Special Education Policy in Nepal: A Critical Review from Policy Theory

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Abstract

Purpose: Education policy is considered as a core document developed to ensure the educational rights of all children including the children with disabilities. By considering the fact, every nation design its educational policy to ensure access to basic education for all school-age children. Nepal Government has also been formulating different educational policies to ascertain educational rights of every child including the children with disabilities. Method: However, a group of children are still out of schools and this study was carried out to analyze different special educational policies through the lens of four dimensions of policy theory. For this purpose, the required data were collected from two sources namely primary and secondary sources and then analyzed respectively by applying qualitative data analysis process. Results: The study results indicate that the special education policies formulated before 1996 focused on normative dimension but the policies introduced between 1996 to 2016 emphasized on normative and structural dimensions with clear ideological shift in education. Conclusion: Finally, Inclusive Education Policy-2017 has emphasized highly on constituent and technical dimension and attached value to normative and structural dimensions as before. Thus, currently developed policy has attempted to encompass all dimensions of policy theory.

Key words: Special education, disability, policy, inclusive education, mainstream.

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I. Introduction

Nepal has a short history in the field of special needs education as most of the schools were opened after the restoration of democracy in 1951. Nepal adopted National Education System Plan in 1971. This plan was the first systematic effort as a ground for preparing policies in favor of the education providing for the disabled people. The plan suggested Special Education Council under ministry of education and culture. This plan fundamentally accepted the responsibility of state in special education. Result of these efforts were the establishment of Special Education Council in 1973 under the chairmanship of education minister. The council had the full responsibility for the promotion of special education throughout the country. The education sector had not achieved much for providing education to the children with special needs. At that time, the disabled children were considered as burdens for the family and the result of sin they had committed in the past lives (CERID, 2004). The concept of providing education to the disabled children was emerged too late in the country because during this time, most of the developed countries were exercising special education. However, the efforts were made to make people aware of the importance of special needs education the rights of disabled children. Before these endeavors, the Rotary Club provided a one month teacher training on disability and later sent a person in the USA for disability study. Then, the teacher established a school for the blind in Lalitpur (a core city of Nepal) after coming back to Nepal. Unfortunately, the school soon closed down (CERID, 2004). Likewise, a blind American woman named Isabel Grant, while visiting Nepal, requested the concerned persons to conduct integrated class for the blind. Then training related to teaching the blind children was provided to the student teachers of the College of Education and teacher of Laboratory School in 1964. In this year, a small number of blind students were enrolled and the integrated education program was started in Laboratory School.

In this year 1996, the school for the deaf was established in Bal Mandir, Naxal at Kathmandu. A physically disabled person named Khagendra Basnet initiated an organization called Nepal Blind and Disabled Association. Similarly, government of Nepal made a plan to educate the mentally disabled children and established a school named Nirmal Child Development Centre in 1980. All the programs of special education were started to conduct by the Social Welfare National Coordination Council (SWNCC) right after its establishment in 1977. On the basis of this platform, a concrete and separate policy was come into action in 1996 as The Special Education Policy (1996), which classified disabilities into seven category with clear definition. In addition, this policy also categorized schools into integrated and special school to provide the education to the children with disabilities.

Furthermore, the High-level National Education Committee (1998) report recommended that education for children with special needs should be provided in disabled friendly educational environment. For this
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purpose, the commission pointed out the need to survey the population of disabled people, establishment of the schools, management of teachers, formation of the school management committee, managing teacher-student ratio, increasing disabled people's access to education, quality education, curriculum and related materials, training, monitoring, building public awareness, and incorporating integrated programs (Ministry of Education, 1998). The concept of special education policy is also mentioned in the Non-Formal Education Policy (2006) of Nepal which mainly focuses on implementing inclusiveness of the disabled people in the education system to ensure their access and rights to quality education. This policy embarked to provide special education for disabled, marginalized, disadvantaged, conflict affected, and linguistically marginalized people. The Constitution of Nepal (2015) in its article 31, has announced the right to get education by ensuring compulsory basic education and secondary level education free of cost. It has also ensured the education for the disabled and economically marginalized people. It has also mentioned that the people have rights to get education in their own language and open schools and other educational institutions (Nepal Law Commission, 2015).

UN Convention on the Rights of the Children (1989), UN Standard Rules (1993), Salamanca Conference (1994), Jomtien Declaration (1990) and Dakar Framework for Action (2000) were the results of the notion of ensuring education as the human right. The postulates and provisions set by the international community for education for all the children of the world provided ample impetus for Nepal to formulate its national special education policies in the country. Nepal has also endorsed these international policies and took these provisions as guidelines to set its policies, programs, and projects for ensuring educational opportunities for all children including children with disabilities (Department of Education, 2015). The present policy of special education in Nepal is the result of the endorsement and thrust of several international provisions for education. Thus, different policy attempts have been made to ensure the educational rights of children with special needs.

