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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE PERCEPTION OF TEACHERS AND EDUCATION EXPERTS TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF SOUTH NATIONS, NATIONALITIES PEOPLES REGION: ITS PRACTICES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to investigate the perception of teachers and education experts towards the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools of south nations, nationalities peoples region: its practices, challenges and opportunities. To meet the objectives of the study, descriptive survey method was used. This method is concerned with surveying existing current status of inclusive education practices, opportunities and challenge. Participants of the study were 317 regular and special needs teachers, 33 school principals, woreda, zone and region education bureau experts included in the study. For data collection, Likert Scale, questionnaire, interview, document consultation and check lists were used. The finding revealed that there are environmental and schools challenges for the implementation of inclusive education such as lack of infrastructure, sanitation facilities, ramps, acoustically treated classrooms for hearing impairments, educational materials and services. Moreover, negative attitudes of school administration and teachers, limited utilization of professionals, lack of budget, lack of skillful professionals to screen and identify learners with special needs according to their interest of learning. The finding displayed that, only 11.3 % of the children with disabilities got a chance of education, 88.7 % of children with disabilities are still out of the school. Furthermore, finding revealed that grade one students are the highest repeaters of all grades when compared to other grades. The reason is poor treatment and poor early intervention problems of diversity of learning. The study suggested that high attention is needed from the concerned parties for the implementation of the inclusive education.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is human right, as reflected in the principle of Universal Primary Education (UNESCO, 2005), and Education for All goals to which Ethiopia has committed. Ethiopia has ratified the United Nations (UN) Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities in 2006, which recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to inclusive education at all levels of the education system. This enhances its recipients' quality of life, enabling them to become independent, productive citizens with sense of dignity and self-worth. In this regard, inclusive learning environments will aid all children in their learning and to meet their potential. Again, it promotes social equity and eliminates discrimination among disabled. Inclusive education is more cost-effective than the creation of special schools across the country, especially in the rural areas. Inclusive education is a democratic set up, which relies on equal rights and equal opportunities (UNESCO, 2005). So, to make sure that the disabled are accepted, respected and not discriminated in schools as follows up becomes necessary.

UNESCO (2004) also emphasizes that educational environment must be adjusted to meet the needs of all learners. Children with special needs meet a wide range of barriers in learning. Often, these learning barriers are associated with inclusion, and involve several factors such as quality of assessment, placement, quality of services, interaction between disabilities and teachers, sociocultural environment and availability of facilities. Quality of service is one of the main aspects for successful implementation of inclusive education (Sharma, 2012). So far as sociocultural environment is concerned, De Boer *et al.* (2011) found that the majority of teachers hold neutral or negative attitudes towards the inclusion of pupils with special needs in regular primary education. Besides, the parents belong to the low socio-economic status of society have lack of awareness about disability education and hesitate to send their kids to special schools as well as inclusive schools (Sharma *et al.*, 2012). On the contrary, strength of current inclusive education system, the Ethiopian Constitution (1994; article 41 and 91) establishes the universal right to education and emphasizes the need to

allocate resources and provide help to disadvantaged groups. Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia (1994) gives emphasis for providing education for all children. On the other hand, the government commitment to universalizing primary education to all criticizes is not only a right but also a guarantee for development. A wide range of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and civil organizations representing people with disabilities are playing an active role in promoting and implementing inclusive education in Ethiopia. In addition, (ESDP IV, 2010) has much described future developments in inclusive education. The second new special needs education strategy (MOE, 2012) addressed problems despite rapid expansion of the education system; Ethiopia's education sector faces several key challenges relevant to the education of special needs children. These includes: limited access to education for the most vulnerable children, achievements in access have not been accompanied by adequate improvements in quality, weak capacity to plan, manage and check the education system, low-level of awareness and capacity to address special needs education in schools, out of school children, drop-outs, repetition, negative attitudes, poor teaching skills, insufficient trained support staff, inaccessible and unsafe built environment, insufficient materials, lack of interpreters for deaf learners, graduates from special needs lack practical skills and etc.

With regard to inclusive education, recent research indicates that the success of inclusive education program is dependent on teachers' attitudes to inclusion. As reported by Robertson, Chamberlain, and Kasari (2003), when teachers have positive perceptions of their relationship with students with disabilities, the students' behavior problems were reported to be lower, and the students were more socially included with peers. It is believed that teachers' attitude plays the vital role for success of students with disabilities in the school. In this regard, Prater (2003) also reported that teacher attitudes as one of several elements that are critical in promoting the success of students with disabilities in general education settings. Hence, central to successful inclusion are mainstream teachers who take ownership of inclusion and who believe in their own competence to educate students with special educational need (Booth et al, 1998). Bradshaw *et al.* (2013) tried to illustrate that the primary condition for successful inclusion of students with special needs in the regular classroom is a change from negative to positive attitudes of regular school teachers towards learners with special needs and their inclusion in the regular classroom. Previous studies about teachers' attitude about inclusion have concluded that the effectiveness of any inclusion method depends on the positive attitude teachers need to develop toward the inclusive practices (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002). Furthermore, factors such as the nature and the severity of students' difficulties, teachers' participation in educative seminars, the availability of proper material and technical resources and the existence of qualified teaching people influence teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion program (Bradshaw and Mundia, 2006). According to Prater (2003), many regular education teachers who feel unprepared and fearful to work with learners with disabilities in regular classes display frustration, anger and negative attitude toward inclusive education because they believe it could lead to lower academic standard. In addition, access to resources and specialist support affects teacher confidence and attitudes toward inclusive education (Bennett, 1997; Katzenmeyer, 1997).

