Special Education Needs and their Multiplicity: Qualitative Analysis of Policy and Interview Surveys from the Communities Surrounding People with Hearing Impairments in Nepal

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Abstract

'Inclusion' refers to the state of diverse people recognizing each other's individuality and needs and working and living together in a society. The idea of 'inclusion' as a state of 'mutual recognition' and 'symbiosis' emerged in the 1980s. It has gained increasing attention today, particularly since it was formally addressed in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015. However, when focusing on inclusion, it must be noted that the concept has more than one meaning. It is a multifaceted idea that encompasses the various needs of the persons, organizations and communities concerned in each context and what is needed for diverse people to live together without conflict. Special education needs (SEN) is one of the people's needs and inclusion can have different meanings in real societies depending on the multiplicity of SEN. Here, the author defines 'multiplicity' as multiple meanings in the diverse contexts where people live and have varying needs. To clarify the structure of multiplicity of SEN, this paper reports on a case study of the policy and community perceptions of people with hearing impairment in Nepal. The research includes an analysis of policies targeting people with disabilities and interviews with people with hearing disabilities, their education, and the stakeholders in it. Nepal has a diverse social and cultural background. As a result, unlike other countries it took a SEN-conscious approach to integrated education as 'inclusive/special needs education (SNE)' from the outset of inclusive education development. The results reveal that the diversity of SEN is not only due to the physical factor of disability but also to the difficulties and disadvantages caused by the variety of social contexts. Social disadvantages and difficulties, more than hearing impairment, hinder people's inclusion through learning in school and working in society. Although the analysis in this paper is limited to the communities surrounding deaf and hard-of-hearing people in Nepal, the issue of the multiple contexts of SEN is of great interest when considering not only equality of educational opportunity but also the issue of equity in meaningful learning.

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Keywords: inclusive education, special needs education, special education needs, Nepal, equity, equality, inclusion, multiplicity, hearing impairments

1. Background and Purpose of this Study

'Inclusion' refers to diverse people recognizing each other's individuality and working and living together in a society. The idea of 'inclusion' as a state of 'mutual recognition' and 'symbiosis' arose in the 1980s, mainly in Europe and the United States, as a key concept in social welfare. Today, it is increasingly under examination, having been addressed in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of 2015.

However, a particular point must be noted when focusing on inclusion. The concept of inclusion has more than one meaning. It is a multifaceted idea that encompasses the various needs of the persons concerned in each context and what is needed for diverse people to live together. Inclusion can have different meanings in real societies. In this study its meaning depends on the multiplicity of special education needs (SEN) of the people included. This study focuses on SEN in inclusive education and aims to clarify its structure.

To explore the multiple meanings of SEN, a case study of the policy and community perceptions of hearing impairment in Nepal was conducted. For this purpose, two research questions were posed: (1) what challenges do people with hearing impairments face in their inclusion in Nepalese society; and (2) What is the structure of multiplicity in SEN?

Section 2 provides an overview of how the concept of inclusion has been discussed in previous studies from two perspectives. First, inclusion has been discussed within a dichotomous framework with diversity. The other is that inclusion can be regarded as one of the primary features of multifaceted situations by considering more diverse factors in SEN. Then, Section 3 identifies the characteristics of Nepal's education for people with disabilities. Nepal is a unique example that has adopted the form of integrated education as an inclusive educational practice. It differs from other countries that started with special education by separating people from those with disabilities, difficulties and disadvantages. Through an analysis of policy and interviews conducted with people with hearing impairments and those involved in their education, various SEN were revealed. Finally, Section 4 clarifies the multiplicity of SEN approaches, focusing on the difficulties and disadvantages that are brought about not only physical factors but also social contexts.

2. A debate on Special Education Needs (SEN)

2.1 Dichotomous Framework of Disability and SEN

Education policy for people with disabilities was set by landmark legislation in the United States. The *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (EAHCA) of 1975 was the first attempt at protection of American students with disabilities against discriminatory treatment by public education agencies. Subsequently, the EAHCA has been modified

several times. It was renamed the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) in 1990 and reauthorized in 1997 and again in 2004, each time to strengthen the protection of students with disabilities (Hossain 2012).

The idea of diversity as part of education needs was coined in the United Kingdom in 1978 in a report titled *Special Educational Needs: Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People* (Warnock Report). SEN is described as learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for some to learn compared to most people of the same age. People with SEN are likely to need extra or different help from that given to other people at their age. The Warnock Report identified the need to reconsider the physical categorization of education for the disabled and introduced the concept of SEN, capturing the different needs of learners. In other words, it considered the multiplicity of special education needs.

The concept of inclusion gained world-wide attention with the issuance of the *Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* (Salamanca Statement) in 1994 – a declaration issued by 92 governments and 25 international organisations. Its preamble states that schools must work with all children, especially those with SEN, and move towards the principle of inclusion to further the aim of education for all. School is an institution that includes everyone but respects individualism, supports inclusive learning but responds to diverse needs (UNESCO 1994, iii-iv).

Special needs education (SNE), referred to in the Salamanca Declaration, is often confused with SEN, but the two differ. UNESCO defines that "SNE is education designed to facilitate the learning of individuals who, for various reasons, require additional support and adaptive pedagogical methods to participate and meet learning objectives in an educational programme." Reasons may include (but are not limited to) disadvantages in physical, behavioural, intellectual, emotional and social capacities (e.g., specially trained personnel, equipment or space) and, if appropriate, modified educational content or learning objectives (UNESCO 2012, 88).

The Salamanca Statement, *Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs* (commonly referred to as the "Green Paper"), was published in 1997 by the British government and stated that "inclusion is a process, not a fixed state. By inclusion, we mean not only that pupils with SEN should wherever possible receive their education in a mainstream school, but also that they should join fully with their peers in the curriculum and life of the school. " Moreover, the statement mentioned that separate provisions may be necessary for specific purposes, and inclusion must encompass teaching and curriculum appropriate to the child's needs (DfEE 1997, 44).

This trend towards inclusion in education can also be observed in North America.

The *Individuals with Disabilities Act* (IDEA) of 2004, which incorporated the requirements of the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) *Act of 2001*, emphasized school accountability and entitled all students, including children with disabilities, to be included in the general education classroom.

