A Review of Educational, Psycho-Social, and Attitudinal Challenges in Addressing the Needs of Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Education

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Abstract

This review addressed challenges to addressing the needs of students with disabilities in inclusive Ethiopia related to educational, psychosocial, and attitudinal challenges. In order to conduct the review, the reviewer downloaded relevant articles on the topic, read them thoroughly, and selected 10 relevant articles for a review. The review employed a narrative review, in which major findings of the articles were narrated according to their similarities under three themes (i.e., education, psychosocial, and attitude). First, the analysis of studies demonstrated that the education of students in inclusive settings is far from practical and not as speculated in different policy frameworks and strategies. It is hindered by barriers related to a lack of educational material resources, a lack of skilled manpower on the issue of educating students with disabilities, and an inaccessible physical environment for SWDs to enroll in school. Second, psycho-social problems related to students with disabilities are observed due to their disabilities; there is discrimination, prejudice, and the stereotype that students with disabilities do not have access to equal opportunities, as well as an unpleasant relationship among the school community and students. This makes students with disabilities poor at social interaction, leads them to worry about their disabilities, and leads them to live separately. Third, the attitude of society's way of thinking and perception of persons with disabilities as weak, unable, hopeless, dependent, and unable to learn prevailed, and they were considered the subject of charity from the side of teachers, the school community, and students without disabilities. These challenges intensify the impact of disability on individuals and social aspects in general. Based on these facts, the necessity of removing barriers to learning and practice to raise awareness of disability through ongoing training of societies, an accessible environment, equipping schools, and working on raising awareness helps overcome the challenges.

Introduction

Disability is defined as having difficulties with performing activities of daily living, and the phenomenon is expressed as an interaction between an individual's health condition and the environment he or she is living in (Al-Oraibi, Dawson, Balloch, & Moore, 2011; Bishai et al., 2015). The Washington group defined disability as having at least a severe difficulty or limitation in performing key activities, such as sight, hearing, walking or climbing steps, remembering, or concentrating (Schulze, 2010). The other well-known definition is that disability is part of a human condition that can be experienced by any person at some point in life, temporarily or permanently. As a concept, it has been used to alternatively refer to physical impairments, activity limitations, or participation restrictions. Currently, the WHO-ICF definition of disability is widely adopted i.e., a person is considered to have a disability if and when his/her activity performances in his/her usual environment are limited in nature, function, or quality (Simeonsson, 2009).

Disability is construed in terms of society's failure to provide adequate and appropriate services for its citizens. As such, this definition sees disability not just as a health problem, but as a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between a person's body and characteristics of the society or environment in which he or she lives. That is to say, disability does not simply refer to an individual's intrinsic features but comes about as "a result of an interaction between a person (with a health condition) and that person's contextual factors (both environmental and personal factors)" (WHO 2011) and as 'mainly as a socially created problem, and basically as a matter of the full integration of individual into society' (WHO 2018a; Etieyibo 2020: 61).

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They are very often excluded and marginalized in different areas of life such as participation in education, social activities, economy, and politics and so on. The rights of persons with disabilities have increasingly been recognized by international and national law. For example, The Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons (1971) and the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (1975) both establish the principle of equality of the rights of persons with disability. The Declaration on the Rights of Deaf-Blind Persons (1979) adopted by the Economic and Social Council provides universal rights. However, it is not possible to force governments to apply them, and the rules require a concrete commitment from governments in order to transform equal opportunities for disabled persons into reality a commitment which is often lacking (Engelbrecht, Nel, Smit, & Van Deventer, 2016).

Concerning to previous experience of students with disabilities in Ethiopia, the reviewer faced to shortage of literature. But it is obvious that they went through the same experience. Literature mentioned that the past experience of segregation and exclusion exists in some developing countries. In Ethiopia also poverty and poor health status is a characteristic of people with disability as perceived by the community (Tirussew, 2005).

Negative attitude towards students with disabilities had a complete impact on the life of individuals with disabilities. It is mainly because of disability still perceived wrongly by society. Lack of public information has led to negative attitudes about Person with disabilities (Tirussew, 2005). Hence negative descriptions of students with disabilities amplify rejection and marginalization of people with disabilities (Zewude & Habtegiorgis, 2021). For the purpose of this review the reviewer focused on education, psychosocial and stigmatization with students with disabilities inclusive education.

