

# *Overcoming Exclusion through Inclusive Approaches in Education*

*A CHALLENGE & A VISION*

*Conceptual Paper*



**Overcoming Exclusion**  
*through* **Inclusive Approaches**  
**in Education**

A CHALLENGE  A VISION

**Conceptual Paper**

United Nations  
Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural  
Organization



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# Introduction

## *Marginalisation a threat to society*

One of the greatest problems facing the world today is the growing number of persons who are excluded from meaningful participation in the economic, social, political and cultural life of their communities. Such a society is neither efficient nor safe.

The Jomtien World Conference on Education for All (1990) set the goal of Education for All. UNESCO, along with other UN agencies, and a number of international and national non-governmental organisations, has been working towards achieving this goal - adding to the efforts made at the country level.

Despite encouraging developments there are still an estimated 113 million primary school age children not attending school (International Consultative Forum on Education for All, 2000). 90% of them live in low and lower middle income countries, and over 80 million of these children live in Africa. Of those who do enrol in primary school, large numbers drop out before completing their primary education.

## *Current strategies insufficient*

It is recognised that current strategies and programmes have largely been insufficient or inappropriate with regard to needs of children and youth who are vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion. Where programmes targeting various marginalized and excluded groups do exist, they have functioned outside the mainstream – special programmes, specialized institutions, and specialist educators. Notwithstanding the best intentions, too often the result has been exclusion:

‘second-rate’ educational opportunities that do not guarantee the possibility to continue studies, or differentiation becoming a form of discrimination, leaving children with various needs outside the mainstream of school life and later, as adults, outside community social and cultural life in general (UNESCO, 1999a).

The urgency to address the needs of learners who are vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion through responsive educational opportunities was also pointed out in the Dakar World Education Forum in April 2000:

“*The key challenge is to ensure that the broad vision of Education for All as an inclusive concept is reflected in national government and funding agency policies. Education for All ... must take account of the need of the poor and the most disadvantaged, including working children, remote rural dwellers and nomads, and ethnic and linguistic minorities, children, young people and adults affected by conflict, HIV/AIDS, hunger and poor health; and those with special learning needs...*”

(Expanded commentary on the Dakar Framework for Action, para 19)

## ***Inclusion – a developmental approach in education***

Inclusive education as an approach seeks to address the learning needs of all children, youth and adults with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion. The principle of inclusive education was adopted at the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994) and was restated at the Dakar World Education Forum (2000).

Inclusive education means that

“*... schools should accommodate **all children** regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups.*”

(The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, para 3)

## *Inclusive education – a human rights issue*

At the core of inclusive education is the human right to education, pronounced in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1949. Equally important is the right of children not to be discriminated against, stated in Article 2 of the Convention on the Right of the Child (UN, 1989). A logical consequence of this right is that all children have the right to receive the kind of education that does not discriminate on grounds of disability, ethnicity, religion, language, gender, capabilities, and so on.

While there are also very important human, economic, social and political reasons for pursuing a policy and approach of inclusive education, it is also a means of bringing about personal development and building relationships among individuals, groups and nations. The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994) asserts that:

*“Regular schools with inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discrimination, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all.”*  
(Salamanca Statement, Art. 2)

## *Challenges of our societies*

The influence of broader political developments towards cultural diversity and more widespread democracy has reinforced the role of education in political socialization, and facilitating active democratic citizenship. As well as a great variety of individual talents, education has to face the wide range of cultural backgrounds of the groups making up society. Education has to take on the difficult task of turning diversity into a constructive contributory factor of mutual understanding between individuals and groups. Any educational policy must be able to meet the challenges of pluralism and enable everyone to find their place in the community to which they primarily belong and at the same time be given the means to open up to other communities. The International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century reminds that education policies must be sufficiently diversified and must be so designed as not to become another cause of social exclusion and that schools should foster the desire to live together. (UNESCO, 1996).

This paper recognizes the broad concept of ‘basic education’. This expanded vision includes:

- universalising access and promoting equity
- focussing on learning
- broadening the means and scope of education
- enhancing the environment for learning, and
- strengthening partnerships (UNESCO, 1990).

