ATTITUDE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOL TEACHERS TOWARDS INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN MAINSTREAM EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF LARKANA

Muhammad Ilyas*, Sumeera, Muhsin Khan, Muhammad Junaid and Maria Sarwar Soomro

SZABIST University, Larkana, Sindh, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine attitude of government school teachers towards integration of Children with Disabilities (CWD) in mainstream education. Their perception of the phenomenon, challenges and possible solutions in their views were covered. Qualitative method, particularly case study design, was used for data collection, and its interpretive approach was utilized in order to gain detailed data from the participants. In the case study, a school in Larkana was selected. Utilizing purposive sampling and criterion-based selection, ten teachers from the school were chosen as respondents to obtain data. Out of ten respondents, eight teachers eventually became part of the study, and the data was collected from them. The data collection tools were semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The obtained data was subjected to content analysis during which different themes emerged: the establishment of an inclusive school, the role of teachers in mainstream schools to implement inclusive education in schools, and the role of the Education and Literacy Department in establishing inclusive schools. In case the mainstream school is converted into an inclusive school, the respondents were aware of the challenges that they might face and the role that they will have to play concerning differentiation, individualized type of support, and collaboration. Findings revealed that the respondents considered the school unfit for turning into an inclusive school due to missing men and material resources, overcrowded classrooms that will make it difficult to teach children with disabilities, and lack of support from local educational authorities. They recommended contextually responsive support for teachers along with their specialized training, keeping into account the real classroom environment, to successfully convert a mainstream school into an inclusive school. Reducing teacher student ratio and recruitment of teaching assistants were also recommended.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education (IE) is the process of transformation of educational institutions to cater to all children-boys and girls, able and disabled, marginalized and less privileged (Mara & Mara, 2012). The definition of 'inclusive education' as adopted by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Government of Pakistan, in National Education Policy (2017), is 'a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures, and communities and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures, and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children. Inclusive education implies that all children, irrespective of their gender, abilities, disabilities, socioeconomic, cultural, and ethnic perspective, are given equal access to education. It is a process of the modification of

mainstream education in such a way as to accommodate all children, including those with disabilities (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

Inclusion does not only mean that students with disabilities are enrolled in regular schools. In its true sense, it is more than that. This implies the planning and implementation of school activities in a manner that all students get equal opportunities to participate and learn without any prejudice. Ballard and Banks (2003) defined inclusive education as "non-prejudicial regarding handicap, society, and sexual orientation. It includes all special needs students in a group, with no exemptions and regardless of their educated person, physical, tangible, or other contrast, having equivalent rights to get to the socially esteemed educational program of their general public as full-timed esteemed parts of age-fitting standard classes".

The ideology of inclusive education came into its origin gradually. In Europe and the USA, efforts to make education inclusive by including disabled learners in mainstream education were started in the 1980s, which yielded positive results (Norwich & Nash, 2011). In the first decade of the twenty-first century, awareness among educationists, writers, and activists of human rights organizations increased about the quality of education accessible to Children with Disabilities (CWD). They increasingly advocated the inclusion of such learners in mainstream educational institutions. UNESCO and UNICEF became more and more active in persuading governments in the developing world to adopt policies of IE. The movement of bringing CWD into regular schools was widely accepted throughout the world. Pakistan also responded positively to the call, though at the moment, the work for the materialization of IE here has not been attained on a large scale.

Pakistan is a signatory of Sustainable Development Goals (2030), the fourth goal of which says, "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all." Pakistan has ratified the United Nations Commission on the Rights of Child (UNCRC) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Article 25, which ensures equality of all citizens, and Article 25-A, which guarantees the fundamental right to education to all children (aged between 5-16 years) of the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, also provide grounds for the inclusion of disabled children in mainstream education. But in the country, Children with Disabilities (CWD) get education in segregated special schools. Only a few inclusive schools are being run in Pakistan and those in some major cities. There is growing awareness and desire to implement inclusive education in Pakistan (Rafique & Hameed, 2021), and both regular and special-needs teachers feel the same way about inclusive education in Pakistan (Farooque et al., 2023).

