

## INCLUSIVE TEACHING IN THE CONTEXT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING (ELT)

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### **ABSTRACT**

This is a review paper which examines the what, why and requirements of inclusive education so as to raise the awareness of teachers on how to address the needs of learners in English language teaching settings. Various sources from empirical studies and UNESCO documents were used as inputs to deal with conceptual and pedagogical aspects. To make inclusive teaching effective in the context of ELT, the appropriate and workable strategies were also suggested in the review. Other strategies could also be suggested depending on the degree and development of inclusive education in light of disabilities as addressed in the program. But these strategies could be employed if teachers get training about Special Needs Education and Inclusive Education other than the subject (English language) they teach.

**KEY WORDS:** Inclusive education, disability, attitude, strategy, resource

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching English as a foreign language in inclusive setting would be a challenge for teachers as far as learners with disabilities are concerned. In this case, improving the academic performance of students from non-English backgrounds requires teachers' attention on the prevention of failure. Moreover, an inclusive education demands the class teacher to be flexible, creative, ready to learn from the learners and capable of initiating active learning.

In order to cater as effectively as possible to the diverse learning needs of the disabled, teachers should apply effective teaching strategies and techniques, select appropriate materials, design suitable tasks, and adapt proper classroom management skills. It is also important for teachers who teach students with disabilities to know about the nature, causes, assessment, and treatments (Hallahan et al., 2005)

Teaching and learning English language skills as components of a foreign language need to be assessed from various perspectives. In the first place whether these skills are delivered properly or not; whether they go with the intended objectives as introduced in the curriculum / syllabus keeping grade levels; what approach or methods could be employed to bring these into practice; and what the challenges are in the process of their implementation. The intention of this review is therefore to put an insight in the practice of inclusive education which aimed at facilitating the learning of students with disabilities in ELT settings.

## 2. THE CONCEPT AND ORIGIN OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

### 2.1. What is inclusive education?

The question of inclusive education has attracted much attention all over the world. Nevertheless, an examination of literature and practice shows that there is no agreed upon universal definition. The term has come to mean different things to different people; it is context specific. The concept also varies from country to country and is associated with various perspectives which indicate the concern of each country.

According to Pijl, Mijer and Hegarty( 1997,106-107),inclusion has different meanings for different people. Referring to American experience they stated that:

Inclusion certainly means 'place', a classroom in a regular school building, and a seat in an age –appropriate general education classroom. It also means access to, and participation in, the general education instructional programme, either full-time or part-time. And it means bringing special education teachers or special education paraprofessionals into general education schools and classrooms to help make inclusion work. Beyond this broad conceptualization, however, inclusion can mean very different things in different schools and among different professionals.

In Spain, as in UK, there is acceptance of the new terminology of 'children with special education needs' rather than children with disabilities or handicaps. This concept is linked to certain kinds of pedagogic help or services required to achieve the educational aims: that is, an educational need is described in terms of what is essential for the pupil to achieve certain educational objectives (Mittler and Daunt, 1995: 13).

