RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT “CLASDISA”

To be presented to the participating schools, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, the Addis Ababa University and other stakeholders in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
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Comment:
Each chapter is written in Amharic and English.
Acknowledgements – የወቅት

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Furthermore, I want to especially thank all the participants and participating institutions (Children, Parents, Teachers, Experts, schools, NGO’s, churches, University of Addis Ababa, Ministry of Education etc.) for their help and support during the field research. Without such an environment this research would not have been possible to such an extent. Moreover, my research assistant Yeshitla Mulat, who accompanied the research from the very start until the end with utmost commitment and engagement, took over an essential role in collecting the data, conducting and transcribing interviews, arranging meetings etc. For his never-ending patience and willingness to work on the project he receives my highest appreciation. He also translated the text of this booklet into Amharic.

Margarita Schiemer, November 2014
1. The CLASDISA project –  ከልል ጎወን

The project CLASDISA (Classifications of Disabilities in the Field of Education in Different Cultural and Societal Contexts) was initiated by Prof. Gottfried Biewer and is financed by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) (Project-number: P 22178).

This research project aims to provide an international and cross-cultural comparative study in the field of special needs and inclusive education. It investigated which environmental factors facilitate or restrict activity and participation of school-aged children with disabilities in the field of education in different societal and cultural contexts. The project refers to the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the adapted Child and Youth version (ICF-CY). This classification regards disability as a product of impairments of physical and mental structures and functions,
activity limitations and participation restrictions in combination with environmental and personal factors.

Based on the classification scheme of the ICF/ICF-CY the research project investigated barriers and facilitators in the field of education in Austria, Thailand, and Ethiopia in cooperation with staff members of local universities. These three countries differ to a great extent in regard to societal and cultural contexts. With reference to the Human Development Index (HDI), societal development can be regarded as high in Austria, medium in Thailand, and low in Ethiopia.

The empirical data for this study was collected through field research. The study followed a uniform design and was undertaken simultaneously in the three countries. Using a mixed-methods approach, including a grounded-theory-based qualitative component, the project took an ecological perspective on children and the micro systems, such as their families and school classes, which they are involved in. Interviews with professionals and parents as well as adapted techniques for capturing the perspectives of the children with disabilities helped to reconstruct societal and cultural aspects of disability. Additionally, the project included quantitative surveys with the same target groups to identify societal and cultural factors regarded as barriers and facilitators within the educational process. Thus, while the study intended to use the ICF classification as a tool for educational research, it critically examined its applicability in different cultures and societies. The research project involved innovative aspects such as: (1) fundamental research on the relations between society, culture, disability and education, (2) application of the ICF and ICF-CY in the field of education including its critical examination, (3) development of research methods through international scientific cooperation in the field of special needs education. The project runs from February 2010 until January 2015.

Further information about the project can be found on the website (http://classifications-of-disabilities.univie.ac.at/) and in publications mentioned at the end of this report.

2. Summary of identified problems – የተለዩን ባለማገኝ የማጠቃለያ መጠንቃል

- ለማይሆን ገራ ያቀረቡት ሲለማገኝ መጠንቃል
  በተጨማሪ ያቀረቡት ከካቲት ዝላማ ጀምሮ መስራት ሲለማገኝ መጠንቃል
- የስራት ያቀረቡት ከካቲት ከነጪ ሲለማገኝ መጠንቃል: የስራት ያቀረቡት ከጭ ዝላማ ሲለማገኝ መጠንቃል
  ይህ በተጨማሪ ያቀረቡት ከጭ ዝላማ ሲለማገኝ መጠንቃል

- ለማይሆን ገራ ያቀረቡት ሲለማገኝ መጠንቃል
  ያቀረቡት ከካቲት ዝላማ ጀምሮ መስራት ሲለማገኝ መጠንቃል
  ይህ በተጨማሪ ያቀረቡት ከጭ ዝላማ ሲለማገኝ መጠንቃል

