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"INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: THE WAY OF THE FUTURE"

REFERENCE DOCUMENT

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INTRODUCTION: MAKING EDUCATION INCLUSIVE

Inclusive education is a process that involves the transformation of schools and other centres of learning so as to cater for all children—including boys and girls, students from ethnic minorities, those affected by HIV and AIDS, and those with disabilities and learning difficulties. Education takes place in many contexts, both formal and non-formal, and within families and the wider community. Consequently, inclusive education is not a marginal issue, but is central to the achievement of high-quality education for all learners and the development of more inclusive societies.

If children do not have the opportunity to develop their potential during the critical years of childhood, their whole families are more at risk of becoming poor, or of sliding into more chronic poverty. In this way, making education more inclusive contributes to the Millennium Development Goals of eradicating extreme poverty and achieving universal primary education. It also contributes to the broader goals of social justice and social inclusion.

Without clear, unified national strategies to include all learners, many countries will not achieve the Education for All (EFA) goals by 2015. Progress also depends on clarity about what is meant by inclusive education. Currently there is a variety of versions of what it means and what it implies. Based on international research, this document offers an overview of the main issues related to inclusive education. It is intended to inform policy discussion during the forty-eighth session of the International Conference on Education (ICE). In so doing, it also elaborates on the main topics of the Conference, i.e. concepts; policies; structures and systems; and practice.

Education systems throughout the world are faced with the challenge of providing an effective education for all children, young people and adults. In economically poorer countries this mainly concerns the estimated 72 million children who are not in school. It is about high rates of repetition and drop-out as well as low learning outcomes that penalize the most deprived social groups. It is also about the 774 million adults who still lack basic literacy skills—more than three-quarters of whom live in only fifteen countries. Meanwhile, in wealthier countries—despite the resources that are available—many young people leave school with no worthwhile qualifications, others are placed in various forms of special provision away from mainstream educational experiences, and some simply choose to drop out since what is taught at school seems irrelevant to their lives. In both developed and developing regions there is a common challenge: how to attain high-quality equitable education for all learners.

The need to advance in the effective democratization of educational opportunities for all can be based on the notion of 'inclusion' to guide national policies and strategies addressing the causes and consequences of exclusion within the holistic framework of EFA goals. Building more inclusive education systems requires a strong commitment to working towards a more just, equitable and peaceful society. It also requires the adoption of intersectoral policies addressing social, economic, political and cultural factors that generate exclusion — both from education and within education.

Faced with these challenges, there is an increased interest in the idea and the practice of *inclusive education*. In several countries, inclusion is still thought of simply as an approach to serving children with disabilities within general education settings. Internationally, however, it is increasingly seen more broadly as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners.[1] It presumes that the aim of inclusive education is to eliminate social exclusion resulting from attitudes and responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender and ability. As such, it starts from the belief that education is a basic human right and the

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[1] UNESCO, *Open File on Inclusive Education,* Paris, UNESCO, 2001.

foundation for a more just society. In this sense, it is the means of ensuring that Education for All really does mean *all*.

Gender disparities

"Gender disparities tend to increase at higher levels of education. Approximately 63% of countries with available data have achieved gender parity at the primary level of education, compared with 37% at secondary and less than 3% at the tertiary level. In many parts of the world, school environments remain physically unsafe for both boys and girls; teacher attitudes and practices, curricula and textbooks continue to be gender-biased; and fields of studies and occupational choices remain clustered by gender.

Globally, about 72 million children were out of school in 2005, with girls accounting for 57%. However regions vary considerably: in sub-Saharan Africa, 54% of out-of-school children were girls compared with South and West Asia at 66% and the Arab States at 60%.

Gender disparities in primary education stem first and foremost from enrolment patterns in the first grade. In 2005, 94 girls started Grade 1 for every 100 boys, according to the global average.

In 2005, disparities at the secondary level favoured boys in 61 countries, slightly more than the 53 countries where girls were at an advantage. Boys' underachievement in terms of participation and performance is increasingly an issue, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean. This is the only region where there are more girls enrolled in secondary education than boys (90 boys or fewer enrolled for every 100 girls in 11 countries). Only four countries out of 144 with data achieved gender parity at the tertiary level by 2005.

Women still accounted for 64% of illiterate adults in 1995–2004, a share virtually unchanged from the 63% recorded during 1985–1994. Globally, there were 89 women who could read and write for every 100 literate men.

Promoting gender equality in education requires altering gender socialization processes and certain learning conditions in school. As highlighted in the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008, effective policies and programmes should ensure: safe and non-discriminatory school environments; the presence of enough female teachers to act as role models, as well as unbiased teacher training and classroom dynamics; unbiased learning content; and less gendered choice of subjects in tertiary education." (*Source:* UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Gender parity in education: not there yet,* Montreal, UIS, March 2008. (UIS Facts Sheet, no. 1.))

Research suggests that progress towards inclusive education is more likely to be successful in contexts where there is a culture of collaboration that encourages and supports problem-solving. It involves those within a particular context—country, district, community or school—working together and using evidence to address the barriers to education experienced by some learners. What, then, does this mean for policy? What needs to be done so that education systems can encourage practices that 'reach out' effectively to all children and young people, whatever their circumstances and personal characteristics?

This document provides a conceptual framework based on what international research suggests are the features of education systems that have been successful in moving in an inclusive direction. The material in the next four sections examines each of these themes in more detail.

In recent years much has been written about inclusive education from an international perspective.[2] UNESCO's documents on inclusive education since the World Conference on

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[2] See: M. Ainscow et al., *Improving schools, developing inclusion,* London, Routledge, 2006; P. Davis, L. Florian et al., *Teaching strategies and approaches for pupils with special educational needs: A scoping study*, London, DfES, 2004. (Research Report 516); A. Dyson, A. Howes and B. Roberts, *A systematic review of the effectiveness of school-level actions for promoting participation by all students*, London, Institute of Education, 2002. (Inclusive Education Review Group for the EPPI Centre.); L. Florian (Ed.), *The Sage Handbook of Special Education,* London, Sage, 2007; A. Lewis and B. Norwich (Eds.), *Special teaching for special children: A pedagogy for inclusion?* Maidenhead, UK, Open University Press, 2005; C.J. Riehl, The principal's role in creating inclusive schools for

'Special Needs Education: Access and Quality' held in Salamanca (Spain) in 1994 also provide a helpful reference point, especially in relation to developing countries. The information available from the Enabling Education Network (EENET) database, which is primarily from developing country contexts, has helped inform some of the thinking behind this document.

This document also draws on UNESCO's *Open File on Inclusive Education* (2001), which distilled the experience of educational stakeholders from a wide range of countries through a series of consultations held over a five-year period. The *Open File* is a set of resource materials designed to stimulate policy-makers and administrators to think about their own situation. It provides an excellent basis upon which policy-makers can build. The document *General Presentation of the 48th session of the ICE* (ED/BIE/CONFINTED 48/4), which has been sent to Member States and other relevant organizations along with the letter of invitation, is another information source for the Conference participants.

Finally, in preparation for the 48th session of the ICE, the International Bureau of Education, in collaboration with UNESCO National Commissions and field offices, as well as other partners, organized nine consultation meetings and two regional conferences during the period June 2007–May 2008, covering all of UNESCO's regions. Altogether they involved more than 780 participants from 111 countries, and in some cases civil society and international organizations were also represented.[3] These meetings revealed a wide range of understanding about the concept of inclusive education, as well as a variety of policies and strategies, even though it was clear that in many contexts inclusive education is still associated exclusively with disability and 'special educational needs', involving the integration of children into mainstream schools.

There was also widespread concern about the social, economic, political and cultural factors that generate exclusion, which should be addressed through the definition and implementation of appropriate intersectoral policies focused on the causes of exclusion, both outside and within education. Among the most promising measures that can contribute to overcoming disadvantage and inequality, most of the participants identified the following: (a) tackling education from a rights-based perspective, since each individual possesses a fundamental right, regardless of their differences, to fully develop their potential; (b) the expansion of early childhood care and educational services; (c) the expansion of basic education beyond primary schooling in order to include lower secondary education, while catering concurrently for both equity and quality aspects; (d) the provision of high-quality, non-formal educational opportunities followed by possibilities for formal recognition of competencies acquired in non-formal settings and other forms of transition between formal and non-formal education; (e) the adoption of more dynamic and diversified teaching/learning strategies and flexible curricula that can respond to the diversity of learning needs; and (f) the improvement of teacher education and training programmes. Overall, the initial outcomes of all these preparatory activities clearly indicate that fostering inclusion—within both education and society—is a common concern across countries and regions.