The already existing research as regards teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in the context of Pakistani schools has manifested a positive outlook, mentioning its advantages for increasing social interaction and reducing negative behavior toward students with disabilities (Haider, 2008). Female student teachers and those with prior experience in teaching children with disabilities tend to have more positive attitudes towards inclusion (Shaukat, 2022). challenges that inclusive education faces in Karachi are funding and staff training, whereas the responses of both school heads and teachers are optimistic (Ghouri et al., 2010). The cognitive, behavioral, and affective aspects of teachers' attitudes toward the inclusive type of education have been explored in prior research work with a focus on the need for equal educational opportunities for children with disabilities (Noreen et al., 2019).

Statement of the Problem

The educational system worldwide is increasingly shifting towards inclusive education. The students, irrespective of their caste, creed, gender, ability, or disability, get the same type of education. In Pakistan, the situation is different. Here, CWD is enrolled in special segregated schools, while there are mainstream schools for normal students. Thus, the differentiation in the educational system exists here. Though the constitution of Pakistan calls for equal educational opportunities for all children and there is a worldwide campaign for the promotion of IE, the need is to explore what our educators think about inclusive education and what challenges are in the materialization of this phenomenon here. The main actors for making IE a

success are teachers. Given this, the purpose of the study was to explore the attitude of the teachers working in government schools towards inclusive education. Their perceptions of the phenomenon, the challenges, and the possible solutions in their view were covered in the study. The audience that will benefit from the research is policymakers, as they will come to know what is the attitude of teachers regarding IE and what the challenges are in the opinion of the teachers for turning a mainstream school into an inclusive school to formulate appropriate policies.

Significance of the Study

A bulk of studies on teachers' attitudes towards IE have been done in the Western world. These researches certainly yield important information, but these are not in the context of Pakistan. Less has been done in this respect here. This study tries to fill the gap. As mentioned earlier, Pakistan is a signatory of international declarations and conventions on inclusive education. It is the responsibility of the state of Pakistan to comply with those obligations. The policies are being set, and some related interventions are being made. But all those interventions will not yield intended results, unless the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education has not been taken into account. At this stage, the need for the state is to know the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education.

The promotion of inclusive education has been demonstrated as helpful in past research works. IE may help in checking the school drop-out rate and may help in getting higher learning outcomes (Brownell et al., 2005). In an inclusive environment, children will have more opportunities to hone their social skills (Ajuwon, 2008). According to Kuyini and Desai (2007), the successful implementation of inclusive education will reform the attitude of teachers towards CWD. It may lead to the development of democratic norms in young generations, such as unity, harmony, equality and tolerance. This study, by focussing on teachers' attitudes, aims at the advancement of the inclusive form of educational structure.

Objectives

The long-term goal of the study is to promote inclusive education, especially in terms of bringing students with disabilities into mainstream education in the country. The sub-goals of the study are;

1. To gauge the level of mental preparedness of teachers towards the promotion of IE.

2. To know the likelihood of successful materialization of IE in regular schools.

3. To identify impediments coming in the way of promoting IE.

Research Questions

1. How much government school teachers are mentally prepared as regards including Children with Disabilities in regular schools?

2. What are the challenges that government school teachers find in integrating the education of CWD in regular schools?

3. What are the measures, in the view of teachers, that should be taken to convert mainstream schools into inclusive schools?

