

The Challenges towards Meaningful Inclusive Education

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"Inclusive Education and the Sustainable Development Goals In September 2015, the Member States of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 16 to guide international development efforts from 2016 to 2030. The SDGs represent a significant step forward in terms of the inclusion of disability in internationally agreed development goals. An emphasis of the SDGs, which include 17 goals and 169 targets, is to "leave no one behind." The Agenda makes numerous references to persons with disabilities, including in relation to education. Goal 4 of the SDGs calls upon States to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Targets for Goal 4 include the commitment to ensure by 2030 equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for persons with disabilities, among others."

Inclusion in the context of education is based on the idea that all children should learn together, regardless of differences or disability. Inclusive education begins with the premise that all learners have unique characteristics, interests, abilities and particular learning needs and, further, that learners with special education needs must have equal access to and receive individual accommodation in the general education system. Inclusive education approaches differences and diversity affirmatively, recognizing

the value of such differences and the learning opportunities that such diversity offers. Inclusion implies transition from separate, segregated learning environments for persons with disabilities reflected in the “special education” approach, to schooling in the general education system.

According to Engelbrecht et al. (1999:73), certain major physical dimensions may have to be changed in order to remove barriers to learning and all barriers in the physical environment should be removed to make the classroom accessible to learners with physical disabilities. . Trained professionals are required in the provision of meaningful educational services to students with special educational needs in regular schools (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002:117). According to Chaikind et al. (1993) (Cited in Eleweke & Rodda, 2002:117), the estimated cost of providing educational and other services to pupils with special needs could be 2 or 3 times greater than the cost of providing for students without special needs. Research has indicated that the mandatory policies and laws support the effective implementation on inclusive , such policies and laws are essential to ensure that the required services will be provided and that a basis for quality control will be ensured (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002:118).

UNESCO as cited in (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002:118), indicates that the study pertaining to the laws on special needs provision in 52 member nations shows clearly that legislation is needed to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities to equal rights and opportunities and it can further help in securing the resources needed to translate abstract rights into practical .

As cited in Prinsloo (2001:346), recognizes the growing need of teachers to understand and assist learners with behaviour problems that serve as barrier to effective learning. Prinsloo (2001), goes further to point out that teacher find it very difficult to deal with the increasing number of children with behavior problems in mainstream classrooms. These children are disruptive in the extreme and the learning climate in the classroom is negatively affected for all the children. The teacher’s lack of the necessary knowledge, skills and expertise to understand and assist these learners, causes frustration. These cause serious feelings of inadequacy which disrupts effective teaching and successful learning. Attention or make very little emotional or physical contact with the child, the child is emotionally neglected. Penh (2005:16), emphasizes the fact that parent-teacher communication and collaboration is therefore crucial, yet it is often difficult to achieve and parents have a key role to play in supporting their children and in campaigning for inclusive education. Ibrahim (2003:45), points out that one of the major barriers to enrolment today is that parents no longer see the value of their children getting an education. The other factor which affects the outcome of inclusive practice is teachers’ training. Inclusive program could be successfully implemented if the level of the teacher’s competency is increased.

According to Prinsloo (2001), if educators do not provide the necessary nurturing, stimulation, encouragement and protection to the child at various stages of development and withhold Thus, the opportunities to attend courses that are related to the inclusive education program have to be created, especially for those who lack exposure and training in special education. Inclusive] Curriculum Flexible approaches

in education are needed to respond to the diverse abilities and needs of all learners. But if the curricula and teaching methods are rigid and there is a lack of appropriate teaching materials, teachers will be constrained in fulfilling their responsibility. Farrell (1997:91) indicates that without a coherent curriculum which is relevant to the needs of pupils for whom it was designed, the quality of education will suffer. Resources A successful inclusion of special needs pupils “depends not only on appropriate organization, legislation and regulations, but also on the availability of resources in the regular classroom and on the way teachers differentiate the resources between pupils” Pijil , Mijer and Hegartyet (1997:10). In this case, materials and equipments provision and financial sources are among the frontiers of challenge in the implementation of inclusive education Assessment and Evaluation In an outcomes-based curriculum, learners’ progress is measured against the broad results expected at the end of each learning process, such as general skills, abilities and values. It can be on-going assessment to get feedback from children’s learning and teachers’ success in selecting appropriate teaching methods, as well as the needs to adjust the pace or style of teaching. In this way, all learners can be evaluated against their own achievements instead of being compared to other learners. Assessment can take place in a flexible manner and time when the learner has acquired new knowledge, a new skill or competency, even new attitudes and values, when the teacher has finished teaching a particular content and in the ordinary classroom situation when the teacher has finished teaching a particular content and in the ordinary classroom situation. Avramidis & Norwich (2002:129), emphasizes the fact that the successful implementation of Any inclusive policy is largely dependent on educators being positive about it. The philosophies regarding the education of children with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities have changed dramatically over the past two decades and several countries have led in the effort to implement policies which foster the integration and, more recently, inclusion of these students into mainstream environments.

CRPD – Article 24: State parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, State parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning directed to: a. the full development of human potential and a sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity; b. the development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential; c. enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.

In formulating policies in this area, countries must take into account the fact that ensuring access for persons with disabilities to education and information requires various accommodations and modifications. Variables such as language, literacy, urban versus rural, cultural traditions and gender all must be taken into consideration

in planning for effective inclusive education promotion and outreach. In addition, policy measures should seek to dismantle the heightened levels of exclusion from education faced by persons with particular impairments, such as intellectual or sensory impairments. To be successful, legislative and policy measures should specifically seek to dismantle each of the many barriers to inclusive education faced by persons with disabilities.

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