

The inclusive education policy in myanmar education essay



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This research focuses on the primary and lower secondary level students with disabilities for the purpose to address the educational needs of CWDs in Myanmar. In addition, one of the most important concerns in the Myanmar educational sector is how CWDs can be provided with opportunities to take responsibility for their learning throughout the concepts of community involvement and technical assistance to achieve a sustainable future.

The political and social context is discussed in terms of international policy reforms and initiatives, especially the Salamanca Statement that agreed to ensure a basic education for all children, including CWDs. The Salamanca Framework for Action (1994) was a significant milestone in the education for CWDs and recommended the mode of service delivery of timing and intervention that linked to inclusive practices. National-level policy and laws as they relate to CWDs are briefly described in service delivery, and increase awareness about the educational opportunities for them. Moreover, the government tries to make the concerted efforts harmoniously for the quality of life of PWDs at pleasant.

According to the guidance of the EFA-NAP, the following activities are being implemented:

Providing primary school textbooks worth over 1835. 51 million kyats in free of charges for over 5 million primary students to initiate free, compulsory primary education;

Preparing the programs for scholarships and stipends which will be implemented starting from 2012-13AY in basic and higher education sectors; and

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Enacting the private school registration law and developing rules and regulations in coordination with concerned departments to contribute the education services by the private sector.

For improving the quality of school education, monitoring and supervision mechanism has been strengthened since 2006-07 AY by focusing on the teaching and learning process. Basic education schools were classified by 5 levels (A, B, C, D, E) based on applying the following monitoring and supervision criteria such as

Accomplishment of the school principal;

Level of school attendance;

Implementation of monthly lesson plans;

Students' achievements;

Use of teaching aids, facilities & laboratories;

Cultivating morale and ethics;

Capacity of teaching staff;

Adequate classrooms and furniture;

School sanitation and tidiness;

Adequate teaching aids and multimedia facilities;

Greening of a school campus; and

Good physical setting of schools.

Myanmar has made progress in the education sector to fulfill MDG 2: “Achieve universal primary education” with the target of ensuring that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling: however the dropout rate still high in secondary school level. A total of 92 governments including Myanmar and 25 international organizations reaffirmed commitment to the goals of Education for All (EFA), recognizing the necessity and urgency of providing an education for children and youth with special needs within the regular education system. By the official data on net enrollment in primary schools was 84.6% in 2010 (MOE, 2010, EFA in Myanmar) and the gender discrimination has mostly been removed from basic education enrollment. However, the net enrollment rates in secondary and tertiary education are very low. The quality of education at all levels remains a serious concern.

Inclusive education (IE) is to support education for all, with special emphasis on removing barriers to participation and learning for girls and women, disadvantaged groups, children with disabilities and out-of-school children. The core point of IE is the basic right to education, which is rooted in many international human rights treaties since the UDHR adopted in 1948. The Dakar Education Forum (2000) reaffirmed that education was a fundamental human right and underlined the importance of a rights-based government actions in implementing EFA activities at the national level. The agreements on the principles and standards of IE spelt out the international human rights instruments and a rights-based education system. Myanmar government

applies a rights-based approach to education in their programming and planning processes.

It will also briefly discuss possible entry points and tools to move forward. In addition, it is hoped that this research will increase understanding of human rights' importance in underpinning development cooperation programming, as well as fostering a discussion on the practical aspects of implementing such programming. Many of the problems are related to the lack of education quality, relevance and exclusion of learning. There is a well-recognized link between overcoming the barriers of learning and achieving the EFA goals. Government and schools' principals must, therefore, pay special attention to children who should be in school, and are not, and to children who are in school, but are unable to succeed there.

