

ETHIOPIAN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION STRATEGY AS TO RESPONSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It's grateful to forward my honest appreciation, from my heart; to my research supporting institution: Bahir Dar University and my manuscript reviewers and editors as well as IJRCM staff for the best guidelines sent to me on time just to support me professionally in order to publish my research paper. And I also need to thank my research work colleagues for their unreserved efforts and whole professional advisories periodically provided to my research paper along with their deep rooted and lively observed philosophical capabilities being shown to me as university scholars with their professional endeavors ever done and said on various aspects of this research area.

ABSTRACT

The study is aimed at analyzing Ethiopian inclusive education strategy document whether it contextualizes about responsive learning environment for practicing inclusive higher education system. The study has employed case study design and descriptive method basing qualitative research approach so as to describe whether promising way outs of practicing inclusive higher education have been incorporated in the strategy or not as a national document prepared at ministry level. To meet this intention, content analysis method of analysis was qualitatively engaged. Both semi-structured interview guidelines and document reading were instruments to gather relevant data from the major data sources: the higher officials of MoSHE and the Inclusive Education/IE/ or Special Needs Education/SNE/ strategy document (2006), respectively. The study has found out that let alone for higher education system, the strategy has considerable gaps on practicing inclusive education at general education level with full positive attitude of disabled students though the strategy has its own implicitly stated feasible signals in place for serving students with disabilities. It has been revealed that IE support for university students with various disabilities has not still been strongly mainstreamed by the federal government of Ethiopia as like as general education: preschool, primary and secondary education students. Even the strategies suggested toward the practitioners for practicing inclusive education are more focusing on general education than higher education.

And also still there is no well designed model recommended for Ethiopian universities at national level to practice inclusive education. Hence, it has been concluded that there is no strong inclusive education policy except the draft policy that is the inclusive education strategy document that only has its own holistically seen feasible signals which can be in place for serving students with disabilities. The strategies stated in the IE document to the practitioners are also focusing only on inclusive general education than inclusive higher education. So the status of Ethiopian Education and Training Policy addressing the issue of inclusive higher education is not that much judged as to the required higher level. There is no even any inclusive learning model designed for Ethiopian universities at national level to practice inclusive higher education. There is also high stigma or psychological ignorance of disabled students that has to be first resolved by the society itself. Thus, Ethiopian higher education learning environment cannot be said as easy and responsive for practicing inclusive higher education system. Hence, we shall better be obliged to suggest that stakeholders in the field should let the society stand for justice for every individual with various disabilities and eradicate their traditionally adapted high stigma or psychological ignorance against disabled students via research and outreach community services up to each and every household level as much as possible.

KEY WORDS: inclusive education, inclusive education strategy, inclusive higher education, responsive learning environment.

INTRODUCTION

In most cases, education and democracy are believed to be the two sides of the coin. Across countries, education and democracy are highly correlated. As education raises the benefits of civic participation, it raises the support for more democratic regimes relative to dictatorships. This increases the likelihood of democratic revolutions against dictatorships, and reduces that of successful anti-democratic coups (Glaeser, Ponzetto & Shleifer, 2006). Hence, in this modern era, scholars who are the products of education are thought to be specimens of democracy or usually, they are not at least considered as contenders of democracy. But from our daily observation, this fact is not always reflected from the side of most scholars. Rather they may sometimes reflect the conflicting behavior acting as lords of education. Even, the major reason we do not have more democratic classrooms, or a more 'inclusive' system, is that the great majority of teachers either do not support democracy, or they do not know or possess the skills and knowledge to move in a more 'inclusive' direction (Knight, 1999). Nevertheless, most scholars in the field feel and agree on the fact that democracy prescribes all abundant resources of the world such as education should be equally and fairly distributed to all citizens without any discrimination who ever the individual is. Meaning in academic arenas unity in diversity is their major concern. However, this reality is not usually seen in the developing continents such as Africa. In particular, if we take a case in South Africa; even schools were racially segregated and also excluded in terms of disability. Here in the country it is suspected that democracy in education has been manacled by European white feudal lords who occupied South Africa since the colonization period. In this country, disabled children have historically been largely excluded from receiving a proper education. In that apartheid era, schools were also racially segregated, as well as segregated in terms of disability. For instance, education was compulsory for

white pupils, but not for learners of other races or for learners with disabilities (Department of Education, 2001). A severe disparity existed between the amount of support given to learners with disabilities based on their race; for example schools for white learners with disabilities were well-funded, whereas support services for learners with disabilities who attended schools for blacks were uncommon (Department of Education, 2001; Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001) and few and far between.

Therefore, based on these all facts we've already shared; in the continent of Africa even those countries that follow democratic republic type of government system have lack of justice on education delivery to all children in kind and number. Of course, this observable difficulty cannot be only attributed to the system of the stated government as a policy. But it must also be attributed to the poor understanding level of the society as a whole. Any ways, here we need to be clear that education is one of the precious resources of all the world population. Restrictively, it is not the business of any private peculiar individual though that individual has the right to gain and develop it for his/her personal life development, or self enrichment. Hence, education is not the only resource of few individuals such as feudal lords who do not need human beings' equality on world's resources regardless of keeping their own abdominal cavity under the shadow of education. And it is, therefore; more renowned that education is the world's noblest psychological resource of all human beings. Because it is the baseline key of all other abundant resources required for the development of the world. In fact, education is scholarly considered as a lifelong complex process rather than a onetime shot. It is thought as a complex process if its process is honestly perceived from the learner's perspective that requires the learners know, think and act at least from simple to complex journey of thought. Meaning the process seems to be end up with complex level of knowledge, skills and attitudinal changes reflected from the side of the learner due to the fact that the learner him/herself biologically has a complex human behavior. This complex learner's human behavior, in turn; should be equally treated through the process of learning that can be found at that multipart level. To elaborate it more, it is rationally felt and argued that the complex nature of the learner itself naturally made education as a complex process.

As scholars in the field, in addition to this naturally created challenge seen in academics; still what is more problematic to us is that education has not ever been delivered to all world citizens without any prejudiced manner of administration. Starting from ones country traditional family, education at school has been given to individuals on the interest of others choice. To justify it, a democratic authority in the school be it principal, teacher, administrator, advocate, coach, counselor, or teacher aide, leads by persuasion and negotiation. Such authority is distinguished from its two 'opponents', guardianship and anarchy (Dahl, 1989). Students, particularly students currently ill-served by schools, bridle under one and are denied an education under the other. Here, it seems like via the process of natural selection. Its provision looks to be based on physical, biological, psychological, social and economical selection rather than inclusively. Whereas those individuals who are traditionally perceived as rich in such factors are simply given the opportunity of education whoever

they are. For instance, there is a legendary say that in ancient times; individuals who were physically impaired were forbidden from the board of modern education, or they were totally ignored even by their own family members and thrown to the streets or beasts. This is a true tragedy of life which happened and also currently happening on a lot of disabled individuals found in the world. This psychological war among human beings has been observed still now even in this modern era, the 21st century. Even the segregation is being highly observed let alone among disabled ones but also among the so called ordinary individuals due to psychologically uttered black spots by the arrogant personalities (i.e those who imagine and feel themselves as they are better than others, or politically they may be considered as feudal lords who consider themselves as different creatures of God) found specially in the backward states of Africa, Asia, Latin America continents. Still this shows us the existence of lack of equality in African education system.

Nonetheless, when we also scrutinize Ethiopian case; education is supposed to increase the respect of democratic values of equality and human rights. As a fundamental human right, education is seen as one of the main factors of reducing poverty and improving socio-economic conditions. Education is all about people being able to learn what they need and want throughout their lives, according to their potential. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) constitution clearly stipulates the rights of every citizen to equal access to publicly funded social services and support shall be given to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities (Article 41). The constitution also states that all international agreements ratified by Ethiopia are an integral part of the law of the land (Article 9(4)). The 1994 Education and Training Policy (ETP) of the country states that, all learners including those with Special Educational Needs (SEN), learn in accordance with their full potentials and needs.

According to the seminar conducted by UNESCO in Ethiopia on July 27, 2007; on the issue stated as “Inclusive Education the Way of the Future” suggested that by inclusive education means an education system that is open to all learners, regardless of economic status, gender, ethnic backgrounds, language, learning difficulties and impairments. It is about identifying barriers that hinder learning, reducing or removing these barriers in schools, vocational training, higher education, teacher education, education management, and work places adjusting learning environments to meet the needs of all learners. Hence, the Ethiopian Government has been committed to achieve the Millennium Development (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) goals. The Strategy recognized that inclusive education requires identifying barriers that hinder learning and/or participation, reducing or removing these barriers in early education in and at all levels of educational institutions. Towards this end, the strategy was directed to organize schools and prepare teachers along inclusive lines. That means; the strategy was directed to create awareness among school managers and teachers about the need to provide supports to all groups of learners, creating identification procedures, developing support systems, availing appropriate materials and equipments, including Braille and related instruments for children with visual and hearing impairments for successful inclusion of all citizens in schools and society. All issues of inclusive education are included in both pre-service and in-

service teachers and educational leaders training and education programs at all levels; undergraduate, graduate and post graduate levels. Nowadays, inclusion is one of the serving teachers' big issues of discussion in their continuous professional development program at cluster centers. Issues of inclusion are becoming one of the main factors in teachers' professional competencies (UNESCO, 2007).

In fact, inclusion as the foremost issue has become an emerging pedagogy in diverse academic and research institutions especially in Ethiopian Universities though not that much practiced as per the required extent. Nevertheless, the newly launched project on inclusive education is coming up, for instance; at University of Gondar being the leading university among the nine Ethiopian first generation Universities. Hence, the University has lately become establishing partnerships with more than 20 Universities and hundreds of projects are being managed in partnership with different organizations around the world and it continues to forge new connections to help faculty and students share their learning and strengthen teaching, research and community services. The University has the only University based CBR program that works for equalization of opportunities and access to rehabilitation services to people with disabilities in North Gondar Zone, through the support of different international partners (PRESS RELEASE January 16, 2017). Among such observable projects, ensuring inclusive higher education to all university students has been recently become the main project focus area of the institution in collaboration with Queen's university of Canada.

