How "Inclusive" Has the Inclusive Education Been?

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The main intent of inclusive education is to include diversity in terms of access to education. Hence, inclusive education is of tremendous significance to a country like Nepal, which has so much diversity. However, the strategies formulated by the inclusive education policies in Nepal still follow a narrow definition of inclusive education, though the policies are progressive. Does inclusive education mean only a scheme for disabled learners? Through a desk review of the policies after 2000 related to inclusive education, this paper argues that the smooth transition to inclusion in education has been challenging. The paper argues that despite policy provisions, Nepal has not been able to actualize inclusion in education because its strategies and actions are not directed toward inclusion. This situation is there mainly because of the lack of uniform understanding of inclusive education, and its present practice will lead towards segregation but not towards integration.

Keywords: inclusive education, broad definition, narrow definition, strategies, policies

INTRODUCTION

It was in 1994 that inclusive education was brought in front for the first time at the World Conference on Special Education in Salamanca, Spain (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 1994). The objective of inclusive education involves the fact that all diverse learners in school should be included in receiving their educational needs irrespective of their abilities and disabilities. (Kafle, 2002). The definition and sense of inclusion can be perceived through several viewpoints, such as political, developmental, critical and educational. From the educational point of view (Haug, 2020; Meiers, 2007; Regmi, 2017), however, it is to re-adjust the prevailing structure of the school system, thereby making it adequately accessible for individuals from diverse cultures, needs, and interests who would ultimately get quality education to succeed in the core curriculum.

There has been an increase in recent years in the global inclination towards inclusive education, which emphasizes enabling all students to gain quality education through learning from their communities (Norwich, 2017). In Nepal, as in all other countries (Regmi, 2017; Sharma, 2019), inclusive education is elucidated in relation to the purposes, forms, strategies, and functions. A study undertaken by Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development [CERID] (2004) has emphasized that "all forms of children living in school catchments must attend school" and "education should be made free not only in policy papers but also in actual practice".

There are both narrow and broad definitions of inclusion in education. The narrow definition of inclusion in education includes people requiring special education needs. This implies that learners with disability are only included in the narrow definition, whereas the broader definition encompasses all learners, including marginalized groups and not only those with disabilities, which are addressed in the Salamanca Declaration from 1994. These learners are indeed those vulnerable groups on the verge of being inaccessible in education due to their diversity (Haug, 2017). Whether the context is national or international, inclusion in education calls for an examination of the values across a societal system with an understanding of the socio-cultural contexts within which it will be implemented (Haug, 2020). This calls for transforming multi-dimensional stages. Boyle and Anderson (2020) also stressed that the multidimensional stages are necessary for inclusive education. The importance of it can be traced to inclusive pedagogies that respond to the educational needs of diverse students. In addition, a favorable social environment that leads to positive social interaction holds equal importance when we internalize inclusive education. The inability to internalize inclusive education can cause student discrimination for learning opportunities.

Diversity is one of the distinct features of Nepal owing to its social, cultural, linguistic, topographic, climatic, and demographic differentiation. Thus, inclusion in education holds particular relevance. This is evident in Nepal with the presence of one hundred and twenty-five caste or ethnic groups and one hundred and twenty-three languages spoken as mother tongues. Ten different religious groups have been started in the census 2011 (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2012). To address diversity, the Department of Education (now CEHRD) has identified 12 groups as targets of inclusive education, where children with disability form one of the groups (DoE, 2018). These target groups are (a) Dalit children, (b) Janjati (indigenous group) and ethnic minority children, (c) Street children, (d) Conflict-affected children, (e) Children suffering the effects of trafficking and sexual abuse, (f) Extremely poor children, (g) Kamaiya and bonded children, (h) Children in prison, (i) Orphaned children, (j) Children affected by diseases, and (k) Child laborers. To understand the progression of inclusive education, it becomes important to first understand the evolution of inclusive education in the international arena and how the wave moved towards the national context. This facilitates in knowing how the policy of inclusive education started to progress. Therefore, this paper reviews the inclusive education component of the national policies and strategies developed after 2000 and explains that the policies and strategies adopted are still looking at the narrow definition.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

During its Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the principle of inclusion evolved from the Charter of the United Nations (UN, 1948). The right to free and compulsory primary education for all children has been spelled out clearly in Article 26 of the Declaration from the UDHR (UN, 1948). The 1960 United Nations Convention against Discrimination in Education, adopted by UNESCO and its Member States calls to dissuade any form of discrimination by making primary education free and compulsory (UNESCO, 1962), In addition, the Convention stresses that secondary education to be open to all learners adding spark to another notable development in the right to education for all. This was followed by the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which allows state parties to input equality by disqualifying all racial discriminations, boosting human rights (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], 1969). Another milestone was the adoption of the Convention of the Rights of Child in 1989 by the United Nations. The Convention recognizes child education for the child's overall development, including the behavioral and physical equal opportunities (OCHCR, 1990).