In retrospect, this is often seen as a watershed statement highlighting the importance of inclusion by showing how people with identified needs should not be isolated in special care but rather integrated into society in general. While the pursuit of inclusion was stated in Goal 4[1]of the SDGs, UNESCO (2017) also emphasized the importance of "inclusion and equity in education as laying the foundations for quality education and learning." It defined inclusion as "a process that helps to overcome barriers limiting the presence, participation, and achievement of learners" and inclusive education as the "process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners."

2.2 Consideration of a variety of SEN in socio-cultural contexts

The Green Paper mentioned above focused on SEN and expressed support for the Salamanca Declaration and educational strategies for including students with SEN in mainstream classrooms (DfEE 1997). Dyson and Millward (2000) mentioned that the Green Paper was significant because it was the first report to clearly state that students with SEN should be included in mainstream classes in the UK and because it set out the global agenda of the Salamanca Declaration in policy terms, stating that "inclusion is a process" (Dyson and Millward 2000, 1-2).

On the other hand, Ishizuka and Tokunaga (2002) state that it is necessary to consider the child's family, culture, and community environments to determine which causes of their learning difficulties should be considered as SEN. SEN are complex because they are influenced by social and cultural factors such as social institutions, history and culture, and personal factors.

Concerning social contexts, it is important to note Dyson and Millward's (2000) statement, which contradicts Ballard's earlier construction of the nature of inclusivity (Ballard 1997). Ballard's definition of inclusion focuses on non-discrimination in terms of disability, culture, gender or other aspects of students or staff that are considered significant by society. This involves giving equal significance to all students in a community, regardless of their intellectual, physical, sensory, or other differences. Dyson and Millward state that this reflects both Ballard's commitment to disability issues and the importance of cultural diversity in the local context (Dyson and Millward 2000, 2-3).

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[1] Goal 4 of the SDGs is "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all."

Schuelka et al. (2019) identify two implications for future research on inclusive education. First, they suggest that future inclusive education research must broaden its analytic scope by considering socio-cultural differences such as disability, race, gender, social class, and immigrant and language status. Second, they argue that given the increasing global inequality, future inclusive education research should re-imagine and reframe the concept of education itself. Moreover, the conceptualisation of disability must account for its dual nature. Therefore, they recommend future research to generate interdisciplinary representations of the groups served in these programmes and the consequences of inclusive education for various subgroups (Schuelka et al. 2019, xxxviii-xxxix).

Considering the above, the 'dual nature' described by Schuelka et al. can be understood as follows: SEN and its frameworks, which are central to inclusivity and diversity in education research, should be examined both in terms of a broader emphasis on diversity, without narrowing the scope of inclusive education, and considering social contexts in which the needs of individuals are addressed in terms of race, gender, social class, and language status.

2.3 The Relationship between disabilities and SEN for inclusion

The above discussion can be summarized as follows: the SEN highlighted in the Warnock Report led to the need to include people with SEN in the Samaranch Declaration, and the Green Paper discussed inclusion in the regular classroom. However, it has also been argued that SEN should consider a wider range of factors depending on the socio-cultural context, in addition to physical disabilities that hinder learning. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

People with SEN, as categorized within the concept of diversity, include not only those with disabilities but also those who are hospitalized due to illness, are truant, or bullied. This makes it difficult to identify SEN and implement educational measures, such as the need for teacher training. Ishizuka and Tokugawa (2002, 2) state that because of the popularization of the concept of SEN, the concept and scope of disability and SEN and the scope of special educational support have expanded. In this sense, we can attempt to capture the multiple nature of the SEN concept.

Figure1: Relationship between the concepts of disability and SEN*
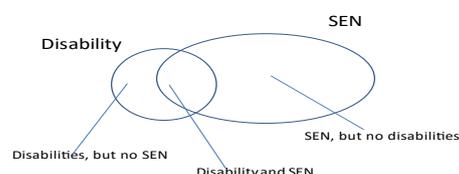
Source: Ishizuka and Tokunaga. 2020: 2.

* The original chart was written in Japanese, and the author translated the terms. The explanation of each part in the original diagram has been omitted.

The crucial point in Figure 1 is the positioning of SEN vis-à-vis disability. In other words, considering various factors, disabilities and SEN are not the same; rather, the part that does not overlap – the part of SEN without disabilities – is critical when considering inclusion. This is because the type of inclusion required will likely vary according to learners' needs. In other words, inclusion should consider not only disabilities but also SEN.

3. A case study of Nepal's SEN-conscious approach to integrated education

To consider how the diversity of SEN affects the nature of inclusion in education, this study takes Nepal as a case study. Nepal was chosen for two reasons, (1) it has a highly diverse social and cultural background, and SEN in Nepal have particularly diverse elements; and (2) unlike other countries, education for people with disabilities in Nepal has been developed from the beginning based on a SEN-conscious approach to integrated education.

3.1 Features of Nepal as a case study

First, Nepal is a heterogeneous country with people of different ethnicities, religions, languages and castes, and it has diversity in both urban and rural areas. It is a federal democratic republic with a population of approximately 28.7 million (Asian Development Bank 2018). The main ethnic groups are the Parvati Hindu, Magar, Talu, Tamang and Newar. Religions are Hinduism (81.3%), Buddhism (9.0%) and Islam (4.4%), among others. The caste system, which is a Hindu status system, is deeply rooted in lifestyle and culture, and it embodies many social constraints and stratification in South Asia. Social class hierarchies, often called *jhātis* or 'castes', refer to more than 100 classes that have been in the habit of intermarrying for generations. Nepal declared its indentured servitude

system illegal in 1963 and has since enacted other anti-discrimination laws and social welfare initiatives. However, although the Constitution recognizes the equality of all ethnicities. Bahuns, Chhetris, and Newars, which are upper castes and account for about 40% of the population, continue to monopolize social activities. Dalit are not included in the caste system and are placed at the lowest level of the social hierarchy.

Second, as of 2015 Nepal is one of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). It serves as an ideal case to demonstrate how ideas on inclusive policies can make a difference even in the LDC situation. Since the 1960s, learners with disabilities have been educated along with non-disabled students in Nepal. The country has a long history of meeting the educational needs of individual learners with disabilities. Integrated education, in which children with and without disabilities learn together, first appeared in Nepal at the Laboratory Higher Secondary School (established in 1956), an experimental secondary school affiliated with Tribhuvan University in the suburbs of the capital city of Kathmandu. Since its establishment in Nepal, the school has been positioned as a model for integrated education. The term "special education" first appeared in the Education Act of 1971. Based on this perspective, basic research on people with disabilities and the integration of special education into the national education system has always been considered essential in Nepal. When discussing education for people with disabilities in Nepal, 'inclusive/SNE' are often mentioned with a slash (/) rather than expressing only the idea of inclusion. Inclusive education and SNE are usually discussed in terms of the form of education that is better in a given situation, and diversity management is a component of inclusion in Nepal. The fact that the two words are used together reflects the country's special situation.