Together, Scholars and faculty members at the University of Gondar and Queen's University will undertake joint research, paving the way for inclusive education that places the needs of young people living with disabilities at the heart of scholarship. They will work together to strengthen the range and type of supports offered to Scholars with disabilities and all students attending the University of Gondar by focusing on accessibility measures that enable student excellence and barrier-free learning. Therefore, from all the above currently begun scholastic disclosures; as a scholar in the field of curriculum and instruction, I myself as a researcher need to emphasize and base my study on "Inclusive or Universal Pedagogy" thought for all university students instead of special pedagogy in terms of treating them all without any direct or indirect discrimination in their academic arenas at any education type and level. Hence, to meet the goal of this study, the study has been indispensably informed with the role of technology enhanced learning strategy so as to suggest and create responsive learning environment for inclusive higher education learning system in particular to this institution.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As already discoursed in the forepart of this paper, the study aims at letting the researcher check out whether the Ethiopian inclusive education strategy suggests responsive learning environment for inclusive higher education system or not. Therefore, related literatures on the trials and practices of adhering inclusive higher education curriculum if stated in this Ethiopian inclusive education strategy

document could be logically treated in the study against the conceptual framework which the researcher has tried to identify and pick up throughout the reviewed relevant literatures. This paper has also considered the issue of Inclusive Education and Educational Theory: Inclusive for What? Stated by Tony Knight (1999) from La Trobe University, Bundoora, Vic., Australia.

However, in addition to these grounded facts; the study has been mainly obliged to state on other related literatures and theoretical framework which the researcher has depended on for comprehensible investigation of inclusive higher education system against Ethiopian inclusive education strategy document. In this part, the theoretical concept and framework stated by Denise Wood (2015) has been incorporated. The concept disclosed by this author focuses on the concern of problematizing the inclusion agenda in higher education towards a more inclusive technology enhanced learning model. The inclusive education approach presented in his study analysis incorporates accessibility, usability, personalization and transformative pedagogy within a holistic model, as well as strategies for implementation at the institutional, program and individual student level. The researcher has concluded by arguing for more transformative approaches to understanding diversity and strategies for implementing inclusive design of technology enhanced learning in the higher education context. The focus on inclusive approaches to higher education and increasing availability of educational technologies designed to enhance student communication and collaboration has led to new opportunities for widening participation and improving the learning outcomes of students from diverse backgrounds. Thus, the literature generally revolves around these major issues in accord with the inclusive education strategy document.

POSITIONING 'INCLUSIVE EDUCATION'

As cited by Knight (1999) in his paper in the beginning of his part, Halprin (1999: 225) argues that 'a particular form of democratic association is fundamental to considerations of the nature, indeed the very practice, of inclusive schooling.' That's the easy part, making the case. Halprin's further point goes to the heart of the matter. Democratic involvement 'cannot be taken advantage of without creating new institutions of democratic practice that entail a significant degree of experimentation in democratic involvement (p 226).' Now we enter the arena of considerable challenge, for there are a number of democratic education proponents as the meaning of democracy is highly contested terrain. However, when we enter the contemporary classroom, especially inner-urban, we find the present is described as 'alienation, oppression, and subordination not only for the students but also for teachers who are also imprisoned in a hegemonic system (Kanpol, 1997:25).

There are lessons to be learnt from the 'critical pedagogy'/ 'radical democratic' literature when positioning 'inclusive education' as part of schooling policy and classroom practice. For example, practitioners of critical pedagogy while insisting that it is a coherent theory, fail to test their propositions, they emerge in general from abstract theorizing. Theory construction in these terms is

not derived from practice; in fact it is logically independent of experience. There appears no record of grounded accomplishment. It can neither inform short-term tactical improvements nor long range strategic restructuring. If 'inclusive education' is to have schooling credibility it has to establish debate at the centre, emerging from grounded and tested program experience. Democracy as defined in this paper establishes debate at the center - moving towards democracy means moving the center, which if it is to be 'inclusive', means advocates or leaders in democracy having to establish credibility in the center.

The cognitive democratic proposal being advocated in this paper is based on a set of egalitarian assumptions which were the result of three decades of applied research and theory development, and has as one of its constructs the ordering and inclusiveness of membership (Pearl & Knight, 1999: 2).

The inquiry of how much this contextual fact stated by the scholar in the inclusive education strategy document has been considered in this part. Hence, before the literature focuses on its own identified framework, it shall better to understand what is being stated in this strategy text so as to cross check its fitness for purpose meaning its comprehensiveness measured through its core indicators of inclusiveness, any relevant inclusive education model suggested with in it and suggested strategies that are the necessities of inclusive education practices at higher education level mainly against its rationales and directive strategies.

RATIONAL FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The inclusive education strategy has its own rationales that are helpful to ratify it at national level in the sense of the rights of the learners with various disabilities. This strategy asserts that education is a human right, as reflected in the principle of Universal Primary Education (UPE), and Education for All (EFA) goals by 2015 to which Ethiopia is committed. Ethiopia has ratified the 2006 UN Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which recognizes the right of PwDs to inclusive education at all levels of the education system in 2010. Subsequently, this right has become part and parcel of the constitution of the country.

More specifically IE:

- enhances its recipients' quality of life, enabling them to become independent, productive citizens with a sense of dignity and self-worth,.
- has an economic benefit, both for individuals and for society,
- contributes to a just and democratic society, the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of social equity,
- promotes the achievement of UPE and EFA,
- is more cost-effective than the creation of special schools across the country.
- assists all children in their learning to develop and realize their potentials.
- Helps children with disabilities stay with their families.

Although the majority of Children with Disabilities(CwDs) and learning difficulties are being served in an inclusive classroom setting, those few number of children with severe physical, intellectual, autistic, deaf-blind, etc disabilities, must also be served in special schools and/or special classes. Inclusive education will also provide conducive classroom settings to meet the educational needs of gifted and talented children.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

STRENGTHENING EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

ESTABLISHING RESPONSIBILITY ACCOUNTABILITY

SNE/IE services are offered within the existing education and training structure. Therefore, the various hierarchies in the education structure (from Federal Ministry to each educational institution) will take full responsibility and accountability for ensuring that all children, youth and adults are served by the education system,

SNE/IE experts should be assigned at all educational levels, i.e., Higher Education, VET, Regional, Zone (if necessary) and Woreda levels to take care of inclusive education issues (i.e., offering professional assistance to schools, organizing trainings, aggregating data on LSEN, ensuring that SNE/IE activities are mainstreamed in planning, budgeting, monitoring, evaluating and reporting, etc.) in their respective places.

ALLOTING SUFFICIENT BUDGET

- MoE will allocate adequate budget for activities to be undertaken at Federal level for progressive realization of the SNE/IE strategy,
- Regional governments and City Administrations should ensure that adequate budget is allocated and properly expended for progressive realization of the SNE/IE strategy,
- Federal MoE solicits additional fund from donors and other development partners in order to strengthen SNE/IE practices in the country,
- Higher Education as well as TVET institutions should ensure that students and trainees with special needs receive appropriate services by allocating sufficient amount of budget,
- Similarly, 1Regional/ City Administration Education Bureaus, WEOs and schools are expected to devise mechanism for soliciting additional resources for the implementation of SNE/IE strategy in their respective jurisdictions.

PREPARING IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES AND DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

- MoE in consultation with stakeholders will prepare the necessary guidelines for the implementation of the SNE/IE strategy and REBs as well as HEIs and TVETs adapt the guidelines in the context of their respective regions and institutions,
- MoE in consultation with REBs, City Administrations and HEIs will prepare appropriate instruments to gather data on various aspects of LSEN, particularly on CwDs. Each educational institution, region and city administration will be responsible and accountable to systematically gather and send relevant data to Educational Management Information System (EMIS) of MoE.

INCREASING ACCESS TO ALL CHILDREN, YOUTH & ADULTS WITH SNEs AT ALL LEVELS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

STRENGTHENING AWARENESS RAISING ACTIVITIES

Inclusive education relies on widespread acceptance of the rights of LSEN to be educated in general education classrooms and to receive equitable resourcing (that is, funding which is adequate to meet their needs). Failure to recognize these rights constitutes one of the biggest barriers to inclusive education.

Accordingly, a concerted and continuous effort must be exerted to raise the level of awareness and rectify the wrong attitudes held by parents, community elders, religious, political and education leaders, teachers, employers and the community at large. To this end, a multifaceted and target-tailored communication approaches (such as campaign, community mobilization, social marketing, etc), and techniques (such as workshops, TV and radio spots, school mini-media, brochures, community dialogue, panel discussion, symposium, posters, etc), will be employed.

This will be put into practice by all concerned stakeholders whereby the MoE, HEIs, TVETs, Regional and City Administration Education Bureaus, Zone Education Departments and Woreda Education Offices (WEOs) taking the lead. Moreover, a detailed communication guideline will be developed and implemented.

CREATING CONDUCTIVE EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

ACCESSIBLE FACILITIES

Many educational settings (Schools, TVET, TEIs, HEIs, and Adult Education Centers) in our country are not conducive and friendly enough to accommodate PwDs. Facilities such as adapted toilet,

adapted seats in library, adequate space for wheel chairs, ramps, signage, water supply, play grounds; etc should be accessible to these children. In the case of multi-story school buildings, measure must be taken to build a modified ramp. Until then, classes for learners with physical disabilities should be located in the ground floor. As stipulated in Ethiopian Building Proclamation No. 624/2009, future buildings should have inbuilt ramp and lift/elevator services for the use of students with disabilities.

CREATING FRIENDLY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Education leaders at all levels, particularly school management bodies should strive to create friendly relationship between and among CwDs and their non-disabled peers, teachers, administrative personnel and supportive staffs by raising the awareness of the school community.

ENHANCING THE EDUCATION OF FEMALE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

It should be also noted that females with disabilities are double disadvantaged and hence, special effort should be exerted to bring them to schools and training institutions and give them special support to enhance their participation.