Even making such types of efforts, condition of special education is not developed as intended manner to ensure access to and quality education of children with special needs. In Nepal, there is approximately 2 percent people out of total population are disabled. Out of this figure, physical disability constitutes 36.3 percent of the population with disability followed by blindness/low vision (18.5%), deaf/hard of hearing (15.4%), speech problem (11.3%), multiple disability (7.5%), mental disability (6%), intellectual disability (2.9%) and deaf-blind (1.8%) (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012). But there are only 380-resource classes for blind, deaf with hard of hearing, and intellectual disability, 32 special schools, and 22 integrated schools are running to educate the disabled children (Ministry of Education, 2017) in all over the country. About 3.4 percent children are still out of school who even do not have access to primary education (Ministry of Education, 2015).
Moreover, 5.6% teachers at basic level and 12.2% teachers at secondary level are still untrained (Department of Education, 2014). Government of Nepal has been investing large proportion of its annual budget expenditure on formulation and implementation of education policy but a small chunk of educational budget is usually allocated for development of special education. Regarding the special school, there are 13 schools for deaf, 13 schools for intellectual disability, 1 school for blind and 1 school for physically handicapped students in the nation (Department of Education, 2014). Those children who have profound level of disability, they need additional supports as per their intensity of disability, and need special provisions; special schools, special teachers and special curriculum.

1. Problem Statement

Government of Nepal has been formulating different educational policies targeting the children with disabilities nearly for five decades. Different provisions in formulating policies have been made to improve the deficiencies prevailed in the past policies. According to Central Bureau of Statistics (2012), approximately 2 percent people are disabled out of total population in Nepal. However, many children with special needs still do not have easy access to elementary level. It means, 3.4 percent primary school-age children are still out of school (Ministry of Education, 2015), in which large number of disabled children are also included.

The Government has been formulating different policies and plans for examples, Education Act, 1971; Inclusive Education Policy for Disable People, 2017; National Education System Plan, 1971; Special Education Policy, 1996; Special Education Guidelines, 2004) for long time but large number of children do not have access to basic education. Such situation has raised many questions in terms of policies formulated with an intention of ensuring educational rights of all children including the children with disabilities. In this regard, some representative questions are: Do the policies reflect the commitment regarding educational rights of the children made by the Government among world community? How far the policies do incorporate the dimension of policy theory? Are the policies based on the necessities and demands of the Nepalese societies? Does the structure of the policy represent the educational needs and problems of disabled people? Are the policies implemented at an intended extent? What should be the future policy direction for Nepal?

Even in the 21st century, special education in Nepal is still under developing phase. Now a days, some developed countries like Korea are funding to develop the current status of special education in Nepal. There are some other developed countries who are trying to assist for the development of special education. This paper is expected to be useful for the researchers and other person or organization of national and international community who want to be informed on special education and related policies of Nepal.
2. Objectives

The research objective is a statement of intent used in qualitative research that specifies purpose that the researcher plan to achieve throughout a study. The main purpose of this study was to analyze special education policy through the lens of four policy dimensions (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Randall, 2004). More specifically the purposed research study had the following objectives:

To identify and explore the existing special education policies of Nepal.

To analyze the special education policies of Nepal.

II. Methodology

This study was based on qualitative research design under interpretative paradigm. Several literatures related to special educational policies in Nepal were reviewed intensively and all the reviewed policies were categorized into three stages namely first stage, second stage, and third stage. Hence, policies introduced before 1996 have been incorporated within first stage. Likewise, the policies came into practice from 1996 to 2016 were encompassed in second stage. And finally, policy released in 2017 has been included within third stage. These three stages were analyzed through the lens of four policy dimensions namely normative, constitutive, structural, and technical dimension (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Randall, 2004). Furthermore, various published journal articles, books, and web-based materials related to educational policies were also reviewed as the reference materials of the study.

On the other hand, eight policy experts representing Ministry of Education, Department of Education, Special Schools and University were chosen as the key sample respondents for the study using purposive sampling method. Among them, two experts who are involved in policy formulation from ministry of education and two from Department of Education were chosen on the basis of purposive sampling method. Likewise, two policy experts from Tribhuvan University who are involving teaching and conducting research activities on special education were chosen as sample of this study. Rest two experts are the head teacher of special schools located at Kathmandu valley. The researcher being a member of Faculty of Education, Tribhuvan University, had good access to the respondents for this study. For the sample selection purpose, the researcher visited the Inclusive Education Section of the Ministry of Education and Inclusive Education Unit under Department of Education and asked about the policy experts from these section then the researcher established rapport and informed them about the study purpose.

