Disability & Education

UNECLAC

CARIBBEAN SUBREGIONAL MEETING
CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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Questions to Consider

- Is there adequate transformation of the education systems within the English speaking Caribbean that ensures and enhances the education of persons with disabilities?

- What activities are undertaken to build the capacity of the education system to facilitate this transformation?

- Are the people who are targeted really benefitting from these initiatives undertaken by governments?
The International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health (ICF) defines Disability:

1. as functioning in multiple life areas

(Simply seeing, walking, taking a bath, working, going to school, accessing social services and many such domains are included in the definition)
2. Disability is seen as a result of an interaction between a person (with a health condition) and that person's contextual factors (environmental factors and personal factors)

• (Simply, disability is not seen as an individual's intrinsic feature but a result of interaction in an environment. The interaction of the same person with the health condition may yield different functioning level in different environments.)
DEFINITION OF DISABILITY- (Cont’d)

3. Disability covers a spectrum of various levels of functioning at body level, person level and societal level. Disability denotes all of the following:

- (a) impairments in body functions and structures
- (b) limitations in activity
- (c) restriction in participation  (WHO)
DEFINITION OF EDUCATION

• What is education? Some people view education as a preparation for life while others perceive education as life itself.

• The late Mahatma Ghandi described education as a complete drawing out of man, mind, body and soul.

• Socrates argued that education was about drawing out what was already within the student.

• This implies that education is an ongoing process.
Arguments to support Education of persons with disabilities

- a significant part of the population in the Caribbean is living with disabilities.
- only five percent of disabled children in developing countries have access to support or services of any kind and that less than two percent attend school.
- main cause due to physical and attitudinal barriers that prevent families and communities in providing for these students the same opportunities that their non disabled counterparts have.
- a low rate of participation in the work force by PWDs, can be directly connected to their exclusion from the education system.  
  (Dr. Gordon Porter “Disability and Inclusion” 2001)
Arguments to support Education of persons with disabilities

• As regards those who are eligible for formal education 5-14 year olds, in most countries of the Caribbean while only 4% of the children without disabilities are out of school, 18% of their disabled counterparts are out of the system. (Disability in the Caribbean: Analysis of Census Data)

• Education is a basic right for everyone.
• Education like learning, can be viewed really as a lifelong process. It is evident that lifelong learning promotes development, however, one has to be also acutely aware of the immense inequalities that could be perpetuated in the establishment of a knowledge-based society, in terms of access to knowledge, capacity for updating knowledge and access to social support mechanisms.
United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - Rights to Education

- Article 24: Children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory education or from secondary education;
- Adults with disability have access to general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning;
- Persons with disabilities receive the necessary support within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;
• Effective individualized support measures are put in place to maximize academic and social development
• equal access to primary and secondary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning

• Education of persons with disabilities must foster their participation in society, their sense of dignity and self worth and the development of their personality, abilities and creativity"
Article 26 states:

To enable persons with disabilities to attain maximum independence and ability, countries are to provide comprehensive habilitation and rehabilitation services in the areas of health, employment and education.
The underlying principles of the CRPD:-

- Accessibility
- Equality
- Non-discrimination
- Full participation
- Social Inclusion
Inclusion as the goal

Measures that would:

- facilitate development for all members of the society,
- foster inclusion rather than exclusion.
- transform the education system from perpetuating inequality to becoming an instrument of social change
- empower people with disabilities to have a better quality of life
- move its emphases rapidly from Segregation to Mainstreaming to Integration to Inclusion and then to full inclusion.
Historical journey towards including persons with disabilities in the society

(i) **Exclusion** - Moral Model Thinking

- persons with disabilities brought shame on family, disability was seen as a punishment from God.
- Societal Response: PWDs were recipients of evil treatment, deemed to be of no value to society; stigmatising, stereotyping (labeling), shut away; often solicited a charitable and protective response from the affluent members of society.
- Implication for education: total exclusion from the education system altogether
ii) **Segregation** - early Medical Model Thinking