CAPACITY BUILDING

TRAINING OF TEACHERS

Teachers are critical to implementing SNE/IE and so too are those who provide specialist advice to them; school administrators and those responsible for teacher education. All teachers, including Early Child Care and Education (ECCE) teachers will be equipped with appropriate attitudes, values and skills to teach diverse populations, including LSEN. This preparation will take place in initial (pre-service) teacher education and in in-service training in accordance with Teachers Development Program (TDP). Adult education facilitators will also take orientation on SNE/IE in pre-service and in-service programs to assist youth and adults with disabilities.

TRAINING SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT STAFFS

Experts at HEIs, TVETs, Regional and City Administrations, Zones and Woreda levels, other education providing institutes, itinerant teachers and those working in resource centers will receive additional training (pre-service and in-service) to prepare them for their roles in advancing SNE/IE. Their training should enable them to work across disability categories and to carry out their advisory responsibilities with principals and teachers. To effectively implement SNE/IE the training of experts with diverse educational backgrounds (speech therapist, physiotherapists, etc) is desperately needed.

To produce these professionals at medium and high level, MoE will establish a system to train in collaboration with higher education institutions.

Educational institution administrators and supervisors will also be equipped with different skills to respond effectively to the diverse needs of all learners and to promote SNE/IE in institutions under their jurisdiction.

CAPACITATING TEACHER EDUCATORS

In order to deliver effective programs of training for the above groups of professionals, attention will be paid to the qualifications and skills of teacher educators in TEIs. Where staff members lack these qualifications and skills, steps will be taken to update them. There will be continued efforts by MoE to harmonize SNE/IE training programs at all levels of TEIs and HEIs in accordance with the spirit and philosophy of SNE/IE.

PROMOTING INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM

ADAPTING CURRICULUM

In developing an inclusive curriculum, account will be taken of the key characteristics of an inclusive curriculum as identified in international documents, namely: flexibility, relevance and adjustability to the diverse characteristics and needs of lifelong learners.

Within an inclusive classroom, it is likely that there will be learners who are functioning at two or three levels of the curriculum. Some will be working at their age level, some will be working a year or more ahead, and some will be working at an earlier age level.

This means that teachers should use multi-level teaching or, at a minimum, make adaptations to take account of the diversity within classroom. Such adaptations include making provisions for gifted and talented learners who can be expected to advance more quickly through the curriculum than their peers.

Hence, curriculum adaptation and modification will be exercised at all levels of MoE (HEIs and TVETs) and also an implementation guideline will be developed in collaboration with concerned stakeholders.

DESIGNING INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Some learners' individual needs call for Individualized Educational Program (IEP). Hence, teachers are required to design IEP to accommodate these learners. To put this into effect at all levels of educational hierarchies, teachers will be capacitated and IEP guideline will be prepared at federal level.

AVAILING APPROPRIATE TEACHING- LEARNING MATERIALS AND STATIONERIES

Teaching-learning materials (Braille text books, large prints, tactile graphics, abacus, etc); stationeries (slate, styles, talking calculator, Braille paper, etc); computer software (such as JAWS etc.), should be available to LSEN at all levels of educational institutions. MoE in collaboration with HEIs, TVETs, REBs and other partners will find some way of making these materials available in the National market.

IMPROVING LEARNING ASSESSMENT

When learning assessment is used for selection or ranking it is inevitable that some LSEN will fare the worst, thus stigmatizing them as 'failures' and de-motivating them. As far as learning assessment is concerned, it is essential that assessment serves educational purposes by promoting learning and guiding teaching, not simply functioning as a tool for sorting and selecting learners for advancement. It should provide the best possible account of what a learner knows, can do or has experienced.

Methods of assessment of learners and trainees with special educational needs should take account of their particular disabilities (e.g., a blind learner/trainee may need to be tested orally and practically or in Braille or a tape recorded test, a test to be given to a deaf learner/trainee may need to be supported in written form as well as practically and via sign language, and a learner with a learning disability may require more time in an exam, they may also take one exam in one day). Continuous assessment such as, portfolio, project work, self-assessment, observation etc., should also be used as alternatives or supplementary to exams. For effective realization, different guidelines will be prepared at all levels of educational institutions.

SUITING FUNCTIONAL ADULT EDUCATION TO ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES

In the ongoing functional adult education program, the learning needs of adults with disabilities should be taken into account in the development of curriculum for the program. Facilitators will also give appropriate support to these learners. Adult education centers are responsible to provide such basic materials such as slate, styles, sign language dictionary, abacus, etc. Moreover, need based non- formal vocational training will be also given to these adults so that they can be more productive to themselves and the country at large.

ESTABLISHING FUNCTIONAL SUPPORT SYSTEM

For successful implementation of SNE/IE, continuous support will be given to learners and trainees with special educational needs, regular classroom teachers at all levels and educational institution leadership bodies. Such support takes place in a variety of forms including the provision of:

- professional development training for teachers and trainers ,

- adapted teacher's and trainer's guides,
- adapted learning and teaching materials and equipment, special classes or units, itinerant teachers, assistant teacher and trainer co-teaching, technical assistance to management (e.g. for data collection, reporting, needs assessment, etc.)

DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING SCREENING AND ASSESSMENT TOOLS

To provide support for LSEN, their needs should be screened and assessed as early as possible in their school careers i.e., in ECCE and primary education. In order for this to take place, teachers will be trained to observe and to conduct screening assessments of learners in their classrooms. Where appropriate, such preliminary screening will lead to referrals to specialists (e.g. itinerant teachers) to conduct more detailed assessments.

EQUIPING AND STAFFING RESOURCE CENTERS

Existing resource centres in cluster schools and special schools will be equipped with appropriate materials (such as Montessori educational kits, (primary level) TV, DVD, Video camera, wheel chair, cane, hearing aid, low vision materials, crutch, etc) and staffed with professionals such as itinerant teachers, psychologists, Braille trainer (at primary level), sign language interpreters, etc. so that they can give support to LSEN and teachers in cluster, satellite and neighbouring schools. Existing centres in secondary schools, TVETs, HEIs and TEIs will also be similarly equipped and staffed. While centres in secondary schools and TVETs provide support to LSEN in their respective educational settings, centres in HEI, and TEIs will serve as centres of excellence for training SNE/IE trainees and offering support to LSEN in their respective institutions. Resource centres will be established in schools and institutions that have no such centres.

The resource centres are also expected to offer support to adults with disabilities and facilitators nearby adult education centres.

The training and assignment of the aforementioned professionals at primary and secondary levels will be the responsibility of REBs and City Administrations, Zone Education Departments, WEOs while in TVETs, TEIs and HEIs the responsibility will be undertaken by the institutions themselves.

PROVIDING INCENTIVE FOR SPECIAL SCHOOL/CLASS TEACHERS

Children with severe disabilities receive education in special schools and special classes attached to regular classrooms. It is well known that teaching these children is a highly laborious and demanding task. Thus special school/class teachers will be provided with incentives in order to motivate and retain them in their profession. MoE will prepare implementation guideline.

PROMOTING PEERS AND PARENTS SUPPORT

Learners and trainees with special educational needs will also receive extra support from their peers as envisaged in the School Improvement Program (SIP). In addition to this, “disability clubs” which comprise all volunteer students and community of the school should be set up in order to establish strong emotional attachment and supportive relationship among CwDs and non disabled peers.

Parents play critical roles in educating and supporting their children. Particularly, parents and siblings of learners and trainees with special educational needs are important sources of information and assistance. Parents are also potential partners in designing and implementing educational programs for their children. Thus, they should be represented in the existing Parent-Teacher-Student-Association (PTSA) or any other structure and be consulted in designing and implementing IEP.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIP AMONG STAKEHOLDERS

Providing appropriate education for LSEN is a responsibility that is shared among a range of stakeholders (e.g., Partners, Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) providers, the Federation of Ethiopian National Associations for Persons with Disabilities (FENAPD), National Associations of Persons with Disabilities and private providers of education) as well as relevant Ministries (especially Ministry of Health, Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs).

ESTABLISHING NATIONAL COUNCIL

This partnership entails strong collaboration among stakeholders in terms of providing financial and technical assistance as well as in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating SNE/IE strategy. To put this into effect a National Council on SNE/IE and its Regional equivalents will be established.

STRENGTHENING COLLABORATION WITH IN MoE

The approach to SNE/IE adopted by the MoE makes it essential that all agencies, centres, directorates and units within the Ministry mainstream the education of learners and trainees with special educational needs in their planning.

Some of the areas of collaboration among the directorates, agencies and units include; data gathering of learners and trainees with special educational needs, preparation of guidelines on curriculum adaptation, IEP, manual for the implementation of SNE/IE in TVET, screening and assessment tools for mathematics and language etc. MoE will play a critical role in ensuring the effective implementation of the strategic issues outlined in this document by developing a guideline.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to apply all essentials of inclusiveness which have been discussed so far, inclusive education model of technology enhanced learning designed by Denise Wood (2015) has been taken for granted in this study. Since this research is prominently a newly emerging pedagogical study especially in Ethiopian case, the researcher has been currently convinced by this model and employed it as the primary spring board relevant model to investigate the teaching learning environment and then try to visualize and plot the existing inclusive higher education curriculum at institution level. The theoretical framework upon which the inclusive design of technology enhanced learning model is based on a bio-psychosocial understanding of diversity and social constructivist approaches to learning and teaching, which recognizes that learning and teaching is culturally situated, historically informed and imbued with power and control (Hardman and Amory, 2015; Wood, 2015 cited in Wood, 2015). These factors impact on the ways in which technologies are employed and their effectiveness in engaging diverse students and supporting transformative approaches to learning and teaching. Additionally, it can also be seen based on cultural historical activity theory. The approach is also founded on an ethic of care framework (Tronto, 1993), which focuses on the “compelling moral salience of attending to and meeting needs of particular others for whom we take responsibility”.

In this next section, these three theoretical frameworks, which provide the foundation for the inclusive design of technology enhanced learning model, are discussed in further detail.

