

**Gaps between General and Special Education Policies and their Implications
Regarding Inclusive Education in Pakistan: A Qualitative Study**

Afshan Khalid

Ph.D. Scholar at the Institute of Special Education, University of the Punjab, Lahore,
Punjab, Pakistan

Dr. Hina Fazil

Assistant Professor at the Institute of Special Education, University of the Punjab,
Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan

Arooj Amanat

Ph.D. Scholar at the Institute of Special Education, University of the Punjab, Lahore,
Punjab, Pakistan.

Uswa Rasool

Ph.D. Scholar at the Institute of Special Education, University of the Punjab, Lahore,
Punjab, Pakistan

Hamayoun Shah Nawaz

Ph.D. Scholar at the Institute of Special Education, University of the Punjab, Lahore,
Punjab, Pakistan

Dr. Muhammad Nadeem Iqbal

Assistant Professor, Department of Special Education University of Okara, Okara,
Punjab, Pakistan.

ABSTRACT

Education is considered the most significant aspect of the social and economic development of any country. Regions are still far from properly adopting the notion of inclusive education as altering the education system at large and struggling for establishing an inclusive setup despite discrimination. The main purpose of the study was two-fold. First, review the literature to investigate the special and general educational policies regarding the formulation and implementation of inclusive education in Pakistan. The second purpose was to identify the gaps between the policies regarding inclusive education. The researchers used a qualitative research approach and multiple case studies as research designs to explore the phenomena. A content analysis technique was employed to review the literature. For this purpose, researchers over-viewed 17 research studies in the field of inclusion of persons with disabilities. To find out the gaps between these policies a semi-structured interview was conducted. In this connection, seven participants were purposively selected including, one deputy director of planning; one director academic; two district education officers from the special education department; one head of special education school; two heads from the general education department. The obtained data through semi-structured interviews were analyzed with the thematic analysis technique. The results of the study reported that in different eras policies for inclusive education have been formulated but could not be implemented appropriately. The content analysis revealed that in Pakistan inclusive education is an emerging trend and is gaining momentum but slowly. A lot of work and reforms have to evolve for implementation of the inclusive education in Pakistan.

Keywords: general and special education policies, inclusive education, multiple case studies

Introduction

Children with Disabilities (CWDs) are a vulnerable population that often faces neglect and lack of access to education services. They are often not included in policies and programs and may experience barriers to accessing appropriate and adequate services. In Pakistan, a significant number of CWDs do not attend school, with an estimated 5.5 million out-of-school children, which is among the highest rates globally. It is important to address the needs of CWDs and ensure they have equal access to opportunities and resources. This issue is not unique to Pakistan, as it is also prevalent in other developing countries. According to a 1998 census, Pakistan has over three million disabled individuals, which is 2.54% of the population (PBS, 2014).

Inclusive Education (IE) has been a major priority in global education policy, and it is a vital component of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Pakistan has committed to implementing IE as a signatory to the SDGs 2030, as SDG 4 is based on inclusive education as a core premise: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." This is consistent with articles 25 (Equality of all citizens) and 25-A (Right to Education) of Pakistan's Constitution. Article 25 protects the equality of all citizens, while Article 25-A provides education to children ranging from 5 years to 16 years (Abrar, Baloch, & Ghouri, 2010).

As a signatory of the UNCRPD, Pakistan is obliged to fulfill its goals. The concept of Inclusive Education is partially outlined in the draft National Education Policy (2017), which has been set aside by the current government and is no longer applicable. Other documents such as the Punjab ECE Policy (2017) and the Balochistan Education Sector Plan (2013-2018) also mention inclusive education, however, they simply refer to it as the avoidance of discrimination based on gender, ethnic/cultural origin, talents, and socioeconomic status.

The draft National Education Policy (NEP, 2017) also emphasizes inclusive education and gender equity in education at the national level. The National Policy for Persons with Disabilities 2002 also mentions the inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstream society as an objective. However, the National Plan of Action (2006), which aims to put this policy into action, has not been effectively implemented. The policymakers have divided inclusive education into three main categories that are; local, national, and non-governmental. These same stakeholders also work to provide special education. However, there is currently no coordinating committee or mechanism in place for collaboration among different stakeholders (Farooq, 2012). Inclusive education, which aims to provide equal educational opportunities for all citizens, has become a challenging task for countries worldwide as a result of global educational movements and initiatives. Additionally, it is generally acknowledged that the province of Punjab has done more for special education than any other province in the country.

In Pakistan, the marginalization of people with disabilities is believed to be costing the country between 4.9% and 6.3% of its GDP. To address this issue, policymakers are focusing on inclusive education. However, it should be noted that Pakistan doesn't have a national education monitoring report, as highlighted in the GEM Report (2017). Additionally, a report by UNICEF (2004) pointed out that there has been a lack of examination of Pakistan's policies and initiatives related to inclusive education

in the past. This study is presenting a clear picture of gaps regarding the educational policies of the Government of Pakistan toward initiating inclusive education. This study unfolds the gaps so that Pakistan can develop appropriate policies and action plans on this issue.

