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**IBE-UNESCO Preparatory Report for the 48th ICE on**

**Inclusive Education**

**Regional Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education – East Asia**

**Hangzhou, China 3-5 November, 2007**

## **Abstract**

The International Conference on Education (ICE) is a major international forum for educational policy dialogue among Ministers of Education and other stakeholders (researchers, practitioners, representatives of intergovernmental organizations and NGOs). The ICE is organized by the International Bureau of Education (IBE); the UNESCO institute specialized in assisting Member States in curriculum development in order to achieve quality Education for All. The IBE Council, composed of 28 UNESCO Member States, has proposed in January 2007 that the 48th ICE session, to be held in Geneva in November 2008, should focus on the theme “Inclusive Education: the Way of the Future”. The 48th ICE will focus on broadening the understanding of the theory and practice of inclusive education while discussing how governments can develop and implement policies on inclusive education. The IBE is hosting a series of regional preparatory workshops and Conferences dedicated to exploring and advancing inclusive education in preparation for the ICE 2008. The International Bureau of Education (IBE-UNESCO) and the UNESCO Bangkok Office, in partnership with the UNESCO Beijing Office, the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO (NATCOM-China), and the Department of Education of the Government of Zhejiang Province and the Government of Xiacheng District, organized the Regional Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education East Asia in Hangzhou, on 3-5 November 2007. China, Japan, Mongolia and Korea sent government representatives to this workshop. This report details the discussions that took place at the workshop, describes the status of inclusive education in participating countries, and develops concrete ideas on what the next steps should be to promote inclusive educational policy in the region.

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## I. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The IBE-UNESCO, through the Community of Practice (COP) in Curriculum Development<sup>2</sup>, is organizing a series of Regional Preparatory Workshops on Inclusive Education with the overall goal of initiating a participatory and consultative process to highlight key issues and challenges in inclusive education to be presented at the 48th session of the International Conference of Education (ICE 2008).

There are a number of critical dimensions contained in the inclusive education agenda. Each preparatory regional workshop centers on four sub-themes around which the IBE Council has proposed to articulate the 48th ICE.

- (i) *Inclusive Education: Approaches, Scope and Content* (to broaden the understanding of the theory and the practice of inclusive education);
- (ii) *Inclusive Education: Public Policies* (to demonstrate the role of governments in the development and the implementation of policies on inclusive education);
- (iii) *Inclusive Education: Systems, Links and Transitions* (to create education systems which offer opportunities for life-long learning); and
- (iv) *Inclusive Education: Learners and Teachers* (to foster a learning environment where teachers are equipped to meet the learners' diverse expectations and needs).

The IBE Council understands the Conference as an opportunity for promoting dialogue among Ministers of Education, highlighting universal and complex issues, and engaging the audience. The ICE should play a pivotal role in orientating and clarifying the debate on Inclusive Education. The IBE Council also proposes that the ICE should be based on

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<sup>1</sup> This document was prepared by Mr. Renato Opertti and Mr. Daoyu Wang, with the assistance of Ms. Jayne Brady and Ms. Anne Matter.

<sup>2</sup> IBE, in conjunction with curriculum specialists from different regions of the world, set up from 2005 onwards, the Community of Practice in Curriculum Development (up to the moment made by 697 members from 85 countries). It is understood as an open and plural worldwide space that contributes to generate collective thinking and action on curriculum issues within the framework of a holistic approach to determining and implementing the Education for All (EFA) goals.

evidence and involve the Ministers of Education in enriching discussions on evidence-informed policies.

The East Asia Regional Preparatory Workshop is the seventh of the above-mentioned series of workshops, which has involved well-known experts and institutions coming from the Ministries, universities, international organizations, foundations, NGOs and civil society in general. The objectives of the Workshops are:

- (i) to share visions, strategies and practices on inclusive education at regional and national level;
- (ii) to identify common challenges related to inclusive education; and
- (iii) to provide structured technical inputs from a regional perspective to the 48<sup>th</sup> session of ICE.

Some 31 participants from the People's Republic China, Japan, Mongolia and the Republic of Korea, joined by guests invited by and staff of involved UNESCO agencies and UNICEF Beijing Office. (see List of Participants in Appendix 1):

- 12 officials and experts in special needs education or inclusive education designated by the National Commissions (NATCOMs) of the four countries, 3 for each;
- 6 staff from UNESCO IBE, Bangkok, Beijing and Headquarters;
- 2 specialists from the UNICEF Bangkok and Beijing Offices;
- 1 regional expert invited by UNESCO Bangkok Office;
- 2 guests invited by the UNESCO Headquarters;
- 4 guests invited by UNICEF Beijing Office;
- 2 officials from the Chinese NATCOM and 2 other guests.

Inclusive education is a concept which is still developing in East Asia. Mr. Min Bista, Program Specialist for Education in the UNESCO Beijing Office, emphasized the importance of inclusive education in bringing about an inclusive society, and lamented the “painfully and unacceptably slow” pace towards inclusion around the world. However, the conference attracted scores of international participants this year and around 800 local

participants, a powerful testimony of China's eagerness to learn from the regional and international experience and its willingness to share its own experience with the world.

The purpose of this report is to shed light on the concept of inclusive education from the standpoint of the International Bureau of Education (IBE) and examine how practices of inclusive education are and could be further developed in the region. To explore this issue, emphasis will be given to inclusive education in the context of the four ICE sub-themes, and to regional topics based on good practices and Child-Friendly schools.

Methodologically, the report is organized as follows: The first section provides a background on inclusive education based on the United Nations normative framework. The second section discusses the concept of inclusive education and its evolution. In East Asia, inclusive education has traditionally been circumscribed to students with special needs, but it is gradually being recognized as a method for achieving social equality and justice, by providing democratised learning environments and opportunities for all students. The third section details the current status of inclusive education in China, Japan, Mongolia and Korea. This section draws directly from the country reports, presentations and discussions on inclusive education held during the Regional Workshop. The fourth section focuses on good practices that various countries within the region are employing with regard to inclusive education. The specific example of Hong Kong and UNICEF Child Friendly School Programmes in China, Mongolia, and Thailand are also cited and discussed as they provide a good model for countries on effective inclusive educational policy. The fifth section draws from a regional roadmap that participating countries helped develop at the workshop and various actions that workshop attendees felt need to be taken with respect to inclusive education in the region. The final section puts forth a strategic vision for the region.

## **II. Inclusive Education: United Nations Normative Framework**

Building a truly inclusive society, where all people learn together and participate equally hinges on providing a quality education for all. The United Nations Education for All movement is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, clearly lays down the foundation for the Education for All movement. It states:

Everyone has the right to education and education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedom<sup>3</sup>.

Inclusive education seeks to address the diverse learning needs of all children. This is further supported by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, which states that all children have the right to receive the kind of education that does not discriminate on the basis of disability, ethnicity, religion, language, gender, capabilities, and so on. The principle of inclusive education was adopted at the 1994 World Conference on “Special Needs Education: Access and Quality” in Salamanca, Spain. It was restated at the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal. The idea of inclusion is further supported by the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities proclaiming participation and equality for all.

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education call upon member states to guarantee the implementation of inclusive education in order to bring back children who are excluded into the mainstream educational system. According to the Salamanca Statement, inclusive education means that:

Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions. They should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote and nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (2007). In the *United Nations Website*. Retrieved July 2, 2007 from the United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights website: <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>

<sup>4</sup> The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, Adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality. (1994). In the *United Nations Educational*,

The Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All (2000) further supports previous initiatives by calling upon nations to address the needs of learners who are victims of marginalization. It states:

Education for All (...) must take account of the need of the poor and 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, those with special learning needs.<sup>5</sup>

The Convention on the Right of Persons with disabilities<sup>6</sup> (2006) specifically addresses the right of all persons with disabilities to education (article 24). In realizing this right, States Parties shall ensure that (a) persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability; (b) persons with disabilities can access an inclusive and free quality primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live; (c) reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided; (d) persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education and (e) effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

Providing quality education for all remains one of the biggest development challenges of our times but with effective legislation and policies it is possible to contribute to build a world of inclusion, not only for people with disabilities, but also for all those who are unable to exercise their basic human right to education.

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*Scientific, Cultural Organization (UNESCO) website.* Retrieved July 2, 2007 from the UNESCO website: [http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA\\_E.PDF](http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA_E.PDF)

<sup>5</sup> Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All. (2000). In the *United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization (UNESCO) website.* Retrieved July 2, 2007 from the UNESCO website: [http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed\\_for\\_all/framework.shtml](http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/framework.shtml)

<sup>6</sup> [www.un.org/disabilities/convention/](http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/)



### III. Conceptual Dimensions of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is a growing universal concern that informs and challenges the processes of educational reform in both developing and developed regions. Inclusive education is an evolving concept that can be useful to guide strategies of educational change to address the sources and consequences of exclusion within the holistic framework of EFA goals and the understanding of education as a human right.

#### Special Needs Education

Traditionally and even today in various world regions (for example, in Eastern and South Eastern Europe<sup>7</sup> as well as in the Commonwealth of Independent States<sup>8</sup> (CIS) and most parts of Asia<sup>9</sup>) the concept and practices of inclusive education have been mainly circumscribed to students categorized as having special needs, meaning predominantly those with physical and/or mental disabilities, as well as refugees. Under this perspective, the approaches and responses given to students' needs have been remedial and corrective, by setting up and increasing the number of special schools, curricula tracks and special education teachers.

