CARIBBEAN SYMPOSIUM ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Regional perspectives and challenges in inclusive education: main findings from seven meetings

Kingston, Jamaica
5-7 December 2007
Hilton Kingston

Renato Opertti, IBE-UNESCO

UNESCO
United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

International Bureau of Education

COP Workshops on Inclusive Education

- Seven meetings covering the five UNESCO regions

- 282 participants

- 62 countries

- Valuable and productive partnerships with UNESCO Offices

- Discussion and capacity-building on a broadened concept of IE

- Inter-regional sharing of concepts, visions and practices

- In some cases good participation from the civil society as well as from international organizations

Eastern and Southeastern European Workshop on Inclusive Education

- Sinaia, Romania, 14-16 June 2007

- 23 participants

- Policy-makers, educators, curriculum specialists

- 9 countries: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine

- Representatives from OECD, the Open Society Institute, UNESCO CEPES and Finland also attended the workshop

- Co-organized by: Center Education 2000+ (Bucharest, Romania), the Eastern and South-eastern Community of Practice in Curriculum Development and IBE.

Eastern and Southeastern Europe: Current Situation

- Strong tradition of a medical "defectology" approach (i.e. residential institutions)

- Inclusive policies limited to students with special needs (prevalence of the integration model)

- Some positive advances → progressive conceptualization and incorporation of groups with "cultural and social disadvantages"

Eastern and Southeastern Europe: Current Situation

- However, Inclusive Education is not high in the priority agenda

- Common barriers of exclusion include:

  - Segregation of special schools from mainstream ones

  - Insufficient curricular integration

  - Insufficient articulation between primary and secondary education

  - Lack of teacher training

  - Lack of public awareness

Eastern and Southeastern Europe: Challenges

- Tradition of evaluating individuals instead of groups → IE introduces a completely new perspective (i.e. cultural and social disadvantage groups)

- Many countries in transition → policy discontinuity is a major obstacle for large scale system change and long-term consensus building

- Need for a common, broad and shared definition of IE for each country, reflecting the ideal of social justice

- IE can be visualized as a step further in addressing the needs of students with diverse learning conditions and needs in mainstream classes

Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa Workshop on Inclusive Education

- Nairobi, Kenya, 25-27 July 2007

- 23 participants

- Seminar "Poverty Alleviation, HIV and AIDS Education and Inclusive Education: Priority Issues for Quality Education for all in Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa"

- Policy-makers, government officials, curriculum specialists and teacher trainers

- 6 Countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda

- Representatives from ED/BAS, Nairobi Cluster Office and local UN Country team

- Co-organized by: the Ministry of Education, the Kenyan Institute for Education (KIE) and IBE.

Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa: Current Situation

- Addressing the needs of diverse social marginalized groups:
    - Girls
    - HIV-AIDS bearers
    - Nomadic populations
    - Orphans
    - Street and out-of-school children

- Critical issue: design an inclusive curriculum (a common framework from childhood onwards)

    → the current curriculum is too academic, overloaded and exam-oriented: it excludes more than it includes

Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa: Current Situation

- Necessity to harness appropriate and relevant resources based on a multi-sectoral approach

- The major policy framework and action remains the integration of children with special needs (mainly disabilities) into mainstream schools

Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa: Challenges

Challenges are related to:

- The need to develop an Inclusive Education policy which implies a broader conceptualization of inclusion

- The fact that the fight against poverty, marginalization, segregation and exclusion needs to incorporate the crucial role of curriculum in providing effective opportunities for all learners

- The acknowledgment of cultural diversity and multiculturalism as a right and a learning context

- The need to safeguard the rights of all excluded groups

- The need to collaborate with existing institutions (NEPAD, ADEA) to drive the inclusive education agenda forward

The Gulf Arab States Workshop on Inclusive Education

- Dubai, United Arab Emirates, UAE, 27-29 August 2007

- 25 participants

- Policy-makers, government officials, and curriculum specialists

- 7 Countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and United Arab Emirates

- Representatives from ED/BAS and Finland

- Co-organized by: GASERC (Gulf Arab States Educational Research Centre), the Gulf Arab States Community of Practice in Curriculum Development and IBE.