- Focus: impairment; what the person with disability could not do; ‘fixing’ the person to fit. If this was unsuccessful then the person was kept separated.
- Implication for education: charitable organizations provide special services and education with segregation and categorization (residential homes and specialized schools: - schools for deaf, schools for blind, etc. special educators viewed as experts. Education mainly at the primary level with a goal towards tech voc more than academic achievement.
Mainstreaming - Medical model Thinking

- Emphasis on disability, but a slightly modified version
- Support for swds in the mainstream; provision them with a continuum of services based on the severity and type of impairment.
- Implication for education: swds were under pressure to prove themselves in order to maintain a place in the mainstream; no extra support to enhance learning; “fixed to fit”; Inability to cope meant returning to the segregated environment.
(iv) **Integration – Medical Model Thinking**

- **Focus:** the disability; the emphasis is on supplying special equipment, providing special resources, special teachers to meet the special needs of the swds in the mainstreamed environment.

- **Implication:** Pull out, integrating with other students for some subjects.
Historical journey towards including persons with disabilities in the society

- (v) **Inclusion** – Social Model Thinking
- Paradigm shift from the medical model to the social model. With the social model of thinking,
- Focus shifts from the disability to the society; removal of barriers – attitudinal, environmental, organizational; from what the swds cannot do to what they can do;
- Implication: assessment, peer support, focus on those who may be at risk of marginalization, exclusion or underachievement
Historical journey towards including persons with disabilities in the society

• (vi) **Full Inclusion** - Human Rights Model Thinking
  
  the right of every human being regardless of race, age, gender, disability, etc. to quality education in the school of his/her choice, no matter the severity of the disability. In essence the student with the disability has the right to be educated.

• Focus: breaking down the barriers; reduction of stigma, increased participation of pwds in the education system and society in general.

• Implication: enhanced learning, feelings of belonging, acceptance, self esteem, socialization, money better spent in strengthening the capacity of regular schools to handle children with diverse needs.
To address my first question posed at the beginning of my discussion:

- ‘Is there adequate transformation of the education systems within the English speaking Caribbean that ensures and enhances the education of persons with disabilities?’

I have selected Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and Barbados, the three countries that have been identified by ECLAC as agreeing in principle by signing or ratifying at least one Human Rights Agreement which addresses persons with disabilities.
Profile:

- Population 2,607,632 (Census 2001) - 162,859 pwds
- Children with moderate to profound levels of retardation are sent to schools operating with Government’s funding; mandate for them to attend the regular public school; total of 1,250 students served. For every eligible child receiving service, two or three others who are eligible are not served.
INITIATIVES (2007 and continuing):

- Establishment of student assessment Centres
- Preparation of policy regarding special education
- Provision of Special Ed. Programmes a collaborative effort of private, voluntary organizations and Gov’t.
- In 2009 budget an allocation of funds to the amount of 846.6 million towards special education
- Teacher Training and training of other personnel

N.B:- Others may be added by delegates
BARBADOS

Profile:

Population: 250,010 (Census 2000)
- 9,993 or 4.0% pwds; 2.4% between ages 0 and 19

INITIATIVES:
- Seven year programme to make school building more accessible
- All new buildings required to now have provisions for pwds
- The SSSD for Barbados coordinates special services for students with disabilities
- Detection of developmental delays at the Pre school levels
- Training of teachers and other personnel
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Profile:
- Population 1,114,772 with 45,496 pwds or 4.1% (2000 Census). 16.1% of children have a disability (Marge report 1984) 2.2% between ages 0 and 19.
- **INITIATIVES**
  - Physically upgraded public schools to adapt to the new inclusive policy
  - Teacher Training and Recruitment of Relevant Personnel
  - Parent education and empowerment
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO – (Cont’d)

- Support for early diagnosis of children with special needs;
- Streamlining curriculum and adaptation of testing instruments;
- Support for early diagnosis of children with special needs;
- Development of a multi-pronged communication strategy for sensitization;
- Provision of didactic material and resources;
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO – (Cont’d)

- U.W.I. INITIATIVES
- 2004 Think Tank Conference
- 2005 Introduction of Social Disabilities Course to the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus
- Development of the Disabilities Studies Unit
- Social Disabilities:
  - identifies the ways in which differently able persons are marginalized and restricted and experience discrimination within an unadaptive society;
U.W.I. INITIATIVES

