

Challenges Towards Implementing Inclusive Education in Myanmar

Pan Su Aung ¹, Riho Sakurai ²

¹ Ph.D. Student, Graduate School of Humanities and Social Science,
Hiroshima University, Japan

² Associate Professor, Research Center for Diversity, and Inclusion,
Hiroshima University, Japan

e-mail: wigichitlay18@gmail.com, riho@hiroshima-u.ac.jp

Abstract

Many challenges still exist in combating discrimination and achieving equal education access for all, including those with disabilities in international communities. Myanmar is undoubtedly a country that faces a number of obstacles. This qualitative study aims to understand the barriers and challenges that teachers face when implementing inclusive education. A total of five purposively selected teachers participated in this study. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data elicited through semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that teachers generally had positive attitudes toward inclusion; nevertheless, various challenges hampered the ability of teachers to implement policies. Three main themes were found, including religious factors, physical factors, and student with and without disabilities. The research contributes to the limited literature on inclusion and gives insights into legislative ways to practically facilitate a better strategic policy implementation plan in inclusive settings. This research proposes that politicians should prioritize teacher professional development and emphasize the significance of culture and religion in inclusive education.

Keywords: Inclusive Education; Challenges; Teachers; Children with Disabilities; Myanmar.

INTRODUCTION

Following the adoption of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, the practice of inclusive education became extensively practiced around the world (UNESCO, 1994). However, creating such a heterogeneous and diverse classroom environment poses numerous obstacles. In particular, teachers, who represent the backbone of this paradigm shift, have various challenges with regard to including children with disabilities. Much prior research on inclusive education has highlighted the difficulties and challenges of inclusion of children with disabilities in general education classrooms across the world (Kayani et al., 2016; Mekelle & Burmistrova, 2021). In this regard, Myanmar, a developing country undergoing numerous political crises, also faces numerous challenges in implementing inclusive education.

According to the Myanmar Population and Housing Census (2014) report Volume 4-K, 2.3 million out of a total population of 50.3 million people had at least one kind of disability. The situational study of children with disabilities in Myanmar (2016) found that 19% of children without disabilities are out of school compared to 67% of disabled children. There are still many children with disabilities who struggle to get accepted into a school (UNICEF, 2016). This finding highlights the Myanmar education system's poor and ineffective preparations for

inclusive education. Many difficulties and problems stand in the way of its actual implementation.

One of the significant challenges for teachers is the religious-rooted belief of the Burmese people. Religion and culture can shape the way people think about the world and affect people's views of disability and influence how they treat people with disabilities (Kaur & Arora, 2019). The majority of the population is Buddhist (87.9%), followed by Christian, Muslim, and others. In daily human lives, the teachings of Buddha and the practice of "Karma" play a significant role in the concept of cause and effect. Reichenbach (1988) characterized the law of karma as "a casual law," which indicates that all acts have repercussions that will influence the person who does the action at some point in time. Ware and Schuelka (2019) conducted a study in Myanmar to explore what the teachers and community stakeholders understand about the idea of disability. It was found that these people considered disability as punishment for a sin of a past life and based on their religious, personal experiences, and culture, they associated the notions of "karma, pity, compassion, shame and suffering" mainly with persons with disabilities (Ware & Schuelka, 2019).

Similarly, other Asian countries supported this finding, and their constructs of karma-related beliefs about disabilities mainly came from their beliefs in Buddhism (Schuelka, 2013, 2015 & Miles, 2000, 2002; as cited in Ware & Schuelke, 2019). For example, Sakurai (2021) pointed out the influence of religion and culture on the perceptions of teachers and principals towards inclusive education in both Japan and Bhutan. In Bhutan, a traditionally Buddhist-oriented country, people's religious beliefs influence their view of disability as "punishment by God." Therefore, it is important to recognize the influence of culture and belief in the implementation of inclusive education.