General and Special Education Policies regarding Inclusive Education in Pakistan

Since the creation of Pakistan, there has been a need to organize the education system in a way that meets the needs of the country. It was recognized in the Commission on National Education, which was established by the Pakistan Ministry of Education in (1959). Over time, various educational policies have recognized the importance of special education. For example, the Education Policy of (1972) and the National Policy and Implementation Programme of (1979) both gave attention to this sector. Inclusive education is the provision of education for all students in a regular classroom setting, regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

The government needs to continue to invest in inclusive education, and for society to change its attitudes towards people with disabilities so that all children can have equal opportunities for education to succeed. The Government of Pakistan has organized a range of educational conferences from (1947 to 2022), covering various topics. This analysis primarily uses a summary of the main points discussed at all of these conferences as its source.

Educational Policy of Pakistan (1947)

The conference aimed at creating the framework of the educational system in Pakistan. The recommendations for the education policy were based on the ideas of Quaid-e-Azam, the founder of Pakistan. He highlighted four crucial elements: the education system should be tailored to Pakistan's distinct characteristics, it should reflect our history and culture, it should promote a strong sense of dignity and morality, and it should focus on science and technology. The main suggestions presented at the conference were to make education compulsory and without charge in Pakistan, integrate Islamic teachings into education, and give more focus science and technology education (Ahmed, 2020).

Education Policy of (1959)

The National Commission of Education was established by the Government of Pakistan on December 30th, 1958, and launched by President Mohammad Ayub Khan on January 5th, 1959. This commission emphasized the importance of religious education and made it compulsory, as well as promoting equal education opportunities for boys and girls. The commission also aimed to provide the training and education necessary to develop a competent and educated workforce and leadership to meet the needs and aspirations of the nation. Moreover, the commission emphasized the training of leaders in diverse fields such as engineering, government, and commercial development. It's noteworthy that the Government of Pakistan first recognized its responsibility to educate students with disabilities (Lingard, B., & Ali, S. 2009).

Education Policy of (1970)

The Pakistan Educational Policy (1970) was a comprehensive policy implemented by the government of Pakistan in 1970 to modernize and restructure the country's education system. The key elements of the policy included:

- The implementation of a national curriculum that prioritized the instruction of science, mathematics, and English.

- The expansion of basic education (till secondary) to increase the enrollment rate from 40% to 80%.
- Encouraging education and training in vocational fields to fulfill the demands of the expanding labor force.
- They increase the number of women in education by providing them with equal opportunities and facilities.
- The provision of education for marginalized and disadvantaged groups, such as the rural poor and minorities.

The policy aimed to increase the literacy rate from 27% to 50% in a decade. The policy also sought to raise the number of schools across the country from 22,000 to 45,000 and the number of teachers from 200,000 to 400,000. While the Pakistan Educational Policy of 1970 was seen as an important step forward in the development of the country's education system, its implementation was hindered by a lack of resources and political instability. Despite these challenges, the policy did lead to some improvements in education, including a hike in enrollment rates and the establishment of education centers and vocational institutes (New Education Policy, 1970).

Education Policy of (1972)

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto put into action a policy that built on the Pakistan Educational Policy of (1970) to modernize and improve the educational framework in the country. A key aspect of the policy was placing a strong emphasis on vocational and technical education. The main elements were:

- The expansion of adult literacy programs and the promotion of non-formal education
- The establishment of a National Council for Curriculum and Textbook Development to oversee the development of curriculum and textbooks
- The promotion of education for women and girls and the provision of equal educational opportunities for all students
- The promotion of education for marginalized and disadvantaged groups, such as the rural poor and minorities.

As with the 1970 policy, the implementation of the Pakistan Educational Policy of (1972) was hindered by a lack of resources and political instability. The policy also developed a national system of training teachers and established a national council for curriculum and textbook development (National Education Policy, 1972).

Education Policy of (1979)

The policy, put in place during Zia-ul-Haq's presidency, had a major focus on religious education while also promoting scientific and technical knowledge. It aimed to ensure equal education opportunities for male and female students, and included a review of the curriculum, merging of madrassas with traditional schools, and making Urdu the language of instruction. It also established separate educational institutions for male and female students in the country (Ministry of Education, 1979).

Education Policy of (1992)

This policy was formulated after an educational conference held in April of that year. The policy was developed through the participation and cooperation of education experts, writers, scholars, scientists, engineers, doctors, newspaper editors, and lawyers from all over Pakistan. It included the integration of Islamic values in education, a focus on enhancing education for women, and the development of a curriculum that met the current needs. A significant aspect of the policy was the emphasis on post-graduate studies within Pakistan (National policy, 1992).