One significant consequence of differentiated curricular and institutional structures for students categorized as having special needs has been their segregation and isolation within the education system. The assumption that there are "special needs children" is questionable as stated by Sue Stubbs<sup>10</sup>: "any child can experience difficulty in learning (..) many disabled children have no problem with learning" and "children with intellectual impairment can often learn very well in certain areas".

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<sup>7</sup> OECD. 2006. *Education Policies for Students at Risk and those with Disabilities in South Eastern Europe. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, FYR of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia*. Paris: OECD Publications

<sup>8</sup> IBE, 2007 International Bureau of Education (IBE) 2007. *Report on the Commonwealth of Independent States, Third Workshop on Curriculum Development: "Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future"*, Minsk, Belarus, 29-31 October 2007. Geneva, Switzerland: UNESCO IBE, IBE/2007/RP/CD/06.

<sup>9</sup> *Infra*.

<sup>10</sup> Stubbs S. 2002. *Inclusive Education. Where there are few resources*. Oslo: The Atlas Alliance. Pp. 23; 3

## **Integration**

The concept of integration came forward in the 1980s as an alternative to special needs curricula and school models, with the objective of placing students defined as having special needs in mainstream schools. The restructuring and improvement of physical facilities, the increase in numbers of special classrooms and specially trained teachers in the mainstream buildings and the provision of learning materials were, and still are, some of the main components for the application of integration models. Being mainly focused on students with mild impairments, integration can risk becoming a rhetorical device rather than a reality, and be more about a spatial change of school classrooms than a change of curricular content and pedagogy relevant to children's learning needs.

After the 1990s, the scope, objectives, contents and implications of inclusive education in relation to integration were considerably changed. This was principally due to the recognition that integration models solely based on closing special schools and “adding” students to mainstream schools and curricula do not respond to the diversities of learners' expectations and needs. Such an understanding prompts revision of education policies dealing with integration issues by questioning the relevance of curriculum and school models that are the same for all students regardless of their differences. In such models, students must *adapt* to the norms, styles, routines and practices of the education system instead of the education system changing according to the learner. Moreover, dropout rates may increase among students with special needs when integrated into mainstream schools that have not undertaken a comprehensive set of institutional, curricular and pedagogical changes.

## **Inclusion**

Inclusive education can be understood both as a guiding principle and a strategy to attain reasonable levels of school integration for all students. In the context of a broader vision of integration, inclusive education implies the conception and the implementation of a vast repertoire of learning strategies in order to precisely respond to learners' diversities. In this sense, education systems have the obligation to respond to the expectations and needs of children and youth considering that the capacity to provide effective learning opportunities based on a rigid scheme of integration (placing “special needs” students in mainstream schools)

is very limited. This is what Susan Peters<sup>11</sup> refers to as the placement paradigm, i.e. when inclusive education is conceptualized as a place and not as a service delivered within the general education classroom as the continuum.

The debate on inclusive education and integration is not on a dichotomy between integration and inclusion policies and models (as if we could integrate without including, or include without integrating), but rather on identifying to which extent there is a progress in the understanding that each school has the moral responsibility to include everyone. Such an obligation is challenged at the same time when education systems have to effectively address other core universal education problems of non-school attendance, repetition, over-age and dropouts as well as low learning outcomes that undermine the goals and functioning of education worldwide. Empirical evidence indicates that a student who repeats the first school years has a strong probability of dropping out from school<sup>12</sup>. Each one and also the combination of the above problems generating exclusion are exacerbated by persistent institutional and pedagogical practices that presuppose that all children have the same learning conditions and capabilities. Moreover, as noted during the 2004 International Conference on Education<sup>13</sup>, a child's exclusion from education represents his/her lack of professional and social competencies needed in order to access essential knowledge and to exert an autonomous and responsible citizenship.

Therefore, in the last fifteen years approximately, the concept of inclusive education has evolved towards the idea that all children and young people, despite different cultural, social and learning backgrounds, should have equivalent learning opportunities in all kinds of schools. The focus is on generating inclusive settings, which implies: (i) respecting, understanding and taking care of cultural, social and individual diversity (education systems, schools and teachers' response to the expectations and needs of students); (ii) providing equal access to quality education; (iii) having close coordination with other social policies. This should involve the expectations and demands of stakeholders and social actors.

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<sup>11</sup> Peters S. World Bank. 2004. *Inclusive Education: an EFA strategy for all children*. Washington: World Bank.

<sup>12</sup> See UNESCO, 1998. *Wasted Opportunities: when schools fail; repetition and drop-out in primary schools, Education For All, Status and Trends*, Paris, EFA Forum Secretariat. UNESCO, 1996. *La Repetición Escolar en la Enseñanza Primaria Una Perspectiva Global*. Ginebra, Oficina Internacional de Educación; UNESCO, 1984. *The drop-out problem in primary education: some case studies*. Bangkok, Regional Office for Education in Asia and the Pacific.

<sup>13</sup> UNESCO. 2004. *International Conference of Education. 47<sup>th</sup> meeting. Workshops 2A y 2B Quality education and social inclusion*. Geneva: IBE/UNESCO. Annex XVI, pp. 8–14.

A broad conception of inclusive education also addresses the learning needs of students with disabilities, learning difficulties and disadvantages, as conceptualized by OECD<sup>14</sup>. Although there are different categories to consider, the nature of the concept of inclusive education is non-categorical, and aimed at providing effective learning opportunities to every child, in particular tailored learning contexts.

More precisely, UNESCO<sup>15</sup> defines inclusion “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. 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”. Furthermore, as stated by Tony Booth and Mel Ainscow<sup>16</sup> in their proposal of an index for inclusion, “inclusion is about making schools supportive and stimulating places for staff as well as students (...) It is about building communities which encourage and celebrate their achievements”.

Indeed, the design and the development of policies on inclusive education should not be understood as the sum of initiatives and efforts towards specific groups (an endless although possibly incomplete list). On the contrary, the focus is not on which categories to include but on the provision of friendly learning environments and diverse learning opportunities for all. According to Rona Tutt<sup>17</sup>, the main challenge is to provide inclusive settings in all schools through the provision of a diverse continuum of services that are part of a school network in articulation with other social policies.

Thus, the challenge of an inclusive education implies the articulation of a coherent and articulated set of policies aiming for (i) a pertinent and relevant curriculum with a vision that facilitates dialogue among different levels of the educational system; (ii) a vast repertoire of diverse and complementary pedagogical strategies (formal and non-formal schooling) that can respond to the specificities of each student by personalizing the educational provision; (iii) available physical facilities and equipment aligned with the designed curriculum and its

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<sup>14</sup> OECD. 2006. *Education Policies for Students at Risk and those with Disabilities in South Eastern Europe. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, FYR of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia*. Paris: OECD Publications

<sup>15</sup> UNESCO. 2005. *Guidelines for inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All*. Paris: UNESCO.

<sup>16</sup> Booth T. and M. Ainscow. 2002. *Index for inclusion, developing learning and participation in schools*. CSIE: Bristol, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Tutt. R. 2007. *Every Child Included*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing / The Association for all School Leaders (NAHT).

implementation; (iv) strong teacher support in the classroom, seeing him/her as a co-developer of the curriculum and (v) engaging in dialogue with families and communities in order to understand their expectations and needs as well as to promote their active participation in the schools.

An inclusive educational strategy implies the careful and detailed consideration of the specificity and uniqueness of each child and adolescent so as to provide them with effective educational opportunities throughout their lives. In these terms, inclusive education is about the ways and the modalities under which teachers and students interact and generate mutual empathy and nearness; how they understand and respect their diversities and jointly create suitable and attainable conditions for achieving relevant and pertinent learning opportunities for all.

Cognitive education plays a key role in achieving an inclusive education as it tends to make children aware of their own cognitive functions, which can help them to understand and learn better. It is an effective way for educators to address the needs of diverse populations by better understanding how students learn, think, and reflect, critically and creatively, and how to use this understanding in the co-construction of a meaningful curriculum and of associated activities.

As a contribution to the discussion of pedagogical approaches of inclusive education, David Skidmore<sup>18</sup> draws attention to the difference between pedagogy of deviance and one of inclusion by noting the following five aspects:

- a) student's learning – while the deviance discourse establishes a hierarchy of cognitive skills to measure the abilities of each student, the inclusion discourse highlights the open learning potential of each student that can be progressively discovered and stimulated;
- b) explanation of school failure – while the deviance discourse points out that the main learning difficulties are related to the deficiencies of the students' capacities, the inclusion discourse argues that the main difficulty lies instead on the insufficient responses generated by the curriculum;
- c) school response – while the deviance discourse states that the support of the learning process should be focused on the students' deficiencies, the inclusion discourse emphasizes the need of reforming the curriculum and of implementing a crosscutting pedagogy in the school;

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<sup>18</sup> Skidmore, D. 2004. Inclusion, the dynamic of school development. London: Open University Press. Pp. 112-127

- d) theory of teachers' expertise – while the deviance discourse emphasizes the importance of specialized discipline knowledge as key to teachers' expertise, the inclusion discourse highlights the active participation of the students in the learning process; and
- e) curriculum model – while the deviance discourse argues that an alternative curriculum should be designed for those students categorized as low achievers, the inclusion discourse emphasizes the need of a common curriculum for all students.

In overall terms, inclusive education implies four key elements:

- a. it is essentially a process of looking for the most appropriate ways of responding to diversity as well as of trying to learn how to learn from differences;
- b. it is linked to the motivation and development, through multiple strategies, of students' creativity and capacity to address and resolve problems;
- c. it comprises of the right of the child to attend school, express his/her opinion, have quality learning experiences and attain valuable learning outcomes; and
- d. it implies the moral responsibility of prioritizing those students who are at risk of being marginalized and excluded from the school, and of obtaining low learning outcomes.