In addition, the lack of professional development and training for teaching students with disabilities was also found to be the most challenging part for teachers in each country. For example, Gaollike et al. (2015) also concluded that teachers from Vojvodina expressed their inadequate preparation for teaching in an inclusive classroom. Likewise, Parley (2019) argued the need to improve the professional development of teachers from Trinidad to deal with CWDs effectively. The importance of training to enhance the willingness of teachers to implement inclusive education was shown by Hoskin et al. (2015) and Song et al. (2019). Aquarian and Rao (2018) also described the lack of fieldwork and practicum experience in teaching CWDs.

Several researchers pointed out the challenges of teaching children with different natures and types of disabilities in the classroom (Khan et al., 2017; Ehsaan et al., 2018; Al-Youde, 2006). It was thought that children with visual or hearing impairments and others with minor physical disabilities could be included in the classroom but not children with cerebral disabilities (Khan et al., 2017). Sometimes teachers push to include children with disabilities in their classrooms, but their intentions to accept those children, in reality, is hindered by the lack of support. Navarro-Mateus et al. (2020) suggested that providing support like prior training and updated training that could facilitate a better inclusive classroom.

To conclude, teachers confront several difficulties while attempting to integrate inclusive educational practices in the classroom. Even though multiple studies have documented challenges in implementing inclusive education in various countries, Myanmar still lacks data on the subject. Much of the previous study has been descriptive, and more research is needed to explore the underlying issues fully. As a result, the primary goal of this study is to investigate

the challenges that teachers face when teaching children with disabilities alongside children without disabilities in general education classrooms.

METHODS

The study aims to explore the challenges and barriers that the teachers perceived with respect to the implementation of inclusive education in Myanmar. A semi-structured interview was used to investigate the difficulties that the teachers recognized when including children with disabilities in their classrooms. The questions mainly focused on the opinions towards inclusive education and the challenges for the inclusion of children with disabilities. The researchers developed the semi-structured interview questions to encourage critical exploration and in-depth discussion with the participants.

Participants

Three of the five participants were pre-service teachers studying at Universities of Education, while the other two were in-service teachers employed by Myanmar's Ministry of Education. Since the study was collected during the two major crises of COVID-19 and military coups, samples were selected purposively and conveniently. The researchers contacted ten participants who were known personally online and requested to participate in this study. In the current study, only five people participated since the researcher considered all the possible options had already been considered (Coburn & Adams, 2020). The vast majority of participants had no prior experience teaching children with disabilities and had not completed any teacher training programs in this area. Each member was provided a code to ensure their confidentiality. The demographic features of the interviewees are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile of Participants (N = 5)

No	Codes	Gender	Age	Education Level	Current Position
1.	PT1	Male	>21 years	3 rd year, B.Ed.	Pre-service Teacher
2.	PT2	Male	19-20 years	2 nd year, B.Ed.	Pre-service Teacher
3.	PT3	Male	>21 years	5 th year, B.Ed.	Pre-service Teacher
4.	IT1	Female	28 years	Bachelor of Education	In-service Teacher
5.	IT2	Female	28 years	Bachelor of Education	In-service teacher

Procedure

The semi-structured interview questions were employed because of their flexibility in language and questioning sequences (Cohen et., 2018). The information was gathered via the Internet. The face-to-face online-visual interview approach was used, and each participant took approximately 30-46 minutes to complete. An appointment was scheduled ahead of time to ensure their availability and to inform them of the interview's objective, the nature of the interview questions, and how their responses would be recorded. In addition, informed consent was obtained to utilize the data for analytical and publication purposes. The researchers took notes on everything that happened during the interview and documented the audio recording.

Date analysis

The researchers adopted the data analysis spiral approach of Creswell and Plano Clark (2018). To begin, all of the information required was translated into English and grouped into a single file. The translated script was validated for errors. Second, we read the scripts multiple times, made notes, and reflected on their findings while reading and summarizing the notes. Third, we organized the information into themes by breaking it down into relevant groups and giving them names. The concepts were then creatively and analytically investigated. Finally, findings were presented with text.