The Gulf Arab States: Current Situation

- The understanding and use of Inclusive Education remain limited to special needs education

- Focus is on integration on mainstream schools mainly by:
    - Providing physical facilities
    - Installing resource centers
    - Diversifying learning strategies with an increased focus on tailored approaches

The Gulf Arab States: Current Situation

- Immigrants, guest workers and temporary residents have difficulty in accessing the social welfare system

- Education may be insufficient for girls, poor and students in rural areas

- The "Dubai Declaration on Urban Children and Youth" (2005) states that "*Inclusive Education for all children and youth is the first priority*"

The Gulf Arab States: Challenges

Challenges are related to:

- Broadening the concept of IE linked to current processes of educational and curriculum change (competency-based basic and secondary education)

- Raising political awareness among different stakeholders around a broadened concept of IE

- Disseminating UNESCO guidelines for inclusion → implement inclusive strategies at different educational levels

The Gulf Arab States: Challenges

- Informing and training professionals to visualize IE as a core strategy to address different learner expectations and needs

- Strengthening cooperation and communication among countries to share and learn from each other

International Workshop on Inclusive Education, Latin America, Andean and Southern Cone

- **Buenos Aires, Argentina, 12-14 September 2007**

- 48 participants

- Governmental representatives, including 4 Vice-ministers of education, policy-makers, consultants, scholars, researchers and educators

- 11 countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela

- Representatives from ED/BAS, UNESCO OREALC and IIEP-Buenos Aires, the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education and COP Focal Points from Africa (Nigeria), Europe (Belarus, Finland and Romania) and Gulf Arab States (Bahrain)

- Co-organized by: ED/BAS, OREALC, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Argentina, University of San Andres (Argentina), the Southern and Andean Communities of Practice in Curriculum Development and IBE

Latin America, Andean and Southern Cone: Current Situation

- Focus on the relationships between social inclusion and inclusive education

- Understand the extent to which education in a knowledge society, within a new globalised capitalism and under the wave of neo-liberalism, generates more exclusion and inequality than in an industrial society

- Schools are molded and defined according to a demand for schooling → they do not respond to social and knowledge needs

- Education systems democratize access by including previously excluded groups but the gap outcomes are wider → this feeds exclusion from accessing pertinent knowledge and core competences

Latin America, Andean and Southern Cone: Challenges

Challenges are related to:

- Developing policies aimed at reducing social inequalities and poverty around a renovated concept of social justice and the kind of society to be built

- Avoiding the categorization of those who are excluded → this can stigmatize such groups within condescending educational patterns

- Including the broad conceptualization of Inclusive Education in governmental agendas, a relatively new term, and its links with the more traditional and legitimized agendas around equity and quality

Latin America, Andean and Southern Cone: Challenges

- Making educational institutions more heterogeneous:
    - Including all socio-economic strata
    - Stimulating socialization processes → notion of "living together within diversity" as a way to recover the sense of public education

- Strengthening promising inclusive initiatives → i.e. intercultural bilingual education and childhood models

Session on Inclusive Education – Regional Workshop on "What Basic Education for Africa?"

- Kigali, Rwanda, 27 September 2007

- 115 participants

- Policy-makers, government officials, curriculum specialists and teacher trainers

- 16 countries (Benin, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and Uganda)

- Representatives from ED/BAS, UNESCO BREDA, Addis and Nairobi Cluster Offices, UNEVOC, the Association for the Development of Africa (ADEA), the African Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank

- Co-organized by: ED/BAS, BREDA, Ministry of Education of Rwanda and IBE.

Africa: Current Situation

- Consensus on visualizing IE as a main strategy to attain EFA goals. It might take a long time but it is needed.

- Insufficient responses in order to meet the needs of:
  - Girls (including those forced into prostitution)
  - Children with disabilities or special needs
  - Street and out-of-school children
  - Child workers
  - Socially stigmatized children (orphans, HIV and AIDS affected children, etc.)
  - Children belonging to nomadic and minority groups
  - Children in post-conflict societies

- Teachers need to be re-trained to acquire intellectual freedom and the knowledge to adapt their teaching approaches

Africa: Challenges

- Expanding and democratizing basic education in Africa through:
    - A broadened concept of IE
    - An inclusive curriculum
    - A renovated school model

- Developing a holistic, integrated and inclusive competency-based curriculum framework for a minimum of 9-year Basic Education

- Raising awareness and convincing stakeholders of the importance of teacher motivation in achieving quality education → necessity to strengthen the social status of teachers

- Implementing advocacy campaigns about IE → sensitization process

The Third Workshop of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Community of Practice in Curriculum

"Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future"

- Minsk, Belarus, 29-31 October 2007

- 26 participants

- Ministerial representatives, policy-makers, and educators

- 9 countries: Armenia Belarus, Russia, Latvia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Uzbekistan

- Representatives from: UNESCO Office in Moscow, the National Commissions for UNESCO of Latvia and Belarus, the Division for the Promotion of Basic Education (ED/BAS, UNESCO) and the Finnish National Board of Education

- Co-organized by: National Institute of Education of Belarus, Ministry of Education, IBE, UNESCO Office in Moscow , and the CIS Council on Cooperation in Education.