### **Inclusive Education and Social Inequalities/ Social Inclusion**

The urgent need to advance in the democratization of opportunities for all children accessing and profiting from a high-quality equitable education can be based on the conception of inclusion as a central strategy to foster educational and social change. Inclusion from an educational perspective can help address the traditional and structural problems of poverty; the challenges of modernization and social and cultural integration; and the growing diversity of national societies. Social inclusion and inclusive education are mutually implicated in a feedback relationship. Inclusive education opens the way to increasingly addressing forms and contents of exclusion. For example, inclusive education can aim to address the social gaps in access to ICT; the marginalization of disaffected young people (those who do not study, do not work and do not look for work); the lack of educational opportunities and low learning outcomes among migrant populations; the cultural homogeneity of educational proposals that do not know, understand and value multiculturalism; and the stigmatization of cultural and social diversity as an obstacle to integration.

Therefore, inclusive education can be considered as a pathway to attain social inclusion. From a societal perspective, inclusive education is clearly and substantially linked to the discussion around the type of society to be attained; the kind of well-being desired for all citizens; and the quality of democracy and social participation we wish to pursue. On a long-term basis, basic education in relation to social inclusion implies an understanding of the former as key to citizenship and as an essential component of social policy.

Along those lines, the relationship between social inclusion and education highlights central issues of inclusive education related to (i) the struggle against poverty, marginality, cultural and social segregation, exclusion and HIV-AIDS, (ii) the consideration of cultural diversity and multiculturalism as both a right and a learning context within an universal framework of shared universal values, and (iii) the protection of the rights of aboriginal, migrant, displaced populations and populations in a minority.

In the context of an ongoing discussion, the following points seem to be critical in understanding and advancing on the conception and practice of inclusive education:

- a. Identifying the significance and priority given to inclusive education, in governmental and state policies. Inclusive education, as a key social policy, is a powerful instrument to mitigate the negative effects of social inequalities and cultural disintegration as well as residential segregation. Inclusive education is useful to address the changing cultural, ethnic, migrant and social composition of schools, a major challenge to the development of efficacious and efficient government social policies.
- b. Fostering high quality equitable learning opportunities for all by considering the articulation, diversification and flexibility between the different ladders and pathways of the education system, its structures and contents, within a global and unified vision of basic and youth education.
- c. Developing a tailored approach towards providing a real opportunity of educational success to each child by focusing on the learning needs of both potential and current students (those who have never attended school, those who are currently attending and those who dropped out), taking into account their cultural, social and cognitive diversities as well as their ethnic origin, philosophical and religious beliefs and migrant status. Diversity in learning contexts should be considered as a challenge and an asset to education and not as an obstacle.
- d. Guiding, articulating and undertaking efforts and initiatives aimed at generating suitable conditions for achieving useful and relevant learning by conceiving the school as the main force of educational change, and also as an integrated institutional and pedagogical unit within a solid educational policy and shared curriculum framework, from early childhood to youth education.

- e. Renovating and recreating teachers' professional role taking into account their ethical, societal mission and responsibility. Teacher training should strengthen the ways in which teachers understand, approach and respond to students' differences; teaching styles should be revised and adjusted in order to be aligned with cultural and social contexts that are increasingly complex and uncertain; teachers should be considered as co-designers and co-developers of inclusive education policies at the school and classroom levels, and not as mere implementers of curriculum change.

In overall terms, the transformation of education into inclusive education<sup>19</sup> implies collective thinking and action on the concept of social justice and social inclusion; on the beliefs around the learning potentials of each student; on the conceptual frameworks that sustain good practices of teaching and learning; and on endorsing a comprehensive political and technical vision of curriculum encompassing processes and outcomes.

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<sup>19</sup> British Educational Research Journal. 2005. *Thematic Review. Inclusive education: discourse and action*. Vol. 31, No. 2, April 2005, pp. 269–275.



## **IV. Regional and Country Situations/Challenges/Lessons Learnt**

### *A. China*

The idea of inclusive education can be found in ancient educational philosophy, which has been very influential in China for over 2,500 years and continues to be held as the core values of Chinese education. Today, inclusive education doesn't only lie in meeting educational requirements of the disabled people with special education needs, but also in satisfying the needs of all students, who will not be refused by school because of his or her physical, mental, social, emotional, linguistic or other problems related to his or her health. At the same time, inclusive education encourages students to actively get involved, pays attention to cultivating their teamwork spirit, and meets the requirements of students with different personalities. Special measures regarding special needs and migrant children were highlighted as an example of applying the concept of inclusion.

In China, the application of inclusive education has been realized within the framework of *Action Plan for Education for All* (2003) and the revised *Compulsory Education Law* (2006), through the implementation of the education and training of teachers, the reform and development of curriculum, the establishment and dissemination of child-friendly schools, as well as the improvement of educational attitudes of teachers and educational environment. The Chinese government also intends to further disseminate the broaden concept of inclusive education and integrate it into each aspect of education. In China, the transfer from “education for all” to the broadest sense of “inclusive education” remains at the heart of the discussion.

Yet the reality in China makes the understanding, appreciation and application of inclusive education a formidable challenge. China faces particular challenges with regard to the education of children with special needs and children of migrant workers; the education of millions of migrant workers' children who did not have the right to be educated in the cities where their parents were working has been a problem for China for decades. The government of China is already responding to some of these challenges. Such children can now be admitted either by schools established exclusively for them or by local public schools, as required by the revised *Compulsory Education Law* (in effect since September 2006) which emphasizes government responsibility and equity.

Another paramount barrier is the examinations that decide the upward mobility of students in the education system and the society, as examination-oriented education distorts the true nature of education. Similarly, sometimes children with special needs are moved to a new environment but the same attitudes remain; there are still cases in which parents are reluctant to send their children with mental handicap to regular schools.

Moreover, experts believe, if the so-called regular classes remain the same as before they had special students, they can't satisfy the children with special needs, and it is not inclusive education if the class does not adapt to student's needs. Indeed, class size is essential—classes in China are currently far too large and are a major reason for the lack of individual attention to students by teachers. Evidence from small classes in Shanghai suggests that if all classes were small enough in China and two teachers could be provided for each class, inclusive education may be realized in China sooner. Finally, Chinese experts recommend that all teachers should be equipped with inclusive ideas through practical school-based training. A practical system of assessment should be employed in which not only the learning of the students is assessed, but also the teaching of the teachers.

In general, government policy documents do not use the term “inclusive education”, however the policies are in line with the idea of inclusion, which can be inferred from the priorities and reform. In practical terms, to promote inclusive education, the first step for China is to create an inclusive school culture, which is very important and requires training of every pupil in the school in order for them to get acquainted to inclusive education. The second step is to develop a policy to promote inclusive actions and rules. The third step is to inform teachers, and through them inform parents, which is the most difficult.

In curriculum reform, the focus is on getting rid of the traditional teacher-student relationship that represses initiatives of students while they regard teachers as the source of knowledge and authority. In this process, China has cooperated with UNICEF on projects such as “Child-Friendly Schools” to promote a safe, accessible and student-centered environment for effective learning, as well as an inclusive community. The Child-Friendly School project cultivates a friendly relationship between students and teachers, which is in line with the idea promoted by the new curriculum reform, in which the traditional authority of the teacher is transformed into a dialogue on equal footing. Indeed, the new curriculum advocates keeping a portfolio for each student, which requires teachers to make a record for each step of the

development of the students, often with the assistance of the parents, which also strengthens parent-school communication.

The new curriculum also emphasizes the training of teachers, particularly in terms of transforming the ideas ruling the teacher-student relationship. It was a general practice to rank the students according to their test scores, but now teachers are required to abolish this ranking. Once teachers lose the right of ranking students, the relationship becomes more equal. Of course, there are problems of ensuring the effectiveness of classes while keeping the relationship equal; this is being explored in China as well as in other parts of the world.

In terms of quantity regarding EFA, the national average retention rate in the three years of junior secondary school is now 92%. This index is considered important as it is always checked in monitoring the implementation of universalizing 9-year compulsory education in the provinces. As to the monitoring of quality, participants noted that it is difficult to apply a unified international standard; however Chinese institutions are studying the applicability in China. For the new curriculum (which came into force since 2001), an evaluation center for compulsory education has been established to conduct diversified evaluation of quality, especially for special needs children. Further research may also be necessary in this area.

The Chinese government also emphasized two other aspects closely related to the quality of inclusion, namely the degree of inclusion and the local criteria. The former is used to measure the quality, gender equality and equity of inclusive policies, while the latter is developed through minority language for local cultures. Indeed, the government seemed to suggest that in implementing a certain set of policies, all of the afore-mentioned aspects will be promoted and that it is considered impossible to develop a set of policy for each new educational philosophy. Therefore, policies should be developed flexibly based on this general idea according to local situations according to the situation in particular countries or regions of a country, such as the gap between the eastern and western regions of China. For example, there are disparities in education between the West and the East of China; so that quality education resources in the East could be shared by schools in the West to advance in education equity, the Modern Distance Education Project is now underway in the West. Experts are optimistic about the implementation of inclusive education in China despite several difficulties reported also by students in Jiangsu Province and Shanghai.

The concrete example of The Mingzhu School, which literally means “Shining Pearls”, was also discussed by workshop participants. This public school was specially established in 1999 for children of migrant workers employed in Hangzhou, mostly from poor families. After 3 years of junior secondary education with Mingzhu, students can apply to be in a vocational secondary school and enter into the labor market upon completion in three years, or they can apply to be in a regular academic high school and sit for the college-entrance examinations in their county of origin. Now the Mingzhu School is educating half of the children of local migrant workers, while the other half are accepted in mainstream schools. It is predicted that Mingzhu will also become a mainstream school with the admission of local urban kids, and become more inclusive.

