
EXPLORING EDUCATIONISTS' PERCEPTION OF EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION IN PAKISTAN: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) has been used as a research framework across disciplines to study existing practices and make work environment more diversity friendly, equitable and inclusive. Present study tried to identify and explore how EDI is commonly viewed and understood by educationists in Pakistan. It was a qualitative study and was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, after literature review, a conceptual framework was developed about application of EDI at different levels in education. During second phase Higher Education Commission recognized journals of education and special education departments of different universities of Pakistan were reviewed. Inclusion criteria involved open access online journals. 56 Research articles published in last five years and discussing at least one dimension of EDI were selected and reviewed. Few consistent patterns of viewing and explaining EDI were identified. Mostly studies focused on implementation level of EDI and mostly studied areas included teacher readiness, use of modifications, diversity, differentiation and use of technology. At placement level, school leadership and in-service teacher training were most studied areas. Policies, access, attitudes and gender were the repeatedly studied themes at societal level application of EDI.

KEYWORDS

EDI, Pakistan, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

INTRODUCTION

Classrooms have become more diverse in recent times. Pupils come from different linguistic, socioeconomic, religious, ethnic and geographic back grounds. They are also different in terms of ability level, learning styles, interests, preferences, motivation and previous experiences (A. M. Amer, 2009). Inclusive education has gradually been accepted as a suitable and rightful way of imparting education. It became more familiar when Salamanca declaration proposed it as the most relevant

way of providing academic facilities to children who have special needs (UNESCO, 2015). International community has gradually appreciated and adopted it in their practices and policies. In last two decades there has been a thrust to plan, develop and implement diversity and disability friendly strategies and processes (Ainscow & Howes, 2001).

International treaties and commitments such as sustainable development goals (SDGs) and convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (2006) have further established that inclusion is the right way forward towards a society that is open, accepting and appreciative of differences and diversity (Bari & Kamran, 2019). Looking at the evolution of inclusive schools it can be observed that this movement took momentum in developed countries. They have taken the lead both in building educational systems in more inclusive manner and developing policies and legislations. In under-developed and low income communities and countries this realization, acceptance and resulting actions have taken much longer time. It is because there have been apprehensions and misunderstandings about the basic ideation of inclusion (UNICEF, 2020). Other hurdles and constraints associated with provision of diversity responsive education have been meager financial resources, less focus on education sector, structural flaws and hurdles, non-availability of instructional and teaching material, un-trained or less motivated teachers, non-supportive school leadership, lack of conviction and commitment at government level etc. (Chauhdry, 2019).

Sustainable development goal 4 talks about education which is inclusive and equitable. When it comes to inclusive education, there are three main pillars that make inclusion possible. These pillars include a) equity, b) diversity and c) inclusion. Recent researchers argue that the conceptual framework of EDI i.e. equity, diversity and inclusion provide practical means of conceptualizing, planning, developing, implementing and eventually evaluating and monitoring a diversity responsive, equitable and inclusive education system (AAC&U, n.d.). Pakistan is considered a new country because it was around mid of last century that this country was born. After getting independence, this new born country was faced with numerous multifaceted difficulties and challenges. Along with lingering threat to existence by neighboring country, serious financial and political challenges surrounded the administration. Education sector was not an exception and faced constraints in the availability of resources and trained personnel (Govt. of the Punjab, 2020). Although the country has crossed million miles and education system has evolved a lot, still there are numerous challenges impeding the progress of equitable, quality, inclusive, diversity friendly education (Jawad, Iqbal, & Zamir, 2016). Local evidence and research plays an important role in developing a deeper understanding of contextual factors and challenges faced in education system. Over the years, several researchers

