ICE 2008:
“Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future”

A challenge to share

CARIBBEAN SYMPOSIUM
ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION
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HILTON KINGSTON
Objectives of the Session

- to identify common challenges related the development of Inclusive Education, principally in terms of visions, strategies and practices;
- to provide structured technical inputs from a regional perspective to the 48th session of the International Conference of Education (ICE, November 2008, Geneva) whose theme is “Inclusive Education: the way of the future”.
Agenda

- Inclusive Education as a core strategy to attain EFA goals.
- The Right to Education for All.
- Country presentations on issues around Inclusive Education.
- Inter-regional perspectives on Inclusive Education
- Shaping a Regional Roadmap.
Expected Outcomes

Participants

- be aware of the 48th. ICE and its scope and modalities and become agents for dissemination of this knowledge within their sphere of action;
- hold an open and constructive sharing of national perspectives on Inclusive Education within a regional context;
- elaborate a regional roadmap on Inclusive Education that can provide significant inputs for implementing a regional agenda towards the 48th. ICE.
Institutional framework


- Four sub-themes proposed: “Approaches, Scope and Content”; “Public Policies”; “Systems, Links and Transitions” and “Learners and Teachers”.
Issues under discussion

- 1. The roles of Education as a right.
- 4. Concept and key dimensions of Inclusive Education.
1. The Roles of Education as a Right

Education as:

- providing the conceptual and the empirical foundations of a **democratic citizenship**;
- a key **economic and social policy**;
- a main factor to **reduce poverty and marginality** under a long-term vision;
- a crucial factor in facilitating an **intelligent and productive integration** of national societies in a globalized world;
- a way of contributing to establish a solid basis of **cultural and social integration**.
Core elements of a Holistic Approach towards Education as a Right

- Guaranteed funding. **Investing more and better.** Improve the impacts.
- **Free and compulsory education.** Scope and content.
- The struggle against **all forms of exclusion and discrimination.**
- The **strengthening of the quality of learning.** Conditions, inputs, processes and outcomes.
EFA goals as a core strategy.

**Five main international instruments:**
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)
- Salamanca Statement (1994) on Inclusive Education
Education as a Human Right: a worrisome reality

- Insufficient consciousness and **lack of political willingness** on the importance of funding and investing in Basic Education.
- The maintenance of **school fees** and the penalization of the most socially deprived sectors.
- The existence of **discriminatory visions, provisions and practices** related to gender, ethnic origin, migrant status and rural residence.
- **Unbearable cultural, social and educational gaps** between groups and persons. The equity and quality dimensions and their interdependence.
Education for All (EFA) Goals as a powerful commitment of the international community

- The expansion of **early childhood care and education**.
- The provision of **free and compulsory primary education for all**.
- The promotion of **learning and life skills for young people and adults**.
- The increase of **adult literacy** by 50 per cent.
- The achievement of **gender parity** by 2005 and gender equality by 2015.
- The improvement of the **quality of education**.
Pending Challenges on EFA goals

- Assuming and implementing in a more decisive way a **human-rights based approach**.
- Better visualizing **education as a public good** based on an irreplaceable government mission and responsibility.
- Developing a clear and explicit comprehensive **agenda of educational change and policy reform** in order to attain a high quality equitable education.
The democratization of Basic Education as a key issue in the UNESCO Agenda

- Removal of institutional, pedagogical, curricular and teaching barriers between Childhood, Primary and Youth Education. **EFA goals altogether form the Basic Education Agenda.**
- Ensuring real access to knowledge and skills (a relevant and pertinent curriculum) based on a triad: a solid and shared educational policy, a common curriculum framework for all levels of Basic Education and a strong emphasis on the teacher’s professional development.
3. Significant sources of exclusion

- **Endogenous vision** of the educational policy.
- A prescriptive top-down vision of curriculum far from the school mission and the classroom.
- The “imposition” of **homogenous ways of teaching**. The ideal over the real student.
- Lack of learning materials, principally **textbooks**.
- A **worrisome miscomprehension** of teachers’ histories, identities, beliefs and expectations.
- Non critical assimilation of an **international model** that must be “followed”.
4. Concept and key dimensions of inclusive education BEFORE

- Group of students categorized as with special needs such as and predominantly physically and/or mentally handicapped students and refugees.
- The approaches and the responses have been essentially remedial and corrective. **Institutional and curricular segregation.**
The concept of Inclusive Education TODAY

- The concept has evolved towards the idea that **all children and young people should have equal learning conditions and opportunities in different types of schools** regardless of their cultural and social backgrounds as well of their differences on abilities and capacities.

- It implies **the generation of inclusive settings** in all schools through the provision of complementary offers that are part of a school network and by the articulation with other social services.
The concept of Inclusive Education TODAY

- The nature of the concept is not the outcome of adding categories of prioritized students (a supposedly endless list). Quite to the contrary, it is about providing **friendly and effective learning opportunities to every child** by respecting and taking care of its uniqueness and diversity. The development of curricular and pedagogical responses with regards to the diversity of student’s situations, contexts and profiles is a core issue.

- UNESCO 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”. 
Inclusive Education

- **From a societal vision:**
  the type of society and the quality of democracy we wish and we pursue. It is reflected in the type of curriculum we choose (political and technical dimensions).

Social inclusion and inclusive education, a complex and critical relationship.

Education as a central social policy.

- **From a strictly educational vision:**
  a careful consideration of the specificity and uniqueness of each child and teenager so as to provide them a real educational opportunity all along their lives.

Key role of **Cognitive Education.**

Mutual empathy and nearness between teachers and students.
Five critical dimensions to consider as part of an Agenda on Inclusive Education:

- The significance and priority given to IE within the government policies.
- The integration between the different ladders and pathways of the education system. Navigability, density and flexibility.
- The individualization of the learning needs of both potential and current students taking into account their cultural, social and cognitive diversities.
- The conceptualization and organization of the school as an integrated institutional and pedagogical unit.
- The renovation and recreation of the teachers’ profile and role (teachers education and professional development).
Inclusive Education implies four key elements:

- to learn how to learn from the differences;
- to stimulate students’ capacity of addressing and resolving problems;
- the right of every child to attend school and have high quality learning experiences;
- the moral responsibility of prioritizing those students who are in risk of being marginalized and excluded from the school.