### *B. Japan*

The main objective of educational public policy in Japan is to provide equal and free education shall be provided to all boys and girls, starting at age 6<sup>20</sup>.

In particular to achieve this objective with respect to students with special needs, understood as children with special needs resulting from disabilities or cultural and linguistic differences, compulsory and free special schools, or special departments in normal schools, have been set up. Even non-Japanese citizens are provided with the same treatment, such as free textbooks and financial support, and extra language support. For example, Japanese language courses are offered to foreign students in Japan, and further legislation is also planned to provide more help to these students.

With respect to 200,000 children with disabilities in Japan, they are placed either in regular classes with assistance, in special classes in regular schools, or in special schools, according to the degree of the severity of their disabilities and as decided by local authorities. For special education, there are usually only 3 children in one class (regular classes will have about 30), and flexible material and contents are available in the provision of special curriculum. Only with doctor recommendation and parent application can a child be exempted of compulsory education, as a result, currently only 81 disabled children are out of school among the national total of over 10 million children.

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<sup>20</sup> Article 26 of the Constitution of Japan

Due to the increase in children with multiple disabilities and the new widespread recognition of various disabilities, there have been positive changes in special needs education in Japan through a revision of the School Education Law since April 2007. Schools for specific special needs, (e.g. deafness or blindness) have been converted into comprehensive special needs schools to be able to accept students with multiple disabilities and serve as the resource center for the community. The law also encourages effort to integrate children with disabilities into the regular school system: through a strengthening of the support system in regular schools, special needs schools are required to advise and cooperate with nearby regular schools through joint activities and learning. Nagahama High School & Nagahama School for Special Needs Education are taken as examples of sharing campus, principal, uniform, school song, and partly sharing classes, activities and school events.

During the workshop, the inspiring account of one blind Japanese student was also presented: he had benefited from inclusive education practices, being allowed to exceptionally attend a regular school, thanks to parents' negotiation with local authorities, flexible and dedicated teachers and the support of a special assistance teacher. From this later very successful Japanese student's perspective, inclusive education should be a reform of the entire educational system based on human rights, accepting all children in a regular school with proper support, which requires the cooperation of a wide range of stakeholders such as teachers, institutions, parents, policymakers and civil society. He emphasized the three dimensions of an institutional framework for inclusive education: firstly, to promote real understanding of inclusive education; secondly, to promote diversity in education system at all levels, i.e. in schools, at local education authorities, as well as in the ministry of education; and finally, policy makers must establish institutional support for teachers, parents, and civil society.

The participants highlighted certain challenges, however. It seems that the concept of inclusive education in Japan is mainly only categorized as relating to students with special needs, people with disabilities being given a lot of emphasis. While the government is paying more attention to individuals and trying to change the system, the term of inclusion or inclusive education is not official in Japan and the term "inclusive education" is not recognized by all. Indeed, the requirement for every teacher to understand the situation of students with special needs is not very successfully implemented; almost no teacher recognizes the importance of individual needs in education or inclusive education and the importance of the education of special needs groups, even though in 2005, the central government created a commission to promote and coordinate the education of students with special needs, and there are laws and

regulations regarding inclusive education for schools and teachers. Teacher training is not always very successful; it seems difficult to translate the well-meaning government policies into practice to convince teachers of their role in promoting special needs education.

The actual extent of implementation of inclusive education in Japan does not seem clear at the moment and Japan is keen to define the key elements of an inclusive education system at the upcoming International Conference on Education. For example, Japan raised the issue of the costs of inclusive education reform advocating a proper analysis of funds and outcomes, even if it is clear that the creation of an inclusive and equal society is still considered worth the investment.

### *C. Mongolia*

It is the current educational policy objective of the government to provide equal and quality education to all children, despite the political and economic changes of the 1990s. The compulsory school education system has also weakened since the transition period, particularly so for children with special needs, such as children with disabilities, from poor families, street children and of ethnic minorities.

With respect to children with special needs, for example, before 1989, the socialist Government of Mongolia pursued a policy of institutionalizing disabled people by building a network of special schools and residential care facilities. While this system addressed basic needs for disabled children, it excluded them from social and political life. Following the political and economic changes, this institutional framework was collapsed. Due to shortages of funds and resources special schools in rural areas were closed and social benefits for disabled children decreased dramatically. Disabled children are now forming a visible part of school drop-outs and have very limited access to education, especially in rural areas. Very few special schools exist for children with mental disability. Just one school offers classes for blind children and one school offers classes for children with hearing/ speaking disabilities. Such schools are located in the capital city, Ulaanbaatar.

In accordance with today's educational policy objectives, the following policies and laws have recently been developed through coordination of various government Ministries, such as Health, Culture and Finance to establish the appropriate conditions for inclusive education;

- “The Program on Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities” under the management of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (2003-2008)
- Development of Child-Friendly schools (2004)
- The Education Law of Mongolia (2006)
- Law on Inclusive Education for Disabled People (2006)
- Master Plan of Education Development of Mongolia (2006- 2015)

The main objective of these policies is to change the attitudes of parents and teachers to fully understand the concept to inclusive education. With resources from the government, international organizations and NGOs, Mongolia has implemented activities in curriculum, methodology and psychology research, teacher training, material and equipment provision, rehabilitation services, vocational training, mobile training and school evaluation. In terms of the curriculum, parents can now decide what parts of the curriculum they would have for their children. The government has also worked with the health sector so that teachers can be better prepared for teaching students with disabilities.

A change is the content and methodology of teacher training and a reduction in class sizes are also desirable; however lack of funding and an increase in the number of disabled children is posing difficulties. Teachers in Mongolia have a heavy burden of workload already. The challenge is how to ensure they are paid in full and in time. Besides this, incentives need to be provided to encourage them to get involved in inclusive practices. Another challenge would then be to establish what kind of skills the teachers need to be trained, to be able to practice in inclusion.

Moreover, Mongolia has provided opportunities for advocacy, dialogue and awareness-raising in relation to inclusive education for children with disabilities, through the provision of handbooks, information kits and organised a Regional Assembly for disabled children. Mongolia is also working with the Association of Parents of Children with Disabilities to raise awareness of parents to students with disabilities. These advocacies were warmly welcomed by parents who are becoming more positive and growing in number. Raising public awareness and changing attitudes is in general very important, in particular to counter the “white flight” phenomenon of elitist parents taking their children out of integrative schools.

As a result, regular schools and kindergartens are developing suitable learning environment for children with disabilities. The number of children with disabilities studying at regular schools and kindergartens is increasing. For instance, for the 2006-2007 school year, 7.4% of the children who attend kindergartens were disabled and 7.1% of students at grade schools were disabled.

However, the efforts being made right now to integrate special children into mainstream schools may seem to have a rather narrow focus on disabled children; little is being done for the migrant, street, orphan and ethnic minority children in Mongolia. In addition, Mongolia is still not yet entirely successful in terms of implementation and exploration of new practices. Nevertheless, the government is committed to providing inclusive quality education for all children through more strategies in the future within their pre-existing strong policy framework.

#### *D. Korea*

The government of Korea's main aim in educational public policy is that there shall be an equal opportunity of education for all, where no citizen shall be discriminated against in education for reasons of sex, religion, faith, social standing, economic status or physical conditions, etc.<sup>21</sup> Korea is proud to have eradicated almost all gender disparities in terms of children's education, however certain other groups are still targeted with respect to achieving these objectives, such as children with disabilities, low income families, children from North Korean refugee families and children from multi-cultural families.

Traditionally, the concept of "inclusive education" is understood in Korea as policies ensuring educational access at regular schools for students with disabilities. However, in practice, children with a variety of differences have been taken care of, restructuring education into a new holistic, integrated strategy. At the Korean Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, the Special Education Policy Division is in charge of the inclusion of children with disabilities and children with learning difficulties. The Educational Welfare Policy Division then oversees matters related to children from low income families, children from North Korean refugee families and children from multi-cultural families (of foreign worker and international marriages, which is on the rise in Korea). The Elementary and Secondary

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<sup>21</sup> In accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Korea, Article 4 of the Framework Act on Education



Education Policy Division devises and implements policies to support children that have low academic achievement levels.

With respect to disable children in Korea, 65,940 children with disabilities receive special education services. Among them 42,977 students are integrated in regular school setting. Inclusive education was first stipulated in the Special Education Promotion Law in 1978. Since then, the number of disabled students being placed within the regular education system has seen a rapid increase. In May 2007, in order to accommodate growing demands from parents and the diversifying needs of a rapidly changing society, the Special Education Promotion Law was revised into the Special Education Law for the Disabled and those with Special Needs. Major changes include the stipulation of free and compulsory education for students with disabilities from kindergarten through high school, free education for 3-year-olds and younger who have disabilities or are at risk, free lifelong education programs for adults with disability and instructional material and training for teachers. There are 180 designated support centers for special education in the local communities with experts and experienced teachers who provide information to teachers, parents and personnel as well as financial assistance to narrow the gap between regular and disabled students.

In terms of a curriculum for disabled children, Korea has devised various study plans for different types of students. For example, students with chronic diseases who will need several years to be cured were provided orientation courses in the hospital and even in rehabilitation centers, paid by the government. Psychological counseling for children of divorced parents is also part of the government program.

For children from refugee and international backgrounds, the Ministry of Education established the term ‘multi-cultural families’ in 2006, setting forth a series of caring policies to support the estimated 1 million foreigners, both legal and illegal, in forms such as information consulting centers, special foreign language material, language courses, and after-school activities.