3.2 Nepal's policies with an integrated approach considering a variety of SEN

The Nepal National Education Planning Commission (NNEPC), established in 1955, formulated a plan for public education that included spreading free and compulsory education and decentralizing the education system. The 1971 Education Law includes a section on special education. Basic research and definitions of "disabled persons" were added to provide equal educational opportunities, and policies on diversity came to the forefront.

Nepal moved along with the international call for diversity and enacted concrete policies. Firstly, the Protection and Welfare of Persons with Disabilities Act came into force in 1982. Afterwards, several movements arose in the international community in the 1980s and the 1990s: the UN Decade of Disabled Persons (1983–1992), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Education for All (EFA 1990) and the UN Decade of Disabled Persons in the Asia Pacific (1993–2002, 2003–2012). In 1992, the National Education Commission (NEC) of Nepal submitted a report in response to the 1990 World

Conference on Education for All and its accompanying plan to promote basic education. The report proposed an improvement in access to education and the introduction of pre-primary education. These endeavors culminated in the Special Education Policy of 1998.

While Nepal joined the Salamanca Statement when it was adopted in 1994, the country did not see an immediate and complete turn from diversity to inclusion. For example, in the 2000s, the National Special Education Programme (NSEP) at the primary level (2001–2004) was formulated along with the Basic Primary Education Programme (BPEP). In 2002, the EFA Core Documents (2004–2009) and Secondary Education Support Programme (SESP) were established.

The 2006 National Policy and Action Plan Related to People with Disability was a significant impetus for developing policies on inclusion in Nepal's education policy. It stated that the government was committed to expanding education as a right for people with disabilities, in line with developments in the international community. Interestingly, this policy continued using the term "special education." The concept of 'inclusive/SNE' implies a SEN-conscious approach. In 2006, the Interim Constitution of Nepal was adopted, which affirmed the right to retain language and culture as well as the right to free primary and secondary education – an idea that promotes inclusion in education. Another policy is the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) 2009–2015, which addresses how inclusiveness in education can be reflected in educational policies, including teaching methods and teacher training.

Decentralized offices run the promotion of such a SEN-conscious approach to integrated education in rural areas, which includes grassroots inclusive resource centres, decentralization of educational administration, emphasis on the role of local government, localization of the national curriculum, and participation in local communities (Government of Nepal, Ministry of Education 2009).

The Government of Nepal enacted the Consolidated Equity Strategy for the School Education Sector in 2014. This considers the need to correct all forms of discrimination and develop diversity-oriented policies, as stated in the new constitution (Government of Nepal, Ministry of Education 2016, 28). Educational policies have also been promoted in line with international trends. The implementation of the SSRP is based on the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2015). This period coincided with Nepal's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2010. According to the CRPD, all students with and without disabilities have the right to learn in the same classroom and inclusive environment.

The policy of inclusive/SNE was also seen as a national philosophy around the time that Nepal promulgated the Nepal Constitution in September 2015. In its Preamble, the new constitution states:

Protecting and promoting social and cultural solidarity, tolerance and harmony, and unity in diversity by recognizing the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-cultural and diverse regional characteristics, resolving to build an egalitarian society founded on the proportional inclusive and participatory principles in order to ensure economic equality, prosperity and social justice, by eliminating discrimination based on class, caste, region, language, religion and gender and all forms of caste-based untouchability (Constitution of Nepal 2015, 6).

This statement indicates that Nepal includes a range of factors within the scope of SEN and inclusive/SNE. In 2017, Nepal adopted the Disability Rights Act and the Inclusive Education Policy for Persons with Disabilities. This policy states that children should be able to study, without discrimination, in their own communities. However, the policy also allows separate education for children with disabilities.

When we consider Nepal's education policies, as described above, the following features can be mentioned. Nepal uses the term 'inclusive/SNE' rather than devoting itself to the idea of inclusion. While inclusive education aims to integrate all learners into a regular classroom, SNE covers educational practices that are separate from regular schools and classes.

The Nepalese government also states that basic education should be free and compulsory for all citizens and that secondary education should also be free, thereby enshrining the principle of inclusive democracy. In Nepal, there are 380 resource classes, 36 "special schools" [*sic*],[2] and approximately 10 integrated schools for taking care of children with disabilities, though approximately 75,000 children of school age with disabilities (55%) are in primary school (Kafle 2020). Resource classes are a form of integrated education. According to UNESCO's definition of the term, integration means that "learners labelled as having 'special educational needs' are placed in mainstream education settings with some adaptations and resources, but on condition that they can fit in with a pre-existing structure, attitudes, and an unaltered environment." This distinguishes it from inclusion (UNESCO 2017, 7). In the Nepalese context, this integrated approach can also be seen as a form of education that considers both the inclusion and the multiplicity of approaches in SNE.

However, educational administration in Nepal distinguishes between integrated and inclusive education and special education. The Centre for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD) and the Division of School Administration at the Ministry of

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[2] The word "special schools" means "schools for disabled students." However, this expression was cited by Kafle (2020), a professor at the Faculty of Inclusive Education, Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST) care for inclusion-related issues in education. Moreover, the Special Education Council, headed by the Minister of Education, is still in limbo in CEHRD, which once was supposed to be the policymaking body of the government for special education.

As discussed above, the integrated approach to Nepal's education policy suggests the importance of considering the multiple meanings of SEN when thinking about inclusion. The following section focuses on educating people with hearing impairment in Nepal. It analyses SEN through interviews with the people concerned and the stakeholders involved.

3.3 Set-Up of the Framework: Definition and Traits of People with Hearing Impairment

Before analysing the results, the definition, and characteristics of people with hearing disabilities are discussed. This is because gradations between levels of hearing impairment have implications for inclusion/SNE, which has been noted in Nepalese policy. The World Health Organisation (WHO) distinguishes between hard of hearing and deafness as follows:

> "Hard of hearing" refers to people with hearing loss ranging from mild to severe. People who are hard of hearing usually communicate through spoken language and can benefit from hearing aids, cochlear implants, and other assistive devices, as well as captioning. "Deaf" people mostly have profound hearing loss, which implies very little or no hearing. They often use sign language to communicate (WHO 2021).