BIO-PSCHOSOCIAL MODEL OF DIVERSITY

The bio-psychosocial model rejects the reductionist medical and social models of disability, both of which have constructed the view of disability as a “problem to be managed” and perpetuated a Cartesian disembodied view of disability. The approach acknowledges the fluid and multi-faceted dimensions of diversity and recognizes the need to shift focus from regarding diversity as a “problem” to be managed (through either a medical or social “cure”) to one in which engaging with and affirming difference is embedded in policies and practices at the institutional, program and individual level.

The approach addresses the need for a more inclusive model by dispensing with the “scientifically archaic principles of dualism and reductionism” in favor of a more holistic model based on the principle that an individual’s health reflects the extent to which there is harmony between the interconnected biological, psychological and social systems. Therefore, as George Engel (1978) points out, a disturbance or disruption of any one of these interconnected systems can have profound impact on other systems; thereby acknowledging the diversity in the ways individuals’ experience the same disability or illness depending on their individual biological makeup, their socio-cultural history, psychological factors and/or environmental circumstances.

The bio-psychosocial model is also reflected in the World Health Organization's (WHO) transition to the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (hereafter ICF) in 2001 (World Health Organization (WHO), 2002). The ICF, in contrast to previous approaches such as the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH) first published in 1980 (World Health Organization (WHO), 1980), changed the perspective from the biomedical model of diseases to that of the bio-psychosocial model of health; acknowledging the fluidity and transient nature of health status at any given time. As Kraus de Camargo (2011) observes, the ICF classification does not classify people according to a diagnosis, but rather, their functioning given their biological makeup and the psychological, social and environmental circumstances at a particular point in time. The ICF therefore acknowledges that the functioning and disability of an individual occurs in a context, taking into account "what a person with a health condition can do in a standard environment (their level of capacity), as well as what they actually do in their usual environment (their level of performance)"; domains which are classified from body, individual and societal perspectives.

CULTURAL HISTORICAL ACTIVITY THEORY

In the context of inclusive education, the bio-psychosocial model as a systems based theory is complementary to social constructivist approaches such as cultural historical activity theory (hereafter CHAT), which recognizes that learning is a collectively shared process with significant cultural and historical dimensions (Vygotsky, 1978). The approach draws on Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development, which is the distance between what an individual (for example a student) can achieve on their own and what they can accomplish when guided by more capable peers or adults (for example, their peers, tertiary tutors, lecturers) through social interactions that take place in a historical and cultural context (Wood, *et al.*, 2015). CHAT provides a heuristic for analyzing activities within the context in which those activities take place (Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy, 1999). Vygotsky's conceptualization of CHAT was a simple triad (see [Figure 2](#)) in which he argued that every activity system includes a subject (in the case of education this might be the student whose activity system we are studying). An object is what drives or motivates the activity; for example, the object might be for students to develop communication skills and particular technical skills required to fulfill the requirements of the course. The third component are tools which include both cognitive and material tools (including traditional tools and information and communication technologies), which in the higher education context, might be the cognitive strategies, academic literacies and the digital technologies students require to complete their studies.

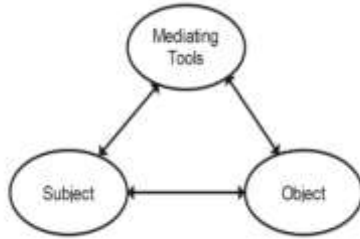


Figure 1: Vygotsky's conceptualization of an activity system (first generation CHAT).

Leont'ev (1978) recognized that Vygotsky's conceptualization was under-developed since as he argued, activity systems are more complex, taking place with a community in which there is a division of labor and rules which affect the subject's interactions and use of tools. Leont'ev also noted that activity systems include operations — the specific activities undertaken by the subject using tools to achieve a goal, motivated by the object. This model became known as second-generation CHAT, and was subsequently depicted by Engeström as a more complex triad (see Figure 3).

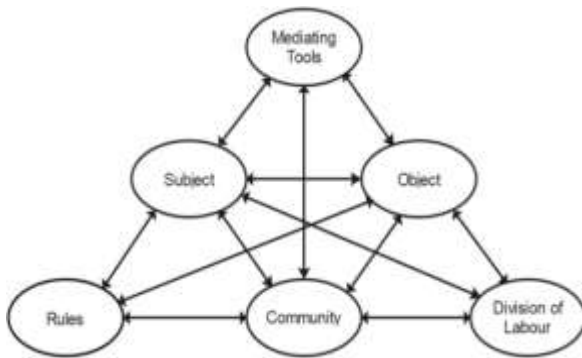


Figure 2: Engeström's visual depiction of Leont'ev's conceptualization of an activity system (second generation CHAT).

Engeström (2001) further developed the model, which he referred to as third-generation CHAT, arguing that individuals operate within a number of activity systems, each with multiple points of view, traditions and interests. According to Engeström (2001), the interactions of two or more activity systems reveal contradictions in the objects of each system. Such contradictions are not regarded in a negative light; rather Engeström identifies such contradictions as opportunities for expansive learning, which can occur when the facilitator, or in our example, the teacher, adapts their learning and teaching approach in ways that enable the objects of activity systems to be shared, or jointly constructed.

In explaining his concept of expansive learning, Engeström (2001) as stated in the study of Wood (2015) draws on Gregory Bateson's three types of learning. Learning I refers to "acquisition of the responses deemed correct in the given context — for instance, the learning of correct answers in a classroom". Learning II is described as the type of learning that occurs when the student acquires an understanding of the deep-seated rules and patterns of behavior required in a particular context (for example, students learn the "hidden curriculum" required to pass exams or be accepted by the group). Such learning creates what Bateson refers to as a double-bind for the student, which can only be resolved by the collective endeavor of the group with the support of knowledgeable others (teachers, peers etc.). This type of learning is referred to as Learning III by Bateson and is what Engeström means when he refers to **expansive learning**. It is the type of learning that can occur through the collective action taken by the teacher and the students to resolve the double-bind or contradictions between the objects of activity systems. Thus, expansive learning can occur when a student or a group moves beyond the contradiction to "radically question the sense and meaning of the context and to construct a wider alternative context".

Engeström (2001) cited in Wood (2015) further reminds us that it is this type of learning that we need to focus on when redesigning curricula and activities that are designed to facilitate a process by which students are able to confront the contradictions between their preconceived notions about diversity and their exposure to new situations requiring them to engage with and begin to appreciate diversity as an articulation of difference, and something to be valued.

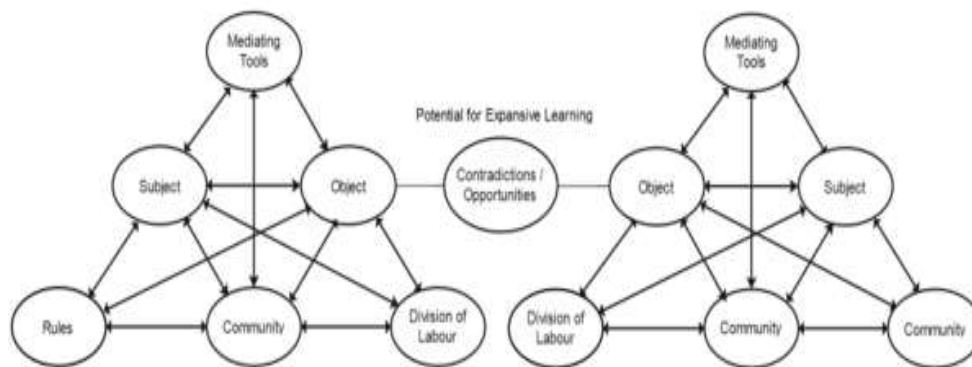


Figure 3: Engeström's conceptualization of two interacting activity systems (third generation CHAT).

ETHIC OF CARE

The origins of ethics of care as a moral theory are generally attributed to the feminists Carol Gilligan (1982) and Nel Noddings (2003) who argued for a relational moral theory. Despite criticism of Gilligan's conceptualization of care ethics as essentialist and privileging women (see, for example, the critique by O'Brien, 2005), the principles have been advanced by several feminist scholars including Selma Sevenhuijsen (1989), Berenice Fisher and Joan Tronto (1990), and Virginia Held (2006).

Held (2006) argues that despite the differences between various conceptualizations of care ethics, the five underlying principles are:

1. The central focus is on the moral salience of attending to and meeting the needs of others for whom we take responsibility;
2. The valuing of emotions such as sympathy, empathy, sensitivity, and responsibility;
3. Universalistic and abstract rules are rejected in favor of caring relations which act for self and others;
4. The boundaries between public and private are conceptualized, social and public arrangements examined, and at times transformation of society is sought; and,
5. Individuals are understood to be relational and interdependent.

The ethic of care adopted in the inclusion model outlined in this paper is that of Joan Tronto (1993) who defines care as "a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave as a complete complex life-sustaining web".

Tronto (1993) identifies four phases of caring:

1. Caring about
2. Taking care of
3. Care- giving; and
4. Care receiving.

She further identifies four elements of care arising from these four phases including:

1. Attentiveness
2. Responsibility to care
3. Competence and
4. Responsiveness.

Failure to act on inequalities and caring for others, according to Tronto, is a form of parochialism or "privileged irresponsibility"; that is, elevating one's needs above the needs of others, or distancing oneself from the needs of those who are unrelated. In contrast, an ethic of care advocates responsibility; the requirement to act and take responsibility for the needs of particular others.

An ethic of care is therefore fundamental to the inclusion model and also an essential foundation for implementation of the inclusion strategy within an institution. By adopting an ethic of care approach, the teacher commits to being attentive to the needs of students, takes responsibility for ensuring their diverse needs are accommodated through the teaching strategies employed and the manner in which curriculum materials are designed to ensure they are accessible to students with diverse needs and is responsive to students and their changing circumstances. An ethic of care also commits the teacher to seeking strategies for engaging students in learning activities that facilitate expansive learning by challenging them to confront their assumptions, consider multiple points of view and to value difference. In this next section, the inclusion model based on these theoretical foundations has been outlined.