Method and Materials

This review has been carried out on education, psycho-social and attitudinal challenges of students with disabilities in inclusive education. Research articles conducted on the topic of the focus were reviewed those conducted in area of this topic. In order to collect the articles, the reviews used key terms. The reviewer downloaded 15 articles from Google scholar using key words from the variables. Then, 10 articles were selected and reviewed through thoroughly reading abstracts and conclusions. The articles taken for reviews were conducted almost in different part of the country and ranges from primary to higher education institutions focused on students with disabilities from 2000-2020 G.C. Reviewer employed narrative review approach in order summarize and present the previous work of the authors. Finally, educational, psycho-social and attitudinal challenges of students in inclusive education were narrated and discussed under the aforementioned three themes.

Results and Discussion

Educational Challenges

Students with disabilities are much less likely to start school than their peers without disabilities. In case study data collected from respondents indicate that more of school-age children with disabilities had rarely attended school, compared with none disabled students. Literature was evident that countless number of children with disabilities have been excluded from ordinary education opportunities (Mitiku, Alemu, & Mengsitu, 2014). Estimated there are 150 million people under 18 living with a disability. These groups of children are less likely to attend school and have lower rates of staying and being promoted in schools (Groce & Kett, 2013). Only a very small number of children with disabilities in school age having opportunity to attend their education that has special needs facility (Franck & Joshi, 2017).

This issue is true that all over many countries many students with disabilities around the world are denied sustained access to basic education. A number of these children with disability never enter school at all, while others start the school but make unable to succeed finally dropping out, and it appears that a relatively small proportion are educated in a parallel system of special schools, running alongside mainstream schools (Croft, 2010; Katsui, Lehtomaki, Malle, & Chalklen, 2016). This is resulted from lack adequate opportunity and lack appropriate facilities, lack need based education and treatments from the school.

According to Franck (2015), he ensures unsuccessful attainment of the Millennium Development Goal, ignoring the marginalized and those with learning difficulties and other impairments, as many school-aged children are still kept in the confines of their homes rather than brought to school. To overcome this, working with parents in order to bring these children into classrooms and provide them with appropriate support while they are in school is essential (Franck, 2015). Dammesso (2018) stated that the inaccessibility of school buildings, including stairs, narrow corridors, inaccessible desks, accessible information and equipment, and inaccessible bathrooms, is often a major barrier for students with disabilities in schools. In general, children with disabilities are less likely to start school and have lower rates of staying and being promoted in school (WB & WHO, 2011). Without active efforts from governmental and nongovernmental organizations, it is difficult to see improved conditions in the education of students with

disabilities.According to WHO (2011), to address the barriers, increasing physical access to school buildings is an essential prerequisite for educating children with disabilities. Those with physical disabilities are likely to face difficulties in traveling to school if, for example, the roads and bridges are unsuitable for wheelchair use and the distances are too great. Even if it is possible to reach the school, there may be problems with stairs, narrow doorways, inappropriate seating, or inaccessible toilet facilities. The attitudes of teachers, school administrators, other children, and even family members affect the inclusion of people with disabilities in regular schools. It is obvious that in developing countries, authorities have demonstrated a clear move towards inclusive education in policy design, with their official position being one of education for all children regardless of mental, intellectual, physical, visual, or hearing impairments (NESCO 2015). Even though this official commitment is a good move, the experiences of many disabled children represent a very different reality (UNESCO, 2007). Many children with disabilities in developing countries, especially those from rural regions, are still not getting access to education as a result of being unable to access any kind of education or being placed in regular schooling without appropriate support (McKenzie & Chataika, 2018).

Psycho-social challenges

Students with disabilities faced the psycho-social problem of being historically marginalized from mainstream school society by longstanding prejudicial beliefs about their right to full citizenship and their ability to contribute meaningfully to decisions that have an impact on their lives. In this review, the reviewer uses the term "psycho-social disability to refer to people who have experienced enduring social, mental, and emotional distress, which "in interaction with various barriers hinders their full and effective participation. It clearly stipulates that all disabled students have the right to equality and non-discrimination. It is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of his or her disability unless it can be proven that discrimination, prejudice, stereotypes, and marginalizing are proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. Many studies find that students with disabilities have lower rates of motivated attainment than students without disabilities (WB & WHO, 2011). The social and academic advantages of being so-called normal are well known, such as security, psychological wellness, self-determination, independence, and a sense of purpose. Yet people with disabilities encounter innumerable barriers to obtaining an advantage. These barriers include discriminatory attitudes, accessibility, lack of support, poor education and training, and inaccessibility of resources (Seyoum, 2017). According to one study, more than eighty-five percent of students with disabilities live in poverty and fifty percent suffer from malnutrition in the country, which is one of the demonstrations of not equal access to resources (Johannes, 2012). Concerning public attitudes toward students with psycho-social disabilities, they were generally negative and spoke of the exclusion and dis-empowerment that stigma can cause. Their findings also highlighted the fact that people with psycho-social disabilities may experience accumulative discrimination on the basis of other socially marginalizing factors.Regarding social inclusion of people with disabilities, these persons have limited access to formal and informal information because organizations don't want to include people with disabilities in their formal communication processes. According to another study, more people with disabilities are disadvantageous—those in lower-status occupations, on lower earnings, or out of the labor market altogether—than non-disabled people. Reasons for equal access to benefit are stated as a number of barriers to psychological well-being for individuals with disabilities, such as learning discrimination, psychological barriers within the school, pervasive negative attitudes regarding abilities, and an unpleasant relationship (Sona, 2015).