At the same time, researcher collected the e-mail address, Skype ID as well as their telephone numbers.
Similarly, the researcher met university professors and special schools’ head teachers who were frequently involved in policy formulation in special education. The procedures were same as the Ministry of Education and Department of Education officials. First of all, the researcher prepared semi-structured questionnaire and administered through e-mail interview. In case of lacking and ambiguous information provided by the respondents, researcher reconfirmed through Skype and telephone interview time and again. And then telephone, email, and Skype interview were held with them to collect required information related to the policies reviewed under the study.

![Diagram](https://example.com/diagram.png)

**Fig. II-1** A Four-Dimensional View of Policy Theory

However, the study was mainly based on secondary data particularly published special education policies. Thus, both primary and secondary data were collected by using different sources. The collected data was classified and categorized into different themes and themes were generated by considering objectives generated at the beginning of the study. The generated themes were analyzed and interpreted thematically linking them with the established policies as prescribed in the documents.

This paper primarily based on above mentioned policy theory consisting four dimensions which attempts to review three major special education policies of different policy stages(before 1996, policies during 1996 to 2016, and 2017 on special education) of Nepal.

III. Results and Discussion

Education policy is simply a decision making process in education system and it is considered as a means of securing the educational rights of the people. Policies have clear purpose to fulfill social needs and harmony through social justice. Sherri(2005) views policy as a deliberate and usually careful decision for providing guidance with an intention of addressing selected public concerns. Policy formulation is focused on creating the best interest and achieve desired goal directed towards the ethics and social justice. Policies have effects on targeted areas where the policies are implemented. Updating policies is the continuous process and hence old policies provide the basis for formulating new policies(Cooper, Fusarelli, & Randall, 2004). Generally, policy analysis has been done for finding out whether they could make the intended impact on target groups to get intended result. The interest groups make influence in both shaping as well as implementing policy, determining the ways of implementing and evaluating the formulated policy for further improvement and continuation.

The researcher collected, grouped and arranged the data systematically and analyzed to find the results as an outcome of the analysis. This research work was analyzed on the basis policy theory as a theoretical standpoint, and then different policies formulated in Nepal across the time has been analyzed by using the dimensions of the policy theory(Cooper, Fusarelli, & Randall, 2004). While doing so, different policies developed in Nepalese history were categorized into three chronological stages.

1. Normative Dimension

Normative dimension describe the values and norms of policy making. It is an ideology to express the purpose to bring desired change in the society. According to this dimension, all policies are the expressions
of purposes of the society. The policy indicates a set of assumptions and beliefs about the rationality of human action and a scientific nature of social action. Postmodernism and ideological perspectives are included in this dimension. Postmodernism focuses on the social construction of problems and reality. Through this dimension, the researcher has analysed the Nepalese Special Education Policy as given below:

1) Special Education Policy before 1996: Children with disabilities hardly got chance to education at formal schools before 1971. The Government of Nepal introduced education provision for disable people for the first time in National Education System Plan 1971. The plan focused on providing education for physically disabled children where the ability was categorized as deaf, dumb and blind. This stage was mainly guided by the normative dimension of policy theory as suggested by Cooper, Fusarelli and Randall(2004) as it tried to bring about changes the beliefs, values of the Nepalese education system. In the previous time, Government of Nepal did not address the concept of Education for All(EFA). Through the concept of EFA, the government introduce the Education Act(1971) for the development of general and special education of Nepal. Education Act(1971) opened the door formally to develop special education into new height and changes the ideologies from general education to special education in Nepalese society. Through the postmodernism concept, the government realized the social construction of problems and reality of the society and total reformation of the education system into new one by changing the structure of curriculum, teacher training, textbooks and other materials. Thus, 1970s is considered as the beginning decade of education for children with disabilities in Nepal.

Furthermore, the Education Act(1971) did not specially focus on special education but it ensure the education for disabled and economically marginalized people. Regarding the context of special education policy, the 1971 to 1996 is the developmental phase of special education in the context of Nepal. Moreover, the researcher has taken interview with the two experts who were working in Ministry of Education of Nepal, they opined that the Education Act(1971) was the first initiative for the education of children with disabilities. They also reported that Special Education Council(1973) was formed under the chair of Education Minister and was mandated for the promotion of special education in Nepal. They further highlighted that due to political instability the council had unable to contribute the over all development of special education in the country. In this regard, the researcher came to the conclusion that it would be better if the separate special education policy had formulated on time. Country had to suffer for long time because of inadequate, unclear and less emphasized policy of that phase.