At the present, MOE is making special arrangements for the disabled and other excluded children to attend formal schools and to continue their education receiving special care and attention. In Myanmar, IE programs were formulated to accommodate for all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. These programs include all vulnerable children such as CWDs; children from mobile families, orphans, street children, and other disadvantaged children. No. 25 Basic Education Primary School (Yangon) is the best witness of MOE in implementing IE. A new multi-pronged strategy for the capacity building in Teacher Education can promote the progressive adoption of effective teaching and learning methodologies for all CWDs at all levels. MOE and other partners strengthen educational management for the Basic Education

Sector Plan that supports the Government's education service delivery to meet commodities needs at the school level.

IE is a programme that creates opportunities for CWDs to pursue education together with non-disabled children in mainstreaming schools. It can bring about the educational opportunities for them. Nowadays, CWDs who have completed their primary education through special schools are now able to continue their education in mainstreaming schools by keeping abreast with other non-disabled children. IE According to the statistics data from MOE in 2011 showed that, there were 801 disable children in mainstreaming schools, 1450 children in special schools for the blind and the deaf, 30 disable students in universities and colleges and 6 disable students in master degree courses in 2010-11 AY.

The government policy was developed and practiced with policy reform to fill the gap in legal and policy development. As per hearing from the media, the advocacy for helping disabled issue more and more in Myanmar. The government policy and legal change occur on resetting criteria for definition of PWDs. Out of nine criteria (international norms), some implementation processes of IE use four criteria to define the PWDs. To be more specific about educational opportunities for CWDs, the government agrees to provide all children (including all regardless of physical condition) equal opportunity to learn basic education. In the actual situation, there has a gap between policy and practice.

The concept of IE means welcoming all children, without discrimination, in formal schools. Indeed, it is a focus on creating environments responsive to

the differing developmental capacities, needs, and potentials of all children. Inclusion means a shift in services from simply trying to fit the child into 'normal settings'; it is a supplemental support for their disabilities on special needs and promoting the child's overall development in an optimal setting. It calls for respect of difference and diversity of individual characteristics and needs. This has to include a consideration of overall organization, curriculum and classroom practice, support for learning and staff development.

By the collaboration and cooperation of MOE, DSW is implementing inclusive education for the students with disabilities especially for the Blind and the Deaf students. Also, inclusive education workshops were held throughout the country and the teachers from the MOE and the staffs from DSW were also attended. Myanmar is now implementing six sectors for PWDs across the nation such as

Enhancing Education Standard,

Improving Vocational Trainings and Job Opportunities,

Promoting Health Care Service,

Enhancing Reintegration into the Society,

Upgrading Capacity Building and Morale, and

Providing Social Needs.

In this situation, if the service providers can make the concerted efforts harmoniously, the life quality of PWDs will surely be enhanced and pleasant.

Inclusive education can bring about the educational opportunities for CWDs. Some NGOs and DPOs are collaborating with the Department of Social Welfare, the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Health for CWDs, who have completed their primary and lower secondary education level through special schools, able to continue their education.

3. 6. 1 Implementing processes of IE by I/LNGOs

TLMI is involving a little part in this area of IE implementation processes.

They only conduct trainings for teachers on disability issues, the importance of CWDs to get the opportunity to attend schools like any other children and providing some barrier free arrangement in selected schools. TLMI is working with the parents of CWDs to convince to send the formal school and on the other hand they also try to engage with school principals to accept and pay attention for those children. Also they proposed the education need of PWDs in the Draft disabled law, advocate the decision makers and teacher, and we are working together with U Tin Nyo, retired DG from MOE who is very interested in IE for CWDs.

Myanmar Independent Living Initiative (MILI) has concrete plan to implement the IE programs for children with cross-disabilities, they could not take shape it yet fully because their organization is just one year old & still young. But, some executive members of MILI organization are actively involved in comprehensive disability law drafting process to ensure the educational rights of PWDs. The Long experience of disability inclusive education for five years, the community-based rehabilitation programs mainly supported poor children with disabilities to go to mainstream schools, advocated parents and education teachers for disability inclusive education and renovated the <https://assignbuster.com/the-inclusive-education-policy-in-myanmar-education-essay/>

schools to be accessible for students with disabilities in collaboration with Department of basic education, DSW, local PWDs' Self-help Organizations and other relevant stakeholders.

