

Inclusive Education - Reader

Illustrative definitions

Inclusive education is when all students, regardless of any challenges they may have, are placed in age-appropriate general education classes that are in their own neighborhood schools to receive high-quality instruction, interventions, and supports that enable them to meet success in the core curriculum (Bui, Quirk, Almazan, & Valenti, 2010; Alquraini & Gut, 2012).

According to UNESCO, inclusive education is seen 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 from education and from within education.” The goal is that the whole education system will facilitate learning environments where teachers and learners embrace and welcome the challenge and benefits of diversity. Within an inclusive education approach, learning environments are fostered where individual needs are met and every student has an opportunity to succeed (UNESCO).

Inclusive education values diversity and the unique contributions each student brings to the classroom. In a truly inclusive setting, every child feels safe and has a sense of belonging. Students and their parents participate in setting learning goals and take part in decisions that affect them (Open Society Foundation).

Inclusive Education (IE)

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As an educational terminology "integration" has been used for a long period of time, and this education format still exists in some countries. Integration means the process of transferring CSN from special schools to mainstream schools (Thomas et al., 2005). This process urged the children "to fit in" to the classroom setting and school environment. But the overall results of the process were assimilation. However, unlike integration, the emergence of inclusion concentrated on transformation of profoundly rooted structural obstacles rather than assimilation. This transformation changed dominant interpretation of "success", "failure", "ability" and so on (Barton, 2003).

Basically, IE means educating learners with special educational needs in regular education settings. However, IE is not limited to only placement. Rather, it means facilitating education of students with special needs with a whole suite of provisions which include curriculum adaptation, adapted teaching methods, modified assessment techniques, and accessibility arrangements. In short, inclusive education is a multicomponent strategy or, perhaps, a mega- strategy (Mitchell, 2008). Inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners and can thus be understood as a key strategy to achieve education for all (EFA).

For Mittler (2000) IE is a total reformation of education system in terms of pedagogy and curriculum. These reforms are viewed as intentions to welcome all diversities such as gender, nationality, culture, language, academic achievements, and disabilities. Skjørten (2001) also carries the same view stating that inclusion is an inclusive society schools, kindergartens, and other institutions welcomes people with social care. Here the essence of inclusion becomes integral part of humanism which argues that all forms of segregation contradict universal moral values. IE become and remains as a leading idea which has inspired a lot of educational institutions and educators to initiate projects to transform cultures and procedures in schools for diversity (Barton and Armstrong, 2007).

International principles of inclusive education are defined in the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994):

1. The guiding principle that informs this Framework is that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions;
2. Special needs education incorporates the proven principles of sound pedagogy from which all children may benefit;
3. The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have;
4. Within inclusive schools, children with special educational needs should receive whatever extra support they may require to ensure their effective education;
5. Special attention should be paid to the needs of children and youth with severe or multiple disabilities;
6. Curricula should be adapted to children's needs, not vice versa;
7. Children with special needs should receive additional instructional support in the context of the regular curriculum, not a different curriculum.