



Study Guide United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural
Organization

*“Introducing Inclusive Developing Countries and Learning in
Eliminating Discrimination in Education at the National Level”*

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Introduction

Eliminating discrimination in education and promoting inclusive learning are pressing challenges faced by developing countries worldwide. This essay aims to shed light on the problem at hand, emphasizing the need for equal access to education and the consequences of discriminatory practices. By understanding the complexities of this issue, delegates in the UN Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization (UNESCO) can work towards effective solutions that promote inclusive learning and equality in education at the national level.

Access to quality education is a fundamental human right, as recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, the reality is that millions of individuals in developing countries continue to face barriers that prevent them from receiving an education. Discrimination based on factors such as gender, ethnicity, disability, socio-economic status, and geographical location perpetuates exclusionary practices, limiting educational opportunities and exacerbating social inequalities.

Discrimination in any form remains a significant obstacle in education. For instance, individuals with disabilities often encounter physical and attitudinal barriers that deny them equal access to education, perpetuating their marginalization. Socio-economic disparities further compound the problem. Children from impoverished backgrounds often lack the necessary resources, such as textbooks, school facilities, and qualified teachers, to receive a quality education. This perpetuates a cycle of poverty and social exclusion, as education is a critical pathway to economic opportunities and social mobility. Discriminatory practices are not limited to access alone but also manifest within educational institutions. Biased tracking systems that segregate students based on perceived abilities can limit opportunities for certain groups, reinforcing stereotypes and hindering individual growth. Discrimination can also manifest in the curriculum, which may fail to represent diverse perspectives and histories, thereby perpetuating cultural biases and reinforcing

marginalization. The consequences of exclusionary practices and discrimination in education are far-reaching. Individuals who are denied equal access to education face limited opportunities for personal and professional growth, leading to increased poverty, unemployment, and social unrest. Moreover, societies that fail to provide inclusive learning environments miss out on the diverse perspectives, talents, and contributions of marginalized individuals, hindering overall progress and development.

History

The 1994 Salamanca conference was a significant turning point in developing inclusive learning in poor nations and the nationwide elimination of prejudice in education. Since then, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of inclusive education, which is defined as a systematic framework for removing barriers according to the principle that every learner matters and matters equally. Inclusive education is a moral imperative and a prerequisite for sustainable societies, education in, and for, a democracy based on fairness, justice, and equity. Despite the consensus on the implementation of inclusive education, developing countries have not yet arrived at the point where every school in every developing country would have to implement inclusive education. This is due to various challenges such as financial and human resource constraints, unclear situations at the government level, ideological socialization, large classes, lack of awareness of what inclusion entails, and an unrealistic sense of urgency of some with regard to implementation.

National definitions of inclusive education tend to embrace a broader scope, with 68% of countries defining inclusive education in laws, policies, plans, or strategies. However, definitions that cover all marginalized groups are found in only 57% of countries, while in 17% of countries, the definition of inclusive education covers exclusively people with disabilities or special needs. Evidence from

citizen-led assessments in Southern Asia and subSaharan Africa highlighted large gaps between what is taught in schools and what children need to learn. UNESCO's involvement in developing inclusive education has also been aimed at making better use of existing expertise and creativity within any given educational context. UNESCO has developed a reference document that calls for major reform of the ordinary school to develop 'inclusive' education systems. UNESCO has also been working to promote the Convention against Discrimination in Education, which asserts the principle of nondiscrimination and proclaims that every person has the right to education.

Causes

The primary issue raised by the discussion of implementing inclusive learning in developing nations in order to deal with discrimination in national education systems is the marginalization of certain groups in the educational system. Here are some of the causes:

- Stigma and discrimination at the community level: At the community level, stigma and discrimination must be tackled, and individuals need to be educated on the benefits of inclusive education.¹
- Inappropriate policy development issues: The implementation of inclusive education is hampered by various issues such as inappropriate policy development issues, which can lead to a lack of inclusive education nationally.
- Teacher attitudes and lack of training: The implementation of inclusive education is also hampered by teacher attitudes, lack of teacher training, and inadequate support and resources.²
- Limited resources: There are many barriers to inclusive education, all of which hamper the right to education of persons with disabilities. These barriers include limited teacher training and teacher preparation, limited human and material resources, and limited government support.
- Discriminatory legislation: Discriminatory legislation is incongruent with international standards and mandates and can support the limitations to inclusive education.