Limitations of the Study

A major limitation was the lack of any significant experience of research participants in teaching children with major disabilities. Such children can rarely be found in mainstream schools in Pakistan. The participants had not clear understanding of the concept of what actually the term inclusive education implied. Besides, the participants were not fully aware of teaching and learning aids for CWD. Moreover, as children with a severe type of disabilities and those who are intellectually challenged can't be integrated into mainstream schools, this study was only meant for children with minor disabilities. As data has been collected from a specific city, that's Larkana, the applicability of the generalization of the gained results will be on the target population from where the sample was obtained.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Inclusive education is all about the facilitation and provision of support services to underprivileged learners, particularly those with special needs. UNESCO defines inclusive education as a process of responding to the diversity of children through enhancing participation in the classroom and reducing exclusion from education. According to Khan et al. (2012), inclusive education, besides being concerned with CWD, also accommodates those who are underprivileged. Lilian and Sandy (2010) in their studies concluded that regular schools needed to accommodate CWD. According to Voltz et al., inclusion in its true sense means full interaction of learners with disabilities with their normal class fellows and with teachers in a healthy environment.

Throughout the world, there have been efforts towards inclusive education over three decades (Ainscow, 2020). At the global level, numerous initiatives have been taken for the recognition of education as a basic right of every child. United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), United Nations Convention on The Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), and United Nations on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006) are some international legislative frameworks wherein education has been made fundamental right of every child, including those with disabilities. Article 23 of UNCRC (1989) particularly deals with people having disabilities, recognizing them as the most vulnerable group facing discrimination of different kinds. Articles 28 and 29 of the convention direct state parties to ensure that every child gets quality education on an equal basis without any discrimination. Article 24 of the UNCRPD (2006) protects the right to education of Children with Disabilities and also urges the state parties to the convention to ensure the integration of CWDs in the mainstream education system.

Since 2002, Pakistan has done several legislations for the integration of CWD into mainstream education. These include National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (2002), Islamabad Declaration on Inclusive Education (2005), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2011), laws passed by Punjab, Sindh and Baluchistan provinces in support of inclusive education (2013-14), National Education Policy (2017), and ICT Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2020). Pakistan also has international commitments guiding the enactment of an inclusive form of educational system.

Though signatory to multiple international conventions promoting inclusive education and having related national legislation in place, Pakistan has not been able to shift its education system to an inclusive one. Singal (2016) concluded that as compared to India, Pakistan remained unsuccessful in improving the circumstances of children with disabilities, finding that a good number of them remained out of school. Teachers' attitudes are very important for the successful implementation of inclusive education (Dover, 2002). Hsien (2007) suggested that bolstering confidence and developing a positive attitude towards IE preparation of teachers is important. As regards the attitude of teachers towards CWD, a study was conducted in 34 schools in Lahore. That study is evident that generally, teachers and peers have positive attitude toward children with disabilities (Farooq, 2012). The same study also concluded that for CWD, regular schools are more helpful than special schools. In another research conducted by Mizunoya et al. (2018), it was concluded that teachers were of the view that mainstreaming the education of CWD is helpful, but they were less confident in this respect and thought that these children are better off in segregated schools. Such an attitude of teachers is understandable. Teachers may certainly find difficulty in teaching a class containing one or more students who are challenged. The challenge maybe of someone having speech difficulty or someone needing braille. Teachers will end up consuming more time on such students if they are not properly trained. Ivey and Reinke (2002) are of the view that teachers' approach towards inclusive education needs too much work.

Constraints in the promotion of inclusive education in past literature have been identified as follows: absence of commitment towards inclusive education in schools' admission policies, a lack of related training opportunities for teachers, limited acquaintance with current literature on inclusive education,

and inadequate family-school & community partnerships (Pasha, 2012). Teachers believe that additional training organisations should be established for the training of teachers to cater needs of such children (Malik et al., 2022). A challenge for inclusive education is the absence of an appropriate and flexible curriculum (Upadhayay & Kakar, 2021). Lack of professional training of teachers for integration of inclusive education into the curriculum and inappropriate teaching pedagogies are the major constraints for teaching children with disabilities (Umar & Asghar, 2017).

Gaps Identified

Current literature focusses less on discerning the attitude of general teachers, who don't have any qualification in special education and who work in mainstream schools, towards inclusive education. Such teachers have been involved in this study as respondents.