The International Federation of Hard of Hearing People (IFHOH 2020, 10) also defines "hard of hearing" as follows:

> "Hard of hearing" usually refers to persons with varying degrees of hearing impairments who communicate primarily by spoken language. A hard-of-hearing person may use hearing aids and/or cochlear implants to supplement residual hearing with assistive listening devices. However, individuals who are members of the deaf community subscribe to that group's unique cultural norms, values, and traditions. Members of this group typically use sign language as their first language.

According to the Agreement on Terminology between the International Federation of Hard of Hearing People and the World Federation of the Deaf, "hard of hearing" refers to all people with hearing impairments whose usual means of communication are by speech. It includes those who have become totally deaf after the acquisition of speech and agrees

that "hearing-impaired" is a term intended to include deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals under a single category. However, deaf and hard-of-hearing persons in most countries reject this definition because they fail to recognize any fundamental distinction between these two social categories in terms of the equity-based SEN of each group of deaf and hard-of-hearing. The joint declaration recognizes and respects the rights of individuals with hearing impairments that range from mild to severe to regard themselves as either deaf or hard of hearing. Both organisations have agreed to recognize the terms deaf or hard of hearing only in their official terminologies (IFHOH, Position Paper, Terminology n.d.). [3]

The different needs of those with hearing impairments greatly affect what kind of response is required when they are considered as subjects of inclusive education. Specifically, hard-of-hearing people need to be taught without sign language, while deaf people need to be taught using sign language. Therefore, the former is treated as an invisible disability, while the latter is treated as a visible one; the former requires more complex treatment in the inclusion process.

3.4 Interview Analysis: Multiplicity of SEN for the Persons Concerned

As described in the previous section, the Nepalese case is characterized by a very diverse society and policies regarding inclusion in education. Considering how inclusiveness is viewed in a society as diverse as Nepal requires considering the overlapping Venn diagram of disability and SEN as seen in Figure 1.

To focus on the diversity of society and individuals, we addressed the communities surrounding people with hearing impairments because how this group perceives educational opportunities differs greatly depending on the type of disability. Moreover, the learning of people with hearing impairments requires multiple perspectives when considering inclusion. This is because people with hearing impairments are further divided into deaf and hard-of-hearing groups, each having different difficulties in the SEN-conscious approach to integrated education in Nepal.

3.4.1 Methodology: Semi-structured Interviews with the Communities Surrounding People with Hearing Impairment in Nepal

Data gathering was based on semi-structured interviews of the communities surrounding people with hearing impairments conducted from 31 January to 6 February 2015 in Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. Interviews were conducted by asking interviewees three questions. The targeted interviewees were contacted through the Japan International Cooperation Agency （JICA） Nepal office, and the researcher visited the relevant

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[3] In this paper, the expression "people with hearing impairments" is used; however, considering the matters addressed in the text, this expression is used with the assumption that the term includes a wide variety of cases with different hearing abilities, such as deaf and hard-of-hearing people.

educational institutions where the interviews were conducted. All interview results were transcribed and the responses to the three main questions were analysed into categories. Each interview lasted for approximately 30 minutes and was conducted in English:

Questions for the Interview

(1) What are your thoughts on inclusive education, which is also an international trend?

(2) What do you think are the significance and challenges of inclusive education in Nepal for people with hearing impairments, considering the social context in which people with disabilities are placed?

(3) Besides the social context, what challenges do you face when implementing inclusive education, such as the nature of school education and teachers' teaching skills and methods?

In this study, from the perspective of focusing on the social context in which education for people with hearing impairments is practiced, interviews were conducted with 16 schoolteachers, parents, and staff of related organisations involved in education (names have been removed):

Teachers (2)
・ Teacher C: an integrated school (primary school) teacher
・ Teacher F: a special need school for the Deaf (secondary school)

Parents (8)
・ Parent O: whose child is in a regular class at a typical school.
・ Parent P: whose child is in an integrated school
・ Parent G: whose child is in a special needs school for the Deaf
・ Parent Q: whose child is in a special needs school for the Deaf, and the parent is also deaf.
・ Parents J, K, L and M: whose children are in different classes for the Deaf managed by community-based rehabilitation.

Decision makers: Department of Education（1）
・ Government Staff H: Inclusive Education Section Officer

People involved in support groups for individuals with hearing impairments(4)
・ Member A: involved in the National Association of Hard of Hearing and Deafened Nepal and is hard of hearing.

・<u>Member D:</u> involved in the Nepal National Federation of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

・<u>Member R:</u> involved in the National Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR)

・<u>Staff E:</u> Officer of the CBR

Caregiver for people with hearing impairments(1)

・<u>Caregiver B:</u> who cares for a deaf person working at a café?

All interviews were transcribed and then categorized according to their content, and the results of the analysis were summarized by extracting cases in which distinctive opinions were expressed in comparison with other interviewees. As a result, the following six points were derived as findings from the interviews.

3.4.2 Findings from the Interviews

(1) The merit and demerit of sign language as a medium of instruction

The need for sign language is often mentioned when discussing people with hearing impairment. Teacher C, from an integrated school that actively accepts students with disabilities, stated the following:

> What is most important is that teachers, parents, and the community accept that children with disabilities are also children of ours, our community, and our nation. These equally important human resources can contribute to the country's development. This school was established in 2026 [4] (1969/70 in the Western calendar), and in 2043 (1986/1987), a blind child wished to study here. I wanted to get him in, so I studied Braille. In 2046 (1989/1990), another blind child was enrolled in this school. In 2050 (1993/1994), a deaf student wished to enter the school, so I began to learn sign language. After a few years, I found a child with a physical impairment whom his mother had almost abandoned because of his disability, so I brought him to our school. For him, physiotherapy was necessary, so I learned about it.

Teacher C believes that students with disabilities are important members of society and that it is important to accept them as such. Furthermore, they have taken measures such as introducing Braille and sign language at the school. However, some argue that sign

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[4] Indication in Bikram Sambat (Nepali calendar). The year is 1969/1970 in the Western calendar.

language learning has limitations. Member A, who is hard of hearing herself and currently works for the National Association of Hard of Hearing and Deafened Nepal, said the following based on her own experiences:

> The Nepali sign language vocabulary is very limited. In addition, sign languages differ between countries. Captioning is also inclusive of people without disabilities. When I participated in a seminar organized by an international organisation, I asked the organizer to provide a captioning system. In the training group, I was the only hard-of-hearing person. I understand sign language, but it is difficult for me to follow when speech and sign language occur simultaneously. At first, I was the only one who used captioning, but this gradually spread to other participants. Captioning is a new technique in Nepal, and it is helpful for those who do not understand English.