Further, the teachers expressed fear and concern, that because they do not have the required knowledge and expertise to teach students with disabilities who are included in their regular classes; it is contributing to a reduction in the academic success of their schools. Despite several attempts made in order to strengthening inclusive education, SNNPR education sector faces different challenges in the education system such as lack of budget for inclusive education, unorganized education development army, lack of responsibility to lead inclusive education, looking disability issues as NGOs issues, lack of guiding inclusive/special needs education as a policy issues, lack of resources, limitation of professionals and lack of adequate awareness in society and stakeholders on inclusive education (SNNPR education Bureau, 2013). It is important to note that proper inclusion is possible when we remove the above barriers and give placement according to the productivity of the child and facilitating competitive academic achievement environment in inclusive schools. Based on above arguments, inclusive education requires a commitment and accountability to the underlying philosophy from educators at all levels of the education and support from the stakeholders. Hence, a feasible study needs to be carried out to find out the practices, opportunities and challenges of inclusive education from teachers perspective at regional level of Ethiopia. It is in this milieu, that the present study has been planned.

Statement of the Problem: In Ethiopia, schooling for students with special needs is evolving at a rapid rate due to educational and legal changes in the country. Nationwide movement toward opening integration classes in regular schools are part of the inclusive education movement and the result of the expansion of the inclusive education program. However, inclusion should not mean dumping children into the regular education classes. Teachers have to make sure quality education for all. Quality education does not simply mean cognitive learning. Human values, attitudes, skills and competencies are also important. Guaranteeing and about the right to education in the neighborhood school is a challenge which every teacher has to meet with dedication and sincerity otherwise inclusion will be a frustrated attempt, if not a disaster. In this regard, MoE (2015) identified several barriers of implementing inclusive education including weak pedagogical skills of teachers for students with special needs. This might be emanated from negative attitude of teachers to disability which needs further investigations.

These new paradigms shift to inclusive education of the country show a need to investigate about implementation of inclusive education in terms of its practices, opportunities and challenges in current school settings. Hence, this study attempted to check teachers' perceptions towards the practices, challenges and opportunities of implementing inclusive education in primary schools of South, Nation Nationalities people Region (SNNPR).

Thus, the study raised the following basic questions:

- How teachers view problems of students with special needs in inclusive education settings?
- To what extent inclusive education practice has been accessed in SNNPR?
- What is the current educational status of students with special needs in terms of enrolment, retention and dropout?

- What are the prevailing challenges of environmental, administrative, social and academic practices in inclusive education?
- What are the opportunities for the implementation of inclusive education?

RESEARCH METHODS

This study was conducted on the basis of the pragmatist philosophical lens which applied both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Descriptive survey method was used for this study.

Sampling and Sample Size: Multistage sampling was employed to select participants from different zones, districts and primary schools. First, 6 zones were selected through lottery system. Out of each zones two schools were included in purposive sampling technique schools with special and integration classes. Moreover, the three special districts/woredas were one special or inclusive school was selected purposively out of four districts/woredas. Moreover, three special districts were included in the study. Totally 15 special classes and inclusive teaching schools were selected. From these schools sum of 317 regular and special needs teachers, 15 school principals, 18 woreda, zone and region education experts were participated in the study.

Instruments: Likert Scale Questionnaire items designed for teachers and open ended interview for education experts. To ensure the quality of the instrument, the questionnaire was pilot tested with a sample of 25 teachers of the Haik and Fura regular primary schools of Hawassa town. The data were analyzed to examine the correlations between each item and the overall score on the instrument internal consistency is assessed using Cronbach's coefficient alpha formula. The internal consistency of the instrument is 0.95. This revealed that there is a high consistency relation between overall score on the instrument.

Methods of Data Analysis: Both quantitative and qualitative method of data analysis was employed. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version 20 to calculate the frequencies, percentage, Mean and Standard deviation were used. For qualitative data, narrative description and verbatim was also used.

RESULTS

Part One: Quantitative Result

Demographic background of Participants: Regarding general information about teachers who are participated in the study, 200 (63.1%) participants are males and the rest of 117 (36.9%) are female teachers. The majority 86 (27.1%) teachers age is found between 36-40 years, (69.4%) age participants between age 26-36 years and few 11 (3.5%) participants age is between 20-25 years. Regarding the level of education, majority of 168 (53%) and 110 (34%) participants have Diploma and degree holders respectively. The majority 99 (31.2%) participants have teaching experience between six up to ten years but few 3 (0.9%) have zero experience. The data displayed that 127 (40.1%) teachers have an experience between one up to five years in teaching students with special needs but 88 (27.2 %) respondents reported that they have no experience in teaching students with special needs. Some 105

(33.1%) of the respondents replied that they took basic courses in inclusive education whereas 78(24.6%) participants reported that they did not take any training related to special needs education.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Teachers' Perception on Achievement of Learners with Special Needs

Teachers		
Alternatives	n	%
High	20	6.3
Medium	84	26.5
Low	199	62.8

A total of 33 school principals and educational experts were purposefully selected from schools, woreda, zone and region for the implementation of inclusive education under study. All interview participants were age range from 24 to 56. -31 male and two female experts participated in the interview; all interview participants were hearing people.