Previously existing research on IE has mainly been done in schools of urban areas. Working conditions and capabilities of teachers serving in regular schools in rural areas are different from those serving in urban areas. This study has chosen a sample from schools in rural areas.

Reliability and Validity

The researchers themselves visited the research site and got the responses. To enhance the relevance of data, the responses and the results were subjected to peer briefing. The questions that were used during interviews were also used during focus group discussions in order to ensure the reliability of the data. The techniques of member checking, in which three participants of the study were involved to check the accuracy of the findings, and external audit, in which a person with sufficient know-how of research work outside the research project was involved to comprehensively review the study, were utilized in order to authenticate the data.

Research Ethics

The consent of teachers and heads of the institution was obtained. It was avoided to include any such question and topic of discussion in the interview and focus group discussion that could offend the teaching community. Secrecy of the data was ensured to the participants. A copy of the research report was mailed to the respondents to apprise them of the research findings.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted by utilizing qualitative research, particularly case study design. In it interpretive approach was resorted to in order to gain detailed data from the respondents. Before obtaining the data, consent was sought from concerned authorities i.e. District Education Officer and also from the principal of the school.

Population and Participants

In this case study, a school in Larkana district was selected through purposive sampling. This school is considered the largest public school in Sindh province. Using purposive sampling, ten teachers from that school were selected as respondents of this study utilizing criterion-based selection. The criteria for selecting the respondents include: 1) teacher must hold a professional degree in special education or have a diploma in special education; 2) teachers should be interested in the materialization of IE; 3) teachers must be flexible in giving their educational and professional details; 4) teachers should have at least five years of teaching experience as the respondents have enough experience so they can greatly contribute to the current study. Among these ten teachers, only eight of them eventually participated.

All of the respondents claimed that they had not been formally trained for inclusive education. Two of the respondents among eight were teachers who were teaching ninth and tenth classes, while the other six respondents were teaching junior sections, i.e., from grade six to grade eight. They have an average experience of 10 to 15 years. Pseudonyms were utilized for the protection of their identities. They were also allowed to withdraw from the study at any stage.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews and also focus group discussions were data collection tools. A primary benefit of the semi-structured interview is that it permits interviews to be focused while still giving the investigator the autonomy to explore pertinent ideas that may come up in the course of the interview (Adeoye et al., 2021). Interviews were conducted in the mother tongue of the respondents, that is Sindhi. These were then translated verbatim into English. Focus group discussion is frequently used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of social issues. The method aims to obtain data from a purposely selected group of individuals rather than from a statistically representative sample of a broader population (Nyumba et al., 2018).

Semi-structured Interviews

The primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews. The developed interview guide assisted the author in the formulation of questions to be explored while conducting the research. The formulated questions were meant to investigate the perception of the teachers as to IE and their perceived role as regards the establishment of such schools. The total number of conducted interviews was six, and the interviews were recorded in audio form after seeking permission from the respondents. The interviews were carried out after school time and the total duration of the interviews ranged between 45 minutes to one hour.

Focus Group Discussion

In the focus group discussions, only six teachers participated, though an invitation was extended to all the respondents, eight in number. The same questions that were asked of the respondents during interviews were used in the focus group discussion to gain deeper insights. The discussion lasted for one hour, and it was also audio-recorded after getting permission from the respondents.

Data Analysis

For systematic analysis of data, qualitative content analysis was resorted to. The collected data was transcribed word for word. The coding and categorization were started. Through analysis of data, uniformity, and themes were figured out, and these were assigned codes. The reduction and categorization of the codes were carried out correspondingly. From such coding patterns connected with the topic of the study appeared.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During qualitative content analysis following themes and their sub-themes emerged.

Establishment of an Inclusive School

The respondents did not think the school was fit to be turned into an inclusive school. The reasons they advanced were missing material resources and insufficient man resources. The participants argued that the good performance of teachers was ascribed to students' academic performance and this is against inclusive education's policy. This brewed from overcrowded classrooms due to the high student teacher ratio. The enrolment of the students in classrooms ranged between 80-100. This apprehension worsened due to the curriculum developers who did not clearly know the concept of IE.