Member A also suggested that there is a difference between what the hard of hearing and the deaf want from education through sign language:

> In Nepal's definition, 65-80 dB is hard of hearing, and those above 80 dB are categorized as deaf. This definition misses some "hearing impairments" as defined by the WHO. My mother realized I could not hear her as I did not answer her when she called me from behind. I went to a private mainstream school, not a Naxal school (School for the Deaf), for my own dignity. The teachers were unsupportive. My mother asked the principal to allow me to sit in the front row, and it was accepted, but it was all. I was punished for not doing homework because I did not understand what the teacher had said. During my school days I felt my mind was weak, but I found this was not true after I started working.

It should be noted that a difference in hearing exists between the deaf and the hard of hearing. Those who have difficulty in hearing do not necessarily require sign language. However, they have invisible difficulties that, at first glance, do not appear to be disabilities. In the case of Member A she went to a private mainstream school but did not receive proper support from the teachers. However, the commonality of sign languages has its connotations in Nepal. Teacher F, a teacher at a special needs school for the deaf, described sign language in Nepali society as follows:

> Nepal has more than 100 ethnicities, each with its languages and cultures. However, if we use sign language, we can use the same language and feel a sense of unity.

From Teacher F's statement, we can understand that under the unique socio-cultural conditions of the caste system, people of different castes can interact and exchange ideas and values using the common sign language communication tool. However, Member A said that communication using sign language has some limitations, such as a limited number of words in the sign language and difficulty in expressing technical terms. In particular, the more advanced the school, the more disadvantageous it is that sign language cannot be used, which limits opportunities for students who wish to enter higher education or find employment. Therefore, it is important to balance its advantages and disadvantages.

(2) Teachers Teaching Skills Challenged

The next factor often mentioned in the interview results was those teaching skills essential for teaching children with hearing impairment. For example, Teacher F at the School for the Deaf focused on education using sign language in the following ways:

> This may not be effective for an inclusive setting. Resource classes are dependent on teachers' skills. We are working on creating new vocabularies as a necessity for each subject authorized by related government units and NGOs.

Teacher C at an integrated school mentioned the importance of skilled teachers:

> It is better to enroll children with disabilities in a local school for socialisation and advocacy in society. If there are no skilled teachers, it is impossible to teach children with disabilities at local schools.

Those who support the deaf and hard of hearing have criticized the teachers' skills and the government's response to them. Member D of the Nepal National Federation of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing stated the following:

> Only 2–3 teachers teach students in resource classes, and we are not satisfied with their teaching methods. As their teaching skills are insufficient, the students cannot build their own capacity. The Nepalese government does not pay sufficient attention to deaf education. Supporting agencies, such as INGOs, often support physical material but do not support improving teaching methods. Teachers are trained only in sign language and not in other teaching methods. Teachers can teach the deaf if they have a teaching certificate and know sign language.

Member R of the National Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing also mentioned the following about a school for deaf people:

> The teaching method was outdated. Most teachers can hear, and communication between teachers and students did not seem to be good. Their attention to the students was insufficient. Many of the teachers were above 60 years of age and were not very active. The environment and quality were poor.

As a person who is hard of hearing, Member A of the National Association of Hard of Hearing and Deafened Nepal reflected on her experience as follows:

> I went on to Tribhuvan University and obtained a certificate, but I mostly studied alone. Studying in school did not help me obtain a proper job. I wanted to be a doctor as my two sisters were doctors. However, it helped me speak with my family and friends. Teachers were unaware of any invisible disabilities. Other than the deaf, they did not understand hearing impairment.

The above interviews show that when it comes to teachers' teaching skills and attitudes, this is a major challenge to the quality of inclusive education. In other words, no matter how inclusive the education that is provided is, it does not lead to sufficient learning if it depends solely on teachers' skills.

(3) A Shaky Choice – Inclusive or Special Needs Education?

Given the variety of circumstances surrounding the deaf and people who are hard of hearing, it is difficult to know whether a clear decision has been made about choosing inclusive or SNE. Parent G, whose daughter attended a special needs school, described how she transferred from a regular school to a special needs school and the future of education as follows:

> First, my daughter attended a regular school for 3 years, but the teachers told us that it was difficult for her to continue, so I had no choice but to take her to the Naxal School for the deaf. She has two older sisters who can hear. I want her to have the same quality of life as her sisters. I do not want her to go for vocational training, but I want her to prioritize academic studies like other normal children. My daughter thinks the same. Once I asked her whether she wanted to be a hairdresser, she said she preferred to become a civil servant. However, I do not want her to compete with children without disabilities. Sign language should be taught in regular schools like

English; it is a 'right' [interviewee made air quotes with his fingers]. If every school taught sign language, there would be more opportunities for deaf people to learn in regular schools. If there is no chance to work, education is meaningless. Everyone should learn sign language so that deaf people can live normal lives.

However, Parent Q, who is deaf and whose child attends a special needs school, prefers inclusive education if possible:

My daughter is 9 years old. She wants to be a pilot; I want her to be a teacher for the deaf as she is deaf, and I want her to help these children. I think an inclusive setting is better. If she goes to an inclusive school, I think she can gain more knowledge by studying together with children without disabilities, and she can learn natural conversation and correct grammar.

Some parents felt that it was not possible to decide between inclusive education and SNE, such as Parent O, whose hard-of-hearing child attends a mainstream school, and Parent P, whose child with a hearing impairment attended a mainstream school but was later transferred to an integrated school. Each said the following:

Parent O: I want him to own a small business as he is good at mathematics. I want him to study in mainstream schools. He can try to learn normal behaviours in society. If he goes to a special school, how can he survive? However, this is just my idea, and I am unsure whether it is right. It is meaningless if a child goes to a mainstream school but does not learn at all. I think my son is learning something, but I also feel unsure.

Parent P: My son is 12, but I am unsure about his class. He was in a mainstream class, but his teacher told us that it would be better for him to go to a place where he could study sign language. So, I took him to this integrated school every day; it would have been better if there had been a nearer place. I do not have a clear image, but I want him to study hard. He is good at painting. I wanted him to study in a special environment because he could not learn in his previous school.