2) Special Education Policy from 1996 to 2016: On the basis of previous education act and many more recommendation of Education Commissions, the Government of Nepal formulated the Special Education
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policy 1996. This policy was a great achievement of the time in the field of special education in Nepal. The policy was mainly guided by the normative dimension of policy theory as suggested by Cooper, Fusarelli and Randall(2004) as it tried to bring about changes in the values of the Nepalese society and government. It tried to establish the values that people with disability are equally necessary for the overall development of the society and nation, and that they should be provided opportunities for their growth and development. Regarding the assumptions and needs of this dimension, the policy defined the Special Education as means for teaching, learning and training arrangement made through special method to meet the needs of education of various types of disabled children(Nepal Law Commission, 2015).

Furthermore, the government tried to change its ideological perspective keeping in mind the widespread prevalence of the people with disability in the country. The government of Nepal took initiative to formulate the Special Education Policy(1996) to place disabled people in the national mainstream by making arrangement of education in conformity to the national education policy. Through the postmodernism perspective of this dimension, the policy also ensured to produce curriculum, educational materials and textbooks for children with disability and provide necessary training to the teachers to teach such children. Different modes of evaluation systems based on the types of disability were introduced to help the disable children perform as per their ability. It aimed to provide concession to import materials such as wheel chair, crutch, white cane, hearing aid, etc.

Moreover, the researcher took interview with the two experts who are working in Tribhuvan University of Nepal, opined that the previous Education Act(1971) could not cover areas of disability and also could not address the needs of disabled students. But this policy changed the values and goals as well as ideology through introducing the concept of special and integrated school to educate children with disabilities. They also opined that the Special Education Policy(1996) is the corner stone for the development of special education in Nepal. The special education policy for the education of disabled children was not sufficiently structured to address the unique needs of the disabled children. The definition of the disability was not appropriate and could not all the disabilities type within the disability criteria. However, the policy as a guideline, worked for several years to develop special education in the country was highly appreciated.

3) Inclusive Education Policy 2017: The government of Nepal has recently introduced new inclusive education policy for the development of inclusive education in Nepal. The policy replaced the old special education policy which formulated in the year 1996. The Special Education Policy(1996) is considered a significant step for the development of inclusive education policy. However, the new policy is yet to be implemented. The new inclusive education policy is the most recent and revised document in the field of
special education in Nepal. The policy incorporated the values of inclusiveness, equity and social justice as indicated in the Salamanca Conference (1994). Through the goals and needs of this dimension, the new inclusive policy set its vision to provide quality education for disabled person. The objective of the policy is also to empower, make self-dependent and increase their dignity and respect. The policy aims to (a) ensure the quality education for disable children with equitable assess; (b) provide opportunity of need based, life skills, skills based and employment based quality education for disable person; and (c) ensure the provision of lifelong education for disabled people. Considering the assumptions and needs of normative dimension, the policy made a provision to establish the inclusive education section with focal person in the Ministry of Education, Department of Education, and even in the local level. Regarding the ideological and post modern perspectives, the new policy changed the existing scenario with shifting towards the inclusive education from special education to better address the diversity of the children in the wider context. The policy also incorporated the perspectives of human right concept, and increasing trend of inclusive practice in education. It has been acting as a push factor to change the situation existing in special education scenario in the country.

The existing Inclusive Education Policy(2017) is the result of this paradigm shift in ideology of special education. The experts who are working in Inclusive Education Unit under DOE, opined that the previous policy could not cover broad areas of disability and needs of the disabled students as well. It being the newly emerged concept of educational paradigms, the policy is expected to be an important policy to ensure the educational rights of disabled children. But they claimed that the new policy could have covered broad areas of disabilities and also incorporated the needs of disabled students. They further opined that the present policy introduced the new educational paradigms in inclusive education. Hence, the present policy is well reformed policy irrespective of having some minor lacking. The has categorized the disability in broader sense and provided a lot impetus for the policy implementor a clearer guideline for ensuring educational rights of the children with special educational needs.

2. Constitutive Dimension

Constitutive dimension describes policy as the product of the influence of elites, masses and other several interest groups. It reveals the fact that policies are formed for the benefit of the certain segments of the society which influence and participate in policy making. This dimension includes the issues about access to power, how these interest groups make their needs felt, and the degree to which competing interests can work out to meet the needs. In this dimension, policies are formed and fashioned by the constituent groups that favour and oppose them formally through governmental structure, and informally through their
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social power to influence other groups. Neo-pluralist advocacy coalition and interest group models, as well as critical and feminist theories, focus attention on actors in this dimension.

