

## Inclusive Education

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### Abstract:

*Inclusive education refers to a model wherein special needs students spend most or all of their time with non-special needs i.e., general education students. It arises in the context of special education with an individualized education program, and is based on the fact that it is more effective for students with special needs to have said mixed experience for them to be more successful in social interactions leading to further success in life. Inclusive education happens when children with and without disabilities participate and learn together in the same classes. Research shows that when a child with disabilities attends classes alongside peers who do not have disabilities, good things happen. Inclusive education differs from the integration or mainstreaming model of education, which is to be concerned principally with disability and special educational needs, and learners changing or becoming ready for or deserving of accommodation by the mainstream, also inclusion is about the child's right to participate and the school's duty to accept the child. Thus, the present paper focuses on importance of inclusive education and how it can be implemented in educational institutions.*

### Introduction:

“Inclusion is a philosophy that brings diverse students, families, educators, and community members together to create schools and other social institutions based on acceptance, belonging and community. Inclusion recognizes that all students are learners who benefit from a meaningful, challenging, and appropriate curriculum, and differentiated instruction techniques that address their unique strengths and needs. Inclusion programs provide all students with access to a challenging, engaging and flexible curriculum that helps them to be successful in society.” (Salend, 2005). Inclusion not only benefits those individuals who are disabled but those also who are without disabilities as it provides an opportunity for them to learn about disabilities and learn to accept that every individual is different and unique. Inclusion may not be for every child but it benefits greatly, so an inclusive classroom has been prioritised as far as the education of these individuals is concerned. When an individual is in an inclusive classroom setting, it is extremely important for the parents and teachers to have a complete understanding of each other and have the ability to communicate whenever possible, at an appropriate time. An individual will learn best when a positive role model is to be looked up and for an individual with a disability that positive role model

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might be his/her peers or the teacher. It is imperative to state that before finding the perfect classroom for an individual to be included in, one should remember that he or she is an individual first and disability should come second. Inclusive Education (IE) is a new approach towards educating the children with disability and learning difficulties with that of normal ones within the same roof. It brings all students together in one classroom and community, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area, and seeks to maximize the potential of all students. It is one of the most effective ways in which to promote an inclusive and tolerant society. Inclusion is an effort to make sure that diverse learner – those with disabilities, different languages and cultures, different homes and family lives, different interests and ways of learning. Inclusive Education denotes that all children irrespective of their strengths and weaknesses will be part of the mainstream education. It is clear that education policy in India has gradually increased the focus on children and adults with special needs, and that inclusive education in regular schools has become a primary policy objective. The researches show that teachers in inclusive settings collaborate more and spend more time planning, learn new techniques from one another, participate in more professional development activities, show a greater willingness to change, and use a wider range of creative strategies to meet students' needs. All school going children, whether they are disabled or not, have the right to education as they are the future citizens of the country. Today, it is widely accepted that inclusion maximizes the potential of the vast majority of students, ensures their rights, and is the preferred educational approach for the 21st century. Inclusive education helps the disabled child to develop a sense of pride in their work because they actually feel like they accomplished something. Educating children with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers is considered one of the better ways to provide education. It is important that inclusive education not be seen as an add-on in mainstream schools. Implementing inclusive education should be done within a whole-school approach. As mentioned previously, inclusive education is about implementing change to improve the educational system for all learners. Therefore, it should be part of the vision and mission statement of the school and form an intrinsic part of the practices and activities in the whole school. Although the move towards inclusive education originated within disability discourse, it is currently viewed from a human rights and social justice perspective. Inclusive education is thus much broader than special education, and should therefore not be limited to learners who have disabilities. It is now acknowledged at international and national level, that barriers to learning may be intrinsic and/or extrinsic. Inclusive education should consequently not be seen as a change in the way special education is provided, but rather as an opportunity to transform the whole school as a system. It is accordingly essential that this transformation is addressed through the development of a

whole-school policy for inclusive education.