National Education Policy (1998-2010)

This policy was implemented under the leadership of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, to root out the long-standing issues and challenges facing the country's education system. It was aimed to uplift education quality, increase access to education, and promote national unity and integration. The core aim of the policy was to develop "Education Management Organizations" (EMOs) to manage and improve the performance of schools, as well as the expansion of primary level as well as secondary level education to increase enrollment rate from 60% to 85%. However, the implementation of this policy was interrupted by the military coup of Pervez Musharraf in 1999, which led to a change in government and a shift in priorities. Under the Musharraf government, the education policy of Pakistan saw some changes, mainly towards the promotion of vocational and technical training, as well as the introduction of a new curriculum (National Education Policy, 1998-2010).

National Education Policy (2009-2015)

The Pakistan National Education Policy (2009-2015) was proposed by the Government of Pakistan People's Party (PPP). The policy sought to enhance the availability of education, raise literacy rates, and elevate the general standard of education in Pakistan. Early Childhood Education (ECE) was proposed to improve access to education for young children. The policy aimed to provide ECE for children aged 3-5 years to give them a strong foundation for their later education. Some of the key objectives of the policy (2009-2015) included:

- increasing enrollment rates in primary and secondary schools
- reducing the dropout rate
- increasing the literacy rate to 85% by 2015
- induction of teachers on a large scale

Inadequate involvement of stakeholders in policy development and implementation it's worth mentioning that the overall education system in Pakistan is facing many challenges and the policy of (2009-2015), despite its good intentions, was not able to make a significant impact on the education system of Pakistan (National Education Policy, 2009).

National Educational Policy (2017-2025)

This policy was introduced and implemented by the regime of the Pakistan Muslim League, Nawaz (PML-N). The policy aimed to increase public sector colleges and universities in Pakistan. This particular policy also paid attention to special education and agreed upon enrollment of 50% of special children by 2025 and also allocated a 5% separate budget for special education across Pakistan. The following aspects were reviewed in the National Education Policy (2017-2025) for expanding access to Special and Inclusive Education (Ahmed, 2012).

Disabled Persons (Employment and Rehabilitation) Ordinance (1981)

According to the constitution, the National Council for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons was established as the first step toward institutional care for individuals with special needs in Pakistan. This council was tasked with developing policies and programs for the employment, rehabilitation, and welfare of people with disabilities. They also were responsible for conducting medical evaluations, providing care, and conducting surveys for those seeking rehabilitation. Additionally, the provincial governments were required to establish Province Councils for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons to implement the strategies laid out by the National Council. These councils also served as resources for guidance and support to relevant organizations in carrying out projects related to the rehabilitation and welfare of people with disabilities.

National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (2002)

This was established by the federal government in 2002 in response to the Biwako Framework. A National Action Plan was developed in 2006 to operationalize the policy. The policy's objective is to empower individuals with disabilities by providing them with resources and directives for full integration into society, participation in programs relevant to them, and enjoyment of rights equal to those of other citizens. The policy aims for equal access to "medical, education, social, psychological, vocational training, employment, and rehabilitation, without any discrimination." A report submitted to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights revealed that as of 2015, the action plan's long-term measures had not been carried out (Hameed, 2017).

Islamabad Declaration on Inclusive Education (2005)

The Islamabad Declaration on Inclusive Education, signed in (2005) by the federal government and all provinces, set forth the principle that all children should be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their gender, abilities, disabilities, socio-economic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. The declaration emphasizes the importance of equal access to education, health services, work, and other aspects of life for all children, to help them reach their full potential academically, physically, emotionally, and socially through appropriate teaching methods and materials.

National Plan of Action for the Persons with Disabilities (2006)

In 2006, the National Action Plan for People with Disabilities the National Plan of Action (NPA) makes recommendations for how to put the 2002 National Policy for Persons with Disabilities into practice. The NPA is founded on the idea that isolated actions cannot ensure equal access, participation, or opportunity for people with disabilities. Therefore, these services must be developed in an integrated manner by combining and utilizing all available resources. The NPA outlines 17 important intervention areas, ranging from service delivery systems to problem sizing. It outlines immediate actions that must be made before the end of June 2009 and long-term actions that must be taken by July 2025. It has explicit deadlines for completing each activity.

Special Citizens Act (2008)

The Special Citizens Act of (2008) aims to make public spaces accessible to people with disabilities, including by allocating seats on public transportation and providing wheelchairs and blind people with amenities on walkways. Similarly to this, priority must be given to special people when crossing roads. The law requires that measures for wheelchair accessibility be taken by all relevant parties before the construction of new public or private buildings, particularly those in areas such as schools, hospitals, shopping centers, banks, law enforcement facilities, train stations, airports, bus stops, and other public spaces.

Special Citizens (Right to Concessions in Movement) Act, 2009

Trade Policy of the Government of Pakistan (2009–2010); Ministry of Commerce, and the Government of Pakistan create their accounts. People who are blind will be given customized checkbooks with Braille so they can manage their finances on their own and independently. Before this, blind people were only permitted to open joint accounts in all banks across the nation, which could occasionally cause problems for them in the absence of a close blood relative Braille information is being created, and Talking ATM installation in Islamabad is being considered for the first time in the history of Pakistan. Additionally, initiatives are being made to stop prejudice toward those with disabilities in the insurance and micro-lending industries. The visually challenged would receive special ATM cards that would also allow them to manage their accounts. "They would receive ATM cards bearing the unique identifiers of special individuals, and only they could profit from the talking ATM," Special Citizens (Right to Concessions in Movement Act, 2009).