That organization has planned to work in IE policy for PWDs by following kinds of strategies;

Awareness raising and advocacy for disability inclusive education policy & law

Capacity building of educational officers and staffs, and parents as well

Support children with disabilities for their mainstream and special schools

Change the schools as accessible friendly places for disabled children

Strengthen the collaboration among government departments, non-government sectors and relevant stakeholders to ensure the educational right of disabled children

Eden initiated the project of IE implementing in formal schools and the plan for barrier free renovation such as walkways, seat toilet and one handrail that fixed in the toilet. In that project, 80 IE students were gathered at Eden Centre for CWDs. Also Eden celebrated the township level awareness meeting for introducing to the teachers for successfully implemented IE policy. It means that the principals and teachers from 21 schools are introducing IE awareness about IE at their schools. Therefore, IE process can only succeed through strong collaboration and cooperation amongst all shareholders especially from the government site and the donor site as well.

Eden is cooperating with DSW and MOE. According to their advice, they held workshops and trainings for awareness raising workshop with DSW and MOE and shared awareness about IE and disability issue to other I/LNGOs' staff, local authorities, other stakeholders and teachers from mainstream schools. EDEN organizes a series of mobile training courses throughout Myanmar aimed at helping improve the lives of disabled people which focus on activities such as CBR, IE and disability development. Through the help of DSW and Department of Basic Education No. (1), (2) and (3), awareness training not only about IE but also the Social Model of Disability was conducted in mainstream schools.

“ PWDs in Yangon have more chances to access this information with help from NGOs and DSW, but those living in rural areas having difficulties due to inconvenient transportation and lack of mobility,” U Hta Oke said. “ I’m pleased about the growing number of people working in the field, but most of them are using a charity approach, which involves giving food, money, tools and other necessities,” he said. “ Not many are using a life-based approach, which means providing training so they can stand on their own feet.”

Moreover, for the educational status of children with hearing/seeing/ intellectual disabilities in Myanmar is inadequate and behind-the-times. There is only the DSW has one project on sign language especially for people with hearing disability. There is no standard educational practice. Teachers learn by copying the methods of older teachers. According to the UN CRPD agreement emphasizes bi-lingual/bi-cultural education for people with hearing disability. The Mary Chapman School in Yangon uses the philosophy “ Total Communication” that is method has been a widely adopted language <https://assignbuster.com/the-inclusive-education-policy-in-myanmar-education-essay/>

policy in deaf education from the 1970s. But this philosophy is out-dated. Graduation rates are very low. In Yangon Division, only 14 students with hearing disability have passed high school and only six have graduated from university until 2011-2012 academic years.

Undertaking All School-age Children in School Program

In Myanmar, all school aged children in school project (ACIS) was implemented by the MOE by collaborating with UNICEF since 1994 with the aims of reducing the number of over-aged out of school children, eliminating non-school going populace, ensuring that all school aged children to attend school and increasing the enrollment rate of primary level students. They designed the last week of May as the Whole Country School Enrollment Week.

3. 6. 2 Special schools which are supported IE for CWDs

Myanmar has a policy of IE, which means disabled students, including those who are blind, are allowed to attend classes in mainstream schools. This study found that mainstream schools are not properly equipped to cater for students with disabilities which mean that most CWDs are forced to attend special schools, despite the policy. There are challenges to implementing the policy, since schools lack the required resources and facilities.

Myanmar Christian Fellowship of the Blind (MCFB) was founded on 4th August, 1975, to upgrade the basic level of education afforded to blind people in order to increase opportunities of leading independent in life styles. That foundation encourages beneficiaries in education specific to their needs including vocational training, as well as a focus on how to cope as a

blind parent and job placements. The MCFB accepts children aged five and above and enrolls a similar method to the government mainstreaming schools. At that school, students can learn from grade 1 to 5 and then they can continue their secondary education in formal school. That school charges Kyats 15, 000 a year for day students and Kyats 40, 000-50, 000 for boarding students, which covers accommodation, meals and tuition fees. However, there are over 700 blind and visually impaired students receive a formal or vocational education.

