

Comparative Policy Analysis on the Impact of Inclusive Education in Asia and Africa: Focusing on the Right to Education for Children with Disabilities in Cambodia

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Abstract

The Framework for Action on Special Needs Education was adopted at the World Conference on Special Needs Education held in Salamanca, Spain in 1994. This paper, first questions the notion of inclusion based on diversity claiming whether all groups with special education needs are identified in developing countries as specified in the Salamanca Statement. And second, it continues to make arguments on the feasibility of implementing inclusive educational settings with due consideration of educational rights of children with disabilities in Cambodia, which is the critical point of discussion. The research methodology primarily consists of two methods. Firstly, comparative policy review analysis has been conducted at the international policy level using 77 EFA 2000 Assessment Reports and EFA National Plans of Action of 60 different countries from Asia and Africa. Secondly, qualitative field research in Cambodia has been conducted, comprising of semi-structured interviews with all actors involved in the supply and demand sides of special needs education. This research has laid new insights providing various challenges on the right to education for children with special education needs. That is that at the international policy level and national local levels, identification of all special education needs are not included among developing countries in Africa and Asia. Moreover, the relevance of implementing inclusive educational settings for all groups with special education needs faces numerous constraints and obstacles which address new observations and judgments both at the academic and practical fields of special needs education, especially on the right and quality of education for children with disabilities.

Research Background

Introduction

According to the World Bank, Peters (2003a), there is an estimated 40 million children with disabilities who are out of school with an estimated total of 115 million out of school children. UNESCO (2005) estimates a total of 140 million out of school children of which the “majority” are children with disabilities and girls. As for UNICEF,

Habibi (1999) estimates that out of the 150 million children with disabilities, only 3% of them from developing countries are enrolled in schools. As clearly indicated in the figures above, a consensus in identifying children with disabilities together with their schooling status itself is a constraint, yet it similarly implies that without discussion on the right to education for children with disabilities can the international community work towards Education for All by 2015 and beyond.

Historical background to inclusive education

Historically speaking, children with special needs were excluded from the educational system itself before the 1960s and 1970s (Balescut & Eklindh, 2006). A gradual shift led to initial efforts in the 1960s and 1970s which have consisted of specialized programs, institutions and specialist educators which functioned outside of the mainstream education system (Ainscow, 2007). Eventually in the late 1960s and 1970s, dissatisfaction with special education developed a new approach namely as special needs education which consisted of integration, signifying a system of education limited for children with disabilities physically within ordinary schools, and in specialized classrooms or sharing several hours of the same class with their non-disabled peers. But the Salamanca Statement in 1994 has become the impetus to the notion of inclusion suggesting radical changes to the form of integration, which was to accept a diverse range of special needs or excluded groups not only limited to disabilities (UNESCO, 1994). Furthermore, it explored innovative ways of reforming the school environment to accommodate all needs of children and youth. Improved understanding towards persons with disabilities also led to dissatisfaction among many researchers demanding for fundamental modification of educational settings for the disabled (Ahuja, Ainscow & Jangira, 1995; Booth, 2005). By tracing back the history of inclusive education, it reveals that this notion of inclusion has evolved from a series of stages in development originating from special education, which has been justified from both a human rights approach and from the view point of effectiveness (Ainscow, 2007; UNESCO, 2003b.). Meanwhile, the effectiveness of special schools has been questioned by researchers, notably Lipsky and Gartner (1996).

Defining inclusive education and its feasibility

The definition of inclusion or inclusive education itself remains ambiguous amongst both academic researchers and international organizations of that of UNESCO, the World Bank and UNICEF (UNESCO, 2003a., 2005; McClain-Nhlapo, 2007; Peters, 2003b. from the World Bank; UNICEF (UNESCO, 2004); Booth, 2005; Lynch, 1994; Wormnaes, 2004; Ainscow, 1997, 2000, 2004 and 2007). However, inclusion in principal has two fundamental objectives and roles as highlighted in the principles of the Salamanca Statement. First, it means to accept all excluded or disadvantaged children and youth with various special needs not solely limited to disabilities. Second, inclusion improves and

enriches the quality of education in classrooms in a way that children with special needs would stimulate and influence those without special needs in a positive way, learning from one another and eliminating discriminatory attitudes (UNESCO, 1994).

In spite of the guiding principles of inclusion, the relevance of this new approach especially in terms of feasibility in meeting all SEN¹ of all children and youth remain to be the question of concern among various stakeholders involved. For instance, as developing countries already face constraints in providing compulsory education for those without special needs, the principles of inclusion for those with special needs is not of primary concern for national governments. Thus, it is considered rather as a sensitive issue in many developing countries where main engagement is led by donor agencies to fulfill the right to education for children with SEN with very little accountability held by the government. In other words, inclusive education is seen as very costly. However, Richler (2004) and OECD (2003) claim cost-effective economic justifications of inclusive education in addition to promoting high quality education for children and youth. Also, Nordstrom (2004) strongly claims that educational needs of children must be clearly included and indicated in national educational plans and those plans must be taken seriously, counted with, planned for and supported, on the same footing as it is for other children in the country.