In response, Member D of the Nepal National Federation of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing stated that they do not necessarily recommend inclusive education:

I am not opposed to inclusive education and to people who can hear included with

those who can't. Creating an inclusive class with a sign language interpreter is ideal but difficult in Nepal. Schools do not allow deaf students to join morning assemblies or other gatherings. What is inclusive in our sense is to make students who can hear join a school where the majority of students are deaf and to make it possible for them to study sign language. Teaching methods should also be changed. The textbooks and subjects should be improved.

As the above interview results show, in the actual field, learners and parents seem to hesitate over whether to receive inclusive education. This depends on the educational needs of each individual and the attitudes and educational environment of the people surrounding the physically challenged.

(4) Role of Community-based Rehabilitation (CBR) as a Local Education System
Some people with disabilities are educated at the local CBR and enrolled in mainstream schools. The term CBR was coined by the WHO in 1994 as follows:

CBR is a community centre that involves people with functional disabilities, ability disabilities, and social disadvantages, as well as their families and the community's resources. It aims to implement rehabilitation and create a system of assistance for people with disabilities (Kudo et al. 2012).

As a staff member at the CBR in Bhaktapur, Staff E talked about their support for people with hearing impairments:

In villages, parents send their children to mainstream schools; however, they graduate without understanding anything. Twelve deaf students who completed Grade 5 in the CBR school went to a mainstream school for two years and went to the Naxal School for the Deaf for a year. We wanted them to continue studying at the mainstream public school, but as the school's management changed and the new people did not support them, we had to transfer them to the Naxal school. It is more difficult for deaf children to attend private schools because they use English.

Students with hearing impairments were able to learn in this CBR course. Parents J, L and M commented as follows:

Parent J: I think special schools are better because the teachers in mainstream schools cannot understand them.

Parent L: She could hear until 4 years of age but gradually lost her hearing ability. She could not hear in one ear at all. She had Grade 3 CBR. I wanted her to attend a mainstream school, but I brought her to this CBR school as she became older. I want her to be an office worker, not a factory worker [The mother works at a carpet factory.] I want her to study hard and obtain a good job. I want her to be independent.

Parent M: He could hear for 12 to 13 months but gradually lost this ability. He was in Grade 3 of the CBR school. I am worried about whether he could study if we sent him to a mainstream school. If the circumstances are acceptable, I want him to go to a mainstream school as he can become friends with children without disabilities, but in a special school, he cannot interact with those children. If they have such a chance, they will not be discriminated against.

A class such as CBR, which acts as an in-between for regular classes and those for musicians with disabilities, is important. However, in reality, even with such mediation, it is clear that some learners prefer inclusive education, and others prefer SNE depending on their circumstances.

（5） Focus on Future Career Choices

The informants' responses often included statements about what kind of work and contributions their children could make in society and what kind of education would be better for their future careers. Teacher C from an integrated school that actively accepts students with disabilities appreciates the potential of students with disabilities and the fact that other people are unaware of that potential. He emphasized the importance of both education and skills through vocational training:

Education and skills are important. It is more important to give children with disabilities opportunities to work. I am trying to find a workplace for them. In the school, we opened a small coffee shop run by disabled students. We also formed a marching band for disabled students. They can do what the community people cannot do in front of other students. This experience made them feel proud of themselves. I established an NGO for vocational training to support their skills. At first, the school did not support the NGO, but after the recommendation from the government, it started to support the activity.

Meanwhile, Guardian B, whose family took care of an orphan with hearing impairment who now works in a restaurant in Kathmandu, insisted on the importance of vocational training:

> It is not enough to talk only about education in school. This is meaningless unless it helps someone to make a living. She [the orphan] lost her parents when she was young. Her elder sister had some intellectual disability, and her elder brother was blind. It was difficult for her to go to a normal school, so I took her to class in Bal Mandir [orphanage] once a week for a year. After that, she went to school by herself until Grade 5. Her teacher recommended having an examination at the hospital, and the doctor confirmed that she was deaf. Her teacher advised her to attend vocational training, which she received on sewing for 2 years, and she returned to Draka to start her sewing business. She taught sewing in Pokhara as a teacher. It was a shocking experience for her to learn that there were people with severe disabilities. The Maoists killed her brother, and they harassed her, so she returned to Kathmandu. I asked Bakery Café to employ her. She started on-the-job training and has been working in the café for 12 years.

With the support of Guardian B, this orphan acquired skills through her vocational education to get a job. She has since married and is raising her children; this is a good example of social inclusion. This suggests that the way of learning is influenced not only by disabilities but also by difficulties and disadvantages in the learner's social situation, support, educational environment, and other factors. Moreover, these factors affect not only learning but also employment opportunities and inclusion in society after completion of schooling.

(6) Understanding of Disabilities in Surroundings and Society

As stated above, people with hearing impairments, their families, caregivers, and others are searching for the kind of education that is best for them by considering their individual wishes and circumstances. They often refer to how people and society around them understand disabilities. Teacher C of an integrated school insisted on the importance of changing the community and the positive effect on students without disabilities by helping them with disabilities:

> First, people thought that individuals with disabilities needed to depend on someone, but now they realize they can make changes if given a chance. Students without disabilities support each other and support children with disabilities. There is no

bullying.

Parent M, whose child was in the CBR, mentioned society's changes as follows:

> Society is getting better little by little as many organisations are working for the disabled. As we have a boy with a disability, we can understand it, but other people do not understand it.

Parent Q, who is deaf and whose child is in a special needs school for the deaf, also reflected on society's understanding of disability from her own experiences:

> Nepal's society is still not disability friendly. There are sign language interpreters, but the government does not dispatch these people to places such as hospitals, and public transportation is not friendly to the deaf. I did not have a good opportunity to study. Vocational training is important, but I want her [her child] to prioritize studying in school.

From the government's point of view, gradual progress in its policy towards inclusive education is being made, and it is taking socially affirmative action. Government Staff H: It is difficult to proceed towards 'inclusive education'. SNE is a step towards inclusive education. The resource class model is a strategy to realize inclusive education. For civil servant employment, 45% is allocated exclusively to the disadvantaged group, and 5% of the 45% is allocated to people with disabilities. There is no detailed breakdown of each type of disability. A 5% quota is also applied to teachers. Private companies also have quotas for allocation.