I. INCLUSIVE DESIGN OF TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED LEARNING MODEL

In this subsection of the literature, the study focuses on what the author; Denise Wood (2015) had positioned his conceptual analysis on the model along with its theoretical foundations up on which the researcher in this study has also logically placed his own conceptual framework. Consequently, the desired nature of this study would be born.

The author has deeply mentioned that the inclusive design of technology enhanced learning model is based on those aforementioned theoretical foundations; the bio-psychosocial model of diversity; social constructivist approaches such as CHAT; and, an ethic of care framework. The model incorporates four interrelated components (accessibility; usability; personalization; and, transformative pedagogical practice), each of which is essential for the design of inclusive learning environments (See Figure 5 below). These components have been elaborated upon in further detail in the following sections.

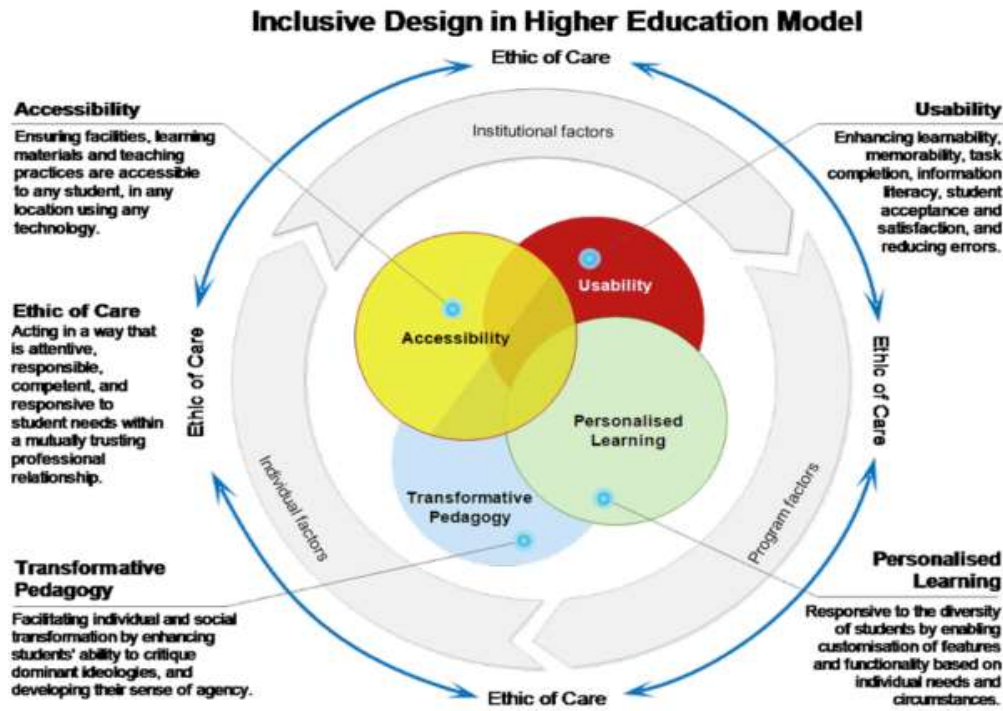


Figure 4: Inclusive Design of Technology Enhanced Learning Model

To summarize and gain better clarification on the factors under the study, I would like to put and employ the following conceptual framework derived from the above theoretical frameworks analyzed by Denise Wood (2015) in his study and his proponents: Vygotsky’s conceptualization of an activity system (first generation CHAT); Engeström’s visual depiction of Leont’ev’s conceptualization of an activity system(second generation CHAT) Engeström’s conceptualization of two interacting activity systems (third generation CHAT).

Hence, the study has focused on and been guided by this aforementioned theoretical framework and the following conceptual framework where the intersection point indicates that the subject that is the university student with disability would be exposed to those whole aspects of learning process by which inclusive learning to the required level can be applied on that particular student.

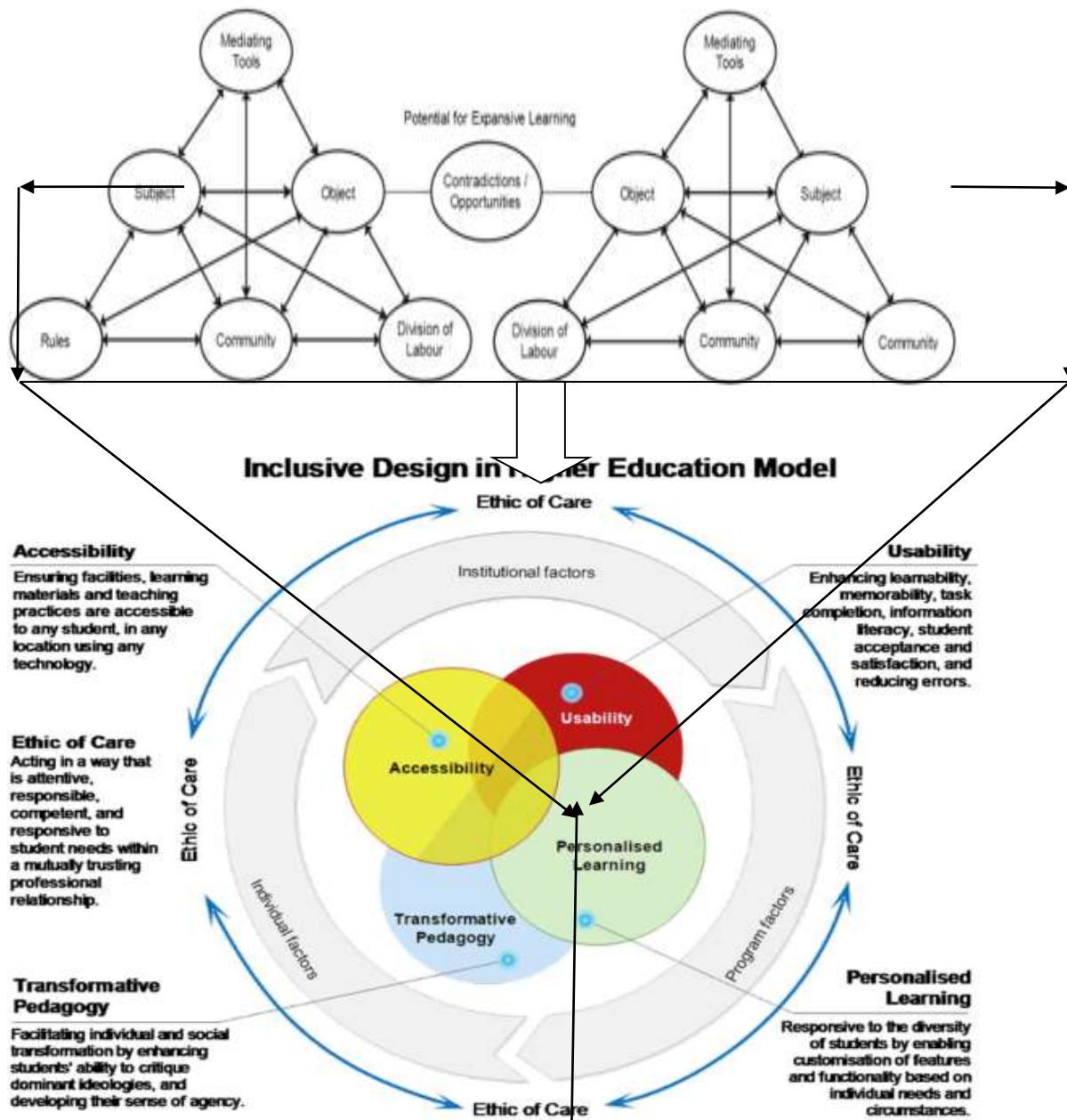


Figure 5: Conceptual Framework based on the theoretical framework of Denise Wood (2015) & his proponents

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

As far as quality alumnae without any direct or indirect discrimination are required for our national development, qualified and inclusive academic programs (if applicable) at all levels have to be examined, mapped, practiced and re-established at grass root level in each discipline. This key professional practice; highly expected from the practitioners, has a paramount importance for both sides; largely for the employees and then for the employers. This can be assured and productive if and only if we let all the learners with disabilities acquire relevant and qualified knowledge, attitudinal changes and skills in a certain area of study as equal as other ordinary students without any biased position. Hence exploring and proficiently examining the academic programs for all university students and trying to map their curriculum inclusively are basically quite significant. Generally, it is very shrewd to realize that the study will serve as useful policy reference or program relevance assessment policy document and particularly benefit beneficiaries such as university students with disabilities and distinct identities, instructors, curriculum designers and reviewers, policy makers and decision makers such as the university senators. Particularly, the recommendations that are forwarded at the end of this research work may serve as guidelines to the practitioners who are engaged in academic and policy research work in order to seek solutions for the overall process of quality teaching and learning in their own institution. Lastly, the researcher also hopes that the review of related literatures and the frameworks set, the design employed, the findings of the study, and the would be recommendations will instigate me to stand again for disabled university students' academic rights and also other interested researchers to conduct further investigation on related dimensions of the area.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As a country, in the current Ethiopian context; adaption and adoption of inclusive education curriculum for higher learning students can be ideologically seen as an upcoming universal pedagogy. Various scholars in the field are right now becoming interested to study on the issue of inclusion. In fact, they have been encountering a lot of challenges. Hence, from the beginning; they might be potentially feeling that solving those recurrent challenges as a bridge is reasonably essential to succeed education for all as a global policy instead of developing confined imagination on the context of learning in a more restricted environment.

Historically, this attitudinal change being seen from those scholars has been gradually emerging as the customary worldwide inclusive education movement to educate and keep the right of students with disabilities through practicing integrated education system. During the 1960s, conceptual changes regarding the best and most appropriate way to educate students with disabilities influenced the movement toward integrated educational settings (Simpson & Sasso, 1992). At this time, successful outcomes were reported for educational programs that trained children with disabilities in the general education environments. In contrast, decreased academic achievement outcomes were reported for children with disabilities who remained in segregated classrooms (Kirk, 1964; Kaufman, Gottlieb, Agard,

& Kukic, 1975; Heiler, 1982). Educators also began to advocate that consonant with assisting students in becoming competent and independent citizens, functional skills could best be taught in natural settings (Brown et al., 1989).

