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Head Teachers' Leadership Practices in Disability Management: A Case of Integrated Schools

Khagendra Baraily

Sanothimi Campus, Bhaktapur

Tribhuvan University, Nepal

Email: khagendraji@gmail.com

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Abstract

This article explored how disability management practice is insighted by the head teachers of schools to address the diverse need of pupils in schools. The dimension of leadership practice on disability management is creating energy within school surrounding, securing learning environment in inclusive setting, extending the vision, enhancing capacity of teaching and non-teaching staff, conflict management, minimising the crisis and seeking improvement. This study employed the narrative inquiry design of qualitative method by using in-depth interview as a research tool to collect data. The sample was drawn purposively that comprised five head teachers of community secondary schools located in Kathmandu Valley. The result showed that head teachers emphasised specifically in infrastructural development, developing awareness about disabilities, creating inclusive atmosphere within organisation, need to focus on professional development along with inclusive indicators. Effective diversity management strategies are the major leading practices adopted by head teachers for the disability management. Its implication is that the leadership practice must be adapted within community schools to create quality and effective management for disability.

Keywords: Diverse need, attitudinal development, inclusive indicator, creating energy, supportive management philosophy

Introduction

Nepali society is composed with lots of diversity along with age, gender, caste, ethnicity, religion, disability, geography, and so forth. Being the classroom as miniature of society, the social diversity representation is reflected profoundly in the surrounding of community school in our country. In overviewing the diversity, the disability is one of the dimensions of diversity arising within schools. The disability management is a part of diversity management that addresses the diverse need of the learner to create smooth

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Head Teachers' Leadership Practices in Disability Management: A Case of Integrated Schools

inclusive atmosphere in the classroom (Sucuoglu et al., 2010). The nature of disability and its educational impact need to be thoroughly abstracted in the mindset to blend inclusive philosophy in the class. For the achievement of better outcomes and intended goal, every dimension of diversity needs to be addressed by using paramount administrative action (Sherpa et al., 2020). Every organisation strives to enhance the effectiveness through focused attention on managerial effectiveness aimed at helping managers to get best out of their team as well as themselves. Hartree (1975) argues that any organisation exists to accomplish a purpose in the larger society which is usually stated in the form of objectives. This is also the same case in community schools of Nepal. According to (Mintzberg, 2010), a head teacher is everyone who can have an influence on others within school. Head teachers may be considered as administrators, officials, directors, executives of an institution and so forth. The head of the school in this sense is the manager that requires a set of diversity qualities along with disability to manage the school for the sake of achieving intended goal (Munir et al., 2020).

Various research studies have shown that the most successful head teachers lead and manage the human resource within school. In the decentralised education system of school management, it is clear that some tasks are about management and some are about leadership to encourage stakeholders for the development of responsibility and accountability within schools (Deslandes, 2010). Actually, leadership is embedded with vision, motivation, and future of school. Management delivers system and process essential to day to day activity in schools. Both leadership and management are the essential characteristics of head teachers for successful school management (Nordberg, 2010).

An administrator may directly influence the teachers' attitude, interest, and change their behaviour towards commitment to accomplish their roles and responsibility (Southworth, 2002). A school can stand to have changes only if there are right management styles and behaviour since the performance of school depends on the entire support of teaching and non-teaching staff like students, parents. To deal with them effectively, head teachers require special skills which make them successful in their task.

The head of school occupies a position of great importance in the set up of an educational institution. He/she is an educator with executive authority and ought to have a clear vision for the future of his school (Hallinger, 2010). Therefore, he/she seeks the support of the faculty to channelise their professional energies towards the achievement of clear objectives of the schools and learning needs of students. His/her role is important and his/her intervention counts in school improvement efforts. It is his/her leadership role that makes different from manager because a manager just plans, organises and controls the resources available to him/her. Leaders have ability to influence and motivate others to achieve organisational goals, influences minds of subordinates who follow their leaders duly inspired by their personalities (Manaseh, 2016). The managerial role is one of the major responsibility of leader who employs varieties of strategies to manage disability within school. A series of intervention that assists to disability management have been adopted by head teachers in schools. One of the key factors which may influence school effectiveness is the ability of the