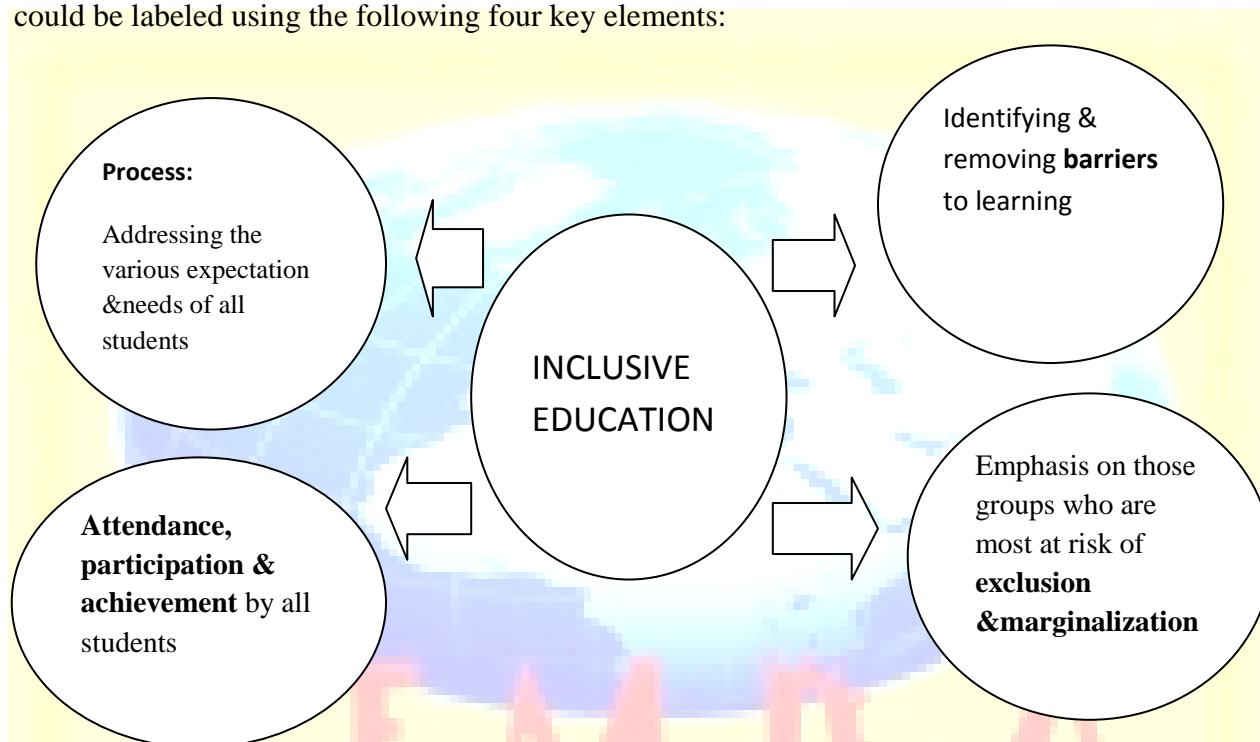
The literature on inclusive education in India primarily addresses "concerns about the children with disabilities." (Singal 2005: 335). This is illustrated in the definition given by Chadha (2000) as quoted in Singal (Ibid). Chadha defines inclusion as "providing to all children (irrespective of the kind and degree of disability) equitable opportunities, to receive effective educational services with needed supplementary aids and support services in age appropriate classes in their neighborhood schools."

In the, 'Guidelines for Inclusion' UNESCO (2005:13) defines inclusion as a process by referring to various aspects, which incorporate its essence as clearly seen in the following:

Inclusion 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 within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children.

It also “aims to enable both teachers and learners to feel comfortable with diversity and to see it as a challenge and enrichment in the learning environment, rather than a problem.” (UNESCO, 2003:7)

Inclusive education can be characterized by taking its inherent features. For example, ‘The Guidelines for Inclusion’ (UNESCO, 2005), extended the idea that the concept of inclusion could be labeled using the following four key elements:



It can also be seen from educational point of view as defined by Piji, Meiger and Hegarty (1997, 150-151) in the following:

Inclusion is sometimes defined as the provision of appropriate high quality education for pupils with special needs in regular schools. Whether or not this happens depends critically on teacher variables, specifically their willingness to take on this task and their ability to carry it out. ...Inclusion stands for an educational system that encompasses a wide range diversity of pupils and that differentiates education in response to their diversity.

Considering all these variations of definitions, it would be possible to synthesise that there is no agreed upon single definition to the concept of inclusion. It could be conceptualized from various perspectives which have got prominence according to issues it addresses and is applied.

According to Walker and Covington (1998, 2) inclusive education for all students “should utilize the best teaching techniques, and any necessary support services and supplementary aids available to make the process of learning a success. Services are brought to the students instead of students being removed from the general classroom to receive the services.”

## 2.2. Origin of Inclusive Education

in the ‘Guidelines for Inclusion’ (UNESCO, 2005:9), it is mentioned that “Inclusion is originally derived from Special Education in which its development involved a series of stages during which education systems have explored different ways of responding to children with disabilities, and to students who experience difficulties in learning.”

Inclusion was also framed within the context of the wider international discussions around “the United Nations Organizations’ agenda of ‘Education for All (EFA)’ stimulated by the 1990 Jomiton Declaration.”(UNESCO, 2005: 9)

The Salamanca World Statement also played a great role to the realization of inclusive education as supported by 92 governments. This statement, besides providing a framework for thinking about how to move policy and practice forward, argues that the regular schools with an inclusive orientation are “... the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all.” (UNESCO, 2005: 9).