- የስራት ያቀረቡት ከጭ ዝላማ ጀምሮ መስራት ሲለማገኝ መጠንቃል

- የስራት ያቀረቡት ከጭ ዝላማ ጀምሮ መስራት ሲለማገኝ መጠንቃል
The research study showed that the following points are hindering the successful implementation of inclusive education for children with disabilities in Addis Ababa. This chapter gives a short overview of these problematic issues. More concrete information about the results, along with an outline of supporting aspects to inclusive education, can be found in Chapter 5.
General aspects
- **Lack of information for parents**
  Lots of parents are not informed about the possibilities of education for their child with disability.
- **Transport**
  The biggest problem for parents is to find a school for their child with disability. Lots of schools simply don’t accept children with disabilities as they don’t feel capable of integrating them in the classrooms. Furthermore, schools are often far from their homes leading to high transport costs and the necessities that parents (mostly mothers) accompany their children to school.
- **Economic constraints**
  The transport problem adds to the strains of poverty, limits access to schools for children with disabilities and brings their families into problematic situations.

In the schools
- **School environment**
  In the schools one of the biggest problems is hygiene. Toilets are often not accessible for children with disabilities. Furthermore, the multi-storey buildings are difficult to access for children with physical disabilities. Also, the fact that lots of the schools are built upon uneven ground, stones, holes etc., pose additional challenges to children with disabilities, especially those with visual and physical disabilities. The classrooms are often dark, cold and noisy.
- **Lack of teacher training and material**
  The main point that is hampering successful inclusion of children with disabilities is the lack of teacher training. Teachers do not feel qualified enough to manage inclusive classrooms, and feel overburdened, unsupported and alone with the high number of children and the diverse special needs that require their attention. The lack of teaching material adds to the problematic situation in the classrooms.
- **Corporal punishment**
  Although the law forbids corporal punishment, it sometimes happens that children are punished physically.
- **Communication and commitment**
  A lack of communication between parents and teachers as well as teachers and school administration etc., leads to a loss in commitment and engagement amongst teachers.

Society and culture
- **Beliefs and religion**
  Lots of parents reported that wider society believes that they possess a child with disability because they are cursed. In some cases, parents were also convinced that god sent the child to them, and held the persistent belief that the child would eventually be healed. However, attitudes present within the parents of children with disabilities changed as soon as they visited school.
- **Societal attitudes**
  In general, a charity model of disability could be observed. This indicates that people with disabilities are generally seen as members of the society that need help, but cannot contribute meaningfully to society by themselves.
The report at hand concerning the results of the research project CLASDISA gives participants and participating institutions an insight into the outcomes of the analysis of the data collected in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

It has to be mentioned that in comparison with the other countries involved (i.e. Thailand and Austria), the research process in Addis Ababa was the one that could be conducted most smoothly, and was completed fastest and without any complications. This could only be achieved through the support of the participating schools, headmasters, teachers, parents and children. Throughout the project we experienced a welcoming atmosphere and great interest in supporting our research aims.

All of the schools that were invited to participate in the research accepted the invitation. Furthermore, the number of interviews that were finally collected exceeded the intended amount by a wide margin. The interest in the topic of research by teachers, parents and children as well as from the experts’ side was very encouraging and enhanced the quality of the interviews that were conducted. Additional support, such as sign language interpreters and people who translated cue-cards for blind children into Braille, was always provided with a
great deal of courtesy. Hence, the researchers did not encounter any major barriers throughout the research. It must also be especially mentioned that the researcher, Margarita Schiemer, has been welcomed in the different communities very warmly and has been made to feel at home throughout. This has to be considered as a very special and important aspect, as coming back to the research sites in the second and third phase was perceived as a very positive experience, and hence, greatly influenced the ongoing research.

4. The research process – የጥሩት እርባት

The research process throughout communities very warmly and has been made to feel at home resulted in the ongoing research.