Purpose and Significance of Research

Comparative policy situational analysis

The main objective of this research is to undertake a comparative situational analysis of the current situation on the notion of inclusion in developing countries after the declaration of the Salamanca Statement in two regions, Asia and Africa. Situational analysis will be undertaken based on the classification of the following two categories; its first category identifying the specific groups of persons labeled as “disadvantaged groups”, “excluded groups” or “vulnerable groups”. Its second category will be examined through the lens of how national governments in Asia and in Africa are meeting the special educational needs of such groups. Precisely speaking, it will be classified into the following four categories as illustrated in figure 1, exclusion, special schools, integrated schools and inclusive schools.

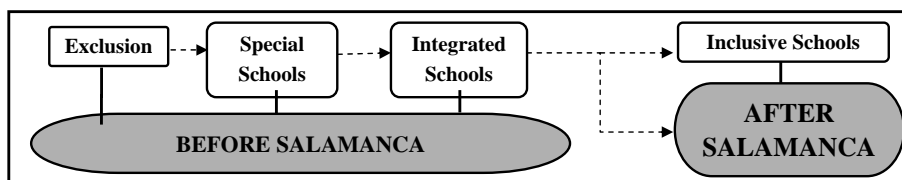


Figure 1 Historical Development Stages towards Inclusive Schools

Note: Figure created by author

¹ SEN is the abbreviated term used for special education needs

Qualitative field interview research in Cambodia

The secondary purpose of this research is to investigate the different constraints and obstacles which exist in attaining inclusive policies and strategies, questioning the relevance of inclusive education based on two groups of actors; the supply and the demand sides of inclusive education, taking Cambodia as a case study. It will reveal whether what is stated at the international policy level is reflected in the on-going activities related to special needs education and inclusive education and seek to clarify the underlying gaps and conflict at the national local level.

The impact of inclusive education at the international policy and national local levels

The expected significance of this research both at the academic and the practical levels is to make implications for the most effective means of implementing special needs education, based on the notion of “inclusion” in developing countries. One of the most effective interventions to plan for inclusive policies is through the development of well-planned national educational plans. Nevertheless, comparative situational analysis of SEN and IE² at the international policy level has not yet been undertaken. Furthermore, by exploring and comparing gaps between what is revealed in policy papers and perspectives of the supply and the demand side actors will become highly significant.

Methodology

Limitations and constraints

Concerning data gathering of EFA NPAs and EFA 2000 Assessment Reports, a total of 77 reports from 60 Asian and African countries have been collected in both English and French. Secondly, the reports reviewed have been written based on specific standards as set forth in guidelines (UNESCO, 1998b, 2000b, 2001; Chang, 2003), but thorough review of each of these reports notably demonstrate a certain degree of variation in the kinds of details included, probably due to different authors involved in finalizing the reports. Concerning the qualitative field interview research in Cambodia, the groups of students that the author came into contact were deaf and blind students along with children with intellectual disabilities. Thus, facilitating interviews among these groups of students were not possible in this particular research.

² IE is the abbreviated term used for inclusive education

Outline of reviewed reports

According to the table as indicated below, out of the 77 reports studied and reviewed, there are in total 38 countries selected from Africa³ with a total of 48 reports and plans, of which 16 reports are EFA National Plans of Action. There are 3 reports considered as “Others” in the 48 reports and plans, of which includes; The Education Sector Development Program from Ethiopia; The Annual Education Sector Operational Plan from Ghana and The Education Sector Support Program from Kenya. These reports were the only sources available as their national education sector plan, available from the UNESCO Education Plans and Policies website.

Table 3-1 Number of countries in Africa and number of Reports/Plans by language

| Total # of Countries In Africa | Total # of Reports/Plans () EFA NPAs () Others | English | French |
|---|---|------------------|------------------|
| 38 countries | 48 Reports/Plans (16) EFA NPAs (3) Others | 21 Reports/Plans | 27 Reports/Plans |

Note: Table created by author based on raw data from EFA NPAs and 2000 Assessment Reports

Next, regarding the Asian⁴ region, there are in total 22 countries counting the Pacific Islands as one target group. When referred to the Pacific Islands, the particular National Plan of Action of the Pacific region comprises of 7,500 islands and is separated into three main sub-regions namely as; Melanesia (West), Polynesia (South-East) and Micronesia (Central and North), excluding Australia and New Zealand.⁵ Among the total of 29 reports and plans reviewed, 10 reports consist of the EFA 2000 Assessment Reports, all of which were published in English. With reference to Mongolia, the report used for this review and analysis was The Mid-Term Action Plan for Improving Education for All.

Thus, combining both regions of Asia and Africa, a total of 60 countries are the target countries of this particular comparative situational analysis, conducting a review study of 77 reports and plans of EFA 2000 Assessment Reports and EFA National Plans of Action, including 4 other reports made available through the UNESCO Education Plans and Policies webpage.

³ Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Comoros, Congo, DR., Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Somalia, Tanzania (Mainland), Tanzania (Zanzibar), Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

⁴ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, DPRK Korea, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Korea, Rep., Laos, PDR, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Pacific

⁵ Region/Country/Territory included: (as referred in the Synthesis of the Pacific EFA NPAs 2003)-Melanesia: Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu-Micronesia: FSM, Kiribati, Marshal Islands, Nauru, Palau-Polynesia: Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu

Table 3-2 Number of countries in Asia and number of Reports/Plans by language

| Total # of Countries In Asia | Total # of Reports/Plans () 2000 Assessments () Others | English | French |
|---|---|------------------|-----------------|
| 22 Countries | 29 Reports/Plans (10) 2000 Assessments (1) Others | 29 Reports/Plans | 0 Reports/Plans |

Note: Table created by author based on raw data from EFA NPAs and 2000 Assessment Reports

Table 3-3 Number of countries in Africa and Asia and number of Reports/Plans by language

| Total # of Countries In Africa and Asia | Total # of Reports () 2000 Assessments () EFA NPAs | English | French |
|--|--|------------------|------------------|
| 60 Countries | 77 Reports and Plans (41) 2000 Assessments (32) EFA NPAs (4) Others | 52 Reports/Plans | 25 Reports/Plans |

Note: Table created by author based on raw data from EFA NPAs and 2000 Assessment Reports

Outline of qualitative field interview research

The field interview has been conducted in Cambodia, mainly in Phnom Penh during two weeks in 2007, comprising of qualitative, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, including the informants as listed in Table 3-4. The supply side consists primarily of two groups, the first group consisting of stakeholders at the international level, national government level (central, provincial, district and commune) and the second group referring to the local level including schools. As for the demand side, it comprises groups of parents of children with disabilities and groups of parents of children without disabilities. The next two significant groups of actors consist of students with disabilities and the group of students without disabilities.

Table 3-4 Actors of the supply side and the demand side

| SUPPLY SIDE | DEMAND SIDE |
|---|--|
| International Organizations: 1 informant | Parents (w/o disabilities) with disabled children: 7 informants |
| Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of Cambodia (MoEYS): 2 informants | Parents (w/o disabilities) without disabled children: 7 informants |
| Schools: 6 schools Total: 9 informants | Students with disabilities: 7 informants |
| School Headmasters: 7 informants | Students without disabilities: 7 informants |
| School Teachers: 7 informants Total: 21 informants | Total: 24 informants |

Note: Table created by author based on data obtained from field interviews

Main methodology

The first dimension concerning the different SEN consist of the following 16 categories⁶:

Table 3-5 Categories of groups with Special Education Needs (SEN)

| | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Disabled Persons | 9. Child Soldiers |
| 2. Gifted Children | 10. Poverty-stricken Children |
| 3. Street/Working Children | 11. HIV/AIDS Children and Orphans |
| 4. Remote/Nomadic Populations | 12. Orphans/Separated Children |
| 5. Linguistic/Ethnic/Cultural/Religious Minorities | 13. Jailed Children |
| 6. Abused Children | 14. Illiterate Youth |
| 7. Refugees/ IDPs | 15. Out-of-School Children |
| 8. Migrants | 16. Other SEN |

Note: Table created by author

Source: UNESCO’s conceptual and policy papers (UNESCO, 1996, 1998a., 1999a., 1999b., 2000a., 2003a., 2004; Bernard, 2000)

The secondary purpose of this research is to undertake qualitative field interview in order to conduct comparative analysis of the existing gaps in the perception of inclusion and SEN based on diversity at the national local level. In a survey report in Cambodia (Filmer, 2005), children of ages 6 to 11 reported to be in school greatly varies for those with disability and without disability. It is clear that children of ages 6 to 11 with disabilities are less likely to be reported in schools in comparison to children of ages 12 to 17 with disabilities. The semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions have been formulated as presented in the following questionnaire in Table 3-6.

Table 3-6 Interview Questions

| Special Needs Education in Cambodia |
|--|
| 1/ Who are the target groups of Special Needs Education (SEN)? |
| 2/ What types of educational opportunities are provided? -Are they excluded? Is it exclusion? -Is it special education? -Is it integrated education? -Is it inclusive education? |
| 3/ What kinds of interventions are in place? -Policy of IE? -Budget? (Is it cost-effective? or Is it more costly?) |

⁶ The 16 categories here have been listed by the author through literature review of what are considered to be SEN based on the notion of inclusion by UNESCO’s conceptual and policy papers (UNESCO, 1996, 1998a., 1999a., 1999b., 2000a., 2003a., 2004 and Bernard, 2000)

| |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Schools? -School/Classroom setting? -School/Classroom resources? -Curriculum reform? -Teaching methodology? Pedagogy? -Teacher training? -Public Awareness? Parents? Communities? Students? Advocacy? -Assessment to measure special educational needs? |
| <p>4/ What are the constraints and the difficulties that you face when implementing the interventions? (with special education, with integrated education, with inclusive education)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Understanding? Public Awareness? -Teachers? –Students? -School Resources? -Budget? -Policy Development? (MOEYS) -Other reasons? |
| <p>5/ Do you agree with the idea of inclusive education or inclusion?</p> |
| <p>6/ What do you think are the future possibilities of inclusive education?</p> |
| <p>7/ How is Cambodia’s IE in relation to Laos PDR?</p> |