In this regard, starting from the second half of the twentieth century; an American government also tried to focus on the issue of full inclusive education system rather than special needs education settings which cannot empirically and fully treat the students with disabilities from their natural and psychological well beings. With increasing concern regarding the efficacy of special education services and mounting court cases on behalf of children with disabilities (Tremblay & Vanaman, 1979), the U.S. Congress passed a series of laws that sought to strengthen and improve the education of children with disabilities. The cumulative effect of this legislation resulted in the passage of the 1975 landmark statute, Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142), which was amended and expanded in 1990 by the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, Public Law 101-476). A central tenet of this legislation is the least restrictive educational environment principle. This tenet asserts that an integrated setting should be provided for students with disabilities. Furthermore, implementation of the least restrictive environment (LRE) principle was envisioned as a continuum model in which a range of options from most restrictive, typified by segregated special education settings, to the least restrictive, such as full inclusion in a general education classroom, are made available to Students. Concurrent with the federal legislation mandating the LRE, some educators advocated not only integrated classroom placements, but also a paradigm shift away from the view of special education as distinct and separate from regular education (Stainback & Stainback, 1984). After 20 years of support for segregated special education placements, Dunn (1968) provided a major impetus for this movement. He took the position that expansion of special education was a consequence of pressure from general educators, and he challenged special educators to resist segregated class placements and develop a system responsive to the needs of socio culturally deprived children with mild disabilities. Stainback and Stainback (1984) provided an additional rationale for the merger of general and special education, known as the Regular Education Initiative (REI) into a system structured to meet the needs of all Students. These authors argued that there were not two distinct types of students or discrete sets of instructional methods but rather that all students were unique individuals with different intellectual, physical, and psychological characteristics. Learning is acquired through the same instructional methods. Such methods may need to be tailored to individual characteristics, but few, if any, apply only to one group or another. Therefore, the full-inclusion model of classroom placements is built on the foundation of both the LRE principle of IDEA and the REI. The LRE principle advocates that the child with disabilities has a right to an education in a general classroom. The REI asserts that providing services in the general education setting is an environmentally referenced approach based on the rationale that children learn best when skills are taught in the natural environment. Full inclusion also proposes that all services that support the student's goals, such as occupational therapy, should be based in the general education environment (Brown et al., 1989). In this way, the student receives training in the natural environment as a full member of the general education classroom. Although the full-inclusion model builds on early mainstreaming efforts, Rogers (1993) described the differences between mainstreaming and full inclusion of students with disabilities

as a reconceptualization of special education services. In mainstreamed settings, the student is brought to the services. In full-inclusion practices, the services are brought to the student.

However, this strict and very essential distinction might not be that much conceptualized and realized in our country's inclusive education strategy document. Here we can also perceive this realistic problem as the indicator of the presence of the gap between the two programs. Hence, the space or demarcation between inclusive education and special needs education practices has not been brilliantly examined and distinctively identified rather it seems almost alike. So as scholars aside of inclusion, we need to convince ourselves and remark that designing exclusive or special learning strategy for disabled students may not be that much gainful.

In addition, the above idea can also be proved through the study of a Soviet psychologist, Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky. In accordance with Vygotsky and others, contemporary Russian scholars tend to promote an educational model in which the borderlines between ordinary and special education tend to be less distinctive – almost to the degree of extinction (Rodina 2007, in press). Consequently, ordinary education has to become “inclusive” (Vygotsky, 1993; Malofeev, 2000, 2001; Zaitsevm, 2004). Research indicates that the development of the special educational system in post soviet Russia has been characterized by basic forms of inclusion, *internal* as well as *external* (Van Rijswik, Foreman & Shipitzina, 1996); the internal form being implemented in the special educational system; the external form presupposing interaction between special and mass education (Shipitzina, 2001). Thus, the process of inclusion in contemporary Russia tend to be implemented in a somewhat spontaneous fashion (Malofeev, 2000). In this regard, even we ourselves also usually accustomed to hearing and reading that the Ethiopian Education policy seems to discuss only on the issue of special needs education for disabled students via mainstreaming system instead of inclusive education system. This can also additionally show us the presence of that much gap between the two wings as learning approaches.

Correspondingly, according to Lewis (2009); a study project conducted in April in Ethiopia and Rwanda; found out that Education sector policies are weak in relation to disability, special needs education and inclusive education. There is also limited guidance as to how disabled people fit into the wider ‘marginalised’ or ‘special needs’ groups, and how those who are implementing policies can ensure that disabled people are not subsequently sidelined *within* these groups. The specific policies/plans on special needs education provide more clarity and direction than the sector wide documents. Neither Ethiopia nor Rwanda has policies/plans those build on the culture and context of their country. The paper argues that developing education and disability policies in a more culturally appropriate way might make them easier to understand, accept and implement. International movements such as Education for All are discussed, highlighting their weaknesses around disability issues and the effect this has on national education policy. Ethiopia and Rwanda can claim achievements in the education of disabled learners, and are moving towards more inclusive education. However, efforts to learn from successful initiatives so that they can be scaled up beyond the current situation of isolated projects are an urgent priority. Even, much of the terminology around education for disabled and other marginalized groups has different

meanings for different people. There are no universal interpretations for concepts such as special needs education, or inclusive education (Lewis, 2009).

Once upon a time, Ethiopian Ministry of Education Minister also called up on and disclosed that Ethiopia has shown in the process of achieving Education for All (EFA). It has been noted that there is still a gap in the provision of access to all learners particularly those with Special Educational Needs. Since our driving vision is of an inclusive world in which we are all able to live a life of good health, comfort, respect and dignity, I invite all stakeholders to implement this strategy and help our education vision become a reality (Demeke, 2012). On and on, this remark now a day seems to become the culture of all academic institutions almost at all levels. In a society, first of all in various educational institutions; it becomes essential to create an inclusive culture or environment based on the understanding of inclusive education as the possibility for different people to receive high-quality education at various levels based on their gender, nationality, language, physical, mental, social or other characteristics; for people who have various educational needs and opportunities but study together. Another important aspect of such an understanding of inclusive education is recognizing diversity as a resource for further growth and improvement. A university, as one of the oldest forms of organizing democratic relations in a certain community, especially in an academic one, can put such understanding of inclusion and inclusive culture into practice (Tikhomirova & Shadrova, 2016).

Hence, what does the strategy document say on this regard has also been tried to be investigated. In fact, there are also other various challenges seen and hence the education sectors seem to strive toward achieving inclusive higher education learning emerging in various Ethiopian Universities such as University of Gondar. Here after, we scholars are morally even need to focus on assessing the strategy document prepared on IE and trying to create responsive learning environment that enables us address inclusive higher education system fitting to all type learners at all levels as our day to day a must to do project.

Thus, the researcher in this study becomes generally interested to examine the inclusive education strategy document against the summary of the entire issues of the problem of adapting inclusive education practices seen in Ethiopian higher learning institutions based on mainstream community based education set by Tod and Ellis stating that inclusive education is concerned with human rights in that it promotes access to, and participation in, an appropriate mainstream community based education (2006:280).

A. Inclusive Education Approach



Figure 6: Inclusive Education Approach adapted from Mainstream Community Based Education by Tod and Ellis (2006:280).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study is to make critical analysis on Ethiopian inclusive education strategy with respect to responsive learning environment for inclusive higher education system consequently; suggesting the possible way outs for universal learning system for practitioners to possibly practice it all in one of the Ethiopian higher education institutions. And hence the study as a paradigm shift is believed to work and serve as a tool to execute and successively inform the Ethiopian education and training policy to re-conceptualize higher education with respect to the diverse needs of students progressively cooperated throughout a unified inclusive higher education curriculum..

Taking in to account these all suggestive major ends, the study first tried to meet the following specific objectives:

- To look into Ethiopian inclusive education strategy and re-inform the policy makers to strongly re-conceptualize the strategy in terms of inclusive higher education pedagogy.
- To find out if any stated proficient suggestion is there in the strategy used to promote inclusive higher education system for all university students with diverse identities.
- To check out whether the strategy has suggested inclusive education model to effectively operate in Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions.
- In order to initiate, mechanisms for promoting inclusive higher education for all university students with disabilities.

BASIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS/HYPOTHESIS

Briefly speaking, the study is desired to base its investigation on responsive learning environment for inclusive higher education system in one of the Ethiopian Universities as a newly emerging universal pedagogy. Hence, in the study the researcher has become highly involved to base his thought on analyzing the inclusive education strategy document prepared nationally by the late Ethiopian MoE or the now Ministry of Science and Higher Education/MoSHE/ whether the strategy has taken in to account the major critical issues of responsive learning environment in particular to human attitudes, practices, policies, learning environments and resources enacted and utilized by the stakeholders so as to address inclusive higher education to the desired level. To measure and realize these significant demanding factors against the document, first the study needs to get answer for the following basic research questions.

1. How far does the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy have addressed the issue of inclusive higher education?
 - 1.1 What signals or elements of the Inclusive Education Strategy of the policy, are in place for serving students with disabilities?
 - 1.2 What strategies does the strategy document suggest to the practitioners with regard to practicing inclusive higher education?
2. Does the country nationally have scholarly employed prominent model to effectively operate inclusive higher education practice?
3. What compulsory mechanisms are suggested for promoting inclusive higher education for all university students with disabilities?