### **Research studies**

Florian & Linklater (2010) found that the concept of 'inclusive education' has gained currency, students who would previously have been referred to specialist forms of provision, having been judged 'less able', are now believed to belong in mainstream classrooms. However, it is often argued that teachers lack the necessary knowledge and skills to work with such students in inclusive classrooms. This paper reports findings of a study of a new initial teacher education course that starts from the premise that the question is not whether teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills to teach in inclusive classrooms, but how to make best use of what they already know when learners experience difficulty. The theoretical rationale for the development of the course is outlined and examples of how teachers might engage in more inclusive practice are presented.

Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou (2011) explored the international development of the inclusive education perspective in Australia. Inclusive education as a late modernity reform project is exemplified in the call for 'Education for All'. Despite the simplicity of its message, inclusion is highly contestable. The key questions raised by the concept of inclusion are not definitional, despite of, or perhaps because of the difficulties of framing a meaningful definition, but are rather questions of practical political power which can only be meaningfully analysed with reference to the wider social relations of our increasingly globalised world. Inclusion is contested within and across educational systems and its implementation is problematic both in the countries of the North and of the South. Some of these contradictions are discussed in this paper, providing an analysis of national and international policy. In the countries of the North, despite the differences in the ways that inclusion is defined, its effectiveness is closely related to managing students by minimising disruption in regular classrooms and by regulating 'failure' within the education systems. In the countries of the South, the meaning of inclusive education is situated by post-colonial social identities and policies for economic development that are frequently generated and financed by international organisations. This paper recognises the contested nature of inclusive education policies and practices in diverse national contexts. It is argued that the meaning of inclusion is significantly framed by different national and international contexts. For this reason, the idea of inclusion continues to provide an opportunity in education and society in general, to identify and challenge discrimination and exclusion at an international, national and local level.

Magumise & Sefotho (2018) stated that Inclusive education (IE) is a global restructuring strategy envisioned to embrace learners with different abilities in mainstream schools.

Previous research shows that parent and teacher inclusive education perceptions depend largely on their experiences of IE. This study examined parent and teacher perception of IE in the context Zimbabwean primary education. Data were collected from 12 parents and 12 teachers of learners in IE. Results indicated that participants' perceptions of IE divide into three main categories; i.e. positive, mixed and negative perceptions. Some believed that inclusion benefits and it leads to collaborative development. The other category was of the opinion that there should be appropriate balance in handling learners and it should not overpower the other or vice-versa and some were of the apprehension that inclusion might slow down the learning outcomes of learners without disabilities because teachers might be more involved with those who are with some disabilities. Inclusion is an effort to make sure that diverse learner – those with disabilities, different languages and cultures, different homes and family lives, different interests and ways of learning.

Dreyer (2017) described two models for inclusion, medical model and social model. The medical model focuses on the individual deficit theory. It categorises and locates deficits or problems within the learner and prescribes curative interventions such as therapy, medicine, surgery or special treatment which is then delivered within a separate class. It is followed by a typical patient-diagnosis-treatment sequence in order to get the learner to function 'normally'. This paradigm professionalises disability and 'difference' to the extent that ordinary mainstream teachers do not perceive themselves as competent or qualified to teach learners with diverse educational needs. It must also be acknowledged there are intrinsic barriers e.g., poor eyesight that medical intervention can cure or provide support by using spectacles. The social model suggests that barriers to learning and participation are created by society and constructed to serve the interest of the majority, thereby limiting accessibility for others. People who do not conform to the expectations of the majority's expectations of appearance, behaviour and/or economic performance are thus discriminated. This paradigm recognises the reality of systemic barriers to learning and development. Within an inclusive education system, it is thus important to identify and remove these barriers to allow individuals equal participation and to eliminate discrimination. The most important principle for inclusive education is the intensive effort to offer equal opportunities for all learners. It is clear that the traditional understanding of teaching is becoming obsolete in the face of increasing numbers of learners from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds with different abilities and present educational needs.