It is in this context that this paper seeks to map out inclusive approaches in education as a strategy to achieve the goal of education for all. It aims to construct a coherent conceptual and contextual policy framework in order to provide access and quality in basic education for all children and young people, and what it implies for education systems so that these needs can be addressed and responded to in mainstream of education whether it is formal or non-formal.

The *‘Overcoming Exclusion through Inclusive Approaches in Education’* paper has been developed in a close interaction, consultation and collaboration with a number of UNESCO colleagues, researchers and practitioners from the different world regions. It is intended to provide a framework for UNESCO’s involvement in developing inclusion in education in its Member States, as well as to be a source of stimulation and discussion.



# Defining Inclusive Education

Inclusion is seen as **a process** of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education (Booth, 1996). It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children (UNESCO, 1994).

Inclusive education is concerned with providing appropriate responses to the broad spectrum of learning needs in formal and non-formal educational settings. Rather than being a marginal theme on how some learners can be integrated in the mainstream education, inclusive education is an approach that looks into how to transform education systems in order to respond to the diversity of learners. It aims to enable both teachers and learners to feel comfortable with diversity and to see it as a challenge and enrichment in the learning environment, rather than a problem.





# The Scene of Exclusion

Poverty, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender or membership of a minority group may limit access to or marginalize within education. However, the exact cultural, social and economic consequences of these factors vary from time to time, from country to country and from location to location.

An analysis of some barriers that exist within the South African context was made in 1996 (NCSNET & NCESS, 1997). Other countries and contexts might find that they face some of the same barriers as in South Africa, but might also find that in their context other factors are more important and need to be taken into consideration. The analysis shows the range of barriers that might exist within a context:

## **Analysing barriers to learning and development in South Africa (NCSNET & NCESS, 1997)**

Inequalities in a society, lack of access to basic services and poverty are factors which place children at risk, contribute to learning breakdown and exclusion. In South Africa, inequalities resulting from apartheid and economic deprivation have had a great impact on the education system, and especially on those learners who face barriers to learning. In the following, a brief description of the barriers at the systemic level is made to illustrate how the 'macro-level' barriers' impact on learners in schools and other centres of learning.

### **Problems in the provision and organisation of education**

- There is not an accurate picture of the number of learners excluded from the school system. These learners include



those who have never attended school and those who have dropped out.

- Only a small percentage of learners who were earlier categorised as having 'special needs' receive appropriate education in ordinary schools or special settings.
- There is not support available for those learners who are outside the system.
- Existing provision after primary school is inadequate to meet the needs. The provision and the distribution of resources reflect the inequalities of the apartheid past.
- Learners who have historically faced barriers to learning have had few opportunities for further education at the tertiary level.

### Socio-economic factors which place learners at risk

- Inadequacies and inequalities in the education system and its contribution to learning breakdown are most evident in areas which have the lowest level of basic service provision, the highest levels of unemployment and sustained poverty.
- Violence and abuse in society have impacted significant numbers of learners.
- HIV/AIDS continues to place large numbers of learners at risk.

### Attitudes

- Negative attitudes towards differences and the resulting discrimination and prejudice in the society manifests itself as a serious barrier to learning.

### Curriculum

- The curriculum has been unable to meet the needs of a wide range of different learners. For example, in 1996, in Mpumalanga province, high repetition rates were common, and 23% of black learners aged between 15 and 19 have not passed standard 4. The equivalent for white learners was 1%.

### Environment

- The vast majority of centres of learning are physically inaccessible to many learners, especially to those who have physical disabilities. In poorer, particularly rural areas, the centres of learning are often inaccessible largely because

buildings are rundown or poorly maintained. They are unhealthy and unsafe for all learners.

### **Language and communication**

- Teaching and learning takes place through a language which is not the first language of many South African learners. This places these learners at a disadvantage and it often leads to significant linguistic difficulties which contribute to learning breakdown. Second language learners are particularly subject to low expectations, discrimination and lack of role models and cultural peers.