RESULTS

The results were recorded and analyzed by using thematic analysis, which identifies codes for frequently reported responses and then constructs themes (Kinger & Varpio, 2020). After carefully listening to the recording, the researchers took notes of the emerging ideas and extracted the themes. The themes were based on the challenges for teachers in accepting children with disabilities in their classrooms. Seven themes were noted: teachers' professional development, class size, curriculum, type of disability, religion and culture, support, and academic progress of children without disability. The findings of this study will be presented as follows under two headings: (1) general opinions and (2) challenges towards implementing inclusive education.

Q (1): General Opinions towards Implementing Inclusive Education

Most of the participants showed positive opinions and feelings towards including CWDs but showed negative behavioral intention towards implementing IE. Nowadays, many people are aware of a person's right to a disability, and they believe that all children with disabilities (CWDs) should be given the same opportunities as children without disabilities. Therefore, teachers now admit that all children should be included in the general classroom regardless of their abilities. One of the pre-service teachers expressed his strong opinion about including CWDs in the general classroom:

Participant PT2 stated, *"If I see children with disabilities, I feel sad for them since they cannot study like us. Besides, I think that children with disabilities should be integrated into the general education classroom from elementary school to understand that CWDs are the same and can reduce discrimination among children. The students with disabilities will be welcomed in my classroom when I become a teacher."* Another in-service teacher, IT2, affirmed, *"Children with disabilities are also human, so they also should have the same opportunities to study in general education classroom."*

However, most of the teachers showed a negative behavioral intention to include CWDs. Although teachers believed that inclusive education (IE) is a good practice for overcoming discrimination and providing equality to every child, they still discourage including CWDs in general education classrooms:

One in-service teacher (IT1) stated, *"Although we understand the right of education for CWDs and Education for All (EFA), we cannot give education to a different person with different abilities and disabilities in the same classroom. Therefore, special education might be the best one."* Another (IT2) supported the above idea, *"I don't want to include CWDs, and it is better to let them study in a special school."* One pre-service teacher (PT1) argued, *"I will not accept*

them. Even in the general classroom without children with disabilities, students have different levels of abilities. I don't want to discriminate against them. But it would be appropriate with a special curriculum in a separate classroom."

Q (2): Challenges towards Implementing Inclusive Education

The primary practical challenge of this study is mainly reflected in the following three aspects: (1) religious factor, (2) physical factor, and (3) student with and without disabilities factor.

(1) Religious Factor

One of the major challenges for teachers is the deeply rooted religious beliefs that strongly influence the teachers' opinion toward inclusive education, especially toward CWDs. Many people in Myanmar believe in Buddhism, and Buddha's teachings have influenced their perception of disability. Most of the participants believed that becoming disabled was the punishment for what they did in their previous lives. Therefore, people believe that a disability is the karmic result of sins committed in an earlier life. They feel sympathy for the person with disabilities but set them apart from society. Here are some examples:

Participant PT2 said, *"When I saw the person with disabilities, I feel pity for them. Besides, my grandmother said that their disabilities were because of their past life's sins. I feel that it is a big debt they need to pay back. From that time being, I feel scared to communicate with them."*

His responses showed that he possessed a positive feeling towards them since he feels sorry for their disabilities, but his grandmother's beliefs influenced his intention to communicate with them. After being admonished by his grandmother, his attitude towards disabilities changed to a negative view in which they deserve it because of what they did. As a result, he does not want to interact with them. According to a review of the literature of other Buddhist countries in Asia, people's perceptions of disability were influenced by the traditionally rooted belief in karma (Ware & Schuelka, 2019).

The culture of a society is also one of the factors influencing their attitudes. Because of the accessibility of the Internet and increased education programs on social media, their perception of people with disabilities is now becoming positive. One of the participants said:

"Nowadays, discrimination in society is decreasing. Many social media are educating about disability, and there are many organizations at universities that are working for increased awareness of the right of children with disabilities. Therefore, discrimination is becoming less prevalent, and many people accept them in society. For example, many people blamed the one who criticized disability on social media."

This response suggests that people changed their attitudes toward inclusive education and towards the person with disabilities because of the educational programs on social media and because of their fear of being recognized as bad people in society.

(2) Physical Factor

The following are some of the significant physical challenges that teachers confront while integrating students with disabilities in general education classrooms.

