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**EDUCATING INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL  
NEEDS TOWARDS INTEGRATED LIFE**  
*Realising the Goal of Educational Equity*



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### ABSTRACT

*The key issue discussed in the article is the main challenges in developing inclusive education. Most countries have acknowledged inclusive education as a means to secure equal educational rights for all persons. However, the definitions and implementations of inclusive education vary immensely. They are discussed in relation to a narrow and a broad definition of inclusive education, distinguishing between a horizontal and a vertical dimension of the concept. The article also goes into students' learning outcomes in inclusive education as well as teacher competencies for inclusive pedagogy. No country has yet succeeded in constructing a school system that lives up to the ideals and intentions of inclusion, as defined by different international organizations. Placement seems to be the most frequent criterion of inclusive education, to avoid segregation. The quality of teaching and learning processes in inclusive education has lower priority.*

*Keywords: Exclusion , Right To Inclusive Education*

### Introduction

Inspired by social justice ideas, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) and the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), many European countries have developed policies and implemented practices to promote inclusive education (Arcidiacono and Baucal, 2020; Nelis and Pedaste, 2020). Inspired by social constructivist approaches to learning, teacher educators supporting inclusive education argue that child development depends not only on inherited capacities, but it is also constructed by shared social values, access to educational institutions, technologies (including assistive technologies), and other relevant social resources as well as quality of support provided to the child and opportunities to participate fully and equally in a community.

Teacher educators and policy makers would agree that it is true that current educational systems (schools, teachers, initial education of teachers, practices, technologies, teaching and learning materials, etc.) in many countries have been established based on an assumption that "regular" education, schools, and teachers should work only with "typical" children and other children need to be educated in a specially designed and segregated environment, that is, "special" education (Carrington, 1999; Croll and Moses, 2000; Dyson et al., 2002; Radó et al., 2016; Zgaga, 2019; Koutsouris et al., 2020). However, they would argue that in such an environment, children cannot develop a sense of belonging nor can become full members of the society because of marginalized status and limited opportunities to grow with others (Freeman and Alkin, 2000; Farrell, 2010; Koller et al., 2018). In order to have an equal opportunity, all children need to be educated in regular education that have conditions, capacities, and resources to be able to adapt to the children needs, capacities, and constraints. Following this, in a case when a school, teachers, discourses, practices, and technologies are not aligned with the needs of some students, it cannot be an

acceptable reason for the exclusion of the child, but for adapting the education to the child and his/her learning and developmental needs (Farrell, 2010; Arcidiacono and Baucal, 2020).

### What is Inclusive Education?

Every child has the right to education. That includes children with disabilities. An inclusive education system is one that accommodates all students whatever their abilities or requirements, and at all levels – pre-school, primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational and life-long learning. It is important to understand what is and is not inclusive education:

- ❖ **Exclusion:** students with disabilities are denied access to education in any form.
- ❖ **Segregation:** education of students with disabilities is provided in separate environments designed for specific, and in isolation from students without disabilities.
- ❖ **Integration:** placing students with disabilities in mainstream educational institutions without adaptation and requiring the student to fit in.
- ❖ **Inclusion:** education environments that adapt the design and physical structures, teaching methods, and curriculum as well as the culture, policy and practice of education environments so that they are accessible to all students without discrimination. Placing students with disabilities within mainstream classes without these adaptations does not constitute inclusion.

### Why is Inclusive Education Important?

- ❖ The educational case: All children learn more effectively
- ❖ The economic case: It is cost-effective
- ❖ The social case: It contributes to more inclusive societies
- ❖ Interpreting Article 24, the right to inclusive education
- ❖ The right to education applies to all children. Article 24 describes what is needed to ensure that children with disabilities are able to realize this right:

**Non-discrimination:** Children with disabilities must be able to access education without discrimination and on the basis of equality. This means the right not to be segregated, and to be provided with all the support they need. All barriers must be removed - legal, physical, communication and language, social, financial and attitudinal barriers.

**Aim of education:** Education should promote the full development of all the abilities and potential of children with disabilities, support them to participate fully in society, and provide them with understanding of human rights, diversity, tolerance and respect for the environment.

**No exclusions:** children with disabilities must never be excluded from the general education system. Any legislation limits their access must be repealed.

**Access to primary and secondary education:** children with disabilities must have access to inclusive, quality and free primary and secondary education in the communities where they live. This means that:

- ❖ Sufficient numbers of schools must be available throughout the country.
- ❖ Schools must be accessible for all children with disabilities - including buildings, transport, playgrounds, hygiene and toilets facilities, communications, curriculum, education materials, teaching methods, and assessment and support services. All new buildings must be accessible.
- ❖ Education services must be acceptable to the requirements, cultures and languages all students with disabilities.

**Trained teachers:** Teachers must be trained to work effectively in inclusive environments. And teachers with disabilities must be recruited and trained. Teachers with disabilities in schools will help promote equal



rights, provide unique expertise and skills, contribute to breaking down barriers and serve as important role models.

**General Support:** Students with disabilities are entitled to general support to enable them get the most out of their education. This might include, for example, having enough trained and supported teaching staff, school counsellors, psychologists, and other relevant health and social service professionals, as well as access to scholarships and financial resources.\

**Individual Education Plans:** Every student with a disability should be provided with an individual education plan that sets out the accommodations and support they need. These plans should be developed together with the student. They should be monitored regularly and be designed to help them be fully included. The student should be able to make a complaint if the support they need is not provided.

**Providing for Specific Impairments:** Certain groups of students may require specific services so that they can acquire the life, language and social skills to help them benefit fully from their education. What must governments do to ensure inclusive education?

**Establish Structures for Education:** schools for every child should be the responsibility of the education ministry. And other ministries need to be involved in helping create inclusive education – for example, transport to enable children to get to school, planning so that buildings are accessible, child protection to make sure that children are safe, finance to ensure sufficient funding is available.

**Introduce laws and policies:** the right laws and policies must be in place to support inclusive education. This can include laws to end discrimination, to promise the equal right to education, to guarantee inclusive education, to provide support, to give children the right to be heard, to make sure all schools are accessible and introduce early identification and assessment of young children

**Create Education Plans:** governments need to make a plan of action to introduce inclusive education. It will need to spell out, for example, how much money will be made available, how many children will need to be provided with a school place, what action it is going to put in place to make it happen and time frames for when it will achieve these goals.

### Conclusion

The journey toward inclusive education requires a collective commitment to dismantling barriers that impede the full participation of every student. By recognizing and addressing diverse learning needs, promoting accessibility, and embracing the richness of differences, we pave the way for a more equitable and empowering educational experience. Inclusive education is not just a concept; it is a transformative force that breaks down societal norms and fosters a sense of belonging for all students. The journey involves overcoming preconceived notions, challenging stereotypes, and advocating for policies that promote inclusivity. As we navigate this landscape, it is crucial to engage in ongoing dialogue, promote awareness, and provide resources to support educators, students, and families. Ultimately, the success of inclusive education lies in the hands of a united community dedicated to breaking down barriers. Through collaboration, empathy, and a commitment to diversity, we can create educational environments that nurture the potential of every individual. As we continue on this path, let us celebrate the progress made, learn from the challenges faced, and remain steadfast in our pursuit of an inclusive educational landscape where every learner can thrive and contribute meaningfully to society.

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