and educationists have explored and studied different aspects related to diversity, equity and inclusion in education. Present study aimed at looking at latest researches to identify how discrete components of EDI are studied, understood and represented by researchers in Pakistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Basic right to education is enshrined in the constitution of Pakistan. In article 25A education, which is free and compulsory, is considered a basic right of a child (age 5 – 16). Through amendment to the constitution, in 2010 more autonomy was given to the provinces. Since education is now a responsibility of provincial administration, provinces have worked on policies and legislations to indicate their commitment towards provision of compulsory basic education (Chauhdry, 2022). Although diversity of students can be of various types but when it comes to difficulties in access to free public education, disability is a more distinctive form of diversity. Efforts have been made in the past to ensure that children with special needs get access to educational facilities (Ahmad, Thomas, & Hamid, 2020). Institutes of special education have been set up in different parts of the country by government and private organizations. Despite all efforts these schools for special education have only been able to reach out to a relatively small number of special children (Ahmed, Khan, & Naseem, 2011). It is primarily because population with special needs is wide spread and resides in scattered urban and rural areas. For a country like Pakistan, where more population resides in villages and rural settings, it becomes very challenging to bring all children with special needs to special education institutes (Ammad, Javed, & Ishaque, 2021).

A feasible and practical solution to this challenge is equitable, diversity responsive, inclusive education. Previous decade has witnessed a rapid positive change, at least in urban areas, in terms of acceptance of basic notion of diversity and inclusion (Hameed, Manzoor, & Minhas, 2020). Increasingly more inclusive practices are being adopted specially by the private schools. At govt. level, there have been a shift from exclusive and segregated education to more inclusive policies. This change at government level has been very slow, gradual and is more evident now at policy level. International commitments and support of international organizations has played a significant role in motivating the relevant stakeholders and directing them towards development of more equitable education systems (Hafeez, 2020). More educationists and researchers are now interested in exploring different dimension of inclusion. There has been a gradual increase in research publications describing different issues and aspects of inclusion. Although inclusive education is quite well discussed and researched topic in academic fraternity of the country, but there is no single commonly accepted definition of inclusive education existing in the country. It can be quite enlightening to identify how major components of inclusive education

such as equity, diversity and inclusion are conceptualized in recent research work.

Even the international community of researchers has divergent views about definition, relevance and importance of EDI framework (Leifler, 2020). Literature suggests various explanations about the nature, role and importance of different constituents of EDI framework in relevance to education of diverse learners. It is quite pertinent that understanding of EDI by researchers in Pakistan is explored to get a closer look at how, in the specific circumstances of the country, it is conceptualized. It is a less researched area therefore it can provide insights into current situation. Findings of this study can make a significant contribution in unfolding local perspectives, research trends and general understanding about diversity in educational institutions, equity being practiced and issues faced in making education more inclusive. It can also pave the way for future research work on EDI, as a framework, in local context.

Development of conceptual framework

For this article the Equity is defined as “creating opportunities for learners to have equal access and participation in educational programs, so that gap between achievement of diverse learners can be bridged” (AAC&U, n.d.). Diversity is “a complex construct representing various factors relevant to identity such as gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, geographic location” (Fuentesl, Zelaya, & Madsen, 2020). Inclusion, for this article is defined as “an educational concept that stresses that diversity should be accepted and all students should be able to access, participate in and experience achievement in education (Artiles, 2004) .

A framework was suggested by Danforth and Narain (2015) where they proposed four dimensions to explain diversity friendly, just and quality inclusive education. These four dimensions included i) democracy, ii) value of communication for mutual relationships, iii) political realization and iv) placed agency. Democracy to them should be the basic guiding principle of such education system where every member feels respected, accepted and experiences freedom. This ethical value is not only pertinent for school but also applies to larger community life. A progressive and dynamic society should pursue for this ideal. New generation and youth should be given an opportunity to celebrate their individuality and feel belongingness. Value of communication for mutual relationships highlights the importance of meaningful, warm and empathetic bonding between teachers and students that translate into relationships of mutual respect and acceptance. Such relationships provide conducive environment for learning, self-growth, self-awareness and self-determination. The value of communication is so significant when it comes to protection and realization of rights. A right based society is determined to provide personal voice, freedom of choice, social life and meaningful engagement to all

members.