Against this background, the forty-eighth session of the ICE offers a unique opportunity for an in-depth and open discussion among ministers of education and other stakeholders on such issues as: (a) the relationship between inclusive education, society and democracy; (b) the concept of inclusive education and its operational dimensions; and, in particular, (c) the main characteristics of policies and practices that can successfully overcome exclusion, both from education and within education, thus contributing to build more inclusive, just and equitable societies.

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diverse students: A review of normative, empirical and critical literature on the practices of educational administration, *Review of educational research,* 70(1), p. 55-81, 2000; UNESCO, *Guidelines for inclusion: ensuring access to Education for All*, Paris, UNESCO, 2005.

[3] A comprehensive summary of the outcomes of these meetings is provided in the special issue of *Prospects* (no. 145, March 2008) devoted to the theme of the forty-eighth session of the ICE.

THEME 1: APPROACHES, SCOPE AND CONTENT

Inclusive education is an evolving concept that can be useful to guide policies and strategies addressing the causes and consequences of discrimination, inequality and exclusion within the holistic framework of EFA goals. Removing the barriers for participation in learning for all learners is at the core of the concept of inclusive education, which is truly rights-based and will require all aspects of the education system to be reviewed and redesigned. Inclusive education can be comprehended as an on-going process in an ever-evolving education system, focusing on those currently excluded from accessing education, as well as those who are in school but not learning. Nevertheless, inclusive education is often misunderstood and there are many different interpretations around the world.

1.1 Conceptual dimensions: special needs education, integration, inclusion

Special Needs Education

Traditionally, and even today in various regions of the world—for example, in Eastern and South Eastern Europe, as well as in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and some parts of Asia[4]— the concept and practices of inclusive education have been mainly limited to students categorized as having special needs, meaning predominantly those with physical and/or mental disabilities, as well as refugees. From this perspective, the approaches and responses considered appropriate to students' needs have been mainly remedial and corrective—setting up and increasing the number of special schools, curricular tracks and special education teachers.

One significant consequence of differentiated curricular and institutional structures for students categorized as having special needs has been their segregation and isolation within the education system. However, the underlying assumption that there are 'special needs children' is questionable, as any child can experience difficulty in learning, many children with disabilities have no problem with learning, and children with intellectual impairment can often learn very well in certain domains.[5]

Integration

The concept of integration emerged in the 1980s, as an alternative to segregated special needs curricula and school models, with the objective of placing students defined as having special needs in mainstream schools. The restructuring and improvement of physical facilities, the increase in numbers of special classrooms and special education teachers in mainstream buildings, the 'integration' of learners with special needs into regular classes, and the provision of learning materials were, and still are, some of the main components for the application of integration models. Mainly focused on students with mild impairments, integration can risk becoming a rhetorical device rather than a reality in practice; it can become more about a spatial change of school classrooms than a change of curricular content and pedagogy relevant to children's learning needs.

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[4] See: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Education policies for students at risk and those with disabilities in South Eastern Europe*, Paris, OECD, 2006; UNESCO-IBE, *Report on the Commonwealth of Independent States, Third Workshop on Curriculum Development: "Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future"*, Minsk, Belarus, 29–31 October 2007 (unpublished); UNESCO-IBE, *Report on the East Asia Workshop on Inclusive Education*, Hangzhou, China, 2–5 November 2007 (unpublished).

[5] See: S. Stubbs, *Inclusive education: where there are few resources*, Oslo, The Atlas Alliance, 2002, p. 3 and 23.

After the 1990s, the scope, objectives, contents and implications of inclusive education in relation to integration were considerably changed. This was principally due to the recognition that integration models solely based on closing special schools and 'inserting' students into mainstream schools and curricula do not respond to the diversities of learners' expectations and needs. Such an understanding prompts revision of educational policies dealing with integration issues by questioning the relevance of the curriculum and school models that are the same for all students, regardless of their differences. According to such models, students must *adapt* to the existing norms, styles, routines and practices of the education system. Moreover, drop-out rates may increase among students with special needs when integrated into mainstream schools that have not undertaken a comprehensive set of institutional, curricular and pedagogical changes.

Inclusion

Inclusive education can be understood as a guiding principle to attain reasonable levels of school integration for all students. In the context of a broader vision of integration, inclusive education implies the conception and the implementation of a vast repertoire of learning strategies to respond precisely to learners' diversities. In this sense, education systems are required to respond to the expectations and needs of children and youth, considering that the capacity to provide effective learning opportunities based on a 'rigid' scheme of integration is very limited. This is what can be referred to as the placement paradigm;[6] that is, when inclusive education is conceptualized as a 'place' and not as a service delivered within the general education classroom as the continuum.

The debate on inclusive education and integration is not about a dichotomy between integration and inclusion policies and models—as if we could integrate without including, or include without integrating—but rather about identifying to what extent there is progress in the understanding that each school has the moral responsibility to include everyone.

Over approximately the last fifteen years, the concept of inclusive education has evolved towards the idea that all children and young people, despite different cultural, social and learning backgrounds, should have equivalent learning opportunities in all kinds of schools. The focus is on generating inclusive settings, basically implying: (a) respecting, understanding and taking care of cultural, social and individual diversity (education systems, schools and teachers' response to the expectations and needs of students); (b) the provision of equal access to quality education; and (c) close co-ordination with other social policies. This should involve the expectations and demands of stakeholders and social actors.

Although there are different categories of vulnerable and marginalized groups to consider—such as women and girls, linguistic minorities, indigenous peoples, children with disabilities—the nature of the concept of inclusive education is non-categorical and aimed at providing effective learning opportunities for every child, in particular tailored learning contexts.

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[6] S. Peters, *Inclusive education: An EFA strategy for all children*, Washington, DC, The World Bank, 2004.

> ### *Special needs*
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> "The estimate of persons with disabilities is between 500 and 600 million persons (of which 120 to 150 million are children, 80 to 90 per cent of whom live in poverty in developing countries) and some 15 to 20 per cent of all students have been estimated as having special needs at some point in their educational careers.
>
> The estimated number of children with disabilities attending school in developing countries ranges from less than 1 per cent to 5 per cent. Literacy rates for disabled women are 1 per cent, as compared to an estimate of about 3 per cent for people with disabilities as a whole.
>
> Stereotypical images, often combined with hostility and traditional attitudes towards persons with disabilities, currently prevalent among teachers, school authorities, local authorities, communities and even families, can reinforce exclusion of learners with disabilities, and clearly hinder inclusion. It is not "disability" that hinders full and effective participation in society, but rather "attitudinal and environmental barriers" in that society.
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> Inclusion is too often misconceived as prohibitively expensive, impractical or a strictly disability-specific issue. Research suggests, however, that States that have appropriately implemented the inclusive education model have found it can be less costly to implement and operate than segregated special education services; have broader educational and social benefits for children and contribute significantly to the ongoing professional development and job satisfaction of educators.
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> In many of the countries surveyed, the role of regulatory legal frameworks and that of the programmes and public policies pursued by some Governments appear to be inadequate. There is almost universal recognition of the need to promote inclusive education practices. However, the concept of inclusive education does not seem to be clearly recognized in all countries, many of which identify it with integrated education.
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> Inclusive education is in danger of being transformed into a new and improved policy of differentiation; in other words, into a process that, once again, singles out persons considered to be different from the rest." (Source: V. Muñoz, *The right to education of persons with disabilities*, New York, NY, United Nations, Human Rights Council. (Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Document A/HRC/4/29, February 2007).)

1.2 Inclusion as a principle – guiding the process

Inclusive education can be seen as a process of strengthening the capacity of an education system to reach out to all learners. It is, therefore, an overall principle that should guide all educational policies and practices, starting from the belief that education is a fundamental human right and the foundation for a more just society. This rights-based philosophy is outlined in international declarations, conventions[7] and reports[8] relevant to inclusive education.

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[7] The right to education is enshrined in Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. International normative instruments which have reaffirmed this right include among others: UNESCO's 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education; the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (in particular Articles 10 and 14); the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (in particular Articles 28 and 29); the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (in particular Article 45); the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2006 (in particular Article 24); and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People adopted by the General Assembly in September 2007 (in particular Article 14).

