



## **Summary**

### **7 Communities of Practice Regional Workshops on Inclusive Education**

#### **IBE-UNESCO**

#### **Eastern and South-eastern European Workshop on Inclusive Education (Sinaia, Romania, 14-16 June 2007)**

Policy-makers, educators, and curriculum specialists from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine as well as representatives from international organizations (OCDE and Open Society Institute), UNESCO CEPES and Finland (as a reference country in regards to the development of good inclusive educational practices) attended the workshop (23 participants). It was co-organized by Center Education 2000+ (Bucharest, Romania), the Eastern and South-eastern Community of Practice in Curriculum Development and IBE.

The discussion was mainly focused on the need to broaden the concept of inclusive education overcoming the strong tradition of a medical defectology approach (i.e. residential institutions) and the circumscription of inclusive policies to students with special needs (prevalence of the integration model). Although there have been positive advances in terms of visions, strategies and practices, mainly by incorporating groups categorised as with cultural and social disadvantages (i.e. street and working children, Roma population), inclusive education is still not a high-level priority in the regional agenda. It is principally dominated by the objective of integrating students with special needs in mainstream schools. Common barriers of exclusion include a lack of systematic comparative data; diverse models and types of special schools segregated from the other ones; insufficient curricular integration and articulation between Primary and Secondary Education; overcrowded classes; untrained teachers and staff; strong communitarian and family opposition to the integration of students with special needs; lack of official effective policy design and implementation and an absence of public awareness about inclusive education.

A common challenge the region faces is that it is in its history to evaluate individuals not groups, so that the entire concept of inclusive education which hinges on including diverse groups introduces a new way of looking at things (i.e. the way of understanding the curriculum and the links between different sectors and branches, the approaches towards teachers education and the training of teachers). Many countries are in transition and this will undoubtedly impede large scale system change and education

reform. Policy discontinuity is a core impediment to advancing in consensus building under a long-term vision. There needs to be a common, broad and shared definition of inclusive education for each nation that can be visualized as a step further in addressing the needs of students with diverse learning conditions and needs in mainstream schools (build upon what has been achieved with the integration models). UNESCO can play a key role in providing a comprehensive conceptual framework on inclusive education which extends beyond just special needs education and reflects the idea of social justice.

Based on the regional roadmap discussed during the workshop and jointly with the Open Society Institute we plan to implement advocacy and awareness raising activities around a broadened concept of Inclusive Education incorporating also the discussion around social inclusion. We also plan to promote the signing and ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).

### **Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa Workshop on Inclusive Education (Nairobi, Kenya, 25-27 July 2007)**

Within the seminar entitled “Poverty Alleviation, HIV and AIDS Education and Inclusive Education: Priority Issues for Quality Education for all in Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa”, policy-makers, directors of education, curriculum specialists and teacher trainers from Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda as well as representatives from ED/BAS, Nairobi Cluster Office and local UN Country team discussed around Inclusive Education during two days (23 participants). It was co-organized by Kenyan Ministry of Education, the Kenyan Institute for Education (KIE) and IBE.

The discussion was mainly focused on the need to broaden the concept and scope of Inclusive Education in at least three main aspects: (i) its links to EFA goals as education for all learners by addressing the needs of diverse social marginalised groups (i.e. girls, those affected by HIV and AIDS, nomadic population, orphans and street children, out of school youth); (ii) inclusive education is strongly associated with fostering an inclusive curriculum which means, among other things, the design of a common curriculum framework from Childhood onwards, the strengthening of Basic Education and emphasizing the need for early education interventions and the development of competency and life-skills approaches and (iii) a concerted effort to harness appropriate and relevant resources to provide a continuum of services and support based upon a multi-sectoral approach (conceptual and operational coordination of social policies), involving all types of schools. It was clearly acknowledged that a highly academic, heavily overloaded curriculum, with a strong division between Primary and Secondary Education, which is moreover exam oriented and far from responding to the needs and expectations of students, is a major source of exclusion. In a certain way teachers are delivering a curriculum that excludes more than it includes. Nonetheless, when participants referred to concrete practices on inclusive education, it is clear that the integration of children with special needs (mainly disabilities) into mainstream schools still remains the major policy framework and action.

