

The Ecological Model of Education for Disability in Pakistan

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Abstract

The article highlights the current trends and issues with regard to access to education of disabled individuals in Pakistan. The main objective of the article is to analyze the present situation of providing education to disabled individuals in Pakistan. The basic tool of the research includes semistructured interviews (SSI) of the special and mainstream school principals, teachers, parents of disabled children and the personnel from Pakistan communication media. The research instrument included three interview protocols for three sets of respondents, with a major focus on problems, issues and prospects of education of disabled children. Researchers undertook the qualitative analysis of the data, with grounded theory as a basis for thematic analysis of SSI. The thematic analysis of SSI revealed the importance of ecological model, viz, home, school and society in the education of disabled individuals.

Key Words: Disability, Ecological Model, Inclusive Education, Educational Policies, National policies for Rehabilitation of Disabled.

This article can be cited as:

Jawad, A. Iqbal, J & Zamir, S. (2016). The Ecological Model of Education for Disability in Pakistan, *Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 1(2), 4 - 35.¹

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Introduction

UNICEF (2003) indicates that approximately ten percent of total population of Pakistan is suffering from some kind of disability. Number of people with disabilities is greater in rural areas than in urban areas. Poverty is a major cause of disability in Pakistan as it results from malnutrition, poor health care and unhygienic living conditions. Natural disasters, especially earthquake in 2005, have also increased disability in Pakistan (Awan, Ramzan and Mehmood, 2004). Disabled people face multitude of barriers in access to education, employment, transportation and healthcare. Most people with disabilities do not possess academic and vocational skills; consequently they cannot enter the employment market (Abbas, 2006; Tyrrell, 2006). Pakistan cannot achieve a higher literacy rate without providing appropriate education policies and practices for children with disabilities. The Bureau of Statistics reported in 1998 that 2.54% of the population were disabled in Pakistan; increasing to 2.65% in 2012. About one-fourth, i.e., twenty-four percent of disabled children were of school going age. Among them only 2.4% were enrolled in schools (Persons with Disabilities, 2012). Sometimes these disabled children face disregard from their siblings and peers and are not sure of their potentials to become useful citizens. When these children pass the age of schooling they find even fewer opportunities for job placements and become a liability for the family (UNICEF, 2003). In this scenario, the present research is an attempt to highlight the significance of the role of school, parents and society in education of children with disabilities. They should recognize the knowledge, skills and the abilities of children with disabilities (Tinklin, Riddel and Wilson, 2004). One of the advocated strategies is inclusive education. Inclusive education has not been successfully implemented in Pakistan. The disabled children need modifications in the existing infrastructure, adaptation of the curriculum and in-service teachers' training programs. Changes in the school buildings are also needed to ensure they can accommodate the needs of children with disability and allow their full participation in the educational activities (UNICEF, 2003;

United Nation Human Rights, 2010). There is a need to procure and utilize significant resources for an effective inclusive system of education.

The Ecological Model of Disability

The ecological model of disability is a powerful conceptual framework. It defines disability through inter-relationship of children with disabilities and their environment (Oliver, 1983). The model explains that disabled children not only depend upon their functioning abilities and individual resilience for their academic and vocational achievements but also on persons surrounding them in the society (Barnes and Mercer, 2003; Bricout, Shirley, Colleen, Mathew, 2004).

The ecological model refers to the attitudes of parents, school and the society towards the disabled (Kirk and James, 1986). Parents have powerful influence on their children. Conversely, the children with disability also affect their parents' life significantly. The parents of children with disabilities often find it difficult to accept this reality as they perceive disability as an end to their dreams and aspirations (Power-deFur and Orellove, 1997). Caring for such children requires hard work and continuous commitment. Children with disabilities need encouragement and right support to build their selfconfidence. Major role of the parents is to teach their children to cope with difficult and challenging situations and to live independently in the society (Unicef, 2007). Taub (2006) and Klinger and Vaughn (1999) assign a pivotal role to school and the teachers of special need children and their parents. Teachers play a vital role in providing optimal learning to their students. They should care about the cognitive and affective domains to motivate the students towards learning and meaningful curricular and co-curricular activities (Milner, 2005; Fontana and Lari, 2001). Furthermore, the school can help children with disabilities through effective communication between parents and teachers, either formally in the shape of parent-teacher meetings or informally through regular interactions. Continuous communications between parents and teachers help resolve a

number of academics, behavioral or social problems of the disabled children (Rief, 1993).