¹ 'Inclusive Education' (UNICEF) <<https://www.unicef.org/education/inclusive-education>> accessed 23 October 2023

² (The effects of poverty on academic achievement Kendra McKenzie ... - ed) <<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1230212.pdf>> accessed 23 October 2023

- Overloaded curriculum: When a curriculum is overloaded and is the same for everyone, some students, generally those from rural areas, cultural minorities, or living in poverty, find little meaning in what is taught.³
- Lack of financial resources: Many children who do attend school receive an inadequate education because of poorly trained, underpaid teachers, overcrowded classrooms, and a lack of basic resources.⁴
- Cultural barriers and prejudices: In some countries, cultural barriers and prejudices prevent children from attending school, particularly girls.
- Exclusion: Some children may be excluded from education due to their disabilities, poverty, or other factors.

In summary, the causes of the problem of inclusive learning in developing countries and discrimination in education at the national level are complex and multifaceted. They include stigma and discrimination, inappropriate policy development, teacher attitudes and lack of training, limited resources, discriminatory legislation, overloaded curriculum, language barriers, lack of financial resources, cultural barriers and prejudices, and exclusion.

³ ‘Recognizing and Overcoming Inequity in Education’ (United Nations) <<https://www.un.org/en/un-chronicle/recognizing-and-overcoming-inequity-education>> accessed 23 October 2023

⁴ ‘Economic Issues No. 33 - Educating Children in Poor Countries’ (International Monetary Fund) <<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/issues/issues33/>> accessed 23 October 2023

The problem

The fundamental issue that inclusive learning initiatives in developing nations and national education policy aim to address is the widespread discrimination and exclusion that marginalized groups experience when trying to obtain high-quality education. This problem arises from systemic barriers, discriminatory practices, and social inequalities that hinder equal educational opportunities for all individuals.

Stigma and discrimination at the community level, inappropriate policy development issues, teacher attitudes and lack of training, limited resources, discriminatory legislation, overloaded curriculum, language barriers, lack of financial resources, cultural barriers and prejudices, and exclusion are some of the causes of these problems. Discrimination in education at the national level can lead to the exclusion of certain groups of students, such as those with disabilities, from mainstream education. Inclusive education, which aims to provide quality education to all students regardless of their background, is a way to address discrimination in education. However, the lack of overarching and coherent structures to support education in developing countries has been a major barrier to implementing inclusive education. UNESCO has been working to promote inclusive education and eliminate discrimination in education through various initiatives. For example, UNESCO helps Member States develop and implement inclusive policies and programs that reach excluded and marginalized groups and provide them with equal opportunities for education. UNESCO's work in inclusive education covers everything from curricula to pedagogy and teaching. UNESCO's involvement in developing inclusive education has also been aimed at making better use of existing expertise and creativity within any given educational context.

Past UN Actions

The United Nations has taken up the topic of introducing inclusive learning in developing countries and eliminating discrimination in education at the national level. The UN recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to education and aims to realize this right without discrimination and based on equal opportunity. The following are some of the UN actions that have been taken on the topic to date:

1. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to education and aims to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning.⁵

2. Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325: The Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 highlights the importance of women's leadership in peacebuilding and calls for reforms that include gender equality and women's leadership as central ingredients.⁶

3. Our Future Agenda: Our Future Agenda is a vision and plan for the next and future generations that aims to meet the global target for 40 million more girls to get an education by 2026 while combating gender-based discrimination and violence and improving access to quality education.