Source: Table created by author

Key Findings

Comparison of SEN based on disadvantaged groups

First, identification of groups of people considered to be “disadvantaged groups”, “vulnerable groups”, “excluded groups” or the “marginalized groups” was undertaken through the classification process of making note of reports with reference to such groups. According to this classification process, the following results were found.

Table 4-1 Reference to disadvantaged groups by number of Reports and Plans

| Disadvantaged Groups | Total # of Reports | ✓ | ✗ |
|----------------------|--------------------|----|----|
| | | 77 | 65 |

Note: Table created by author based on raw data from EFA NPAs and 2000 Assessment Reports

As shown in Table 4-1, it is revealed that out of the 77 reports and plans reviewed, nearly in all of the reports, 65 reports and plans had reference to groups of people categorized as “disadvantaged groups”, while 12 reports and plans had no reference to such groups. As mentioned earlier, all groups also categorized under “vulnerable groups”, “excluded groups”, including “marginalized groups” were counted into the total number of reports and plans.

Comparison of SEN based on inclusion and diversity by category

Next, among the groups of persons identified as “disadvantaged”, it is crucial to investigate who exactly are the specific groups of disadvantaged persons in accordance to the 16 different categories of SEN as listed in Table 3-4. Through the review study undertaken of 77 reports and plans from 60 countries, it has become clear that the group of disabled persons became the first most identified group in terms of the number of reports and plans totaling 60. Table 4-2 depicts of the current situation regarding the 16 categories of groups with SEN by number of reports and plans. As revealed in Table 4-2, followed by the group of disabled persons, the second group identified with SEN was the remote and nomadic populations with a total number of 37 reports and plans. And thirdly, there were in total 28 reports and plans identifying minority groups including linguistic, ethnic, cultural and religious minorities. The other groups with SEN identified in more than 20 reports and plans include the illiterate youth, poverty-stricken children, street and working children as well as out of school children. As illustrated in Table 4-3, the situation reflected through the EFA 2000 Assessment Reports and the EFA National Plan of Action demonstrates the following priority concerning categories of different groups with SEN.

Table 4-2 Total Number of Reports and Plans by Categories of SEN

| Total # of Reports | Total # of Countries | Disabled Persons | Gifted Children | Street/Working Children | Remote/Nomadic Populations | Minority Groups: Linguistic/Ethnic/Cultural/Religious | Abused Children | Refugees/IDPs | Migrants | Child Soldiers | Poverty-Stricken children | HIV/AIDS Children/Orphans | Orphans/Separated Children | Jailed Children | Illiterate Youth | Out-of-School Children | Others |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|-----------------|---|----------------------------|---|-----------------|---------------|----------|----------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------------|--------|
| Total Number of Reports | 77 | 60 | 5 | 20 | 37 | 28 | 2 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 22 | 7 | 13 | 5 | 26 | 20 | 3 |
| | | X: 17 | X: 72 | X: 57 | X: 40 | X: 49 | X: 75 | X: 70 | X: 74 | X: 75 | X: 55 | X: 70 | X: 64 | X: 72 | X: 51 | X: 57 | X: 74 |
| 2000 Assessment: | 41 | French: | 25 | ✓: Reports/Plans identifying this group as "Disadvantaged Groups" | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| NPA: | 32 | English: | 52 | X: Reports/Plans not identifying this group as "Disadvantaged Groups" | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Others: | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Note: Table created by author based on raw data from EFA NPAs and 2000 Assessment Reports

Table 4-3 Priority categories of groups with SEN

| | | | |
|---|---|----|--|
| 1 | Disabled Persons | 7 | Orphans/Separated Children |
| 2 | Remote/Nomadic Populations | 8 | HIV/AIDs Children/Orphans Refugees/IDPs |
| 3 | Minorities (Linguistic, Ethnic, Cultural, Religious) | 9 | Jailed Gifted |
| 4 | Illiterate Youth | | |
| 5 | Poverty-Stricken Children | 10 | Migrants Other SEN ⁷ |
| 6 | Street/Working Children Out-of-School Children | 11 | Abused Child Soldiers |

Note: Table created by author based on raw data from Table 4-2

The least prioritized were the gifted children, next the migrants and groups categorized as others with a total of 3 reports and plans. And lastly among the 16 categories were the abused and the child soldiers. As referred in footnote 9, the group of persons with other categories of SEN are featured as problematic or serious issues in the current situation of that country needing immediate attention.

