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## Inclusive Education as a Precursor to Education for All

التعليم الشامل كتمهيد لنشر التعليم للجميع

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### **Abstract:**

Inclusive Education is a new teaching approach which works as a catalyst to respond to the heterogeneity of learners' needs and interests. It assures equal educational chances for all learners no matter if they do not share enough commonality. Furthermore, it strives for potential provisions for those who have been pulled out from regular schools for so long. The aim of this research paper therefore is to highlight the significant importance of inclusive education in paving the way towards education for all learners. Additively, it seeks to investigate the theoretical interrelatedness between inclusive education and education for all. Most importantly, this research identifies various suggestions for the implication of inclusive education as an integral part of education of all and as an enhanced pedagogical strategy.

### **Keywords:**

Education for all, inclusive education, learner needs, regular school

المخلص:

التعليم الشامل هو منهجية تعليم جديدة و التي تعمل كمحفز لتبئية مختلف احتياجات واهتمامات التلاميذ. يضمن التعليم الشامل فرص تعليمية متساوية لجميع انواع التلاميذ بغض النظر عن اختلافاتهم. بالاضافة الى ذلك، فهو يسعى لايجاد بدائل و حلول تعليمية لفئة التلاميذ الذين تم استبعادهم من المدارس لوقت طويل. و بناءا على ذلك، فان هذه الورقة البحثية تهدف لابرار الدور الفعال للتعليم الشامل في تعبيد الطريق نحو تحقيق التعلم لجميع التلاميذ. بالاضافة الى ذلك، تسعى هذه الدراسة لتوضيح العلاقة المترابطة ما بين التعليم الشامل و تحقيق التعلم للجميع. اهمية هذا البحث تكمن ايضا في تحديد مختلف الاقتراحات التي تحت على تطبيق و تبني التعليم الشامل كجزء مهم لتحقيق التعلم للجميع من جهة و للاستفادة منه كوسيلة تعليمية بيداغوجية.

#### الكلمات المفتاحية:

التعليم للجميع، التعليم الشامل، احتياجات المتعلم، المدارس العامة

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## 1.INTRODUCTION

It is no exaggeration to say that today's classrooms are becoming more diverse as they include individuals with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Teaching learners with different interests, needs, abilities, difficulties, cultural and social backgrounds, and skills is meant to be an overwhelmingly challenging task (Florian & Pantic, 2017; Voltz et al., 2010). Accordingly, adhering to traditional methods of teaching wherein the teachers is a "sage on the stage" and the learners are passive recipients of knowledge will surely be doomed to failure

since it partially engages a certain type of learners and excludes the rest. Thus, it is imperative for teachers to be updated and use modern teaching strategies that contribute to promoting education for all learners.

Clearly, adopting Inclusive Education in schools reiterates the need to respond to the diverse needs of learners who are allied with different learning difficulties and needs. They all have the right to be listened and heard to, however many are missed out. The way teachers respond to their learners' needs ought to vary considerably to ensure all learners successful access to the curriculum. This can only be made possible through a profound understanding to the "Education for All" stance.

## **2. Inclusive Education: A Historical Account**

Inclusive Education (IE) is a philosophy of teaching where acceptance of learner diversity is a central issue. Its emergence has paralleled with human right movements and learner exclusion from mainstreaming schools. It "starts from the belief that the right to education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just society" (UNESCO, 2001, p. 15). In accordance with this view, Mitchell (2008) advocates that IE is a result of three main events: the first one, headed by the Scandinavian countries, took place around 40 years ago when impaired persons' life started being recognised and accepted in social life.

By the 1960s and 1970s, the second event took place in the USA. The aim behind this event was twofold. Firstly, it called upon all races' right of belonging, acceptance and equity. Secondly, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act passage in 1975' asked for the right of handicapped learners to be taught in normal settings alongside their same-age peers. In

June 1994, the third event entitled –the ‘Salamanca Statement’- was organised with the presence of 92 governments and 25 international organisations that all agreed upon the dire need to adhere to IE. (Mitchell, 2008)

In previous years, inclusion was associated merely with special educational needs learners. It concerned itself with finding solutions to accommodate the needs and interests of disabled learners and find suitable provisions that would reduce their exclusion from regular schools. Then it narrowed its focus to call for the right of all learners to be educated in regular schools alongside their same-age peers despite their learning difficulties. Inclusive classrooms operate on the premise that all learners are equal regardless of any individual differences they handle. It works on exploring any potential pitfalls that may deter the learners to make great academic gains. For this reason, it strives to equip teachers with adequate inclusive knowledge to ascertain the successful adoption of inclusive practices. In the same spectrum, Flecha (2015) advocates that IE mainly ensures reciprocal help and respect, unity, self-assurance, appreciation of differences, empower classroom interaction, and raise the anticipated outcomes.