(a) Teachers' professional development training: Most of the teachers pointed out the inadequate professional development for the participation of children with disabilities in the

general education classroom. Teachers thought that they did not have the necessary knowledge and skills to teach students with disabilities. They were not prepared to teach students with disabilities either theoretically or in practice. They need more intensive and continuous training for the improvement of their professional development. One of the pre-service teachers highlighted the lack of teacher training as follows:

“There are three teacher training universities in Myanmar. One of the universities, namely the University of Development of National Races, where the students from various far-flung areas were trained to be a teacher. They need to study inclusive education. Therefore, the teachers who graduated from that university showed a more positive opinion toward disability. Disability and inclusive education courses should be included at all the other teacher training colleges and universities.” Another pre-service teacher stated, *“Even though the availability of support for inclusion, we need to be trained and courses should be prescribed at the teacher training colleges and universities.”*

However, because of the lack of training, many teachers are reluctant to accept CWDs because of their lack of experience and expertise rather than because of students’ disabilities. Here are a few examples:

Participant IT1 stated, *“Most of the teachers in Myanmar are not familiar with the term IE. I had learned about IE when I was a master’s student, but not specifically and just only about the types of disability. If the teachers were trained how to handle CWDs at teacher training colleges and universities as a course, it would be more effective.”* Another pre-service teacher also argued, *“If I don’t know anything about IE and disability, I will not know what to teach and how to teach. We need to be trained like we were to teach the normal students.”*

(b) Class Size: One of the important challenges for the inclusion of children with disabilities is the class size. In Myanmar, there are many students in one class because of the shortage of teachers. Even in a normal class, teachers were overwhelmed because of the big class size, and they could not give attention equally to all children. Therefore, teachers were concerned about not satisfying the individual needs of their students and not managing the classroom effectively.

Participant PT3 pointed out, *“It might be better with the student-teacher ratio of 20:1 education system to include children [with a disability] in the general education classroom; however, in Myanmar, the ratio is too high.”* Another teacher, PT2, agreed, *“In a big class size, it is not possible to include children with disabilities. We need to separate rooms. It is very difficult to control, and we cannot give equal attention to all. Small class size is preferred for including children with disabilities.”*

(c) Curriculum: Adaptation of the curriculum and accomplishment of the designated curriculum are the major challenges for the teachers. Because the examination system decides who goes to the next grade in Myanmar, teachers get a lot of pressure from the students and parents. The teachers need to finish the accepted curriculum, so it is very difficult to adapt the lessons to disabled students. Many teachers think that the content of the syllabus is too much, even for children without disabilities. It challenges the teachers to adapt the curriculum to meet each student’s needs. One of the pre-service teachers who had experience in teaching in an inclusive classroom believed that the ability to adapt the curriculum is essential for the teacher to accept children with disabilities, as evidenced by the following:

“I worked as a volunteer at the school where students with hearing and intellectual disabilities are studying together with the normal students. And I found that after adapting the curriculum to make them understand easily, all the students can understand the lesson. So, the teachers’ ability to adapt the curriculum is the most important one if you want to include CWDs in the general education classroom.” (PT2)

However, most teachers need extra time for children with disabilities and a special curriculum for CWDs, including identical learning goals. One of the pre-service teachers expressed his/her concern in the following example:

Participant PT1 said, *“I don’t want to discriminate against them. But it would be appropriate with the special curriculum. The current curriculum is not even easy for the teacher to adapt to normal children. Therefore, providing [the disabled] with a separate curriculum with the same learning goals in special education is the best for them.”* Another participant (PT3) said, *“We cannot waste our time too much since we need to finish the designated curriculum within the available time.”*

(d) Availability of Support: Most of the teachers in the current study expressed the importance of availability support. Some teachers need psychological support from their colleagues, parents, and others, while some teachers need physical help. Psychological support involves encouragement or assistance from colleagues, parents, principals, etc., when the teachers need advice or emotional support. Physical supports include providing teaching aids, preparing classroom environments, accessibility of adaptive materials, adaptable curriculum, the appointment of special education teachers, etc. The following examples illustrate the importance of support:

One of the pre-service teachers who have experience teaching children with disabilities (PT2) stated, *“availability support is important at around fifty percent. It is not quite convenient if you don’t have support in your classroom. Physical support can make the teaching processes easier.”* Another in-service teacher (IT2) said, *“support is essential. If I cannot get support, I will consider not including them in my classroom.”*

Some teachers argue that psychological support is more important than physical support, while some teachers long for physical support. The teachers believed that psychological support is needed not only for the teacher but also for the children in inclusive education. Here are some examples:

Participant PT2 stated, *“Emotional support is essential. If physical support is not available, it can be created by the teachers. But if there is no emotional support, students with disabilities will not want to go to school. They want other normal students to see them as normal, and they don’t like to be pitied. They want to be treated the same as others. They don’t want to be treated as a special student. The student with disabilities is sensitive, and we need to take care with our words.”*

Regarding the availability of support, it depends on the degree of severity of the children with disabilities. Some teachers believed that they could handle the classroom without any support if the child had a mild disability. One of the in-service teachers mentioned that in the following comments:

“Availability support is very important. But for mild disabilities, we can adapt our teaching with the help of students without disabilities. If there is a student with a mild vision disability,

I don't need too much support. I just moved the student to the place to see the board very clearly. But for the children with a severe disability, I need teaching aids." (IT1)

The efforts of the teacher alone cannot achieve the implementation of inclusive education. It can succeed only by the cooperation of the teachers, parents, community, and the students with and without a disability. Teachers are concerned that parents of CWDs will not support their children going to a general education school. Teachers are afraid that parents will prefer special education where the children can acquire specialized services, as in the following comments: Participant IT1 argued, *"Parents should understand and support inclusive education."* Participant PT1 also mentioned the requirement of parents' willingness *"Parents should also possess the self-confidence that their children can learn in general education classroom. If they don't have that confidence, their children will not come to general school and will study at home or at a special education school with special education teachers. If the parents believed in IE, they would also support CWDs emotionally."*

Children with a disability should be willing to study in a general education school. One of the teachers mentioned their difficulties as:

Participant IT1 said, *"If a child with disabilities considered himself or herself as 'I am different from others, I have a disability, I can't study like other students,' it is very challenging for the teachers. The CWDs and their parents need to be self-motivated to be in a general education classroom."* Participants PT3, PT1, and IT1 stated, *"If the curriculum, facilities, and parent support were available, it is very easy to accept CWDs. Parents and teachers should cooperate for physical support. If the parents cannot support their children's requirements, like a wheelchair, I will ask for help from the community."* Besides, they argued, *"We still need the support from the children without disabilities and the principal."*

(3) Students with and without disabilities

A final significant challenge for teachers towards implementing inclusive education concerned with student factors is as follows.

(a) Types of disability: Types of disability and nature of disability were regarded as challenges for the teachers to accept in their classrooms. Most of the teachers would prefer to include children with physical disabilities more than those with other types of disabilities. Teachers believe that having a physical disadvantage does not disturb the teaching-learning process, and only a minor adaptation is needed. Teachers want to accept children if they can study the lessons, as in the following comment:

Participant PT1 said, *"It is fine for me to accept children with physical disabilities, even severe disabilities. It is easy to adapt to teaching with other students. And the physically weak can study like children without disabilities, and this will not affect learning too much like other disabilities. So, I can accept them."* Another in-service teacher participant (IT2) agreed, *"Children with physical disabilities who have normal vision and hearing cannot affect teaching."*

However, teachers were still reluctant to include children with visual and hearing disabilities. Most of the teachers want them to study in a separate classroom. Many teachers are unwilling to include blind and deaf students since they need more support, even for their physical movements. Here are a few examples:

One pre-service teacher, PT1, said, *“For the student who is blind and deaf, it is not good for me to accept them in my classroom. For example, children with hearing disabilities cannot hear the teacher’s explanations. Even though some lessons can be delivered through sign language, hearing is still important. So, if the student has vision and hearing difficulties, I will not include them since learning needs both vision and hearing.”*

