Barriers for Better Education for Children with Disabilities: Evidence from Mongolia

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Mongolian government established the “Inclusive Education Unit” and started implementing a national program called “Program to enroll children with disabilities equally in education” in 2003 as the first large government leading programme on the inclusive education followed by major allocation of national budget for the disabled children. Despite of these great efforts to promote inclusive education, however, the comprehensive review with stakeholders on the inclusive education has not been implemented and overall situation of the inclusive education in Mongolia still remains in a veil. According to some preliminary interviews conducted by JICA, there is a still weak foundation to carry out “inclusive education” at the school level, with little experience and budget. In such difficult circumstances, it is essential that education policy makers understand barriers of children with disabilities to effectively learn at schools. Based on the situation in Mongolia and global growing awareness of inclusive education, JICA Research Institute started research projects on the disability and inclusive education in order to understand the overall situation and barriers of children with disabilities in three developing countries including Mongolia.

As a part of the research projects, this study tries to reveal how school teachers and parents of children with disabilities in Mongolia view barriers to quality education for children with disabilities, as well as the differences and similarities between groups of teachers and parents. Data was collected by a local consultant and JICA Research Institute in the fall of 2014 in four remote regions and Ulaanbaatar. In total, 1,700 samples were surveyed, including school directors, teachers and parents of children with and without disabilities as well as parents of out-of-school children with disabilities.

The paper highlights how barriers such as low budget and poor facilities, are the biggest concerns among both teachers and parents. Preliminary results show that both teachers and parents of children with disabilities regardless in regular or special schools tend to perceive the lack of substance/monetary issues in school as a most major barrier to better education for the children with disabilities. On the other hand, perception on the lack of understanding as a barrier varied among four groups, the teachers and parents in regular and special schools. The teachers in regular class rooms tend to think the lack of understanding as a barrier to inclusive education while the parents of children with disabilities in special class does not consider the lack of understanding as a barrier as much as the teachers do. In addition, the levels of concerns of parents are generally
significantly higher than teachers, particularly in regular schools.

The paper attempts to bring parental concerns of barriers into policy dialogue, and to reflect these parental concerns in policy implications for better education. This study on Barriers to quality education for children with disabilities in Mongolia provides evidence-based outcomes and explores discussions in prospective future.

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