1) Special Education Policy Before 1996: The policy did not focus on special education but it ensured the education for disabled disadvantaged and marginalized people. Regarding the context of special education policy, before 1996 is the developmental phase of special education in the context of Nepal. In this stage, there were lacking the components of Constituent dimension. These policies did not include the provision to address the ethnic and gender minority groups. These policies were unable to incorporate the feminist theory because there was no special provision for girls education. Furthermore, this stage is based on the belief that Nepalese society favored more for male education over females. The concept of gender equality was not addressed. Male people were more preferred over female even in the school management and practices.

The researcher took the interview with two experts who are working in Ministry of Education of Nepal. They opined that the Education Act 1971 was the first attempt to provide education for the children with disabilities. Policies of this stage were unable to incorporate the educational rights the ethnic, gender, and minority groups without any bias and prejudices. They also opined that the education act was not able to create an environment appropriate for raising public awareness to socialize disabled people. So that, the policies of this stage could not address the concept of interest group theory for the development of special education in Nepal. Without addressing the interest and needs of needy people, it is very difficult to meet the sustainable developmental goals of special education sector as well as general education sector in the context of multi-cultural society of Nepal.

2) Special Education Policy from 1996 to 2016: The government of Nepal has rearranged the special education program to continue in the name of Basic and Primary Education Project(BPEP) assisted specially by DANIDA. The objective of BPEP in terms of Special Education was to provide integrated education in the regular school to the disable children(Ministry of Education, 2004). According to the interest group theory of policy dimension, special schools teach only to the students with different types of disability by making provisions of separate school as per the type of disability. Integrated school arrangement of teaching through teachers who have received training related to special education by making arrangement of resource class and essential instructional materials. Thus, making an attempt to accommodate the students with mild and moderate disability, and visually impaired, and blinds to the regular classrooms. The policy have no provision to address the ethnic and gender minority groups as well as interest groups.

When considering the elite concept of this dimension, the policy was influenced by the elites on the
production of curriculum, educational materials and textbooks for children with disability and provide necessary training to the teachers. Different modes of evaluation systems based on the types of disability were introduced to help the disabled children. It aimed to provide concession to import materials such as wheel chair, crutch, white cane, hearing aid, etc. The researcher had taken interview with two experts who are working in Tribhuvan university of Nepal, opined that the previous Education Act 1971 could not cover areas of disability, needs of the disabled students and the policy has felt to incorporate the ethnic and gender minority groups. But this policy introduced the concept of interest group theory by making different modes of evaluation systems based on the types of disability and help them as per their condition. Even though, they opined that the Special Education Policy(1996) is the cornerstone for the development of special education in Nepal. From the above information, as a researcher it is better to address the educational rights of ethnic and gender minorities group specially focuses on woman of rural areas. The researcher strongly recommend the effective implementation of Special Education Guidelines (2004) which was prepared for addressing equal educational rights of the children with disabilities.

3) Inclusive Education Policy 2017: The policy encompasses many strategies to meet the objectives such as enrolling the disabled students in the schools and university, and enhance their learning based on scientific and functional assessment processes. This policy made some significant changes in the special education in Nepal. It categorized the people with disability in twelve different categories and defined the disability in more specific categories. The present policy has also incorporated constituent dimension as it aims to educate disable children together with the general children in the same school covering the idea of mass education. It also aims to include ethnic and gender minorities in the inclusive education program. Additionally, it also has incorporated the idea of different types and nature of disability in line with the interest group theory.

Regarding the interest group theory, the Inclusive Education Policy(2017) also incorporated curriculum and curricular activities of inclusive education from early childhood education to higher level. The policy further ensures the provision of subject selection based on accessible format considering the needs and nature of disability. Likewise, the examination and evaluation system is adjusted to accessible format based on the nature and needs of disability. In addition, the policy also ensures the violence free inclusive culture in all educational institutions for disabled children. The existing policy again ensures the visual support with simple curricular materials for Intellectual disability, Down syndrome and Autistic children as well. Moreover, the current inclusive education policy also emphasizes individual learning and teaching plan based on specific needs of disabled children.
3. Structural Dimension

This dimension emphasizes the structure of the institutions and plays vital role in regulating system and policy process. These structures are primarily the government organizations and institutions; and these structures help in promulgating and supporting policies in education. The role of the local educational structures for e. g. federal, regional and local educational structures play crucial role in regulating the policy process. The core idea of Neo-institutional theory is the recognition that institutions of the state exert an independent effect on policy, shaping it in the preferred ways.