Top-down approach

The participants were of the view that they did not expect that they would be consulted when their schools were to be developed into inclusive schools. They opined that the educational department will not get their confidence in making the school an inclusive one. While conducting the focus group discussion, the opinions were:

Ghulam Shabir: "The teachers don't have any role at the policy-making level. All the previous administrative decisions related to this particular school and other schools in the area are taken and implemented without trying to know the concerns of the concerned teaching or administrative staff of the schools".

Abdul Waqas: "Though we are not ready to adopt inclusiveness in our school, nevertheless, we will have to accept the policy planned at the upper level. These policies are made by the educational department after doing a consultation with educational experts without giving any representation in the consultation to the real stakeholders that are teachers". It manifested that the respondents were against the top-down approach used by educational authorities.

Training

In the focus group discussion, it was clear that the respondents had sufficient knowledge about inclusive education. It portrays that they clearly comprehended IE concept. However, they seemed to be concerned about their ability to work with the students who were unable to learn due to certain hindrances. It was held by all the participants that the teachers should be trained on inclusive education before making a school inclusive. Just two of the respondents had previously participated in seminars regarding IE, while none of them had any type of related training. However, the teachers who participated in the seminars did not think they were prepared for IE. This can be witnessed in Nadeem's opinion below:

"The Education and Literacy Department will need to train teachers of a school before materializing the plan of turning a school into an inclusive school. They should train teachers on how to make the students, with learning disabilities, learn".

All the respondents also held the view that they had overcrowded classrooms in the school, so converting such classrooms into inclusive classrooms would be a formidable challenge for them. Sajid expressed his views as:

"Before implementing inclusive education in the school, the related stakeholders should lower the student-teacher ratio in the school. The school with the present level of enrollment of students in each classroom is not in any way suitable for being made inclusive school. Besides lowering the enrollment of students in each classroom, the stakeholders will have to think about appointing teaching assistants in support of the regular teachers to deal with CWD".

Role of Teachers of Mainstream Schools in Implementing Inclusive Education in Schools

Support for each other

The participants were of the view that teachers should be on the same page and should collaborate with each other as regards accommodation of the CWD in the school if such a plan was to be implemented. Surhan was of the view:

"Peer mentoring is an important way of learning for teachers. There are certain teachers who are good at dealing with students having certain behavior problems. Such teachers guide other teachers when they are to deal with such students. I myself have been seeking advice on some teaching and learning issues from my colleagues. Those pieces of advice I have found very helpful. So, this collaboration makes things easier for teachers".

It can be said that the respondents found collaboration a helpful tool in dealing with teaching and learning issues at the school.

Making curriculum inclusive

The participants were of the view that the curriculum should be transformed to cater to the needs and interests of CWD. It should be differentiated and should incorporate inclusiveness. In the words of Ghulam Shabir "Teachers try to plan and carry out their lesson plans giving into account the learning capabilities of the learners. Some are slow learners, some are fast, and some are in the middle. I do the same. I try to ensure everyone in the class learns by differentiating my lesson plan".

The respondents agreed that they had to comply with the expectations and instructions of educational authorities as regards their teaching in the classroom. So, if there is any plan of making the school inclusive

the need would be to transform the curriculum to embody inclusiveness in order to make the plan successful.

Individual support

All the respondents during their interviews were on the same page as regards the importance of individual support. They agreed that when a child with a disability is given special attention, he or she can learn well. Nevertheless, there are some barriers in the way of providing individualized type of support as was responded by the participants. The participants gave the following responses on how they would cope with the barriers:

Abdul Majeed: "When I would have a child with a disability in my class, I would call him to my table. I will personally instruct him from there sitting near to him. I will try to match the learning speed of the student and will assign him work accordingly. And this will be certainly a big issue given the large number of students sitting in our classrooms".