The main challenges appear to be related to: (i) the need to develop an inclusive education policy which implies a paradigm shift from a narrow conception of disability with specific theories, practices and models to a broader conceptualization of inclusion

to accommodate diverse groups of learners excluded from education; (ii) the struggle against poverty and all factors of marginalization, segregation and exclusion such as HIV and AIDS should recognize the crucial role of the curriculum in providing effective learning conditions and opportunities for all learners (reforms in curriculum approaches, structures, contents and strategies); (iii) the acknowledgment of cultural diversity and multiculturalism as both a right and a learning context; (iv) safeguarding the rights of all excluded groups and (v) utilization of existing institutions (i.e. NEPAD and ADEA) to drive the inclusive education agenda forward.

A consensual statement on Inclusive Education was elaborated by the participants and addressed to the African Union Meeting of Ministers (COMEDAF) that took place in Johannesburg, South Africa August 9-10. The objective pursued by the participants is to establish a Community of Practice on Inclusive Education in Africa to support Education For All (EFA) and MDG Goals. The regional roadmap as discussed during the workshop emphasizes the removal of barriers to participation and learning for girls and women, all disadvantaged and excluded groups, including children with disabilities and out of school children.

### **The Gulf Arab States Workshop on Inclusive Education (Dubai, United Arab Emirates, UAE, 27-29 August 2007)**

Policy-makers, directors of education, educators, and curriculum specialists from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and United Arab Emirates as well as representatives from ED/BAS and Finland attended the workshop (25 participants). It was co-organized by GASERC (Gulf Arab States Educational Research Centre), the Gulf Arab States Community of Practice in Curriculum Development and IBE.

The discussion was also focused on the need to broaden the concept and scope of Inclusive Education linked to the current processes of educational and curriculum change. These processes mainly imply the strengthening of Basic Education (Primary and Secondary), the development of competency-based approaches and the improvement in the provision of learning resources (i.e. textbooks). The conceptual understanding and use of the term of inclusive education remains very much limited to special needs education and the focus is on integration in mainstream schools by mainly providing physical facilities, installing resources centres and diversifying learning strategies with an increasing focus on tailored approaches. Likewise it also seems that immigrants, guest workers and temporary residents have much difficulty in accessing the social welfare system; education may not be sufficient for girls, the poor and rural students. However, these issues appeared to be too sensitive and complex to be addressed under the public policy framework.

Several regional seminars were organized by the UNESCO office in Beirut regarding inclusive education. In 2005, the Dubai Municipality, the Arab Urban Development Institute and the World Bank organized a conference entitled "Urban Children and Youth in the MENA Region: Addressing Priorities in Education", leading to the "Dubai Declaration on Urban Children and Youth". The declaration mentions "inclusive education for all children and youth" as the first priority and states that "conference participants stress the importance of inclusive education and reaffirm their commitment to improve the well-being and quality of life for all children and youth, regardless of their age, gender, religion, ethnicity, disability, or social background."

The main challenges appear to be related to: (i) raise political awareness among different stakeholders around a broadened concept of Inclusive Education linked to the visualization of education as a right and to the attainment of EFA goals (participants agreed on this perspective and emphasized the need of a gradual strategy towards its fulfilment); (ii) disseminate the UNESCO vision on Inclusive Education (i.e. guidelines for inclusion) that is not very much known in the region, as a way of constructing institutional capacities towards the implementation of inclusive visions and practices at different levels of the educational system; (iii) inform, sensitize and train professionals on visualizing inclusive education as a core strategy to address diversity of learners' expectations and needs, and (iv) strengthen cooperation and principally communication between countries to really share what they are doing, learn from each other and set up regional agendas.