Society plays an important role in providing basic health, welfare and educational facilities to the children with disabilities by providing easy access to the buildings, transport and other community resources. The prevailing attitudes and pre-conceptions in the society also affect the lives of children with disabilities. United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 focuses on paradigm shift in attitudes and approaches towards Persons with Disabilities. The ecological model emphasizes the role of civil society in changing the negative attitudes towards disability (Unicef, 2007).

The term 'disability' has been used in this paper to refer to deaf and dumb, visual impairment and physical disability. Moreover, the article uses the terms 'Persons with Disabilities' and 'Children with Disabilities' following the National Education Policy 2009 of Pakistan. The terms, 'Persons without Disabilities' and/or 'Children without Disabilities' are used rather than the generally applied terms 'normal people' or 'normal children'; the rationale is to avoid discrimination against Children with Disabilities and Persons with Disabilities in Pakistan.

Methodology

The study adopted qualitative approach aimed at portraying a "holistic picture" (Shank, 2002) of Ecological Model of Education for children with disabilities in Pakistan. Twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad were selected for this case study. The semi-structured interviews (SSI) and field visits of selected mainstream and special schools were carried out during the data collection phase of the study. The criterion referenced sampling technique was employed to select seventeen participants, *viz.* five parents, five principals and administrative personnel, five teachers and two radio producers. The SSI protocol consisted of three different semi-structured interview protocols with

five questions each, and a number of probes according to the individual situations and respondents.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Academic and Media Respondents

Sr. No	Category	Experience	Institute	Gender
1	Principal	30 years	Federal Government Higher Secondary School (School A)	Female
2	Principal	26 years	Private Secondary Higher School (School B)	Female
3	Principal	12 years	Private Institute for Special Education (School C)	Female
4	Principal	12 years	Private Institute for Special Education (School D)	Male
5.	Principal	14 years	Government College for Women (College A)	Female
6	Principal	30 years	Government Elementary School (School E) Main stream school (School F)	Female
7	Teacher	10 years	Government Boys Blind School (School G)	Female
8.	Teacher 20 Years		Government Blind Girls School (School H)	Male
9.	Principal	20 Years		Female
10	Producer	26 Years	Pakistan Radio	Female
	Admission Incharge	26 Years	Public Sector University (University A)	Female

Table 2: Demographic Profile of the Parents

Sr. No	Parents	Nature of the occupation	Age of the Child	Nature of Disability
1	Father of AB	Retired Army Officer	13 Years	Mental Retardation & Physical Disability
2	Father of SK	Security Guard	6 Years	Delayed Speech & ADHD
3	Mother of KU	School Teacher	13 Years	Cerebral Palsy

4	Mother of AR	School Teacher	20 Years	ASD
5.	Mother of RN	House Wife	8 years	Physical disability
6	Father of MK	Army Officer	20 years	ASD

The SSI protocol for principals of special and inclusive schools included items on inspirational and motivational factors for starting a special or inclusive school; admission policies; the attitude of parents, peers and society or community towards disabled children; the school support system (e.g., counseling, awareness programs) for understanding the nature of disability and handling difficult situations arising due to inclusion of disabled children in their schools. The principals of the mainstream schools were interviewed to find out their views on the enrollment policies and support system for children with disabilities in mainstream schools. The SSI protocol for the parents included similar questions with minor additions on their personal experiences in caring and raising a child with disabilities; their feelings when they first found that their child was suffering from a disability; their coping mechanisms; and hopes, aspirations and future plans for their children. The SSI protocol for the media personnel was largely focused on role of media in increasing awareness of problems and issues prevalent in educating children with disability in Pakistan.

The inductive approach was used to analyze the qualitative data. The approach established a direct contact with the respondents and added details to the complex picture (Shank, 2002) of education of children with disabilities, studying in the educational institutions of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The verbal data was transcribed following Riesman (1993) and Bird (2005). Validity was maintained through member checking, i.e., reporting back the transcribed interviews to the respondents. The thematic coding was carried out

following Holloway and Todres (2003) and Braun and Victoria (2006). The major themes were defined and named.