However, those involved in the education of people with disabilities would like to see generous responses as affirmative. For example, Parent G, whose daughter is in a special needs school for the deaf, said the following:

> As parents and schools provide children's education, the government should do more for deaf people. A 5% quota is not sufficient.

Affirmative action creates new differences in opinion between those who support them and those who do not. In doing so, inclusion is inhibited not by the disability but by the social context.

4. Discussion on the Multiplicity of SEN from the Communities Surrounding People with Hearing Impairment

As mentioned above, we conducted an interview survey on education for people with hearing impairments based on three questions: (1) Do you think that inclusive education, which is also an international trend, should be recommended? (2) In what ways do you think inclusive education in Nepal has significance or challenges for people with hearing impairments? (3) Besides the social context, what challenges do you face when implementing inclusive education, such as the nature of school education and teachers' teaching skills and methods?

As a result, the responses were organized into six perspectives: (1) the merits and demerits of sign language as a medium of instruction; (2) challenged teachers' teaching skills; (3) shaky choice-inclusive or SNE; (4) role of CBR; (5) future career choices; and (6) understanding of disabilities in the surroundings and society. Based on the responses, the findings were analysed.

4.1 Various Views on Inclusion in Education for People with Hearing Impairment in Nepal

For those with hearing disabilities, differences exist between the deaf and the hard of hearing. Special education using sign language is important for deaf people, and it is necessary to expand special education beyond inclusive or integrated schools. However, the hard of hearing would like to learn just as well as people without disabilities because sign language vocabulary is limited, and there are many restrictions to entering school or finding a job.

The above points address an important aspect of the teachers' role and qualifications: whether they know and can use sign language and their thoughts and values regarding disabilities and diversity. This is not a distinction between an inclusive school, an integrated school or a special needs school but rather a question of the quality of the classroom in any school.

The quality of education in each school is important. However, one of the reasons why people with hearing impairments cannot make a clear decision when asked about the pros and cons of inclusive education is that they consider factors other than disability, such as the learning environment and teachers' teaching skills. In this context, the question of whether inclusive education should be encouraged for deaf and hard-of-hearing people is not as much about the form of education as it is about who, what and how they can learn and how this can be done in a meaningful way to realize their dreams and aspirations for the future. Although these are not disabilities or disadvantages, they are difficult to regulate through social factors. In this sense, the forms and needs of inclusion in education

vary widely; therefore, inclusion in education has multiple meanings.

4.2 Factors that Support and Hinder Inclusive Education in Nepal

Considering the multiplicity of SEN in education and the significance of "meaningful" learning, what factors facilitate and marginalize learning? Teacher C from an integrated school pointed out that the school has a system that allows students with and without disabilities to support each other and deepen their understanding. In addition, the school has created job training opportunities for disabled people. These efforts mean that the school provides a place for all students to learn and acquire social skills based on the idea that they will eventually become independent. However, Supporter B gave an orphan with a hearing impairment the opportunity to learn and supported her in getting a job until she became independent by getting married.

Conversely, without social understanding, learning will be meaningless regardless of the many educational opportunities available. Member A, who is hard of hearing, thought about her future, went to a private school, and graduated from university. During this time, however, she could not learn satisfactorily because it was difficult to understand the teachers and the people around her. This means that even if the government meticulously implements inclusive education policies and affirmative action in employment for people with disabilities, this intervention will imply become a formal institutional arrangement without the understanding and values of people who recognize diversity. In other words, social inclusion will only be realized when people mutually recognize the importance of each other's existence regardless of disabilities.

4.3 Difficulties that Hinder Social Inclusion

The importance of social inclusion has been pointed out in the past. For example, the World Bank (2021) explains that "social inclusion is the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society—improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged based on their identity" and "social inclusion is the right thing to do, and it also makes good economic sense."

However, the realization of social inclusion faces various challenges. In Nepal, these disadvantages include gender, caste and urban–rural disparities. Teacher F at a school for the deaf described the meaning of sign language not only as a communication function but also a way of overcoming the barriers that distinguish people based on caste. In the world of sign language, caste is irrelevant, and through sign language as a common language, the idea of unity can be shared, providing a new perspective on SEN.

In addition to visible disabilities, the difficulties include invisible challenges. The understanding of people and society surrounding individuals with disabilities cannot be

seen. In terms of invisible barriers, the differences between deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals are also invisible. This can sometimes lead to invisible segregation, which is an important issue when considering the nature of social inclusion based on the multiplicity of SEN.

4.4 Interpretation of Inclusion with Multiplicity of SEN and Recent Policy Developments

Considering the above discussion, we can conclude the following: first, with regards to inclusion, some difficulties are not included in either disabilities or advantages but still constrain meaningful learning; second, difficulties vary depending on the context of each case – for example, on teacher attitudes and values towards disabilities or the social environment surrounding people with disabilities.

As seen in the previous section, Nepal's policies on people with disabilities were implemented in response to developments in the international community. As mentioned, the expression "inclusive/SNE" is always used, and the policy is characterized by the awareness of both inclusive education and SEN. Considering the discussion of the communities surrounding people with hearing impairments up to this point, Nepal's consideration of both disabilities and SEN is not to consider only those two, as shown in Figure 1, but also the multiplicity of reasons for inclusion based on the social context, which is the cause of the difficulty.

After the enactment of the 2015 Constitution, Nepal's educational policy became more aware of the multiplicity of inclusion based on the new constitution. In 2017, the Act Relating to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities came into force under the leadership of the Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Welfare in consultation with organisations for persons with disabilities, relevant ministries and support groups. The Act repeals the Protection and Welfare of Persons with Disabilities Act from 1982. It protects the rights of persons with disabilities in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2015 Constitution, as well as provisions to ensure access for persons with disabilities to basic services, human rights, health, education, employment and rehabilitation. With the enactment of this law, Nepal's policy for people with disabilities entered a new phase (MyRight 2020).