### **Organisation and governance of the education system**

- The basic centralisation of the education system has left a legacy of restrictive centralised control which inhibits change and initiative. Legal responsibility for decisions tends to be located at the highest level and the focus of management remains oriented towards employees complying with rules rather than on ensuring quality service delivery

### **Inadequate and fragmented human resource development**

- The training needs of staff at all levels are not being adequately met. Little, or no training and capacity building opportunities exist for community resource persons, particularly carers. Training tends to be fragmented, uncoordinated, inadequate, unequal and often inappropriate to the needs of a developing country.



# I

# Overcoming Exclusion through Inclusive Approaches in Education

In the countries of the North the move towards more inclusive approaches in education is often difficult due to the legacy of traditional policies and practices, i.e. segregated or exclusive education for groups identified as being ‘difficult’ or ‘different’, or based on wealth, religion, etc. This influences the attitudes and mind-sets of people creating resistance towards change. In the countries of the South, the major constraint is the serious shortage of resources – lack of schools or inadequate facilities, lack of teachers and/or shortage of qualified staff, lack of learning materials and absence of support. There is also a serious concern about the quality of education: although many countries have made recommendable progress towards achieving the goal of Education for All, this has come through sacrificing the quality. This is not a particular challenge to adopting more inclusive approaches in education but a challenge to education as a whole, as described above in the analysis of the situation in South Africa.

Not all barriers to learning are, or can be, the responsibility of education alone. However, within the education system and the different centres of learning<sup>1</sup> there is a range of exclusionary pressures that can be addressed. In the following some aspects of exclusionary pressures will be discussed and how inclusive approaches can be used to respond to these pressures. Some exclusionary practice is related to access, such as high school fees that only the well-off people can afford or various indirect costs for education; schools being open to children from only one specific ethnic or religious group; etc. In addition to problems in access, factors such as poor quality of the teaching, weak school management or curriculum irrelevance may lead to marginalization and exclusion.

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘centre of learning’ is used to refer to a wide range of educational arrangements in both formal and non-formal settings.

It should be noted that this presentation does not attempt to be an exhaustive list of the barriers and a set of solutions that might occur in a given context, but rather to illustrate the range of barriers that centres of learning are facing, and how some of them have made efforts to overcome the barriers.

## **IV.1 Policies and structures as barriers?**

The Education for All Year 2000 Assessment indicates that most countries have set universal primary education as the minimum target in their educational policies. Although there is progress reported throughout the world regions, there are regions and regions within countries where little or no progress, or even a decline is reported. It seems that, while the target might have been universally recognised, it is not being universally acted on with seriousness of purpose or being achieved.

In some countries there may still exist policies that give a possibility for authorities to declare that some children are ‘uneducable’. Usually this practice applies to children with severe intellectual disability. These children might be taken care of but not necessarily provided with educational opportunities. In some other countries, the education of some specific groups of learners might be the responsibility of another authority than the Ministry of Education. Very often this leads to a situation where these learners are not expected to participate in mainstream education provision and, consequently, they do not have equal opportunities for further education or employment.

In many contexts, the way education provision is arranged contributes to labelling and discrimination despite good intentions. The parallel systems of education have prevailed in many countries, especially in the North. This has created a ‘mainstream’ education system that does not have to cater for children who may challenge its orthodoxy, structure or functioning; and special schools and classes for particular groups of students such as students with disabilities, students from different ethnic groups, students who have challenging behaviour etc. Furthermore, this structure often maintains ‘special incentives’ for teachers working in this ‘specialised’ area, such as better salaries, lower retirement age, smaller classes, etc. which impedes efforts in changing the way the system works.

## *Funding*

A pervasive theme in all of the EFA 2000 Assessment reports is the inadequacy of resources available to meet the basic needs in education. Also some richer countries claim this as an explanation for unequal conditions and provision. It seems that resources are always short in relation to demand so the issue is about priorities.