Results and Discussion

The thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews revealed the importance of ecological model for education of children with disabilities with following themes.

- The parental attitudes towards their children with disabilities
- The role of school in lives of children with disabilities
- The society and the children with disabilities

Table 3: Hierarchy of Over-arching Major and Sub-Themes of the Study

Sr. No	Major Themes	Sub-themes
1	The parental attitudes towards their children with disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parents feel pride in academic performance of their children • The parents' attitudes towards their hostel-residents vs. day-scholar children with disability • The parents are suffering from self pity • The parents being over-protective of their children with disability

- 2 The role of school in lives of children with disability
 - The personal inspiration of the founders of private Institutes of Special Education
 - The admission policies in mainstream schools for enrollment of children with disability
 - The role of inclusive education in mainstream schools vs. Special Education Institutes in the education of children with disability
 - Support system and counseling programs in schools for parents of disabled children
- 3 The society and the children with disability
 - Lack of awareness (misconceptions, prejudices, fear and sympathy)
 - Role of media

Parental Attitudes towards their Disabled Children

The thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews revealed different parental attitudes towards their disabled children and their education, accordingly, the major theme was divided into following sub-themes:

- Parents feel pride in academic performance of their children
- Parents' attitudes towards their hostel-residents vs. day-scholar disabled children
- Parents are suffering from self-pity
- Parents being over-protective of their disabled children

The following section provides a detailed description of the above mentioned sub-themes.

□ **Parents' pride in academic performance of their children with disabilities**

Findings suggested that a majority of parents accepted their child's disabilities with no shame, regret or self pity. Rather they were proud of their efforts to make child's life comfortable and productive. When enquired that how they felt when they first found that their child had a disability, they narrated their stories of courage, effort and learning new experiences while dealing with specialty issues of their child; hope in the future of the child and a strong belief in God. For instance:

...Our son was born premature and was placed in an incubator. The doctors had no hope for his survival. He was so small and underweight that no one could imagine that he could survive. Nonetheless, when he finally survived it was a blessing. After a few months when we discovered that the child had a cerebral palsy and a weaker right side of his body, it did not come as a shock to us. We were already mentally prepared for serious physical or mental health issues of the child... (Father of AB)

The participant commented that he gathered information on cerebral palsy and its remedies when he found that his child was suffering from the disease. One year later he enrolled himself in Masters in Special Education Program. It equipped him with deep insights into the problems of the child and also assisted him to acquire patience in dealing with his son. He mentioned that initially his special child was inclined to dependency. He avoided physical exercise as the effort was painful to him. It was a hard time for him. However, gradually he learned how to be assertive as well as cajoling and corrective to teach self-help skills to his special child.

The semi-structured interviews brought forth that the disability of a child was a great learning experience for some parents. Father of SK belonged to a low socio-economic status. He mentioned that:

...By nature I was a short tempered man. However my temperament changed when a speech delayed child was born in my family. He was very stubborn when he was young. He rejected food and the toilet training. I realized that he could not be managed through a strict discipline code. My son's disability taught me not only patience, but also a deeper belief in God. Gradually, I learnt techniques for effective behavior management of my child...

Parents narrated challenges and opportunities; they had acted as counselors, mentors and even artists, while raising children with disabilities. Father of 'AB' recounted that finding an appropriate ankle shoe for the child posed serious practical setbacks for him. Finally, when he purchased it on special order, the child did not want to wear it. He feared that shoes would make him different and this may provoke others to tease him. The father had to continuously counsel his son before he could accept the shoes as a natural solution to his physical disability. He further elaborated his creativity as follows:

...I had a creative mind, but I learned more creativity due to the disability of my son. I designed several games and toys for the child; designed wood tools like a carpenter and adopted furniture, play objects and the physical environment of my house according to his needs...

He had prompted his child to climb on monkey bar in a local park, which the child could do with reluctance and difficulty. Climbing on a monkey bar was helpful in attaining physical dexterity. Therefore, he designed his own monkey bar in the house. At the time of interview, his son was ten years old and was using the monkey bar independently.

□ The parents' attitude towards their hostel-resident vs. dayscholar disabled children.