Political realization can be defined as an ideal that resists, rejects and counters all types and forms of oppression. People have been subject to deprivations, oppressions, neglect, criticism, marginalization and humiliation on the basis of social, racial, religious and disability related factors. School is a micro-community and it should eliminate and disapprove all forms of segregations and divisions on the base of diversity. Equity should be ensured so that each member of school community get equal and justified chance to progress. These values of mutual respect and disapproval of systems of oppressions can ultimately be reflected in broader society. This continuous process of critical thinking can help in identifying and eliminating sources of disrespect, deprivation and domination of certain groups.

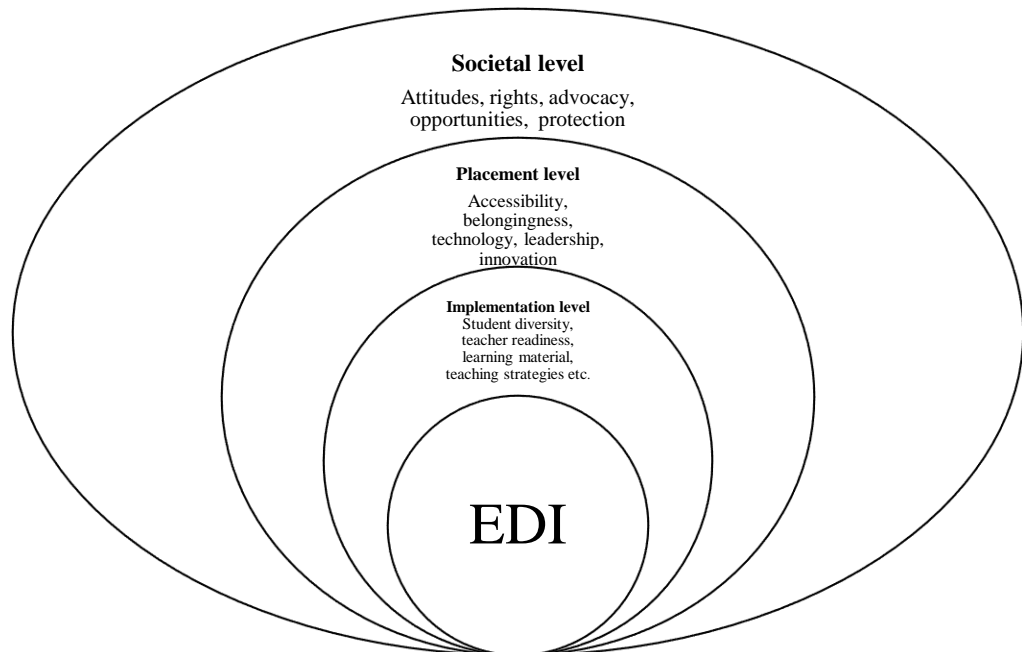
Placed agency is a term that is usually used to explain the decision making process and resulting action by an individual or group of individuals. In respect of this conceptual framework it addresses those people who are proponents of inclusion, such people can be persons who have disabilities, their families, professionals, teachers, and social activist and policy makers. Every society has its own historically background and advocates of inclusion have to work within those complexities and divergent values systems. They have to create positive vibes about the concept of diversity inclusion and at the same time have to continuously resist the existing ideas of exclusion. It is an ongoing and consistent struggle to bring about change from within the social system to achieve the goal of equity.

In 2014 a conceptual analysis of inclusive education was done by Göransson and Nilholm. Presented a hierarchical model explaining understandings regarding diversity inclusion. This four interrelated stages model explained that from most frequently used meaning to less frequently understood notions are a) placing children with disabilities in regular classrooms, b) an approach that strives to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities, c) a way of fulfilling social and educational requirements of all learners, and d) a movement for developing a school as welcoming community for all.