Practice of Inclusive Education in Primary Schools: As shown on the table 1, 199 (62.8%) teachers reported that the academic achievements of students with special needs are low. 84 (26.5%) teachers pointed that the academic achievement of students with special needs is medium and 20 (6.3%) teachers report that the academic achievement of students with special needs is high. The majority of the respondents' response revealed that the academic achievements of students with special needs in regular settings are low. The above table 2 presents the availability of resources in the schools. As shown on the table 2, 246 (77.6%) teachers reported that there are adequate regular textbooks for the students. The data revealed that only regular teaching textbooks avail appropriately. The rest data indicated that there are high shortage of sign language books, braille and related material, white cane, instructional teaching aids and pocket money for visual and hearing impairments. There are also shortage of all educational materials and professional supports for learners with special needs in primary schools. As shown in the table 3 above 75 (23.7%) teachers do not decide whether they feel welcome but 114 (36.0%) teachers agree and the rest 122 (38.5) children with special needs are not feel welcome. On the other hand, 111 (35.0%) participant teachers agree students help each other whereas 128(39.8%) teachers disagree that students help each other. Teachers were asked to show their agreements on all new students are helped to feel settled. On which, 156 (44.5%) teachers agree that new students are helped to feel stable in the school. In contrast, 127 (38.2%) teachers disagree that all students are helped to feel settled in the school. The table above also illustrates that 144 (45.4%) teachers disagree that all students are not valued in groups organized for teaching. on the other hand, 115 (36.3 %) teachers could not decide on the statement whereas 56 (14.6%) teachers agree that all students are valued in a teaching group at their school. Concerning, assessment encouragement for the achievement of students 118 (37.3%) teachers agree that the assessment encourages the achievement of students. On the other hand, 142 (44.8%) teachers do not either agree or disagree on that assessment encourages students for further achievement. This also table describes that 157 (50%) teachers disagree that the implementation of inclusive education is not effective in schools. In contrast, 60 (20%) teachers agree that the implementation of inclusive education is effective in their school. On the other hand, 93 (29.3%) teachers are unable to decide whether the implementation of inclusive education is effective or not.

Table 2. Teachers Perception for Resource Access in the Schools

Items	Available		Not available	
	N	%	n	%
Text books	246	77.6	68	21.4
Sign Language books	75	23.7	238	75.1
Braille and related materials	54	17	257	81.1 81.7
White cane	50	15.8	259	
Instructional teaching aids	97	30.6	214	67.5
Pocket money	70	22.1	243	76.7 67.5
Stationary	100	31.5	214	
Professional advice	115	36.3	198	62.5
Special needs expert/guide	88	27.8	225	71
Appropriate pedagogical strategy	65	20.5	249	78.5
Teachers' support	273	86.1	41	12.9
Administrators support and follow up	131	41.3	183	57.7 65.6
Family support	104	32.8	208	

Table 3. Psychosocial Supports, role of teachers, instructional processes and effectiveness of the school in practicing inclusive education

Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	N	%	N	%	n	%
Everyone is made to feel welcome	44	13.9	70	22.1	75	23.7	69	21.8	53	16.7
Students help each other	29	9.1	82	25.9	77	24.3	75	23.7	51	16.1
All students, new to the school are helped to feel settled	15	4.7	141	44.5	38	12	76	24	45	14.2
The school arranges teaching groups so that all students are valued	16	5	40	12.6	115	36.3	72	22.7	72	22.7
Teachers are high expectations for all students	5	1.6	22	6.9	61	19.2	132	41.6	95	30
Teachers are concerned to support the learning and participations	1	0.3	40	12.6	71	22.4	120	37.9	85	26.8
Staff develop resources to support all learning and participation	27	8.5	67	21.1	66	20.8	90	28.4	66	20.8
Lessons are responsive to student diversity	16	5	59	18.6	110	34.7	90	28.4	39	12.3
Lessons develop an understanding of differences	5	1.6	56	17.7	45	14.2	174	54.9	35	11
Lessons are made accessible to all students	9	2.8	38	12	143	45.1	72	22.7	55	17.4
Students are actively involved in their own learning	9	2.8	64	20.2	145	45.7	77	24.3	21	6.6
Assessment encourages the achievements of all students	69	21.8	49	15.5	142	44.8	17	5.4	38	15.5
Implementation of inclusive education is effective in the school	30	10	30	10	93	29.3	89	28.3	68	21.8
The school's rules and regulations practice is used to reduce the barriers to learning and participation of all students	18	5.7	144	45.4	23	7.3	81	25.6	49	15.5

Table 4. Barriers for inclusion in primary schools: absence of supports, environmental and administrative factors

Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
The school community has awareness about inclusive education	30	9.5	49	15.5	83	26.2	109	34.4	43	13.6
Staff seek to remove all barriers to learning and participation in school	54	17	72	22.7	44	13.9	75	23.7	72	22.7
Teachers are motivated to implement inclusive education in the school	9	2.8	29	9.1	47	14.8	186	58.7	45	14.2
All forms of support are coordinated	14	4.4	138	6.8	47	14.8	138	43.5	32	10.1
Special needs education expertise is fully utilized at the right position in the school	19	6	45	14.2	96	30.3	105	33.1	50	15.8
School resources are fairly enough to support inclusion	48	15.1	114	36	103	32.5	38	12	12	3.8
The school is not accessible for students with special needs	71	22.4	103	32.5	53	16.7	52	16.4	36	11.4
The school makes its buildings physically accessible to all people	18	5.7	72	22.7	23	7.3	157	49.5	47	14.8
The school administration has readiness in achieving inclusive education at the school	30	9.5	28	8.8	86	27.1	148	46.7	22	6.9
Barriers to attendance are reduced	32	10.1	80	25.5	41	12.9	118	37.2	46	14.5

Besides, 144 (45.4%) teachers disagree on that school rules and regulations do not reduce barriers to learning and participation of all students. in contrary, 81 (25.6%) teachers agree that school rules and regulations reduce barriers to learning and participation of all students.