## **2.1 Teachers and Learners in the Inclusive Classroom**

Inclusive classrooms are surely different from traditional classrooms where learners are passive recipients and teachers are mere purveyors of information. Today’s classrooms are becoming more diverse resulting in a dramatic change in the teaching field. Tomlinson and Allan (2000) stress the increasing diversity of the classrooms saying “Look inside almost any classroom today and you will see a mirror of our country” (p. 2). Similarly, Voltz et al. (2010) ascertain that today’s schools are

getting more diverse in nature. Classrooms are populated by learners with diverse needs and linguistic and cultural background. Teachers work with multiple types of learners such as gifted, disabled, less-able, etc.

Quite similar, Tomlinson and McTighe (2006), postulate that learners and classrooms are non-static. Through time, learners who used to struggle with learning at certain points will develop strategies to overcome those learning barriers. The same goes for their needs, interests, learning strategies, etc. What is deemed to be necessary for teaching and learning may need refinement to accommodate the changing demands of education. Obviously then, using the same traditional technique with all learners is useless. Teaching in such circumstances where one needs to be constantly up-dated is one of the predicaments that possess bigger challenges on teachers.

As argued by Tomlinson and Allen (2000) “In fact, the challenge of addressing academic diversity in today’s complex classrooms is as important and difficult a challenge as we have before us” (p. 1). Consequently, teachers are highly recommended to cope with this transformation as it has a significant importance for teacher education. (Florian & Pantić, 2017)

Pijl et al. (1997) argue that learners’ inclusion goes beyond organisational and legislation considerations. It actually depends primarily on the ‘resources’ teachers find at their disposal and how well they use those available resources to differentiate instruction and respond to the needs of all learners. Successful inclusion is rather difficult to achieve (Liasidou, 2015; Ainscow, 1999), whereas learning materials can be afforded; obtaining new teaching methods and creating effective learning

environments with small groups is rather difficult (Pijl et al., 1997). Teachers who go for inclusion and teaching diversity should first be armed with the necessitated fundamental prerequisites of IE.

Furthermore, in addition to the available resources, teachers' attitude towards disabled learners is of paramount importance in the success of inclusion. The way teachers handle teaching disabled learners, respond to their needs, and the amount of the available resources are said to be essential prerequisites of learner inclusion in regular classrooms (Voltz et al., 2010). In case teachers refuse to educate learners with special needs in regular classrooms, this will ultimately result in excluding learners from normal schooling and increasing the levels of school segregation. (Pijl et al., 1997)

Henceforth, teachers who deal with diversity ought to reveal awareness to learner needs. They need to be well trained and skillful regarding the way they deal with learners at different cognitive stages. They are also required to be adept and wise enough when adapting a rich and suitable differentiated curriculum that would match all the various needs, interests, learning preferences, and personalities presented in the classroom (Miller, 1996). To put it clear, "To make inclusive education a success, teachers in training need a thorough pre-service and an on-going in-service training programme to develop new skills and approaches" (Perner and Porter, 1998 as cited in Mitchell, 2008, p. 222). Such a view is further reinforced by Goree (1996) who advocates that to take the best out of IE, it is pivotal for teachers to be 'well trained' in how to deal with the diverse needs of learners.

### **3. Education for All**

According to UNESCO (2001), the ‘Education for All movement’ rests on the belief that all learners have the right to be equally educated within the same context. As a new idea, it was first introduced at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, and saw its heyday through the World Declaration on Education for All. As alluded to previously, IE’s chief endeavour is to deepen the inclusion of learners who have difficulties in learning through accepting their differences and responding positively to their interests. In so doing, learners would develop a sense of comfort and belongingness, and classrooms would be an adequate space for educating all learners. Further, Corbett (2001) asserts that “... an inclusive school looks to the needs of its community and works to foster a healthy climate in which individual differences and collective values are taken seriously.” (p. 35)

Similarly, Graham and Scott (2016) acknowledge that “Inclusive teaching acknowledges the classroom reality of diversity by providing multiple ways for students to access content and demonstrate their learning” (p. 9). When rigorously working on accepting and respecting learner diversity, this will, in return, lead to creating an appealing learning environment. Teachers’ attitude towards learners’ differences is important in this case simply because “All effective teaching begins from a positive attitude and a desire to achieve what is best for all the pupils in a class” (Rose & Howley, 2007, p. 13). Not only teachers’ attitude that is of cost-effect, but also the teaching strategies and the materials they opt for are of pivotal importance. This is further emphasised by Rose and Howley (2007) who say that “In response to the diverse range of needs and strengths of all pupils, it has become clear that teaching styles and strategies need to be equally diverse.” (p. 40)