Other participants also stated, *“Students who cannot hear could use sign language, which is easy to include. However, for blind children, it is quite difficult. They cannot see and struggle to imagine what the teachers are explaining. Art subjects like Myanmar or history are easy to conceptualize, but subjects like science and mathematics, which need high critical thinking, are not easy for the teacher to teach with other children without disabilities.”* (PT2)

Their responses proved that their willingness to mainstream children with disabilities relies mostly on the type of disability. In Myanmar, most teachers use the teacher-centered method, and the students mainly need to listen to their teacher’s explanations. Teachers need to prepare the lessons carefully, and they need extra time during class. Teacher PT2 wants to teach CWDs in a separate classroom. The teachers showed strong opposition to including children with intellectual disabilities. Sometimes, they cannot even understand the language and need more adaptations. Many teachers want to teach them separately, as in the following examples:

Participant PT1 argued, *“I don’t want to include children with intellectual disabilities. If they cannot speak, they cannot learn the language. So, it is challenging to teach them like other children without disabilities.”* Another participant stated, *“Autistic children find it tough to follow the lesson. Therefore, it is better to teach them in special schools.”*

The inclusion of students with disabilities is influenced by teachers’ attitudes toward both the type and severity of the disability. They would like to include children with mild disabilities in the general classroom, but not the severely disabled ones. They believed that students with severe disabilities would not benefit from the general education system, and the teachers were not confident about including them in the classroom. Here are a few examples:

Participant PT3 said, *“For students with severe physical disabilities like they cannot even write with their hand and need to use their toes for writing, I don’t want to include them. And children with severe intellectual disabilities are not easy to include in the general classroom. But if their disability is mild, it is fine for me.”* One in-service teacher, IT1, also stated, *“The inclusion depends on the nature of the disability. If the students with mild disabilities were asked to be in a special classroom, it would interrupt the other students who need special requirements and vice versa. And I am not confident about including a student with a severe disability in my classroom.”*

However, one of the pre-service teachers who have experience in teaching CWDs stated, *“I would like to include children with severe disabilities more than mild disabilities. It is more challenging. For me, teaching might be better if it is challenging. Updating the curriculum and adapting the teaching method is the most enjoyable task for me. For example, when I teach multiplication in mathematics, we don’t use the traditional method, like reciting. We use sticks by counting the interceptions of the sticks.”*

(b) The academic progress of children without disabilities: Participants were concerned that the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general classroom can interrupt the learning of students without disabilities. Teachers, in general, thought that children with and without disabilities would have great difficulty learning together. Some teachers felt that students with

disabilities would not benefit from general education and that it could hinder the academic progress of the students without disabilities. Therefore, many teachers think that special education is the best for children with disabilities. Here are a few examples:

Participant PT3 said, *“It can delay the teaching-learning process for the students without disabilities. Teachers need to prepare the lesson plan more carefully for the CWDs and pay less attention to the preparation for students without disabilities since thinking like that, they are normal and do not need to be specially prepared for them. Therefore, it can affect the progress of children without disabilities.”* Another participant, PT1, said, *“For the student without disabilities, I can teach with the appropriate rate according to their abilities, and I don’t need to adapt too much. But for the disabled, if they are slow learners, it can disturb the other children who want to learn faster. Therefore, I would like to teach them separately.”*

These responses indicate that they believed children without disabilities will not benefit academically because of children with disabilities. Slowing down the teaching pace, taking more time to explain, skipping some lessons to keep up with the designated curriculum, and giving more attention of teachers to special needs students that the teachers adapt to meet each individual’s needs would, in turn, affect the academic achievement of the students without disabilities. Besides, PT1 showed little intention to adapt the curriculum and the teaching-learning method and strongly supports special education. The main reason for both teachers’ concern is based on the teachers’ inability to adapt the curriculum and lack of skill and knowledge for teaching in an inclusive setting.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study examined the challenges that teachers have faced when they are trying to include students with disabilities in general education classes. Generally, most of the participants believed in the benefits of inclusive education, but in practice, they discouraged involving children with disabilities in their classrooms. Teachers believed that inclusive education was one way of combatting discrimination and increasing participation. At the same time, they underestimate the value of inclusive education, which is more effective than special education. Teachers believe special education to be the best place for children with disabilities to meet their needs. Teachers claimed that special education, a differentiated curriculum, and specially prepared teachers are the best options for children with disabilities. This conclusion is consistent with the findings by Sharma et al. (2009), which revealed opposition among teachers to including children with disabilities. The implementation of inclusive education is still beset by too many universal issues and roadblocks. The following are three of the main issues that the authors have identified.