Likewise, in 1979, the UN approved the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to address another important componential target group of inclusion, i.e., women. Similarly, in 1981, the World Year of Persons with Disabilities was celebrated internationally by posing the problem of disability as one of the most important elements of inclusion realized by all: the developing and rich nations (Alzahranı, 2020). Recognizing the diversity of learners, the Convention concerning Indigenous and Minority Communities of Independent Countries (1989) states that all indigenous or minority populations can pursue educational attainment for any level. The Convention reiterates the principle of equality for the indigenous and minority populations, with the majority of the national population (International Labour Organization [ILO]1989). While the word "inclusion" is not explicitly used, the principle behind both these campaigns involves offering inclusive education for diverse learners regarding human rights.

As highlighted above, the process for mainstreaming inclusion in education has embraced a multitude of declarations, international conferences, commitments, initiatives, and international agendas aimed at getting all children into education. However, the first World Conference on Education for All [EFA] is a pioneer event in the history of inclusive education thinking (Khanal, 2015). It was the same world conference that declared a 10-year movement to bring all the children in the school in the form of an EFA campaign which was continued after 2000 for 15 years under the declaration of Dakar Framework for Action (DFA) in 2000. But the Salamanca Conference in 1994 introduced special needs education and used the term "inclusive education". Published in 1994, the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education embodies the theories and practices of inclusive education (the term "inclusive" was not explicitly used earlier (Regmi, 2017). Therefore, the Salamanca Declaration (1994), Millennium Development Goals (2000), and United Nations Convention on Rights of People with Disability (UNCRPD,2006) have underlined the inclusion perspective in education. Now we have Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), of which goal number 4 focuses on the issue of inclusive and equitable education with a view of "leaving no one behind". Despite all this, as Miles and Singal (2010) argue, although Salamanca highlights divergence of views, it has suffered a lack of clarity in terms of execution.

Furthermore, realizing the need to practice inclusive education at the national level can be seen as the first indicator for advancing the notion of 'inclusive education for all. However, the practice must consider the cultural settings in which the idea is expressed. In particular, it requires a new way of thinking that draws attention to removing the barriers some children face that have marginalized them due to contextual situations (Ydo, 2020). When we say special education, special needs education, and inclusive education, it is also necessary to know the definitions of these terms for our common understanding. Understanding these definitions will help clarify the embracement of inclusive education that has been progressing in its coverage along with specific period.

The scope of special education is characterized as a scientific study. This means that the boundary of special education is limited to the education of people with physical disabilities (Kafle, 2002). This includes learning disabilities, speech difficulties, social and behavioral disabilities, physical disabilities, and other developmental disabilities. The special needs in schooling have emerged out of special education. Special needs refer not only to traditional disabilities categories but also to children outside them with social and emotional difficulties and language, culture, and ethnic problems (Kafle, 2002). Inclusive education is perceived as a process of identifying and addressing the individual needs of diverse learners by multiplying their engagements in school settings and minimizing exclusion within and from education (Norwich, 2017). Furthermore, at the upstream level, it includes improvements and changes in content, strategies, systems, and tactics, with a shared goal that embraces every child of the required age group and a belief that it is the duty of the national system to view education as a public good. This indicates that the responsibility to educate all learners rests in the duty of the government.

THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

The practice of inclusive education in Nepal dates back to the year 1964 when the first special education program was introduced in the Laboratory School, Kathmandu. These was practiced initially through the first special education program introduced in 1964 as an integrated education for non-sighted students. This included low, vision, partial as well as fully non-sighted students. However, following the implementation of the National Education System Plan (NESP) in 1971, the development of special education was envisaged (MoE, 1971). The NESP plan formed the Special Education Council (SEC) in 1973 (Thapaliya, 2018). As an apex body for running special education programs, the NESP established a special need education council (Kafle, 2002). Similarly, in 1977, the Nepalese government formed the Social Welfare National Coordination Council (now the Social Welfare Council) to oversee special education programs (CERID, 2004). In 1991, the Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP) established a special education unit to educate children with special needs (Kafle, 2002).