It is estimated that achieving education for all will require additional financial support by countries and donors of about US\$ 8 billion per year (Dakar Framework for Action, 2000). In addition to the extra funding needed, it is urgent to review the way in which resources are allocated and spent within the system. For example, maintaining policies that lead to repetition of grades by large numbers of learners is expensive. In some less developed regions, the cost of school wastage in the first grades has been estimated to cost some 16% of expenditure on education. Resources devoted to a repeater are resources that could have been used to permit another child to enter school or to improve the quality of education for learners already there (UNESCO 1998).

A study of inclusion policies related to education of learners with disabilities in seventeen European countries indicated that if funds are not allocated in line with an explicit inclusion policy, inclusion is unlikely to happen in practice (Meijer, 1999).

The study '*Financing of Special Needs Education*' (Meijer, 1999) shows that countries where there is a direct input funding model for special schools (more learners in special schools – more funds) report that this financing model, may lead to less inclusion, more labelling and rising costs. Learner-bound budgeting also seems to have some clear disadvantages. At times, regular schools are eager to have pupils with special needs (and their budgets), but they prefer learners (and their budgets) who are considered to be 'easy to fit in'.

The study concludes that the countries having the most attractive funding option in support of inclusive education are countries with a strongly decentralized system where budgets for supporting learners with 'special needs' are delegated to local institutions (municipalities, districts, school clusters), and funds are based on total enrolment and other such indicators.

It is extremely difficult to calculate the cost of education of children who are currently excluded and/or perceived as having 'special needs'. There are some indications from countries where a parallel system of education (mainstream – special) is in place that providing services to

children who are perceived as having ‘special needs’ is about 2 to 4 times higher than the cost of education of children who do not need these services. The higher costs apply to education in separate settings, such as in special schools, whereas the lower costs are usually applicable in more inclusive settings. Even if the cost in more inclusive settings would be higher, it is still lower than in separate settings (OECD, 1999).

The cost of education of currently marginalised and excluded children should not be the issue. The eventual social and economical costs of exclusion if these children are not to be educated should be added in the total cost estimates.

## IV.2 Improving Quality of Education

### *Curriculum – challenges and possibilities for inclusion*

In any education system, the curriculum is one of the major obstacles or tools to facilitate the development of more inclusive system.

In many contexts, the curriculum is extensive and demanding, or centrally designed and rigid, leaving little flexibility for local adaptations or for teachers to experiment and try out new approaches. The content might be distant to the reality in which the students live, and therefore inaccessible and unmotivating. The curriculum might also be gender biased and degrading.

There is a growing body of research on inclusive education that derives from the work carried out in a number of schools and other centres of learning around the world. It suggests some key elements for curricula that aim at developing more inclusive education:

- broad common goals defined for all, including the knowledge, skills and values to be acquired
- a flexible structure to facilitate responding to the diversity and providing diverse opportunities for practice and performance in terms of content, methods and level of participation
- assessment based on individual progress
- cultural, religious and linguistic diversity of learners acknowledged and
- content, knowledge and skills relevant to learners’ context (UNESCO, 1999b).

The curriculum can facilitate the development of more inclusive settings when it leaves room for the centre of learning or the individual teacher to make adaptations so that it makes better sense in the local context and for the individual learner:

■ In Uganda, a culturally sensitive, flexible curriculum has been designed to reach out to semi-nomadic cattle keepers living in a fragile ecological environment in North Eastern Uganda. The national curriculum does not relate to their lifestyle, economic activities, environmental dictates and socio-political context resulting in low enrolment and resistance towards formal schooling.