This framework indicates that inclusive practices play significant role in individual positive growth as well as in evolution of school as a small form of fair, just and democratic society where all members experience acceptance. Booth and Ainscow (2011) focused on more practical aspects of inclusion. In index of inclusion they suggested how culture of an educational institute is interrelated with evolution of policies and resulting practices. Their model is widely accepted and used to ensure that pupils coming from different households, having different set of skills and experiences and varying levels of capabilities can be provided fair chances of

engaging in gainful learning. It was evident from the review of different models that diversity, equity and inclusion should be viewed from the perspective of its application at different levels. Three levels of application were identified inspired by the ecological system model of Bronfenbrenner (1979). These levels include a) implementation level, b) placement level and c) societal level.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of EDI



Note: *Conceptual framework explains application of EDI at implementation, placement and societal level*

In this framework a) implementation level is concerned with class room environment e.g. teacher readiness, teaching strategies, student readiness, diversity, leaning materials etc. b) placement level is relevant to overall school environment for example school leadership, belongingness, accessibility, freedom of choice, shared decision making, need and requirements of students and student engagement, and c) Societal level represent attitudes, barriers, facilities, opportunities, discriminations present at larger societal and national level.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. Develop a framework for studying EDI at different levels of implementation.

2. Explore the most common aspects of EDI being studied by the researchers in Pakistan.
3. Explore the research findings about equity, diversity and inclusion.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the different levels of implementation of EDI an educational perspective?
2. What aspects of EDI are studied the most by researchers in Pakistan?
3. What are the common research findings about equity, diversity and inclusion?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It is a qualitative study of descriptive-analytical nature. The study was conducted in two phases. During the first phase after the systematic literature review, the conceptual framework for implementation levels of equity, diversity and inclusion in education was developed.

The second phase consisted of reviewing journals of education and special education departments of different universities. Inclusion criteria for journals were recognition by Higher Education Commission and availability of previous five years publications online. After the selection of journals, research articles published in the last five years were reviewed to identify the way academicians and researchers had viewed and conceptualized the diversified nature of learners, inclusion friendly and equitable practices. After reading and rereading the articles, few consistent patterns were identified. These consistent patterns and themes were used as the basis of discussion for drawing common understandings of equity, diversity and inclusion in Pakistan.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

For the study, 10 journals from different universities were selected according to the inclusion criteria.

Table 1: List of Journals Selected for Study

S.No	Journal Name	Published by	Frequency
1	Journal of Research and Reflection in Education	University of Education, Lahore	Bi-annually
2	Bulletin of Education and Research	Institute of Education and Research, Punjab University	Tri – Annually
3	Journal of Elementary Education	Department of Elementary Education, Punjab University	Bi-Annually
4	Pakistan Journal of Educational Research and Evaluation	Department of Educational Research and Evaluation, Punjab University	Bi-Annually

5	Journal of education and social sciences	Iqra University, Karachi	Bi-Annually
6	Journal of Educational Research	Department of Education, Islamia University Bahawalpur	Bi-Annually
7	Pakistan Journal of Education	Faculty of Education, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad	Bi-Annually
8	UMT Education Review	Department of Education, University of Management and Technology, Lahore	Bi-Annually
9	Journal of Inclusive Education	Faculty of Education, Allama Iqbal University, Islamabad	Annually
10	Journal of Education and Humanities Research	Institute of Education and Research, University of Baluchistan	Bi-annually

After detailed review of journals 56 research articles were selected based on the inclusion criteria i.e. at least one dimension of EDI was discussed in the article and it was published within last five years (not before 2019). After reading and rereading the articles few consistent patterns were identified. Those patterns are used as themes to discuss the findings of the study.

