
Inclusive Education: Concept, Types and Models

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ABSTRACT

The term inclusive education encompasses different and diverse students learning side by side in the same classroom. They enjoy field trips and after-school activities together, they participate in student government together and they attend the same sports meets and plays. Inclusive education values diversity and the unique contributions each student brings to the classroom. In a truly inclusive setting, every child feels safe and has a sense of belonging. Disability can be caused by a number of factors including malnutrition, lack of or poor prenatal and postnatal health care, increased vulnerability to accidents caused by risky work environments, interaction with unexploded ordnance and landmines, or the lack of early detection of illness and abnormalities. Around the world, children are excluded from schools because of disability, race, language, religion, gender, and poverty. But every child has the right to be supported by their parents and community to grow, learn, and develop in the early years, and, upon reaching school age, to go to school and be welcomed and included by teachers and peers alike. When all children, regardless of their differences, are educated together, everyone benefits this is the cornerstone of inclusive education. When education is more inclusive, so are concepts of civic participation, employment, and community life. Special education provides no guarantee of success for children who need special attention; inclusive schools that should provide supportive, context-appropriate conditions for learning demonstrate far better outcomes. Extracurricular activities, peer support, or more specialized interventions that involve the entire school community working as a team are the main pursuits of inclusive education.

KEYWORDS: Inclusive Education, Employment, Inclusion Models.

Introduction

Inclusion in education is an attempt at educating students with special educational needs. Under the inclusion model, students with special needs spend most or all of their time with non-disabled students regardless of their strengths or weakness in any area, and seek to maximize the potential of all students. Successful inclusive education happens primarily through accepting, understanding, and attending to student differences and diversity, which can include physical, cognitive, academic, social, and emotional (Abbotti, & Cribb 2001). This is not to say that students never need to spend time out of regular education classes, because sometimes they do for a very particular purpose for instance, for speech or occupational therapy. But the goal in this should be the exception. The driving principle is to make all students feel welcomed, appropriately challenged, and supported in their efforts. It's also critically important that the adults are supported, too. This includes the regular education

teacher and the special education teacher, as well as all other staff and faculty who are key stakeholders and that also includes parents.

Students and their parents participate in setting learning goals and take part in decisions that affect them. And school staff has the training, support, flexibility, and resources to nurture, encourage, and respond to the needs of all students. Inclusive education is also seen as the programme that allows children with disabilities to learn together with other children in regular school with appropriate support Ozoji, (2006). This implies that effective inclusion entails the use of appropriate supportive facilities and services to meet the needs of children with special needs in regular school system. Inclusive education is a process that involves the transformation of school and other cultures to cater for all children. It involves changes and modification in content, approaches and strategies, structures, facilities and services with a common vision that covers all children of appropriate age. The regular school setting is responsible to educate all children in the same neighbourhood schools with appropriate supportive resources that would meet each child educational needs, disability notwithstanding.

According to Mont, (2007), children with disabilities in poor and developing countries face particular difficulties, linked to poverty and social barriers. In many traditional cultures, a child with a disability is seen as a bad omen, bad luck, or a result of poor lineage. Some children with disabilities are hidden from the community and kept out of school. Those who do attend school – often the ones with less severe disabilities – may face embarrassment, discrimination and misunderstanding. Every child has the right to an education. Unfortunately, in the past many people assumed that the best place for children with disabilities was in a special school or classroom, separated from their ‘normal’ peers. Today, however, international experts and people with disabilities themselves are united in the belief that inclusive education in the child’s local community school, together with their non-disabled peers, offers the best opportunity for social integration and self-sufficiency. Inclusive education models are particularly well suited for developing countries that cannot afford duplication or separation of essential educational services.

Statement of the Problem

Why inclusive education should be important is that inclusive systems provide a better quality education for all children and instrumental in changing discriminatory attitudes. School provides the context for a child’s first relationship with the world outside their families, enabling the development of social relationships and interactions. Education that excludes and segregates perpetuate discrimination against traditionally marginalized groups.

Conceptual Review

The Concept of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education involves a procedural approach to educate all school age children/ youths in a general school setting where everybody belongs, accepted and supported notwithstanding his abilities or disability conditions. Inclusive education is basically a procedure or all about the practice of carrying out educational and ancillary services for children with special needs in an inclusive education setting. This practice as pointed out by Ajuwon (2008) anchors on the notion that every child should be an equally valued member of the school culture. What this implies then is that both children with disabilities and their peers without disabilities benefit from their experience of being together in the same school.

Inclusive education especially targets those children traditionally excluded from general education for reasons of gender, geographic remoteness, ethnicity, poverty, and disability (Abosi, and Koay, 2008). The principle of inclusion promotes the idea that in order to receive a quality education that is equal and accessible; children must be educated to the best of a community's ability in a general education classroom. Inclusive education is moreover a method of creating communities, schools, and societies free of discrimination.

