

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Introduction

The goal of this topic is to introduce learners to the concept of inclusive education. This includes its meaning, advantages of inclusive education, barriers, and students' concerns about inclusive education, criticism of inclusive education and ways for effective implementation of inclusive education. The unit is intended to supplement the topic of individual differences.

Audience

The intended audience of this course is learners and instructors in the field of education, particularly in higher education.

Length of topic

This topic has been designed to be covered in three days (approximately one hour per day).

Topic outcomes

While engaging with this topic, learners will:

- Conceptualise the term inclusive education.
- Identify the benefits, barriers and criticism of inclusive education.

Technology Requirements

- A computer or tablet with internet access for interactive activities or research.
- Audio/visual equipment for videos or case study discussions especially for audience with disabilities.

Concept of Inclusive Education

Inclusion is the act of including normal and exceptional learners in the same education system. It involves the reduction of barriers to learning, by allowing full participation of all students and increasing the school's ability to accommodate all students regardless of their differences. This is an effort to treat them in ways that reflect that they are of equal value and status.

Under the inclusion model, students with special needs learn with non-disabled students. What is needed in the inclusion model is not only the classroom but appropriate education for them. So, inclusion is about the child's right to participate and the school's duty to accept the child.



Figure 1: Example of inclusive classroom

Characteristics of Inclusive Education

- i. All children can be enrolled at the closest school to their home.
- ii. All schools have a “zero-rejection policy” in enrolling and educating children at the school closest to their homes. All students are welcomed and appreciated.

- iii. All children learn in regular and heterogeneous classrooms with peers of the same age.
- iv. All children follow substantially similar study programmes, with curricula that can be adapted and modified if necessary and teaching methods varied to respond to all needs without discrimination.
- v. All children participate fully in regular educational activities and events in schools and classrooms with a celebration and appreciation of diversity in these classrooms.
- vi. All children are supported to make friends and achieve academic and social success with their peers.
- vii. Adequate resources and training shall be provided to all specialists and stakeholders within the school, classroom, and educational district to support the proper implementation of inclusive education.

Types of Inclusive Education

Inclusion has two subtypes which are partial inclusion and full inclusion.

Partial inclusion is a type of inclusion in which students with special needs are educated in regular classes nearly all day, or at least for more than half of the day. Whenever possible, the students receive additional help or special instruction in the special classroom.

Full inclusion refers to the type of inclusion in which students with special needs are always educated alongside students while maintaining appropriate support and services. Some educators say this might be more effective for students with special needs. At the extreme, full inclusion is the integration of all students, even those that require the most substantial educational and behavioural supports and services to be successful in

regular classes and the elimination of special, segregated special education classes

Advantages of Inclusive Education

- Inclusive education may enhance children without disabilities develop positive attitudes and perceptions of persons with disabilities and the enhancement of social status with non-disabled peers.
- Children with disabilities also become less discriminatory, hence developing communication and leadership skills more rapidly
- It implements one of the human rights which is the right to education (learning together).
- It enables exceptional learners to perform better than when excluded.
- It prepares disabled learners for integrated community life.
- It is the value of equality in the provision of education
- Children with disabilities feel wanted, hence improving their level of self-esteem.
- Inclusion is cheaper in terms of money and resources

Barriers for inclusion

- i. Large class sizes. Overcrowded classrooms make it challenging for teachers to provide individual attention.
- ii. Resistance to change. Teachers, or school administrators may resist inclusive practices due to unfamiliarity in terms of knowledge and skills to accommodate students with special needs.

- iii. Poor parental involvement and support. Lack of communication, understanding, or support from parents can hinder the effective implementation of inclusive education.
- iv. Limited social integration and peer relationships. Students with special needs may encounter peer rejection, which could negatively impact their social conduct and self-perception.
- v. Inadequate educator training, and knowledge. Teachers lack adequate training to warrant their knowledge and ability to assist children with special needs in their classes.
- vi. Lack of support. Very little assistance came from government and institutional heads towards the implementation of inclusive education for teachers, who were motivated to accept the children even though they had no training.
- vii. Inadequate professional and specialist collaboration. Lack of specialists' involvement and where these specialists were involved, their expensive charges made it unsustainable. Some schools do not allow facilitators to visit.

Student Concerns about Inclusion Practices

Even with inclusive education becoming more popular in both the classroom and in society, still, some students with exceptionalities are not securing the benefits of being in an inclusive classroom. Some students with special needs reported significantly experiencing lower levels of social acceptance and higher levels of social rejection in inclusive settings. This demonstrates there are still some students with special needs being rejected by their peers in inclusive settings.

Also, many of the placements in mainstream schools with inclusive education are done because they believe the students are academically able, but rarely do they consider if they are socially able to adjust to these circumstances. Studies show that some students with exceptionalities experience feelings of dread, loneliness, and isolation while being bullied, misunderstood, and unsupported by their peers and teachers. These feelings and exclusion impact their well-being and demonstrated "that inclusive education is not meeting the needs of all children with exceptionalities; a gap exists between inclusion rhetoric and their lived realities in the classroom". This shows there is still a need for improvement in the social conditions within inclusive education settings, as many with exceptionalities are not benefiting from this environment.