Head Teachers' Leadership Practices in Disability Management: A Case of Integrated Schools

headmaster to perform managerial functions (Hopkins, 2003). Effective school management is key to improve school performance, particularly of students in both academically and discipline wise (Kabeta et al., 2013). Therefore, the head has to learn some special skills which has direct effect on teacher's and student's behaviour and attitudes so that the school can be much benefited by their activities. According to study conducted by (Hoque et al., 2011), the report revealed that the management skills contribute to effective school leadership and create inclusive environment in school. Good managerial skill of head teacher can create a world of difference in the efficiency and performance of the school (Kabeta et al., 2013).

This study supports the education stakeholders and policy maker to understand appropriate management skills that are essential for disability management. The disability is social construct that leads to opportunity restriction (Isaac et al., 2010). The effective leadership strategies mitigates the diversity issue and make the children with disability contributes to the nation development. The effective leadership strategies can support the formation of inclusive environment within school and also leads to develop the concept of society for all (Kugelmass & Ainscow, 2004). The disability issue is one of the emerging issues in the present context in community school (Liasidou & Antoniou, 2015). Without addressing the need and intention of children with disability, the school cannot achieve the institutional goal and unable to contribute in the transformation of society (Wilson et al., 2006).

To undertake this study, it is assumed that the findings of the study will back up to knowledge generation and improve the managerial skills of heads of the schools in the lines of disability management. For smooth operation and handling of different aspects towards diversity management including disability, the far-sighted vision and supporting activities need to be flourished in their working places (Grossman, 1979). Further the study has implications for the educational administrators in the area of promoting student engagement in effective teaching for the creation of inclusive atmosphere in classroom. This study will also pertain the professional organisations involved in management to develop right skills measurement system for the educational leadership to acquire effective management skills necessary for the performance. The study may reveal whether the problems arising in different school for managing disabilities are associated with lack of diversity management skills among the head of the community schools.

This study is duly intended to seek the answer of the question such as what are the leadership style adopted by the head teachers to manage disability within school?, how do head teachers use the communication skill for addressing the disability issue within schools?

Methods and Procedures

The methodology employed in this study was the narrative inquiry design of qualitative research to draw the experiences and feelings of head teachers in the context of disability management within schools. Regarding the data gathering process, the interview was

Head Teachers' Leadership Practices in Disability Management: A Case of Integrated Schools

taken from semi-structured interview with participants through interview schedule. Data collection process was conducted with five head teachers and they were symbolised as H1, H2, H3, H4 and H5 of five integrated schools located in Kathmandu valley. This study was confined to the integrated schools of valley because the practice of integrated education is likely to be more satisfactory in the integrated schools of valley. The head teachers of participant schools are well managers and transformative leaders for disability management prospective. The interviews were tape recorded and immediately transcribed as verbatim. The transcribed data were coded to generate organised theme and again decoded to make global theme for reaching into the conclusion. Data analysis process was conducted through the process of open coding (Miles et al., 2013). The research structure provided by the objectives and floor plan for research, the transcribed data was qualitatively analysed through open coding to generate theme and main concepts. Recursive version in the transcribed data was recognised as theme and sub-theme. A list of central theme and sub-theme was incorporated. This process permits a deeper understanding and explanation of issue that were being investigated. The peer reviewers read thoroughly for the sake of ensuring validity and reliability and information were gathered by triangulation. The coding corresponded with research question was insightfully analysed.

Results and Discussion

The practice adopted by head teachers for disability management within school seems to present crucial implication for improving the everlasting adjustment of children with disabilities either by educating or delaying their exit from schools through policy and practice that support and accommodate by encouraging their entry into schools. For achieving sustainable developmental goal and education for all, head teachers play roles in managing various parameters that are embedded in schools. The discussion for this study has been done under the following themes.

Attitudinal Management

The perception and behaviour associated with disable people in society refers to the attitudinal management. In some communities, disabled people are treated as stigmatised mentality and treated as unsocial behaviour that affects the dignity of handicapped people. One head teacher H1 said:

In my experience there is lack of positive attitude about disability in my community. Some people expresses disability is result of sin and debt in any birth of dynasty. Disable person has no space in the community and unable to achieve better goal in their life. They think educating children with disability is cultivating at sand beach with no output. They do not give any valuable product for the development of family and community. This is why; they are unable to encourage sending their children to school.