The National Education Commission (NEC) was established in 1992 after the reestablishment of multi-party democracy in 1990 in Nepal. The main objective of NEC was to assess the education system as a whole and suggest improvements to fulfill the country's and population's needs in a changing context (Regmi, 2017). The Commission identified gender gaps in education and recommended additional arrangements for women, persons with physical and mental impairments, and the population undergoing economic and social deprivations (MoE, 1992). In the same way, the High-Level National Education Commission, founded in 1998 had advocated preventing discrimination based on gender and caste, as well as fostering the country's linguistic, ethnic, and cultural diversity (Kafle, 2002). The proposals made by Commissions showed a tendency for making education inclusive. However, it can be said that the topic of inclusive schooling in Nepal had previously been dominated by special needs education for children.

Over six decades, the definition of inclusion has been evolving and taking shape. It continues to evolve with a refined shape and vision through a paradigm change from charity and welfare to rights and with increasing support and appreciation for people with differences, challenges, and other types of vulnerability. It has now been known and understood that inclusion is not only about disability but also embraces ethnicity, language, culture, freedom, the dignity of labor, vulnerability, rights, respect, and differences and difficulties. It is about accepting and accommodating diversity by a system that should work for all regardless of differences and difficulties.

Most of the literature (DoE, 2014; Regmi, 2017; Norwich, 2017; Miles & Singal, 2010, etc.) has shown that inclusive education has wider dimensions. These dimensions encompass many aspects such as gender, caste/ethnicity, vulnerable groups, socio-economic deprivation, linguistic minority, and people with disability, among others. Therefore, inclusive education has been perceived and conceptualized in various contexts depending on where it will be implemented. The scope of the paper here has been seen from inclusion in the context of education. Therefore, the concept of inclusion within the education frame largely deals with the issue of mainstreaming diversity and managing diversity within education. Westwood (2013) has added, positive learning experiences, the culture of the school that respects diversity and equitable access for education as having a direct connection for internalizing inclusive education. Previously, most discourses of inclusive education focused on special needs schooling since the discourse related to disability had a major role in advancing inclusive education. But the present notion embraces the wider dimension addressing all diverse learners as defined in the Salamanca Conference. The broad definition of inclusion shifts from the area of disability to the field of diversity. This field now encompasses many issues and discourses that are much more intricate and difficult to practice (Haug, 2017). It is now a system that can provide quality education and be open to everyone. Consequently, both narrow and wide conceptualizations can be found in the evolution of 'inclusive' education at the international institutional level and have been pivotal to the emergence and adoption of inclusive education in the mainstream (Samuel, 2018). Following the international wave, Nepal has also tried to incorporate inclusive education in its policies. Major policies related to inclusive education after 2000 have been discussed in the following section since policies are a legislative document that guides the implementation through the adopted strategies.

POLICIES TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AFTER 2000

Policy guides and advises the government on what needs to be executed and through whom concerning the main change in social behavior (Gale, 2006). This is the reason why the Government formulates several policy documents. The Constitution of Nepal, which is the country's supreme law, has ensured without any discrimination the right of education for all. The constitution has accorded the right to education as one of the core elements. Article 31 of the Constitution reiterates every citizen's right to access compulsory and free basic education and free education up to the secondary level. Additionally, the constitution has given citizens with physical impairments and those with poor economic status the right to free higher education.

More specifically, people with special needs are secured with provision to meet their unique needs for education with brail script and the use of sign language. To align with the rights ensured by the constitution, the Government of Nepal also has formulated different policies and legislations addressing inclusion in education.

The Tenth Plan (2002-2007) of the National Planning Commission (NPC, 2002), has identified people with disabilities and backward communities with the targeted need to carry out special programs to increase their access to quality education. For the first time, the Tenth Plan included the terms inclusive or integrated education. Furthermore, the Plan aimed to expand access to education for all children. The scope had been increased covering children with special learning needs. Up to the Tenth Plan, the target for inclusion was limited to women and people with disabilities. The Eleventh Plan (2007/08 – 2009/10), an Interim Plan (NPC, 2007), had a separate chapter on gender and inclusion. The scope of inclusion, however, extended to incorporate caste and ethnicity. In the operation and management of schools, special consideration was made to the participation of women, Dalits, Madhesis, Adibasi Janajatis, persons with disabilities, conflict victims, and disadvantaged groups. The Twelfth -(2010/11 - 2012/13) three-year plan (NPC, 2011) envisaged catering access to education for women, indigenous community, Madhesis, Dalits, and children with disabilities by implementing national and local-level programs. The Thirteenth Plan (2014-2017) of NPC (2013) had accommodated a broader sense of inclusion in education, including endangered caste ethnicities, and linguistic minorities in addition to people with disabilities. The Fourteenth Plan (2017-2019) was more extensive in terms of its inclusivity than the earlier plans and had a separate chapter on inclusion and education (NPC, 2016) It included women, Dalit, indigenous communities, Madhesis, Muslims, and geographically excluded communities in addition to people with disabilities.