In parallel with the enactment of these laws, the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP), which spans the entire educational reform in Nepal, was prepared in 2016. The SSDP was a successor to the SSRP (2009–2015) and was designed to promote education to position Nepal as a middle-income country by 2030. The SSDP pre-planning document has four goals to improve educational equity, quality, efficiency, governance and administration. These are, (1) to achieve inclusive and equitable educational access,

participation and learning outcomes, with attention to the disadvantaged sections of society; (2) to improve the learning environment, curriculum, teaching and learning processes – including materials and methods – and the compatibility of assessments and examinations to enhance students' learning effectiveness; (3) to improve the quality of education; (4) to establish a solid and responsible management system for local governments and strengthen government management to ensure minimum standards for teaching and learning processes and learning environments; and (5) to optimize the administrative system to meet people's needs. The latter includes establishing a sustainable financial system through cost sharing between the central government, provinces and local governments; and creating a system that is resilient to disasters. To achieve these goals, the focus areas are federalism and decentralization, education quality and learning outcomes, appropriate curricula, assessment and testing, teacher training, the language of instruction, equity, inclusiveness, learning environment development, school safety measures and human resource development (Juho Uusihakara Consulting 2016).

The SSDP was formulated based on studies ensuring basic educational opportunities for all children. In response, the Special Needs/Inclusive Education Master Plan 2017–2023 was created in 2017. This is also evident in the use of inclusivity concepts and SNE. It has been pointed out that inclusive education in Nepal still faces challenges in achieving inclusion based on SEN due to gender, socioeconomic differences, language, ethnicity, caste and geography (Human Rights Watch 2018). Various difficulties also arise in the intersection of social and physical contexts. Nepal considers the fundamental distinction between these social categories in terms of the equity-based SEN of each group.

4.5 Multiplicity of SEN: disability, difficulty and disadvantage

The point to be noted here is that disability and disadvantage, which are determined by both the disability and a person's innate characteristics, are sometimes perceived as monolithic, while difficulties, which are manifested by differences in the awareness, thinking and judgement of the person with the disability and those who surround them, are not. In other words, when considering SEN, it is necessary not only to separate the disadvantages and difficulties but also to classify the difficulties. If we define physical as the innate factors associated with the person and social as the factors that depend on the context and change with interpretation, then difficulty can be classified as the intersection of "physical factors" and "social contexts."

As shown in Table 2, the relationship between disadvantages and difficulties with disabilities for people with hearing impairment in Nepal can be summarized in the following way. Contrasting this table with Figure 1 mentioned before, which shows that disadvantages and difficulties other than common disabilities correspond to SEN, it can be

seen that both disadvantages and difficulties are affected by social context, and they are more than hearing impairment, which hinders the affected party when it comes to inclusion through learning at school or entering the workforce in society. In other words, what falls into this category creates the multiplicity of the types of SEN.

Table2: Relationship between disability, disadvantage and difficulty through the cases of people with hearing impairment in Nepal

People with Hearing Impairments (PHL) / Communities surrounding PHL	Physical Factor	Social Context
Physical Factor	Disability	Difficulty
Social Context	Difficulty	Disadvantage

Source: The author

5. Conclusions

This paper aimed to identify, through policy analysis and interviews with communities surrounding the deaf and hard-of-hearing people in Nepal, the structure of SEN in the communities. Based on the premise that the SEN to be considered in inclusion is multifaceted and variable rather than fixed, an integrated education approach has been promoted in Nepal as "Inclusive/SNE." However, Nepalese society, which is rich in ethnic, linguistic, religious and caste diversity, presents many disadvantages and difficulties for people with hearing impairment. The social context, such as the social background, the attitudes and values of the people around them and the teachers' professional skills, are more important when considering the inclusion of people with disabilities.

SEN has a multiple factor structure because of the difficulties and disadvantages that arise at the intersection of the physical factors and the social context. Nepal's inclusive/SNE suggests that it is important to overcome such SEN and to realize meaningful learning that leads to social inclusion in employment and education in a detailed manner. Also, it is crucial to focus on invisible segregation. Although the analysis in this paper is limited to the communities surrounding the deaf and hard-of-hearing people in Nepal, the issue of the multiplicity of SEN types could be of great interest when considering not only equality of educational opportunity but also the issue of equity for meaningful learning for learners.

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Abstract (in Japanese)

要　　約

　包摂性（インクルージョン）とは、多様な人々がお互いの個性やニーズを認め合い、社会の中で共に働き、生活している状態を指し、「持続可能な開発目標（SDGs）」においても焦点となっている。しかし、包摂性は一義的なものではなく、当事者のさまざまなニーズや、多様な人々が共に生きるために必要なことを包含する、多面的な考え方であることに留意する必要がある。そこで本研究では、人々が生活し、さまざまなニーズを持つ多様な文脈において、複数の意味を持つことを「多面性（multiplicity）」と定義し、現実の社会では、人々の特別な教育ニーズ（Special Education Needs: SEN）の多面性によって、包摂性が異なる意味を持つことがあることを明らかにした。

　研究方法としては、特別な教育ニーズの多面性という構造を明らかにするために、ネパールにおける聴覚障がい者を取り巻く地域社会の政策分析と、聴覚障がい者自身、ならびにその教育関係者へのインタビューを通じた事例研究を行った。多様な社会的・文化的背景を持つネパールは、他国とは異なり、インクルーシブ教育発展の当初から「インクルーシブ/特別支援教育（Special Needs Education: SNE）」として特別な教育ニーズを意識した統合教育へのアプローチをとってきた。ネパールでは政策面では、社会の不利な立場にある人々に配慮し、包括的で公平な教育へのアクセス、参加、学習成果を達成するための学習環境、カリキュラム、教材や方法を含む教育・学習プロセス、評価や試験の互換性の改善や、人々のニーズに応える行政システムの最適化、人材育成を目指してきた。しかしながら、現実には、特別な教育ニーズの多面性は、障害という物理的要因だけでなく、①状況によって異なる手話の教授法の適否、② 教員の指導スキル、③インクルーシブ教育選択をめぐる判断の難しさ、④ 地域支援センターの役割、⑤将来の職業選択、⑥障がいに対する周囲の理解をめぐる不利益や困難さも社会的文脈の影響を受けており、学校での学習や就労を通じた社会的包摂性に関して、障がい以上に当事者にとっては包摂の妨げになることが明らかとなった。

　特別な教育ニーズに注目した本研究の分析は、ネパールの聴覚障害者を取り巻くコミュニティに限定したものではあるが、教育機会の平等だけでなく、学習者にとって有意義な学習のための公正性の問題を考える際にも、特別な教育ニーズの多様性を考える必要性を提起するものである。

　キーワード：インクルーシブ教育、特別支援教育（SNE）、特別な教育ニーズ（SEN）、ネパール、公正性、平等性、包摂性、多面性、聴覚障がい者