Korsgaard, Larsen & Wiberg (2020) presented the idea of the two-sided study was to disclose and use collective thinking and inquiry to bring about a reflection on the subject 'inclusion in Danish schools'. The aim of the study was to bring the activity of

thinking to a public i.e., researchers and practitioners. The example of Socrates was stated to show how thinking can be brought into the public sphere and how through judging it is possible to bring the perspectives of others into the process as a form of enlarged thinking, which in essence is an inclusive endeavour. Four aspects thus characterise the developed framework: firstly, it is dialogical; secondly, it is collective; thirdly, it is anti-methodological; and, fourthly, it is intent upon mediation between conceptual and practical knowledge. The tentative framework was to explore through the course of a series of sessions with practitioners, researchers and students involved in inclusive education. The group consisted of 2 school teachers (females), 2 student school teachers (male and female), 2 school pedagogues trained in inclusive education (females) and 3 researchers (1 male & 2 females). The pedagogues were at the time 'inclusion counsellors' and, therefore, had a specific professional focus on inclusion. The first experimental session was concentrated on illuminating the concepts used when researchers, politicians and practitioners speak about inclusion. The form was dialogical and collective, and the idea was to identify concepts and prejudices that revolve around the idea of inclusion. The next step was to get closer to how inclusion is experienced in practice. The purpose was to promote discussions and dialogues on experiences of inclusion and to try to transcend common sense ways of talking about inclusion. Examples from situations in practice were explained in order to get beyond common sense definitions, dominant political and economic discourses, and dominant theoretical pedagogical understandings of inclusion. Thus, the second session focused on practice and events of inclusion. In the third session, a utopian perspective was provided in order to work through some of the narratives from the first and second sessions. This way of working with narratives and practice stories opened up a space of reflection on how the world could look if the mundane political and structural entanglements of educational work are abandoned. It also opened a particular space that inhabiting, caught up usually are in the routines and practices of occupation as researchers, teachers and pedagogues are not accustomed. In this way, a collective and inclusive way of speaking about inclusion and education can emerge where both the research and practice develop tactfully in respect to the other.

Mónico, Mensah, Grünke, Garcia, Fernández & Rodríguez (2020) found that Mainstream- school teachers are the most important assets for students with special educational needs (or diverse conditions) who hope to achieve real inclusion. However, teaching experience, attitudes, and knowledge can either promote or hinder efforts towards inclusion. A cross-cultural study was conducted to examine perceptions, knowledge, and attitudes towards inclusion in teachers from Ghana, Germany, and Spain, about intervention with special- education students enrolled in their classrooms. The

participants comprised 363 teachers – 156 men (43%) and 207 women (57%) – from three countries (Ghana, Germany, and Spain). Of the teachers, 150 (41.3%) were from Ghana, 62 (17.1%) were from Germany, and 151 (41.6%) were from Spain. The results showed that there were significant differences in teachers' self-confidence and in the amount of personal and material resources they received from administrators and schools. In general, the Spanish teachers reported lower levels for these variables. All the teachers showed adequate levels of knowledge about instructional strategies and students' characteristics, although those from Ghana demonstrated significantly more knowledge than the others about students' characteristics. Finally, the teachers differed by country in terms of their attitudes towards inclusion, with the teachers from Spain and Germany demonstrating slightly better attitudes. They all agreed on the need for additional training as a key aspect in this regard.

Miles & Singal (2010) explored the history of the international Education for All (EFA) programme in United Kingdom and its tendency to overlook some marginalised groups of children, in particular those seen as having 'special educational needs' or impairments and disabilities. The exclusion from 'mainstream' education programmes of the estimated, though unreliable, figures of 90 or 98% of children in Southern countries has, until relatively recently, been largely unchallenged. The explanation lies in the still prevalent view that some children are 'ineducable' and that overcrowded and under-resourced schools would not be able to cope. Consequently, a largely parallel, international debate has developed about 'inclusive education', within which many conflicting positions exist. We suggest that there is an unhelpful and wasteful polarisation between EFA and inclusive education. Although inclusive education is defined by some writers in terms of overcoming barriers to learning and development for all children, in the context of Southern countries it tends to fill the gap left by EFA and so focuses almost exclusively on disabled children. The paper challenges some of the rhetoric, but also highlights the opportunities created by the current international interest in, and apparent commitment to, delivering quality education for all children. The paper concludes by offering a re-conceptualisation of the relationship between EFA and inclusive education, argues for greater collaboration and synergy between these currently parallel initiatives, and suggests ways in which practitioners and policy makers can develop more sustainable, and context-appropriate, policies and practices.