Sindh Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2013)

This act reiterated education for all children (aged 5 to 16), it's not mentioned inclusive education or a plan to move away from segregated policies in favor of more inclusive ones. A paradigm shifts from a rights-based to a charity-based strategy was advised by a policy assessment. Adapting definitions to widely recognized conventions is a crucial first step. An education that is appropriate for a child with a handicap or a special child must be given by the government in the way specified. Every child must receive free and required education from the government in the local school or the one designated for them. It was ensured that education is of a high caliber and complies with industry requirements and norms.

Punjab Free and Compulsory Education Act (2014)

As disability development progresses, everyone should be able to use the entire spectrum of information and communication technology, transportation services, and other services. The areas where we reside are made up of structures and open areas. Services for people with disabilities must be a part of the government-funded program, community efforts, corporate social responsibility program, and private sector endeavors used the term "handicapped children" to describe children with disabilities. The initiative aimed to ensure equal access to education by providing equal facilities for girls and boys, as well as for underprivileged and marginalized groups and children and adults with disabilities. Despite the policy's intention to promote inclusion in education, the wording used in the document was not inclusive. The policy includes provisions for integrating individuals with special needs into mainstream education, as well as programs for literacy, vocational education, and specialized teacher training. However, the policy lacks specific tactics for achieving these objectives (UNESCO, 2021).

Balochistan Education Act (2014)

Under the Balochistan Compulsory Education Act (2014), it was decided to provide free education to all students/children from ages ranging from 5 to 16 years. However, compulsory schooling is dependent on a student's aptitude. Special education is required for kids with physical or mental disabilities. Due to a lack of pre-service special education training, a shortage of teaching staff, subpar facilities, and low enrollment rates, this act did not meet its goals.

National Education Policy (2017)

A minimum of 10% of the general education departments' development budgets must be set aside each year for fostering inclusive learning environments in the current schools. Additional budgetary resources should be used to improve and restructure the physical facilities in schools, and universities, and to foster an inclusive environment. This includes the inclusion of ramps for entry to classrooms, libraries, labs, restrooms, elevators, and a disability resource center (Grimes et al. 2021). For inclusion, a step-up or staged approach will be used. Textbook Boards should create or modify educational materials for students in inclusive schools who have special needs.

Balochistan Persons with Disabilities Act (2017)

The government must take all necessary steps to guarantee that people with disabilities have equal access to both public and private educational institutions and are given suitable facilities for their education without facing any prejudice. Following Article 25 A of the Pakistani Constitution, the government must provide free education to people with disabilities, or 50% cost reductions for higher education at all educational institutions, whether public or private. Additionally, they would be entitled to a specific quota of seats in institutions as per notifications periodically provided by the government (UNESCO, 2021).

Khyber Pukhtonkhaw (KPK) Free Compulsory Primary and Secondary Education Act (2017)

Every child in the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa between the ages of five and sixteen must receive free, compulsory basic and secondary education. Except in the case of a justifiable justification as described in section four, parents must arrange for their children to attend school until they have completed their secondary education. Educational services outside of the classroom, in the authority's opinion, are sufficient (Grimes et al. 2021). For this Act, the Government may, by notification, establish a School Attendance Authority for any school that is required to have Parent-Teacher Council (PTC) representation. This authority shall be made up of such members as the Government may determine. The School Attendance Authority will take any measures it deems necessary or as directed by the government to ensure that every child attends a school under its purview (Sightsavers, 2013).

National Education Policy Framework (2018)

This was a comprehensive policy that aims to improve the quality of education in the country. The policy focuses on several key areas such as curriculum reform, teacher training and development, school infrastructure, and educational technology. The policy also includes a teacher training program to help teachers develop the necessary skills to deliver this new curriculum effectively (Grimes et al. 2021).

ICT Rights of Persons with Disability Act (2020)

The protection and inclusion of individuals with disabilities within society in line with Islamic principles and Pakistani laws are essential. To achieve this, frameworks must be set up at the local and institutional level to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities, particularly women, children, and the elderly. To this end, the government will provide free education to individuals with disabilities from pre-primary to higher education. Special educational institutions will be established to cater to the unique needs of individuals with moderate to severe disabilities, in addition to making other institutions suitable for inclusive education.

Punjab Special Education Policy (2020)

The Punjab Special Education Policy (2020) of Pakistan includes a special emphasis on children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This aims to provide these children with an inclusive and equitable education by ensuring that their needs are met within the mainstream education system.