Implementation level

A significant research work has been done on issues and practices at implementation level. Teachers' preparedness, their perspectives and quality of in-service and pre-service training, class management, adaptations and modifications, availability of resources, collaboration are more studied areas by researchers. Teacher preparedness for inclusion is among the most studied area. Teacher self-efficacy in teaching in inclusive classroom was studied by Batool and Khwaja (2021). Findings of the study indicate that teachers showed higher self-efficacy in managing an inclusive class. Whereas their scores on other subscales relevant to use of teaching strategies, assessment adaptations and collaborating with other teachers and professionals were lower. It indicates that there is a better understanding of student diversity and general classroom management strategies but teachers felt that they were lacking the skills in implementing equitable, inclusive teaching strategies. Teachers working in regular schools have less favorable response toward the ideas of inclusion as compared to teachers working with special children (Noureen & Intezar, 2019). Teachers also express their concerns regarding lack of training in using specific diversity responsive approaches like universal design of learning in diverse classroom (Jaleel, Hussain, & Kanwal, 2022). The teachers working in general education setups with children having neurodiversity are not well acquainted with effective strategies of universal design and cooperative learning instead they are practicing more

therapeutic and individualized approaches that do not coincide with the basic notion of inclusion (Chauhdry, 2019).

Multi-grade teaching is still practiced in some rural areas of the country. In Pakistan most of the population still lives in villages. Although there are several typed of private schools functioning in the country but by far in rural areas public schools still are only of one of the very few options available to the students (Abbas, Zafar, & Naz, 2016). Due to lack of teachers at times teachers have to do multi-grade teaching. Teachers working in multi-age multi-grade classes have to continuously practice differentiation and ensure equity for a diverse group of students. Researches have been conducted to address these issues and findings suggest that teachers face hurdles in planning lessons for a diverse aged group of students and they require training in instructional differentiation (Pasha, Aftab, & Habib, 2020).

Early childhood education is considered pivotal in introducing a culture of diversity friendly and inclusive education to young children. Teachers understand that early years of life are crucial for setting the pace of child's learning. If conducive learning environment is provided and different dimensions of child development are covered through integrated learning program, it can pave the way for a better transition to elementary education. This goal can be achieved by making teachers more aware and equipped for teaching learners in at early childhood level (Hashmi, 2022). In-service training of public teachers in early childhood education is conducted by staff development departments and in a study it was reported that evaluation of these trainings on Kirkpatrick model yielded significantly positive results not only personal learning of trainee teachers but also on the dimension of transferring knowledge to others (Malik & Asghar, 2020).

Curriculum is an important part of learning and teaching environment. Life skill based curriculum has been explored by the researchers and findings indicate that female students have better life skills as compared to boys and this disparity is also visible in students enrolled in public and private schools. In order to make diverse learners it is imperative that curricular activities make them ready for practical life and enhance independent living skills (Maqsood, Malik, & Jumani, 2022). Diversity is of many types and it exists in all educational settings. Equity means ensuring that all members of learning community has equal chance of learning and excelling. Diversity is not only present in students, teachers are also a part of diverse school community. If students can connect with, appreciate and enjoy learning with their teacher having special needs, it also enhances the democratic, respectful and equitable culture in the educational institute (Afzal & Rafique, 2021). Differentiating the learning materials, strategies and provision of positive environment for learning is at the core of true inclusion. In classrooms, teacher showed willingness and

positive perspective about modifying their practices to suit the requirements of pupils (Tassawar & Khurshid, 2019). Mostly the nature of modifications used by teachers were a) in the way content was presented to students for example making reading material simple, underlining or highlighting main points), b) changing the pace and time requirements for learning, c) making changes in the environment where children learn for example controlling noise, improving lighting, decreasing disturbances, and d) encouraging supportive and collaborative learning by engaging peers in mutual learning. Assessments are the area where teachers fail to make any significant changes to ensure fairness (Chauhdry, 2021). It is highly desirable that assessment processes are made flexible and teachers are made empowered thorough training to differentiate tests and evaluations (Khalid, Shakir, & Shafique, 2022).