With respect to the 1,015 North Korean teenagers who defected to South Korea, who are studying in 275 schools and educational institutions across the country, comprehensive support plan was announced on May 2, 2007. This includes measures to introduce an educational protection officer system, provide free after-school programs, improve the academic qualification accreditation system, and develop instructional manuals for classroom

teachers. In addition, the Hankyoreh Middle and High School will open in 2007 as a specialized school exclusively operated for North Korean youth defectors before they can be transferred to regular schools.

In Korea, there are also various measures to help students from low-income families, drop-out students and non-schooled children, for example mentoring and exchange programmes, financial support, after-school care, meal provision, and counseling. The assessment standards have also been adapted for drop-out students to set appropriate standards. In rural areas, meanwhile, the government encourages schools to coordinate together into integrated communities.

While Korea has no official policy of Child Friendly Schools, many schools have all the necessary elements, for example, standards for school facilities ensure that students are safe and it is a student-centered system. The government talks with parents of students with special needs to decide on what kind of education and how to provide it to them.

With respect to the curriculum in general, Korea is also quite advanced in education technology, now using technology widely in education. There are also web sites for special education to provide education and contents. There are also web sites devoted to different types of disabilities. These web sites also served to provide education to regular students and teachers. Many students with disabilities are involved in activities in information technology. There are also some good practices in Korea of including private enterprises into inclusive education. Many big private enterprises in Korean are very keen on telling the public what they have done for education.

Nevertheless, students are increasingly sensitive and parents complain about the lack of understanding of students on the part of the teachers and the lack of appropriate programs, for example for children from broken families or with chronic illnesses. The design of even more detailed systems, plans and measures is necessary so that teachers can adapt to students with different needs and target excluded children.

One of the biggest challenges Korea faces is lack of teacher awareness. In practice, out of every five teachers, there are two teachers who understand every student and develop plans for individual students, two who not like to have special needs students in their classes, and a fifth who knows nothing about special needs students. In Korea, regular teachers and special

teachers are trained separately so collaboration is being sought; from 2008, Korea is changing the accreditation of teacher qualifications, so that teachers' awareness in special needs education and persons with disabilities can be raised and their attitudes towards persons with disabilities changed in a short period of time. It is the same situation with students from refugee and immigration families. Curriculum changes to adapt to the new concept of inclusive education may also help. In Korea it is still felt that it is impossible to design a special curriculum for each special child. Yet, participants noted that it is the responsibility of the teacher to develop such curriculum and they should be enabled to do that through a better teacher training system.

In fact, an even greater challenge in Korea is to develop everyone's awareness on this issue; not only the public, but also the officials in developing policies. Indeed, as education is divided divisionally in Korea, it could also be the case that some divisions have not yet developed an understanding of inclusive education. It is difficult for the officials to bear in mind inclusive education in their policy-making. Concerning Education for All goals, policy-makers often do not take the needs of individual students and think only of special needs education, while other issues are not considered their concern. Lastly, it was highlighted that there is a need to combine education policy with policies in health and public service sectors.

## **V. Good Practices**

### *A. Good Practices in the Region*

#### A.1. Well-targeted and well-managed incentives to increase access for the marginalized (Japan, Korea)

For students with special needs in Japan, such as those resulted from disabilities or cultural and linguistic difference (even non-citizens) free textbooks, financial support, and extra language support are provided. Schools for specific special needs, (e.g. deafness or blindness) have also been converted into comprehensive special needs schools to be able to accept students with multiple disabilities and serve as a resource centre for the community. In addition, through a strengthening of the support system in regular schools, special needs schools are required to advise and cooperate with nearby regular schools through joint activities and learning between, e.g. Nagahama High School & Nagahama School for Special Needs Education are taken as examples of sharing campus, principal, uniform, school song, and partly sharing classes, activities and school events.

In Korea, there is now free and compulsory education for students with disabilities from kindergarten through high school, free education for 3-year-olds and younger who have disabilities or are at risk, free lifelong education programs for adults with disability and instructional material and training for teachers. There are 180 designated support centers for special education in the local communities with experts and experienced teachers who provide information to teachers, parents and personnel as well as financial assistance to narrow the gap between regular and special students. To provide greater access for foreigners, Korea has also provided special language materials. For children performing badly at school, Korea has provided a strong support network for both students and teachers in the form of after-school programs and instruction manuals. For poorer children, Korea provides meals and financial support. Korea has also made use of private enterprise to fund such schemes.

#### A.2. Adaptation of school curricula and support (Mongolia, China, Korea)

With resources from the government, international organizations and NGOs, Mongolia has implemented activities in the curriculum; parents can now decide what parts of the curriculum they would have for their children. The government has also worked with the health sector so that teachers can be better prepared for teaching students with disabilities.

The new Chinese curriculum advocates keeping a portfolio for each student, which requires teachers to make a record for each step of development of the students, often with the assistance of the parents, which also strengthens parent-school communication.

Korea has devised various study plans for different types of students. For example, students with chronic diseases with orientation courses in hospitals. It has also updated its curricula with new computer and internet-based technology, with websites specifically for special needs children.

#### A.3. Teacher and educational staff incentives and training (Mongolia, China, Korea)

With resources from the government, international organizations and NGOs, Mongolia has implemented activities in, teacher training, material and equipment provision, rehabilitation services, vocational training, home teaching training and school evaluation.

The new Chinese curriculum also emphasizes the training of teachers, particularly in terms of transforming the ideas in teacher-student relationships. It was a general practice to rank the students according to their test scores, but now teachers are required to abolish this, leveling the relationship.

In Korea, regular teachers and special teachers were trained separately so collaboration is being sought; from 2008, Korea is changing the accreditation of teacher qualifications, so that teachers' awareness in special needs education and persons with disabilities can be raised.

#### A.4. Promotion of awareness and positive attitudes (Mongolia)

Moreover, Mongolia has provided opportunities for advocacy, dialogue and awareness-raising in relation to inclusive education for children with disabilities, through the provision of handbooks, information kits and a Regional Assembly for disabled children. Mongolia is also working with the Association of Parents of Children with Disabilities to raise awareness of parents to students with disabilities. These advocacies were warmly welcomed by parents, who are becoming more positive.

### *B. Common Elements of Good Practice in the Region*

Each country in the region was able to advance on the issues of broadening the concept of inclusive education, of committing to an official policy and of looking to successful initiatives on an inter-regional basis in order to articulate and implement inclusive educational policies. Adapted school and learning settings, increased teacher training and tolerance initiatives were actions that countries were able to implement in order to progress in the realm of inclusive education. In summary, the key elements of good practices incorporated ideas of awareness, flexibility and diversity both in terms of the offer and demand for education. They also sought to bolster adapted teacher training, cross-sectoral cooperation (political, social, and economic) and involvement of students, parents and the community at the international, national and local levels.

### *C. Hong Kong*

By looking at inclusive education from the perspective of public policy in the context of Hong Kong, three stages of inclusive education implementation in the world were defined: firstly, guaranteeing access to education, which, in some of the countries, is where the problem lies. A large number of students can't go to school because of disabilities, because they are girls or because of the distance from school. Some of these problems can be solved through the provision of funds, but not all of them. In Indonesia, for example, despite the provision of education vouchers, parents prefer to send boys to school not girls.

The second stage of inclusive education implementation is then preventing discrimination in education, in some countries, there is the dual system of mainstream schools for regular children and special schools for children with special needs. Integrating special children into mainstream school was considered very important. For this, mainstream schools must open their doors and change so that children with special needs - such as children with Down's syndrome, with spelling difficulties, children who are hyperactive and from different cultural background - can get in and play with regular children. Both special and mainstream schools need to respond respectively.

The final stage inclusive education implementation is full inclusion, meaning that every child studies and really learns with their peers in mainstream schools. No country in this world has

achieved this stage. It was recommended that work must be done simultaneously on the three stages right away even though it is not easy to integrate children with special needs into mainstream schools even though every country agrees that all children should go to school.

Hong Kong, in particular, has followed the “whole-school approach” to inclusion the strategy on inclusive education. Since 1997, whole-school approach reform was implemented firstly as a pilot project in mainstream schools to make the system more flexible to accommodate children with different levels of abilities. Firstly, the curriculum was reformed based on 5 years of primary education, followed by two sets of 3 years then one final 4 year period. This was provided to all students including those with severe mental disabilities. In addition, the educational assessment system was also reformed to allow alternative evaluation arrangements so that the children focus more on the progress they have made. No child with disabilities was to be excluded on the basis that they did not fit the “normal” profile, in fact, specialized profile distinctions create barriers. These reforms alone have brought great changes in mainstream schools, especially in terms of accepting students and now 30% of all schools in Hong Kong participating in this program voluntarily.

The second phase of the reform was then to cater for diversity by encouraging schools not to refer special needs children out of mainstream schools. In order to sustain the integrated education, the government introduced a per capita grant for each student identified to have learning difficulties or special education needs (SEN). Additional teachers and teacher assistants were provided, as well as a whole-school approach to provide other supports the schools needed.

In particular, four indicators for the ethos of an inclusive school were highlighted as mutual acceptance and help among students and teachers, collaboration among teachers, teacher-parent collaboration and enhanced teacher competency & confidence. A Whole-school approach was also explained as referring mainly to the following aspects; the approach that every person in the school will contribute; that schools to have a clear policy on SEN support; that systematic record-keeping is kept; and that an Individualized Education Plan Committee is to be formed. The importance of pooling of resources for flexible deployment, as well as continuous staff development and teacher collaboration was also underlined. Peer support and cooperative learning, parent participation and indicators for inclusion should also be introduced for the schools to conduct self-evaluation.