The policy also includes the development of an early identification and intervention system to identify children with SEND at an early stage and provide them with necessary support services. The Punjab School Education Policy 2020 of Pakistan aims to create an inclusive, equitable, and quality education system for children with SEND and ensure that they have the same opportunities as their peers to reach their full potential.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to overview the general and special education policies regarding inclusive education in Pakistan from (1947) to (2022). The main intention was to uncover the efforts made by the Government of Pakistan to promote inclusive education in the country. The other factor to conduct this study was to identify the gaps between general and special education policies in respect of inclusive education. Several studies were conducted in Pakistan which highlighted the phenomenon of inclusive education. Researchers observed that little work has been done to identify the gaps between these educational policies and discussed how to bridge the identified gaps. The researchers perceived the gaps and decided to conduct this study.

Objectives of the Study

The study was conducted to:

1. Review the general and special education policies regarding inclusive education in Pakistan from 1947 to 2022.
2. Identify the aspects which affect policy formulation and implementation regarding inclusive education in Pakistan.
3. Identify the gaps between general and special education policies regarding inclusive education in Pakistan.
4. Bridge up the identified gaps between general and special education policies to promote inclusive education in Pakistan.

Questions of the Study

The study was intended to answer the following questions:

1. What are the general and special education policies regarding inclusive education in Pakistan from 1947 to 2022?
2. What are the aspects which affect policy formulation and implementation regarding inclusive education in Pakistan?
3. What are the gaps between general and special education policies regarding inclusive education in Pakistan?
4. How to bridge the identified gaps between general and special education policies regarding inclusive education in Pakistan?

Methodology

The researchers used a qualitative research approach in this study and a multiple case studies design was employed. Qualitative research aims to understand the phenomena in context-specific settings, such as a “real-world setting, where the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest” (Patton, 2002). According to Cresswell (2013), a multiple-case design explores a real-life multiple-bounded system through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information. The

reason for using this method is best described by DeVos, Strydom, Fouché, and Delport (2005), namely “to gain a detailed picture of a participant's beliefs about, or perceptions or accounts of, a particular topic”.

The main purpose of the study was two-fold. First, review the literature to investigate the special and general educational policies regarding the formulation and implementation of inclusive education in Pakistan. The second purpose was to identify the gaps between the policies regarding inclusive education. A content analysis technique was employed to review the literature. For this purpose, researchers over-viewed 17 research studies in the field of inclusion of persons with disabilities. To find out the gaps between these policies semi-structured interviews were conducted. The obtained data through semi-structured interviews were analyzed with the thematic analysis technique.

Participants and Research Sites

The study sample of the study was comprised of seven participants. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants and sites that would inform me in terms of the focus of the investigation. Participants of the study comprised, one director of academics (special education); one deputy director of planning (special education); two district education officers one from special education and one from the general education department; one head from a special education school, and two heads from the general education department. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants had the right to withdraw at any time. The purpose of selecting these participants from both the general and special education sectors was to present a clear picture of the understudied phenomenon. The selection of participants was made from three districts of Punjab (Lahore, Gujranwala, and Hafizabad).

Procedure

To review the literature specifically on general and special education policies regarding inclusive education in Pakistan focused on 17 research studies over-viewed by the researchers. For this purpose, a content analysis technique was used to analyze policy documents, legislative covers, and empirical studies regarding inclusive education, conducted since the independence of Pakistan to 2022. For comparison, the following parameter was used:

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria: In screening articles for inclusion, our criteria were focused on core aspects of inclusive education, general and special education policies from (1947 to 2022), policy formulation, and implementation. To be included in the review, articles are needed to target inclusive education. All articles were included unless they were concept papers, interviews, book reviews, or editorials. Only those studies and articles were considered and published in journals.

After this, to identify the gaps between these policies semi-structured interviews were conducted with the seven participants of the study. These participants were purposively selected from general and special education departments. An interview guide was developed by the researchers, and contained six open-ended questions, probing gaps between general and special education policies regarding inclusive education. The obtained data from these participants were analyzed through open coding and thematic analysis.

All the information gathered during the interviews was transcribed and analyzed using inductive content analysis. Marshall and Rossman (2011), describe the notion of content analysis as an "objective and neutral way" to secure qualitative descriptive data, where specific words are counted.

Researchers choose inductive content analysis, which allows the researchers to organize the qualitative data through open coding, creating categories for abstraction (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). Open coding involves writing notes in the text during the process of reading, which is then reread, and headings recorded in margins, to clarify content (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). Thus, careful consideration was given to the transcribing of the data from the recorded interviews. Inductive coding begins with a close reading of the text and comprehensively considering the multiple meanings that are inherent in the text (Thomas, 2006).

The typed transcriptions were perused several times before starting the process of analysis to become familiar with the data set. This was done according to the guidelines provided by Clark and Creswell (2010); Henning, Van Rensburg, and Smit (2004); and Thomas (2006). Once familiar with the content it allowed for insight and understanding of the text and the codes, themes, or categories that could be assigned to the events covered in the text. Taylor and Lindlof (2010) further indicate that through the inductive process of data analysis, the analyst must explore and do a close reading, to interpret results.