In the above assertion, the primitive conception is still existed in our community that discourages disabled people. Through this mindset the people treat disability as the result of medical model and can be curable by the effective medication. In such contexts government

Scholars' Journal, Volume 4, December 2021, 93-105

Head Teachers' Leadership Practices in Disability Management: A Case of Integrated Schools

needs to promulgate law that abides the people who discriminate handicapped people. In case of effective implementation of legal provision, monitoring unit of government requires to work efficiently.

Another head teacher H2 said:

In my school parents of children with mild disability frequently come and ask about the enrollment in regular class. Generally the children who come with parents show slightly abnormal behaviour. Some children are reluctant to adapt in regular class due to deficit in any area of disability. Most of the parents of children with disability think losing of dignity and social status if actual information is publicised.

In the above assertion, the actual figure of disability is still diminished and the children with disability are not getting specific intervention due to the misconception about the disability. And the children with disability are imposed to be admitted in regular setting to make them similar to non disabled pair. In such contexts, the head teachers of school need to disseminate awareness programme for parents and make the parents give actual situation of children. The head teacher plays an important role in the transformation of society with effective leadership in education.

Head teacher H3 declared:

My school is garden for all types of children where they can cultivate their innate power in least restrictive environment. To meet the goal of education for all and achieve the millennium development goal, each and every child regardless of their nature of disability requires to be intervened in natural situation. Disability awareness program should be conducted by advocacy agencies to develop positive awareness in community.

Head teacher H1 said:

In my school varieties of students with diverse needs are welcomed and they pursue education in child friendly environment. There are no differences between disable and non disable students in my school. From the school administrative side, I have managed disabled friendly class room and furniture as well. Furniture management is set so that children with physical disability can move wheel chair freely.

In the above premises of head teacher, it is clear that maintaining disable friendly environment within school reflects an effective leadership of head teacher. The physical and psychological environments are the essential wings for managing diversity in school. The parents are seeking about better place for their child's education along with free from accessibility barrier. In their experience, there is lack of skilled people in society to teach children with disability on the basis of nature of disability. It is clear that parents are feeling suffocation about the human resource management at school. So, to eliminate the parents suffocation the government need to manage special teacher who is qualified and well trained in special and as well as inclusive education.

Human Resource Management

This refers to management function associated with hiring, motivating and maintaining people in school. This is designed for management system to ensure that human talent is

Head Teachers' Leadership Practices in Disability Management: A Case of Integrated Schools

used effectively and efficiently to perform institutional goal (Martinet, 2010).

In this regard head teacher H5 expressed:

There is no qualified man power for teaching special education in my school. I am feeling a severe problem to manage special teacher because government has not recruited inclusive teacher till now by teacher service commission. Frankly speaking, the teachers do not intend to teach students with disability because of poor facilities. The government teachers do not like to teach for children with disability due to lack of knowledge.

From the above premises, it is clear that our country is falling behind to overcome the barrier of inclusive education. At present government has issued the inclusive education policy 2072 but preparedness is weak from the prospective of infrastructure, human resource management and internal management of school. Especially special teacher recruitment has not done by government sector and so the teacher working in disability sector feel insecure and not willing to have a job regarding to disability. So the government need to sincere about the human resource management in the disability sector for implementing inclusive education policy lacking behind in practice. It is clear that parents are feeling suffocation about the human resource management at school. So, to eliminate the parents suffocation the government need to manage special teacher who is qualified and well trained in special and as well as inclusive education.

In this respect, head teacher H2 asserted:

Before earth quake disaster of 2072, an infrastructure was completely traditional and not disables friendly. We could not manage child friendly environment due to the lack of adequate resources. After earthquake, the new disabled friendly buildings are established by the assistance of international donor agencies. The government has not recruited special teacher for teaching with disability. So it is difficult to manage teaching staff due the financial inadequacies in the school.