Attitudinal challenges

Literature elaborates that societal beliefs about students with disabilities have a strong impact on inclusion in education, socialization, and work. Disability is often perceived as connected with a person's immorality, chance, or curse. Children with disabilities and their parents are often stigmatized (Franck, 2015).

According to studies conducted on attitudinal challenges in education, individuals with disabilities continue to face negative attitudes, stereotypes, stigma, and discrimination (Beyene & Tizazu, 2010). However, the attitudes of persons with disabilities have not been assessed, and identifying variables that predict attitudes for persons with disabilities is essential to developing interventions.

According to Berhanu (2015), social exclusion means a lack of belonging, acceptance, and recognition. People who are socially excluded are more exposed to economic and social problems, and hence they tend to have difficult life experiences. He further states that the practice of social exclusion affects individuals by preventing them from participating fully in the economic, social, political, and academic spheres. Similarly, the Beyene and Tizazu (2010) study indicated that due to their increased vulnerability in the social environment, women with mental, psychological, or learning disabilities are more likely to become victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse, and mistreatment because they do not have the practical means to live independently and experience their sexuality.This is one of the alarming barriers students with disabilities encounter. It refers to the exclusion of students from education and the denial of access to social services due to stigma. Students with disabilities, most often than not, are seen as helpless and independent. Due to attitudinal problems, in a group of societies, individuals are unwilling to work, learn, live,live and

share benefits and advantages with PWDs as colleagues (Getachew, 2011).According to the Report of Ethiopia cited in Tebeje (2005), "SWDs in societies at home, neighbor, school, work place, and community are victims of prejudice and stereotypes, which is hard to fight back. And we also have a lack of opportunities for employment, access to information, and services. Unavailability of data on the nature and problems of disability, lack of information and education, lack of training facilities and prevention strategies, inaccessibility of services, and lack of adaptive technology are the major problems that hinder SWD from becoming successful".

Conclusions and Implications

Conclusions

Students with disabilities can contribute to the development of the country if they are provided with opportunities, even if they are the ones living with disabilities. But the reality on the ground is evident: they were faced with a lack of appropriate opportunity to be at school. Not only this, if they got the opportunity to join school, it would still be unfavorable for them. After a huge struggle in school, only a limited number of students pass through, but they face a big challenge to get employed. In developing countries, policy guidelines are still far from being implemented, creating an unsolved negative experience for people with disabilities. Moreover, students with disabilities suffer from inappropriate perceptions, prejudice, and discrimination, which range from day-to-day socialization practices to restrictions on schooling. These challenges intensify the impact of disability on individuals and the socioeconomic impact on the country in general. Based on these facts on the floor, the necessity of implementing policy frameworks in practice is pivotal, unless otherwise life would be more challenging for people with disabilities and contribute negatively to the holistic development of the country.

Implications

Issues regarding the experience of students (i.e., education, psychology, and attitude) are interrelated; provide appropriate education that fits the needs and potential of students in their future lives. Similarly, giving students the opportunity to participate can contribute to a change in attitude among the community. Thus, based on a review of the challenges to addressing the needs of students with disabilities and a review of education, psycho-social issues, and stigmatization, the following implications were drawn:

- Schools are expected to motivate parents of students with disabilities to send them to school.
- The school is expected to work to increase the accessibility of resources for students with disabilities.
- Schools are expected to equip themselves with the necessary material for SWDs, including assistive technologies.
- Professionals in the field need to work on raising awareness about disability and the education of SWDs.
- The government is expected to follow the implementation policies regarding education, work to remove barriers to inclusive education, and implement the strategies.

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