[8] See among others: V. Muñoz, *The right to education of persons with disabilities*, New York, NY, United Nations, Human Rights Council, 2007, (Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Fourth Session, Document A/HRC/4/29.); V. Muñoz, *El derecho a la educación en situaciones de emergencia* [The right to education in emergency situations], New York, NY, United Nations, Human Rights Council, 2008, (Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Eighth Session, Document A/HRC/8/10); OECD, *Students with disabilities, learning difficulties and disadvantages. Policies, statistics and indicators*, Paris, OECD, 2007; S. Peters, *Inclusive education: An EFA strategy for all children*, Washington, DC, The World Bank, November 2004; Save the

In order to realise this right, the international EFA movement has worked to make quality basic education available to all learners. Inclusive education takes the EFA agenda forward by finding ways of enabling schools and other centres of learning to serve all learners in their communities. It focuses particularly on those who have traditionally been excluded from educational opportunities.

The EFA Declaration agreed in Jomtien (1990) sets out an overall vision: universalizing access to all children, youth and adults, and promoting equity. It is about being proactive in identifying the barriers some groups encounter in attempting to access educational opportunities. It is also about identifying all the resources available at national and community level and bringing them to bear on overcoming those barriers.

This vision was reaffirmed by the World Education Forum meeting in Dakar in 2000, held to review the progress made so far. The Forum declared that EFA must take account of the needs of the poor and the disadvantaged, including working children, remote rural dwellers and nomads, and ethnic and linguistic minorities, children, young people and adults affected by conflict, HIV and AIDS, hunger and poor health; and those with special learning needs.

It is in addressing these issues that inclusive education has a particular role to play. The major impetus for inclusive education was given by the World Conference on Special Needs Education. More than 300 participants representing 92 governments and 25 international organizations met in Salamanca (Spain, June 1994), to further the objective of EFA by considering the fundamental policy shifts required to promote the approach of inclusive education, namely enabling schools to serve all children, particularly those with special educational needs.[9]

Although the immediate focus of the Salamanca Conference was on special needs education, its conclusion was that: "Special needs education—an issue of equal concern to countries of the North and of the South—cannot advance in isolation. It has to form part of an overall educational strategy and, indeed, of new social and economic policies. It calls for major reform of the ordinary school."[10]

The aim, then, is to develop 'inclusive' education systems. This can only happen, however, if ordinary schools become more inclusive—in other words, if they become more capable of educating all children in their communities. The Conference concluded that: "Regular schools with [an] inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system."[11]

As this key passage indicates, the move towards inclusive schools can be justified on a number of grounds. There is an *educational justification*: the requirement for inclusive schools to educate all children together means that they have to develop ways of teaching that respond to

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Children, *Making schools inclusive. How change can happen*, London, Save the Children, 2008; T. Tomasevski, *The right to education*, New York, NY, United Nations, Human Rights Commission, 2003, (Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Sixtieth Session, Document E/CN.4/2004/45); UNESCO, *The right to education: Monitoring standard-setting instruments of UNESCO*, Paris, UNESCO, 2008; UNESCO, *The right to primary education free of charge for all: Ensuring compliance with international obligations*, Paris, UNESCO, 2008; UNICEF-Innocenti Research Centre, *Promoting the rights of children with disabilities,* Florence, 2007, (Innocenti Digest No. 13); UNICEF/UNESCO, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All. A framework for the realization of children's right to education and rights within education*, New York, NY, UNICEF; Paris, UNESCO, 2007. See also the reports by the Joint Expert Group UNESCO (CR)/ECOSOC (CESCR–Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural rights) on the Monitoring of the Right to Education.

[9] UNESCO, *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*, Paris, UNESCO, 1994.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. iii-iv.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. ix.

individual differences and that therefore benefit all children; a *social justification*: inclusive schools are able to change attitudes to difference by educating all children together, and form the basis for a just and non-discriminatory society; and an *economic justification*: it is likely to be less costly to establish and maintain schools which educate all children together than to set up a complex system of different types of school specializing in different groups of children. Article 24 in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,[12] which advocates inclusive education, and recent legislation to protect indigenous languages provide further international support for inclusive schools. If these inclusive schools really do offer an effective education to all of their students, then they are, indeed, a more cost-effective means of achieving quality EFA.

Multilingualism

"Education in many countries of the world takes place in multilingual contexts. Most plurilingual societies have developed an ethos which balances and respects the use of different languages in daily life. From the perspective of these societies and of the language communities themselves, multilingualism is more a way of life than a problem to be solved. The challenge is for education systems to adapt to these complex realities and provide a quality education which takes into consideration learners' needs, whilst balancing these at the same time with social, cultural and political demands.
Educational policy makers have difficult decisions to make with regard to languages, schooling and the curriculum in which the technical and the political often overlap. While there are strong educational arguments in favour of mother tongue (or first language) instruction, a careful balance also needs to be made between enabling people to use local languages in learning, and providing access to global languages of communication through education.
Linguistically diverse contexts cover a range of scenarios. Broadly speaking, however, these correspond either to more traditionally diverse situations where several, or even up to many hundreds of languages have been spoken in a region over a long period of time, or to more recent developments (particularly in urban concentrations), the result of migratory phenomena, where in some city schools there may be as many as thirty or forty different mother tongues among students. In all cases, there is a need to take into consideration the specific learning needs of children in relation to the language or languages of the home and those of the school.
The choice of the language or indeed the languages of instruction (educational policy might recommend the use of several languages of instruction) is a recurrent challenge in the development of quality education. While some countries opt for one language of instruction, often the official or majority language, others have chosen to use educational strategies that give national or local languages an important place in schooling. Speakers of mother tongues, which are not the same as the national or local language, are often at a considerable disadvantage in the educational system similar to the disadvantage in receiving instruction in a foreign official language." (Source: UNESCO, *Education in a multilingual world*, Paris, UNESCO, 2003.)

In this context, some key questions which might be addressed during the Conference debates include: **What are the current visions of inclusive education? What are seen as the most important challenges for ensuring educational and social inclusion? How does inclusive education inform national policies and practices aimed at attaining quality education for all? What individuals and groups are excluded and why?**

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[12] United Nations, *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, New York, NY, United Nations, 2006.

THEME 2: PUBLIC POLICIES

The EFA agenda rests on a belief that public policy can radically transform education systems, given adequate political will and resources. The development of inclusive education demands wide-ranging changes involving the whole of the education system. It is important, therefore, that the move towards inclusive education is not undertaken in isolation. It needs to be seen as a means of improving the quality of education for all learners in order to avoid the danger of inclusion being seen as something that does not concern the wider education system. Legislation is important in the development of a more inclusive education system. In countries where special and regular education are covered by separate legislation, a necessary step should be to unify the two systems within a common administrative and legislative framework.

2.1 Unified and inclusive national policies

Legislation is important in the development of a more inclusive education system. In particular, it can provide:

- The articulation of principles and rights in order to create a framework for inclusion;
- The reform of elements in the existing system which constitute major barriers to inclusion (for instance policies which do not allow children from specific groups—such as children with disabilities, or from different language groups—to attend their neighbourhood school);
- The mandating of fundamental inclusive practices (requiring, for instance, that schools should educate all children in their communities); and
- The establishment of procedures and practices throughout the education system which are likely to facilitate inclusion (for instance, the formulation of a flexible curriculum, or the introduction of community governance).

Even where radical legislative reform is not desirable or practicable, statements of principles at government level can generate a debate around inclusive education and begin the process of consensus-building. Here, a key task which may be necessary is that of unifying the legislative framework which governs regular and special education.

In some countries, special and regular education are covered by separate legislation, are administered by separate sections or departments at national and local level, have separate systems of training and funding, and have distinct curricula and assessment procedures. Indeed, some children's development may be governed by health or social services legislation rather than by educational legislation. In such cases, a necessary early step in the development process must be to unify the two systems within a common administrative and legislative framework.

The development of inclusive education demands wide-ranging changes involving the whole of the education system. It is important, therefore, that the move towards inclusive education is not undertaken in isolation, for two reasons in particular: (a) inclusive education is difficult to realise where other aspects of the educational and social systems remain unreformed and exclusive in their effects; and (b) in terms of generating a momentum behind the inclusive education movement, it is easier to build consensus where inclusion can be seen as part of a wider attempt to create a more effective education system, or a more inclusive society.