As summarized in Table 4-2, generally speaking, there were at least 2 reports and plans identifying each and every 16 categories of SEN. This implies the fact that the notion or the definition of inclusion has expanded and spread, not solely limited to persons with disabilities. One of the major distinctions made as mentioned in section 1, regarding the definition between integrated education and inclusive education is that before the Salamanca Statement, integrated educational settings were targeted only for those with disabilities. Whereas with inclusive educational settings, the definition of inclusion has diversified itself to include diverse SEN beyond disabilities. Thus, this review study of the reports and plans indicates a certain degree of “inclusiveness” which “...recognizes and responds to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality education to all...” (The Salamanca Statement, 1994, p.12).

Comparison of SEN based on inclusion and diversity by country

The following section analyzes how diverse and inclusive countries are, to meet different SEN of all children and youth. It has classified the countries in accordance to

⁷ Other SEN have been identified by the author in the reports and plans reviewed and studied, all which are specific to the context of the country apart from the 16 categories include the following: teenage pregnancy, school dropouts, unemployed, traumatized children from wars, children in squatter areas, farm workers and children war affected areas.

the total number of SEN each country has identified, ranging from 0 to 10. As shown in Table 4-4, the country identifying the highest number of SEN was Namibia with a total of 10 different categories of SEN. Malawi, Chad, Burundi, India and Zimbabwe follows Namibia, each country identifying 8 to 9 different categories of SEN. By contrast, it becomes obvious that countries with reference to less than 5 types of SEN are the majority, with 16 countries specific to one special type of need and 9 countries with no mention to any type of SEN. From such results, it may be worthwhile to make note that in terms of accepting a variety of SEN and creating diversity in its educational setting, policies in majority of the countries are not inclusive.

Table 4-4 Total number of SEN by total number of countries⁸

| Total number of SEN | Countries | Total |
|---------------------|--|-------|
| 0 | Afghanistan/ Benin/ Cape Verde/ Chad /Democratic Republic of Congo/ Mauritius/ Somalia/ Sao Tome and Principe /Sri Lanka | 9 |
| 1 | Bhutan/ Botswana/ Cameroon/ Comoros/ Ethiopia/ Gambia/ Guinea/ Guinea Bissau/ Indonesia/ (Republic of Korea)/ Maldives/ Myanmar/ Senegal/ Tanzania(Zanzibar)/ Pacific/ Ghana | 16 |
| 2 | Bhutan/ Cameroon/ Djibouti/ Gabon/ Lesotho/ Mali/ Seychelles/ Sri Lanka/ Myanmar/ Kenya | 10 |
| 3 | Bangladesh/ Gambia/ Liberia/ Philippines/ Sao Tome and Principe/ Senegal/ Uganda/ Vietnam/ Pakistan | 9 |
| 4 | Democratic Republic of Congo/ DPRK of Korea/ Gabon/ Nepal/ Papua New Guinea/ Togo/ Uzbekistan/ Vietnam | 8 |
| 5 | Burkina Faso/ China/ Madagascar/ Mongolia/ Mozambique/ Niger | 6 |
| 6 | Botswana/ Congo/ Cote d'Ivoire/ Lao PDR/ Namibia/ Pakistan/ Tanzania (Mainland) | 7 |
| 7 | Cambodia/ Congo/ Kazakhstan/ Zambia/ Nepal | 5 |
| 8 | Burundi/ India/ Zimbabwe | 3 |
| 9 | Malawi/ Chad | 2 |
| 10 | Namibia | 1 |
| 11 | None | 0 |
| 12 | None | 0 |
| 13 | None | 0 |
| 14 | None | 0 |
| 15 | None | 0 |
| 16 | None | 0 |

Note: Created by author based on raw data from EFA NPAs and 2000 Assessment Reports

⁸ The results include countries which appear more than once within the category of the total number of SEN, but this is because both the EFA 2000 Assessment Report and the EFA National Plan of Action are available and have been reviewed for those countries.

Firstly, for those countries which do not specify SEN at all, the notion of inclusion itself is neglected. Secondly, but more interestingly, there is a specific pattern amongst certain countries such as Laos PDR illustrating a conflict arising between the definition of inclusion at the international policy level and with the principles of the Salamanca Statement. This gives insights into questioning the relevance of inclusion as introduced in the Salamanca Statement in comparison to what should really be understood about inclusion. For example, in Laos PDR, priority “disadvantaged groups” are identified as disabled persons and ethnic and language minority groups. It also recognizes the concept of inclusive education based on the notion of diversity with SEN, yet has intentionally targeted these two disadvantaged groups for the following reasons. In Laos PDR, “ethnic groups often face serious supply constraints in education... In general, provinces with large ethnic group populations have more villages without any schools, account for more incomplete primary schools, and seriously lack qualified teachers.” Furthermore, it goes on to saying that “when minority children do enroll in school, the drop-out rate is very high, particularly in the first two years of schooling. The curriculum is not geared towards the needs of ethnic group children. Many teachers are not natives of the communities in which they teach, do not speak the local language, and have difficult time communicating with and teaching local children.” (EFA NPA Laos PDR, 2003-2015) In Laos PDR, it sets out a clear policy for these two target groups which face the most serious concerns in terms of the right to access to education given the country’s geographical and regional characteristics. Thirdly, through the review study, there was not a single country presenting policies or educational strategies to accommodate all types of SEN into one single classroom. It is a clear indication that the notion of “inclusion” of all SEN as set forth in the guiding principles of the Salamanca Statement is not a topic for discussion at the international policy level, revealing an evident gap, largely questioning the relevance of “inclusion” and “inclusive education”.