The respondents maintained that a few poverty-stricken parents living in remote areas of Pakistan overlook the emotional needs of their children living in residential schools, as compared to their children without disabilities living with them. The teacher of School 'F' commented that:

...sometimes, the parents don't even come to take their children on special occasions, such as *Eid* holidays, etc.

Sometimes I pay for the home telephone calls of such children, in order to relieve their home sickness...

On other hand, the principal of School 'H' commented positively on the attitude of parents who enroll their children in day schooling. They try to resolve physical and emotional issues of child with disabilities on day to day basis. Often they were found proud of their child's academic and personal achievements.

Chohan and Qadir (2013) maintain that poverty is closely related with parental attitude towards education of their children. Fan (2001) elaborates that the socio-economic status is also co-related with parents' educational aspirations towards their children. In this context, the researchers of the present study probed the effects of socio-economic status of parents on education of their disabled children. One participant commented that: ...sometimes the parents belonging to very low or high middle class; or the single parents belonging to broken families tend to neglect the educational needs of their special children. However, it is not a rule of the thumb. Parents belonging to any socio-economic profile may show positive or negative attitude towards their children with disability... (Principal of

School 'D')

The principal further commented that the attitude of parents highly affects the disabled children. If parents do not hesitate to accompany their disabled children to outdoor activities, their children show high self esteem. The socio-economic status of parents is not as important as their strong determination to help their children. He narrated several courageous stories of parents belonging to low socio-economic status. For instance, a poor man belonging to a far off town of Punjab migrated to Islamabad to enroll his child in a special institute. Another parent of a child with disabilities was a security guard. He had a child with delayed speech and behavior problems, and three other daughters. He enrolled his child in a private special school of Rawalpindi. The school provided free of cost education along with speech and behavior therapy to the child but not the pick-and-drop service. The father opted for several services but his special child reacted aggressively to all of them. Finally, he had decided to pick and drop the child himself; even at the cost of his job.

The parents suffering from self pity

Interviewing the principals also highlighted the pessimistic views of a few parents towards their children with disabilities. The speech therapist of School 'D' commented that:

...only those parents fail to cope with the disability of the child who fall into self pity. They think that worst had happened to them and they cannot do anything about it. They should be made aware that having a child with disability is not the most devastating thing in life...

She further commented that some parents feel shame, guilt or fear of a child with disabilities. They need counseling to understand how to cope with their anxiety, stress, and grief for having a child with disabilities.

The parents who are over-protective to their disabled children

While talking about the parent-teacher interactions, the principal of School 'C' commented that some parents tend to over-protect their children with

disabilities. They do not allow teachers or therapists to teach coping skills to their children. Another respondent reported that a few parents expected their child to perform and learn at an un-realistically fast rate. They did not accept the natural rate and blamed school for slow learning profile of their child. Sometimes, they transferred them to other special school. Their children seriously reacted to new environment, and were re-enrolled in their previous school. It wasted their invaluable learning time. She commented that special schools should introduce counseling programs to guide parents on individual learning needs of special children as well as pace and necessary time required for their therapy treatment.

Theme 2 Role of School in Lives of Disabled Children

The following section highlights the role of school in the lives of disabled children.

The personal inspiration of the founders of private Institutes of Special Education

The admission policies in mainstream schools for enrollment of children with disabilities

Role of inclusive education in mainstream schools vs. Special Education Institutes in the education of children with disabilities and;

School's support system and counseling programs for parents of children with disabilities

Personal inspiration of the founders of private Institutes of Special Education

The interviews with teachers and principals of private special schools provided insights into the personal inspiration of the founders. The principal of School 'D' informed that he established a private institute for special children because his own son was suffering from cerebral palsy. He established formal and

informal forums for parents of the disabled children to share ideas, feelings, and experiences. His private school provided a formal platform for education; physical, behavioral and speech therapies and free of cost seminars for parents of the special children. Some other respondents reported that they established private schools to provide support and rehabilitation to deserving children with disabilities.

The admission policies in mainstream schools for enrollment of disabled children

The National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, Pakistan (2002) stated that the Federal, Provincial and District level Governments will play essential role in meeting the educational needs and integration of disabled children in mainstream schools. It also promised provision of special aids, equipments, necessary changes in curriculum for children with special needs, and specialized trainings for the teachers of mainstream schools (Policy Paper, 2005; Shakoor and Mohammad, 2003). Nonetheless, the analysis of the present data revealed that there was no mentionable enrollment policy for special students, at school or college level of education. The principal of School 'A' commented that:

...during my thirty years' career in education, I did not notice any admission policy or any directives from the Federal Directorate of Education on mainstreaming the disabled children in the schools. The mainstreaming issues of special children largely remained unseen and unheard at higher policy and administration levels...

