

**Fifty-Ninth Session of the IBE Council**  
**Forum: « Inclusive Education with special focus on curriculum development »**  
**Geneva, 27 January 2010**  
**Summary**

**1. Key messages:**

**(1) Linking the inclusive education agenda to broader historical social challenges** implies revisiting:

- a) the role of education as an instrument of social mobility and change, from a life-long learning perspective;
- b) the recognition that economic growth does not *per se* ensure equity and a fair distribution of educational opportunities, due to multiple dimensions of poverty and marginality;
- c) the strong influence of social factors for the attainment of quality learning outcomes;
- d) the question of whether equity and quality go hand in hand and the need to put the focus on ensuring sustainability and improving quality.

**(2) Learning from public policy developments** on fostering the right to education and inclusive education:

- a) positive advances in various domains include new legislation (longer compulsory schooling and education as a right with a special focus on excluded groups) and active policies (i.e. providing equitable material and learning conditions, increasing instruction time and improving teachers working conditions.)
- b) positive advances have provided legitimacy to state policies but it is still insufficient
- c) the need for better synergies and complementarities between the political and intellectual powers to legitimize and sustain policies for a just society, overcoming the strong resistance to social and educational inclusion (e.g. from the powerful and wealthy or from families who are apprehensive towards heterogeneous learning environments).
- d) need to emphasise implementing “subjective policies” i.e. the consideration and sharing of teachers’ personal and social histories in order to better understand what they are thinking and doing, for developing a culture of trust within and outside the educational system. Such policies would truly engage teachers and other educational stakeholders in the inclusion process.

**(3) Conceptualizing inclusive education as a dynamic process and set of principles informing all policies** at the different education levels and settings (formal, non-formal and informal). It aims to address diversities, to remove barriers to participation and learning and to facilitate links and complementarities between the policies fostering all students’ presence, participation and achievement.

**(4) Understanding schools as social processes for improving learning conditions and opportunities** implies a series of inter-related components, in particular:

- a) leadership based on clear institutional and pedagogical objectives
- b) engaging educational actors with evidence based on school and classroom practices;
- c) prioritizing the voice of children and young people;
- d) facilitating the participation of communities at large and developing a culture of trust among different institutions and actors;
- e) harboring high learning expectations about children;

- f) creating accountability of schools and teachers for the outcomes and support of students' learning and welfare.

**(5) Visualizing the curriculum as a powerful societal tool for inclusion** implies, amongst other things:

- a) developing a sound combination of national strategies, school-based curricula and local inputs;
- b) providing common frameworks for formal and non-formal settings and provisions, complemented by differentiated components at the school level;
- c) utilising assessment for supporting learning and not for penalizing learners, especially those learners who are most disadvantaged;
- d) facilitating genuine dialogue among the different actors at the school level;
- e) emphasizing the development and attainment of relevant social knowledge;
- f) providing individual learning plans to support students' welfare and development.

The curriculum can help in closing the gaps between the theory and practice of inclusive education. The issue of implementation should be revisited in the light of a comprehensive vision of the curriculum, encompassing access, processes and outcomes.

**(6) Understanding teachers as policy-makers and educators** who should be empowered to co-develop an inclusive curriculum. Major issues include:

- a) supporting teacher's ownership of an inclusive curriculum;
- b) understanding and respecting teachers' identities;
- c) ensuring the sustainable investment in the learning competencies of teachers within teachers' professional development strategies.

**(7) Sharing countries effective practices in implementing truly inclusive education systems**, with respect to, for example:

- a) social and communitarian policies to ensure the presence and participation of learners at the school level, with a special focus on disadvantaged groups;
- b) tailored approaches for the inclusion of students with special needs in regular schools;
- c) smooth institutional and pedagogical transitions between basic and secondary education;
- d) early childhood policies for laying a proper foundation in terms of inclusive education;
- e) the planning and allocation of resources towards inclusive education policies and programmes;
- f) assessment and monitoring of the needs of different groups.

## **2. Expert presentations:**

### **• Mel Ainscow:**

IE is about making sure every child matters, which is a big policy drive in the English education system. i.e. EFA means ALL. Working closely with UK schools and worldwide, research shows that schools 'know more than they use'. To improve a school's capacity to draw on expertise and mobilize energy and creativity, there must be collaboration, through networks of schools and districts. The following elements should be encouraged: sharing experience between teachers, listening to the voice of the students in the classroom,

linking school improvement to wider community development; leadership by senior people in schools and school districts based on the principle of shared responsibility.

- **Irmeli Halinen:**

For inclusive curriculum development we need: effective strategies. i.e. clear national goals and policy guidelines; an obligation and actual possibility to design school strategies and create inclusive forms of practice; interactive planning processes of curriculum at national, local and school level. Additionally, in terms of curriculum design, we must take into account: emphasizing goals more than content; learning processes more than products; avoiding content overload; connecting learning in and outside school; formal and informal learning; flexibility and freedom to local and school level.

- **JC Tedesco**

In Latin America, the issue of inclusive education has a strong social and economic component. The most telling fact is social inequality. 10 out of the 15 most unequal countries in the world are in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region. Data of national and international evaluations show that economic conditions are the principal determinants of learning achievement. The school does not break up the cycle of poverty reproduction. In recent decades, there has been a strong expansion of primary and secondary coverage, but without ensuring high quality. Today, the issue is not about solely access but principally about presence, completion rates and quality of learning.