Results of the CLASDISA project, November 2014
The first activities in the field started in March 2010. In this preparatory phase, the research team (Yeshitla Mulat and Margarita Schiemer) visited education bureaus and schools in order to obtain permission to conduct the research (interviews, observations and questionnaires). In the end 7 schools participated. Following this preparatory phase there were three phases of field research:

1. November 2010 – January 2011: Interviews, observations, questionnaires
3. April 2012 – May 2012: Interviews and questionnaires

200 questionnaires were collected from parents and teachers. This quantitative data is not part of the following results and has been analysed in a separate PhD thesis. Hence, the focus herein concerns the qualitative data. It was decided to speak to children, parents, teachers and other experts as sources of information. The reason for this choice was the supposition that those people would be able to give information about the situation of children with disabilities at school from different perspectives. Additionally, observations in the classes and in the school compounds provided the researcher with information that the interviewees might not have been able to give. All these perspectives opened a focussed set of views on a certain aspect. That means that the child with a disability and his/her situation at school was described through these views of the interviewee and additionally through the researcher’s interpretation of these views.

As far as the interviews and observations are concerned, the following set of data has been collected:

- 121 Interviews
- 20 class observations
- 7 appraisals of school compounds

The interviews have been collected by using guided and narrative forms of interviewing as well as focus group discussions. The collected material was transcribed in Amharic by the research assistant and translated into English by colleagues from the language department of the Addis Ababa University. There have been several quality checks by retranslating passages and discussing contents of interviews with the team from the Department of Special Needs Education at the Addis Ababa University.

Regarding the process of analysis, it was considered as essential to analyse how the disability of the child affected each of the participants and vice versa. By analysing emotions, issues that were raised as well as actions and reactions in the data, it was possible to get an impression of what disability meant to the people, and hence, how the parents, teachers, experts and children constructed, and perhaps also deconstructed, disability in relation to the field of education. The goal of this analytical approach was to obtain an answer to the question of which environmental factors the participants identified as influencing the education of children with disabilities. In this regard, the participants exhibited different roles: children on a “trying to find my place” level, parents on a “caring about the child” level, teachers on a “being responsible for education” level, experts on a “having to know what the problem is” level.
The data has been analysed by concentrating on the single groups of participants individually: children, parents, teachers and experts. In the results it becomes visible that relationships and attitudes towards children with disabilities were amongst the most important aspects that influenced the children’s activity and participation at school.

5.1 Children – እንበት

The participating children with disabilities were very enthusiastic about their education and school in general. The goals they set for themselves were usually very ambitious, with most of
them wanting to visit University later, and strived for jobs such as teachers, doctors etc. One of the main goals for the children was the possibility to be able to support their parents and family in the future.

Hence, education leads to an increase in the positive perception of self for the children. New possibilities seem to open for them and lead to new perspectives in their lives. Family, friends and their surroundings thereby play a major role regarding support for the child. Children who are supported to reach their goals are also more included in the community than children who are not supported. Furthermore, the goals of being able to support their family and become a valued member of society become more achievable through education, as children get the feeling of being able to reach those goals.

The children seem to go through a struggle of the question of belonging. It is a moving back and forth between possibilities and restrictions, between rejection and acceptance, between exclusion and inclusion. In school, children are accepted and receive education like other children. However, society in general still has a negative attitude towards people with disabilities. This means that the children’s environment provides them with conflicting ties and restrictions between rejection and acceptance regarding support. Children are accepted and receive education like other children are supported to reach their goals are also more included in the community than children who are not supported. Furthermore, the goals of being able to support their family and become a valued member of society become more achievable through education, as children get the feeling of being able to reach those goals.

5.2 Parents - መንገድ

In school, the children seem to go through a struggle of the question of belonging. It is a moving back and forth between possibilities and restrictions, between rejection and acceptance, between exclusion and inclusion. In school, children are accepted and receive education like other children are supported to reach their goals are also more included in the community than children who are not supported. Furthermore, the goals of being able to support their family and become a valued member of society become more achievable through education, as children get the feeling of being able to reach those goals.