Comparison of progress on inclusive educational strategies and SEN

Through qualitative review of the reports and plans, the progress of countries in creating an inclusive environment can be classified into the following five patterns as illustrated below. It demonstrates the various issues of conflict and challenges behind inclusive education as declared in the Salamanca Statement and what is recognized at the international policy level, questioning the relevance of implementing inclusive educational settings in developing countries.

Pattern A: No educational provision for the disabled persons

Pattern B: Educational provision solely limited to special education and no discussion on integrated or inclusive policies and strategies

Pattern C: Educational provision in the form of special education with policies and strategies which are negative towards integrated or inclusive policies and

strategies

Pattern D: Educational provision in the form of special education with policies and strategies which are positive towards integrated or inclusive educational settings

Pattern E: Educational provision in the form of special education with integrated or inclusive policies without detailed strategies for implementation

The above five patterns will now be examined in detail through actual statements from the EFA 2000 Assessment Reports and EFA National Plans of Action.

PATTERN A

With Pattern A, there were in total 9 countries which identified “disabled person” as one of their “disadvantaged groups”, yet stated that they had no educational opportunities for such groups of persons or clear educational strategies. Those countries were Djibouti, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Seychelles, Tanzania (Zanzibar), The Pacific Islands, Tanzania and Pakistan.

PATTERN B

In Comoros, its national policy recognizes the importance of “special education”, but there are no elaborated discussions on either integrated or inclusive schooling. Likewise with the Democratic Republic of Congo, it states the importance of developing special education schools and programs but no reference to integrated or inclusive schools. Similarly, in Congo, there are strategies to promote the development of special education for example, “construction and rehabilitation of new classrooms... special schools... construction of special centers for the mentally handicapped and implementation of these centers in every region where there are special schools established.” Furthermore, these strategies in Congo’s National Action Plan are named as “inclusive education” which indicates that the term “inclusion” is not fully understood. There were in total 13 countries with such a pattern.

PATTERN C

Pattern C illustrates interesting findings about inclusive education at the international policy level, and there were in total 10 countries with such a pattern. For example, in the EFA NPA 2003 of Bangladesh, it clearly illustrates pattern C as follows:

“The NPA I recognized the need (of inclusive education) but felt that “normal primary schools” could not provide both “education and expensive arrangements required for treatment of the disability” and proposed that Ministry of Social Welfare should provide this service through the specialized institutions under normal Allocation of Business.” (EFA NPA II Bangladesh, 2003-2015 7.13, p 47)

From the statement above, it can be inferred that in Bangladesh, not only does it make implications about the difficulties of inclusive education implementation, but in addition argues that it is a costly mean of educational provision. Furthermore, it continues to state that quality education cannot be provided for the disabled students with inclusive education. In other words in Bangladesh, the government provides educational services for the disabled through specialized institutions questioning the justifications of inclusive education in terms of cost and quality, implying a different perspective as to that of the Salamanca Statement.

PATTERN D

In contrast to pattern C, with this pattern, national government policies of 10 countries express relatively positive attitudes towards the ideas of integration and inclusion with actual on-going development and planning for such settings. In Bhutan, for example, educational provision for the disabled takes place in the form of special education, yet active promotion of integrated education settings are in place from 1997 onwards; “educational programs and facilities developed to integrate, wherever possible, disabled children into the regular schools...” (EFA 2000 Assessment Bhutan 3.9) To be more specific, it uses the expression “wherever possible” with integrated education settings, implying a positive aspect, yet also acknowledges its limitations, suggesting certain conditions in its feasibility and relevance. On the contrary, in Cote d’Ivoire, inclusive schools are considered as a positive educational approach for the deaf, blind and deaf/blind students. It is also interesting to observe that the Salamanca Statement is mentioned as a turning point in having launched a pilot project of integrating/including children with disabilities into ordinary schools in Cote d’Ivoire.