Based on the actions that were discussed during the workshop and that are to be taken within the Gulf Arab States Community of Practice in Curriculum Development and jointly with GASERC, we plan to implement advocacy and raise-awareness activities on positioning the discussion on Inclusive Education within EFA goals, on broadening its conceptualization and on linking it to educational and curriculum reforms currently underway.

### **International Workshop on Inclusive Education (Latin America, Southern and Andean Region, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 12-14 September 2007)**

Governmental representatives, including Vice-ministers of Education (Argentina, Peru, Bolivia and Paraguay), policy-makers, consultants, scholars, researchers and educators from eleven Latin American countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela) as well as representatives from ED/BAS, OREALC and IIEP-Buenos Aires, the Special Rapporteur on the right to education and COP Focal Points from Africa (Nigeria), Europe (Belarus, Finland and Romania) and Gulf Arab States (Bahrain) attended the International Workshop (48 participants). It was co-organized by ED/BAS, OREALC, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Argentina, University of San Andres (Argentina), the Southern and Andean Communities of Practice in Curriculum Development and IBE.

The discussion was mainly focused on the relationships between social inclusion and inclusive education, in at least two core dimensions: (i) the extent to which education, understood in a society of information and knowledge, within a new globalized capitalism and under the wave of neo-liberalism, generates exclusion and inequality, in a more powerful way than those generated by an industrial society and (ii) how schools are now moulded and defined according to a demand for schooling instead of responding to social and knowledge needs. The educational systems democratize the access by including social groups previously excluded but the gap outcomes are wider and feed exclusion from acceding to pertinent knowledge and core competencies.

The main challenges appear to be related to: (i) the development of policies aimed at reducing social inequality and poverty around a renovated concept of social justice and which society to pursue; (ii) avoiding the categorization of those who are excluded as this may have undesired effects of stigmatizing such groups within condescending educational patterns. (e.g. "...as they are poor we cannot educate them in the same way

as the rich”.); (iii) positioning the broad conceptualization of Inclusive Education within the governmental agendas taking into account the fact that it is a relatively new term and a challenge that may already be addressing similar challenges of equity and quality education (mainly the agenda of the nineties); (iv) to make educational institutions more heterogeneous including all socio-economic strata since, as of now, schools are not offering space for the others, and by stimulating socialization processes that involve living together within diversity as a way to recover the sense of public education (participants expressed their concern about the privatization process in Education and its consequences); (v) to strengthen promising inclusive initiatives such as the strengthening of intercultural bilingual education in the curricula of Basic and Youth Education, the expansion of Childhood Education through diverse formal and non-formal models and the pivotal role of the school in the articulation of social policies. A consensus was reached regarding the importance of addressing inclusion education not only within national frameworks but also within a global perspective of shared responsibility of the international community.

Within the Latin American and Caribbean Educational Project (PRELAC II) and under the coordination of OREALC, the workshop outcomes will be shared with Ministers aimed at discussing and agreeing upon a regional agenda on Inclusive Education that can be presented at the ICE 2008.

### **Session on Inclusive Education – Regional Workshop on “What Basic Education for Africa”? (Kigali, Rwanda, 27 September 2007)**

Policy makers, directors of education, curriculum specialists and teachers trainers from 16 countries (Benin, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and Uganda) as well as representatives from ED/BAS, BRENDA, Addis and Nairobi Cluster Offices, UNEVOC, the Association for the Development of Africa (ADEA), the African Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank attended the workshop (115 participants). It was co-organized by ED/BAS, BRENDA, Ministry of Education of Rwanda and IBE.

The reviewed concept of inclusive education was again introduced as a main strategy to attain EFA Goals. The main outcomes of the Nairobi workshop were presented by the Directors of Education of Kenya and Tanzania as part of the process of setting up an African Community of Practice in Curriculum Development focused on Inclusive Education. A document regarding the way forward to approaching inclusive education, summarizing the outcomes of the previous regional workshops as well as other relevant literature, was distributed to participants who were asked to discuss it by providing comments and suggesting missing points that should be considered as priorities.