4. Achieving Sustainable Development and Promoting Development Cooperation: Achieving Sustainable Development and Promoting Development Cooperation is a book that presents the key

⁵ 'Article 24 – Education Enable' (*United Nations*) <<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-ofpersons-with-disabilities/article-24-education.html>> accessed 23 October 2023

⁶ 'Women's Participation' (*Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 | UN Women*) <<https://wps.unwomen.org/>> accessed 23 October 2023

debates that took place during the 2008 high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, at which ECOSOC organized its first biennial Development Partnerships.

5. **Independent Committee Findings:** An independent UN human rights committee found that Spain violated the right to inclusive education of a child with disabilities and called on the country to end any educational segregation of students with disabilities in both special education and mainstream schools.

The UN actions that have been taken upon the topic to date include the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, Our Future Agenda, Achieving Sustainable Development and Promoting Development Cooperation, and independent committee findings. These actions demonstrate the UN's commitment to ensuring that every child has access to quality education and learning.

Solutions

Inclusive education is essential for providing a better-quality education for all children and changing discriminatory attitudes. However, children around the world are excluded from schools where they belong because of disability, race, language, religion, gender, and poverty. To address this issue, possible solutions that are currently being discussed or implemented include:

1. **Reforming education systems:** Governments must be prepared to invest substantial resources at the outset on system reforms such as teacher and staff training, improving infrastructure, learning materials, and equipment, and revising curricula to implement inclusive

education successfully. Inclusive education policies should build on antidiscrimination legislation, legal mandates for inclusion, and policies to remove barriers.

2. Engaging with civil society: Governments should engage with civil society and other actors in policy development by providing technical support.

3. Providing support for disadvantaged students: In a number of countries, disadvantaged students face discrimination within the education system, and their learning gaps are dealt with by moving those facing difficulties out of the system. To address this issue, countries need to develop consistent inclusive policies, with a strong public investment in education, especially for disadvantaged children.

4. Measuring success: Measuring the success of inclusive education should go beyond merely counting students to evaluate access, but should include measures of educational quality, outcomes, and experiences. Understanding and evaluating teaching practices is also critically important.

5. Creating safe, inclusive, supportive, and fair school climates: Harsh or unfair exclusionary discipline practices and frequent disparities in the use of exclusionary discipline practices for children and children with disabilities can contribute to students feeling unwelcome, unsafe, and unsupported. To address this issue, schools should provide students equitable access to mental health services that are welcoming and inclusive regarding race, ethnicity, culture, language, gender identity, socioeconomic status, and disability. Inclusive education is not a cost-cutting measure, and governments must be prepared to invest substantial resources at the outset on system

reforms. Making education inclusive requires a shared responsibility, and the entire community, including mainstream and special educators, social workers, parents, and students, must work together and participate in the design, delivery, and monitoring of education. Governments must also be held accountable for implementing anti-discrimination legislation, legal mandates for inclusion, and policies to remove barriers.

Conclusion

To sum up, this study guide by the UN Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization (UNESCO) focuses on eliminating discrimination in national education systems and the problem of inclusive learning in developing nations. Inclusive learning ensures equal access to education for all individuals, regardless of their background, abilities, or social status. The main problem is the persistent exclusion and discrimination marginalized groups face in education systems, which perpetuates social inequalities and hampers societal progress. These solutions include reforming education systems, engaging with civil society, providing support for disadvantaged students, measuring success, and creating safe, inclusive, supportive, and fair school climates. Inclusive education is not only a human right but also a key to sustainable development, and it is essential to ensure that no one is left behind.

Links to research

<https://www.unicef.org/education/inclusive-education>

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1230212.pdf>

<https://www.un.org/en/un-chronicle/recognizing-and-overcoming-inequityeducation>

<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/issues/issues33/>

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-ofpersons-with-disabilities/article-24education.html#:~:text=States%20Parties%20shall%20ensure%20that%20persons%20with%20disabilities%20are%20able,an%20equal%20basis%20with%20others>

https://wps.unwomen.org/pdf/en/globalstudy_en_web.pdf