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Inclusion through Education: Facilitating Learning for Every Child

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Abstract

Education can offer the practical skills, and knowledge, needed to break out of the cycle of poverty. But inclusive education goes further by giving an opportunity to disabled children and adults to challenge prejudice, become visible, and gain the confidence to speak for them and build their own future within the mainstream of society. The terms 'integrated' and 'inclusive' are often used interchangeably, as if they mean the same thing. However, they represent major differences in philosophy. *Integrated education* is about disabled children going to mainstream schools (i.e., the focus is on attendance rates). *Inclusive education* is about disabled children learning effectively once they are in mainstream schools (i.e., the focus is on quality of learning).

In this paper, I examined many resources and cited studies to answer the some questions that arose from our study of the literature of inclusive education with reference to persons with disability.

Inclusion has been incorporated into almost every educational system, but we still need to learn and understand the real meaning of Education for All with quality and equity and recognize the fundamental role of teachers in the advancement of social justice, human rights, and opportunities for welfare. We can overcome obstacles by creating more awareness on inclusive education, by schools having the resources and the ability to re-structure their curriculum to cater to all types of students, by recruiting teachers who have the skills and proficiency to meet varying demands within the classroom and by having the support of family. If these changes are implemented, it will increase the confidence of a number of special children to aspire for a valuable education like their normal peers. Each one of us needs to face the challenges in order to consolidate inclusion for the benefit of our community.

Keywords: Inclusion in Education, Inclusive Education, Persons with Disability, Integrated Education, Inclusive Approaches

Inclusion through Education: Facilitating Learning for Every Child

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Introduction

Education can offer the practical skills, and knowledge, needed to break out of the cycle of poverty. But inclusive education goes further by giving an opportunity to disabled children and adults to challenge prejudice, become visible, and gain the confidence to speak for them and build their own future within the mainstream of society. The terms 'integrated' and 'inclusive' are often used interchangeably, as if they mean the same thing. However, they represent major differences in philosophy. It is helpful to clarify their different meanings, and for practitioners to use the same language. We recognize that, in some languages, it is not always possible to make the distinction between integration and inclusion. However, we feel that an understanding of the distinction in English is helpful, and is important in promoting more inclusive practices. A simple distinction is:

Integrated education is about disabled children going to mainstream schools (i.e., the focus is on attendance rates).

Inclusive education is about disabled children learning effectively once they are in mainstream schools (i.e., the focus is on quality of learning).

Thus Inclusive education must respond to all pupils as individuals, recognizing individuality as something to be appreciated and respected. Inclusive education responding to special needs will thus have positive returns for all pupils. All children and young people of the world, with their individual strengths and weaknesses, with their hopes and expectations, have the right to education. It is not our education systems that have a right to a certain type of children. Therefore, it is the school system of a country that must be adjusted to meet the needs of all its children. Inclusive education is different from special education, which takes a variety of forms including special schools, small units, and the integration of individual children with specialised support. Inclusive education services allow children with disabilities to stay with their family and to go to the nearest school, just like all other children. Interrupting a disabled child's normal development may have far more severe consequences than the disability itself.

How can we support Inclusive Education?

The Government should be committed in providing safe, supportive, inclusive and disciplined learning environments that provide educational opportunities for all students. This means building school communities where:

- all students feel a strong sense of belonging
- all students learn to interact respectfully with others
- all students learn to understand and appreciate diversity,
- all parents and care-takers in the community can take an active role in the life of the school, and
- carry out situation analyses, develop pilot schools lobby for system change in education, promote inclusive policies and legislation, find simple and cost-effective ways of overcoming barriers in the physical environment, create child-friendly learning environments, use simple clear and consistent language, make learning enjoyable make education more relevant to daily life and home situations accept that children learn at different rates and vary teaching methods accordingly respond flexibly and creatively, to cater the individual needs of children be flexible about seating arrangements – use mats, wooden blocks or old car tyres use multi-sensory teaching methods that attend to the diversity of senses promote active learning and child-to-child activities encourage teachers to observe each other and problem-solve together involve parents and community members in education.