Coding helps to reduce the data into themes or categories that emerge from the analyzed data (Clark & Creswell, 2010). A study by Saldana (2011) describes the coding of data as a complicated and advanced skill that requires the revisiting of material and recording of information. In this study, codes were linked into categories after the first round of coding. The purpose of creating categories is to provide a means of describing the phenomenon, increasing understanding, and generating knowledge (Elo & Kyngas, 2008).

Results

The participants' ages ranged from 47 to 52 and two of them had 10 years of job experience while one participant had 11 years. No participant had less than 5 years of job experience. Four participants belonged to the special education department and three participants were recruited from the general education setup. All the participants had job experience of five years or more in special and general education. The information about participants is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Participant	Age	Designation	Experience	Sector
P1	52	Director Academic	10 Year	Special education
P2	49	Deputy Director Planning	6 Year	Special education
P3	47	District Education Officer	5 Year	Special education
P4	51	District Education Officer	7 Year	General education
P5	53	Head of Special Education	10 Year	Special education
P6	48	Head of General Education	9 Year	General education

P7	50	Head of General Education	11 Year	General education
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In response to the first research question, 17 research articles were over-viewed to uncover the general and special education policies regarding inclusive education in Pakistan from (1947 to 2022). Following table 1 depicts the over-viewed research articles.

Table 1

The Research Studies Over-viewed in this Study

S/N	Title of the Research Articles	Authors	Year	Journal
1	Inclusion or exclusion: Language ideology and language-in-education policies in Pakistan	Ahmad, Guijun &	2022	European Journal of Language Policy
2	Inclusive Education in Pakistan: Perspectives of Stakeholders	Basit, Ashfaq, Arif, & Gulshan	2022	PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology
3	Policies and Practices of Punjab Government			
3	Towards Inclusive Education: From the Lens of Senior Special Education Teacher's	Nawaz, Fazil & Ahmad	2021	Journal of Inclusive Education
4	Barriers in Implementation of Inclusive Education in Punjab Government Schools	Thakura, Nader, Idris, & Batool	2021	International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change
5	Comparison between the perceptions of primary school teachers towards inclusive education in Peshawar, Pakistan	Ahmad, Reba, & Ahmad	2020	Journal of the Social Sciences
6	Similar Agenda, Diverse Strategies: A Review of Inclusive Education Reforms in the Subcontinent	Hameed & Manzoor	2019	Bulletin of Education and Research
7	Inclusive education in primary and secondary schools of Pakistan: Role of Teachers	Madiha Ehsan	2018	American Academic Scientific Research Journal for Engineering technology and Sciences
8	Inclusive Education in Punjab: Challenges and Way Forward	Ibtasam Thakur & Fazal Abbas	2017	Journal of Inclusive Education

9	Comparing government and private schools in Pakistan: The way forward for universal education	Siddiquei & Gorard	2017	International Journal of Educational Research
10	Inclusive Education in Government Primary Schools: Teacher Perceptions	Hashmi, Khan & Khanum	2017	Journal of Education and Educational Development
11	Footstep towards Inclusive Education	Abbas, Zafar, & Naz,	2016	Journal of Education and Practice
12	Attitudes and self-efficacy of pre-service teachers towards inclusion in Pakistan	Sharma, Shaukat, & Furlonger	2015	Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs
13	Readiness of Urban Primary Schools for Inclusive Education in Pakistan	Pasha & Shaheen	2012	Journal of Research & Reflections in Education
14	Special education in Pakistan: In the perspectives of educational policies and plans	Ahmad, & Yousaf	2011	Academic Research International
15	Inclusive education: Preparation of teachers, challenges in classroom and future prospects	Malik	2011	Pakistan Journal of Education
16	Inclusive education in Pakistan: Experiences and lessons learned from the ENGAGE project	Caceres, Awan, Nabeel, Majeed, & Mindes	2010	Journal of American Institutes for Research
17	Attitude of secondary schools' principles & teachers toward inclusive education: Evidence from Karachi, Pakistan	Ghouri, Abrar, & Baloch	2010	European Journal of Social Sciences

Table 1 shows that there is still no policy on Inclusive Education formulated in Pakistan from (1947 to 2022). A cursory look at policy guidelines indicates that the philosophy of inclusive education is not properly conceived. The Ministry of Education, Social Welfare, and Special Education do not have any role to play in the policy formulation regarding Inclusive Education. The National Policy for Persons with Disabilities 2002 has a chapter on mainstreaming inclusive education without clear guidelines for its implementation. A study by Makoa (2004), highlighted that the success of any policy rests on the capacity to implement it. Through the in-depth review of selected research articles, it appears that a delay in policy initiatives for inclusive education is being caused by a split in administrative set up at the provincial and federal levels.

In response to the second question of the study, an open-ended questionnaire was used semi-structured interviews were conducted. Following table 2 reported the identified aspects which affect both policy formulation and implementation regarding inclusive education in Pakistan.