Yet teacher training in terms of awareness and incorporation of such an approach was noted as presenting one of the biggest challenges. It entails time, funding, training models and training materials, and a change, ultimately, in the whole school system. Solutions are supply teachers, school-based training to in-service teachers, short courses, specialist teacher Institutes who can then provide support and in general, collaboration and team-work among teachers.

Sustaining this model is also a continuous process, methods to do this include an early identification package with a “checklist” as a warning tool and also a list of solutions recommended in given situations. Self-evaluation techniques, following the Hong Kong Inclusion Index for example, are also useful. A flexible action plan to build up the inclusive capacity of a school in all areas is also necessary, setting goals for the future to improve the school culture, the quality and depth of teaching, the level of cooperation and support from other teachers, parents and specialist, advisory agencies. This needs to be flexible to deal with new problems arising, e.g. in Hong Kong, there are more and more ethnic minority students.

Lastly, it was underlined that although short-term such a program seems expensive, in the long-term it is worthwhile, as no country can afford to promote exclusion and even then, a dual system of special schools is very expensive.

#### *D. UNICEF Child Friendly School (CFS) Programs (China, Mongolia, Thailand)*

##### *D.1. China*

UNICEF’s CFS Pilot Program started in China in 2004, and involves 1500 rural primary schools (including 420 multi-grade teaching sites) from 20 poor rural counties in 10 western provinces. Four Departments of the Ministry of Education, namely, Basic Education, Teacher Education, Personnel (who is in charge of in-service training of head teachers and principals) as well as Physical, Hygiene and Arts Education are UNICEF’s national counterparts.

CFS programs in China are inclusive of all children, aiming at a child-centered and friendly learning environment providing quality education to all learners. Its ideas are based on the recognition that inclusive education is a constant process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners, and a strategy of ensuring “Education for All is really for all”, by moving away from the barriers within and from education for those who are excluded. In particular, a CFS is to develop learner-centered, rights-based quality education for the all-rounded development of students, in safe, healthy and harmonious environments, based on



principle of inclusiveness and equality, and through effective teaching-learning processes, with active participation of the learner, the family and the community.

This pilot scheme has achieved remarkable changes on the parts of the students, teachers, parents and school leaders. Students now have a voice in their likes and dislikes, teachers are learning together with the students, and school leaders are taking note of the what the students have to say. Visual changes have also been made to buildings, libraries and parents are more supportive of the study of their children and the school development.

UNICEF is now talking with the Chinese Ministry of Education on more initiatives and policies in inclusive education through CFS, as they continue to redefine the CFS concept and standards. For China, the concept of CFS is a good basis for inclusive education because it is beneficial to the utmost interest of the child. CFS represents a effective tool for implementing inclusive education in a concrete way.

## D.2. Mongolia

CFS projects in Mongolia were proposed in 1999 based on experiences in Thailand and China. The National Policy Document was approved the by the Government of Mongolia in 2004, which defines the action framework, strategies and action modalities of the policy implementation for developing the CFS in Mongolia.

The objective of the CFS policy is to make the commitment of the government to create the most favorable physical, psycho-social learning environment and actions that can build up good conditions where children are able to learn, develop their potential in the most favorable school environment. Strategies for implementation of this national policy document, involve policy support, partnership building among key players, capacity building, public and community participation, as well as advocacy & resource mobilization and monitoring and evaluation.

The Mongolian CFS initiative refers to five main elements, namely “inclusive of all children and gender sensitive”, “Academically effective and relevant for children”, “healthy, safe and protective”, “involved with students, families and communities” and “all level policy support”. A standard package based on these five elements has been elaborated and implemented in

respect of the poor, rural, disabled, street, working children and children from ethnic minorities.

It was noted that teaching models and development plans, advice on approaches and standards, parent questionnaires and other policy support for CFS programs were provided at the national levels through various measures, often in relation to other efforts national policies in improving education, health and sports of children. Various national and international aid organizations and NGOs were also involved in this process. In addition, children were asked what they imagined from a “dream school”. The children’s needs clearly differ depending on the category, for example some rural schools required dormitories. The implementation and improvement of CFS schools in Mongolia is therefore an evolving, on-going process.

### D.3. Thailand

Thailand was among one of the first to implement CFS programs in the Asia-Pacific region as early as 1998 and the number of schools involved is continuing to grow. Thailand recognizes that CFS is a means of transporting the concept of rights of the child into classroom practice and school management. As ensuring the right of all children to a basic education of high quality is at the heart of CFS initiatives, and also at the heart of all other Millennium Development Goals, therefore CFS initiatives provide the basis from which real progress towards the MDGs can be made.

The CFS approach is used to work together with the Thai education policy to achieve universal primary education, through a coordination of CFS indicators into the Thai external evaluation system. Early childhood education is given particular importance, while overall the CFS approach Thailand emphasizes child participation to address and respond to their interests.

In order to find out the real situation for policy development, Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys were conducted, in collaboration with the Office of National Statistics. The result showed that 98% of all children between 7 and 12 years of age were enrolled in school system, while 42% of children of 3-5 years of age stayed in a family with less than 3 books. For children out of school, household surveys and high level executive policy discourses were also conducted. There was also a campaign for identifying out-of-school children to include them into the system, by adapting the system accordingly.

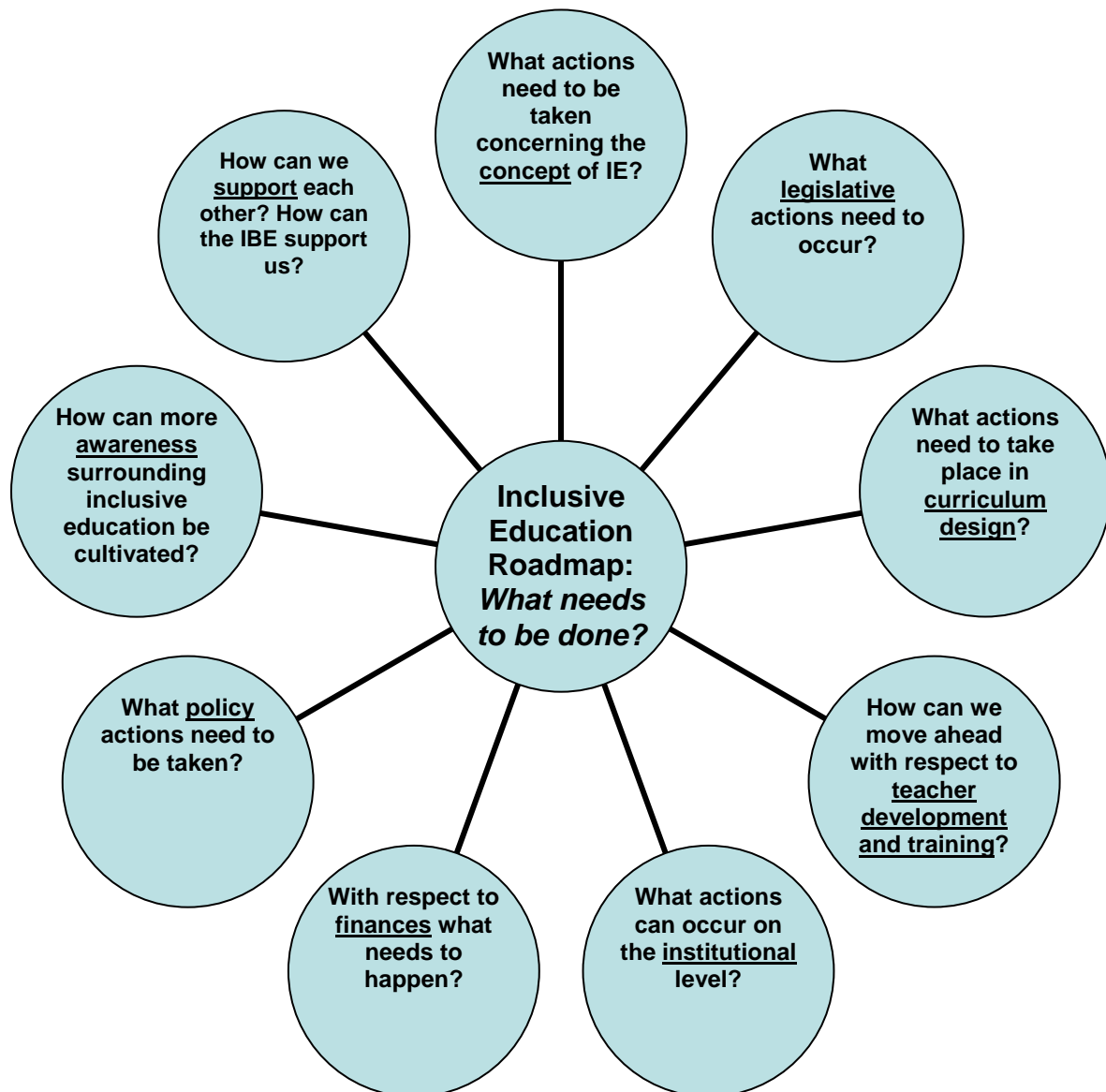
At the curriculum level, school curricula were reviewed in a framework of global education that includes peace education, environmental education, human right education and development education. For students traumatized by the Tsunami, special counseling support has also been organized. With respect to health and safety in school setting, child-friendly school toilet design has been developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

In particular, regarding teachers in multi-grade teaching and learning in Thailand, training was provided to build their capacity in facilitating school curriculum & instructional design and implementation. 350 schools joined the project to get training for teachers in screening, instructional assistance and referral systems, for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. Teachers were also encouraged to seek support when they encounter difficulties. For this purpose, teacher resource centers were established in a cluster school approach. Lastly, there has been support from national and district levels in sharing and exchanging resources and innovation.