The revised, adopted curriculum has been designed to suit the learning and skills requirements of these children with in-built provision for indigenous knowledge and skills, basic life skills relevant to pastoral life such as animal husbandry, water and rangeland management, environmental protection, early warning systems and positive cultural practices. The design and development of specific learning and teaching materials as well as teaching arrangements take into account the needs, interest, aspirations and uniqueness of the pastoral learners (UNESCO, 2001b)

■ Eric has an intellectual disability and he attends his local, regular school. Ms Comfort, Eric's grade one teacher, is aware that each learner's capabilities are different. She uses her knowledge of a range of learning styles to design teaching and learning experiences that intentionally build upon individual capabilities and strengths:

- Ms Comfort's grade one have been to the carnival. They have been working on concepts related to 'technology', and were asked to find and describe various systems they saw at the carnival. Back in class, after the group discussion, the class decided to describe the system that is a Ferris wheel. Part of the description is a presentation of the model of a Ferris wheel.
- Ms Comfort knows that Eric can use scissors (kinaesthetic capability); she wants him to learn how to measure and cut equal lengths of straw (rational capability). Stella and John can use then the straws of equal length to design and construct a shape for the Ferris wheel (kinaesthetic, creative, rational capabilities). Ms Comfort sets a series of interdependent tasks of differing layered complexity that both engage and challenge her learners. (UNESCO, 1999b)



As a part of the curriculum, the language of instruction may pose problems to all learners or some of the learners. In many countries the language of instruction is different than the language the students talk at home and use in their community thus creating difficulties in understanding for many students. Some countries have opted for one language of instruction, which may not be the first language of a large proportion of the learners, but which is the common language in the country. Some other countries have made it possible to choose from different languages of instruction.

### *Assessment and evaluation to promote inclusion*

Repetition is seen in majority of countries as a remedy for slow learners although there is no conclusive evidence that it is so. Children's success in school is often believed to be primarily a function of their intellectual aptitudes. In case of learners who come from deprived environments, their living conditions may reduce their motivation and opportunities to learn, whatever their intellectual ability might be. Furthermore, the language of instruction may put children at a disadvantage, as discussed above. Learners who are unable to proceed with their classmates to the next grade may experience low self-esteem and are likely to develop negative attitudes towards education. Repeaters become then candidates for an eventual dropout (UNESCO, 1998).

While knowledge-based examinations are recognised to have their limitations in terms of both validity and reliability, formal standardised tests may also have adverse effects, such as encouraging the accumulation and recall of fragmented and decontextualised facts and skills; ranking and sorting schools and children; narrowing the curriculum as teachers concentrate their teaching on the information, forms and formats required in the tests; and reinforcing bias in terms of gender, race/ethnicity and social class. (Supovitz & Brennan, 1997)

An inclusive curriculum demands a flexible, success-oriented means of assessment, examination and evaluation. The assessment of children is increasingly related to the aims of the curriculum, the culture and experience biography of the child and the way in which the curriculum is designed and delivered:

## **Inclusive approaches to 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 (National Department of Education, 1997).

■ **'Portfolio' assessment**, for example, can include learners' own products such as final "best" work, various works in progress, samples of tests completed, certificates earned, goals met, daily work samples, self-evaluation of the progress of learning and teacher's observations. Research has revealed that equity factors, such as race, ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status, are reduced by about one half in the portfolio system in comparison to standardised tests. The gender gap, however, increases in favour of girls when portfolios are used (Supovitz & Brennan, 1997).

# V | Some Steps Forward

With regards to pedagogy, curriculum, educational organization or financing inclusive education does not bring much additional on the educational agenda, but it analyses why education systems and educational programmes are not succeeding in providing education for all learners. It tries to bring together within a cohesive framework what is known about quality education in order to work towards systems that are more responsive to diversity. As a strategic approach, it identifies existing resources and innovative practices in local contexts, examines the barriers to learning, with a specific focus on groups vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion.

This approach is indeed recommended in the Expanded Commentary on the Dakar Framework for Action:

*“... In order to attract and retain children from marginalized and excluded groups, education systems should respond flexibly... Education systems must be inclusive, actively seeking out children who are not enrolled, and responding flexibly to the circumstances and needs of all learners...”*

(Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments. Expanded Commentary on the Dakar Framework for Action, Para 33)

The example of barriers to learning in South African context (see p. 9) illustrated the complexity of the day-to-day realities which education systems have to take into account. There are no quick-fix solutions or cook book recipes as how to go about educational change. However, there are some processes that might facilitate the development of more inclusive education systems.