Inclusive education is a commitment to educate each child to the maximum extent appropriate, considering his abilities and disabilities. As revealed by Obani (2004) the goal of inclusive education is not to erase (or deny the existence of) differences, but to enable all students to belong to an educational community that values and validates their individuality. The concept of inclusive education is therefore about the child's right to participate and the schools' duty to accept him/her. It involves the following:

Changing Mindsets: Inclusion Is Still Associated with Children with Special Needs

Students with special needs are often associated with individuals having severe disabilities who are unable to keep the educational pace with those living without such disabilities. However, this is often not the case. Although some students may live with severe cognitive impairments, most students have conditions that vary widely, from mobility issues (the most common functional disability type as reported by the CDC) to anxiety problems and allergies. These conditions generally do not severely impact a student's ability to progress academically. Noting this wide variability, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) says it is unnecessary to isolate special needs students. Doing so only creates an exclusionary environment, which both marginalizes individuals as well as hinders educational opportunities that could otherwise lead into future employment options.

Too often the result has been exclusion – second-rate educational opportunities that do not guarantee the possibility to continue studying. But there is increasing recognition that it is better for children with special needs to attend regular schools, albeit with various forms of special support. Furthermore, inclusive education can actually counteract the marginalization and exclusion caused by disabilities; “Integrating children with disabilities into the standard education system can break down the segregation that reinforces stereotypes. Moreover, special schools are often chronically underfunded and lack either skilled teaching staff or the equipment needed to deliver a good education” (Ademokoya, 2003).

The Effect of Inclusive Education Really Promote Successful Learning

According to a report by the Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education (MCIE), disabled students are often less engaged in class instruction and less likely to receive personal assistance when separated from general education classes into special education programmes. General education classrooms delivered more instruction addressed content more, and used non-disabled peers more and adults less. Students with severe disabilities were 13 times more likely than their peers without disabilities to receive instruction directed exclusively toward them during whole class activities, and were 23 times more likely to receive P.D instruction.

The report goes on to declare, “This challenges the prevalent notion that students with disabilities cannot receive individualized support in general education classrooms.” It is worth noting that inclusive education programmes also show significant benefits for students without disabilities. According to the same MCIE report, 60.7 percent of students without disabilities demonstrated progress in mathematics when enrolled in inclusive programmes,

compared to 37.5 percent of students who made progress in traditional schools. In addition, the report goes on to state that positive outcomes are not limited to academics alone. Rather, out of the 11,000 students polled in inclusive education programmes, the report shows a decline in school absences, fewer disruptive behavior incidents, and better outcomes after high school in the areas of employment and independent living.

The Path Forward on Inclusive Education Work in the Classroom

According to both the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and the MCIE, implementing a fully inclusive education system takes large policy changes, funding, leadership, and the appropriate education of teachers. However, it is the more direct, hands-on approach that can be seen to give relevance to the whole notion of inclusive education. According to the MCIE, two fundamental approaches have been shown to demonstrate large gains in the educational advancement of students in inclusive education programmes: Peer Tutoring & Mentoring and Instructional & Curriculum Adaptation.

Peer Tutoring & Mentoring: “The use of peer-mediated strategies results in improved academic outcomes for all students including those considered at-risk academically.” Furthermore, “Results showed increases in spelling accuracy as well as greater levels of engagement with typical peers and a decrease in competing behaviors when compared to teacher-led instruction.”

Instruction & Curriculum Adaptation: In the same report, the MCIE shows large academic gains experienced in classrooms employing “specialized” adaptations, such as graphic organizers, self-regulation strategies, semantic maps, text book supplements, as well as inquiry based approaches to academic studies. In some cases, entire class averages have shown academic gains of 10 percentage points. The report states, “...strategy instruction (teaching students how to learn) has been shown to improve academic achievement across grade levels for both students with and without disabilities.”

The Long Term Effects of Inclusive Education Impacts on Employment

The Kessler Foundation, a public charity assisting the disabled, cites Dr. John O’Neill, its Director of Vocational Research and co-author of the 2015 study, “Individual Characteristics and the Disability Employment Gap, as saying “Our study revealed variations in outcomes that provide insight into factors that favor employment...For example, the employment gap declines as educational attainment increases.”

According to Dr. O’Neill’s study, which was published in the Journal of Disability Policy Studies, educational attainment does more than narrow the employment gap for people living with disabilities; it brings the gap into close comparison with those of people living without disabilities. “With a few exceptions, the differences in employment by age, gender, education, and other personal characteristics are similar for those with and without disabilities.” However, the study is careful to clarify that such variables are not necessarily directly related; “For non-fixed characteristics like education and marital status, differences between people with and without disabilities may reflect both differences in disability prevalence and differences in opportunities or choices.” The article continues, stating that the same consideration must be given when comparing education completion rates (Alquraini & Gut 2012).