The most important impetus for realization of inclusive education was ‘fuelled’ by a number of initiatives taken by UNO and World Bank. According to Mangal (2007, 65) the following were contributory factors:

- a) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1949)
- b) The World Conference on Education For All (1990)
- c) The UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1992)
- d) The World Conference on Special Needs Education/ The Salamanca Statement

and Framework for Action (1994).

Influenced by these contributory factors, “Many countries of the world have come up with necessary legislative initiative in making inclusive education as a basic policy of their educational system” (Mangal, 2007: 66).

### 3. THE RATIONALE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: Why inclusion?

Inclusion in education is a human right. At the core of inclusive education there is a human right to education which is pronounced in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 which states that “Everyone has the right to education.”(UNESCO, 2005: 12) Inclusive education is necessitated and justified due to the following three arguments (Dark and Light Blind Care, 2008:9):

**Educational justification:** the requirement for inclusive schools to educate all children together means that they have to develop ways of teaching that respond to individual differences and thus benefit all children.

**Social justification:** inclusive schools are able to change attitudes to differences by educating all children together and form the basis for a just and non-discriminatory society.

**Economic justification:** it is likely to be less costly to establish and maintain schools which educate all children together than to set up a complex system of different types of school specializing in different groups of children UNESCO (2003,4); UNESCO (2009,9).

The right of education can be realized only when schools begin to accommodate children from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and their broader range of learning styles, behaviors, capabilities, and potential in all sensory domains.( Puri and Abraham, 2004: 12)

All in all it would be possible to generalize that inclusive education has got a wider sphere of influence in many countries as propagated by its advocates. According to Mitchell (2008, 27) advocates of inclusive education preferred inclusive education on the basis of three main factors.

First, if it is handled appropriately, learners with special educational needs will gain academically and socially and will improve their self-esteem. Further, other learners will gain academically, as well as an appreciation of the diversity of their society, a greater recognition of social justice and equality, and a more caring attitude. Second, it is now generally accepted in most countries that learners with special educational needs have a right to be educated alongside their peers who do not have special needs. A third argument is sometimes put forward, that inclusive education is more economically viable, given the expense involved in transporting and accommodating learners in special schools, especially in rural areas.

#### 4. REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL INCLUSION

There is no blueprint for making inclusive education successful. As it is a dynamic process it is basically necessary to have “a good knowledge and understanding of the key the background to the development of inclusive education, its origins and influences international human rights and development instruments and documents, and the concepts, models, approaches and what makes inclusive education different from apparently similar paradigms(Stubbs, 2008: 52).

In the literature there are various factors which are considered to determine the outcome of implementation of inclusion. Among the various research findings (Alahbabi (2009), Mitchell (2008) demonstrated that there are innumerable factors which affect the implementation of inclusive education. For example, according Mitchell (2008, 28).these include factors such as: “large classes, negative attitudes to disability, examination oriented education systems, a lack of support services, rigid teaching methods, assessment dominated by a medical model, a lack of parent involvement and, in some countries, a lack of clear national policies.”

In another study as refereed by Alahbabi ( 2009,46) the following factors such as “an appropriate process of implementation, involving other stakeholders in the implementation process, support of other staff members including special education service providers, the ability to make necessary classroom modifications, and teachers’ attitudes” were also mentioned as factors which determine the implementation of inclusive education.

From the overall discussion, it would be possible to understand that making inclusion successful is not an easy task. There are many internal and external factors which interplay in the implementation and outcomes of inclusive education. Hence, successful inclusive educational practice can be achieved with policies which provide clear guidelines and a commitment to the principle of inclusion (Harvey, 1998) as cited in Agbenyega(2007).

#### 4.1. Teachers' Attitudes

One of the prominent environmental factors which affect the implementation of inclusion is teachers' attitudes to disabilities and to inclusion. In the literature (Gormly, 1992, Hoitocks, 1964, Magn'e, 1985, Ragland & Saxon, 1985, Sears, Freedman & Peplau, 1985) as cited in Machi, ( 2007, 7) the notion of attitude can be understood as an "internal state that moderates the choices of personal action made by an individual and as such it is an expression of a person's feelings about a thing or situation. This includes a total subjective sum of a person's fears, inclinations, and wishes, prejudices, preconceived notions, ideas and convictions."