1) Special Education Policy before 1996: The Education Act(1971) also incorporated the structural dimension. It tried to establish the provision of special educational arrangement to provide education for blind, deaf and mentally retarded children. Education Act(1971) was a cornerstone for taking education system in the new horizon. The education act totally changed the structure of textbooks, teacher training and many more. Although it covered structural dimension, but it could not incorporate the concept of integrated and special schools to educate the children with disability. Therefore, 1970s decade is considered as the beginning decade of education for children with disabilities.

Furthermore, the Government considered the structural dimension and introduce Disable Protection and Welfare Act(1982). This act is providing the practical solutions for problems of people with disabilities in the country. It has mentioned the provisions of free education for disable people in educational institutions. It accepted that special education teachers are subjected to receive necessary training to enhance the quality education for disabled children. It has ensured the educational opportunity for blind, deaf and mentally retarded children with the special considering their needs and rights to education. The deliberate efforts to ensure educational opportunity to the disabled children by the government resulted in the establishment of a school in 1996 for deaf children named Bal Mandir Naxal. All the programs of special education started to be conducted by the Social Welfare National Coordination Council after its establishment in 1977. The researcher has taken interview with the two experts who are working in Ministry of Education of Nepal, Both of them had the same opinion. They opined that the Education Act(1971) is the beginning act of children with disabilities. They also reported that Special Education Council(1973) was formed under the chairmanship of Education Minister and provided total responsibility and accountability for the promotion of special education in Nepal. Because of instable politics and recurrently changing government, the council could not function well to contribute the overall development of Special Education in the country. From the opinion of the respondents it is concluded that from the perspectives of structural dimension of policy theory, the Special Education Council(1973) was formed as a result of the policy which is an apex body for the development of special education in the country.
2) Special Education Policy from 1996 to 2016: This policy was a breakthrough in the history of special education in Nepal in many ways. This policy was the first and the most important legal document to manage and develop special education in Nepal. It also aimed at bringing about some changes in the structure of the government agencies to cater the needs of disabled children and thus, can be said to have covered structural dimension. It also introduced the concept of integrated and special schools to educate the children with disability as suggested by the Neo-institutional theory under structural dimension. According to system and processes of this dimension, special school arrangement have been incorporated separate school according to the type of disability. Integrated school arrangement of teaching through teachers who have received training related to special education by making arrangement of resource class and required instructional materials for children with mild and moderate disability along with the visual impairments and blind.

Furthermore, the Special Education Policy(1996) defined disability and classified its types also made necessary provisions to conduct a detailed survey to find out the condition of the disabled children. Besides, it also envisioned to ensure legal provision for safe school environment for the children with disability and provided them free education both in school and university level. In this study, the researcher had taken interview with two experts who are working in Tribhuvan University of Nepal, They opined that the previous Education Act 1971 could not cover areas of disability, needs of the disabled students. But this policy introduced the concept of special and integrated school to educating children with disabilities. They also opined that the Special Education Policy(1996) was an important undertaking for the development of special education in Nepal. The policy is actually unable to define disability and left many problems during its implementation. The policy could not incorporate the idea of Individual Disability Education Act(IDEA, 2004).

3) Inclusive Education Policy 2017: This policy made some significant changes in the special education in Nepal. The existing Inclusive Education Policy(2017) is the result of this paradigm shift in ideology of special education. The Inclusive Education Policy(2017) established Inclusive Education Council on the chairmanship of Education Minister for the development of inclusive education in Nepal. Regarding the system and processes of this dimension, previous special education policy categorized the disability in seven different types but new policy has categorized disabilities in twelve different types namely multiple disability, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, autism, intellectual disability, hemophilia, deaf and hard of hearing, blind, deaf with visual impairment, physical disability, speech disorder and learning disability. In addition to this, new policy made several provisions of institutional structures for implementing inclusive education in Nepal.
Moreover, the researcher had taken interview with two head teachers of special schools regarding this new inclusive education policy context, majority of the respondents had common idea that the previous special education policy could not properly categorize the disability, but this policy categories the disability covering most of the disability types with utmost effort. This policy also emphasis on infrastructures and practicing much of special education, They expressed their idea upon how the current inclusive education policy could be well implemented in its full spirit. In this regards, the researcher came to conclude that the respondents were optimistic in implementing new policy to address the disabled children with diversified background.

4. Technical Dimension

The technical dimension explains the policy process in the light of educational planning, practice, implementation and evaluation of the policy making process in detail. System theory is the major idea to understand the policy contents, analyze and examine the consequences the effects of policy implementation. System theory views education policy as a serious of stages. It assumes that the policy is shaped by the various political actors and interest groups and the outcome is determined by the overall institutional system.