“ The schools should be equipped with teaching materials in Braille, and teachers who know how to teach the blind by using Braille,” said Mr. Thein Lwin, the general secretary of MCFB.

Also in an interview with the principal of the Kyee Myint Daing School for the Blind found that the school accepts children from age six to 16, who are taught to the fourth standard. After they finished the primary education, they are sent to a formal school to continue their secondary education. The school and provides has both day students and boarders with free of charges for all fees of food and accommodation. The school can accept 200 students for one academic year.

Mary Chapman School for the Deaf accepts children from the ages of five to 18. At that school, children can learn regular curriculum that is taught in formal schools together with speech reading, finger spelling and sign language. Moreover, children at that school over 10-year of aged are taught reading, writing and arithmetic and vocational training such as tailoring,

knitting, book binding, bag-making, cooking and massage. The school fee is Kyats 6, 000 per month including meals for students.

The School for Disabled Children in Mayangone Township in Yangon is operated by the DSW. That school accepts both physically and mentally disabled children between the ages of six to 18 and teaches the standard curriculum up to the fourth standard. It has developed a special curriculum for children with a learning disability that take into account the extent of their disability and their capacity to learn. The current admission fee is Kyats 10, 000 for one academic year.

Further, while the study found that, the technical for education and training initiatives are not new to Myanmar. As a result of some recent educational developments and reforms, it is new to some teachers and learners both in curriculum and methods of delivery.

Special Program for Over-aged Children

This program is one of the branches of all school aged children in school especially for over-aged children. It was started in 2003-04 AY at basic education schools. If the child has between the age of 7 and 8, he/she will complete the primary education within 3 years and if the child has over 9 years of age, this accelerated program enables to complete his/her primary education within 2 years.

Monastic Education System

Under the supervision the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the monastic basic education schools are initiated by collaborating with the MOE. They use the

formal basic education curriculum of MOE but the schooling hour is flexible according to the students' availability. This program is so benefit for the marginalized children including CWDs that is complementary to the formal education system. In 2010-11 AY, there were about 1431 Monastic schools (1071 primary schools, 246 post primary schools, 112 middle schools and 2 high schools) with 0. 215 million students including novices and nuns. Currently, at least 40% of all students in Myanmar are attending at these monastic schools. The research found that it is still very few opportunities for CWDs if we compared to the entire nation.

3. 7 Problems of accessibility to education faced by PWDs

The principle of basic education as a right based approach has been accepted internationally. However, a large number of CWDS are not able to complete a minimum number of school years in most developing countries. They face a variety of barriers before coming to school and even within the school. This research findings highlighted the problems of CWDs to access education that although the regulation and laws on inclusive education for all excluded children have been well established in Myanmar. The government runs the IE as the national level education development plan, however, there is a lack of educational assistive materials such as Braille books, Braille writing frames and syllabuses, qualitative/standard papers for writing in Braille, assistive devices for mathematical teaching or learning, and sign language interpreters. For these reasons and because of the lack of skilled teachers, the IE system's benefits have not been realized.

Learning through the restricted environment has also been one the most critical issues of educational opportunities for PWDs that needs to be addressed in order to create equality and equitable education in Myanmar. The current education system does not suit for PWDs in rural area, specifically in promoting the education standard of CWDs. In fact, there are several factors that influence over the education opportunity for CWDs. In addition, the researcher tries to explore what are those factors, challenges, and obstacles in pursuing education in the community. The following data are contributed by the PWDs and community representatives during the field research.