Results of the CLASDISA project, November 2014
Parents were generally very satisfied with their child with disability attending a school. They were also happy with the teachers and the schools. However, transport was a major issue for them. As lots of children with disabilities cannot visit their neighbouring schools, transportation routes to schools are becoming longer. Hence, parents have to bring their children to the school themselves, investing time and money. As many of the parents were daily labourers, they lost time to earn their daily income and had to pay for the transport. This indicates that the attendance of their child with disability at school is even more challenging, adding to the strain of poverty through the fact that the schools accepting children with disabilities are usually not in the neighbouring communities.

Thus, through communication and interaction with their community, parents gain information about their child and the possibilities that education can offer. Additionally, some parents start to discover new potential in their children. Having this knowledge enables parents to develop trust in their child and establishes the foundation for future perspectives and support for children with disability. However, in order to start the process of establishing knowledge, parents must first and foremost show interest in education and care for their child.

Very often, parents viewed disability as a curse from God. This involves feelings of shame, which burdens children as well as parents. Education seems to offer a way out of this dilemma and changes the perception of disability. Hence, parents discover the significance of education and the possibilities that are opening up. Consequently, they might feel an “atmosphere of departure” when they break free from old convictions, and take on new perspectives regarding disability in general and their child with a disability in particular.

In this context, the aspect of responsibility that has to be taken on by the parents becomes very important. Parental support towards the child is influenced by fears and worries, awareness, possibilities and efforts on the parents’ behalf. The possibilities that open up for the children through the help of parents adds to the atmosphere of departure that is evoked by the parents’ change of attitudes. If parents support their children in education they contribute to and support the child’s new possibilities. A main factor that influences parents in their engagement towards supporting their child is a positive relationship with their child’s teachers and the school. Very often those parents spoke about a “feeling like a family” between parents and teachers.

5.3 Teachers - የጋራናት

Results of the CLASDISA project, November 2014
The interviews clearly show that teachers are overburdened in many cases, as they are not provided with sufficient tools to be able to manage classrooms with children with disabilities (in special settings as well as integrative settings). Lack of material and support is often indicated as an additional barrier. However, lots of teachers are very creative in finding solutions for their problems and show motivation and commitment to their profession and to the education of children with disabilities.

On the other hand, teachers also talk about frustration and loss of motivation, as they feel left alone with the problems that result from crowded classrooms and the special needs of children that cannot be given special attention because of the above-mentioned problems as well as a general lack of time etc.

An interesting aspect that could be observed is the importance of relationships and communication with parents, but also with other teachers. Teachers who invest in their working atmosphere by building a basis for cooperation with parents are more enabled and motivated to support the children. Conflict and trust between parents and teachers both play important roles in this context. Teachers often complain about parents who do not cooperate in the way they would expect it. Establishing relationships therefore can be seen as an investment by teachers to improve their working atmosphere with the children. An important aspect that was already mentioned above, concerning the relations between parents and teachers, is “feeling like a family”. This could be observed more so within special settings (special schools, special classes) compared to integrative settings (regular schools integrating children with disabilities). On the one hand, the relatively smaller size of special settings compared to integrative settings can be a reason for the development of such a feeling in the smaller settings. On the other hand, the fact that disability is a main concern in the special settings might also be more sensitizing for all people involved. Therefore, the awareness about the specific needs, challenges and problems regarding education for children with disabilities might be higher.
The initially mentioned challenges for teachers indicate that support is needed to a greater extent. In order to be able to improve the situation for children with disabilities (as well as for children in general) at school, teachers need support from parents, other teachers and from the school administration. Working with and supporting children with disabilities requires commitment and motivation. The more that teachers enjoy their working environment, the more commitment and motivation can be identified. Additionally, it is essential what teachers think about their profession; that is, if it makes sense for them and what they themselves gain from it (i.e. reassurance, satisfaction) or if they are mainly frustrated and overwhelmed by excessive demands. Positive relations and intense communication with parents, but also with colleagues in school, support a positive image of the working atmosphere for the teachers.