Challenges in the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Primary Schools: This part deals with the major challenges observed in school settings. It is believed that they hamper the implementation of inclusion. The challenge and its magnitude have been addressed as perceived by teachers in primary schools. The table 4 describes the awareness levels of school community about inclusive education, 152 (48.0%) teachers reported that the school community has less awareness about inclusive education. Regarding, the intention of school staffs in removing barriers of learning and participation 147 (46.4%) teachers disagree that staffs in the school seek to remove all

forms of barriers of learning and participation in the school where as 126 (39.7%) teachers agree on it. On the issue of motivation of teachers in the implementation of inclusive education, 231 (72.9%) respondents disagree that teachers are motivated to implement inclusive education in their school whereas 2.8% teachers strongly agree and 9.1% teachers are disagree that teachers are motivated to implement inclusive education in the school. This table displays the types of supports for students in primary schools. In the study areas, 172 (53.6%) teachers disagree that all forms of support are coordinated whereas 85 (26.8%) teachers agree that all forms of supports are coordinated in their school. Regarding the professional support, 155 (48.9%) teachers disagree and that special need experts are fully utilized at the right position only 54 (20.2%) teachers agree that the special needs experts are working at the right position and fully utilized. Teachers are asked to evaluate the adequacy of resources for the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools.

Table 5. Community involvement, psychosocial supports and educational policies as an opportunity for inclusion

Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	n	%	N	%	N	%	n	%	n	%
Local communities are involved in the school actively.	47	14.8	78	24.6	81	25.6	61	19.2	47	14.8
Staff, government, students and parents share a philosophy of inclusion	6	1.9	26	8.2	97	30.6	121	38.2	64	20.2
Students are equally valued	5	1.6	13	4.1	64	20.2	128	40.13	101	31.9
The school seeks to admit all students from its locality	32	10.1	93	29.3	36	11.4	37	11.7	118	37.2
Student difference is used as a resource for teaching and learning	29	9.1	73	23	75	23.7	118	37.2	21	6.6
All the students take part in activities outside the classroom	7	2.2	49	15.5	89	28.1	123	38.8	47	14.8
Staff development activities help staff to respond to student diversity	7	2.2	71	22.4	131	41.3	73	23	34	10.7
Inclusive policies are properly implemented in the school	17	5.4	69	21.8	134	42.3	60	18.9	35	11
All the teachers know about the international and national policies on inclusive education	35	11	67	21.1	108	34.1	68	21.5	39	12.3

	Age Appropriate	Children Dis/y	With	Enrolled Children with disability in 2018				Planned to admit 2018
				M			F	Total
							%	Total
Basketo Sp.	19179	1918		169	92	261		
Bench Maji	194004	19400		556	363	919	13.6 %	303
Dawuro	119487	11949		405	455	860	4.70 %	1066
DehubOmo	134932	13493		481	289	770	7.2 %	998
GamoGofa	376446	37645		1422	1129	2551	5.8 %	893
Gedeo	238373	23837		1149	783	1932	6.8 %	2959
Guraghe	320802	32080		5793	4904	10697	8.1 %	2241
Hadiya	341476	34148		1797	1317	3114	33.3 %	12409
Halaba Sp.	58163	5816		756	556	1312	9.1 %	3612
Hawassa	83251	8325		427	522	949	22.6 %	1522
Kefa	272421	27242		877	557	1434	11.4 %	1101
Kembata/ T	182931	18293		1534	1564	3098	5.3 %	1663
Konta Sp.	31508	3151		209	135	344	16.9 %	3594
Segen A/h	143487	14349		259	200	459	10.9 %	399
Sheka	55407	5541		505	396	901	3.2 %	532
Sidama	1013520	101352		2678	1680	4358	16.3 %	1045
Silte	210648	21065		1481	1058	2539	4.3 %	5055
Wolayta	444409	44441		5708	5591	11299	12.1 %	2945
Yem Sp.	18317	1832		118	87	205	25.4 %	1307
	4258761	425876		26324	21678	48002	11.2 %	238

Source: SNNPR Education Bureau (20017)

Table 7. 2017 Children with visual special needs Enrollment, drop out and repeater in SNNPR primary schools

No	Type of Disability	Grade	male	Female	Total	
1	Visual Impairment	1-8	6994	5881	12875	2932 (Blind)
2	Hearing Impairment	1-8	7718	6113	13831	6560 (Deaf)
3	Intellectual Disability	1-8	1895	809	2704	
4	Physical Impairment	1-8	8558	6454	15012	
5	Health Imp.(Asthma, Diabetes, Epilepsy, heart defect, HIV)	1-8	880	738	1618	
6	Reading difficulties	1-8	7346	7142	14488	
7	Comm. Disorder	1-8	1401	1244	2645	
8	Behavioral Disorder	1-8	2847	1570	4417	
9	Drop outs	1-8	23776	31603	55379	
10	Repeaters	1-8	118551	128000	246551	

Source: SNNPR Education Bureau (2017)

In this issue, 162(51.1%) teachers agree on that school resources are fairly enough to support inclusion if resources exploited appropriately but 50(15.8%) teachers disagree that the resources are fairly enough to support inclusion in the school. Regarding the physical accessibility of school buildings, 204(69.5%) teachers disagree that the buildings are physically accessibility to all people. On which 174(54.9%) teachers agree that their school is not accessible for learners with special needs. However, 88 (27.8%) teachers disagree that the school is not accessible to learners with special needs. The school administration preparation to implement inclusive education was another issue forwarded to teachers. Hence, 170 (52.7%) teachers disagree that the school administration is ready to achieve inclusive education in the school. Yet, 58(18.3%) teachers agree that the school administration has readiness in achieving inclusive education in the school. The rest 86 (27.1%) teachers are unable to decide whether the school administration is ready to achieve inclusiveness or not in their school. Regarding the barriers to students' attendance, 164(51.7%) respondents disagree that barriers to attendance are reduced whereas 80(25.2%) teachers agree that barriers to attendance are reduced.