Towards the attainment of MDGs, many challenges still remain with regard to special focus which is required on hard-to-reach areas. A need of advocacy with more focus on duty bearer is a strategy to make sure of the long term commitment. The policy needs to be rewritten with a better understanding of authorities, duty bearers and duty holders. Moreover, the accessible services for PWDs in Myanmar is very little, only those who live in cities could access to those services and even then they need to get to such places where by need a lot of barriers to overcome to get there and money factor is another big barrier. In 2008, there are only 100 Physiotherapists appointed in hospitals under ministry of health.

According to the First Myanmar National Disability Survey 2010 showed that there were only 50% of PWDs in Myanmar never attended school, out of which 66. 5% enrolled in primary schools, 22. 2% in secondary schools.

Some kind of problems concerned with CWDs. A large percentage of those who do attend mainstream schools soon drop-out because of unfriendly

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attitudes and environments in educational settings. They often encounter negative treatment from their peers who are not sensitized to disability issues. Most teachers and school principals are not familiar with the idea of including. In Myanmar, one of the Southeast Asian countries, most of the people are still discriminate and exclude the CWDs traditionally. They believe money can make CWDs to be happy. It's not right. In special schools, there have IE projects for all CWDs. It can only the way to make in those children's lives to be valuable.

While the enrollment rate increase almost 100% every year at school opening seasons, there is alarming about 40-50% dropping out before they completed in their primary education so one could imagine for students with disabilities. There is little help for schooling opportunities for students with disabilities with the current situation because of the low awareness about the disability issue, wrong traditional believes and practice, less accessible resources (Brielle, sign language, teaching aids, Buildings, etc.), Low prioritization and no special law and regulation to protect them. Among the four types of disabilities, accessibility for physical disability, blind and deaf disability may be about 3. For people with intellectual disability is 0. 05.

The vast majority of CWDs never attended school and that a large percentage of the ones who do attend mainstream schools soon drop out due to inaccessible school infrastructure, lack of learning scopes, improper learning process and unfriendly school environment. But amongst the children that are not in any form of educational setups, a large majority shows a keen interest to acquire education. CWDs may have many of the problems that affect children at risk. The difficulties and problems are not <https://assignbuster.com/the-inclusive-education-policy-in-myanmar-education-essay/>

because of their impairments but because of several barriers around their environments.

During this field research, the researcher notified that there is an absence of reliable and consistent data on the educational status of children according to their disabilities. This makes it difficult for educators, policy-makers and programmers to understand the nature of the problem, and identify possible solutions. Moreover, the current teaching methods are not addressing to the individual needs of students with disabilities by lacking training and experience of teachers in teaching and handling them. Currently, the education of CWDs is concerned by DSW. For this reason, it is difficult to mainstream the program. Education for CWDs needs to be addressed by the MOE by collaborating with DSW and other stakeholder organizations.

Economic Factors

The high cost of instructional materials of CWDs further curtailed their access to all inclusive education services. Some representatives from DPOs were also presented about the cross section of economic factors of CWDs' families to access education. To summarize the various agreements on poverty issues that is seriously hindering the CWDs from accessing education. Poverty is not only affected on the accessibility of basic education for CWDs but also for other children.

In other the school drop-out CWDs case, many of them are suffering from an unrecorded or undiagnosed disability. If the community aware more about the disability issue, they could try to improve education for those children, but right now the illiteracy rate of this population is so high and that caused

an economic burden on countries. In the failure to include those CWDs, most of the community members are ignoring an important step in our attempt to eradicate poverty. Poverty and lack of knowledge on disability issues are the major problems accessing education for CWDs. Poverty would stand out on top as there are livelihood opportunities for parents who are poor and having CWDs in the family.

The researcher agrees with the respondents that because of the perceived added costs of health related problems, the problem is relatively deeper when the CWDs are involved. More than half of the population of PWDs lives in rural areas detached from the benefits of information and communication, transportation, and certain advanced technological facilities. Indeed the high cost of equipments, coupled with the rampant poverty predetermines the near or total absence of instructional materials. There does not seem to be a policy to ensure the massive distribution of these materials.