Commonwealth of Independent States: Current situation

- Considerable importance given to the tradition of "defectology" as a way to address the education of children with special needs

- Importance given to gifted children – seen as a protected national value- who are separated from mainstream schools

- Lack of resources for children with special needs: sometimes they are integrated into mainstream schools

Commonwealth of Independent States: Current situation

- Until now, the concept of Inclusive Education has been mainly used to refer to students with physical and/or mental disabilities → this is evolving

- Regional strength: having achieved almost 100% of literacy and attendance rates

- Right to education (as a human right) is guaranteed by constitutions and laws

Commonwealth of Independent States: Challenges

Challenges are related to:

- Creating awareness within the education system and society about the importance and value of IE → addressed in terms of social inclusion, quality education and a revised "defectology" approach

- Investing in teacher training at all levels regarding IE practices

- Creating awareness that IE implies not only a reform of special schools but also of mainstream schools

- Addressing multi-ethic, multilingual and migration changes in relation to EFA goals

Commonwealth of Independent States: Challenges

- Increasing commitment of other public sectors involved in social policies

- Importance of providing and further developing early childhood education

- Understanding IE as a flexible paradigm, not a limited unique model

East Asia Regional Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education

- Hangzhou, China, 2-5 November 2007

- 25 participants

- Governmental representatives, researchers and educators

- 4 countries: China, Mongolia, Japan and Republic of Korea

- Also about 20 local elementary and secondary school principals participating as observers

- Representatives from the organizers, UNESCO HQs and UNICEF Beijing, regional experts invited by UNESCO Bangkok and UNICEF Beijing

- Co-organized by: IBE in partnership with UNESCO Bangkok, UNESCO Beijing, UNESCO National Commission of China, and the Department of Education, Provincial Government of Zhejiang

East Asia: Current Situation

- Until now, Inclusive Education has been limited to the domain of traditional special needs education

- There are language barriers for widening the use of the term → measures need to be taken so that the new meaning of IE can be disseminated

- Limited impact of social policies to reduce social inequality and poverty levels at regional and national levels → need for more social policies

- There are cases of child-friendly schools in Mongolia, Thailand and China → these are a good means for developing a broadened concept of IE

East Asia: Challenges

Challenges are related to:

■ The fact that the concept of IE is quite new to Asia → difficult to adapt to local conditions and frameworks

■ Misunderstandings of this new term as creating a completely new education system → will cause uncertainty and confusion among various stakeholders

■ The costs of IE being a major fear → idea that including severely impaired children in mainstream schools is more expensive than doing so in special ones. It is also argued that under certain conditions, a special school can provide a better service.

■ The fact that teachers should receive more training and incentives to address learners' needs in mainstream schools

Six suggested areas for debate in an interregional perspective

Renato Opertti, IBE-UNESCO

Areas of debate: where to position the discussion?

1. Special Education/Integration/Inclusion:

■ Maintenance of special schools, not only for students with severe disabilities but also culturally and socially disadvantaged groups in a broad sense: isolation, segregation and discrimination. Delicate and complex policy issue: suppression / maintenance special schools.

■ Integration of students with special needs into mainstream schools → a progressive continuum which includes: improving physical facilities and equipments, adjusting curriculum, tailoring pedagogical approaches and diversifying teacher practices

■ Integration has been more a discourse than a reality, more a "physical" than a "curricular" integration

Renato Opertti, IBE-UNESCO

Areas of debate: where to position the discussion?

1. ## Special Education/Integration/Inclusion:

- Inclusive Education essentially means friendly environments and effective learning opportunities suited to the expectations and needs of each child → an all-inclusive mainstream school

- Need to overcome the integration/inclusion debate → generation of inclusive settings in different types of schools.

- Need for a diversity of provisions along a continuum in close coordination with other social policies and based on strong support by the community and parents

Areas of debate: where to position the discussion?

2. **Interpretations around the relationships between social inclusion and inclusive education**

- Is the knowledge society generating more exclusion than inclusion? Democratization of the access to education, but wider gaps in terms of learning outcomes and the building of competences.

- Both concepts are strongly based on visions around the type of society and quality of democracy to be attained.

- An inclusive education setting could be developed and achieved regardless of the levels of social inclusion and the scope of the equity gaps. No specific mention to social inclusion in the debate around inclusive education policies. Disengagement from society?

Areas of debate: where to position the discussion?

2. **Interpretations around the relationships between social inclusion and inclusive education**

- Learning conditions and processes can only be developed if there is a minimum basis of educability → relational concept about the degree of articulation between:

    - on the one hand, suitable societal and family conditions needed to achieve an active participation in the educational process (for ex: socialization around values and attitudes that promotes the significance of learning), and

    - on the other hand, educational conditions (for ex: the school takes into account the characteristics and the expectations of the students)

Areas of debate: where to position the discussion?