Saadat: "Students with disabilities require more time from teachers. In an overcrowded classroom, this is certainly a problem for the teacher as the period is about forty minutes only. The teacher has to mound his teaching style according to the needs of the special children sitting in the class."

Nadeem: "I will not give the workload of the same level to the students with disabilities as is given to the rest of the students because the learning speed of such learners is slower."

Role of Education and Literacy Department in Establishing Inclusive Schools

Support in the classroom

The respondents were of the view that if a school is turned into an inclusive school after the training of the teachers, the Education and Literacy Department and other related stakeholders should monitor the work of the teachers as regards the CWD and should try to provide a conducive environment in the class helpful for learning of the students.

Jabbar, in his interview, said:" In the training, the teachers are told things that are not applicable in the classroom. The related stakeholders should visit real classrooms where the teachers teach and guide and facilitate them from their real-world environment".

Saadat said: "Just trainings are not enough. The trainers should visit the feral classroom setting where children with disabilities are also present. They should observe the teaching style of the teacher in the inclusive classroom and should guide him there. Moreover, if inclusive education is employed in the schools where they are posted, the trainers someday should visit the school and observe the teaching style of the trained teacher. Moreover, administrative authorities under the Education and Literacy Department should visit the classrooms and facilitate the teachers if they face any trouble teaching an inclusive classroom".

Supporting staff

The respondents suggested that if a school is to be made inclusive, then teaching assistants with special education degrees or diplomas should be hired at the school to help the regular teachers. The availability of these teaching assistants will make things easier for regular teachers to deal with the students in inclusive classrooms. Saadat said," We don't have teachers with degrees in special education. They are not in a good position to teach CWD. So, I think it would be better if the government appointed teaching assistants, who should be full-time workers, in the school before converting it into an inclusive school.

Empowering local educational authorities

The Education and Literacy Department, Government of Sindh, should entrust powers to local educational authorities and should provide them special funds to resolve any issue related to inclusive education. Abdul Waqas, in this context, said, "Whenever we teachers face any issue and need funding, we find none to look at. If teachers teaching in an inclusive classroom confront any challenge or require any facility or support,

they should have access to concerned educational authorities. So, the Education and Literacy Department will need to empower the educational authorities at the local level so that they will be able to take necessary actions and release required funding".

Discussion

In this case study, the school that was selected is considered one of the largest schools in Pakistan. The data was collected from the teachers of the school to know their perception about converting mainstream schools into inclusive schools and identify challenges and their possible solutions in the eyes of the teachers in materializing this shift. In the interviews and focus group discussions, it appeared that the teachers did not consider the school suitable for making it an inclusive school. Among the main reasons that they advanced were missing basic facilities for students in the school and a large number of students studying there making classrooms overly crowded. Nevertheless, if the school was to be made an inclusive school, then the teachers expected that they would be trained to manage this change and that the training would touch a real classroom environment of inclusive education, not like the normal training that does not take into account whatever they confront in classrooms. Besides the training, the teachers suggested follow-up. This type of expected support is in agreement with context-responsiveness for teachers. Their demand for continuous support emerged from their concern that they might not get appropriate training and, thereby, might lack the necessary skills to extend specialized support to children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms (Dreyer, 2017). Besides, the teachers' training programs in Pakistan have failed to yield the intended outcomes (Siddiqui et al.,2021); hence, the teachers talked about continuous support. In case the mainstream school is converted into an inclusive school, the respondents were aware of the challenges that they might face and the role that they will have to play concerning differentiation, individualized type of support, and collaboration. In doing this, they exhibited poor confidence on the grounds of contextual factors, which included overcrowded classrooms, insufficient man and material resources, inadequate support from local educational authorities, and lack of adequate training opportunities. The contextual factors mentioned might overwhelm the teachers and make things difficult for them. The concerned authorities of the educational department will need to take into account these contextual factors in an attempt to convert the mainstream school into an inclusive school. Teachers are thought to have a central role in creating a conducive learning environment in an inclusive classroom (Saloviita, 2020). However, the teachers who responded to the study recommended support for teaching staff in order to successfully turn a mainstream school into an inclusive school. The respondents suggested classroom-based support for regular teachers, especially in terms of appointing teaching assistants in inclusive classrooms. Many research studies put emphasis on classroom-based support by appointing teaching assistants (Dalton et al., 2012). Appointments of teaching assistants to work with regular teachers in the same classroom in a country like Pakistan are not a common thing as it is in the educational system of the developing and developed world. It has been emphasized by the teachers in the study. It is clear that for the successful transformation of a mainstream school into an inclusive school, just training the teachers is not necessary. There is a myriad of factors that need to be taken into account, the most important being continuous support for teachers, the appointment of teaching assistants with specialization in special education, lowering teacher-student ratio, and provision of necessary material facilities.