The discussion was mainly focused on how to move forward on inclusive education. Participants considered that it might take a long time to achieve but that it is necessary to embrace if EFA goals are to be attained. Special attention should be given, among others, to girls (including those forced into prostitution), children with disabilities or special needs, street children and out-of-school children, child workers, socially stigmatized children (orphans, HIV and AIDS affected children, etc.), children belonging to nomadic and minority groups, post-conflict children. To meet the needs of these various groups, the adoption of alternatives were suggested. One can state: accelerated

learning, mobile schools, rehabilitation, non-formal education models and community learning centres. In schools, teachers need to be re-trained so that they will acquire intellectual freedom as well as the necessary knowledge and skills to adapt their teaching approaches to children's needs.

The main challenges appear to be related to: (i) positioning a broadened concept of Inclusive Education, an inclusive curriculum and a renovated school model as the critical dimensions to expand and democratize Basic Education in Africa; (ii) development of a holistic, integrated and inclusive competency based curriculum framework relevant to the needs of children and youths in Africa for a minimum of 9 years Basic Education and (iii) raising awareness and convincing stakeholders that quality education cannot be achieved if teachers' motivation remains lacking. Participants strongly called upon governments and communities to create incentives regenerating teachers' social status. As in the other regions, advocacy campaigns about inclusive education were considered to be needed in order to sensitize all stakeholders, including policy makers, educators, communities and families.

Participants provided suggestions on actions to be taken towards an Inclusive Education in the region. Jointly with ED/BAS, BRENDA, Cluster and National Offices in Africa, the World Bank, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) and the African Development Bank (ADB), we plan to develop a framework proposal for an inclusive curriculum framework for an expanded Basic Education in Africa. It will mainly imply the capacity development of curriculum developers to design and implement a curriculum framework for Basic Education as well as to continue the policy dialogue, exchange information, documentation, experiences and good practices through the African Community of Practice in Curriculum Development.

### **CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) Workshop on "Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future" (Minsk, Belarus, 29-31 October 2007)**

Ministerial representatives, policy-makers, and educators from Armenia, Belarus, Russia, Latvia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Uzbekistan, as well as representatives of the IBE-UNESCO, UNESCO Office in Moscow, the Belarusian and Latvian National Commissions for UNESCO, the UNESCO Division for the Promotion of Basic Education (ED/BAS) and the Finnish National Board of Education attended the workshop (26 participants).

It was co-organized by the IBE-UNESCO, the National Institute of Education of Belarusian Ministry of Education, the UNESCO Moscow Office, and the CIS Council on Cooperation in Education.

The discussion mainly focused on nine CIS country presentations and their conceptions of inclusive education, as well as of their challenges and policy proposals. It revealed the prevalent understanding of inclusive education in the region: (i) special needs education based on a defectology background of theory and expertise (this was referred to as the narrow conception of inclusive education); (ii) educational integration without implying a systemic change of education structural components and (iii) a concept that has been mainly circumscribed to students categorized as having physical and/or mental disabilities. At the same time, it is important to highlight that, during the workshop, participants revised the above approaches to inclusive education with a refined definition presented in a final regional statement. Inclusive education was addressed in terms of

social inclusion, quality education and a revised defectology approach in the context of UNESCO's definition of inclusive education.

The participants stated that inclusive education, understood in its broad interpretation as engagement of all students in educational process, regardless of their age, gender, ethnic and religious background, previous achievements, differences in abilities and capacities, their social and economic status, is one of the main focuses of the development of the national educational systems in the CIS region. Though inclusion in its broad meaning is not widely used in official documents, still the ideas of inclusive education are more and more reflected in the CIS countries educational policies. One may also note that the region's strength is to have achieved an almost 100% of literacy levels and attendance. Moreover, the right to education as a human right is guaranteed by national constitutions.