There are a number of ways in which the development of inclusive education can become part of wider changes in the education system or in society as a whole. Inclusive education can, for example, be part of a comprehensive educational reform. In countries such as South Africa and Spain, inclusive education has been at the core of a wider reform to enhance the system's

effectiveness. It has therefore been seen as a means of improving the quality of education for all learners. This is important in order to avoid the danger of inclusion being seen as something that does not concern the wider education system and that does not, therefore, merit national resources.

Inclusive education may be part of a reform of the position of marginalized groups in society as a whole, or may be linked to an attempt to address issues of poverty, illiteracy and marginalization. Inclusive education can also be part of more fundamental democratic reforms aimed at forging and consolidating open and inclusive societies. In many countries in transition, for instance, it is not possible to separate the move to inclusion from a wider effort to rebuild democracy and refocus on human rights.

Child Labour

"In 2004 there were 218 million children trapped in child labour, of whom 126 million were in hazardous work. Although the participation of girls in child labour and hazardous work is on a par with that of boys in the youngest age group (5-11 years), boys predominate considerably at older ages in both categories.

The number of children involved in armed conflicts has increased significantly over the last decade and is generally thought to be in the range of 300,000. While many are older, aged 15 or above, there has been a dramatic trend towards recruiting younger children. The abduction of children during armed conflict is a serious problem, leading to sexual slavery or forced labour, with girls as the likely victims.

Political commitment, through the adoption of coherent policies in the areas of poverty reduction, basic education and human rights, is central to the progress, both past and present, made by countries in combating child labour.

There is a growing recognition that the international effort to achieve EFA and the progressive elimination of child labour are inextricably linked. On the one hand, education—and, in particular, free and compulsory education of good quality up to the minimum age for entering employment as defined by ILO Convention No. 138—is a key element in preventing child labour. Education contributes to building a protective environment for all children and is the mechanism for opening up choice, which lies at the heart of the definition of development. In turn, child labour is one of the main obstacles to full-time school attendance and, in the case of part-time work, prevents children from fully benefiting from their time at school.

Schools will be attractive to children and have the support of parents and the community if they conform to the concept of the "child-friendly school". We should not forget that teachers also have rights at work and are key to quality improvements—their voices must be heard, and their organizations have a vital role to play in EFA and child labour elimination efforts." (Source: International Labour Organization, *The end of child labour: within reach*, Geneva, ILO, 2006.)

2.2 Building consensus

Moves towards inclusion may not always be understood or welcomed where people are used to segregated systems, or where educators are fearful of their ability to cope with diversity. All government agencies and civil society organizations need to work together to promote inclusive education—it is not only a matter for educationalists, but for advocacy organizations, families and communities, professional associations, researchers, teacher educators and service providers.

It is necessary to mobilize opinion in favour of inclusion and to begin a process of consensus-building at an early stage. Here are a range of possible strategies:

- *Advocacy groups* can be given legitimacy and support by receiving government funding, being commissioned to carry out tasks (research, resource production, conference organization) by government, or simply by the presence of senior political figures appearing on platforms alongside their leaders. Advocacy groups often have a network of international contacts capable of bringing new ideas into a country.
- *Professional organizations* are likely to have mixed views, but are important in the consensus-building process. They can be involved in the decision-making process and encouraged to undertake their own publicity and dissemination events.
- *Health, social services and administration* groups should be involved—not just educational groups. These groups play a part in the delivery of inclusive provision and the diversity of views is likely to promote a genuine debate.
- *Researchers and research students* can play a part in shaping opinion and in providing the data and knowledge on which any reform will have to be built. They can analyse and publicize the problems of existing systems, and contribute to finding local solutions.
- *Key opinion-formers* include respected teachers' leaders, academics and leaders of voluntary organizations. Opinion can be mobilized by establishing partnerships and networking with other agencies.
- *Dialogue between specialist organizations and ordinary schools* can be important in breaking down the 'mystique' of technical specialization often associated with special needs education.
- *Educational authorities and service-providers at the local level* are likely to be key players. In some cases, inclusion initiatives start at this local level and the task of decision-makers and administrators at the centre is to support these initiatives and to promote their dissemination to other areas.
- *Teacher educators* play a crucial role. The incorporation of inclusive principles and practices into professional training does not lead to rapid change—but builds a key group of inclusively-oriented professionals.
- *Channels of communication* can be identified and activated. The principal channel is the mass media and so a media management strategy may be necessary. Other channels include professional journals, videos and specially-organized conferences and dissemination events. Such events are often used to celebrate successes in inclusive education—rather than simply to advocate inclusive education in the abstract.

2.3 Changing cultures through strong leadership and participatory practices

The transition to inclusive education is not simply a technical or organizational change—it is a movement in a clear philosophical direction. However, countries have to be prepared to analyse their own situations, identify barriers to and facilitators of inclusion, and plan a process of development that is appropriate for them. Therefore, it is important that senior staff think through the principles that will guide the process of change.

Moving to more inclusive ways of working involves changes in cultures across the education system, most significantly within schools. But changing school cultures depends largely on new institutional cultures within the society at large (including local communities), as well as at the different levels at which educational authority is being exerted. Cultures are about the deeper levels of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization, operating unconsciously to define how they view themselves and their working contexts. The participation of learners in this process is critical to its success.

Changing the norms that exist within a school is difficult to achieve, particularly where there are so many competing pressures and where practitioners tend to work alone in addressing problems. The presence of learners whose needs are not being met can stimulate the development of a more collaborative culture within which teachers can experiment with new ways of teaching.

Becoming more inclusive is a matter of thinking and talking, reviewing and refining practice, and making attempts to develop a more inclusive culture. This means that inclusion cannot be divorced from the contexts within which it is developing, nor the social relations that might sustain or limit that development. It is in the complex interplay between individuals and between groups of individuals that shared beliefs and values and change occur. It is impossible to separate those beliefs from the relationships in which they are embedded.

It is not surprising, therefore, that some writers have argued that, in order to bring about the cultural change that inclusion demands, it is essential to consider the values underlying the intended changes. Thus, cultural change is directed towards a transformative view of inclusion, in which diversity is seen as making a positive contribution to the creation of responsive educational settings. This involves developing the capacity of those within schools to reveal and challenge deeply entrenched 'deficit' views of difference, which define certain types of learners as 'lacking something'.

The principle of inclusion challenges assumptions and current thinking in organizations. Inevitably, this raises questions about leadership. There is a need for shared leadership, with the principal seen as a leader of leaders. Hierarchical structures have to be replaced by shared responsibility in a community that becomes characterized by agreed values and hopes. Many of the control functions traditionally associated with school leadership become less important or even counter-productive.

Research suggests that in order to foster inclusive school development school leaders need to attend to three broad types of task: (a) fostering new meanings about diversity; (b) promoting inclusive practices within schools; and (c) building connections between schools and communities. Much of the literature on the role of leadership places emphasis on the importance of social relationships. It has been argued, for example, that leaders may structure staff working relationships in one of three ways: competitively, individualistically or co-operatively. Within a competitive structure, teachers work against each other to achieve a goal that only a few can attain; an individualistic structure exists when teachers work alone to accomplish goals that are unrelated to the goals of their colleagues; whereas, a co-operative structure exists when teachers co-ordinate their efforts to achieve joint goals. This means that school principals have to: challenge the *status quo* of traditional competitive and individualistic approaches to teaching; inspire a clear mutual vision of what the school should and could be; empower staff through co-operative team work; lead by example, using co-operative procedures and taking risks; and encourage staff members to persist and keep striving to improve their expertise.

2.4 Challenging non-inclusive practices

In order to become more inclusive, schools and other learning settings should pay attention to the development of 'inclusive cultures' and to the building of some degree of consensus around inclusive values within learning communities. Leaders should be selected and trained in the light of their commitment to inclusive values and their capacity to lead in a participatory manner. Learners who cannot easily be educated should not be seen as 'having problems'. Instead, the difficulties they face should be seen as challenges, which lead educators to re-examine their practices in order to make them more flexible and responsive.

Inclusive schools and learning settings stimulate and support processes of interrogation and reflection. Such learning centres emphasize the pooling of different professional expertise in collaborative processes. Recent international literature on inclusion suggests that schools with an 'inclusive culture' have:

- A degree of consensus amongst adults around values of respect for difference and a commitment to offering all pupils access to learning opportunities.
- A high level of staff collaboration and joint problem-solving. Similar values and commitments may extend into the student body, and into parent and other community stakeholders in the school.
- Participatory cultures. Respect for diversity from teachers is understood as a form of participation by children within a school community.
- Leaders who are committed to inclusive values and to a leadership style which encourages a range of individuals to participate in leadership functions.
- Good links with parents and with their communities.