It is worth mentioning that creating inclusive classes as the basic platform for Education for All cannot be achieved overnight. It is true that many countries are working on addressing IE in their schools; however, as noticed in Asia and South Africa, this move is surrounded by many impediments such as teachers' attitude, disregarding learner disabilities, lack of materials and supportive pedagogies, lack of adequate teachers' training on how to successfully implement IE, lack of clear understanding of the notion IE, traditional-oriented large classes, static teaching strategies and methods, absence of parental support, etc. (Mitchell, 2008). Although the synergy of all the aforementioned components is essential for Education for All to be skyrocketed, teachers' attitude towards learners remains the very foundation of maintaining Education for All. Additionally, it entails a radical change at different levels in education.

#### **4. Implications of Inclusive Education**

In reliance on the available research-based evidence, we have culled some implications that we deem are necessary for the effective implementation of inclusive practices in regular schools. These implications are suggested for teachers, learners, curriculum makers, and whoever this work might concern.

##### **4.1 Implications for Teachers**

Teachers are an integral part in the establishment of inclusive schools. They are the ones who are going to put the theory and philosophy of IE into practice. They can help in minimising underachievement amongst learners and ameliorate Education for All. Therefore, they need to develop a positive attitude towards IE and show preparedness and readiness to work in inclusive settings. It has been widely acknowledged that



teachers' negative perception could undermine the establishment of inclusive schools. Accordingly, they need to consider some essential aspects.

- Teachers are required to receive support and formal training on IE. In so doing, they will be equipped with the appropriate skills and instructions needed for the effective adoption of the target teaching approach.
- Teachers should accept change instead of sticking to the traditional teaching methods. They need to be updated with the technological revolution that is witnessed in the educational realm and reflect upon the effective inclusionary practices that help in understanding barriers to learning.
- Teachers are required to transmit information to all learners in the classrooms instead of working only with the elites. Put precise, they ought to differentiate instruction the thing that may evoke learners' motivation to get involved in the learning process.
- It is recommended from teachers to establish positive teacher-learner and teacher-parent relationship. This will help in providing the teachers with authentic information about the disabilities and learning difficulties their learners suffer from. Knowing the problem helps in providing the suitable provisions.
- Teachers have to be active researchers and observers in their classrooms. They need to conduct researches to know about their learners' needs, interests, learning styles, learning difficulties, weaknesses and strengths. This step will supply teachers with additional options

and ideas when differentiating the lessons and the teaching materials.

#### **4.2 Implications for Learners**

- Learners should never feel ashamed to communicate their learning difficulties to their teachers. Although there are various views that question the appropriateness of learner-teacher kind of relationships, the healthy and effective learner-teacher relationship inevitably leads to outstanding performance in academic activities. It is one effective way that helps teachers cater for their learners' needs and interests.
- Learners should take down barriers to learning through taking advantage over every single learning opportunity and constructive feedback provided by their teachers.
- It is widely advocated and enshrined in various international policy documents such as the Declaration on Education for All (1990) and the Salamanca Report (1994) that every learner should be appreciated and treated with equity irrespective of needs, learning difficulties, gender, disability, weaknesses, and strengths.

#### **4.3 Implications for Curriculum-Makers**

- The need to extend education to all requires serious reforms in education to comply with learner needs and diversity. This starts from designing more accessible syllabus that considers those needs and diversity.
- They need to design flexible curriculum that reaches out to all learners and strives to boost their intellectual

growth and overall wellbeing.

- The curriculum should consider the learners' needs and individual differences. As enshrined in many international conventions such as the Salamanca Statement, a designed curriculum that serves the needs of a diversity of learners appear to make a significant contribution to their academic goals.
- It is globally acknowledged that a flexible and responsive curriculum that goes with the demanding needs of the learners and the society at large is what helps in developing relevant skills and competencies.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This research paper addressed the issue of inclusive education and how it can be an avenue to prevailing education for all learners regardless of their diverse needs. Providing education for all learners implies creating an inclusive-oriented environment wherein learning is tailored to every learner needs. Henceforth, the aim of this research is to highlight the importance of inclusionary practices in prevailing education for all. To fulfill this aim, and based on the theoretical analysis aforementioned above, a number of pedagogical implications are provided to teachers, learners, and curriculum-makers in order to promote the adoption of inclusive education as well as to ensure equal educational opportunities for all kinds of learners.

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