In Mozambique, “children with special educational needs are divided into two groups, those who are not seriously disabled and who may be enrolled in normal schools but will require individual and specialized attention, and those who do have serious disabilities and will require attendance in special schools.” Although Mozambique expresses a positive attitude towards integrated education; “children with special educational needs will, as far as possible, be identified prior to schooling so that they may receive appropriate and adequate care. The majority of these children will be integrated in normal schools which will have separate support systems”, it clearly indicates the need for special or separate support systems, identifying the positive role of special education. On the other hand, Mozambique acknowledges that “to the greatest extent possible, those with special needs will be integrated into existing schools and classrooms rather than segregated in separate schools or excluded from school altogether.” (EFA 2000 Assessment: Country Report Mozambique PART I)

PATTERN E

In this last pattern, policies of integrated or inclusive education are included, but there are no clear visions or realistic strategies in line with the country’s context. For

example in Cameroon, its policy acknowledges the “negative perception (or) physical barriers” (EFA NPA Cameroon, p.11), yet it’s strategy remain ambiguous lacking details; “creation and construction of necessary equipments in schools to adapt to the difficult situations of children”. (ibid, p.11)

Comparative analysis of existing gaps about inclusion of SEN based on diversity- supply side

First, comparative analysis of stakeholders involved in Group A of which were UNESCO⁹, UNICEF, the World Bank and Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) of Cambodia, has come to reveal of the following their perception towards the notion of inclusion of SEN based on diversity.

Table 4-5 Difference in perceptions of actors in Group A and Group B

| ACTORS | + | — |
|-----------------------|----------|----------|
| Group A | | |
| UNESCO | ✓ | — |
| UNICEF | — | ✓ |
| World Bank | ✓ | — |
| MoEYS | ✓ | ✓ |
| Schools (NGOs) | — | ✓ |
| Group B | | |
| Headmasters | — | ✓ |
| Teachers | — | ✓ |

Source: Table created by author based on data obtained from field interviews

Regarding the “+” and “—” as represented in the table, the positive column indicates that the actors first of all agree on the idea about “inclusion” based on “diversity”. The positive and the negative categories have been the two fundamental axis of analysis to determine each actor’s definition and perception of “inclusion”. Moreover, not limited to the definition of “inclusion” and “diversity”, but evaluating their perception on the relevance of implementing inclusive education is also the key point of this comparative analysis. In other words, are actors in favor of adopting inclusive strategies or are they in positions claiming constraints and difficulties with inclusive education.

From the comparative analysis as conducted through this qualitative field interview

⁹ Literature review of document (UNESCO, 2007) has also been conducted.

research, the following conclusions are made. As the level of actors in the supply side change from Group A to Group B as well as further down the level from schools to school headmasters and school teachers, it clearly indicates that further down at the grassroots level, actors are not involved with disabled children in an inclusive way. Furthermore, there is a clear gap existing between actors of Group A and actors of Group B in the sense that actors of Group A recognize the need to develop and promote inclusive education in a positive way and at this current stage, the Ministry of Education of Cambodia takes in view that Cambodia is already in the stages of promoting such inclusive educational settings for the disabled children. However, interviews with many of the school headmasters and school teachers have revealed that they themselves understand the concept of inclusion, yet acknowledge that developing inclusive education is not suitable under certain cases and it was not in their intention to develop and plan for such settings. As for the teachers, many of them having experienced special professional training to teach the disabled children experienced difficulties and constraints from time to time, which indicates that if teachers were to teach students in real inclusive educational settings, the burden or the capability of the teachers are highly questioned and debatable.

Comparative analysis of existing gaps about inclusion of SEN based on feasibility- demand side

This part of the section has aimed to conduct comparative analysis of the existing gaps about the notion of inclusion and diversity as well as evaluating the difference in perception about the relevance of promoting inclusive educational settings for children with disabilities from the view point of actors in the demand side of education. The following table as shown below illustrates briefly the summary of the findings.

Table 4-6 Difference in perception of actors in Group A and Group B

| ACTORS | + | — |
|-------------------------|----------|----------|
| Demand Side | | |
| Group A | | |
| Parents Group 1 | ✓ | ✓ |
| Parents Group 2 | ✓ | ✓ |
| Group B | | |
| Students Group 1 | ✓ | ✓ |
| Students Group 2 | ✓ | ✓ |

Source: Table created by author based on data obtained from field interviews

The demand side of education in this particular case involves groups or parents and groups of students, in which these two groups are further divided into two groups.

The first group of parents is those parents with disabled children and the second group of parents is those with non-disabled children. As for the students, the first group of students is those with disabilities and the second group is those without disabilities.

Firstly, qualitative interview results have shown that parents with children with disabilities were very positive about providing educational opportunities for their children, regardless of whether it was in the form of special schools, integrated schools or inclusive schools. For example, according to Mr. G who is a school headmaster of school A (KTD), he has commented that *“parents show their willingness of wanting to communicate with their children and ask for sign language lessons. They say that they want to learn, but at the same time they have no time to master the language because they are busy with other things.”* Furthermore, Mr. H from School C (RS) has observed that when advocacy activities are conducted to raise public awareness amongst parents and the community about the rights of all children even for those children who are disabled, parents are more than willing to send their children to schools. *“In 2003 and 2004, there was media coverage through the use of television highlighting the rights of the child with disabilities to raise public awareness. After this television diffusion, there were 200 calls to the Rabbit School.”*