For the first time, the current Fifteenth Plan (2020-2023) has mentioned that the state itself would be made capable and accountable to ensure equitable access for compulsory and free education in the schools. The Plan even envisages residential schools accommodating students from geographically excluded areas and endangered communities (NPC, 2020). The inclusion dimension of this plan is wider.

The Higher Education Policy (2015) has equally prioritized inclusion through the provision of an open model education system, scholarships, and concessional educational loans to the focused groups including marginal, economically poor, disabled, and endangered people (Ministry of Education ([MoE], 2016). Recognizing the disproportionate access and quality in education, the Consolidated Equity Strategy for the School Education Sector in Nepal was formulated, which (DoE, 2014) has incorporated eight dimensions of equity to examine education concerning access, participation, and equitable learning outcomes for life. The dimensions thus included are gender, socio-economic status, health, nutrition, geographical coverage, disabilities, caste, & ethnic groups, linguistic diversity, and children of vulnerable groups.

Giving continuity to advancing inclusion in education, the Government of Nepal developed School Sector Development Plan [SSDP], (2016-2023), prioritizing equitable ways to provide quality education for all. In this regard, the SSDP (DoE, 2016) has looked into participation, access, and learning outcomes for children from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups for inclusion in education. Since the plan was formulated after the earthquake of 2015, it also entailed children affected by natural disasters. Closely coordinating with the Ministries of Health and Education, the plan involves interventions to lead children with disabilities towards special and segregated educational services. The equity target group of the plan included seven types of learners who faced obstacles in access, participation, and learning outcomes. Due to low financial condition, gender, abilities or disabilities, geographical locations, caste, ethnicity, and other forms of vulnerability, recognizing the coverage of diverse learners from different dimensions.

The Inclusive Education Policy for People with Disability, 2016 (MoE, 2016) has replaced the Special Education Policy of 2053 (DoE, 1996). The policy aims to impart quality education based on the human rights approach, including lifelong learning to prepare capable and competitive citizens by ensuring inclusive education to children with disabilities. The policy is also very progressive and sets Inclusive Education Minimum Enabling Conditions.

The Act related to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2017) has been elaborative in ensuring the rights of persons with disability. The Act (Nepal Law Commission, 2017) states that educational institutions managed or financed by the Government of Nepal or any Local Level should provide free higher education to persons with disabilities. Recognizing the importance of vocational skills, the Act has offered free technical and vocational education to persons with disabilities. Aligning with the constitutional provision, the Act has adopted a differential medium for accessing education to people with special needs.

The Act relating to Children (2018) specifies that children below six have the right to learn properly, befitting their age and development level with need-based learning resources and pedagogies (National Law Commission, 2018). However, this Act is limited to the medical model of disability pointing at disability as a physical condition only. The National Education Policy of 2019 (Ministry of Education Science and Technology [MoEST], 2019) in its section on inclusive education (policy 10.29) states that only children with disability will get inclusive education, special needs education, with opportunities for life and vocational skills harmonizing with curricula texts and curriculum, which is again limited in a narrow definition of inclusive education. The Education Act (National Law Commission, (2017) has spelled out special education provisions for children with hearing, visual, autism, and intellectual deformities. It has also planned to prepare to educate such disabled groups. Specifically, the Act has listed the following target groups for the provision of adjusted textbooks, curriculum, teaching-learning materials, teachers, and assessment: a) people with visual impairment, (b) people with hearing impairment, (c) children with poor eyesight, (d) children with autism, (e) children with intellectual disabilities, and (f) children with hearing loss.

EMERGING INSIGHTS

A review of Nepal's policies after 2000 related to inclusive education shows that the policies are still seen from narrow perspectives, although the concept is more than three decades old. The narrow definition of inclusion is still prevalent. Although the policies have started to ensure different dimensions of inclusive education, the strategies adopted are more inclined to the disability lens.