As shown in the table 5 above 108(34%) teachers agree on the active involvement of the local school community activity. In contrast, 125(39.4%) teachers disagree actively involved in the school. However, 81(25.6%) teachers do not decide whether the local communities are involved or not actively in the schools. Moreover, 185 (58.4%) teachers agree that the local communities, government and school community are sharing for the implementation of inclusive education. Most 170(53.6%) of teachers disagree that all student participation in activities outside the classroom. Few of them 89 (28.1%) teachers unable to decide whether all students are participate in activities outside the classroom. As shown in the table 5 above shows that 131 (41.3%) teachers unable to decide staff development activities help teachers to respond to student diversity. However, 107(33%) teachers disagree that staff development activities support teachers to respond to student diversity. Regarding the implementation of policies of inclusive education 134(42.3%) respondents do not decide whether inclusive policies are implemented properly or not. 95(29.9%) respondents disagree inclusive policies are implemented properly. In line with teachers' knowledge on policies of inclusive education 108(34.1%) teachers do not decide whether teachers know inclusive educations policies or not. 107(21.1%) teachers disagree on that teachers know policies of inclusive education.

Enrollment of Children with Special Needs in Primary schools: According to Education Bureau, the 2017/18 regional level house to house assessment of 14 zones, 4 special Woredas and Hawassa town administration report addressed that school age children are 4,258,761. Out of these school children 425,876 are children with disabilities. In 2017/18 26,324 male and 21,678 female entirely 48,002 children with disabilities are registered in primary schools. This shows only 11.3 % of the children with disabilities got a chance of education. The remaining 88.7 % of children with disabilities are still out of the school. The data revealed that a large number of children with disabilities are out of the school. The above table 7 data indicates that there are 2090 male and 742 female blind children totally. 2932 registered from grade 1-8 grade levels. In addition, 7015 male and 2928 female low vision to sum up 9943 low vision or partially sighted students

enrolled in elementary schools of the region. There are 12875 (26.82%) visual impairment children registered in regular primary school of the region. Concerning hearing impairment, 2193 male deaf and 1645 female deaf students totally 6560 enrolled in 1-8 grade levels. There are also 5220 male 2051 female hard of hearing totally 7271 registered in primary schools. There are 13831(28.8%) hearing impaired children currently attending in the schools. This shows a number of hearing impairment and visual impairment students are enrolled in schools without appropriate provision of professionals and teaching materials readiness. Regarding physical impairment 8558 male and 6454 female enrolled in the region's primary schools. physical impairment children totally 15012 (31.27%) enrolled 1-8 grade levels. The data revealed that physical impairment constitute a highest number of children with disabilities. However, the data are not complete from all zones and special woredas, the available health related impairments data show that there are 508 asthmatic, 105 epileptic, 278 diabetic, 239 heart defect, 400 blood pressure and 88 HIV AIDS carrier children registered in primary schools in the region. There are 1,618 (3.37%) health impairment children attending in regular settings. The data in table above show that there are 14,488(30.18%) children with learning disabilities have reading difficulties. There are 1,573(3.27%) children are with communication disorders. 2924 (6.09%) children with behavioral disorders are attending in regular settings. Furthermore, 1170(2.43%) children with intellectual disabilities enrolled in 1-8 grade levels.

As shown in the table above grade one students are the highest repeaters of all grades in the primary schools of the region when compared to other grades. Grade eight students are the second group repeaters next to grade one with the number of 38,679. In grade one 25,461 males and 27,103 females totally 52,564 children are repeated. The reason for highest number of repetition in grade one is poor treatment and poor intervention problems of diversity of learners who come with different needs of learning to the classroom. In all primary school grade levels females' numbers of repeaters are higher than male. Sidama, Gamo Gofa, Kafa, Bench Maji zones respectively highest number of repeaters. Table 7 depicts that still grade one student are the highest dropout rate of all primary school students with 9148 numbers. Grade two follows grade one in highest dropout rate. These grade school levels require greatest treatment or intervention. In all grade levels females drop out number exceeds male drop outs. In this regard, Sidama, GamoGofa, Bench Maji, woliya, Dawro zones show highest number of dropout rates.

Part Two: Qualitative Result

Academic Achievement and Resource Materials: School principals' interview results indicated that low academic achievement of students with disabilities. This is attributed with negative attitudes toward children with disabilities, school location, poor quality educational provision, inflexible curriculum, poor physical environment and lack of trained professionals in regular schools contributed for low academic achievements. In addition, they added that there are inadequate educational facilities, equipment and services for children with special needs including those with disabilities. Similarly, education experts of Woreda explained that from school children most of the drop out and repeating students in schools are special needs children. Low achievement of pupils is one of the major reasons that cause students to drop out.

Low achievement is the result of low quality of instruction according to the needs and interests of children in primary education that is resulted from low teacher motivation and commitment. Zone education experts addressed that in most schools availability and accessibility of the physical facilities including drinking water, electricity, toilets, furniture, playgrounds, libraries, laboratories, resource rooms are not fulfilled, which have a significant impact in academic and vocational achievement. The accessibility and availability of the physical facilities of school assist in enhancing learning and educational outcome of all students including with impairments and children with special needs. They added that the schools' physical environment is the basis of quality education.

The Practices of Inclusive Education: The principals reported that some problems as lack of understanding of the inclusion philosophy by the teachers. Principals added that some of the problems like school community awareness limitation, poor teaching and learning approaches, lack of or inadequate adaptations in public and private buildings to allow easy access and mobility of persons with disabilities, fear of responsibility and stress from added responsibility, lack of early screening, identification and intervention, etc. affects implementation of inclusive education. On the other hand, the communities fail to support inclusive education; parents prioritize taking their other children without special needs to school and only considering the one with special needs if finances are still available, low expectations from the learners with special needs leading to low self-esteem in the learners. Some school administrators and policy makers in education feel that it is improper to 'waste' scarce resource on learners with special needs and poor or negative attitudes towards disability engagement in their classrooms. In addition, principals added that there are limitations of professionals, material and resource support for schools and lack of encouragement to promote inclusive education. Zone education experts reported that most schools are not ready to accommodate diversity of learners because of negative attitudes of teachers and school communities. Teachers are not ready in attitude, profession, knowledge and skill.