Inclusive Education can improve the quality of Education for All

Inclusive education can act as a catalyst for change in educational practice, leading to improved quality of education. Including disabled children in mainstream schools challenges teachers to develop more child-centered, participatory, and active teaching approaches and this benefits all children. Teachers often think they need ‘special skills’ to teach disabled children, but experience has shown that in most cases disabled children can be included through good, clear and accessible teaching which encourages the active participation of children. These are all skills which teachers need to deliver quality education to all children, disabled or non-disabled. In addition to these skills, teachers may also need some specific technical help and/or equipment to meet certain children’s impairments.

Traditional Approach

Education for some

Static

Collective teaching

Learning in segregated areas

Emphasis on teaching subject- orientated

Diagnostic / prescriptive

Opportunities limited by exclusion

Disability view

Labels children disability wise

Inclusive Approach

Education for all

Flexible

Individualized Teaching

Learning in Integrated areas

Emphasis on learning child-centred

Holistic

Equalization of opportunities for all

Curricular view

Planning is made on ability levels and opposes all kinds of labelling

Changing the Education system- School improvement for all needs

1. Positive teacher attitudes
2. Child-centred curriculum
3. Alternative methods of teacher education
4. Flexible teaching methods
5. Appropriate teaching aids and equipment
6. Reduction in drop-outs and repeaters
7. Parent and community involvement
8. Well supported teachers and schools

Teachers are the Key to success in Inclusion

The current context in which teachers are working is in need of rapid change. All areas of education have changed during the past decades, with major changes to the role of teachers, together with the introduction of new approaches to the curriculum and assessment. These changes have involved the development of new understandings about the interactive nature of children's needs and a shift in focus from what is wrong with the child? To what does the child need to support their learning? Teachers are often not confident about working with children who do not fit their expectations of a 'normal' child, particularly where they have fears or prejudices about what such children will be like. But there are many practical ways of helping teachers overcome their fears of the unknown and helping them to work more closely with excluded children in a learner-centred environment. All teachers need to have the following responsibilities for bringing about lasting change in schools.

1. **Ongoing contact and communication:** to communicate regularly with the home that is, parents or guardians about their children's progress in learning and achievement, to invite parents and members of the community to be involved in the classroom. The inclusive teacher is a professional educator committed to his/her community, who recognizes individual differences and considers them in his/her educational intervention actions. S/he participates in collective teaching because it is essential for collaboration and dialogue and is also creative in implementing education by facing the challenges of diversity in specific educational project interventions.
2. **A collaborative, team approach:** The collaborative work among educators and community facilitates inclusion and teachers need to be promoted to work with community leaders to find out which children are not in school and why, and to devise ways to bring them into school on the basis of Information collected in the school and community, a team sharing knowledge, making decisions, solving problems together and generating actions in order to improve the school and to increase the learning for all. In consequence, the collaborative work is a source of dialogue, co-teaching and updating. Information on the process of collaborative is necessary. The dialogue, participation and collaboration allow full awareness to all as a community and, in consequence ensure successful experiences in inclusion. For this reason the teachers need to be involving community.
3. **Resources need:** to explain the value and purpose of an inclusive education to parents of pupils in their classes; Improving teaching and learning in the classroom through Workshops and other learning opportunities. The inclusive teacher has to have strong skills in action research methods. Teacher recognizes individual differences and implements learning strategies for all. The dialogue needed for relationships and the essence of collaboration is the recognition of otherness. Collaboration takes the value of the other as implicit – this implies strengths, occupations and concerns. This vision then transforms from two ideas (you and me) to a new figure (us). Such dialogue and collaboration are key elements in inclusive education. Thus educational intervention is oriented to diversity and promotes learning strategies for all (equality), for quite a few and for only one (equity), it allows co-teaching or concurrent participation. Inclusion promotes co-operation in the classroom.
4. **The mission, vision, and culture:** to prepare their pupils to interact with the community as part of the curriculum, such as through field trips or special activities and events. As a result of these activities, each student keeps a portfolio and checks

research to support their actions. At all times they are accompanied by an experienced teacher. Certainly, they should include diverse environments, contexts, and educational services that characterize the educational system. The teacher must exert mentoring activities, to enrich their teaching experience with the knowledge of a mentor who attends and promotes pupils' inclusion activities. It's not enough for children and youth to be among peers. For successful connections to occur, it's important to build on common interests. This may be as simple as selecting certain students to travel together, teaming kids up for work projects, or using peer tutors in the classroom. Parents can invite other children and youth to their home and involve their child in community activities such as boy scouts, girl guides, recreational clubs and teams, or after-school clubs.