Rodriguez & Garro (2014) stated that the terminological shift from 'integration' to 'inclusion' in special education and the arbitrary use of one term or another has ended up distorting the real meaning of both. This semantic confusion suggests that when it was spoken of "integration", the socio-educative actions practiced actually had this goal but fell into a mere inclusion of individuals in the already set-out structures (ordinary schools

in most cases). Meanwhile, the current "inclusive education" or "inclusive pedagogy", even referring to inclusion what it really pursues and practices is the integration in society, what cannot be forgotten is that the genuine special education is personalized and therefore it will sometimes require the creation and arrangement of spaces and other facilities in order to meet the specific needs of every student. It considers the semantic distinction to be extremely important because each concept refers to different sociological logics (inclusion/exclusion or differentiation/integration) that have diverse social educative implications which range from educational policies to the selection of teaching methods and resources in the classroom.

Mercinah and Nirmala (2011) focused on "Children who learn together, learn to live together". Their study reviews some of the barriers to the development of successful inclusive schools and suggests that one way of overcoming these difficulties is to reconsider the roles and responsibilities of school teachers in inclusive education and also provides some suggestions to be acted out well. This signifies that if all schools became inclusive and learning-friendly, and would welcome all the children from the surrounding communities into their schools, these fears would be much less relevant because all the schools would compete on a more equal footing. Inclusive and child-friendly education should therefore be seen an approach to school improvement: inclusion is about making quality education available to all. The success of inclusive education in any context depends upon many factors. Teachers themselves are an essential component to ensure the quality of students' inclusion in the school environment. Communication and having an open mind to suggestions are two key things to keep in mind when working in a co-teaching situation which highlights the importance of Inclusive Education.

Xu & Cooper (2020) explored how mainstream teachers, in mainland China with experience of inclusive education, perceive individual differences (ID) among students in general education classrooms. The study adopted a qualitative research approach and employed purposeful sampling and semi-structured interviews. It was found that the mainstream teachers tended to conceptualise ID among students in accordance with five categories: perceived student ability; perceived student behaviour and motivation; perceived students' personal attributes; perceived family factors and observed learning outcomes. The mainstream teachers' particular concerns in relation to catering for ID were also revealed and discussed.

Kilinc (2019) defined Inclusive education (IE), as a global movement, has been part of many nations' policy agendas. As the global ideas travel across borders, the meaning of this term has taken various forms in local and national discourses. Thus, this study examines teachers' conceptualizations and experiences of IE for students with

dis/abilities (SwDs) in Turkey. SwDs are one of the largest groups who are marginalised and excluded from accessing education and participating in meaningful learning experiences. Cultural historical activity theory was used to understand the teachers' meaning-making of IE in relation to their context. This qualitative study was conducted in four schools in a southwestern city in Turkey. Applying a photo elicitation approach, a classroom photo with a hypothetical vignette was used as a stimulus to generate focus group discussions and individual interviews. Classroom observations and document collections guided the exploration of SwDs' experiences and the context of their schooling. Using constant-comparative data analysis, two themes were identified: 'Who is in? Who is out? Challenges to access,' and 'What happens after placement?' The findings revealed that SwDs had justice struggles in regard to misdistribution of access, misrecognition of their abilities and backgrounds, misrepresentation of their voices, and participation in learning activities.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

So, it is hereby concluded that the above-mentioned studies tried well to highlight the importance of inclusive education for children with special needs. There are many research studies which explain the role of regular school teacher for children with special needs. The studies also reveal that the coordination between regular school teacher and special educator is important to implement inclusive education for these children. The governments have also taken lot of initiatives to strengthen the inclusive in regular schools through different policies.

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