11 BRIEF — Inclusive Education in Secondary Schools: A Global Perspective

Inclusive education is based on the principle that the right to education is a universal right of all children and youth as articulated in a number of internationally approved declarations, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), the *World Declaration for Education for All* (1990), the *Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disability* (1993), the *UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action* (1994), and the *Dakar Framework for Action* (2000).

Inclusive education is an approach that recognizes each child to be a unique learner and requires ordinary schools to be capable of educating all children in their community regardless of physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other differences. Inclusive education draws on a social model to understand educational difficulties—a model that shifts the attention from the "personal tragedy of the individual" towards the way in which social environments act to exclude individuals from full participation in society. This approach implies that, in part, learners experience difficulties in the educational system because of the barriers to learning implicit in the system not because of their individual impairments. Importantly, inclusive education is about removing barriers and increasing educational opportunities.

Implementing Inclusive Education

For countries to implement inclusive educational practices, a number of key areas must be addressed:

◆ Developing Inclusive Policies and Practices,

◆ Establishing Professional Development for Inclusive Education,

◆ Developing an Inclusive Curriculum,

◆ Initiating and Sustaining Change in Schools,

◆ Partnering with Families and the Community,

◆ Organizing Supports in Inclusive Systems, and

◆ Managing Finance to Support Inclusive Systems (Magrab, 2002).

The move to more inclusive education does not happen overnight. A process of ongoing change ensues that must be based on a clearly articulated set of principles and that addresses system-wide development. To achieve inclusive education, countries have to develop strategies for managing this process of change over a sustained period of time. This process of change requires financial, human, and intellectual resources through building partnerships with stake-holders, international organizations, and NGOs.

Because teachers are one of the most important resources for all educational systems, the development of a teaching force that is skilled in inclusive practices is crucial. As systems become more inclusive, professional development

> *MY NAME IS BONGANI DLAMINI.*
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> *I am 18 years old and a grade 9 student at Siyafunda secondary school. I am physically disabled because when I was two years old I was badly burnt on my legs and back with boiling water. My walking is very difficult and I have to use crutches.*
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> *I enjoy my schooling at Siyafunda school because I find that the teachers respect me. I do not feel that I am treated different from other learners at the school by teachers. I think the teachers try to teach all learners and help them.*

is particularly important because of the new challenges that face both teachers in regular education—who have to respond to a great diversity of student needs—and special educators—who find the context and focus of their work changing in major ways. Training efforts must be sustained in a planned, systematic manner which implies that ministries of education and local authorities develop long-term training plans to assure professional development for inclusive education.

A VILLAGE VISIT PROGRAM TO study the state of individuals with disabilities in the district was under way. One of the health posts in the village reported a blind child eight years of age. Ten years ago, when we first met Manoj, he was begging in the street. Because he was blind, he was completely neglected by his family and was discarded by the society. We found a Japanese sponsor for him and with those funds we admitted him to Namuma Machhindra Secondary Boarding School. Slowly, Manoj became accustomed to the school environment. He turned himself into a keen learner and learned the social way of living. He slowly made friends, both normal and blind, in the hostel. Now, Manoj is an understanding and hardworking student. He independently goes to and from school. Now, he is able to make other blind children understand the importance of education and guide them.

The curriculum embraces all the learning experiences that are available to students in their schools and communities and has to be structured in such a way that all students can access it. Inclusive curricula are constructed flexibly not only to allow for *school-level* adaptations and developments, but also to allow for adaptations and modifications to meet *individual* student's needs and teachers' styles of working. There are good reasons for arguing that the development of an inclusive curriculum is the most important pre-condition of inclusive education and that inflexible and content-heavy curricula are the major cause of segregation and exclusion.

The implementation of more inclusive systems of education is possible only if schools themselves are committed to becoming more inclusive. Schools typically are required to change their cultures including existing values, assumptions, and practices. Working with the school as a whole and implementing changes systematically throughout the school are crucial strategies.

Education is not simply a matter for professionals. Families have a major contribution to make to their children's education. By building the family's right to involvement in the schools into legislation or into the system of school governance, the importance of this partnership is honored. Partnership with the wider community is a significant opportunity for schools as well. Not only is the community a crucial resource for the schools, but the school can be a meaningful resource for the broader

community. Importantly, families and community groups often take a lead role as activists for inclusive education by promoting and advancing changes in policy and legislation.

In order to create schools in which a diversity of learners have opportunities to become successful students, it is crucial to have a range of effective supports. The most important form of support is that which is provided from the resources available to every school—children supporting children, teachers supporting teachers, parents as partners in the education of their children, and communities as supporters of schools. Additionally, there may be support from teachers with specialist knowledge, resources centers, and professionals from other sectors.