School infrastructure

The lack of matching infrastructure necessary for the integration was identified as a key challenge to all inclusive education services. Most of the schools' infrastructures are not comfortable for children with physical and visual disabilities. There are many environmental barriers for wheelchair movement. In schools that are at least two stories high, there is no way to climb up the stair by children in wheelchairs or using crutches. Parents of physically disabled children have to be carried up stairs and the doors are also not large enough for wheelchairs to pass through. Lack of classroom adaptations hinders the movement of children with disabilities including the

furniture of the classrooms and accessible toilets. These barriers are so difficult to access IE.

A key problem is the lack of clear policy guiding I/LNGOs' interventions in education for students with disabilities. Another barrier is the lack of reliable information and statistics which could back up planning and funding processes. All schools are under the Ministry of Education, but the development issues of CWDs are still under the DSW. Existing policies related to education and disabilities were found to be contradictory to each other. Appropriate policy formulation & adaptation is required to overcome the barriers.

Moreover, the budget for education is the basic need and awareness of duty bearers and duty holders need to be promoted along with its legal and policy development. It is somehow, inclusion is not a subject of Teacher's training college, training methods & tools are not available in Myanmar. Insufficient knowledge of inclusive teaching methodologies, lack of public awareness about the needs and opportunities of this target group and lack of funding to support inclusive education for CWDs are all preventing these children from receiving an education and being included in wider society.

It is found that to be depended upon the individual teacher's or school principals' interest to initiate and include in the mainstream education system. Most of the services are available only in Major City such as Yangon, Mandalay and Sagine where 27% of PWDs are aware of existing social services, while only a third of those ever contacted the agency.

Isolation and negative attitude by peers

According to the EFA strategy, all schools are found to be enforcing IE process regarding the CWDs but there are no insulting them, special support for them, no strenuous work for them. In some cases, some non-disabled children perceive some CWDs as contagious and fear that they will transmit from those disabilities. Some superstitious parents of non-disabled children want to prevent their children from making friends with CWDs. This is one factor that upsets one of CWDs.

Information and awareness sector

As to the awareness of NGOs who provide services for PWDs, 14.7% know of their presence but just over 1.7% of those who are aware of the services had ever contacted NGOs. Concerning special institutions, 20.2% of PWDs have knowledge about special institutions but only less than 1.7% of them ever had contact with them. Only 14.6% of PWDs know about the existence of organizations for and of PWDs whereas only 2.5% of them ever been involved with those organizations. Participation of PWDs in IE policy is not a big problem for physically disabled persons. The big problem is IE and vocational training for ID. Government, I/LNGOs and DPOs need to do a lot of it.

Unavailable trained teachers in adopting students with disabilities

The lack of enough trained teachers has predetermined that CWDs lack the specialized care they need. This could be explained by lack of awareness and disability related facilities like ramps, special toilet facilities, learning materials by the parents. Teachers can integrate the virtue of education

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levels, roles and responsibilities by being exposed the requirements of CWDs in the community. In almost all schools, the students with disabilities allow to sit in front of the classrooms. Nevertheless in some schools, there was no effort to support for CWDs in this regard. The researcher noticed that one student with hearing disability was sitting at the back of the classroom that worsen her learning skill. When the researcher asked her class teacher about it, she said that the child had not told her about it.

Teaching method

Another problem faced by CWDs is the traditional methods of teaching and learning that has little scope for addressing diverse learning needs of students, lack of continuous assessment of individual learners, and a serious shortage of assistive devices and learning materials all act as major barriers to CWDs. There is no special curriculum for CWDs in mainstream schools but there are some special schools for CWDs, which unfortunately those schools are not located in and around the rural area.

If CWDs can able to access formal education in the mainstream schools, they can gain not only education, but also the opportunity for social inclusion with their non-disabled friends that are so important to practice for their life-skills. Summarizing the interview with one student with intellectual disability from special school shared his feeling that he wanted to attend the school and he would like to live with his friends. If he stays at home, he feels so lonely and bored because he has nothing to do at home. He wants t