Firstly, the influence of people’s religious and cultural beliefs was found to be the most challenging factor for teachers. Teachers were concerned that parents of disabled children would not favor inclusive education because of their traditional belief in Karma. Most people believed that becoming disabled was the result of a previous life and that they deserved to be disabled due to their previous actions. This type of long-held disability belief persists in society, and it poses a challenge not only to teachers but also to parents. Having disabled children has always been seen as a punishment and a source of humiliation for parents. As a result, most disabled children were not sent to school. The current findings appear to be in line with past studies that

have discovered the impact of culture and belief on teachers' and principals' perceptions in Bhutan (Sakurai, 2021).

Secondly, physical factors, including the absence of consistent training for teachers of children with disabilities, shortage of support, centralized curriculum, and big class size, were also major challenges. All of the teachers complained about insufficient training, a shortage of courses at teacher education colleges and universities, and a lack of practicum experiences. They are unfamiliar with inclusive education policy, and they have little understanding of what is currently working for disabled children. As a result, it was difficult for them to believe in their own abilities. Waite (2015) also reported no regular training for regular teachers in Myanmar to teach children with disabilities, and this study pointed out the little progress in terms of preparing both in-service and pre-service teachers for the implementation of inclusive education during a decade.

Adaptation of the curriculum to meet the needs of all students, including those with disabilities, also makes teachers difficult to accommodate. Having a centralized curriculum and testing system puts teachers under a lot of stress. Teachers found it impossible to adapt to each student's needs because of this rigid and inflexible educational system. Teachers' incapacity to adjust curriculum, typical children's and parents' demands that all subjects be covered in order to advance to the next grade, too much syllabus content, and insufficient time made it difficult for teachers to accommodate children with disabilities. These, in turn, made the teachers concerned about the impact of enrolling children with disabilities on the academic progress of those without disabilities. Making instruction slower, taking more time to explain lesson points, paying more attention to children with disabilities, and adjusting lesson plans to accommodate the needs of children with disabilities can all disrupt the learning of children without disabilities. These all reflect the lack of knowledge and abilities among teachers, particularly their readiness for the current paradigm change.

The final setback involves the type and severity of disabilities. Children with severe disabilities or intellectual disabilities are another prevalent difficulty that most teachers find difficult to embrace. Because of the wide employment of the teacher-centered teaching technique, teachers would like to include only children who can study and require only modest adaptation. Physically disabled children are more likely to be included by teachers than children with other types of disability. The results of this study are comparable to those from other studies looking at how teachers' perceptions of IE are affected by disability types (Ehssan et al., 2018; Avramidis & Kalyva, 2013). Furthermore, most of the teachers reported difficulties in obtaining physical support from parents and the community to make their teaching more efficient.

The findings of this study shed light on teachers' perceptions of obstacles to implementing inclusive education. This suggests that teachers' and parents' religious or cultural beliefs have an impact on the number of students with disabilities who attend general classrooms. We recommend that teacher training personnel, educators, policymakers, and implementers address these issues so that we can move toward a more inclusive society. As pledged in the Salamanca Declaration, international society has been working under the principle of "zero rejection" by IDEA to create a barrier-free environment and combat discrimination. However, challenges and hurdles will coexist with this universal paradigm shift; nonetheless, the methods for resolving these issues in each country must be carefully addressed to achieve the ultimate aim of SDG goal 4.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to offer special thanks to the teachers and pre-service teachers who participated in this study.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

FUNDING

This study has been funded by the Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship by Japanese Grant Aid (JDS) (2019-2021).