1) Special Education Policy before 1996: The technical dimension of the policy theory were not addressed in this stage. The Education Act(1971) have no provision to prepare the Special Education operation guidelines for the effective implementation of special education in Nepal. This dimension did not addressed the concept of system theory to view education policy as a serious of stages in which the policy is shaped by different political and non-political actors. Furthermore, the Education Act(1971) only introduced the concept of special education then formulated the Special Education Council and Disable Protection and Welfare Act(1982). These acts were formulated for providing the practical solutions of people with disabilities. Both the acts tried to ensure the free education for disable people in educational institutions.

There was no any detailed guidelines for the effective implementation of the existing provision to develop the situations of disabled people in the country. The researcher had taken interview with the two experts who are working in Ministry of Education of Nepal, They opined that the Education Act(1971) was the initiation for the education of children with disabilities. They also reported that Special Education Council was fully mandated for overall formulation of special education policies and the development of special education in Nepal. From the above mentioned information, it was found that the council could
not prepare the concrete guidelines which could have helped to go into an immediate action for the
development of special education in Nepal.

2) **Special Education Policy from 1996 to 2016:** Nepal has enforced many policies related to special
education in the country and these policies are formulated to ensure the educational rights of the disabled,
marginalized, poor and disadvantaged children. According to the system theory perspective of technical
dimension, the Special Education Policy(1996) defines special education as teaching, learning and training
arrangement. It also incorporated the special method to be applied in the classroom to meet the special
needs of the children with disabilities. Perceiving through steps and stages of the technical dimension, the
policy classified the disability in seven categories namely a) physical disabled, b) mentally retarded, c) deaf
and hearing impaired, d) blind or poor eyesight, e) teaching difficulty, f) problem in voice, language and
communication skill and g) multi-disability. It also defined integrated and special schools, their nature and
responsibility they have to bear.

Planning, implementation, and evaluation of this dimension were not addressed to provide the detailed
guideline on the steps and procedures to be adopted for the desired changes. The researcher interviewed
with the two experts who are working in Tribhuvan University of Nepal, opined that the previous
Education Act(1971) could not cover all areas of disability, needs of the disabled students but this policy
introduced the concept of special and integrated school to educating children with disabilities. The Special
Education Policy(1996) did not provide the detailed guideline on the steps and procedures to be adopted
for the desired changes. Considering the opinions provided by the respondents, the Special Education
Policy(1996) was the core document for the development of special education in Nepal. As compared to
previous education acts and policies, this policy seems to be more progressive and practical. It would be
different in the field of special education, if the policy had implemented with its fullest spirit.

3) **Inclusive Education Policy 2017:** Government of Nepal has recently introduced new inclusive policy
for development of inclusive education in Nepal. The vision of new policy is to provide quality education
for disabled person making them empowered, self-dependent and helping in their day to day life.
considering the technical dimension, the policy encompasses many strategies to meet the objectives of the
policy; such as to enroll the disabled students in the schools and university enhancing their learning based
on scientific and functional assessment processes. The policy also ensures the provision of subject selection
based on accessible format considering the needs and nature of disability. The examination and evaluation
system is adjusted to accessible format to the disabled students.

Furthermore, the policy is mainly guided by the technical dimension of policy theory(Cooper, Fusarelli, &
Randall, 2004), as it has clearly mentioned the strategies and stages of the implementation of the programmes and policies envisioned. It has mentioned a clear schedule for the implementation of the existing policy and programmes. The planning, implementation and evaluation procedure of the special education programmes are more specific and clearer from the perspective of the system theory. The researcher took interview with two head teacher of special schools regarding this new inclusive education policy context. The majority of the respondents had similar idea that the previous special education policy could not have been practiced adequately in its full spirit. Without developing enough infrastructures and practicing much of special education, the successful implementation of inclusive education policy is uncertain. However, the respondents were optimistic in implementing new policy to address the disabled children. In this regards, the researcher found that learning from the experiences of implementing pervious policies, the new policy seems to be clearer in term of implementing trajectory the new Inclusive Education Policy(2017) clearly speaks about the responsible institutions time frame and the norms for allocating necessary budget.