The review of the provisions by the Government and the existing legal and policy documents helps us contend here that the policies and legal mechanisms do not adequately recognize and embed the intent of inclusive education as such. However, the right to education has been recognized as a fundamental right in the Constitution of Nepal. The Constitution has also included special provisions for children with different abilities. The Constitution has also recognized other targets of inclusive education regarding a linguistic minority. This is evident in the constitution by the provision offered for education with mother tongue language. Likewise, the Education Act and Education Rules have laid the provision for special schools equally focusing on children with disabilities.

A welfare-based approach drives the Education Act and Rules, and they have limited the scope by recognizing the rights of people with disabilities and attempting to integrate their basic requirements into legal provisions (Regmi, 2017). The Consolidated Equity Strategy is more progressive from an equitable perspective in education. The Equity Strategy is also in coordination with the SSDP, emphasizing on them accessing education. Furthermore, having access does not only ensure education, but Participation also becomes equally important and the quality of education being imparted depends on the learning outcomes. It has encompassed eight dimensions of inclusion to advance an equitable education system. However one of the lacunae observed the overlook to perceive the main intent and philosophical dimensions of inclusive education.

The objectives from the reviewed policies show that there has been a shift in the understanding of inclusive education. Earlier, it used to be from a welfare perspective and creating favorable conditions for people with disability. The Department of Education (now CEHRD) has mentioned 12 targets of inclusion, such as people with disability, Dalit children, Janjati (indigenous group) and ethnic minority children, street children, conflict-affected children among others (DoE, 2018). However, this is not reflected in our policies. The reviewed policy documents present a picture of the stated commitment to education for all. But they still indicate some confusion over the essence of inclusive education: is it a scheme for disabled learners only? This was mainly because the disability group had a strong voice in advocacy. There can be varied reasons for this. Looking from the theoretical viewpoint, Sen (1999) emphasizes poverty as capability deprivation in his Capability Approach. Everyone could be deprived of such capabilities in many ways, such as due to lack of awareness, government repression, lack of access to financial resources, or false consciousness. According to Amartya Sen, Agency refers to a “person’s ability to act on what they value and have reason to value.” It primarily denotes the status of an individual as a member of a society with the ability to participate in economic, social, and political activities. Therefore, the agency is significant in judging the competencies of individuals (Nadeera, 2016). Inclusive education being more disability-inclined can be attributed to the fact that the disability group came out as strong advocates due to their capabilities to advance their agency. This was mainly because “Inclusive Education” became a major thrust of persons with disabilities following Article 24 (United Nations, 2006) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). This was the main push leading to the development of capabilities among disabled people.

There are pervasive barriers that persons with disabilities encounter while accessing education, which cover accessibility standards, both physical and ICT, language barriers, accessible teaching-learning materials, easy learning text, and so on, which do not apply to those living without disabilities. Therefore, it becomes very challenging to bring learners with special needs vis-a-vis disabilities into the regular education system due to the issues above. Thus, the campaign for inclusive education for children with disabilities has gained momentum.

Given the diverse targets and concerns of social stigma and language barriers, the solution for including such children in mainstream education is a comparatively more convenient task in the case of local levels adopting such policies. However, the practice may differ in terms of compatibility of each local level with the local socio-cultural phenomenon. Hence, their agenda has not been able to draw much attention. However, the challenges of the learners with disabilities exist universally in each class of people and culture. Personal disparities occur in how resources are used to achieve well-being. This resource differential conversion entails identifying individual differences, which are accounted for in the capability approach (Norwich, 2017).

Secondly, though inclusive education is like an umbrella term encompassing different dimensions of inclusion, this has often been limited to disability, leaving out other forms of difficulties, disadvantages, and vulnerability which might be due to the lack of clarity of inclusion. This also reflects that the definition has been perceived more from a diagnostic perspective than an educational one. The concept of special needs or inclusive education emerged from special education for disability. Therefore, the lack of understanding in inclusion is itself a barrier to practicing inclusive education.

Thirdly, most of the development programs are injected from the top-down approach. The same approach has been applied in the policies and programs concerning inclusive education and other educational reforms rather than being contextual. The bottom-up policymaking approach must be mandatory by assessing the needs of diverse learners, teachers, and schools at the ground reality (Sharma, 2019). This contributes to developing a practical, inclusive education strategy and curriculum that outlines the types of resources that schools, and teachers require to deliver the concept of inclusive education in the classroom and school.