REFERENCES

- [1] Al-Zyoudi, M. (2006). Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in Jordanian schools. *International journal of special education*, 21(2).55-62. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ843606.pdf>
- [2] Avramidis, E., & Kalyva, E. (2007). The influence of teaching experience and professional development on Greek teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 22(4), 367–389. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856250701649989>
- [3] Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (Eighth edition). Routledge.
- [4] Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (Third edition, international student edition). Sage.
- [5] Department of Population Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population (2017). *The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census (Thematic Report Census Report Volume 4-K)*. Retrieved from https://aarjapan.gr.jp/wp/wp-content/themes/aar/pdf/myanmar_4K_Disability.pdf
- [6] Ehsaan, F., Khan, M. S. G., & Gulzar, S. (2018). *Comparison of Attitude of Teachers and Concerns Towards Inclusive Education of Special Need Children*. 03(01), 7.
- [7] Galović, D., Brojčin, B., & Glumbić, N. (2014). The attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education in Vojvodina. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 18(12), 1262–1282. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2014.886307>
- [8] Hoskin, J., Boyle, C., & Anderson, J. (2015). Inclusive education in pre-schools: Predictors of pre-service teacher attitudes in Australia. *Teachers and Teaching*, 21(8), 974–989. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2015.1005867>
- [9] Kaur, S., & Arora, N. (2019). *Religious Perceptions Towards Disability: A Changing Perspective*. 6(1), 13.
- [10] Khan, I. K., Hashmi, S. H., & Khanum, N. (2017). Inclusive Education in Government Primary Schools: Teacher Perceptions. *Journal of Education and Educational Development*, 4(1), 32. <https://doi.org/10.22555/joeed.v4i1.1331>
- [11] Kuyini, A. B., Yeboah, K. A., Das, A. K., Alhassan, A. M., & Mangope, B. (2016). Ghanaian teachers: Competencies perceived as important for inclusive education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 20(10), 1009–1023. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2016.1145261>
- [12] Makoelle, T. M., & Burmistrova, V. (2021). Teacher education and inclusive education in Kazakhstan. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.1889048>

- [13] Navarro-Mateu, D., Franco-Ochoa, J., Valero-Moreno, S., & Prado-Gascó, V. (2020). Attitudes, Sentiments, and Concerns About Inclusive Education of Teachers and Teaching Students in Spain. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 521. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00521>
- [14] Parey, B. (2019). Understanding teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in inclusive schools using mixed methods: The case of Trinidad. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 83, 199–211. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.04.007>
- [15] Reichenbach, B. R. (1988). The Law of Karma and the Principle of Causation. *Philosophy East and West*, 38(4), 399–410. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1399118>
- [16] Sakurai, R. (2021). Reexamination of Inclusive Education – Its Dynamics, Challenges, and Complexities: Implications from an Empirical Study from Bhutan and Japan. In A. W. Wiseman (Ed.), *International Perspectives on Education and Society* (pp. 281–305). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-367920210000040016>
- [17] Sharma, U., Moore, D., & Sonawane, S. (2009). Attitudes and concerns of pre-service teachers regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular schools in Pune, India. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(3), 319–331. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13598660903050328>
- [18] Song, J., Sharma, U., & Choi, H. (2019). Impact of teacher education on pre-service regular school teachers' attitudes, intentions, concerns, and self-efficacy about inclusive education in South Korea. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 86, 102901. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.102901>
- [19] UNESCO (1994). *The Salamanca Statement and framework for action on special needs education*. Paris, France: Author.
- [20] UNICEF (2016). *Situation analysis of children with disabilities in Myanmar 2016*. Yangon, UNICEF Myanmar. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full_report_in_English_0.pdf
- [21] Waite, M. (2015). A space to learn for all children? Inclusive education and children with disabilities in Yangon, Myanmar. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 5(4), 381–394. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2043610615612948>
- [22] Ware, H., & Schuelka, M. J. (2019). Constructing 'disability' in Myanmar: Teachers, community stakeholders, and the complexity of disability models. *Disability & Society*, 34(6), 863–884. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2019.1580186>