## **V.1 Overcoming barriers within the centres of learning**

Within centres of learning there are some issues worthy of further consideration for fostering inclusive approaches within education. The following ideas (Ainscow, 1999, Fine, 2000, UNESCO, 2000) are based on experiences of development work in a number of countries.

■ **The work towards more inclusive centre of learning is seen as a part of the centre's mission.** The process of change needs to be a means of achieving the goals set. Adopting more inclusive ways of thinking and working is not a project but a process.

In centres of learning, there are factors that are more linked with general 'change resistance' which may inhibit the development process. If the pursuit towards inclusion is not connected with the mission of the centre of learning, or the education system in larger sense, the stakeholders might not be willing to devote their time to a process that does not seem to contribute to the development in general. There might also be difficulties in soliciting the support of all groups concerned if the inclusion process is seen to be benefiting only certain groups, such as learners with disability or a certain ethnic minority (Fine, 2000).

■ **Leaders communicate strong support.** If leaders demonstrate strong support for the change process, teachers, other staff and the community are more likely to devote the time and resources necessary for the process.

■ **Physical access and learning environment** might pose barriers to learning and participation. In addition to factors such as long distance or dangerous road, the centres of learning might be inaccessible for those learners who have difficulties in mobility. Simple ramps and internal classroom arrangements can easily help the situation. Furthermore, the physical environment of the centres of learning, such as the design of the building, the availability of water, electricity and toilet/sewage facilities will either enable or constrain both students to participate and the range of learning activities in and out of classroom.

Schools may cause exclusion when they are not able to deal with violence, bullying and abuse between learners, between learners and teachers and between the school staff. Carers are not likely to send their children to a centre of learning which

they do not perceive as being safe, and learners and teachers cannot be expected to work in such an environment.

■ **Supporting teachers** is a crucial lever for the development of more inclusive centres of learning. Support can be about many things:

- **Making use of available resources to support learning.**

At the heart of the process of inclusion is an emphasis on making better use of resources. This includes, for example, developing ways of working that make better use of human energy through greater cooperation between teachers, support staff, carers and the learners themselves. There is also strong evidence to support the argument that better use of child-to-child co-operation can help to contribute to the development of a more inclusive education in ways that will improve conditions for all learners.

The lack of teaching/learning materials and various forms of printed media for teachers and learners may hamper the quality of education. Teachers need support for their work in terms of information and background materials so that they can prepare their lessons and update their own knowledge. Also locally made learning/teaching materials can enhance considerably the quality of the learning/teaching process and provide satisfaction of the work done for learners and their teachers.

■ **Teaching / Learning processes** are often lacking the flexibility to accommodate the diverse abilities and interests of a heterogeneous learner population. In many contexts, much of instruction and learning is based on rote learning, meticulous following of textbooks and copying. It is not surprising that the most capable learners are not adequately challenged nor are the less advantaged learners supported.

- **Starting with existing practices and knowledge.**

There is international evidence that suggests that most centres of learning know more than they use. The main thrust has to be with making better use of existing expertise and creativity within any given educational context. This suggests a need to work alongside teachers in centres of learning in order to support them in developing ways of analysing their practices. Furthermore, in examining existing practices it is also necessary to consider whether aspects of these practices are in themselves acting as barriers to participation.

- **Seeing differences as opportunities for learning.**

Adjusting existing arrangements seems to require a process of improvisation as teachers respond to the various forms



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FORWARD

of feedback provided by learners. Those who do not fit into existing arrangements can be seen as offering ‘surprises’; that is, feedback that invites further improvisation. This implies a more positive view of difference. It also requires an adequate professional self-confidence that can be developed through continuous training and practice.

■ **Involving communities.** Centres of learning are often isolated from, and even in opposition to, the families and communities of the learners they are supposed to serve (Bernard, 2000). Therefore, partnership with carers is increasingly seen as essential to the effective and efficient delivery of a quality education service.