Criticisms of Inclusion Programs

- i. Inclusion approaches neglect the fact that most students with significant special needs require individualized instruction or highly controlled environments. Thus, general education classroom teachers often are teaching a curriculum while the special education teacher is remediating instruction at the same time.
- ii. A child with serious inattention problems may be unable to focus in a classroom that contains twenty or more active children.
- iii. Inclusive schools neglect to prepare general education staff for students with special needs, thus preventing its effective implementation. Moreover, they expound an inclusive philosophy for political reasons, and do away with any valuable pull-out services, all on behalf of the students who have no say in the matter.

- iv. Inclusion is viewed by some as a practice philosophically attractive yet impractical. Moreover, inclusive services do not allow students with moderate to severe disabilities individualized instruction in resource rooms, from which many show considerable benefit in both learning and emotional development.
- v. Parents of students with disabilities may be cautious about placing their children in an inclusion program because of fears that the children will be ridiculed by other students, or be unable to develop regular life skills in an academic classroom.
- vi. Inclusive schools are not a cost-effective response when compared to cheaper or more effective interventions, such as special education. Special education helps "fix" the students with exceptionalities by providing individualized and personalized instruction to meet their unique needs. This is to help students with special needs adjust as quickly as possible to the mainstream of the school and community.

Ways for Effective Implementation of Inclusive Education

The following strategies when implemented in inclusive education can create an environment where ordinary and students with special needs have opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential.

- i. Establish clear policies supporting inclusive education, backed by government or institutional commitment. Provide legal frameworks that ensure the rights of students with diverse needs.
- ii. Train educators in inclusive teaching practices. Teachers with strong special education backgrounds are competent to handle the

education and teaching of students with disabilities. So, providing ongoing professional development and support and employing special education professionals to collaborate with general educators can enhance the effective implementation of inclusive education.

- iii. Design flexible curricula that accommodate the diverse learning needs of all students. Teachers should provide students with opportunities to choose rather than predetermine their level of participation in the curriculum. Incorporate assistive technologies to support students with disabilities. Use a variety of teaching methods, such as hands-on activities, multimedia, and peer learning. Inclusive education teachers need to innovate flexible teaching strategies based on the needs of their students.
- iv. Create accessible and welcoming physical environments. Foster a sense of belonging by promoting respect and acceptance among students. Arrange classrooms to facilitate interaction and minimize barriers.
- v. Involve parents in the learning process and decision-making. Partner with community organizations to provide additional resources and support.
- vi. Encourage collaboration among teachers, administrators, support staff, parents, and students. This can be done by using a team-based approach to problem-solving and planning. Inclusive education teachers need to grow as lifelong learners and collaborators in inclusive practice. Teachers need to build on each other's strengths and complement each other's weaknesses to improve their overall professional competence in collaboration.

- vii. Effective implementation of inclusive education can be enhanced by promoting awareness about disabilities and diversity to reduce stigma. Encourage inclusive mindsets among students, staff, and the community.
- viii. Ensure regular assessment of the effectiveness of inclusive education practices. Use feedback to make improvements in policies, teaching methods, and resources.
- ix. Ensure adequate funding for training, materials, and infrastructure. Provide resources such as teaching aids, specialized equipment, and additional staff for effective implementation of inclusive education.

Assessment Questions on Inclusive Education

General Understanding

1. What does inclusive education mean to you?
2. How would you define inclusive education in your own words?
3. What are the key principles that underpin inclusive education?
4. Why is inclusive education considered essential in today's society?
5. What are the key features of inclusive education?

Purpose and Importance

6. How does inclusive education benefit students with and without disabilities?
7. What role does inclusive education play in fostering equality and diversity?
8. In what ways does inclusive education prepare students for life in a diverse society?
9. How does inclusive education promote social integration?
10. What impact does inclusive education have on the academic achievement of children with disabilities?
11. How does inclusion foster positive attitudes towards diversity?
12. What is the role of peer support in inclusive education?

13. What role does inclusive education play in fostering leadership skills?

Practical Implementation

14. What strategies can schools implement to make education more inclusive?

15. How can teachers effectively address the diverse needs of students in an inclusive classroom?

16. What are some barriers to inclusive education, and how can they be overcome?

17. What role do families and communities play in promoting inclusive education?

18. How can educators ensure that inclusive education is accessible to all?

Challenges, Barriers and Criticism

19. Explain challenges faced by teachers when implementing inclusive practices in the classroom.

20. How can technology aid in achieving the goals of inclusive education?

21. How does a lack of teacher training affect inclusive education?

22. What are the barriers to implementing inclusive education?

23. How do attitudinal barriers hinder inclusive education?

24. What are the main criticisms of inclusive education?

25. How do large class sizes pose a challenge for inclusion?

26. How does inclusion affect students without disabilities?

27. With examples, explain the unintended consequences of inclusive education.

28. What challenges arise in addressing diverse disabilities within a single classroom?

29. What are the challenges of implementing inclusive education in resource-limited settings?

30. Explain how can inclusive education lead to bullying or social isolation

References

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