot need this subject. Particularly they donot like math because they cannot write mathematical symbol in their slate. At this moment they like to learn music if it is possible.

In this class student with visual impairment are less attentive for reading. Because, these thought is not necessary for reading. Getting knowledge cannot support to their life to go ahead. When they depart from school they might be alone and not supported by counterparts. By thinking such evils in mind they donot like to study and keep silence in class. Sometimes they fell asleep. To overcome this situation government need manage their job placement by promulgating in law. In the case of rejection by company and other employment agencies, they need to provide quota and reservation. If not so, government must terminate their company registration.

## Conclusion

Inclusive education emphasizes the effective participation of all types of children with disability in least restrictive environment (Gyimah et al., 2009). The students with distinct characteristics are welcomed in general class for the self determination and effective participation(Kristensen et al., 2003). In inclusive approach, the pedagogy is provided effective learning environment for all types of learners with additional needs (Baraily, 2021). Inclusiveeducation sensitizeschildren without disability to respect equally like themselves to children with disability (Simon et al., 2010). This develops positive attitude towards disability.

From the above discussion, the major challenges faced by general teacher while including children with visual impairment are interaction with students without disability, unusual behavior of student with visual impairment in class, problem of intentionality, uncertainty of job placement and unwillingness for reading. For the sake of copping challenges, the material and assistive technology need to be accessible for children with visual impairment in achieving relevant skill and knowledge. Technology can be helpful in providing learning material in alternative option for equally participating in class room activity (Leach & Duffy, 2009). Use of assistive technology makes children with visual impairment enabling to keep up with non disable peer.Laptop with refreshable Braille,OCRsoftware,scanning and reading devices enhances the learning experience of learners with visual impairment.

The study findings for this can contribute to manage inclusive approach to regular classroom and creates sound environment to diversity management. The challenges emerged from the perception of teacher can back up to policy maker for

setting suitable strategies to adopt inclusive approach in education. The major findings can contribute to induce inclusive pedagogy to address the diverse needs of learner in general class.

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