3. Role of inclusive education within a renovated commitment towards EFA goals.

- Inclusive Education, a paradigm policy shift?

  From taking care and responding to the needs of diverse cultural and social groups to the personalization of the education provisions in response to the specificity and uniqueness of each child.

  A renovated way of addressing the challenges of attaining high quality and equitable education?

- Is there a value added in the concept of inclusive education to further accelerate and to strengthen the attainment of EFA goals? As a comprehensive educational strategy, it can provide both a conceptual and operational framework to achieve an effective holistic approach towards EFA goals

Areas of debate: where to position the discussion?

3. Role of inclusive education within a renovated commitment towards EFA goals.

- How to conceptualize quality education (EFA goal 6) in the light of assuming the concept of inclusive education as a guiding policy principle?

- How to conceptualize the rationale as well as the costs and benefits of an inclusive educational policy? → Importance of fostering a productive dialogue between Ministries of Planning, Finances and Education

- Do we have a coherent and integrated international framework to develop a broadened concept of IE?

Areas of debate: where to position the discussion?

4.   Promote and safeguard the right to an equitable, high-quality education

- A delicate and complex equilibrium between governments' and parents' rights and responsibilities:
    - Can parents freely choose the type of school in which they want to enroll their children?
    - How do governments orientate the selection of the schools done by parents within the vision of education as a public good?

- Prejudice towards heterogeneous learning environments:
    - Teachers' apprehension and resistance.
    - Societal bias and parental opposition.
    - Children representations of the students with special needs (negative attitudes and narrow conceptualization)

Areas of debate: where to position the discussion?

4. **Promote and safeguard the right to an equitable, high-quality education**

- Arguments and pressure in favor of homogenous schools.
    - Supposedly, talented/gifted children learn more if they are together in homogenous settings. They are considered to be better equipped to cope with a competitive society.
    - There is also a build-up of national pride (for ex: Mathematics Olympics in Secondary Education)

- Raise societal and political awareness on a broadened concept of IE under which each child has an effective learning opportunity.
    - Which stakeholders are key for the awareness process?
    - Importance of the scope and quality of democratic and participatory discussion/debates between the state, the civil society and the citizens.

Areas of debate: where to position the discussion?

4. **Promote and safeguard the right to an equitable, high-quality education**

- Pay attention to those who are educated in elite schools. They can play a key role in fostering social and educational inclusion.

- How to include the excluded groups? They are very heterogeneous, there are no links between them and they aren't in a dependent relation as those historically categorized as exploited.

Areas of debate: where to position the discussion?

5. Does the curriculum matter for achieving an inclusive educational setting?

- Common perceived and evidence-based problems:
  - Curricula are overloaded, too academic and excessively exam-oriented
  - There is too much emphasis on the transmission of information, frontal teaching methodologies and a lack of articulation between primary and secondary education

- The conceptualization, the structure and the contents of the curriculum are sources of inclusion in or exclusion from the education system

Areas of debate: where to position the discussion?

5. **Does the curriculum matter for achieving an inclusive educational setting?**

■ Common challenge: try to overcome the institutional, curricular and pedagogical separation (and segregation) between primary and secondary education.

An enlarged concept of Basic Education?

■ Focus on good practices, for example:
   ■ Comprehensive school models
   ■ Child-friendly schools
   ■ Development of competency-based approaches

The school being seen as the main driving force of educational change based on inclusive policies and practices

Areas of debate: where to position the discussion?

6. **Change teachers' profile and role, and support teacher professional development**

- Commonly perceived and evidence-based problem:
  - Strong teacher resistance to cope with school and classroom heterogeneity
  - Lack of competences and knowledge on how to address diversity (for ex: on issues related to students categorized with special needs)

- The prevalence of the deviance discourse (establish a hierarchy of cognitive skills to place each student in a rather closed way) over the inclusion one (highlights the open learning potential of each student that can be progressively discovered and stimulated, key role of cognitive education)

Areas of debate: where to position the discussion?

6. Change teachers' profile and role, and support teacher professional development.

- Teacher education curriculum lacks conceptual frameworks and methodological tools to effectively address the diversity of learners' expectations and needs

- School-based support to teachers. What proves to work?
    - Interdisciplinary team work
    - Special education teacher support in mainstream schools
    - Special schools as resource centers
    - Tutoring
    - Personalized pedagogical support
    - School networks and close coordination with social institutions

Renato Opertti, IBE-UNESCO