The main challenges appear to be related to: (i) the need for creating awareness both in the education system and society about the importance and value of inclusive education; (ii) fostering teacher training at all levels with regard to inclusive education practices; (iii) the imperative of addressing multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and migration changes in their populations in relation to the aim of a right to education for all (e.g. Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Uzbekistan); (iv) economic levels of the countries preventing from providing all the necessary facilities and professional staff training in relation to children with special needs (thus, as a default, they are in some cases integrated into mainstream schools); (v) the importance of providing and further developing early-childhood education with attention to pre-school education (pre-school institutions in the region were described as being in a very poor situation); (vi) the need for commitment from and coordinated involvement of other public sectors involved in social policy addressing children's development and welfare; (vii) understanding inclusive education as a flexible paradigm, not a limited unique model and (viii) the need to create awareness that inclusive education implies not only a reform of special schools but also of mainstream ones.

A regional roadmap was presented after three days of discussion and group work, combining the input of all CIS country representatives. The roadmap, encompassing the above mentioned challenges and proposals, became a regional declaration/final statement of actions and goals set in the context of a revised operational conception of inclusive education. The statement will be disseminated in the upcoming XIV Conference of the Ministers of Education of the CIS Member States taking place in June 2008, and it will also be presented as a regional document at the ICE 2008.

### **East Asia Workshop on Inclusive Education (Hangzhou, China, 2-5 November 2007)**

Governmental representatives, policy makers, researchers and educators from China, Mongolia, Japan and Republic of Korea as well as representatives of the organizers, UNESCO Headquarters and UNICEF Beijing, regional experts invited by UNESCO Bangkok and UNICEF Beijing attended the workshop (25 participants). There were also about 20 local elementary and secondary school principals participating as observers. It was co-organized by IBE-UNESCO, UNESCO Bangkok, UNESCO Beijing, UNESCO National Commission of China, and the Department of Education, Provincial Government of Zhejiang.

The discussions mainly focused on the definition of the term of “inclusive education” and the necessity of such a term. Until now, “inclusive education” has been limited to the domain of the traditional special needs education. There are also language barriers for widening the use of the term. All participants agreed that measures should be taken so that the new meaning of inclusive education can be disseminated. It is also suggested that a new term, such as “new inclusive education”, be created so that it will not be in conflict with the traditional meaning of inclusive education. Participants pointed out that in terms of equality, more social policy should be implemented to reduce social inequality and poverty levels at the regional and national levels. Cases of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) in Mongolia, Thailand and China, advocated by UNICEF, were presented during the workshop as a good means of implementing the ideas of Inclusive Education. It is unanimously agreed that CFS is indeed a good means for IE.

The main challenges appear to be related to: (i) the concept of inclusive education being alien to Asia and thus difficult to adapt to the local conditions and its policy framework; (ii) misgivings of this new term seen as creating a completely new education system, which will cause uncertainty and disorder among the various stakeholders; (iii) some questioned the necessity of so many new terms and the confusion it might cause; (iv) the cost of inclusive education being major fear as it is deemed that including severely impaired children in different mainstream schools is more costly than concentrating them in a special institution; (v) the argument that under certain conditions, a special school can provide a better service; (vi) the fact that teachers should be given more training and incentive to training in Special Education Needs to better satisfy the needs of different groups of children with special needs, such as children with severe impairment, with single parent, etc.

A regional roadmap was constructed during the last session of the workshop, combining the inputs of participants, particularly the representatives from the four countries. The roadmap, as a regional strategy, encompassing the above mentioned challenges and proposals, addresses operational aspects of inclusive education in relation to curriculum development; improvement of teacher training (and particularly the training of head teachers) and schools as educational and social institutions; inter-sectoral legislation and inter-departmental cooperation covering all aspects of inclusive education; reallocation of public resources towards more equitable goals of social justice, such as tax-reduction for donations to education; and the role of UNESCO supporting the right for a quality education for all, life-long learning with the necessary skills to exercise freedom and increasing individuals’ capacities to choose.

The workshop outcomes will be shared through the National Commissions with Ministers. It is proposed that national preparatory workshops be held to better prepare for the contribution to the 48<sup>th</sup> ICE.