It is therefore essential that attempts to develop inclusive schools pay attention to the development of 'inclusive cultures' and to the building of some degree of consensus around inclusive values within communities and society. School leaders should be selected and trained in the light of their commitment to inclusive values and their capacity to lead in a participatory manner.

In diverse learning environments, particular forms of leadership can be effective in promoting quality education, equity and social justice. Discussions of inclusion and exclusion can help to make explicit the values which underlie what, how and why changes should be made. Inclusive cultures may make those discussions more likely to occur and more productive when they do occur.[13]

2.5 Resources

The use of resources, particularly human resources, is a vital factor in the development of inclusive provision. This does not necessarily require large amounts of new money and other resources. The important thing is that: existing funding is redirected towards moving policy and practice in a more inclusive direction; and that incentives are built into resourcing mechanisms for schools, local authorities and others to involve themselves in inclusive developments. Efforts need to be made to ensure that teaching encourages learner participation by making good use of available resources, and particularly human resources.

The careful use of available resources is a cross-cutting theme: the way resources are managed affects policies and strategies; structures and systems; and practice.

All countries face difficulties in finding adequate funds for education. It is important, therefore, to find ways of meeting all learners' needs which do not necessarily call for extra funds and other resources. It is important to establish partnerships between governments and other potential funding-providers. For example, a unified approach to the funding of educational provision is an important step forward. It may also be necessary to fund programmes that aim to overcome disadvantage and promote a more equitable education system for all. It may be necessary to set up monitoring systems to ensure that funding and other resources are used

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[13] A helpful list of indicators in relation to this analysis and a widely used review framework for examining school factors that constitute barriers to learning and participation can be found in: T. Booth and M. Ainscow, *The index for inclusion*, 2nd ed., Bristol, UK, Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, 2002.

appropriately and effectively. Even though levels of funding differ from country to country, many of the challenges and many of the strategies are similar.

Providing resources that support all learners is another cross-cutting theme. This includes those resources that supplement what the ordinary class teacher can provide. However, the most important form of support is that which is provided from the resources which are at the disposal of every school—that is children supporting children, teachers supporting teachers, parents as partners in the education of their children, and communities as supporters of schools and other centres of learning. This involves efforts to ensure that teaching encourages learner participation by making good use of available resources, and particularly human resources.

2.6. Monitoring the impact

The starting point for making decisions about what to monitor should be an agreed definition of inclusion. There is a need to 'measure what we value', rather than 'valuing what we can measure'. Evidence collected at the systems level needs to relate to the *presence, participation and achievement* of all learners, with an emphasis on those groups of learners regarded to be at risk of marginalization, exclusion or underachievement.

Certain factors have the potential to either facilitate or inhibit the promotion of inclusive educational practices. These are all variables that national and, to varying degrees, local district administrations either control directly or over which they can at least exert considerable influence. Some of these factors seem to be potentially more potent; in other words, they are 'levers for change'. Two factors, particularly when they are closely linked, seem to be particularly important. These are: *clarity of definition* in relation to the idea of inclusion; and the *forms of evidence* that are used to measure educational performance.

When establishing a definition for strategic purposes, the following elements can be helpful:

- *Inclusion is a process*. That is to say, inclusion has to be seen as a never-ending search to find better ways of responding to diversity. It is about learning how to live with difference and learning how to learn from difference. In this way, differences come to be seen more positively as a stimulus for fostering learning, amongst children and adults.

- *Inclusion is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers*. Consequently, it involves collecting, collating and evaluating information from a wide variety of sources in order to plan for improvements in policy and practice. It is about using evidence of various kinds to stimulate creativity and problem-solving.

- *Inclusion is about the presence, participation and achievement of all learners*. Here, 'presence' is concerned with where children are educated, and how reliably and punctually they attend; 'participation' relates to the quality of their experiences whilst they are there and, therefore, must incorporate the views of the learners themselves; and 'achievement' is about the outcomes of learning across the curriculum, not merely test or examination results.

- *Inclusion involves a particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalization, exclusion or underachievement*. This indicates the moral responsibility to ensure that those groups that are statistically most at risk are

carefully monitored and that, where necessary, steps are taken to ensure their presence, participation and achievement within the education system.

A well-orchestrated community debate about these elements can lead to a wider understanding of the principle of inclusion. Such a debate can encourage schools to move in a more inclusive direction.

The search for levers draws attention to the importance of using evidence to monitor the impact of policies on children. In essence, the argument is that within education systems 'what gets measured gets done'. Unfortunately, this means that in countries that value narrowly conceived criteria for determining success, monitoring systems can act as a barrier to the development of a more inclusive education system. All of this suggests that great care needs to be exercised in deciding what evidence is collected and, indeed, how it is used.

The starting point for making decisions about what to monitor should, therefore, be with an agreed definition of inclusion. In other words, there is a need to measure what we value. In line with the suggestions made earlier, the evidence collected at the systems level needs to relate to the *'presence, participation and achievement'* of all learners, with an emphasis on those groups of learners regarded to be 'at risk of marginalization, exclusion or underachievement'.

In light of the above, some important questions which might be addressed during the Conference debates include: **What specific legal or regulatory frameworks could be adopted to foster inclusion in education? How can national educational policies and strategies be developed to promote inclusion? How can available resources be used flexibly to support inclusion?**

THEME 3: SYSTEMS, LINKS AND TRANSITIONS

The main goal should be to create education systems that enable lifelong learning for all. Education systems may foster inclusion in different ways, especially through providing equitable access to learners throughout educational stages and grades, as well as through providing open and flexible links and transitions between formal and non-formal education, and among different types of schools and tracks. This means that co-ordinated efforts have to be made to ensure the participation of all members of the community and that, where necessary, appropriate support is available for vulnerable groups. This is why it is essential that partnerships are formed between key stakeholders who can support the transition process to inclusive education. These include: parents/carers; teachers and other educational professionals; those in other services who will be affected by the move to inclusion (e.g. health, social services); teacher trainers and researchers; national, local and school-level administrators and managers; civic groups in the community; and members of minority groups at risk of exclusion. The involvement of families is particularly crucial. Involving educational stakeholders and partners, including members of the community, businesses and families, in the design and implementation of such open and flexible educational structures is of fundamental importance in order to strengthen the links between schools and communities and provide better chances for learners to develop relevant competencies as a basis for their successful participation in private, public and professional life.

3.1 Structures, links and transitions

Education systems may foster inclusion in different ways, with a view to providing equitable access for all learners to different educational stages and types of schools, and also encouraging higher retention and success rates, based on support systems helping students to overcome learning difficulties:

- Emphasis is increasingly being placed on providing access to early childhood education and care, as a basis for learners to cope successfully with future requirements in basic education and higher education stages.
- In some countries, education systems have been redesigned so as to offer basic education of nine to ten years based on a comprehensive model, which avoids early and rigid tracking of students into different streams. Thus, all children attend primary and lower secondary education based on a common curriculum, which is accompanied by formative and progressive assessment.
- International trends document an expansion of primary education from four/five to five/six years, and the inclusion of lower secondary education in basic education, to at least nine years of comprehensive and uninterrupted schooling.
- Countries are also increasingly keen to foster more access progressively into the upper stages of their education systems, based on fair processes of student guidance and orientation and on enlarging their educational provision in compliance with new needs and prospects.
- Flexible passages among different education streams and types of schools are also being offered in many countries, such as from 'special needs' schools to 'mainstream/regular' schools; between general and vocational education; or between different high school streams/tracks in either general or vocational education (e.g. from humanistic to science classes and vice-versa).

- Links between formal and non-formal education are also being encouraged, and countries increasingly seek effective ways of formally recognizing competencies acquired by learners through non-formal and informal education.

- Education systems also increasingly seek to integrate flexible and productive solutions to address vulnerable groups, thus avoiding poor learning outcomes, poor school attendance, repetitions and poor transition rates (i.e. second-chance programmes; rural education programmes; customized education programmes in remote areas; improvements brought to vocational and pre-vocational systems in order to avoid narrow specialization; recognition of qualifications acquired in non-formal and informal education; and bilingual education).