- it examines the interaction of persons with disabilities within the existing political, social and cultural and legal systems;
- historical struggles for rights and services by the Disabled are highlighted;
- policy needs for the future development are outlined;
- taught in partnership with persons with disabilities NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US;
- In summary, this course in Social Disability Studies is:
  - an interesting and challenging journey, which begins with awareness and trudges along the paths of acceptance, alignment and unto its final destination, advocacy;
Critical Questions

- What activities are undertaken to build the capacity of the education system to facilitate this transformation?
- Are the people who are targeted really benefitting from these initiatives undertaken by governments?
- Are the initiatives comprehensive enough to transform. Is it happening in sufficient measures and often enough?
- Are they extensive enough?
- Are they intensive enough?

- Is there Tracking, monitoring and evaluation to find...
Are you seeing a cross over in significant measures of students of the special schools into the regular schools?

Is there Tracking, monitoring and evaluation to find out who benefits from the initiatives and to what extent?

What activities are undertaken to build the capacity of the education system to facilitate this transformation?

Do we see an Inter-sectoral, collaborative approach?

Are pwds included? Do they have a voice?
Critical Questions

- Is research being conducted in order to inform – identify problems, find solutions, to prioritize programmes, to monitor, to evaluate?
- Are we seeing breaking down of attitudinal barriers?
- Are we seeing more people with disabilities entering secondary and tertiary institutions and being able to maintain participation in these programs?
- Are we seeing the training of both teaching staff and all other levels of staff in these institutions (specialization, sensitization and advocacy)?
- Are we seeing ratification of policies, regulatory processes and procedures, fiscal measures being undertaken?
Challenges to Inclusion in the Caribbean context

- Lack of Research Issues in Disability and Education and the synchronizing of data.
- Poor statistics means it is difficult to get an accurate account of the facts thus making the job of identifying problems and solutions almost impossible.
- Good efforts, are likely to fall far short of guaranteeing full participation of pwds in education and in life in general if programmes are not sufficiently comprehensive, extensive and intensive.
- Full potential of pwds not being utilized which would be experienced as a loss for society as a whole.
SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING CAPACITY/INITIATIVES

• Examples of good practices exist, but the models need to be strengthened and made more systemic.
• Key stakeholders must come together to invest in programs and initiatives that would make inclusionary practices in education possible for all students.
• Opportunities would be opened up if parent-based groups and ministries work in partnership to nurture new approaches and new models.
• Experts have also identified the following supportive or crucial move towards inclusion:
SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING CAPACITY/INITIATIVES

- Train the Trainer Program amongst Teachers and Principals
- Paying teachers sufficiently so that they can focus on teaching and be held accountable for students’ success.
- Providing teachers with classroom strategies so they can accommodate children with diverse learning needs in regular classes.
- Staffing schools with support teachers to provide collaborated help to classroom teachers.
SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING CAPACITY/INITIATIVES

- Developing information packages on best practices and disseminating the knowledge.
- Creating education institutions that prepare new teachers for inclusion.
- Forming partnership between school, parents groups, NGOs and government and professional groups in the promotion of inclusion in schools and the community in general.
Conclusion

- It has been observed that one of the main challenges for the countries in the Region is the appreciable gap between the stated principles and vision on one side, and the actual practices of inclusive education on the other.
- There is an urgent need to ensure that policies and strategies translate into concrete actions in that changing institutional practices and pedagogical approaches in the school and the classroom.
- Inclusive education is a Human Right issue. It means full sustained participation. It is the means towards achieving equity, social justice and the struggle for a non discriminatory society.
- We are each of us a split second from becoming disabled. Be our brother’s keeper.


• Mulca

• Think Tank Planning Committee (2010). Report of the Proceeding of the Think Tank Conference on “Disability, Integration, and Development – The Way Forward- Theme: Unleashing Full Potential Through full Participation.” Disability Studies Unit, Department of Behavioural Sciences, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago.

THE END

THANK YOU