CONCLUSIONS

The objective of the study was to know the perception of teachers towards inclusive education. Teachers' views of the challenges in integrating CWD in mainstream schools and getting their related suggestions also formed part of the objectives of the study. Not all the respondents were acquainted with the concept of inclusive education. Most of them thought it better for CWD to get admission to special schools, considering it difficult for general teachers to teach special needs children. For the promotion of inclusive education, all of them agreed that general schools should be provided with the necessary facilities for teaching CWD, and professional development of general teachers in this context should be done. Other

recommendations of the participants of the study for policymakers were the recruitment of teaching assistants, with specialization in special education, to help regular teachers in an inclusive classroom and lowering the teacher-student ratio, preferably in the school that is to be turned into an inclusive school. The study is meaningful as it reveals the attitude of teachers working in a mainstream school towards the integration of special needs children in the school. It is only by preparing teachers mentally and skilfully, after gauging their perceptions and level of skills, that the promotion of inclusive education can be attained.

REFERENCES

Adeoye, O. A., & Olenik, N. L. (2021). Research and scholarly methods: Semi-structured interviews. Journal of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy, 4(10), 1358-1367.

Ainscow, M. (2020). Promoting inclusion and equity in education: lessons from international experiences. Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy, 6(1), 7-16.

Ajuwon, P. M. (2008). Inclusive education for students with disabilities in Nigeria: benefits, challenges and policy implications. Journal of Special Education, 23(3), 11.

Avramidis, E, & Norwich, B. (2002). Attitudes towards integration/Inclusion: A review of the literature. European Journal of Special Needs Education,17(2), 129-147.

Ballard, C., & Banks, G. (2003). Resource wars: the anthropology of mining. Annual Review of Anthropology, 32(1), 287-313.

Brownell, M. T., Ross, D. D., Colon, E.P., & McCallum, C. L. (2005). Features of special education in teachers' preparation: A comparison with General teacher preparation. Journal of Special Education, 38(4), 242-252.

Dalton, E. M., Mckenzie, J. A., & Kahonde, C. (2012). The implementation of Inclusive education in South Africa: Reflections arising from a workshop for teachers and therapists to introduce Universal Design for Learning. African Journal of Disability, 1(1), 13.

Dover, W. F. (2002). Instructional management of paraeducators in inclusive classrooms: The perspectives of the teachers. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED463107.

Dreyer, L. M. (2017). Constraints to quality education and support for all: A Western Cape case. South African Journal of Education, 37(1), 1–11.

Farooq, H. O., Hassan, R.S., & Rasool, F.H. (2023). Promoting inclusive education for children with disabilities in Pakistan. Global Social Sciences Review. https://www.humapub.com/admin/alljournals/gssr/papers/UbT2X7Jypf.pdf.

Farooq, M. (2012). Problems faced by students with special needs in ordinary Pakistani Schools. Journal of Quality and Technology Management, [online] VIII(I), pp.13-27. Available at: http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/iqtm/PDF-FILES/02-Problems%20Faced%20by%20Students%20with%20Special%20Needs_june2012.pdf

Ghouri, A. M., Abrar, N., & Baloch, A. (2010). Attitude of secondary schools' principles & teachers toward inclusive education: Evidence from Karachi, Pakistan. European Journal of Social Sciences, 15(4), 573-582.