Technology has transformed the life styles and ways of approaching things and ideas. Use of technology had gain momentum in educational settings as well. There is a realization at teachers and parental level that through technology not only access to information can be made easy, but it can make learning more interesting by matching the learning with styles of different learners. Use of technology to augment barriers in expressing needs has also become an area of interest for researchers (Abbas & Majoka, 2021). Technology use has been identified as supporting the efforts of meeting several needs of students while ensuring equity. Students have showed considerable improvement in learning and quality of understanding when videos about different concepts, ideas, and historical events were used in teaching (Khursheed & Bibi, 2020). Use of technological gadgets can help in improving quality of early childhood education as well Technology is a tool for Learning: Voices of Teachers and Parents of Young Children (Pirani & Hussain, 2019). Attitudes of teachers are not always positive towards innovation and use of new digital tools. Teachers at time hesitate in making any changes of their traditional, set patterns of imparting knowledge. To some extent this inertia is found to be rooted in their personality and typed of trainings they have received. Through training and mentoring at school administration level a positive change in teacher responses can be expected (Baber & Qaisar, 2022).

Placement Level

Placement level represents the overall policies, efforts and acceptance as displayed by school community for ensuring fairness, just, empathetic and innovative learning environment. Review of research journals indicated that at placement level mostly researchers have been on role of school leadership, student engagement and satisfaction, in-service trainings of teachers etc. Leadership play the role of a catalysts when it comes to making school environment democratic and flexible to make all learners welcomed and accepted (Imran, 2021). Different types of leadership styles have been reported in the literature. Research conducted in

Pakistani perspective indicates that in order to shift away from conventional ways of management and built in parity and flexibility into practices, innovative leaders are required (Ahmad, Thomas, & Hamid, 2020). Leaders possessing qualities of transformative style are usually more effective and can be more successful in making imaginative and innovative changes for making schools more closely knitted and accepting communities (D'Souza & Kang, 2021). Principals and school wide leaders can be very impactful in providing support, mentoring, guidance and acting as role model at managerial level. If head of school takes up the role of pedagogical leader, there can be a significant improvement in quality of teaching and learning benefitting both teachers and learners (Bashir & Afzal, 2019). According to teachers collective and collaborative style of leadership can be very operative in bringing about constructive changes in schools. Shared decisions also lead to evolving a sense of ownership and mutual responsibility to ensure that everyone in school get equal chances to growth and development (Awan, Anjum, & Ali, 2021).

Student participation in decisions and active participation in learning has emerged as a research trend in education. Research shows that the more students are actively engaged in learning, the better their motivation and performance becomes. Management of academic institutes play a vital role in making sure that students coming from different backgrounds and having different set of experiences feel comfortable and right (Iqbal & Asghar, 2020). Researchers have emphasized that educational experiences should work on developing social skills in students to improve their interactions, communication and ability to raise voice for their rights (Suleman & Zaman, 2020).

In-service training of teachers is crucial in making academic institute diversity responsive. Trainers and educators involved in training of existing teachers indicate that their current training programs are not aligned with the international commitments and sustainable goals. They feel that they cannot bring about required improvements because they lack training, authority and freedom (Mirza & Tajuddin, 2020). There are very less if any components on managing behavioral, psycho-social and emotional problems of students. Teacher lack awareness about mental health issues and have very limited knowledge about handling behavior variations in classrooms (Majeed, 2020). Research conducted on dropout rate in public schools of Punjab province indicated that unfriendly and strict behavior and lack contact with teacher were among the most important factors leading children to leave school (Rehman & Malik, 2023).

Societal level

Attitudes are formed and changes through the process of socialization. It takes time, efforts, commitment, education, awareness to break the barriers. There have been

several researches in past few years to study the attitudes of different stakeholders regarding social, educational and financial inclusion. Persons with physical disabilities display lower confidence levels and self-esteem and face difficulties in connecting mainly because of scarce opportunities to interact with others at equal level (Ain & Mazhar, 2022). In a study individuals with hearing impairment displayed positive and willing attitude toward the idea of all children going to same school. It was indicated that respondents living in urban areas had more high expectation and more willingness to interact and learn with all other pupils as compared to those residing in villages (Masood, Sami, & Salahuddin, 2021).

