



48TH SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION Inclusive Education: The way of the Future

SIDE-EVENT 6 REPORT

Date	Thursday, 27 th November 2008
Side-Event Title	SIDE-EVENT 6 Regional Issues and Challenges of Inclusive Education: from Romania to Cameroon
Organisers	International Bureau of Education (IBE-UNESCO)
Speakers	<p>The Side-Event was moderated by Renato Operti, Programme Specialist of the Capacity Building team of the International Bureau of Education.</p> <p>Representing the Eastern & Western Sub-Saharan and Central African region, the panel representatives were Mr. Paul Mushi, Director of the Tanzanian Institute of Education, Ms. Lydia Nzomo, Director of the Kenyan Institute of Education and Mr. Godswill Obioma, Executive Secretary of the Nigeria Educational Research & Development Council.</p> <p>For Europe (the Commonwealth of Independent States, Eastern Europe and Nordic regions), the panel representatives were Mr. Alexandru Crisan, Executive President Centre Education 2000+ in Romania and COP Focal Point for Eastern and South-eastern Europe, Ms. Irmeli Halinen, Director of the Finnish National Board of Education and COP Focal Point and Mr. Iouri Zagoumenov, Director of Comparative Education of the Belarus National Institute of Education and COP Focal Point.</p> <p>On behalf of the Arab States, the panel representatives were Mr. Ali Bubshait, Researcher and COP Focal Point and Mr. Hegazi Idris Education Specialist of UNESCO Beirut.</p> <p>Representing Asia, the panel representatives were Ms. Vivian Heung, Head of the Centre for Special Needs and Studies in Inclusive Education, Hong Kong Education Institute and Mr.</p>

Johan Lindeberg, Associate Expert in Education and Human Rights, UNESCO Bangkok.

Speaking for Latin America and the Caribbean (Southern Cone and Andean regions, English-speaking Caribbean region), the panel representatives were **Ms. Silvina Gvirtz**, Director of the Master in Education of the University of San Andres, Argentina and COP Focal Point and **Mr. Paolo Fontani**, Programme Specialist in Education, UNESCO Kingston Office.

Documentation The Side-event was supported by the following documentation: Information Doc. No. 3 “Outcomes and Trends in Inclusive Education at Regional and Interregional Levels: Issues and Challenges” (English and French); a CD containing the workshops’ reports and other related documentation and a running presentation of key messages and photos from the regional preparatory events.

Objectives The objectives of this side-event were to deepen the understanding and conceptualization of inclusive education by sharing key outcomes from the regional workshops and conferences and identify key issues and challenges common to different regions in addressing and implementing a broader vision of inclusive education.

Outcomes According to the presentations, the following are some of the key outcomes which were highlighted per region:

For Europe, it was underlined that there are 3 Communities of Practices; the Nordic region, the Eastern Europe region and the CIS region. The common challenges relating to inclusive education in this region are increasing public and teacher awareness; developing a school curriculum; and useful pedagogical, social and economic models, and creating political commitment. In particular, the most important issue is that change at the national, municipal and school level must happen at the same time through a national strategy supported at local, school and cultural levels.

In Latin America, it was noted that there are problems of access, retention and outcomes. With respect to the Caribbean, it was noted that obstacles preventing access to education for 50,000 children still exist. It is thus important to promote a new understanding and long-term socio-cultural reform on inclusion among educators, policy makers and public at large. Schools should join in action with the communities. In Latin America, it was also noted that a stronger commitment and political will from governments is needed. The focus in both Latin America and the Caribbean should be on teacher training to adapt

programmes based on the needs of each learner and it was recommended that policies should actively discriminate in favour of disadvantaged groups.

For the Asian region, it was noted that the limited progress on inclusive education is supported by the high value that is given to equity in education in Asia and a gradually increasing awareness of inclusive education as a means to attain social inclusion. However children with disabilities, HIV/AIDS, linguistic minorities, refugees, gender-based discrimination and children in disaster-prone areas are particularly excluded; the reality is that education is still not inclusive. Inclusive education requires cross-sectoral policies and approaches; a database, clearing-house and dissemination strategy on inclusive practices to raise awareness; and strengthened cooperation between stakeholders at all levels and teacher training.

In the Arab region, it was explained that inclusive education initiatives are starting to be supported by the government, however few countries are even working to integrate special needs education students into mainstream schools, let alone inclusion. One problem is that there is a lack of expertise and resources in the region for the implementation of inclusive practices. Attitudes against diversity also pose strong obstacles to inclusive education. Awareness about inclusion needs to be increased in parents and the community, more national research is needed and cooperation between stakeholders should be strengthened, especially to mobilise resources.

In Africa, it was noted that countries recognize the importance of education but that there are policy gaps and weak commitments. Well-articulated public policy is sorely needed in a cross-cutting way and in strategic partnership with other bodies. These policies must establish enabling environments through flexible curricula and thus target identified barriers of exclusion. The role of UNESCO to support these initiatives was underlined.

Links and implications for the 48th Session of the ICE

These discussions were highly relevant to the 48th session of the ICE, having been framed around the four main ICE sub-themes of the ICE. In addition, many of the participants were reporting upon findings which were established at the thirteen regional preparatory workshops and conferences of the ICE.

Similarly, the outcomes of this side-event highly implicate the follow-up activities of the 48th session of the ICE, which will take place on a regional and inter-regional basis. These activities will involve close cooperation with all IBE Community of Practice Focal Points, as well as the other panel experts present at this side-event, in coordination with the IBE.