As for the parents with non-disabled children, analysis of information obtained through interviews with school headmasters and teachers have revealed some negative aspects about integrating or including children with disabilities with their non-disabled children for several reasons. In Cambodia, the religious and cultural beliefs behind disabilities are one of the underlying factors which create negative attitudes amongst parents and families. Hence, parents without disabled children hold negative attitudes and beliefs towards children with disabilities, which are the root causes of making parents cautious about including disabled non-disabled children together, and not wanting the two groups of children to follow the same curriculum in schools. Secondly, the presence of one another within the same classroom setting has evolved from negative to positive aspects. For example, Ms. F from school B (KTB) has commented that students with disabilities said that at first, *“I was afraid to go to public schools and talk to classmates without disabilities, but after a while, I made many friends...”* or *“I love going to school and I like learning English a lot...”*

Moreover, participatory observation inside the classrooms of the special schools and interaction with the students has shown that students are very motivated in learning and in attending special schools with enthusiasm. However on the other hand, not all children with disabilities felt comfortable with the integrated or inclusive form of educational setting. According to Mr. K from school E (DDP), has commented that he has heard stories directly from students saying that, *“I know a deaf student who was integrated into the public school and doesn’t like staying there, but cannot say so...”* Mr. K believes that deaf students cannot be integrated nor included with other non-deaf students unless their language, sign language is used as their language of instruction, because they possess their own deaf culture. As inclusive education is now becoming the international trend,

Mr. K comments that many NGOs receiving partial funds from the government are facing particular situations in which they are in a way forced to adopt inclusive strategies.

As for the students without disabilities and their perception of learning with their disabled peers, they have expressed a change in attitude from negative to positive feelings. For example, school headmaster Ms. F from school B (KTB) has commented that “*the non-disabled children in public schools at first did not know how to communicate or interact with the deaf and the blind students within the classrooms.*” However eventually, those students expressed interest and curiosity to interact with their disabled peers and those students visited the special schools when special sessions were organized by the special schools. Such activities have become critical factors in changing the attitudes of the non-disabled students in a positive way in terms of expressing their understanding towards their disabled peers.

Conclusion

This particular research has aimed to conduct comparative situational review analysis of the current situation of special needs education based on the notion of inclusion and diversity, nearly 20 years after the declaration of the Salamanca Statement. Furthermore, it has aimed to conduct comparative analysis of the existing gaps in perceptions of all actors involved at different levels of special needs education both at the supply and demand sides at the national local level in Cambodia. From this research, the following essential points can be summarized.

Firstly, the notion of inclusion based on diversity at the international policy level addresses the principle of “inclusion”, as more than 16 categories of disadvantaged groups with SEN have been identified by all 60 countries in total. At the same time and interestingly enough, majority of the 60 countries identified less than 3 different categories of SEN referred to as “disadvantaged groups” with priority on the disabled. Such key findings imply that the definition of “inclusion” as stated in the Salamanca Statement, meeting the needs of not only the disabled, but all special needs is not recognized and fully understood by each and every country of developing countries in Asia and Africa. Furthermore, majority of the countries have specified and prioritized its target disadvantaged groups based on a logical reasoning. In other word, given the regional, geographical, social or cultural contexts of certain countries, prioritization of groups with specific SEN becomes a critical “fast-track” initiative and strategy towards the initial steps for inclusion of those countries.

Secondly, identification of 5 patterns of educational strategies provided for those with disabilities has most importantly revealed that implementing integrated or inclusive education for the disabled encounters various constraints as negative attitudes were expressed in the policy papers of national governments. In other words, country policies view that special schools can better meet the SEN of the disabled. This is a clear indication at the international policy level that although the Salamanca Statement

promotes the adoption of inclusive policies, certain countries are working in the opposite direction, challenging the realistic relevance of inclusive education as declared in the Salamanca Statement.

Thirdly, a general overview of perceptions of all different supply and demand side actors involved well illustrates that the notion of “inclusion” based on diversity as well as the relevance in promoting inclusive educational settings for children with disabilities faces constraints and problems for actors further down at the grassroots level of both the supply and demand sides. The fundamental reasoning behind such reality is that those actors with firsthand experience observe that inclusive educational settings is not the most suitable and appropriate way to meet the educational needs of children with disabilities depending on the type and degree of disability. This providing enough evidence to question the relevance of inclusive education as guided in the principles of the Salamanca Statement. Moreover and realistically speaking, field research in Cambodia has revealed that the development of inclusive education targeting children with disabilities requires enormous reform and modification in the fundamental system of education itself and for a developing country recovering from turmoil, it requires tremendous time and effort to promote inclusive educational settings. At this current stage, Cambodia needs reinforced government commitment and leadership, to take the lead in search for the most innovative ways of implementing “inclusion” as an approach to meet the educational rights of children with disabilities. At the same time, a clear agreed consensus must exist among supporting international donor agencies, including non-governmental organizations on the definition of “inclusion” given the country context of Cambodia where educational resources are lacking in public schools to accommodate the right to quality education for children with disabilities.

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