## **VI. The Way Forward**

Inclusive education must become a significant priority within government policies. There must be integration between the different ladders and pathways of the education system in each nation. The individualization of the learning needs of both potential and current students must take into account their cultural, social and cognitive diversities. Teachers must receive adequate training and support, and schools must help the advance on inclusive practices. Yet there is no unique model to follow; the approach can be context specific. In the East Asia region, as in other regions, there have been good practices, but scaling up these practices is essential.

With the effective cooperation of IBE, UNESCO Bangkok, and UNESCO Beijing, and the excellent work of the local hosts, this workshop has been an excellent example of different UNESCO offices working together for a common UNESCO cause. Workshop attendees discussed a number of questions with respect to inclusive education and actions that need to be taken. The main points of discussion centered around the questions in the following diagram which is also used as a guide in future Regional Workshops on inclusive education.



Workshop attendees came up with some crucial steps to be taken with respect to inclusive education. Actions recommended include:

Concept:

- Put forward, clarify and raise awareness on a broader, more comprehensive definition of the concept of inclusive education to include all children with diverse learning needs

as well as socially, politically and economically marginalized and excluded groups, for example through Ministers of Education.

- Consider country-specific cultural aspects and conditions when implementing inclusive education. In particular, attention should be drawn to the sensitivity of a right-based education approach in Asia and the fact that countries in this region are all at different stages of development.
- Promote practical examples such as such as CFS programs.

### Policy/Legislation

- Develop complementary legislation and official instructions for local governments and parents in fields of education, health, social rehabilitation and professional training for all institutions and apply clear educational policies and strategies to support inclusive schools.
- Translate the precise meaning of the broader concept of inclusive education into the local language and disseminate this translation.
- Develop policy frameworks at the national level to ensure that all children in the country be guaranteed the right to education, regardless of their status. These policies should be based on practice and connected to real problems and challenges.
- Develop strategies for scaling up good practices on inclusion (e.g. pilot projects).

### Institutions/Governance

- Ensure that the Ministry of Education is primarily responsible for the education of all children.
- Initiate a National Commission to coordinate educational, health and social services institutions.
- Plan for transition of special needs schools towards inclusive education resource centers and support institutions for regular schools.
- Establish an ombudsperson/office to monitor implementation of right to education.
- Strengthen regional and national networks to cooperate, collaborate and share good practices across the board nationally, including at the district level.

### Finances

- Encourage understanding and coordination between policy-makers of all sectors to allow an integral budget for inclusive education.

- Ensure resource allocation for equipment, facilities, assistant teachers etc. for support of all children in mainstream schools.
- Reward local authorities and teachers for good practices with special stipends.
- Promote partnerships between private and public sectors.
- Identify resources dedicated to education and shift distribution of resources to ensure that it reaches the most vulnerable groups.
- Allocate adequate resources to finance both pre-service and in-service teacher training, as well as local governments who support the education system in their communities.

### Curriculum Design

- Improve curricula by adding some new topics related to the concepts and terminology of inclusive education.
- Encourage schools to adopt flexible inclusive curricula which embrace EFA goals based on a national core curriculum.
- Facilitate the links and transitions between early childhood, primary, and secondary education in order to provide life-long learning opportunities.
- Promote values and citizenship education in curriculum design.
- Develop national guidelines to assess how the curriculum is implemented and to help teachers manage diversity while using mainstream school curriculum as a reference.
- Observe classrooms responses and gather feed-back on the new curricula to follow-up accordingly.

### Staff/Teacher Training and Development

- Develop and invest in pre-service and in-service training programs to respond to the diverse needs of learners in schools. Incorporate inclusive education as part of the whole pre-service training programme instead of addressing it separately.
- Ensure that regular classroom teachers are trained to deal with diverse needs in the classroom with the support of specialized teachers.
- Provide comprehensive training for all educational personnel including inspectors, social workers, etc. and create inter-disciplinary support teams.
- Explore alternatives such as distance training, in-service training, head-teacher training.
- Teacher training should also adapt to country-specific situations.
- Provide relevant incentives to teachers to be motivated for training.

- UNESCO should also provide information and teacher training.

#### Awareness

- Conduct advocacy work (informational campaigns and programs) to change negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities (e.g. Children's Days, etc).
- Ensure the participation of local communities and NGOs in the education process and involve NGOs in the monitoring process.
- Raise awareness in the media about the rights to education of all children in the country.

#### Support

- Activate the capacity of families and communities to uphold and defend the rights of their children to education.
- Develop guidance and counseling services in school.
- Strengthen coordination with universities.
- Offer support to parents, students, teachers and educational personnel in the form of subsidies, financial aid, etc.

Clearly, there is great value in sharing national perspectives in a regional context because collective learning is very enriching and stimulating. The workshop participants are now aware of the ICE 2008, its objectives, scope and modalities, and will become agents for dissemination of this knowledge within their sphere of action. Since each workshop participant is already a member of several other networks they can disseminate the workshops outcomes, with a multiplier effect, using existing websites and planned events. Additional professional exchanges among participants and with IBE have been generated as a result of this workshop. Furthermore, participants will rely on each other for provisions of technical expertise and professional peer support. Cooperative relations will be established not only among the regional participants, but also through inter-regional exchange with inclusive education specialists working in other parts of the world.



## VII. Relevant Issues for a Regional Agenda

Outline of some core issues according to the suggested four themes of the 48<sup>th</sup> ICE:

- Inclusive Education: Approaches, Scope and Content:
  - (a) Inclusive education touches the very foundation, strategies and contents of the education system. It promotes active citizenship, social justice and collective well-being. To address inclusive education, a human rights-based approach well embedded in the holistic framework of EFA goals should be adopted.
  - (b) The goal of inclusive education should be to include all children in education, but also to include all citizens in the society and thus, to create a new relationship between people, namely social justice.
  - (c) Inclusive education can be visualized with a generational approach. Pupils of today will be the parents of tomorrow; if they can benefit from inclusive education, our societies will be more likely to progress towards equity, equality and democracy.
- Inclusive Education: Public Policies:
  - (a) The role of the government in developing inclusive education policies should be one of advocacy, coherent and sustainable policy design; attainment of financial sustainability; capacity building for relevant institutions and actors; active involvement of multiple stakeholders and accountability to society.
  - (b) The design and the development of inclusive education policies should not be understood as the sum of initiatives and efforts towards specific groups. The focus should be on providing friendly environments and effective learning opportunities to every child in mainstream schools. Learners' diversity should be recognized and respected.
  - (c) It is crucial to base the design and implementation of inclusive education policies and programmes on a cross-sectoral approach.
- Inclusive Education: Systems, Links and Transitions:
  - (a) The organization and functioning of the education system should reflect flexibility and diversity (in terms of attendance, learning opportunities, learning content, learning environments, teaching practices, use of technologies, among other aspects) to meet learners' differences and needs.
  - (b) The transition and coherence among the different levels of the education system should be improved (for example, from early childhood to primary education), especially for special needs education and in order to reduce dropout. A common curricular framework and guidelines should be developed for compulsory schooling. Strong early intervention is a key factor.
  - (c) If the general education curriculum framework is to be used as a reference, parallel guidelines should be adopted in order to provide teachers with clear direction on how to manage different learning needs.

- Inclusive Education: Learners and Teachers:
  - (a) Inclusive education should be learner-centered and also a synonym of a good quality education. High expectations should be conveyed to each child and individual support should be provided.
  - (b) More resources should be invested in inclusive education as a critical component of pre- and in-service teacher professional development. Teachers should be able to co-develop the curriculum from the school level by forging tailored approaches towards the learning expectations and needs of their students.

## **VIII. Appendices**

### Appendix I:

List of Participants to the Regional Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education East Asia in partnership with the UNESCO Beijing Office, the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO (NATCOM-China), the Department of Education of the Government of Zhejiang Province and the Government of Xiacheng District, in Hangzhou, on 3-5 November 2007

### **Japan**

#### **1. Mr. ISHIZUKA Kenji**

Senior Specialist for Special Needs Education

Primary and Secondary Education Bureau

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)

Tel: +81-3-6734-2432

Fax: +81-3-6734-3737

Address: 2-5-1, maruoccthi, Chiyoda District, Tokyo, Japan

#### **2. Mr. OSAKI Hirofumi**

Senior Researcher

National Institute of Special Needs Education

Tel: +81-46-839-6841

Email: [osaki@nise.go.jp](mailto:osaki@nise.go.jp)

Fax: T81-46-839-6893

Address: 5-1-1 Nobi, Yokosuka-city Kanagaw.

#### **3. Mr. YOKOO Shun**

Researcher

National Institute of Special Needs Education

Tel: +81 46-839-6840

Fax: +81 46-839-6907

E-mail: [shun@nise.so.jp](mailto:shun@nise.so.jp)

Address: 5-1-1 Nobi, Yokosuka Kanagaw 2398585 Japan.