Teachers' attitudes may be influenced by their characteristics such as their educational status, teaching experience, class size, exposure to teaching of disabled students, lack of funding, workload norms, and lack of training staff in inclusive practices. In this respect,

Attitudinal barriers are perceived to be the basis of all other environmental barriers, and are the most difficult to change. They are reflected in misconceptions, stereotypes, labeling, fear from the unknown, resistance, misunderstanding people's rights and opportunities, and further isolation of children with disabilities (Heyne, 2003; Odom, 2000; Parsarum, 2006 cited in Girma, 2011: 91).

According to Alexander and Strain (1978) identifying teacher attitudes is important on two levels: the individual classroom level and the larger program level. On the classroom level, teacher attitudes affect teaching and students. Research shows that teachers' attitudes influence both their expectations for their students and their behavior towards them. These attitudes, expectations, and behaviors influence both student self-image and academic performance.

#### 4.2. Training



The other factor which affects the outcome of inclusive practice is teachers' training. Inclusive program could be successfully implemented if the level of the teacher's competency is increased. Thus, the opportunities to attend courses that are related to the IE program have to be created, especially for those who lack exposure and training in special education.

According to Agbenyega (2007, 42) "As part of the teacher training program it is recommended that education courses make room for critical discussion regarding issues and concepts of inclusion and teaching effectiveness." In this case trainee teachers should be given opportunities to experience inclusive education in practice.

From the overall presentations made above, it would be possible to generalize that training teachers on SNE and IE is a primary concern in the teacher education program. With this in mind, an attempt must be made by the governments to intensify efforts to meet the requirements of SNE in general and IE in particular.

#### 4.3. Inclusive Curriculum

Flexible approaches in education are needed to respond to the diverse abilities and needs of all learners. But if the curricula and teaching methods are rigid and there is a lack of appropriate teaching materials, teachers will feel constrained in fulfilling their responsibility. In inclusive setting, the curriculum designed for ordinary children may be generally appropriate for visually impaired children. However, "Some adaptations to the learning materials and the teaching approaches have to be made so that the learning needs of visually impaired children can be met." (Dhawan, 2005:5)

According to Pijl, Meijer and Hegarty (1997, 79) an inclusionary curriculum "provides both process and content that will facilitate students and teachers working together to achieve meaningful learning for every student." They also add that in overall terms, inclusive education implies four key elements:

- a) It is essentially a process of looking for the most appropriate ways of responding to diversity as well as trying to learn how to learn from differences.

- b) It is linked to the motivation and development, through multiple strategies, of students' creativity and capacity to address and resolve problems.
- c) It comprises the right of the child to attend school, express his/her opinion, have quality learning experiences and attain valuable learning outcomes; and
- d) It implies the moral responsibility of prioritizing those students who are at risk of being marginalized and excluded from the school, and of obtaining low learning outcomes

To make inclusive education successful an inclusionary approach to curriculum is required. This means a common curriculum for all students, which provides for multilevel instruction. Students at all levels are provided with opportunities for meaningful involvement in classroom activities (Position Paper National Focus Group on Education of Children with Special Needs, 2006:18).

More inclusive curricula make considerable demands on teachers. They have to become involved in curriculum development at a local level and to be skilled in curriculum adaptation in their own classrooms. In addition, they have to manage a complex range of classroom activities, be skilled in planning the participation of all students and know how to support their students' learning without giving them predetermined answers. They also have to understand how to work outside traditional subject boundaries and in culturally sensitive ways (UNESCO, 2003:10).

#### 4.4. Resources

A successful inclusion of special needs pupils “depends not only on appropriate organization, legislation and regulations, but also on the availability of resources in the regular classroom and on the way teachers differentiate the resources between pupils” Pijil et. al. (1997, 10). In this case, materials and equipment provision and financial sources are among the frontiers of challenge in the implementation of inclusive education.

According to Peters (2003:6), a number of cost-effective initiatives were taken by developing countries to overcome the challenge of scarce resources and to promote inclusive education.