In the above statement, in the beginning, the physical infrastructure was poor and demolished by earthquake. At that time it was difficult to manage children with disability in school. In the previous infrastructure, there was no child friendly environment. Now, physical environment seems disable friendly but not sufficient for all types of disability. It is somehow difficult to manage sound educational environment due to the unavailability of special teacher. The teacher having training for 45 days are unable to serve children with special needs in sufficient manner. In such present situation, the stakeholders need to focus on human resource management providing incentives for qualified and energetic person.

Human Relationship Management

Human is social being and cannot survive without society. Society is a group of people living in a certain territory and functioning for the sake of common aim and common vision. People of society are interconnected with common vision and sharing responsibility. In the school, interpersonal relationship requires to be maintained among students and teachers. In case of disabled students, it is very essential for communication and social

Head Teachers' Leadership Practices in Disability Management: A Case of Integrated Schools

interaction. In this context, head teacher H1 said:

In the school environment it needs to interact with every student. The mutual collaboration between teacher and students keeps learning environment sound and supports to intervene on the basis of nature of severity. The teachers are provided training about inclusive education and special education. If the collaboration between students and teacher are maintained, the human relation skill be spread within classroom.

In the above statement human relation management is essential factor for creating inclusive environment within schools. The head teacher needs to manage disability specific programme within schools and intend to focus on making participation of teacher to inclusive oriented refreshment training organised by the government and non-government agencies. The head teacher requires giving an emphasis on setting collaborative discourse within and out of school.

In the same argument as above another head teacher H2 asserted:

In my school some of teacher and student are deaf and hard of hearing. In such situation, I have hired paraprofessional to give sign language training for all teaching and non teaching staff including students. In the school management committee, I have sent one deaf teacher for teacher representative as member. Some time I call sign language interpretation for interpreting discussion especially for deaf teacher.

In this statement the human relation is maintained with the help of alternative strategies adopted by head teacher of school. The head teacher of school needs to think that the school can achieve its goal by addressing the difference embodied within organisation. The disable person can play an equal role for the development of school if they are additionally supported. The differently abled person can also give the support for the enhancement of school with the association of non-disabled peers. That is why the head teacher needs to think about the mutual collaborative climate in the school to proceed ahead.

Infrastructural Management

Physical faculties such as classroom furniture, pathway to surrounding refers to the physical aspects that are needed for children with disability. If such kind of things are not supportive for children with disability, they cannot adjust in the environment and can't enjoy with educational parameters. For this context head teacher H2 said:

I am very much interested to implement inclusive education policy passed by government in 2072 milestone for founding equitable society. Government is unable to set appropriate facilities for children with disabilities besides scholarship offered for residential support. We have established resource room for special children but not sufficient for the varieties of disability. All types of children of different disabilities come to the same class and learn some basic skill. The resource room management is poor due to the lack of financial adequacy.

From this assertion almost physical facilities founded are appropriate for non-disabled children. Government has declared no child left behind the educational opportunity but existing provision for welcoming all children is only for children who can access in normal

Head Teachers' Leadership Practices in Disability Management: A Case of Integrated Schools

situation. There is not homogeneity in the feature of children in society. The difference in children is ornament of society so the government needs to set up infrastructure to address the diversity in children for the sake of achieving goal of education for all without any exclusion. The written document cannot address the need of child with disability. Thus the policy implementation aspect is crucial for the welfare of disability.

Urging the above statement another head teacher H2 said:

In my school, some parents of disable children visit and ask about the educational provision of children with disability. At that I fall to be unanswered. Our nation has provisioned constitutional right to provide education for disable children but disable friendly schools have not been established since then constitution. Our country has signed in series of international convention and declaration for ensuring quality education for children with disability. The policy forms in this way but there is no implementation. That is why the children with disability are still out of school and far from the educational intervention.

In the above assertion, the parents are seeking quality education for their child as promulgated in the constitution but their dreams are flying in the space due to lack of policy implementation. Some children are not accessing to school due to geographical barrier and transportation problem. To minimise such numerous disturbances, government has to initiate from infrastructure by collaborating national and international agencies.