Therefore, if our purpose is to make education inclusive, we have to look beyond following inclusive pedagogy. Adopting inclusive pedagogy is an essential component, but it is not adequate. Inclusive teaching does not just concern pedagogy in groups or classes. The education system might be strengthened upstream through well-defined inclusive policies. The essential part is that the downstream level needs to be equally strengthened through inclusive classroom practices, and vice versa, which is to say, inclusive school practices, but no inclusive policy (Haug, 2017). Studies (e.g., Regmi 2017; Thapaliya 2018) have shown that the prevalent misconception between teachers and educators is that inclusive education is seen as requiring a learner to fit into a framework in Nepal. This does not define inclusion in its true sense; it denotes assimilation rather than inclusion (Regmi, 2017). While the word ‘inclusion’ has gained more ground, it might take years still before moving to the transformation from special education to special education needs and ultimately to inclusive education (Kafle, 2002).

GAPS AND CHALLENGES

Based on the review of policy documents of the government mentioned above, it can be argued that existing policies and Acts in Nepal do sufficiently embody the objectives of inclusive education. The boundary of inclusive education has been increasing in the policies. However, the strategies still lack the sentiments of inclusive education. The Constitution of Nepal has defined the right to education as one of the core rights. The Constitution has also made special provisions for learners with disabilities and allowed basic education in their mother language. Despite all the progress made, there are gaps and challenges due to which confusion and contradictions are observed in the policy documents.

Similarly, the Education Act and Education Rules have guaranteed special schools targeting children with disabilities. Although the rights of disabled people have been acknowledged, the Act and Rules rather appear guided by welfare-based approaches. The consolidated equity strategy (DoE, 2014) sought to create an inclusive educational environment prioritizing access, participation, and learning outcomes. It recognized various aspects of inclusion as best practices for establishing an inclusive educational framework. However, one of the major deficiency strategies is the omission of the word inclusive schooling and the failure to grasp the values and intent of inclusive education. Therefore, a uniform understanding of inclusive education is yet to be reflected in the policy documents. This is one of the challenges and a gap.

Although the policy documents offer a strong interpretation of inclusive education, the strategies for its application do not explicitly describe inclusive education, merely making it more disability-friendly (Regmi, 2017). According to Norwich (2017), there are plural values associated with inclusive education, which is responsible for causing tensions, dilemmas, and different practices. Furthermore, Alzaharai (2020) has also confirmed that there is still a lack of understanding of what inclusive education entails in practice. Clarity remains about what an education system should look like from an inclusion perspective, which is a huge drawback. Another main challenge is the lack of data from the inclusive dimension. Data are the key to development. Inclusive data is not reflected in the education management information system (EMIS) of Nepal (National Institute for Research and Training [NIRT] & American Institute of Research [AIR], 2017). Therefore, the lack of inclusive data might have also led to less reflection of real inclusion in the inclusive education policy.

Factors like school curriculum, language and communication, and teaching pedagogy constitute the actual environment of a school. When the schools do not have an inclusion-friendly environment, the practice of inclusive education does not occur in the real sense. This has posed a challenge to the realization of inclusive education. Therefore, the inefficiency of inclusive education would lead to the segregation of students rather than their integration.

CONCLUSION

Inclusive education concerns bringing equity and organizing and developing our schools, classrooms, programs, and activities so that all students can learn and participate in the same way. An inclusive education system delivers quality learning for all children for the transition to higher levels of educational attainment to open doors for other opportunities. This ultimately contributes to the development of an open community that respects diversity. Following the international wave, Nepal also has aligned policies on inclusive education, and there has been a progressive development in the policies after that. However, the strategies formulated by the policies are still observed to follow a narrow definition of inclusive education, while the policies are confusing and contradictory. It is observed that the disability group appeared as an advocate group due to their capability, making their agency strong to advance their voices heard in the policy statement. Inclusion in education is needed not only to aid people with disabilities but also to encompass the target groups as spelled out by the policy documents. This requires an understanding of the intricate notions of “inclusion in education,” taking into account the context in which it will be implemented. Such contextualized and locally relevant understanding of inclusion in education will ultimately lead to the formulation of relevant and sustainable policies from the dimension of inclusive education. Therefore, unless the thinking, speaking, and action are changed, the smooth transition to inclusion in education can still be challenging, which will lead to the threat of segregation rather than integration.

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