The data revealed that there were no policy directives from the concerned Ministry or Directorate of Education and the enrollment of children with disabilities was left to the consent of principals of main stream schools. The participants reported that they sympathetically considered the enrollment of children with mild and moderate disabilities, and later facilitated them in their curricular and co-curricular activities. The enrollment in-charge of a public

sector university 'A', reported a special *para* (part) in the admission form, guiding students to report any special needs, for on-campus academic or social assistance to these students. However, no special student ever reported their disability to university. She asserted the importance of counseling and guidance for special students to identify and struggle for their rights.

The role of inclusive education in mainstream schools vs. Special Education Institutes in education of disabled children

While probing into the impact of the ecological model, the study also focused on the role of special schools versus inclusive education in the academic and social development of special children. The literature review as well as the present study highlights diverse opinions on inclusive education.

The Indo-Pak subcontinent has a long tradition of integrating children with mild and moderate disabilities into mainstream schools. Begum (1991) described the enrollment of children with visual impairments in middle school in 1940s. The religious institutions had a long tradition of providing equal access to children with disabilities. Blind children have been integrated into religious schools since 19th century (Leitner, 1991; UNICEF, 2003).

During the last two decades, there has been a lively debate among special education teachers, parents, the educationists, and the policy makers on possibility of introducing inclusive education in Pakistan. The National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (Government of Pakistan, 2002) promised 'the paradigm shift from exclusive to inclusive system of education' (Shakoor and Mohammad, 2003, p. 3), and special aids in mainstream schools for children with disabilities. The school culture, policy and practice should be homogenously geared towards inclusive settings in mainstream schools (Ahmad and Yousaf, 2011; Rieser and Peasley, 2002). Nonetheless, the main stream schools in Pakistan still lack in appropriate resources *viz.* trained teachers/support staff, sufficient classroom space and game area and equipment

to facilitate on campus learning of special children. At times the government schools are overcrowded and situated far away from the residence of the disabled students, making it difficult to commute. On the other hand a majority of urban institutes for special children provide residential facilities to students from far flung areas of Pakistan. They also provide pick and drop services to the day scholars. Therefore, the parents of disabled children prefer distant special institutes as compared to mainstream schools even if lying closer to their houses (Nawaz, 2008). Parents are also suspicious of the attitudes of teachers and peers in mainstream schools towards their disabled children (Khatoon, 2003). UNICEF (2003) also reported similar concerns in mainstreaming children with disabilities and emphasized an urgent need for a long term planning required for special children studying in urban and rural mainstream schools across the country.

Contrary to aforementioned views, another participant commented positively on inclusive education. She had served in a Government Institute of Hearing Impaired for twenty six years and started a private Inclusive school after her retirement. She said:

...Inclusive education promotes the positive interaction among children with and without disabilities resulting in positive attitudes towards each other. Further it provides children with disabilities with communication, problem solving, collaborative and creative thinking skills; thus preparing them to live in a larger society after completing their education and providing a new scope to their future life.... (Principal of a privately managed inclusive school 'C')

A teacher of the same inclusive school ('C') commented that:

...it is important for the children with disability to develop a knowledge, awareness and understanding of themselves as well as of others in order to live a productive life in a pluralistic society. On other hand

children without disability become aware of the needs and issues of children with disability and disseminate this knowledge to others during their later life....

She maintained that thoughtfully implemented inclusive education has tremendous potential to transform the lives of children with disabilities as well as their peers without disabilities. Inclusive education is pivotal to enhancing their social skills enabling them to interact, make friends, as well as cope with difficult situations and compete for their survival in a natural setting. It not only helps to alleviate their emotional stress, but also enhances their self concept and self esteem. Research studies report a positive change in the behavior of special children due to day-to-day interaction with their normal peers (Nawaz, 2008; Rasheed and Jawad, 2008).