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The higher education academy is called up on supporting the higher education institutions to think creatively about inclusive curriculum design from a generic as well as subject or disciplinary perspective working through viable research design and methods. Still my professional worry is pedagogy for diversity or addressing academic unity in diversity which most prominent democratic scholars recommend to the world population. As being extremist in a contradictory side of democratic education system would never indulge inclusive learning opportunity to all learners in higher education institution.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Case study design has served the researcher to analyze the contents of the strategy document whether dealing with disabled university students' learning environment in higher education already under operation. Hence, in the context of this study; a case study design is an in-depth, usually longer-term, investigation of the document about a certain group of students with disabilities in higher education institution for descriptive purpose. It is basically an intensive investigation of the factors that contribute to the characteristics of the cases observed from university students with disabilities in the sense of

inclusive higher education practices. For example the researcher has critically tried to explore or discover the strategy document of the ministry about the classroom learning conditions of a disabled student whether technology enhanced learning should be practiced by the student or not in the classroom by the help of the course instructor.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, descriptive research method has been used. Hence, along with the content analysis of the document, the researcher also tried to describe the attitudes and specific critical cases under the major problem of disabilities of students under investigation. For that case, qualitative research approach used for the analysis of the strategy document. Barriers and support that students with disabilities which the strategy document would identify at the selected University have been checked. By using this method, the study has been carried out by the help of experts of Ministry of Science and Higher Education /MoSHE/, who have due national experiences of how universities need to manage teaching disabled students coming from various nations and nationalities with distinct identities.

DATA SOURCES, POPULATION, SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

The population for this mini study had incorporated University of Gondar local and foreign experts and higher officials at ministry level as secondary data sources. But, the primary data source of the study was the inclusive education strategy document prepared by MoSHE /the late MoE/ in 2006. The university itself and the 5 interviewees from MoSHE and MoE were purposely selected.

INSTRUMENTS OF DATA COLLECTION AND THE RESEARCH PROCEDURE

In general, some types of instruments such as unstructured-interview guide and critical document reading style were employed to gather the required data. Unstructured-interview guide was hardly used to obtain firsthand information from higher officials of MoSHE and MoE as much as possible as relevant secondary data on disability issues and suggested solutions aiming those data might consolidate the primary data collected from the primary data source that is from the IE strategy document through the researcher's deep critical reading.

The research procedure was scheduled based on the interest of the interviewees especially based on their office's program. The researcher begun to conduct the interview sessions with good rapport with the participants and the researcher was in a better position and could stay with the interviewees for considerable hours per each schedule. This task really took a lot of energy and ample times. Consequently, the researcher tried to collect valid data from these participants who would critically influence the findings of the study.

Plus, the selected contents of the document were also critically read by the researcher along with taking in to account the opinions forwarded by those higher officials.

METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

The data obtained through interviews, document analysis have been qualitatively analyzed in the form of paraphrasing and interpretation considering the context in which the records are developed. Hence, the method of content analysis has been mainly employed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Here under, the inclusive education strategy which was drafted and ratified in 2006 UN conventions on the rights of persons with disabilities; taken from the Ethiopian Ministry of Science and Higher Education/MoSHE, here after) policy document, and has been critically analyzed using the selected thematic areas of the strategy that would give the researcher the right milestones for his finally driven conclusions and suggestive mechanisms of improving the strategy as an inclusive higher education policy by the stakeholders at all levels. This strategy actually recognizes the rights of PwDs to inclusive education at all levels of education system in 2010. On each selected thematic area or content of the strategy in relation to the basic research questions, due analysis has been made with reference to the researcher's professional knowledge in accord with various scholastic viewpoints identified throughout the literature.

THE STATUS OF ETHIOPIAN EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICY ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION

This topic as a theme has been analyzed based on the following sub-themes just to clearly discourse the research question being posed in the study and then the major findings throughout the analysis have been put based on the qualitative data forwarded from the key participants.

SIGNALS (ELEMENTS) OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION STRATEGY, IN PLACE FOR SERVING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

At the beginning, the researcher tried to introduce himself to the first key interviewee who is working at the late Ethiopian MoE or the today's Ministry of Science and Higher Education/MoSHE/ and well developed his rapport with him. Then interview guides were read to the interviewee taking in to account that he has long professional and managerial experience on the issue of inclusive education.

Hence, he tried to discuss the specific indicators of inclusive education strategy of the policy, in place for serving students with disabilities. Generally, this man as the first interviewee tried to point out the major points related to the signals as follows.

“The Inclusive Education Strategy document has been prepared since 2006 G.C.

With regard to this, equity has been considered in the strategy. It focuses on physical disability that is only up to general education than higher education. In this strategy, it has been asserted that disabled students cannot reach at higher education level. It is pro-poor type strategy. It even tells us that they are lower than other students and hence it makes difficult to practice inclusive education as it creates negative attitude within the disabled students' mind."

Date: April 8, 2011 E.C

At 9:00 O'clock local Time

Just to elaborate it more, let alone for higher education system, the strategy has considerable gaps on practicing inclusive education at general education level with full positive attitude of disabled students. Besides, the interviewee also mentioned additional challenges of inclusive education (IE) in HEIs as follows.

"No Sign Language, for instance; is used in HEIs. Inclusive society is not yet created at this higher level except trying to apply Special Need Education(SNE) principles. For example, to make the classrooms inclusive, especially for those students with sight impairments is quite difficult even using smart boards in the classrooms. However, since these classrooms are not conducive to make them inclusive, we use SNE system to hospitalize students with such disabilities. The reason that we cannot make classrooms inclusive is there is no technology (soft or hard technology) up to the level. Even we don't have enough soft technology i.e, knowledge as like as hard technology i.e, skill for them taught by the instructors who can operate such technologies for the students."

Date: April 8, 2011 E.C

At 9:30 O'clock local Time

This directly tells us that the expert has actually mentioned the severe challenges of practicing IE in Ethiopian HEIs due to the fact that the universities do not have either adequate soft technology (i.e, enough knowledge on IE) or/and hard technology (skill) up to the required level. In relation to these all comments of the informant, what does the IE strategy document state on this regard and also how about the signals? However, before answering this critical question, what the second interviewee explained on this point could be stated as follows.

"From first degree up to 3rd degree study programs on IE have been begun particularly in AAU and Gondar University. In AAU, disability center has mainly been established. Itinerant (roving or traveling) teachers have got trainings on inclusive education and assigned at each center so as to practice IE. Support service centers which are around more than 200 centers in number have been set up in Ethiopia just to deliver support to students with various disabilities at national level. Text books from Grade 9-12 students have been transcribed in to Braille by expending around 5 million dollars. The task has been done since 2006 G.C to train and hence the teaching learning materials for 6 major subject areas have been interpreted in to Braille forms."

Date: April 14, 2011 E.C

At 4:00 O'clock local Time

As already disclosed by the interviewee, these all can show us that the various trials are being practiced by the government, which can be considered as signals of IE in place for serving students with disabilities. On and on, the informant also explained that:

“However, still this task has not included higher education students’ course materials. Rather, from preschool to grade 12 students with hearing impairment, sign language based student text books and teachers’ guide book have been prepared and distributed. Along with this all, itinerant teachers support this kind students at satellite schools.”

Date: April 14, 2011 E.C

At 4:30 O'clock local Time

Totally, during the interview and discussion sessions, it was clearly understood that IE support for university students with various disabilities has not still been strongly considered by the federal government of Ethiopia as like as preschool, primary and secondary general education students. This say directly indicates that there is a gap obviously seen in Ethiopian HEIs in this respect. Even, he also assured that the country does not have its own IE policy except this strategy document only let alone worrying about IE system in HEIs.

On page 12 onwards in the strategy document of IE, major initiatives or tasks taken to practice inclusive curriculum like adapting curriculum, designing individual educational program, availing appropriate teaching-learning materials and stationeries, improving learning assessment and suiting functional adult education to Adults with disabilities, have been referred as the possible indicators of IE to implement it in the classroom during learning. For more comprehension on the strategy, in the document it has been stated that teaching- learning materials (Braille text books, large prints, tactile graphics, abacus, etc); stationeries (slate, styles, talking calculator, Braille paper, etc); computer software (such as JAWS etc.), should be available to LSEN at all levels of educational institutions. MoE in collaboration with HEIs, TVETs, REBs and other partners will find some way of making these materials available in the National market.

Therefore, it is possible to judge that the strategy has its own feasible signals which are recommended or in place for serving students with disabilities though we cannot that much freely evaluate it as it has the adequate presence of indicators or comprehensive elements of IE in place for serving university students with disabilities without any reservation.

STRATEGIES SUGGESTED IN THE IE STRATEGY DOCUMENT TO THE PRACTITIONERS FOR PRACTICING INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION

On the same day, while the researcher was continuously approaching the first interviewee who is still the director working in his office at MoSHE found in the country's capital Addis Ababa; the researcher observed that he was with quite disciplined approach to forward his own proficient and genuine suggestions on practicing inclusive higher education as follows.

“Those trained professionals in SNE and IE should serve other Universities. This task has been considered as right and obligation in the strategy document. The buildings constructed are to be inclusive. Because the impairment stage of the students determines the type of its degree of inclusiveness in the classrooms. And some selected universities should be organized as excellence centers of inclusive education.”

Date: April 8, 2011 E.C

At 10:00 O'clock local Time

What the strategy say on this regard was also posed by the researcher. Continuously, related to this issue; the second interviewee from the late MoE, also tried to state the following possible suggestions which the inclusive education strategy should have:

“Well organized structure with appropriate human power or professionals in IE has to be available in the country's education system as a strategy. Adequate budget for inclusive education has to be there. In all universities, there should be disability centers. Text books with text book interpreters should be available

or

be together with in or among students with disabilities. Pushing the higher education institutions to have Braille books is good. We need to change the negative attitudes of university community toward students with disabilities. Meaning it is quite essential to let all staff have inclusive attitudes toward these Students.”

Date: April 14, 2011 E.C

At 5:00 O'clock local Time

However, the strategic directions which have been stated in the IE strategy document (MoE, 2012:9) are more clearly mentioned as follows.