An inclusive approach to education recognises that carers and the community have a real contribution to make, that they can make a contribution to children’s learning and that they have a right to be involved in the decision making process.

However, evidence suggests that those carers who become involved in the education of their children often are people with more resources. A great challenge, therefore, is to get the families of the most marginalised students involved.

Investing in adult education for carers might facilitate them getting involved in the life around the centre of learning and follow up on their children’s education. The centre of learning might also make efforts to ensure that the information provided to carers about their children’s education is in a language understandable for them and with a vocabulary that is accessible (UNESCO, 2001c).

## **V.2 The role of training of education personnel**

It has been shown that teachers’ positive attitudes towards inclusion depend strongly on experience with learners who are perceived as being ‘challenging’; teacher education; availability of support; class size; and workload. In Romania, a recent study (2001a) revealed that negative attitudes of teachers and adults are the major barrier to inclusion – children do not have prejudice unless adults show them.

There are number of challenges in teacher education facing systems moving towards inclusive education. Generally, the level of specialists and their training is relatively high, in contexts where they are available, but the level of ‘mainstream’ teachers is not. A factor that affects both pre- and in-service training in teacher training colleges is teacher educators’ lack of experience and skills for working in inclusive settings. Furthermore, teacher education is often seen as being mainly about

developing knowledge and skills, whereas the question of attitudes and values is considered as less important.

The preparation of an appropriately skilled workforce of teachers for inclusive education would:

- Design long-term training plans that take into account all the actors involved and the different models needed to meet different needs;
- Implement training activities directed to both mainstream teachers and specialists so that they share the same approach and are enabled to work in partnership;
- Include the relationship between theory and practice and opportunities for reflection in all training actions;
- Start from the needs felt by the teachers themselves;
- Direct training to the school as a whole whilst retaining an array of strategies and models to achieve different objectives and address different needs;
- Promote self-development, creating opportunities for networking amongst teachers, schools and communities; and
- Encourage teachers themselves to develop new teaching materials (UNESCO, 2001c).

The development of a more inclusive education system also requires training and retraining of all education personnel. Curriculum, assessment and evaluation procedures, support services, funding mechanisms and overall administrative frameworks need to be adjusted to facilitate the development of inclusive education. Therefore, administrators and education managers from ministries of education, local governments, district services, voluntary organisations, NGOs, etc., need to be introduced to the principle of inclusion and its implications for the system at different levels.

In many countries, there is a further need to encourage members of marginalised groups, such as ethnic minority groups, economically disadvantaged groups, persons with disabilities and – depending on the cultural meanings of gender – men or women, to enter the teaching and other education professions. In this way they can act as role models for learners who are vulnerable to marginalisation and bring in their particular personal and social knowledge to enrich the education system as a whole.

As argued above, training is not sufficient per-se. Although training of education personnel might promote more inclusive approaches in education, the reality in centres of learning is often different. Therefore, it is crucial to link training of personnel to the development





of schools and other centres of learning in order to enable them to change the way they work.

### **V.3 Building up support**

As inclusive education is about providing opportunities for all learners to become successful in their learning experience, a range of resources – teaching materials, special equipment, additional personnel, teaching approaches or other learners – can support in the task of learning. ‘Support’ means all of these resources, but refers particularly to resources over and above what the teacher alone is able provide.

The first task in building effective support is to mobilise those resources which already exist in and around centres of learning (see discussion above). In addition, there is a need to develop support within centres of learning, for example, by investing in the development of some additional expertise. In some instances there also might be a need for external support structures, such as peripatetic teams of support teachers who have expertise on issues related to counselling, behaviour management, teaching methods, disabilities, socio-linguistics or multi-cultural issues, etc.

The main challenge in building up support is to retain the focus on maintaining all learners in ordinary schools and in other centres of learning in their home communities.

### **V.4 The transition to inclusive education**

The transition to inclusive education is not just a technical or organisational change but also a movement in a clear philosophical direction. Countries have to define a set of inclusive principles and more practical aspects to guide the transition process through those principles. The principles of inclusion, set out in international declarations, need to be interpreted in the context of individual countries.