In relation to the above premises, head teacher H3 elucidated:

Parents tell me educating all types of student is the preservation of constitutional right but your schools are not managing about inclusive education environment. The children with disabilities are hungering for their suitable education to survive as human being. As per the rules of humanism he has to perform some task that pertains him to run their life. Managing facilities for disable children is far reaching behind from my side request to the government to implement in practice whatever is mentioned in policy.

From the above speech of head teacher, it is clear that the people in this century are not nonsense and they like to advocate their rights themselves. The people do not need additional support to aware about the legal provision adopted by the nation. The parents of handicapped children fall in anxiety how the fundamental right of children is conserved. Of course, the head teacher himself/herself cannot address demand of children with disability because he is simply manager of school not executive. So governments need to manage sufficient budget and resources for succession of school from inclusive philosophy.

Attitudinal Management

Attitude is the way that someone evaluates or judges a certain person, object, event or idea (MacLean & Gannon, 1995). Also we can say that in alternative ways as attitude is the way we think about someone or something which can be positive or negative thought. A person with disability often experiences negative attitude from their near environment. In some countries, disability is perceived as a curse and associated with witchcraft, result of sin and thought to be caused by the some wrong work in past life (Wilson & Alcorn, 1969).

Head Teachers' Leadership Practices in Disability Management: A Case of Integrated Schools

Such type of belief make the family and community feel ashamed about disabled children. The wide spread belief is that disabled children cannot study and work as non-disabled ones and no need to invest for them (Tringo, 1970). Indeed, disability is a social construct and does not correspond with functional limitation. The society has made the person as inactive and not functional due to his/her personal deficiencies and imposed him/her as participation restriction.

In this regard head teacher H4 said:

In my school, some teacher and students are at handicapped condition such as hard of hearing and seizure disorder think they are representing the individual differences and acting as a typical ornament for our school. The deaf and hard of hearing teacher and students are facilitated by the assistive device and sign language interpretation. Somestudents are of seizure disorder and they are equally treated as other and first aid is provided at sick room by health personal.

In the above views on disability, both teachers and students are deviated from the normal condition and they are acting as differently abled at school. The school administration has managed additional support for those who are at risk embracing them as valuable wings of organisation. The school is not treating disability as a medical model rather than a social model. The support provided to the impaired person shows that the attitude towards disability is strongly positive and extends warm support for children with disability.

By favouring as above, head teacher H5 emphasised:

In my school every year we offer scholarship for marginalised, disadvantaged and disabled children for the enrollment. In the new session we organise home to school programme by welcoming those who are at risk. The awareness programme for disability has been organised for the parents of child to give the message about disability is a social factor. Sometimes the professional and paraprofessional are hired to teach additional skill for children as well as parent in our school. In our community some of the parents are unable to mention the condition of children. In such cases, we have organised an awareness programme about disability.

In the above views, the head teacher has shown the effective and visionary leadership skill for smooth management of disability. Developing positive thought toward disability is an empowering factor that can stimulate children with disability to study, acquire a professional skill and support to live independently with full of self esteem and feel abled to learn new things.

The farsightedness about disability of head teacher is not confined to school but also in community. The head teacher's role is to create disable friendly environment within school which is a gateway for the establishment of equitable society. The dynamics of head teacher becomes a mitigating component towards challenges faced by differently abled children with reference to accessibility, right to education and disable advocacy. In this manner, the government organisation and other disability specific organisation need to assemble disability focused seminars and workshops for school head teacher.

Head Teachers' Leadership Practices in Disability Management: A Case of Integrated Schools

Diversity Management

The main theme of diversity management is to realise difference and the differences need to address the prospective of diversity leader. Diversity management including disability keeps diversity from the lines of managerial aspect and underpins with the management style of head teacher (Saylık et al., 2016). According to Mitchell et al. (2015), the diversity is not a problem that needs to be managed. The diversity leadership is the process of acting respectfully, sensitively against the differences of individual such as race, ethnicity, language, disability etc. by accepting them as they are equally responsible for objective of organisation and directing them in the course of common objectives by holding them together with fair management strategies (Polat & Olcum, 2016). In this context head teacher H2 asserted:

There is huge diversity in my school such caste, ethnicity, language, religion, culture, disability etc. In addition to this, there is diversity in acquiring knowledge, like some students are average some are slow minded and some gifted. To teach effectively in the classroom the teacher need have the knowledge of inclusive pedagogy. In my school I have focused on inclusive classroom setting and furniture. Some time I permit to teacher to have training on special and inclusive education organised by NGOs and INGOs. I have allocated budget to build disable friendly furniture, toilet and ramps within the school compound.