Students with physical impairments to enter easily through the main gates of the school buildings lack of ramps, entrances pavements of classrooms, dining rooms, supportive educational physical environment, offices, and accessibility in terms of information which includes sign language, printed/written form and Braille were found very less accessible. This shows that in the region there are inaccessible and unsafe environment of learning in many schools. Hence, it is conceptualized as a barrier to learning and development that need to be removed. The classroom should be wheelchair friendly, door way should be widened, and stairs should be removed and be replaced with ramps to allow movement. Concerning curriculum, many of the respondents viewed as one of the barrier to learning and development in the classroom. It is important that the curriculum should be flexible enough to accommodate all learners in the classroom; otherwise, it could lead to learning fail. Most of the experts reported that teaching methods are chalk and talk, questioning and answering are dominant one. Teachers are dominated by this traditional way of teaching methods; they are not free from this method. Continuous assessment, cooperative and student centered learning are not actively used. The teaching system is not attractive for diversity of children; it is pouring in one

direction which is not delivered according to needs and interests of the learners. Teachers are not adequately trained/skillful to modify the curriculum for these diversified children. They don't have adequate knowledge about how to treat specific needs of children in regular schools. The curriculum itself is not encouraging the varying groups of students. Skillful teachers and committed teachers are needed to implement inclusive individualized educational approach. The skilled professionals' distributions in region's schools are only 2 % or less. A lot is remaining in the region in trained professionals.

Enrollment, Retention and Dropout of Students with Special Needs: When all the principals asked for the enrollment of children with special needs, they reported that currently the numbers of special needs children enrollment rates are increasing from time to time. Parents are started to send their children, however, a significant number of children who start primary school are not completing the first cycle because of inadequate treatment and unfriendly learning environment conditions. Most of the principals reported that out of repeating children in annual curriculum of the school, majorities are special needs children. They forwarded the reason as rigid curriculum, lack of experiences of regular teachers to treat and absence of trained teachers and peers support. Regular classroom teachers do not perceive themselves as having the appropriate training and skills to meet the instructional needs of students with disabilities.

For this reason, the enrolment of these children is very limited in regular settings. Some of special needs were not recognized in schools, still continued in invisible situation. Furthermore, experts reported for the drop out and repetition most causes are related with learning difficulties, teacher's attitudes and abilities, lack of material, lack of coordinated support system in schools from teachers and schooling environment and lack of qualified and motivated teachers who would understand the problems of diversified learners. All of the region education experts reported that the current enrollment status of children with disabilities and special needs is encouraging. Currently, majority of the population started to understanding inclusive education, parents started to send their children, and teachers started admitting children with disabilities in regular schools. The experts exemplified as in 2004 the enrollment of children with disabilities and special needs are 2700, now in 2008 rising about 60,334 in regional level.

Challenges of Inclusive Education in the region: School principals reported that there are environmental, administrative, social and academic challenges in the implementation of inclusive education. As they addressed that environmental challenges from different schools situations are lack proper and adequate facilities and infrastructure such as sanitation facilities, most of schools are without ramps, dirty and dusty classrooms and no acoustically treated classrooms. Furthermore, there are inadequate educational facilities, equipment and services for children with special needs including those with disabilities. Schools are not ready with teaching resources like teaching aids, resource centers that support diversity of learning. In addition, communities low expectations from the learners with special needs leading to low self-esteem in the learner. Similarly, principals forwarded that there are administrative challenges that principal attitudes and actions were a decisive factor for the successful inclusion of children of varied ages and disabilities.

The school principals viewed it as their role to create an inclusive atmosphere in their school. When asked whether budgetary plan for the implementation of inclusive education or not, almost all principals reported that there is no budget for inclusive education. But for, schools support disable children from their internal income. No structured budget in all schools level to support children with special needs and encouragement bonus for professionals. Regarding the current regional practices of inclusive education, the region education experts reported that inclusive education is a process, understanding, addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners through personalized learning and identifying and removing barriers of the education system. To do this, the region education experts addressed that identifying and screening children with disabilities and special needs in their abilities and interest of learning is one of the current challenge of the schools. Children with disabilities and special needs started to come to school but lack of professional who will screen and sort with their interest is the big school's challenge.

Opportunities to Implement Inclusive Education:

Pertaining opportunities to implement inclusive education, most principals, woreda, zone and regional education experts explained that there are fertile international and national conventions, constitutional and education and training policy backgrounds for the implementation of inclusive education. Societal and parental attitudes are changing towards person with disabilities from time to time. Regular schools started to admit CWDs and parents started to send their children to regular schools. In different places student with special needs began to learn in special classes/units and in inclusive settings. Special needs professionals are training in different universities and colleges. The regional government started to give due attention for the implementation of inclusive education. Building resource rooms are started in different places of the region. This shows that there is optimistic environment for the implementation of inclusive education.