Access to learning and educational opportunities is another areas that emerged as a constant area of exploration by the researchers. Getting enrolled in appropriate educational facility pertains several hurdles. In some cases even parents give preference to their other kids over those with disabilities when making decision about investment to education (Qamar, Naz, & Batool, 2022). Financial resources of families enable them to make best possible learning opportunities available to their children. Students coming from financially less advantaged families feel it unjust that their peers from better off families get extra support from paid after school facilities which probably can improve their academic achievements (Malik & Anwar, 2020). Students with disabilities are placed in special schools which deprives them from social and educational equity. Regular schools are the most appropriate environment for their personality development and education (Hameed, Manzoor, & Minhas, 2020).

Gender and disability are a serious intersection where women having disabilities face more inequalities and hurdles as compared to men. Researchers have reported that females with difficulties are more susceptible to psychological challenges and social exclusion (Amjad, Salahuddin, & Shaukat, 2023). The gender disparity is even represented in curriculum because women are projected in typical and orthodox way (Akbar & Malik, 2020).

Policies set out the priorities of societies and governments. If policies are not based on reliable statistics, designed poorly or not implemented efficiently, instead of bringing improvements they might adversely affect efforts for appropriate and equitable education for students (Nazir & Hameed, 2019). Dissatisfaction of general public is indicated when they prefer private schools over government managed institutes. It is a direct measure of quality of education offered by the government (Ammad, Javed, & Ishaque, 2021). Researchers have made efforts to critically evaluate polices to identify implications for development, harmony and realistic objectives (Khadim, Qureshi, & Khan, 2021).

Review of journals indicates that generally educational researchers in Pakistan have awareness about and realize the importance of inclusion, equitable education and diversity more research work regarding EDI has been on the implantation level. Various aspects of equity, diversified nature of students. A major focus in recent years has been on direct implementation level and related issues. Pertinent issues of teacher readiness and preparedness, diversity in students, modification, differentiation and use of technology have been studied in local contexts. Mostly studies suggested that more well designed trainings, teaching resources and constant support is required to bring more swift improvements at implementation level.

Leadership and mentoring of school management and administration is considered quite important by researchers at it emerged as a major focus at placement level of EDI. Findings suggest that if management especially school heads are motivated to make school climate conducive and inclusive, they have the motivational and administrative powers to do so. Other constant pattern that was visible across researches was student satisfaction, engagement and teacher professional development. It became evident during review that if policies, practices and procedures are flexible, administration is pro-active and empathetic, it can play a considerable role in improving student satisfaction and eventually their increases their academic achievement. In-service training of teacher was also considering an important lever of positive changes at placement level of EDI.

Societal change is a long process

Not many researches focused this area. The main themes that emerged related to societal level were pertaining to attitudes, access, gender and policies. Attitudes of persons having disabilities, teachers and general population is affected by their experiences, background and level of awareness. Similar attitudinal constraints and orthodox outlook can make policy development process consummated. It was also indicated that for better implementation and results policies should be developed in consultation with stakeholders.

Present study suggested a conceptual framework to study EDI at different levels. It also shed light on the common understandings about EDI and prevailing perceptions about diversity, inclusion and equity. In future systematic literature review can be conducted to get a more in depth analysis of situation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It became evident during the study that there is an understanding in the educational fraternity of Pakistan that inclusive education is an important way of providing equitable, quality education to all learners. Although a considerable work is being done on addressing diversity, equity and inclusion, yet few areas remain under-

studied. Based on the findings of the study following recommendations are made for future research in this area:

Mostly research has been focused on classroom practices and meeting the individual needs of students with special needs, there is a dire need to conduct studies on school wide policies and practices. Such studies can identify the prevalent policies, best practices and also suggest a broader contextually relevant framework for school policies.

Current study was qualitative in nature, more elaborated quantitative research e.g. a bibliometric analysis can be conducted to explore these research trends in detail.

EDI basically relates directly to the way concept of inclusion is defined in a given society. Exploring the meanings associated with inclusive education by academicians and educationists can be another interesting study in future that can lead to developing a broader and commonly accepted definition of inclusive education.

Multidisciplinary researches remained under represented in the study. Multidisciplinary research can help in exploring EDI and inclusive education from diverse viewpoints.

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