From the above statement it is clear that head teacher needs to manage the disability by adopting appropriate intervention to address the diverse need of children with disability. The school has to manage in such a way that all types of student can learn equally and fairly. In relation to above theme, head teacher H3 expressed:

In my school there is no discrimination within student culture. Disabled and non-disabled children are playing and enjoying in the same field. Our student are very much cooperative. They interact with Non disable peer without any hesitation. In our school, every disabled child is nominated in the formation child club and house. The disable friendly activities like poem recitation, speech competition, quiz contest, disable friendly sport tournament have been organized in every week.

In this assertion, the attitudinal problem about disability is completely free from the conventional thought and student culture seems to be very inclusive. In this regard, the head teacher is leading in a proper manner of inclusion for the betterment of school development. The school head teacher liked to be very enthusiastic and dedicated for the implementation of institutionalised policy. The head teacher himself or herself has to initiate the diversity management strategies by heart and extend warmly up to the collaborative partners.

Supportive Management Philosophy

Every insider thought around school needs to be guided by substantiated philosophy. The dimension of management within school is required to accomplish by subsidiary approach. In this context head teacher H3 said:

Head Teachers' Leadership Practices in Disability Management: A Case of Integrated Schools

In my school, the children with disabilities are provided the residential facilities for children at risk. The students are facilitated by resource room support service along with differentiated instruction. The residential support is managed by the donor agencies, local NGOs, Charity individual support etc. The remuneration for resource teacher is managed by the community forest programme.

From the above assertion, it is clear that the resource class management is not undertaken by government and the schools are managing with the support of local NGOs and other charity support. For the sustainability of disability management act, entrepreneurship development programme needs to be introduced within school. By accepting above argument head teacher H2 urged:

In my school, the children with intellectual disability and children with physical disability are studying. To engage them in earning activity, they web thread and make hanging clips. The children with physical disability make small handkerchief and Khada. The products made in the school are sold in whole sale market to gain profit. The profit amount is used in internal management of resource class as well as logistic support for students with disability.

In the above statement, the school has managed the income generated activity within school. It enhances the entrepreneurship development of children who are eligible in respective skills. This also shows the effective leadership of school head teacher in the prospect of disability management. To create inclusive atmosphere at school, government and professionals need to ensure support for children with additional support requirement and their parents are at the epicenter of all decision made at school. It is crucial that the head teacher recognise the educational, psychological, social and cultural context of children with additional support requirement and their family which provide a holistic approach and eradicate barrier to effective leadership.

Conclusion

The result showed that head teachers of community school are duly hardworking in leadership development for securing disability right in education. In reviewing the literature, it was found that head teacher's leadership practice has accomplished against many more challenges occurred at front in the arena of disability. The leadership management practice in the present context of our country is not smooth as compared to developed country. The findings of study elucidate the infrastructure development along with disabled friendly environment, minimisation of attitude problem, focus on disability awareness, child advocacy network, creating inclusive atmosphere within schools, adopting inclusive philosophy, introducing empowerment initiatives, adapting support management strategies are major disability management strategies employed by head teachers for ensuring effective leadership. Leaders need to focus on framework and approach that are discussed above regarding how to accomplish work within diversified culture to achieve the goal of school. Working with staff and students with disability that assist them to resist the impulse derived from school employment approaches. The result obtained from this study is becoming

Head Teachers' Leadership Practices in Disability Management: A Case of Integrated Schools milestone for setting policy at legislative level to ensuring child right in non-discriminatory and least restrictive environment. The different disability management strategies become mitigating factor for hindrances of diversity management. It is clear that this article fills the gap and provides necessary feedback with useful tools required to function successfully in the field of comprehensive disability management.

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Head Teachers' Leadership Practices in Disability Management: A Case of Integrated Schools

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