- They also provide increasing support for flexibility through appropriate curriculum and assessment strategies (i.e. core requirements in combination with differentiated curricula; fast-track initiatives; progressive assessment aiming to stimulate students' motivation for learning; and remedial strategies).

In order to enhance the role of their educational structures in fostering inclusion, countries ought to address problems and difficulties, such as rigid legislation and administrative arrangements; the belief that early streaming of students based on 'intellectual' capacity or achievement tests is meaningful; the absence of policy dialogue among stakeholders, and the lack of coherent public policies and co-ordination among different social partners.

3.2 Co-ordinating services and institutions

In many countries, education systems and their administration are themselves barriers to inclusive practices. Often special and mainstream education are administered through different departments or teams, with different decision-making processes, regulations, funding arrangements and so on. Co-ordinating existing services and interest groups is an essential first step towards inclusive education. Civil society and international organizations can play a role in the transition to inclusion by helping to align national developments with current international trends; providing access to international expertise and experience; working at the national level with ministries in formulating inclusive education policies; supporting inclusive education projects with advice and resources in order to catalyse national developments; and supporting the implementation of national inclusive education policies.

In some countries, the move to more inclusive education has been accompanied by a move towards devolved management structures. This devolution seems to encourage flexibility and risk-taking. It also counteracts the tendency of centralized bureaucracies to set up rigid decision-making procedures. Two levels of devolution tend to be used:

Decentralization to the local level (e.g. the municipality or district). Local administrations in a given area are able to respond flexibly to local circumstances and to take into account the needs of particular groups or even individual learners. They are capable of being more responsive than national or regional governments to the needs of their communities.

Decentralization to the school level. This means that many decision-making powers and substantial amounts of the educational budget are devolved to individual schools. This allows schools to manage their own resources in order to meet the diverse needs of learners in their communities, to take risks in developing inclusive education programmes and to be proactive in co-ordinating other services and mobilizing community resources in the interests of their students.

Decentralization to both of these levels carries with it risks as well as opportunities. For example:

- Schools and local authorities can be resisters of change as well as leaders of change.
- Devolving power to schools and local administrations invites them to pursue their own self-interest rather than the implementation of national policy. This is a particular problem if national policy itself is ambiguous or has multiple, conflicting aims.

There is evidence from some countries that school-to-school collaboration can strengthen the capacity of individual organizations to respond to learner diversity. There is also evidence that when schools develop more collaborative ways of working, this can have an impact on how teachers perceive themselves and their work. Comparisons of practices can lead teachers to view underachieving students in a new light.

Civil society and international organizations can also play a range of roles in the transition to inclusion. They can:

- Help align national developments with current international thinking;
- Provide access to international expertise and experience;
- Work with ministries in formulating inclusive education policies;
- Support inclusive education projects with advice and resources in order to catalyse developments; and
- Support the implementation of inclusive education policies with advice and resources.

There are, however, some problems which may arise. For example:

- International agendas may be imported into a country without sufficient thought as to how they need to be reinterpreted in the light of that country's situation;
- Demonstration projects and other initiatives may be dependent on a level of resourcing which is not sustainable, so that they cannot be 'rolled out' throughout the national system;
- Excellent initiatives may take place in isolation and never be fully incorporated into national policy and practice.

The key to avoiding these dangers seems to be for a genuine partnership to be formed between the national government, civil society, and other national and international organizations, and for there to be a clear plan for the role each will play in the transition process.

3.3 A curriculum for all: accommodating different learning needs and styles

The curriculum is the central means through which the principle of inclusion is put into action within an education system. It therefore has to be flexible enough to respond to the diverse characteristics of learners. Consequently, the curriculum needs to be well structured while accommodating a range of learning styles; rich and flexible so as to respond to the needs of particular learners and communities; and structured around varying levels of entry skills so that all students can succeed. Inclusive curricula will make greater demands on teachers who will need support in implementing them effectively. A key issue for policymakers, then, is how to

define a core curriculum and at the same time enable schools to make adaptations for individual learners, while also allowing flexibility in assessment and accreditation.

The agenda of inclusive education presents a considerable challenge, not least in terms of the development of a curriculum and systems of assessment that can take account of all learners. At the heart of the curriculum are the planned teaching and learning opportunities that are available in ordinary classrooms—the 'formal' curriculum of schools. However, there are many other potential learning experiences that are more difficult to plan, but which can certainly be influenced by schools and other parts of the education system. These include: interactions amongst learners; interactions between students and teachers in and out of the classroom; and learning experiences that occur within the community—in the family, for instance, or in other social or religious contexts.

The formal curriculum has to serve at least two purposes: (a) it has to embody all the values, skills and knowledge that the country wishes its young people to acquire; and (b) it has to provide quality education for all learners, both in terms of the level of engagement it generates and the outcomes it produces.

Above all, the curriculum has to achieve these purposes for all learners equally. Consequently, the curriculum should be:

- Structured and yet capable of being taught in such a way as to allow the participation of all learners.
- Underpinned by a model of learning which is itself inclusive—therefore, it needs to accommodate a range of learning styles and to emphasize skills and knowledge that are relevant to students.
- Sufficiently flexible to respond to the needs of particular learners, communities and cultural and linguistic groups.
- Structured around varying levels of entry skills, so that progress can be assessed in ways that allow all learners to experience success.

Developing a curriculum which is inclusive of all learners may well involve broadening the definition of learning which is used by teachers and decision-makers in the education system. So long as learning is understood as the acquisition of bodies of knowledge presented by the teacher, schools are likely to be locked into rigidly-organized curricula and teaching practices. Commonly, therefore, inclusive curricula are based on a view of learning as something that takes place when learners are actively involved in making sense of their experiences. Learners, in other words, cannot simply be told. Rather, they have to discover and understand things for themselves.

Such a view combines the role of the teacher as facilitator and instructor. This makes it easier for a diverse group of learners to be educated together, since they do not all have to be at the same point in their learning, or receive the same instruction from their teacher. Instead, they can work at their own pace and in their own way within a common framework of activities and objectives.

A key issue for policy-makers, then, is how they can enable schools to make adaptations for individual learners. At the same time, if strategies for curriculum flexibility are to be effective, they have to be accompanied by similar strategies for allowing flexibility in assessment and accreditation. Such strategies are essential for ensuring that learners progress through the curriculum, and that their individual needs and characteristics are understood and accommodated.

> *Immigration and the integration of immigrants*
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> "Worldwide, in the year 2000, approximately 175 million people lived outside their country of birth representing an increase since 1990 of 46%. Although many countries have implemented various measures to contain immigration levels, international migration movements remain a topic of global significance.
> Drawing on data from the OECD's Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA), the report entitled *Where immigrant students succeed – A comparative review of performance and engagement in PISA 2003* shows that immigrant students are motivated learners and have positive attitudes towards school. Despite these strong learning dispositions, immigrant students often perform at significantly lower levels than their native peers in key school subjects, such as mathematics, reading and science, as well as in general problem-solving skills. The report also provides information on countries' approaches to immigration and the integration of immigrants. It shows that some countries, where there are either relatively small performance differences between immigrant and native students or the performance gaps for second-generation students are significantly reduced compared to those observed for first-generation students, tend to have well-established language support programmes with relatively clearly defined goals and standards. In a few countries where immigrant students perform at significantly lower levels, language support tends to be less systematic." (Source: OECD, *Where immigrant students succeed: a comparative review of performance and engagement in PISA 2003*, Paris, OECD, 2006.)

3.4 Support for vulnerable learners

Governments need to mobilize human and intellectual resources, some of which they may not directly control, if inclusive education is to become a reality. The involvement of the family is particularly crucial. In some countries, for example, there is already close co-operation between parents and authorities in developing community-based programmes for disabled children. A logical next step is for such parents to become involved in supporting inclusive education developments in schools.

Sometimes, parents of children experiencing difficulties can find themselves in dispute with schools and authorities as they press for better provision. In some cases these parents—and the organizations that represent them—have been invited into the policy-formulation process. They might be involved simply in negotiating provision for their child, or in becoming part of school governing bodies, or in joining local or national policy-review groups.