All systems face a common problem in identifying resources for learners who experience difficulties. However well-resourced the system may be overall, there is almost always a feeling that the resources are inadequate to meet learners' needs. Two key issues can be identified. First, often there is the mistaken assumption that meeting needs always demands extra resources and that these resources always demand extra funding. Through broadening an approach to resource development by responding to learners' difficulties in ways that are not dependent on additional funding such as parental involvement in the classroom, maximizing the use of skill levels of teachers, improving the quality of school management, and enhancing the degree of community support for inclusion, the budgetary

demands can be reduced.

Secondly, in many countries, there have been separate funding streams for mainstream education and for specialized education. The consequence is that there are administrative barriers between ordinary schools and access to the funds they need to support inclusive approaches. Inclusive systems, therefore, need a mechanism for channeling additional funds into ordinary schools.

Inclusive Education and Secondary Schools

To establish inclusive practices in secondary schools some specific challenges must be addressed. Creating a responsive climate in secondary schools requires a commitment to the mission of inclusion, strong principal leadership, and a collaborative spirit. Traditionally teachers in secondary schools work in isolation from each other as do groups of students. A significant transformation in both the structure and culture of the school environment must occur.

To achieve inclusion, all students must have access to the curriculum, regardless of their disability, gender, or ethnicity. This requires flexible, creative planning for accommodations and adaptations. In secondary schools, all academic departments must be involved and committed.

Adolescence, in itself, represents a developmental period that presents unique challenges to schools. The adolescent's drive towards independence, risk-taking, and experimentation serves as both a resource and deterrent to

learning. Secondary schools must address these specific developmental needs as they develop inclusive practices.

Particularly the transition to the world of work and/or higher education is a unique responsibility of secondary schools. The planning and implementation of these transitions also must be considered through the lens of inclusion. Assessment, planning, and opportunity are at the heart of successful inclusive transitions.

Moving Towards Inclusive Practices in Secondary Schools: A Global Perspective

UNESCO, in conjunction with the International Working Group on Disability and Development (IWGDD) and the Consortium for Children and Youth with Disabilities and Special Health Care Needs, conducted a study to identify and describe illustrative examples of inclusive approaches to education in secondary schools in multiple regions around the world (Magrab, in press).

The schools and countries were selected to represent a diverse view of inclusive practices and to demonstrate how schools have begun to implement change towards providing inclusive environments. The countries and schools included in the study are as follows:

◆ South Africa—Siyafunda Secondary

◆ Nepal—The Namuna Machhindra Secondary Boarding School

◆ Chile—Francisco de Miranda School

◆ Hungary—The János von

Neumann Secondary School of Informatics

◆ Ukraine—Secondary School #82

◆ United States (Vermont)—Hunt Middle School.

Each case study identifies issues to consider in the relationship between inclusive practices and the structuring of secondary school education.

Countries provided a discussion of national policy and legislation efforts, funding practices, personnel preparation, and evaluation practices. For each illustrative example of a secondary school program, information was gathered around the programmatic implementation of inclusive practices, funding approaches, and external supports. Additionally each school provided a human interest story, a brief account of a child's

experience in the inclusive program.

As we move globally towards implementing inclusive practice in secondary schools, there are lessons to be learned from the diverse examples in this study. Each example reflected not only the will of those who worked towards inclusion in the particular secondary school, but the ecological and political supports and barriers influencing success.

Clearly commonalities were identified that lead to the success of creating inclusive environments. Most significantly, in each of the schools, the success of establishing inclusive practices was based on the individual and institutional commitment to principles of inclusion and the dedication to the goal of educating all children, regardless of their special needs. The willingness to create change in the environment and a process to

deal with that change was a strongly related characteristic.

Seeing inclusion as a benefit for all children and youth in the school environment was another common thread. This further reinforces the importance of attitudinal elements in the success of providing inclusive environments for youth with disabilities in secondary schools.

The training of teachers, particularly teachers in the ordinary classroom, was a challenge for each of the programs. Often, the training was addressed in an informal, in-service manner. Teacher training around inclusive practices—especially for general education teachers in the academic areas—was identified as a key dimension in the implementation of inclusion in secondary schools.

As we look towards the future, these examples point to the need for more in depth action research to understand the challenges of and strategies for globally implementing inclusive practices in secondary schools. Recognizing the specific developmental needs of adolescents, the structure and culture of secondary school environments, and national policies and practices are parameters that clearly affect the implementation of inclusive practices and should be examined.

This brief is based on the content of two documents published by UNESCO:

Magrab, P. (in press). *Towards Inclusive Practices in Secondary School Education.* Paris, France: UNESCO

Magrab, P. (2002). *Open File on Inclusive Education: Support Materials for Managers and Administrators.* Paris, France: UNESCO.

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FOR HIS SECONDARY EDUCATION

András, a young man with severe motor and speech difficulties, moved to the János von Neumann Secondary School in Budapest, Hungary. The motto of the school is: "Equal standards, unlimited support." This is András' fourth year. He is applying to the Technical University here in Budapest for a place to study informatics. Because of the high standards of the Janos von Neumann School, and his own high achievements, he stands a very good chance of being accepted to University.