Conversely, a few other teachers of a mainstream school commented that the teachers of inclusive schools did not possess necessary knowledge or training on disability issues and may manifest fear or bias about disability. One of the participants commented that:

...ten years ago the academic and the administrative staff of mainstream schools were largely unaware of the needs and issues of children with disability. The teachers showed diverse attitudes towards children with disability in their classrooms; starting from a state confusion to hatred; surely going through the middle level reactions of avoidance, ignorance and irritation... When I reflect back to my years of interaction with children with mild and moderate disability in that school, I realize that we still face lags [SIC] in terms of inclusive schools in Pakistan. We urgently need a paradigm shift in mainstream schools in terms of inclusion of children with disability; but how and when it will occur? These are the big questions. Presently, I do not have any answer to them...(Teacher in

mainstream School 'E' and also mother of two children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders [ASD]).

She elaborated that the slow learners, the hearing impaired, the children with mild mental retardation remained unnoticed in mainstream schools in the past. There were no assessment tools or remedial classes for such children. Teachers either neglected them in curricular and co-curricular activities, or felt irritated with their slow performance. There was no assessment for disability at the time of entry. Consequently, mild and moderate disabilities remained unnoticed and unattended in the schools. Sometimes the parents of special children also overlooked the educational issues of special children or did not accept the reality. She mentioned the examples of two kindergarteners; one was a slow learner and the other was a hearing impaired. The slow learner repeated the same class for two years. There were no assessment tools for such children, consequently no remedial classes were arranged.

School support system and counseling programs for parents of disabled children

National Policy for Persons with Disability (Ahmed, Khan and Nasem, 2011) addressed a dire need for counseling and training programs for parents of children with disabilities. It highlighted importance of two types of counseling, namely, **a)** genetic counseling, referring to knowledge about genetic transference of disabilities, and **b)** family guidance for 'teaching competencies and skills essential for social work' (Policy Paper, 2005. 9). The training programs provide opportunities for parents to understand the needs of children with disabilities and provisions for their early learning. Consequently, a majority of Government Institutes of Special Education run such programs effectively in their schools. During present study all respondents reported parents' support or awareness programs, counseling and even training sessions in special institutions. Views of participants revealed that there existed a close parent-teacher relationship in special and inclusive schools. One principal (School 'D') maintained that parents' aspirations and understanding of the

disability has a direct effect on academic achievement and behavior management of the disabled children (Christenson and Sheridan, 2001). They elaborated that a few parents felt lonely in bringing up and caring their disabled child, without any major support from the extended family members, school or the society. Therefore all should work together to improve support and counseling systems for parents of children with disabilities. If parents are depressed for having a special child, they could be counseled that disability could happen to anyone, anytime and anywhere. Therefore disability issues could be accepted positively to make life comfortable for them as well as for their children with disabilities. Another principal (School 'C') maintained that he had a training program for parents of the children suffering from Autistic Spectrum Disorders, where special seminars and counseling session were arranged for them. Special provisions were meant for parents to observe child's training sessions so that they could continue the similar learning activities at home.

Theme 3: Society and the Disabled Children

The theme was further divided into following sub-themes.

Lack of awareness (misconceptions, prejudices, fear and sympathy)

The role of media

The sub-themes are detailed below:

Lack of awareness (misconceptions, prejudices, fear and sympathy)

Participants of the present study manifested humanitarian attitude towards disability. One respondent commented that the religion, spirituality and morality play a significant role in formulating positive attitudes toward disability (Miles, 2007). Sometimes people donate for special schools and financially support the education of the children with disabilities for religious merit. The present research highlighted that common people in Pakistan fear to

discriminate or stigmatize disability due to their religious or philanthropic views (Miles and Farhad, 1999). Nonetheless, the Global Human Rights maintain that persons with disabilities should not be seen as subject of personal sympathy or charity (Oberleitner, 2007). The Discriminatory Act 2005 entails concrete steps to promote positive attitudes and equality of opportunities to children with disabilities and people with disabilities (DfES, 2006). They have a right to live independently, get equal opportunities for education, jobs and recreation; and make their own decisions about their life (UNICEF, 1994). They should be allowed to pursue their choices in life. As a potentially valuable resource of the society, their potential must be discovered, developed and nurtured

Participants of the present study further elaborated that the attitude of society towards disability was more positive in rural as compared to urban areas in Pakistan (UNICEF, 2003). Some urban and educated parents tend to hide the disability more as compared to uneducated parents residing in rural and peripheral areas (The principal of special institute 'D'). Generally speaking, disability is accepted as a part of natural life in rural areas of Pakistan. The rural parents make efforts to provide formal education facilities to their children with disabilities, but if failed, they assertively teach daily life and earning skills to their children. Some time it is easier for persons with disabilities to get married and start their independent life in rural areas as compared to urban settings (Teacher of school 'D').