5.4 Experts – እንክስወጥ

The analysis of the interviews with different experts (special needs experts in the schools, with in the Ethiopian ministry of education, at Addis Ababa University and the Kotebe teacher training college; experts from Light for the World, RSDA, ECDD, ENDAN; various associations for people with disabilities etc.) showed that in general positive developments regarding attitudes towards persons with disabilities were observed within Ethiopian society. The development of educational possibilities for these children seems to be improving slowly, but visibly. This “atmosphere of departure” is supported by certain developments and hampered by other aspects. Hampering aspects are:

- The various aspects of poverty
- The prevailing charity model of disability
- The loss of motivation on the teachers’ side

The development of educational possibilities for these children seems to be improving slowly, but visibly. This “atmosphere of departure” is supported by certain developments and hampered by other aspects. Hampering aspects are:

- The various aspects of poverty
- The prevailing charity model of disability
- The loss of motivation on the teachers’ side
- Misunderstandings between the church and its followers, who see disability as a curse
- Infeasibility of an environment for inclusive education

Supporting factors are:
- An atmosphere of departure, which can also be observed at the highest levels (Ministry of Education etc.)
- The goal of transforming the Ethiopian society into a knowledge-based society
- Teachers’ engagement, preparedness and creativity
- Availability of special needs experts in the schools
- Positive attitudes and increasing number of initiatives found amongst teachers
- Parents seem to be more interested in education
- Considering the need for increased focus on practical skills in teacher education
- Children are seen as multipliers for awareness raising (talking to their families about disability etc.)
- CBR (Community Based Rehabilitation) workers

### 4 Conclusion and Reflections – የጠቃለያና ውስፋት

Children demonstrating their skills in writing
What stood out in this research is that communication and exchange amongst all people involved in the educational process of children with disability must receive a lot of attention. Furthermore, it is not surprising that teacher training is amongst the most important aspects that must be improved in order to enable the implementation of inclusive education, as aspired to by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education. The fact that attitudes towards people with disabilities have to change in general within society is also something that is very well known. It could be seen that mini-media and other awareness raising programs within schools are already having a positive influence on the attitudes of children, and consequently, on the families of these children as children might discuss these issues at home.

The point that was most striking throughout the interviews was the aspect of “feeling like a family,” which is highly related to the initially mentioned relevance of communication and exchange. Participants who expressed such a feeling also seemed to have developed a feeling of belonging towards the school. This in consequence influenced teachers’ motivation and commitment and parents’ interest and willingness to support their child. As a result the quality of education for children with disabilities rose by a considerable amount.

The research that took place in the framework of the international CLASDISA project was basic research that intended to look at the current situation for children with disabilities at school. As such, it intends to provide a basis for further research and is addressing questions that become visible through giving children, parents and teachers a voice in the process of making education for children with disabilities accessible. We hope that this research will contribute to discussions about inclusive education in Ethiopia and will provide a basis for schools and other stakeholders to identify and overcome major barriers to reach the goal of achieving universal primary education for all children.

Yeshitla Mulat & Margarita Schiemer
6. Publications and Presentations

Publications


Unpublished PhD Thesis:


Presentations

2012


- Field work in Ethiopia and Thailand. Presentation in a research seminar with Erich Otto Graf and Raphael Zahnd at the IFE, University of Zurich, Switzerland, April 4, 2012.
- **Classifications of Disability in the Field of Education (CLASDISA) Comparing Factors Influencing Participation and Activity of Children with Disabilities in Educational Environments in Austria, Ethiopia and Thailand.** Presentation together with Kramann M. (University of Vienna) Lecture at an ICF workshop in Zurich together with Judith Hollenweger, PH Zurich, Switzerland, January 26/27, 2012.

**2011**


- **Die UN-Behindertenrechtskonvention und das Recht auf Bildung.** Lecture held together with G. Biewer at the second study group “Inklusion von Menschen mit Behinderungen in der Österreichischen Entwicklungszusammenarbeit (OEZA)” – Inklusion im Bildungssektor, Austrian Development Agency (ADA), Vienna. September 23, 2011.


**2009**


**7. Further Resources**