In highly developed countries of the North, the priority has been breaking down the system of segregation as it relates to education provision. In less-developed countries, the priority has tended to consist of including a range of marginalised groups in basic education. Many countries have found it useful to formulate an explicit statement of the principles which guide their own transition towards inclusion. Statements of principles at the government level have been effective in generating a debate around inclusion and beginning the process of consensus-building. Such statements have been made more powerful where they have been incorporated into legislation.



## V.5 Linking inclusion to broader developments

Inclusion in education is not likely to expand unless concerted efforts to promote mainstream approaches are made at the national level. Inclusion can be linked to a reform of the education system as a whole: In England, South Africa and Spain inclusive education has been at the core of a wider reform which has been directed at enhancing the system's effectiveness. Inclusion has been seen in these countries as an essential precondition of bringing about quality education for all; this is important in order to avoid the danger of seeing inclusion as something that does not concern the majority of the population. As argued throughout this paper, inclusive education is not something additional to or separate from the mainstream education provision but an alternative way of looking into educational development and responding to the diversity of learners' needs. Therefore, it goes closely together with the goal of Education of All and could be adopted as a philosophy to guide the EFA national action plans.

Inclusion can be linked to reforming the status of persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups. For example, in Chile, inclusion is set within the framework of 'The Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities Act'. In Brazil, inclusion is linked to an attempt to address issues of poverty, illiteracy and marginalisation. Inclusion can be also linked to fundamental democratic reforms. In many countries of eastern and central Europe, in Chile and in South Africa, it is not possible to separate the move towards inclusion from a much more far-reaching attempt to build democracy. The inclusion movement can call upon values, energies and momentum which underpins this political and social restructuring.



SOME STEPS  
FORWARD

In Dakar, UNESCO was requested to assume the role of the lead agency for the Education for All movement in pulling together the international community to deliver on the Dakar commitments. UNESCO was also asked to streamline its own activities and provide the intellectual leadership to better respond to the challenge of Education for All.

The Dakar Framework acknowledges the major education conferences throughout 1990s, such as the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education (1994 Salamanca, Spain), and urges the international community to continue working on achieving the goals set (Dakar Framework for Action, Para 4.). The ‘Expanded Commentary on the Dakar Framework for Action’ describes the broad vision of Education for All which needs to be adopted in order to achieve the goals, with a special emphasis on those learners who are the most vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion. The Dakar Framework for Action thus clearly sets inclusive education as one of the main strategies to address the question of marginalisation and exclusion.

The adoption of inclusive approaches in education is imperative to UNESCO. Inclusion needs to be the fundamental philosophy throughout UNESCO’s programme so that the goal of ‘Education for All’ can be achieved. Inclusion, therefore, should be the guiding principle for the development work with Governments towards Education for All.

## **VI.1 UNESCO’s response**

In his speech to the 160th Executive Board, the Director General of UNESCO highlighted the need to make the special and urgent needs of marginalized and excluded groups an integral part of all

UNESCO's programme actions so as to enable the Organization to make a more effective contribution.

UNESCO's actions in promoting inclusive approaches in education will aim at:

- 1) forging a holistic approach to education which ensures that the concerns of marginalized and excluded groups are incorporated in all education activities, and cooperating to reduce wasteful repetition and fragmentation
- 2) developing capacities for policymaking and system management in support of diverse strategies towards inclusive education, and
- 3) bringing forward the concerns of groups who are currently marginalized and excluded.

In light of the above, the efforts will focus on the following:

- Ensuring that educational activities have comprehensive approaches that take into account the needs of currently marginalized and excluded groups
- Developing approaches, policies and strategies to address diversity in education
- Supporting national capacity building for government policymaking and system management in support of diverse strategies towards inclusive education
- Refining and developing indicators for inclusion, and give support to strengthen capacities at the national level in developing indicators and using of various data in forming strategies and activities
- Gathering and disseminating information and ideas, and stimulating dialogue about the diversity of needs of those who are still excluded or marginalized from their right to education.

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