<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Special Education policies before 1996 (stage I)</th>
<th>Special Education Policy, 1996 (Stage II)</th>
<th>Inclusive Education Policy for the Disable People, 2017 (stage III)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Normative | - The previous policies is mainly guided by normative dimension  
- Tried to bring about changes the beliefs, values and ideologies from general education to special education in Nepalese society | - Mainly guided by normative dimension  
- Tried to establish the values that people with disability are equally important  
- Aimed at providing opportunities to disable people | - Incorporated and continued the normative dimension of policy theory and aimed to bring changes in the beliefs in society about the people with disability |
| 2. Constituent | - Lacked the Constituent dimension  
- There was no provision to address the ethnic and gender minority groups. | - No provision to address the ethnic gender minority groups as the interest groups. | - Aims to educate disable children together with the general children in the same school covering the idea of mass education.  
- Included ethnic and gender minorities in the inclusive education program.  
- Incorporated the idea of different types or nature of disability. |
5. Policy Direction for the Future

There was not separate special education policy before 1996. The Government of Nepal introduced special education policy in 1996 for the first time in special education history. The policy incorporated only seven categories of disability, and also lacked specific schedule for implementation. This policy was carried out until the new policy was not formulated. The Incheon Strategy(2012) stated to make the right real for the person with disability in Asia and Pacific region with covering ten goals for promoting inclusive education for the disabled children. The Inclusive Education Policy(2017) was formulated encompassing the spirit of Incheon Declaration. inclusive education policy consisted many new provisions for educational rights of disabled children and put forward an idea where the shift in educational paradigm is clearly reflected. Unfortunately, the policy has failed to encompass all the disability types with broad categorization and defining each disability as it has been done in IDEA(2004). IDEA well defines the disability and categorizes broadly in thirteen different types(Kirk, Gallagher, & Coleman, 2015). This policy

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| Structural | - This stage covers structural dimension but not incorporated the concept of integrated and special schools to educate the children with disability.  
- It established the provision of special educational arrangement to provide education for blind, deaf and mentally retarded children | - Aimed at changing the structure of the government agencies to cater the needs of the disable children  
- Introduced the concept of integrated and special schools | - Incorporated and continued the structural dimension of policy theory and envisioned to have inclusive schools |
| Technical  | - Technical dimension of the policy theory were not addressed.  
- There is no any detailed guideline on the steps and procedures to be adopted in the previous policies. | - Not addressed much as it did not provide the detailed guideline on the steps and procedures to be adopted for the desired changes. | - Has mentioned the strategies and stages of the implementation of the programmes and policies envisioned  
- Has mentioned a clear schedule for the implementation of the policy and programmes.  
- Specific and clearer guideline for planning, implementation and evaluation of the policy and programs. |
came with sound and handy provisions for its implementation but still there are many recent trends to be incorporated because the inclusive education in Nepal has a long way to go. However, inclusive education policy of 21st century has not incorporated the international developmental trends and values of special education. Therefore, the researcher came to the conclusion that this policy still needs to be revised including the trends emerging across the globe.

The policy needs to have incorporated Individualized Family Service Plan(IFSP), Individualized Education Plan(IEP) and Transitional planning. The Response to Intervention(RTI) is the new strategy instruction in the field of special education which should be essentially included in the policy. The policy is silent about its implementation guidelines, home-school collaboration, continuum of support and using modern alternative and assistive devices in instructional procedures. Some of the components of special education are mentioned in the policy, however these components are not adequately defined and are vague to understand. The policy needs to be revised and should be included of the major provisions of special education processes in detail and insert newly established provisions of special educational strategies. Considering the above suggestions in mind, the Government of Nepal should take initiation immediately to incorporate in Special Education Master Plan which is going to be prepared soon in the future.

**IV. Conclusion**

The education for disabled people was realized and reflected for the first time in the National Education System Plan 1971. It was the formal start of special education from the government side in the name of education for disabled. Nepal endorsed many international provisions resulted into the formation of Special Education Policy(1996) which became the backbone of special education activities for almost two decades. However, the efforts made for the development of special education were not sufficient to provide access and quality of education to the disabled people. The policies formulated for the last three decades have seen to be instrumental in shaping the programmes conducted by governmental and non-governmental organizations in the country. Although, the policy contributed much in main-streaming special education in the national education system. There are many weakness prevailed in the policy. Hence, the policy demanded many reforms in the existing provisions so that the new policy came in the existence.

The review of the policies related to special education in Nepal shows that the special education policy was guided primarily by normative and structural dimensions of policy theory and could not incorporate the constituent and technical dimensions. This led the ineffective mechanism for policy implementation. Later, this policy laid the foundation to formulate new one incorporating other dimensions of policy theory.
The Inclusive Education Policy (2017) has incorporated all four dimensions of the policy theory viz. normative, structural, constituent and technical dimensions with special focus on the technical dimension. The inclusive education policy has been provided a clear institutional framework with clear responsibility of the organizations for implementation. However, because of missing some important components of special education process, the policy still needs to be revised.

**References**


Special Education Policy in Nepal: A Critical Review from Policy Theory

Author.
정책 이론의 사차원적 관점에 기초한 네팔 특수교육 정책의 비판적 탐색

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주요어: 특수교육, 장애, 정책, 통합교육, 메인스트림