Haider, S. I. (2008). Pakistani teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with special educational needs. Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences, 24(4), 632-6.

Hsien, M. L. (2007). Teacher attitudes towards preparation for inclusion in support of a unified teacher preparation program. Retrieved online from: http://unesco.org.pk/education/teachereducation/files/National%20Education%20Policy.pdf.

Ivey, J. K., & Reinke, K. (2002). Pre-service teachers' attitudes toward inclusion in a non-traditional classroom. Electronic Journal for Inclusive Education, 1(6), 4.

Khan, I. K., Ahmed, L., & Ghaznavi, A. (2012). Child friendly inclusive education in Pakistan. Plus, 5, 18-20.

Kuyini, A. B. & Desai, I. (2007). Principals' and teachers' attitudes and knowledge of inclusive education as predictors of effective teaching practices in Ghana. Research in Special Educational Needs, 7(2), 104–113.

Lilian, L. & Sandy, L. (2010). South Africa: First step in the development of an inclusive education system. Journal of Education, 31(3), 307-316.

Malik, R., Raza, F., Rose, P., & Singal, N. (2022). Are children with disabilities in school and Learning? Evidence from a household survey in rural Punjab, Pakistan. Journal of Comparative and International Education, 52(2), 211–231. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2020.1749993.

Mara, D., & Mara, E. L. (2012). Curriculum adaption in inclusive education. Procedia, Social Behavioral Sciences, 46, 4004–4009.

Mizunoya, S., Mitra, S., & Yamasaki, I. (2018). Disability and school attendance in 15 low- and middle-income countries. World Development, 104, 388–403. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.Worlddev.2017.12.001.

Noreen, H., Intizar, F., & Gulzar, S. (2019). Teachers' multidimensional attitude towards inclusive education. UMT Education Review, 2(2), 72-89.

Norwich, B. & Nash, T. (2011). Preparing teachers to teach children with special educational needs and disabilities. Research in Special Educational Needs, 11(1), 2–11.

Nyumba, T., Wilson, K., Derrick, C. J., & Mukherjee, N. (2018). The use of focus group discussion methodology: Insights from two decades of application in conservation. Methods in Ecology and Evolution, 9(1), 20-32.

Pasha, S. 2012. Readiness of urban primary schools for inclusive education in Pakistan. Journal of Research and Reflections in Education, 6(2), pp.113-128. at: http://ue.edu.pk/jrre/articles/62003.pdf.

Rafique, U., & Hameed, A. (2021). Implementation of inclusive education in Pakistan: A case of school culture. Global Educational Studies Review, VI(II), 133-144. https://doi.org/10.31703/gesr.2021(VI-II).13.

Saloviita, T. (2020). Attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education in Finland. Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 64(2), 270-282.

Shaukat, S. (2022). Challenges for education of children with disabilities in Pakistan. Intervention in School and Clinic, 59, 75 – 80.

Siddiqui, K. A., Mughal, S. H., Soomro, I. A., & Dool, M. A. (2021). Teacher training in Pakistan: Overview of challenges and their suggested solutions. International Journal of Recent Educational Research, 2(2), 215-223.

Singal, N. (2016). Education of children with disabilities in India and Pakistan: Critical analysis of developments in the last 15 years. Prospects, 46, 171-183.

Umar, M., & Asghar, Z. (2017). Analysis of gender parity for Pakistan: Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education. University Library of Munich, Germany. https://mpra.ub.unimuenchen.de/80482/1/MPRA_paper_80482.pdf.

Upadhayay, N. B., & Kakar, Q. (2021). Access to schools and learning outcomes of children with disabilities in Pakistan: Findings from a Household survey in four administrative units. International Journal of Inclusive Education. online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.2008535.