## **Mongolia**

### **4. Ms. Jadamba Myagmar**

Officer, Department of Primary and Secondary Education

Ministry of Education, Culture and Science of Mongolia

Tel: 976-51-263653

Fax: 976-51-260613

E-mail: [jmyaga@mecs.gov.mn](mailto:jmyaga@mecs.gov.mn); [myaga2002@yahoo.com](mailto:myaga2002@yahoo.com)

Address: Room101, Government building III, Baga toiruu-44, 210621a

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

### **5. Ms. Samdan Bolormaa**

Project Specialist, Sparkle of the Spirit

Tel: 976-88000415

Fax: 976-11-322612

E-mail: [Boogii78@yahoo.com](mailto:Boogii78@yahoo.com)

Address: Government Building VI-1107-1108, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

### **6. Mr. Yadamsuren Tseveenkhazal**

Teacher

Education University of Mongolia

## **Republic of Korea**

### **7. Ms. Kyeok Kim**

Educational Researcher

Special Educational Policy Division

Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development

Tel: 82-1-02-2100-6387

Fax: 82-1-02-2100-6394

E-mail: [kyeok@moe.go.kr](mailto:kyeok@moe.go.kr)

Address: Special Educational Division, Ministry of Education, Government Complex, nn-6, Sejong-no, Jongno-gu, Seoul, 110-760, Korea.

**8. Ms. Soonho Choi**

Head of Education Team

Korean National Commission for UNESCO

Tel: (822)755 2997

Fax: (822)755 7478

E-mail) [shchoi@unesco.or.kr](mailto:shchoi@unesco.or.kr)

Address: 50-14 Myungdong 2 Ga, Jung-gu, Seoul, Korea (100-810)

**9. Mr. Sung-woo Park**

Educational Researcher (former special education teacher)

Korea National Institute for Special Education (KISE)

Tel: 82-31-400-8351

Fax: 82-31-418-2775

E-mail: [dream24@moe.go.kr](mailto:dream24@moe.go.kr)

Address: 723-2 Bono-dong, Sangnok-gu, Ansan, Kung-gi 426-807, Korea.

**China**

**10. Mr. GAO Xuegui**

Head

Literacy Education Division

Department of Basic Education

Ministry of Education

Tel: 86-10-66097819

Fax: 86-10-66097819

Email: [gaoxg@moe.edu.cn](mailto:gaoxg@moe.edu.cn)

Address: 35# Damucang Hutong, Xidan, Beijing

**11. Mr. HUANG Zhicheng**

Professor

Comparative Education

East China Normal University  
Shanghai  
Tel: 021-62233405  
Email: [zchuang@kcx.ecun.edu.cn](mailto:zchuang@kcx.ecun.edu.cn)  
Address: Institute of International and Comparative Education  
East China Normal University  
Shanghai 200062, China.

**12. Ms ZENG Ting**

Principal  
Minzhu School for Migrant Children  
Hangzhou  
Tel: 0571-85386518, 13395711300  
Fax: 0571-85382189  
Address: Yueying Alley 60, Dongxin Road, Xiacheng District, Hangzhou, China.

**UNESCO Headquarters**

**13. Ms. Jill Van den Brule**

Assistant Programme Specialist  
Section for Inclusion and Quality Enhancement  
ED/BAS/IQE  
Tel: 33145681765  
E-mail: [j.vandenbrule@unesco.org](mailto:j.vandenbrule@unesco.org)  
Address: 7 place de Fontenoy, Paris, France

**IBE**

**14. Mr. Renato Opertti**

Programme Specialist  
IBE, UNESCO  
Tel: 0041-22-9177818  
Fax: 0041-22-9177801

Email: [r.operti@unesco.org](mailto:r.operti@unesco.org)

Address: Route des Morillons 15, Geneva 1218, Switzerland

**15. Mr. WANG Daoyu**

Expert

IBE, UNESCO

Tel: 0041-22-9177821

Fax: 0041-22-9177801

E-mail: [d.wang@unesco.org](mailto:d.wang@unesco.org)

Address: Route des Morillons 15, Geneva 1218, Switzerland

**Bangkok Office**

**16. Mr. Johan Lindeberg**

Associate Expert

Bangkok Office

E-mail: [j.linderberg@unesco.org](mailto:j.linderberg@unesco.org)

**Beijing Office**

**17. Mr. Min Bista**

Education Programme Specialist, UNESCO Beijing Office

Tel: +86-10-6532-2828

Fax: +86-10-6532-4854

Email: [m.bista@unesco.org](mailto:m.bista@unesco.org)

Address: 5-15-1 Jianguomenwai, Waijiao Apartment, Beijing 100600 ,China

**18. Ms. HE Pei**

Education Programme Assistant, UNESCO Beijing Office

Tel: +86-10-6532-2828

Fax: +86-10-6532-4854

Email: [p.he@unesco.org](mailto:p.he@unesco.org)

Address: 5-15-1 Jianguomenwai, Waijiao Apartment, Beijing 100600 ,China

### **Participants invited by HQs**

#### **19. Yumiko Ito,**

Student

University of Tsukuba

Eel: +81-80-3089-4904

Email: [bon\\_voyage\\_yi@msn.com](mailto:bon_voyage_yi@msn.com)

Address: 8-3 Apt. Kakimotohaitsu C-202, Amakubo Tsukuba Ibaraki Japan, 305-0005

#### **20. Kentaro Fukuchi**

Senior student of University of Tsukuba

College of Human Science

Tel: +8190-8885-2549

Email: [dir@fox.zero.ad.jp](mailto:dir@fox.zero.ad.jp)

Address: 4-23-29 Kotorida #105, Kasuga, Tsukuba, Ibaraki Japan〒305-0821

### **Regional experts invited by Bangkok Office**

#### **21. Ms. Woon King Vivian HEUNG**

Associate Professor

Tel: (852) 2948 7771

Fax: (852) 2948 7993

Email: [wkheung@ied.edu.hk](mailto:wkheung@ied.edu.hk)

Address: The Hong Kong Institute of Education, D1 G/F-05, 10 Lo Ping Road, TaiPo N.T.  
Hong Kong, CHINA

### **UNICEF and UNICEF invited**

#### **22. Ms GUO Xiaoping**

Education Specialist

UNICEF CHINA



Tel: 010-65323131-1703

Fax: 010-65323107

E-mail: [xguo@unicef.org](mailto:xguo@unicef.org)

Address: 12# San-Li-Tun-Lu, Chaoyang District, Beijing 100600, China

**23. Mr. Rangsun Wiboonuppatum**

Education Officer, UNICEF

Tel: 6081-9841796

E-mail: [rwiboonuppatum@unicef.org](mailto:rwiboonuppatum@unicef.org)

Address: 150/2 soi ONGKARAK, KHET DUSIT, BANGKOK, THAILAND, 10300

**24. Mr. Erdenechimeg**

Head of the International Cooperation Division,

Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

Mongolia

**25. Ms. Uranchimeg Budragchaa**

Education Specialist

Tel: (976-11)312183, 312185, 312217-ext.108

Fax: (976-11)327313

E-mail: [Ubudragchaa@unicef.org](mailto:Ubudragchaa@unicef.org); [Ulaanbaatar@unicef.org](mailto:Ulaanbaatar@unicef.org)

Address: UNICEF Office for Mongolia, UN House, Building No.2 United Nations Street  
N0.12, Sukhbaatar District

**26. Mr. Radamsuren Tsereen Lkhzzzl**

Senior teacher of National Pedagogical University

Tel: 95701458, 96201736

Fax: 976-57-260613

E-mail: [myaga2002@yahoo.com](mailto:myaga2002@yahoo.com)

Address: National Pedagogical University Bagatouruu-44 Ulaanbaatar Mongolia

**27. Ms. Chimedlkham**

Researcher of Institute of Education Mongolia

Tel: 976-11-99857509

Fax: 976-11-311588

E-mail: [chimedts@yahoo.com](mailto:chimedts@yahoo.com)

Address: Barilgachdiintalbai-2, UB-44, Mongolia

### **Chinese National Commission for UNESCO**

#### **28. Mr. DU Yue**

Deputy Secretary-General

Chinese National Commission for UNESCO

Tel: 86-10-6609 6445

Email: [duy@moe.edu.cn](mailto:duy@moe.edu.cn)

Address: 35# Damucang Hutong, Xidan, Beijing

#### **29. Ms. DONG Jianhong**

Director

Division of Education

Chinese National Commission for UNESCO

Tel: 86-10-6609 6249

Email: [jhd@moe.edu.cn](mailto:jhd@moe.edu.cn)

Address: 35# Damucang Hutong, Xidan, Beijing

#### **30. S. K. Gandhe**

#### **31. Leela Pradhan**

## Appendix II:

### **Appendix 1: List of Regional Preparatory Workshops on Inclusive Education**

The workshops are planned over the period June 2007 – March 2008 in different geographical regions according to the following calendar:

1. Eastern and South Eastern Europe: Sinaia, Romania (13-16 June 2007), completed;
2. Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa: Nairobi, Kenya (25-27 July 2007) completed;
3. Arab Gulf States: Dubai, United (27-28 United Arab Emirates (UAE), August 2007)
4. Latin America: Victoria, Argentina (12-14 September 2007)
5. Africa: Kigali, Rwanda (25-28 September 2007).
6. Europe and West Asia: Minsk, Belarus (29-31 October 2007)
7. Asia: Hangzhou, China (3-5 November 2007)
8. The Caribbean: Kingston, Jamaica (5-7 December 2007)
9. Eastern Europe: Riga, Latvia (24-26 February 2008)
10. Northern Europe: Finland (7-8 March 2008)

#### ***Report prepared by:***

Renato Opertti, Programme Specialist, Coordinator, Capacity Building Programme ([r.opertti@unesco.org](mailto:r.opertti@unesco.org)), Mr. Daoyu Wang, Capacity Building Programme ([d.wang@unesco.org](mailto:d.wang@unesco.org)), Jayne Brady, Research Intern, Capacity Building Programme ([j.brady@unesco.org](mailto:j.brady@unesco.org))

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