The data set also revealed that multifarious misconceptions, prejudices and discriminatory practices occur in rural settings due to lack of awareness about disability issues. Respondents reported that common people manifest a multitude of attitudes towards disability. They may be sympathetic; or manifest fear or stereotyped superstitions towards special children. The literature also reveals the societal stereotyping referring to disabled as dependent on others for care and nurture (Grewal, Joy, Lewis, Swales and Woudfield, 2002). In

such circumstances, the children with disabilities may lack normal experiences for personal grooming; become self-conscious and resentful about others' attitudes; or feel it difficult to compete for curricular and co-curricular honors. Sometimes, they lose their self confidence and need others' approvals for their genuine rights. Disabled children need emotional and moral support to build confidence in their abilities. There should be more information available on print and electronic media for an enhanced awareness among common people on the disability issues in the country. The attitudes of common people may be changed by enhanced information about the cause, nature and coping mechanisms for different kinds of disabilities on print and electronic media (Lewis and Doorlag, 2010).

The role of media

National Policy for Persons with Disabilities 2002 (Government of Pakistan, 2002) promised advocacy and awareness of general public about disabilities, and the projection of 'positive images of Persons with Disabilities and their success stories' through media campaigns. Such campaigns were also to be initiated through mosques and other congregational places. It also maintained that 'the public attitude plays an important role for persons with disabilities to function as fully participating members of society' (Policy Paper, 2005, pg. 9). Findings of the present study suggest that electronic or print media can be effective in portraying the genuine rights of people with disabilities among common people of Pakistan. Respondents commented on dearth of radio or television programs on disability issues. The media can play a very effective role to change the mind set and encourage parents to send their children with disabilities to schools. It can provide an ongoing forum in the print and electronic media to dispel the myths and the stereotypes surrounding the Persons with Disabilities in Pakistan.

The data of the present study highlighted personal efforts of a few producers to telecast effective awareness programs on disability issues on Pakistan Radio. One producer, who served in Pakistan radio for last twenty seven years, commented that she started a program named as *Ba-Himat Log* (meaning courageous people). The program emphasized the achievements and success stories and remained a source of inspiration for Persons with Disabilities for several years.

Conclusions and Future Directions

The ecological model plays an important role in education of the disabled children. The research has revealed the views of parents, school teachers and principals of mainstream and special schools and media personnel about education of children with disabilities. It revealed the personal efforts of the respondents to facilitate education of the special children, and in creating awareness about the disability issues. However, such efforts have not been depicted in mainstream school or college policies.

In depth research should be undertaken regularly to investigate the constraints and difficulties faced by children with disabilities and persons with disabilities in their education. It will result in an increased access to reliable data and statistics on education of disability in Pakistan. The development and dissemination of such data through scholarly reports, the print and the electronic media will help to highlight the needs and voices of the disabled children and persons in Pakistan. It will also help to highlight the areas within education system, where the rights of disabled children and persons are violated so that protection of their rights may be ensured. Although, the educational issues of children with disability and persons with disability are well represented in National plans and policies, however, these need to be properly implemented in order to ensure equality and 'Human Rights for All'. The National Policies should be vocal on enrollment and facilitation of

education for the disabled in mainstream schools, colleges and the universities, especially during the long term planning phases.

On the basis of findings of the study it may be suggested that mainstreaming of special children may be made a policy matter at all levels of education. The enrollment and facilitation of education of the special students may be formalized at school, college and the university levels. Government and private education institutes may design appropriate policies to invest time, efforts, patience and support to the special children. There may be more radio and television programs focusing on dissemination of useful information on disabilities. Leading newspapers of the country may reserve a weekly or monthly corner for the awareness of education of disability in Pakistan. Last but not the least, there may be dissemination of information on examples from personal, academic and professional lives of disabled persons in Pakistani society.

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