DISCUSSIONS

Practices of Inclusive Education: The finding of this study revealed that 199 (62.8%) teachers reported that the academic achievement of students with special needs is very low. The majority of the teachers report revealed that the academic achievement of primary schools students with special needs are low in the region. Similarly, interviewed principals reported that negative attitudes toward children with disabilities, distances of school location, poor quality educational provision, inflexible curriculum, poor physical environment and lack of trained professionals in regular schools contributed for low academic achievements. The findings revealed that there are limited supports and limited environmental improvements contributed for low academic achievements. Most of the teachers 273 (86.1%) revealed that teachers do not provide adequate supports for students with special needs. In this regard, scholars like Bornman and Donohue, (2013) found that teachers are less accepting school children with nervous system disorders, sensory impairments, brain injuries, or autism. Many teachers believe that they lack proper training and they don't have access to appropriate pedagogical materials to teach adequately the special education needs students. Concerning the practices of inclusive education, teachers ensure that school are not valuing and practicing inclusive education where there was no provision of diverse instruction in the classroom, materials and assistive equipment

support and organization of the school environment. Supporting the idea statistical data analysis revealed that 227 (71.6%) teacher respondents disagree that teachers have high expectation for all students. This finding revealed that teachers are not equally valuing learners with special needs in inclusive classrooms. This is consistent with Buell *et al.* (1999) found that teachers in developing countries not ready for inclusion were not more confidence in their ability to support students in inclusive settings, and to adapt classroom materials and procedures to accommodate their needs. Regarding students' active learning 145 (45%) undecided whether children with special needs actively learning and 98 (30.9%) teachers disagree that students are actively involved in their own learning. The finding revealed that children special needs are not actively involved in teaching and learning process in regular settings because teaching method is traditional chalk and talk not diversified. On the other hand, principals, district and zones education experts report revealed that teaching and learning process in inclusive classroom is haphazard manner, teachers are not equipped to match the learners with their diversity needs due to learners suffer with problems of inconvenient environment. The findings revealed that student with special needs are poorly beneficiaries in regular settings in assessment. The reason for is little or no diversified assessment access in the learning environment. Similarly, department of education (2002) reported that one of the significant barriers to learning is evaluation process of children with special needs is not considering diversified learners.

The study revealed that utilizing professionals in the schools 155 (48.9%) teachers disagree that special need experts are fully utilized at the right position. Similarly, almost all of the educational experts districts, zones and region reported that trained special needs professional are not properly used. This shows that special needs professionals are not properly allocate in all level of education sectors for the implementation inclusive education. Regarding physical facilities and supports, some of the education experts of the woreda and zones reported that the physical facilities of school enhance the learning of the students. However, in most schools availability and accessibility of the physical facilities including drinking water, electricity, toilets, furniture, playgrounds, libraries, laboratories, resource rooms are not fulfilled, which have a significant impact in academic and vocational achievement. In addition, students with physical impairments to enter easily through the main gates of the school buildings lack of ramps, entrances pavements of classrooms, dining rooms, supportive educational physical environment, offices, and for sensory impairments accessibility in terms of information which includes sign language and interpreter, printed/written form and Braille were found very less accessible. This is consistent with one of African studies (Dada and Alant, 2002) who found that most of the African learning centers are physically not accessible to all because they were not built to accommodate the children with physically disabled learners. Regarding the availability of appropriate materials and resources teachers' responses displayed that the availability of stationary and supportive materials for special needs learners were little or no available except Sign Language text books and Braille materials. Majority of teachers' 238 (75.1%) teachers' response indicated that there is little availability of materials. Regional education experts also reported that inaccessible environment for learners with special needs in infrastructure, resource materials, classrooms and material arrangements are biggest challenges.

Challenges in the Implementation of Inclusive Education:

In data analysis of teachers responses displays that 110 (34.7%) respondents do not decide whether lessons are responsive to student diversity. Whereas 129 (40.7%) teachers disagree that lessons are responsive to student diversity. School principals also forwarded that classroom instructions are not responsive for diversity of learners. This finding is consistent with Msimango (2002) found that the instruction should be flexible enough to accommodate all learners in the classroom otherwise it could lead to learning breakdown. All education experts reported that teaching methods are chalk and talk, questioning and answering are dominant one. Teachers are dominated by this traditional way of teaching; they are not free from these methods. Continuous assessment, cooperative and student centered learning are not actively used. The teaching system is not attractive for diversity of children; it is pouring in one direction which is not delivered according to needs and interests of the learners. Teachers are not adequately trained/ skillful to modify the curriculum. They added teachers don't have adequate knowledge about how to treat specific needs of children in regular schools. This finding is consistent with scholars such as teachers' ability to implement varying instructional strategies may be dependent on confidence in their ability to cater for diverse needs, as well as knowledge of their students' needs (Tomlinson, 2003).

Communities negative attitude, low expectations from the learners with special needs leading to low self-esteem in the learner. Most parents because of attitudinal problems of society, they hide their children at home. This society's traditional prejudice affects parents to bring their children to regular schools and to contribute their share to inclusive education. One of the challenges is school accessibility. Majority of teachers displayed that 174 (54.9%) teachers agree that their schools are not accessible for learners with special needs. Most of the learning centers are physically not accessible to all because they were not built to accommodate the physically disabled learners. The other challenges in the schools are teachers are not ready/ committed to support, modify the curriculum based on their interest and ability of learning. This is because inclusive education by itself is new for regular teachers. In addition, this study finding revealed that current region's schools problem is identification and screening problem of disable and non-disable children and providing individualized learning. This is home task for the region for training professionals and developing screening instrument.

Children with special needs Enrollment, drop out and repeater in SNNPR:

Concerning enrollment of students with special needs, there are 12875 (26.82%) visual impairment children registered in regular primary school of the region. There are 13831(28.8%) hearing impaired children currently attending in the schools. This shows a large number of hearing impairment and visual impairment students are enrolled in schools without appropriate provision of professionals and teachers readiness. Regarding physical impairment 8558 male and 6454 female enrolled in the region's primary schools. Physical impairment children totally 15012 (31.27%) enrolled 1-8 grade levels. The data revealed that physical impairment constitute a biggest number of children with disabilities. There are 1,618 (3.37%) health impairment children attending in regular settings, however, the data are not complete. There are 1,573(3.27%) children are with communication disorders. 2924 (6.09%) children with

behavioral disorders are attending in regular settings. Furthermore, 1170(2.43%) children with intellectual disabilities enrolled in 1-8 grade levels.