5. **Planning with parents and community:** The idea of coming together for planning was to develop a forum for parents of children to promote inclusion from the very early stages of their lives, not specifically about including children in education, but also promoting their career. This was a unique opportunity to capture the parents' hopes and fears, and their need to talk to others with similar experiences. Planning activities, after assessing the educational context, it is important to develop instruments of work; observation guides, questionnaires, interviews and to make teams to provide all aspects for implementing the planned approaches. Critical route implementation is of great help for the teachers to implement their plan successfully.

School Reforms needed for facilitating Learning of every Child

The curriculum for "ALL" needs to be:

1. **Child Centred:** Children with disabilities need child-centred curriculum, which takes into account the individual needs of children. The curriculum needs to set specific, observable, measurable and achievable learning outcomes.
2. **Flexible:** A flexible, locally relevant curriculum, teaching and learning strategies are intrinsically important for children with special needs to participate in the educational process. Alternative methods of teaching can be of great help.
3. **Participatory:** Children with special needs require a learning environment in which they can actively participate in learning in small groups learning settings, appropriate teaching aids and equipment to be used for motivation.
4. **Partnership with parents:** Parent and community involvement is a key factor as children learn not only in the classrooms but also at home. Parental involvement is an important part of making inclusive education work. In this context, it is important to

stress the role parents have, as they have a right to be involved in all decision-making concerning their child. Increased access to information for parents of children with special needs entering inclusive schools is of great help for the teacher as well as for the parents. They should be seen as partners in the education process. Where there is such co-operation, parents have been found to be very important resources for the teachers and the schools. Parents can also learn how to deal better with their children at home by using techniques that the teachers use in school. They also learn to interact with others in the community, as well as to understand and help solve each other's problems. Visiting families door-to-door and talking to parents on a one-to-one basis was the only way to gain their trust, engage their interest and mobilize their commitment. School and its teachers having links with the community, is responsive to the needs of the community, and provides opportunities for exchanging ideas with the community to bring about positive changes in inclusive practices; The school-community maps need to be continually updated and used to identify children who may not be coming to school. Consequently, creating the maps can become a permanent part of the curriculum.

Knowing the roles of each of these team members will allow them to build positive relationships, solve problems, and create the best possible future for the child and family. Building positive relationships and creating a team that works together to plan for your child's education will make your journey to an inclusive future possible. Education of children with special educational needs is a shared task of parents and professionals at an inclusive school. A positive attitude on the part of parents favours school and social integration. Parents need support in order to assume the role of a parent of a child with special needs. A co-operative, supportive partnership between school administrators, teachers and parents should be developed and parents regarded as active partners in decision-making. Parents should be encouraged to participate in educational activities at home and at school (where they could observe effective techniques and learn how to organize extra-curricular activities), as well as in the supervision and support of their children's learning.

Conclusion:

Inclusion has been incorporated into almost every educational system, but we still need to learn and understand the real meaning of Education for All with quality and equity and recognize the fundamental role of teachers in the advancement of social justice, human rights, and opportunities for welfare. We can overcome obstacles by creating more awareness on

inclusive education, by schools having the resources and the ability to re-structure their curriculum to cater to all types of students, by recruiting teachers who have the skills and proficiency to meet varying demands within the classroom and by having the support of family. If these changes are implemented, it will increase the confidence of a number of special children to aspire for a valuable education like their normal peers. Each one of us needs to face the challenges in order to consolidate inclusion for the benefit of our community.

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