The same ambiguity in interpretation should be kept in mind when noting that people with disabilities have lower educational attainment than do people without disabilities. A

substantially smaller share of people with disabilities has a graduate or professional degree (4% vs. 12%) or a bachelor's degree (9% vs. 21%) as their highest level of educational attainment. A greater percentage of people with disabilities have not graduated from high school (23% vs. 11% of nondisabled people). Incidentally, other organizations, such as the GCE, also declare that the limited educational opportunities experienced by those living with disabilities are often the first step in a cycle leading to fewer opportunities throughout a lifetime. According to the GCE, "In particular, education can play a powerful role in either reducing or embedding poverty. Children with a disability are more likely to experience exclusion from education, which leads to a greater chance of being in poverty in later life."

Therefore, Inclusive education is a mandatory call to all to participate whether invited or not into education and learning process. It carries a wind of force that must move all persons away from darkness to light; from ignorance to knowledge and skill acquisition, from theory to practical, Iheanacho (2007) Inclusive education is seen as denoting two or more shades of meaning: First, it entails enabling all learners to participate fully in life and work in an inclusive setting whatever their needs. Second, it conveys a continuing process of breaking down barriers to learning and participation for all children and young people (Ozaji, 2005).

Types of Inclusion in Schools

While state laws may differ with regard to the inclusion of special needs students in academic environments, federal law stipulates that public education institutions strive toward an inclusive environment. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 forbids entities in receipt of federal funding from denying participation to persons with special needs. As such, schools should make every effort to include special needs students in mainstream classrooms with assistance, unless this method fails to address the student's particular learning disability. The primary law governing special education is the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and it requires that students with disabilities be provided with a public education in the least restrictive environment.

Individualized Education Programme

According to the National Center for Learning Disabilities, "Each public school child who receives special education and related services must have an Individualized Education Programme (IEP)." School officials, parents, special and regular education teachers and the student will often work together to identify and address the student's unique needs, set learning goals and allow for future reevaluation and modification. Because IEPs vary from student to student, the IEP committee may set different goals regarding inclusion in standard classrooms.

Full Inclusion

Schools that practice full inclusion will teach all children, regardless of learning disorders, in a standard classroom from the time the student enrolls. If the special needs child performs and functions according to expectations, full inclusion may prove to be a viable long-term option. However, if full inclusion does not meet the student's needs, special education teachers may visit the classroom periodically to provide supplemental instructions. If the student continues to experience difficulty, the school may switch to a partial inclusion model.

Partial Inclusion:

Though the partial inclusion model emphasizes allowing special needs students to interact with their peers socially and academically, it does not require that the student remain in a standard classroom for all lessons. In many cases, students will meet with a special education teacher or speech therapist in a separate class to avoid disrupting the learning dynamic of the standard classroom. Special education teachers will remain in communication with regular teachers to ensure students are able to understand and complete coursework.

Mainstreaming:

According to Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, schools that practice mainstreaming will initially enroll special needs students exclusively in special education courses. They do so because they believe special education teachers are better-equipped to address learning disabilities and often hold their students to a higher academic and behavioral standard than mainstream teachers. Under the mainstreaming model, students who perform well may begin attending "mainstream" classes, whereas those who don't will continue their studies in a special education setting.

Different Inclusion Models

Effective inclusion programmes are characterized by team work and collaboration. Regularly scheduled planning time is essential. The regular classroom teacher must consistently consult with special education teachers, speech-language pathologists, other specialists and family members. This collaboration begins during the IEP meeting. The team must first consider all placement options for the student with disabilities. If they determine that the student can benefit from an inclusive programme, a plan is developed to provide the supports and services needed for academic success. Some students may benefit from a programme incorporating inclusion for some special education instruction, and traditional "pull-out" services for other educational needs (Banks & Pollack, 2013).

Teaming Model: The special educator is assigned to a grade level team. The team meets on a weekly basis and works collaboratively to plan for student success in the regular education environment. The special education teacher is responsible for providing instructional strategies and modifies ideas for assignments in the classroom.

Collaborative, Co-teaching Model: The regular education and special education teacher's work together to teach all students in the classroom. Both are responsible for lesson planning and delivery, student progress, assessment, and discipline. Students with disabilities in the classroom receive age-appropriate modified instruction and necessary support services from both instructors. The special education teacher may participate in instruction for all or part of the school day.

Consultant Model: The special education teacher is made available to research difficult skills, or help the student practice a recently acquired skill. This model works most effectively with students who only require occasional assistance. As with other models, regularly scheduled team meetings are essential to effective implementation.

Conclusion

Children with a disability are more likely to experience exclusion from education, which leads to a greater chance of being in poverty in later life. Inclusive education especially targets those children traditionally excluded from general education for reasons of gender, geographic remoteness, ethnicity, poverty, and disability. The principle of inclusion promotes

the idea that in order to receive a quality education that is equal and accessible; children must be educated to the best of a community's ability in a general education classroom. It is moreover a method of creating communities, schools, and societies free of discrimination.

Recommendation

1. Education plays a powerful role in either reducing or embedding poverty. Therefore, children with disability should not be excluded from such opportunity of alleviating poverty from the economic system.
2. The government should make every effort to include special needs students in mainstream classrooms, providing them with the needed learning assistance.
3. The regular classroom teacher should be in consistent consultation with special education teachers.

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