- Strengthening educational management and administration
- Increasing access to all children, youth and adults with special educational needs at all levels of education and training with in which:
 - Strengthening awareness raising activities
 - Creating conducive educational setting
 - Enhancing the education of girls with disabilities

- Improving educational opportunities for learners with disabilities in TVET
- Capacity building - Promoting Inclusive Curriculum
- Establishing functional support system
- Strengthening partnerships among stakeholders
- Research, monitoring and evaluation

From the expression of the interviewee, it is revealed that the suggestions stated in the strategy and the views of the informant are almost comparable or alike regardless of grasping each word and phrase. Meaning the understanding level of the expert depends on his own knowledge on the strategy document. Here the researcher has learnt that how much the strategy document of IE prepared at national level is so vital at least to find out possible mechanisms for practicing or implementing IE in HEIs. Anyways, though it is not that much necessary to emphasize, there is knowledge discrepancy seen between the strategy document and the interviewee as professional expert working at ministry level. The difference, in fact lies mainly on the attitudes of the university community which is not mentioned in the strategy and from another side the expert also didn't ever suggest on the necessity of promoting inclusive curriculum in HEIs.

Hence, it is generally possible to be aware of that strategies suggested in the IE strategy document to the practitioners for practicing inclusive education are more focusing on general education than HEIs. This kind leak of emphasis on IE strategies for Ethiopian HEIs has also been lively crosschecked from the speech of the interviewee.

PROMINENT MODEL BEING SCHOLARLY EMPLOYED TO EFFECTIVELY OPERATE INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION PRACTICE

The first interviewee from Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MoSHE, hereafter) briefly discussed that the country does not have any prominent model of learning so as to effectively operate inclusive higher education activity for students with various disabilities.

He put his own position as follows:

“But not yet designed. However, we are trying to bench mark (but not to copy directly from other countries’ model of inclusive higher education system). For instance, we try to take Italy’s 1960’s ways of practicing inclusive education.”

Date: April 8, 2011 E.C

At 10:30 O'clock local Time

Similarly, the second informant also said:

“Still no study done on this aspired IE model but we are ready to study on it to design.”

Continuing his speech, the interviewee additionally tried to elaborate that:

“The main purpose of inclusive education at higher education level is trying to push those disabled students first, to reach up to university level. The activity or practice of the ministry as a national purpose is almost doing only the process of inclusive education rather than developing such model.”

Date: April 14, 2011 E.C

At 5:30 O'clock local Time

Hence, we can learn that still there is no well designed model recommended for Ethiopian universities at national level to practice inclusive education. Rather, the universities themselves are expected to try to design accessible inclusive higher learning model that may be scholarly employed to practice IE that can be developed through research and outreach activities.

In the same vein, no page has tried to state about the specified learning model in the IE strategy document which is not that much surprising us as the country tried to develop even this strategy for the first time as a strategy or draft policy document.

COMPULSORY MECHANISMS FOR PROMOTING INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION FOR ALL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

As far as the interviewee was a higher official expert on inclusive education, the researcher directly took all his pin points discussed and has tried to entertain them all. Hence, this higher expert working in the directorate office at ministry level from his own long years experience on inclusive higher education tried to proficiently and deeply disclose those compulsory mechanisms so as to promote inclusive higher education (IHE, here after) just step by step as follows.

“Stigmas or psychological ignorance of disabled students has to be first rejected or resolved by the society itself. Everybody should know that he/she has carried with or living with probably expected or unpredictable disabilities which might be manifested once up on a time in one’s life encounters or ways of life though not currently happens. Meaning the community has to develop such real awareness on disability issues. Because if the awareness on this case is not created at the grass root level, the number of disabled students i.e, the probability of having a lot of disabilities becomes very high at university level. In order to let higher education so inclusive, first it is better to practice Special Needs Education. Because trying to let all disabled students inclusive has its own disaster and it may become quite complex for such students to learn together with normal students. Meaning primarily it is good to let them not to feel inferiority complex via Special Needs Education system practices to develop their own confidence on equality.”

As higher official, this key participant simultaneously worrying about and asserting that this psychological ignorance always felt by these kind students; continued on his professional suggestions on the should s and should not s.

“Plus, the student has to have first inclusive experience starting from his/her own family. Otherwise, it is so dangerous for them especially for those students with severe disabilities to be inclusive. Those technology producers have to consider all students with disabilities, wisely. For example, a man who has created that technology might have used it exclusively for himself. The resource or the budget of the university has to be gender responsive or gender inclusive. It’s better to be in such a way. The budget for university students with disabilities has to be taken as or accustomed as a usual culture of the HEIs. That means the culture of letting the budget inclusive should be sustainable in all universities. We have to be careful of that inclusive not to be exclusion. Sometimes when we apply inclusion, we may do exclusive activities such as using unsuitable or sympathetic or very touching jargons deliberately or unintentionally. Because there are people even at university level who think that inclusive education is not important, or necessary for students. Such like their attitudes are still observed in HEIs. They think that students’ disabilities are natural sentences or God’s damnation. These too traditional negative attitudes of such people are still excluding such students instead of being inclusive.”

Date: April 8, 2011 E.C

At 10:45 O’clock local Time

These all says of the interviewee show us that there is a gap in this respect even at this higher learning level. So it must have a strategy to fill such a gap. The negative attitude and the gap of technology usage have to get solutions as soon as possible if we all need to apply inclusive higher education. Hence, professionals or all academicians in the field and the university management have to be well ready to resolve all those aforementioned wrong traditional conceptions or attitudes toward practicing inclusive higher education and to become inclusive practitioners with a viable strategy.

FINDINGS

The overall findings of the study based on the discussions and discovered so far are set as follows.

- Let alone for higher education system, the strategy has considerable gaps on practicing inclusive education at general education level with full positive attitude of disabled students.
- The strategy has its own feasible signals which are recommended or in place for serving students with disabilities though we cannot that much freely evaluate it as it has the adequate presence of indicators or comprehensive elements of IE in place for serving university students with disabilities without any reservation.

- Inclusive education support for university students with various disabilities has not still been strongly considered by the federal government of Ethiopia as like as preschool, primary and secondary general education students. This directly indicates that there is a gap obviously seen in Ethiopian HEIs in this respect. Even, the country does not have its own IE policy except this strategy document only let alone worrying about IE system in HEIs.
- Strategies suggested in the IE strategy document to the practitioners for practicing inclusive education are more focusing on general education than HEIs.
- There is no well designed model recommended for Ethiopian universities at national level to practice inclusive education. Rather, the universities themselves are expected to try to design accessible inclusive higher learning model that may be scholarly employed to practice IE that can be developed through research and outreach activities.
- There is a psychological ignorance towards students with disabilities in higher education institutions. Hence, the negative attitude and the gap of technology usage have to get solutions as soon as possible if we all need to apply inclusive higher education.

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

The worthwhile recommendations forwarded based on the major findings and their conclusions are:

1. Inclusive Education support for university students with various disabilities has to be firmly considered by the federal government of Ethiopia as like as general education students. And the country should have its own strong inclusive higher education policy through modifying the existing IE/SNE strategy document.
2. Strategies stated in the IE strategy document to the practitioners should also focus on inclusive higher education rather than only on inclusive general education. Meaning the strategy has to give due emphasis to inclusive higher education system through its all curricula as soon as possible.
3. The universities themselves are to be responsible to design accessible inclusive higher learning model that may be scholarly employed to practice IE that can be developed through research and outreach activities.
4. If we need to let higher education students so inclusive, it is better to let them first free from their socially attached inferiority complex and develop their own confidence on equality in the classroom during learning via practicing Special Needs Education as a spring board technique.
5. Stakeholders in the field should let the society stand for justice for every individual with various disabilities and eradicate their traditionally adapted high stigma or psychological ignorance against disabled students via research and outreach community services up to each and every household level as much as possible. Hence, it does not become dangerous for them in higher institutions to learn inclusively with other normal university students more than ever, for those students with severe disabilities.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the above analysis made on the qualitative data obtained from the key research participants from MoSHE and the IE strategy document, somehow sounding conclusions are stated as follows.

1. At country level, there is no strong inclusive education policy except the draft policy that is the inclusive education strategy document that has its own feasible signals which can be in place for serving students with disabilities. However, we cannot that much freely evaluate it as the strategy has comprehensive elements of IE for serving those university students with disabilities without any reservation.
2. The strategies stated in the IE strategy document to the practitioners are focusing on inclusive general education than inclusive higher education. Meaning the strategy has given less emphasis to inclusive higher education system.
3. The status of Ethiopian Education and Training Policy addressing the issue of inclusive higher education is not that much judged as to the required higher level.
4. There is no any inclusive learning model designed for Ethiopian universities at national level to practice inclusive higher education. Even the inclusive education strategy document of MoSHE does not state about any specified learning model for university students with disabilities.
5. In order to let higher education students so inclusive, first it is better to practice Special Needs Education. Because trying to let all disabled students instantly inclusive may be quite complex for such students to learn together with normal students. Meaning primarily it is good to let them free from inferiority complex and develop their own confidence on equality.
6. There is high stigma or psychological ignorance of disabled students, that has to be first resolved by the society itself. It has been also noted that everybody should know that he/she has carried on or living with probably expected or predictable disabilities which might be manifested once up on a time in one's life encounters though not currently happens.
7. The student has to have first inclusive experience starting from his/her own family. If not, it becomes so dangerous for them in higher institutions to learn inclusively with other normal university students especially for those students with severe disabilities.
8. Hence, as already learnt from Ethiopian Inclusive Education Strategy document; Ethiopian Higher education learning environment cannot be said as easy and responsive for practicing inclusive higher education system.

LIMITATIONS

As far as adequate data were required to conduct this study, there was a great challenge of getting first hand information from the data sources identified timely as soon as possible. In fact, the issue of the study was new for the researcher himself and also has not been rigorously studied by other researchers at country level. This critical problem really challenged the researcher during the study time. Plus the essential data planned to be taken from Faculty of Education at Queen's University of Canada could not be brought on time due to

the bureaucratic leadership system of the bureaucrats of the top management bodies of both Bahir Dar University and Gondar University; and hence highly limited the study not to get its status at the required level.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Briefly, the study has been predominantly concerned with responsive learning environment for inclusive higher education system as an emerging pedagogy in Ethiopian universities in particular to University of Gondar. Meaning the researcher has restrictively relied on analyzing the indicators, strategies and models suggested in the inclusive education strategy document so as to practice inclusive higher education at national level. Further study should also stand up on and start from this scope broader than ever.

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