



Seychelles

Bernard Shamlaye
Minister of Education



Mr Bernard Shamlaye is the Minister for Education since August 2006. He was Secretary to the Cabinet in the President's Office from 1998 until 2006 and previously the Special Advisor to the Minister for Education and Culture. He has worked as a teacher and in education management and served on several national committees and boards.

Inclusive Education – the way for small island states

In the small island state of Seychelles, inclusive education is the norm in keeping with the importance placed on social cohesion as well as for resource and cost considerations. Seychellois society is recognized as being generally free of racial and cultural barriers and has no minority group or strong social cleavages. Education is seen as a vital means of maintaining social integration and harmony within the society. For the past three decades emphasis has been on widening access to and improving the quality and effectiveness of education, in order to enhance educational outcomes and prospects for all children and young people.

Our goal is to have regular schools with an inclusive orientation which enables the holistic development of every child and young person. The achievement of this goal requires flexible curriculum approaches, judicious use of available resources, and above all, the capacity of teachers and school leaders to respond to the diverse needs of all learners. They all pose considerable challenges. Educators' commitment, attitudes and skills, along with parental and community support, are crucial to the development of successful learners.

We are also aware that traditional schooling models do not always lend themselves to inclusive orientations in education. Selective processes for access, a rigid curriculum driven by examination requirements, teachers' attitudes towards learners' needs, language requirements and parental expectations based on competitive outcomes, can all work against diversity and inclusion.

It is therefore important that we look into ways of transforming education systems so that they may better provide for the diverse needs of all learners. Concepts of schooling and other learning environments that view diversity as enriching, that draw on the essence of our common humanity and promote greater education quality and relevance for all, are among the issues we must explore.

The 48th session of the International Conference on Education provides the forum for such explorations and debate and I thank the IBE and UNESCO for making this possible.