These are:

- a) trainer-of-trainer models for professional development;
- b) linking university in pre-service training institutions with school for their clinical experiences; and
- c) converting SNE schools into resource centers to provide expertise and support to clusters of general education schools....utilizing children themselves in peer programs.

#### 4.5. Assessment and Evaluation

In an outcomes-based curriculum, learners' progress is measured against the broad results expected at the end of each learning process, such as general skills, abilities and values. It can be on-going assessment to get feedback from children's learning and teachers' success in selecting appropriate teaching methods, as well as the needs to adjust the pace or style of teaching. In this way, all learners can be evaluated against their own achievements instead of being compared to other learners. Assessment can take place in a flexible manner and time when the learner has acquired new knowledge, a new skill or competency, even new attitudes and values, when the teacher has finished teaching a particular content and in the ordinary classroom situation.

It must be clear that, in the process of teaching "how we assess our students has a profound effect on what they learn and on the ways in which they learn."(Race, 2005: xi). In the process of teaching and learning it is common to use class work, homework and examinations but these can pose considerable difficulty for the students with impairment. In such practice teachers should know how to apply these addressing the needs of learners.

The following are some of the strategies suggested by Carney, Engbretson, Scammell and Sheppard (2003, 33) to conduct fair and constructive assessments. Hence, teachers need to consider the student's well-being when assigning homework, particularly if extensive reading or writing is required; allow additional time for completion of assignments and examinations; allow the student to complete an examination in more than one sitting, if necessary; Reduce the number

of questions to be answered; provide an alternate way of testing the student's knowledge; provide a scribe; and give the examination orally.

#### 4.6. Instructional strategies

Effective teaching for children with SNE will be effective if teachers are able to respond to a wider range of needs and this could be achieved through greater differentiation of tasks and materials, that is, school-based intervention ( Davies, 2004)

Some pupils may have specific difficulties in learning languages and may require help in improving their areas of weaknesses and in devising strategies to overcome their difficulties. In this case impaired students (hearing or visual) may require alternative communication systems to compensate for the difficulties they face in using spoken or written language.

In this case, teachers should be encouraged to take specific action to provide access to learning for pupils with special educational needs. According to Davies (2004, 27-28), teachers should provide various opportunities for pupils who need help. Some of these are: "using texts that pupils can read and understand; using visual and written materials in different formats, including large print, symbol text and Braille; and using ICT, other technological aids and taped materials."

In the area of instructional strategies classroom teachers need to build a deep knowledge base and develop tools for ascertaining student learning and clearly outline the learning expectations to ensure student comprehension to be able to provide consistent, continual support for each individual student. The teacher has the responsibility to utilize a variety of technical resources and incorporate them into their instructional lesson design in order to meet the individual learning needs of all the students.

According to Dhawan( 2005, 51-52), the following are very helpful, for example , to visually impaired students to learn English.

- a) Textbooks and supplementary learning materials can be transmitted into Braille. Various language activities such as story- telling, singing, and role-play can be used to reinforce the children's language skills and to improve their understanding of the language.
- b) Great emphasis should be put on the explanation of synonyms and the homophones. In introducing new vocabulary and language items, more explanation or experience sharing is required as visually impaired children have little actual experience.
- c) Good language games: The teacher should give good language models. By using various learning activities, such as phonetic games, passage reading, sentence making, dialogue practice, report writing, discussions and audio-recording, the children's interest can be stimulated.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Inclusion in the context of English language teaching will be effective" if teachers are able to respond to a wider range of needs and this could be achieved through greater differentiation of tasks and materials , that is, school-based intervention( Davies , 2004). These, in turn, require training teachers to implement inclusive teaching effectively. Without training teachers never do what they are supposed to do. In this case teachers need to get training on how to address the needs of learners when teaching English. This implies that they have to vary their method of teaching to meet different learning styles such as, visual, auditory and kinesthetic type of learners. In the training special attention should also be given to enable teachers adapt materials for teaching and design appropriate activities which make students with disabilities (for example, hearing impaired, visually impaired) actively involved the lesson. Teachers should also get training on SNE how to communicate with different types of disabled learners when they are assigned to teach these learners in their classes. Other supporting materials and technological devices should also be available to facilitate the process of teaching and learning.

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