Table 2

Open Coding Scheme and Generated Themes Concerning Research Questions

Open Codes	Themes	Research Questions
Poor communication system	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Govt. Instability 2. Political Deprioritize 3. Attitudinal Barriers 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the major issues to formulate policies for inclusive education in Pakistan? 2. What are the differences between general and special education policies in the context of inclusive education in Pakistan?
Poor policy evaluation mechanisms	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of Coordination 2. Need Flexibility 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Why do educational policies of Pakistan not work out for the establishment of inclusive setup for persons with special needs? 4. Why special educationists are reluctant and general educationists afraid to implement inclusion as educational reform? 5. What aspects do you think should be considered for improving the educational policies of Pakistan for establishing the inclusion of persons with disabilities?
Need for increased public awareness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Poor implementation Mechanism 2. Lack of Financial Resources 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Should inclusive education be part of general and special education policies? What do you think about the
Fear of failure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Non-inclusive curriculum 2. Teachers' incompetency 4. Physical Infrastructure 	
Advocacy of Inclusion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Flexible Planning 2. Proper Monitoring System 	
The willingness of the main stakeholders	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop Collaborations 2. Support Inclusive Education 3. Professional Development 	

improvement and implementation policies in Pakistan?

Table 2 shows that several themes were manually generated by using an open coding scheme. Manual coding requires researchers to read through their data and manually develop and assign codes and themes (Khandkar, 2009).

Table 3

A Table Showing the Prevalence of Theme 1 across Interviews

Master Theme: Poor communication system	Participants						
Sub-theme: Govt. Instability; Politically Deprioritize; Attitudinal Barriers	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7
What are the major issues in policy formulation and implementation regarding Inclusive Education in Pakistan?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 3 reported that all participants agreed that policy formulation and implementation in the education sector regarding Inclusive Education in Pakistan has exercised highly negative repercussions on all other areas of the national life. Based on the interviews of educational experts it appears that a delay in policy initiatives for inclusive education is being caused by a split in administrative setup at the federal level. One participant mentioned that no planning and implementation arrangements are made so far. All participants agreed that political instability and deprioritize along with the attitudinal behavior of different ministries and main stakeholders are challenging issues in policy formulation and implementation regarding Inclusive Education in Pakistan.

Table 4

A Table Showing the Prevalence of Theme 2 across Interviews

Master Theme: Poor policy evaluation mechanisms	Participants						
Sub-theme: Lack of Coordination between Ministries; Need Flexibility	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7
What are the differences between general and special education policies in the context of inclusive education in Pakistan?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 4 highlighted that all participants agreed that the Ministry of Women's Development, Social Welfare, and Special Education does not have any role to play in the policy formulation regarding Inclusive Education in Pakistan. Neither do they have any administrative control to implement such a policy? Any inclusive effort in this regard was not to be seen in the country because different ministries working without any kind of collaboration. The Ministry of Education is the right place to design and implement inclusive education. One participant noted that the lack of policy initiative is the major barrier to inclusive education in Pakistan.

Table 5

A Table Showing the Prevalence of Theme 3 across Interviews

Master Theme: Need for increased public awareness	Participants						
Sub-theme: Poor implementation Mechanism; Lack of Financial Resources	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7
Why educational policies of Pakistan do not work out for the establishment of an inclusive setup for persons with special needs?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 5 highlighted that all participants agreed that public awareness and the provision of financial resources can set a platform for Inclusive Education in Pakistan. A report by UNESCO (2005), has found that inadequate financial resources for education in Pakistan have hindered the policy implementation. According to Saleemi (2010), financial resource in any system plays the role of a lifeblood. Without enough monetary support, no system can work effectively. Without sufficient resources like these, required services will not reach the beneficiaries directly (Siddiqui, 1993). One participant claimed that both print and electronic media have failed to play their crucial role in creating awareness about inclusive education so that the stakeholders can be mobilized for this purpose.

Table 6

A Table Showing the Prevalence of Theme 4 across Interviews

Master Theme: Fear of failure	Participants						
Sub-theme: Non-inclusive curriculum; Teachers lack competency; High numbers of learners; Physical Infrastructure	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7
Why educational policies of Pakistan not work out for the establishment of an inclusive setup for persons with special needs?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 6 highlighted that all participants agreed that an ungrounded fear is evident that inclusive education may result in close up the special education setup in this country. Special education decision-makers and experts, therefore, may be trying to protect the special education system as front-line stakeholders. The Ministry of Education, on the other hand, is not supposed to plan for the education of children with disability since a separate Ministry has been established for this purpose. One participant stated that the political will for including children with special needs in an ordinary school for better education is nonexistent. No movement for legislation on this issue is expected shortly unless the legislators are made aware of the intensity of the problem through proper advocacy.