Where parents lack the confidence and skills to participate in such development, it might be necessary to undertake some developmental activities with them. This could mean creating networks of parents who can act as mutual support groups, or training parents in the skills needed to work with their own children, or acting as parental advocates in their dealings with schools and authorities. In thinking about the roles of the family and the community, the following points should be kept in mind:

- Families and communities have rights to involvement and can make a range of contributions. In particular, they have knowledge of their children which professionals do not have.
- Building family and community involvement is a step-by-step process based on trust. Particular efforts are needed to promote the involvement of marginalized groups.

- Families and community groups can sometimes take a leading role as activists for inclusive education.
- Families' rights to involvement can be built into legislation or into the system of school governance.
- Communities can also be involved successfully in the governance of schools or of the education system as a whole.
- Schools can act as a resource for the community by offering services or becoming the base for other agencies.

3.5 The role of specialist provision

Where countries have special schools or units attached to mainstream schools, it is likely that these will continue to make a contribution. As ordinary schools become more inclusive, the evidence is that the need for separate special schools diminishes and changes. Efforts are needed, therefore, to explore how the expertise and resources within special schools can be re-directed in ways that will add support to the changes taking place in mainstream schools. Special schools can play a vital part in supporting ordinary schools as they become more inclusive. In some countries special schools have become resource centres, which enable clusters of schools to become more inclusive.

The Salamanca Conference concluded that countries should concentrate their resources on developing inclusive ordinary schools. Such moves open up new opportunities for special school staff to continue their historical task of providing support for the most vulnerable learners in the education system.

Here, once again, it is desirable that governments make clear their commitment to inclusion, emphasizing the positive benefits for parents and children. Specifically, it is useful to stress the distinction between *needs, rights* and *opportunities*. All children have needs (e.g. for appropriate teaching), but they also have the right to participate fully in a common social institution (a local mainstream school) that offers a range of opportunities for them. Too often parents are forced to choose between ensuring that their child's needs are met (which sometimes implies special school placement) and ensuring that they have the same rights and opportunities as other children (which, according to the Salamanca Statement, implies mainstream school placement). The aim therefore should be to create a system where these choices become unnecessary.

This is why it is important to stress that inclusion is about the development of mainstream schools, rather than the reorganization of special schooling. The aim has to be to increase the capacity of all mainstream schools, so that they can meet the needs of all children, whilst offering them similar rights and opportunities. This has implications for a changed role for special schools in the medium term and the disappearance of special schools in the longer term, without losing their know-how and resources.

Against this background, some key issues which might be discussed during the Conference include: **What are the main barriers to and the main facilitators of inclusive education? How can education systems enable transition and be flexible so as to become more inclusive? How can partnerships with educational stakeholders be fostered in support of inclusion? How can formal, non-formal and informal learning settings be more effectively organized in order to ensure the inclusion of all learners?**

THEME 4: LEARNERS AND TEACHERS

Inclusive education cannot become practice in the absence of adequate teaching and learning strategies, and committed and competent teachers. Both learners and teachers are constantly faced with keeping the right balance between 'common' requirements and the diverse needs of learners. How can the best strategies to cater for learner needs, as well as to respond to societal and economic demands, be chosen? It is surely not easy to identify clear-cut solutions. As shown in many countries though, such solutions may be identified and effectively put in place by appropriate teacher education and training practices, as well as by close co-operation between schools and communities (including—and foremost—the family) within an open and flexible education system.

4.1 Developing schools for all

A preoccupation with individualized responses (a feature of special education) deflects attention away from the creation of forms of teaching that can reach out to all learners. The importing of practices from special education tends to lead to the development of new, more subtle forms of segregation within mainstream settings. At the same time, the category 'special educational needs' can become a repository for various groups who are discriminated against in society, such as those from minority backgrounds. In this way special education can be a way of hiding discrimination behind an apparently benign label, and so justifying their low attainments and, therefore, their need for separate educational arrangements.

Inclusion will not be achieved by transplanting special education thinking and practice into mainstream contexts. This opens up new possibilities for the whole education system. In particular, it relates to the need to move from an individualized approach to educational planning towards a perspective that seeks to take into account the diverse needs of learners.

Research indicates that a feature of lessons that are effective in encouraging student participation is the way available resources, particularly human resources, are used to support learning. In particular, there is strong evidence of the potential of approaches that encourage co-operation between students for creating teaching and learning conditions that can both maximize participation, while at the same time achieving high standards of learning for all learners. Furthermore, this evidence suggests that the use of such practices can be an effective means of supporting the involvement of 'exceptional pupils', e.g. those who are new to a class; children from different cultural and language backgrounds; and those with disabilities. However, it is important to stress the need for skill in orchestrating this type of classroom practice. Poorly managed group approaches usually involve a considerable waste of time and, indeed, present many opportunities for increased disruption to learning.

Where resources are limited, the potential of 'peer power' is more likely to be recognized. The development of child-to-child approaches to learning has a great deal to offer here. Such experiences suggest that children are themselves an under-used resource that can be mobilized to overcome barriers to participation in lessons and contribute to improved learning opportunities for all learners. The essential resources for child-to-child initiatives to take place are already present in any learning environment. In fact, the larger the class the more potential resources are available. This is not an argument for large classes, but an acknowledgement of the resources they contain. The key factor is the teacher's ability to mobilize this largely untapped resource.

4.2 A shared/common understanding

The development of inclusive practices involves social learning processes within a given workplace that influence people's actions and the thinking that informs these actions. Colleagues need to develop a common language with which they can discuss their practice. Engaging with various types of evidence can be helpful in encouraging such dialogue. This can help to create space for interrupting and rethinking existing discourses by focusing attention on possibilities for making practices more inclusive which may have been overlooked.

The development of a common understanding/language is essential. Without such a language, teachers find it very difficult to experiment with new possibilities. Much of what teachers do in a typical lesson is carried out at an automatic, intuitive level, involving the use of tacit knowledge. There is little time to stop and think. This is perhaps why having the opportunity to see colleagues at work is so crucial to the success of attempts to develop more inclusive practices. It is through such shared experiences that colleagues can help one another to articulate what they currently do and define what they might like to do. It is also the means whereby taken-for-granted assumptions about particular groups of learners can be subjected to mutual critique.

As regards engaging with various types of evidence, particularly powerful techniques involve the use of mutual observation, sometimes through video recordings, and evidence collected from learners about teaching and learning arrangements within a school. Under certain conditions such approaches provide interludes that help to make the familiar unfamiliar in ways that stimulate self-questioning, creativity and action. In so doing, they can sometimes lead to a reframing of perceived problems that, in turn, draws the teacher's attention to previously overlooked possibilities for addressing barriers to participation and learning.

4.3 Support for learning

In an effective education system, all learners are assessed on an on-going basis in terms of their progress through the curriculum. The aim is to make it possible for teachers to provide support to all of their students, as needed. This means that teachers and other professionals have to have good information about their students' characteristics and attainments.

Teachers in inclusive systems need to know how effective their teaching is for different learners and what they need to do to enable each one to learn as well as possible. It is not enough simply to be able to identify the level at which each student is performing, or to be able to list their particular difficulties or disabilities. Assessment, therefore, should not focus only on the characteristics and attainments of the students. It also has to focus on the curriculum and how each student can learn within that curriculum.

This in turn means that the most useful forms of assessment take place in the ordinary school, as well as in community settings for adult learners. Teachers, therefore, will need to have the skills to carry out most assessments by themselves. However, they will also need to find ways of working with special educators, psychologists, social workers and medical professionals so that they can use their specialist assessments for educational purposes. The most important partners of all will be colleagues, parents and students themselves.

Internationally, contextual assessment is under-developed. The culture of attributing all of a learner's difficulties to learners themselves remains strong and is an issue that many countries might need to address as they promote inclusive education. In this context, *support for learning* should be a key strategy, implying for example:

- Children supporting children, teachers supporting teachers, parents as partners in the education of their children and communities as supporters of schools and other centres of learning.
- Teachers with specialist knowledge, resource centres, and professionals from other sectors. This support may need to be reoriented towards an inclusive approach.
- Services and agencies working together—this may require the creation of local management structures for services, which are ideally the same as those for managing schools.

In general, countries find that assessment systems work best where there is a basic system which applies to all children, but which can become more intensive and specialized in individual cases. Such universal systems make it more likely that particular difficulties will be identified. They also make it more likely that assessment will remain focused on supporting the child's progress and development rather than simply on labelling and categorizing learners.