The data show that grade one students are the highest repeaters of all grades in the primary schools of the region when compared to other grades. Grade eight students are the second group repeaters. The reason for highest number of repetition in grade one is poor treatment and poor intervention problems of diversity of learners. Sidama, Gamo Gofa, Kafa, Bench Maji zones respectively highest number of repeaters observed in primary schools. The data shows that still grade one student are the highest dropout rate of all primary school students with 9148 numbers. This is because early period of elementary school level require greatest treatment or intervention. In all grade levels females drop out number exceeds male drop out number. In this regard, Sidama, GamoGofa, Bench Maji, woliyta, Dawro zones respectively show highest number of dropout rates than other zones. Out of school age children 425,876 are children with disabilities 26,324 male and 21,678 female entirely 48,002 children with disabilities are registered in primary schools. This shows only 11.3 % of the children with disabilities got a chance of education. The remaining 88.7 % of children with disabilities are still out of the school. The data revealed that a large number of children with disabilities are out of the school.

Opportunities of Implementing Inclusive Education in Primary Schools:

The UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Rule 6 not only affirms the equal rights of all children, youth and adults with disabilities to education but also states that education should be provided in "an integrated school settings" and in the "general school settings." Proclamation number 1 of the 1995 constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia also declare that the democratic right of every citizen including persons with disabilities is protected under the following articles, 11, 14, 16, 18, 20, 25, 28, 31. Article 41(5) of the Constitution sets the state's responsibility for the provision of necessary rehabilitation and support services for people with disabilities. "The state shall, within its available means, allocate resources to provide rehabilitation and assistance to the physically and mentally disabled". A New Education and Training Policy was drafted and put into practice in 1994, which aimed at realistically tackled educational problems, and provide education for all children. Finally, there are optimistic situation are appearing in the region. The region education student enrollment data indicated that in 2012 the enrollment of children with disabilities and special needs in regional level are 2700 only, now in 2016/17 rising about 60,334. It is documented that there are 53048 (88%) of children with disabilities enrolled in primary schools (1- 8 grades) in the region. There are 7286 (12%) children with disabilities are attending in secondary high schools. 33,217 males and 27,117 females totally 60334 children with disabilities are currently attending in regular and special schools in the region. This shows that the enrollment of children with special needs in inclusive education is increasing and community awareness level is rising from time to time.

Conclusion

The study indicated that 199 (62.8%) teachers report that the academic achievement of students with special needs is very low.

This revealed that majority of the teachers view that the academic achievement of students with special needs is very low in primary schools of the region. This is because schools are inaccessible in human and material support for special needs learners. Regarding inclusive practices teachers 273 (86.1%) teachers reported that teachers do not provide adequate supports. In similar way, 183(57.7) teachers added that there is no adequate supports and close follow up from the school administration, woreda, zone and region. This finding revealed that there is limitation of readiness and support of teachers and hierarchical administration for the inclusive implementation. Concerning equally valuing learners with special needs the findings revealed that children with diversified groups are not equally valued in inclusive classrooms. The accessible physical facilities of school assist in enhancing learning and educational outcome of all students with special needs. However, in most schools lack of availability and accessibility of the physical facilities for students with special needs including infrastructure, resource materials, material and classroom arrangements. This finding revealed that schools are not accessible for diversified learners. Most of the learning centers are physically inaccessible to all special needs because buildings are not built to accommodate the physically disabled and visually impaired learners.

In the region, in inclusive education professionals are not properly utilized in their profession. This findings show that in everywhere in the region professional were not properly used. Furthermore, there is no budgetary plan for inclusive education in regional level. The findings of this study revealed that teaching methods are chalk and talk, questioning and answering. Teachers are dominated by this traditional way of teaching. Continuous assessment, cooperative and student centered learning are not actively used. The teaching system is not attractive for diversity of children; it is pouring in one direction. Teachers are not adequately trained/ skillful to modify the curriculum for these diversified children. Furthermore, the findings revealed that student with special needs are poorly beneficiaries in regular settings because of unfriendly learning environment. Little or no screening and assessment accessibility are in the learning environment. The other challenges in the schools are teachers are not ready/ committed to support, modify the curriculum based on their interest and ability of learning. This is because inclusive education by itself is a new challenge for regular teachers. In addition, this study finding revealed that current biggest challenge in the region is identification and screening problem of children with special needs and provision of individualized learning. This shows that there is high limitation of trained professionals to screen and identify special needs according to their learning needs and developing screening instrument in the region. The data show only 11.3 % of the children with disabilities got a chance of education. The remaining 88.7 % of children with disabilities are still out of the school. The data revealed that a large number of children with disabilities are out of the school. The data revealed that grade one students are the highest repeaters of all grades in the primary schools of the region when compared to other grades. The reason for highest number of repetition in grade one is poor treatment and poor intervention problems. The data shows that still grade one student are the highest dropout rate in all primary schools. In all grade levels females drop out number exceeds male drop out number. This early period of elementary school level requires greatest treatment or intervention. Pertaining opportunities to implement inclusive education, most teachers

forwarded that there are fertile international and national conventions, constitutional and education and training policy background for the implementation of inclusive education. Regular schools started to admit CWDs and parents started to send their children to regular schools. This shows that there is optimistic environment for the implementation of inclusive education in educational settings.

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