Table 7

A Table Showing the Prevalence of Theme 5 across Interviews

Master Theme: Advocacy of Inclusion	Participants						
Sub-theme: Flexible Planning; Proper Implementation and Evaluation	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7
What aspects do you think should be considered for improving the educational policies of Pakistan for establishing the inclusion of persons with disabilities?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 7 highlighted that all participants agreed that people are unaware of the enclosure of special children in inclusive schooling since there is an inadequate perception regarding the term advocacy. The stacks are supposed to be advocated that “special persons are not a curse for society”. Advocacy can be accepted in diverse manners i.e. through speaking forums and arguments at schools, particularly on the subject of inclusion in the perspective of Pakistan. Moreover, radio programs can also be broadcasted where teachers and pupils can express their views on this issue (Ehsan, 2018).

Table 8

A Table Showing the Prevalence of Theme 6 across Interviews

Master Theme: Willingness of main stakeholders	Participants						
Sub-theme: Develop Collaborations; Support Inclusive Education; Professional Development	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7
Should inclusive education be part of general and special education policies? What do you think about the improvement and implementation of policies in Pakistan?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 8 illustrates that participants of the study agreed that inclusive education should be part of general and special education policies. They notified that the teacher training institutions both meant for ordinary schools as well as special schools do not offer courses on inclusive education. The prospective teachers are, therefore, not being trained for the implementation of inclusive education. For the better implementation of inclusive education willingness of all the stakeholders is necessary. Jatoi (1995) believes that the success of the implementation of a policy depends largely on the main stakeholder will; policymakers and policy implementers alike. Presently, the dire need is to develop a collaboration between the ministries and institutions also. There has been no major evolution in policy formation for inclusive schooling yet. At the moment, both special and regular schools are isolating working (Hameed & Manzoor, 2014).

Gaps in Educational Policies Implementation

In response to the research question, 3 following gaps in general and special education policies were identified. Inclusive education for persons with disabilities has faced challenges in being established and implemented in educational conferences and policies. These challenges include (1) poor communication systems, (2) weak

management, (3) inadequate assessment procedures, (4) financial discrepancies, (5) negative attitudes of public servants, (6) inefficient bureaucratic structures, (7) lack of decentralization measures, (8) lack of political will, a leadership vacuum, (9) corruption, (10) military takeover, (11) lack of consistency, (12) unclear admission policies, (13) lack of awareness, and (14) negative attitudes of society and stakeholders.

Bridging the identified gaps

To bridge the identified gaps between general and special education policies regarding inclusive education a complete series with a proper plan of implementation has been prepared to achieve desired goals of IE especially, to maintain the following aspects:

- A well-organized, effective, and long-term solution (by rethinking and restructuring policies, curricula, etc.) is needed to eradicate barriers to implementing IE.
- The public and private sectors in Punjab should take obligatory steps (i.e. develop legislation, policies, and support services) to remove barriers.
- Restricted school infrastructure and unavailability of staff development opportunities for teachers and inadequate professional qualification are the causes to implement IE in its true letter and spirit.
- Promote the inclusive education system by using social media and newspapers and other digital sources.
- Promote training in government and private sectors for teachers to accept inclusion at every level (i.e. federal, provincial, and district levels).
- To mitigate the gaps between policies and practicing IE the dire need is to bring reformations in the policies and to integrate global policies into the local context.
- School Education Department (SED) can play a vital role by developing flexible infrastructure, resource rooms, and teachers' training programs.

Discussion and Conclusions

This literature review provides an overview of the current state of inclusive education in Pakistan. It is apparent that while progress is being made, the implementation of inclusive education in the country is still a gradual process. The literature states that there are currently only a few pilot projects of inclusive education in operation in Pakistan. The literature also identifies several obstacles to the implementation of inclusive education in Pakistan, such as lack of awareness, societal segregation, financial barriers, and resource scarcity. Teachers and students also face challenges, like addressing the diverse needs of all students and dealing with bullying from non-disabled peers.

However, inclusive education was also seen as beneficial by many educators, students, and other key players. Additionally, future teachers and students generally believed that inclusive education would enhance their performance and provide equal opportunities for all students.

To enhance inclusive education in Pakistan, it is essential to concentrate on various areas such as creating laws and policies, raising public awareness, engaging communities, fostering a positive school culture, providing technical support, training

and professional development for teachers, revising assessment methods, and developing curriculum. These areas are critical to achieving genuine inclusive education in Pakistan.

Recommendations

Based on this study, the following recommendations are provided.

- All stakeholders such as teachers, principals, and researchers may be involved or informed on policy formulation and implementation. In this way, the gap of understanding would be resolved.
- Strong coordination between the schools and the inspectorate may help in bridging the gulf of mistrust and alienation.
- The accountability systems may be strengthened to decrease corruption.
- To overcome financial constraints, practical measures may be taken for effective planning and utilization of available resources both human and material.
- Through strong accountability, the prevalence of corruption, nepotism and favoritism could be controlled.
- The people involved in the process of formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies can be trained to enhance their theoretical knowledge in skills in better administration, management, and coordination.
- A string bond or relationship between the beneficiary community and policy makers can decrease the trust deficit between the system and public.
- The step of decentralization should be strengthened. It will decrease the delays in implementation of measures taken at the central level.

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