4.4 Preparing teachers

In an inclusive education system all teachers need to have positive attitudes towards learner diversity and an understanding of inclusive practices, developed through both initial training and on-going processes of professional development. In addition, a few teachers will need to develop a higher level of specialist expertise. Much of the training teachers need in relation to inclusive practice can take place in their ordinary initial training, or through short in-service training events. A basic training curriculum for teachers, therefore, might include advice about how to:

- Translate relevant research findings (including brain research) into effective teaching practices.
- Assess the progress of all students through the curriculum, including how to assess learners whose attainments are low and whose progress is slow.
- Use assessments as a planning tool for the class as a whole, as well in drawing up individual plans for students.
- Observe students in learning situations, including the use of simple checklists and observation schedules.
- Relate the behaviour of particular learners to normal patterns of development (particularly important for teachers of young children).
- Involve parents and pupils in the assessment process.
- Work with other professionals—and know when to call on their specialized advice and how to use their assessments for educational purposes.

Given the diversity of difficulties with which all teachers are confronted, separate pre-service training tracks (special and mainstream), are unhelpful. It is a better use of resources for teachers to develop skills and experience as mainstream educators and only later to specialize. Specialists should not be too narrowly defined, but could be built on a broad base of expertise at lower levels of training. Mainstream teachers can acquire specialist skills if they are given the opportunity to collaborate with special education teachers, or in multi-disciplinary teams.

The progression from less to more specialist and extensive assessment is most straightforward where the school has access to a multi-disciplinary team. In some wealthier countries, establishing such teams involves bringing together specialists—such as social workers, health workers and educational psychologists—who have traditionally worked separately, and this in turn may involve some reorganization at the ministry level. Where such specialists are scarce, it also involves persuading professionals to work flexibly so that they can take on some

of the assessment work normally regarded as the preserve of other professionals. In particular, it may involve developing specialist teachers who can undertake some aspects of, for instance, psychological assessment, and who can relate the assessment process to the needs of teachers in ordinary schools.

4.5 Continuing professional development

For all countries, teachers are the most costly—and the most powerful—resource in the education system. As systems become more inclusive, professional development is particularly important because of the major new challenges that face both ordinary school-teachers—who have to respond to a greater diversity of student needs—and special educators—who find the context and focus of their work changing in major ways. Professional development needs to be seen as part of a whole-system approach to change. Teacher trainers may need opportunities for reorienting their role, particularly where mainstream and special education training have traditionally been separate from each other.

The development of the teaching force is crucial, particularly in countries where material resources are relatively scarce. The key issues for professional development are as follows:

- Special educators need to develop a new range of skills in consultancy, the mainstream curriculum, inclusive classroom practices and so on—since, in an inclusive approach, they spend more of their time working in ordinary schools and supporting teachers.
- Teacher-training programmes have to be organized on inclusive lines. The rigid separation between mainstream education and special education programmes has to be replaced by more integrated programmes or more flexible pathways through programmes.
- Teacher trainers themselves have to understand inclusive practice. They have to develop a greater knowledge of mainstream education and, in particular, the sorts of practices that are appropriate in inclusive classrooms.
- Initial and in-service training have to provide opportunities for reflection and debate on inclusive approaches—since they are based on sets of attitudes and values as well as on pedagogical knowledge and skills.

Countries find themselves in very different situations in terms of their existing professional development provision. In some, there are extensive and well-resourced programmes that simply need to be reoriented towards inclusive ends; in other countries, training is patchy. Mainstream educators may only be trained to a relatively low level and effective programmes have to be established with limited resources. In terms of the format of continuing professional development programmes, the following issues should be taken into account:

- Professional development needs to be seen as part of a whole-system approach to change.
- School-based staff development, aimed at supporting school development, can be particularly powerful in the early stages of the move towards more inclusive education.
- Distance learning can be important where there are logistical challenges.
- The structures of teacher education need to be reviewed. In particular, it will be necessary to set up a 'hierarchy' of training opportunities, so that all teachers know something about barriers to learning and some teachers have the opportunity to develop specialist expertise.

- It will be necessary to give special educators access to training that helps them reorient their roles towards working in inclusive settings.
- Teacher trainers may also need opportunities for reorienting their role, particularly where mainstream and special education training have traditionally been organized separately.
- Training efforts need to be sustained over time in a planned, systematic manner.

Inclusion and Education for All

"All stakeholders need to ensure that EFA remains a priority on the global agenda in the face of emerging global issues such as climate change and public health. Policy and implementation should emphasize five key factors—inclusion, literacy, quality, capacity development and finance. Inclusion means encompassing: **the marginalized and disadvantaged**, whether they be poor, rural and urban slum residents, ethnic and linguistic minorities, or the disabled; **all age groups**, from early childhood (ECCE) to adults (especially literacy); **and girls and women**, particularly as the 2005 gender parity goal has been missed.

Inclusion of the poorest and most marginalized children, youth and adults, means: a) ensuring that all children, particularly the marginalized and disadvantaged, have access to good ECCE programmes; b) expanding the physical infrastructure of the basic education system in rural and disadvantaged urban areas, providing mechanisms for teachers to work in these areas and improving their working conditions; c) eliminating school fees through a well-planned and well-managed process to ensure that schools are adequately prepared to deal with increases in enrolment and reductions in school income; d) providing financial support such as scholarships, cash or in-kind transfers to households, appropriately targeted; e) taking measures to alleviate the need for child labour and allowing for flexible schooling, non-formal equivalency courses and bridging courses to provide for the learning needs of working children and youth; f) sustaining efforts to assure gender parity, including improving girls' access to and retention in primary and secondary education and addressing the emerging boys' issues at secondary level; g) promoting inclusive education for the disabled, indigenous people and other disadvantaged groups; h) promoting a great diversity of youth and adult education programmes through legislation, public funding arrangements and policies, such as regulation and oversight of the non-state sector and bridges between non-formal and formal education; i) developing constructive partnerships between governments and the non-state sector to increase access to quality education." (Source: *Education for All by 2015: Will we make it?* Paris: UNESCO, 2008 (The EFA Global Monitoring Report).)

In this context, some important issues that might be addressed during the Conference include: **What new approaches to teaching, learning and assessment can be implemented to foster inclusiveness, improve learning outcomes and reduce inequality? How can schools and communities/families co-operate more closely and more effectively in support of inclusion? How can teachers be trained to meet the learners' diverse expectations and needs?**

CONCLUDING REMARKS: THE WAY OF THE FUTURE

UNESCO's guidelines for inclusion[14] were originally developed in 2004. These guidelines were a first step in seeking to foster dialogue on the quality of educational provision and the allocation of resources, providing a policy tool for revising and formulating Education for All plans, and also raising awareness about a broadened concept of inclusive education. Since being published in 2005, much progress has been made in the EFA agenda, although it is evident that new approaches and strategies need to be developed and adopted to reach out to those who are still excluded. These strategies must take into account issues of access but also fundamental issues linked to quality and equity—key elements in building the foundations for inclusive societies.

Incorporating inclusion as a guiding principle requires important changes and shifts in education systems, as well as at the societal level, and this change process is frequently faced with several challenges. Typically, these include: discriminatory attitudes and beliefs; lack of understanding; lack of necessary skills; limited resources; and inappropriate organization.

Accepting change is really about learning. It means that schools should foster environments where teachers learn from experience in the same way that they expect their pupils should learn from the tasks and activities in which they are engaged. Teachers who regard themselves as learners in the classroom are more likely to successfully facilitate the learning of their pupils.

There are several important elements that contribute to successful change, in particular: clarity of purpose; realistic goals; motivation; support; resources; and evaluation. The move towards inclusion is a gradual one that should be based on clearly articulated principles, which address system-wide development. If barriers are to be reduced, policy-makers, educational personnel and other stakeholders need to take certain steps which must involve all members of the local community, local education offices and the media. Some of these actions include: mobilizing opinion; building consensus; reforming legislation; carrying out local situation analyses; and supporting local projects.

Finally, it is also important to recognize that some dimensions of change can effectively be measured. Such measurements include: direct benefits to learners; wider impact on policies, practices, ideas and beliefs; enhanced learners' participation; reduced discrimination (e.g. gender, disability, minority status, etc.); strengthened partnerships and improved collaboration between ministries, at the national and local level of government as well as at the community level; and development and strengthening of the education system, technology and pedagogy to include *all* learners.

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[14] UNESCO, *Guidelines for inclusion: ensuring access to Education for All*, Paris, UNESCO, 2005.