HEART
HEALTH & EDUCATION ADVICE & RESOURCE TEAM

Photo credit: Albert Gonzalez Farran / UNAMID

Inclusive learning
Children with disabilities and difficulties in learning

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Overview of Reading Seminar

Each of the following sections will involve a short presentation followed by questions

1. **Key concepts in inclusive learning and data challenges**

2. **Classroom practice and teacher education**

3. **Inclusive societies**

4. **Policy and practice implications**

Photo credit: Hamish Roberts & Leonard Cheshire Disability

Inclusive Learning

Inclusive learning focuses on the capacity of educational institutions:

- to understand and respond to the educational requirements and entitlements of individual learners

- to increase active participation and engagement in learning

- to create appropriate, responsive and welcoming educational environments.

Photo credit: GPE / Sarah Beeching

The Salamanca Statement (1994) called for 'a major reform of the ordinary school' and put forward three justifications for inclusive learning:

Educational:

It is a way of producing higher quality schools.

Social:

Inclusive learning is the basis of a just and non-discriminatory society.

Economic:

It is less costly to establish and maintain schools which educate all girls and boys, rather than funding a complex system of different types of schools.

Inclusive learning can be seen as 'a principled approach to education' which involves:

- the process of increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, the curricula, cultures and communities of local schools

- restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in their locality

- the presence, participation and achievement of all students vulnerable to exclusionary pressures, not only those with impairments or those who are categorised as 'having special educational needs'

Ainscow and Miles, 2008: 5

Inclusive learning targets:

1. those children who are enrolled in school but are excluded from learning

2. those who are not enrolled in school but could participate if schools were more flexible in their responses

3. relatively small groups of children with severe disabilities who require additional support

Education for children with disabilities – improving access and quality,

DFID Guidance Note, 2010, p2

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The policy context: change and diversity in schools

Population changes: medical advances, vaccinations, conflict

Policy changes: free education, inclusive education

Technology: low-cost assistive devices, ICT

UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities : Art 24 inclusive education; Art 32 inclusive and accessible aid programmes

Ongoing challenges of chronic poverty, under-nutrition, lack of access to rehabilitation services and equipment

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Data Challenges:
Prevalence rates of children with disabilities vary considerably due to differences in definition and measurement

- Children aged 0–14 years experiencing "moderate or severe disability" [is] 93 million (5.1%)

- 13 million (0.7%) children experiencing severe difficulties

- In 2005, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated the number of children with disabilities under age 18 at 150 million.

- A recent review of the literature in low- and middle-income countries reports child disability prevalence from 0.4% to 12.7% depending on the study and assessment tool

The World Report on Disability (WHO, 2011: 36)

Some of the problems with current survey instruments for collecting data on disability and education include:

- asking if a child has a disability – only identifies children with the most severe impairments

- asking if a child is receiving special support – problematic because the answer relates to both the function of the child's disability, the policy and how the policy is implemented

- asking about diagnoses – problematic because many children do not have a diagnosis; children can have very different abilities and needs, yet have the same diagnosis; the list of diagnoses is never complete

Mont, 2014

The role of specialist provision in inclusive learning

Photo credit: Brian Glanz / Olcott Memorial School, Chennai

- In Southern countries, special provision is very limited, and the policy choice centres on whether to develop inclusive regular schooling and/or provide some interim specialist provision, as a twin-track approach

  Bines and Lei, 2011: 422

- In India, twin-track approaches are commonplace, with the number of special schools having doubled between 1992 and 2002 at the same time as financial incentives being made available for the inclusion of girls and boys with disabilities into mainstream schools

  Singal, 2008

Discussion

- How important do you think accurate disability data is in your country?

- What sort of data needs to be prioritised?

- How is the term 'inclusive' understood in your context and what are the key challenges in implementing an inclusive learning approach?

- Do you have any examples where an inclusive approach has been successfully implemented and replicated?

Photo credit: Lindsay Mgbor / Department for International Development

Part 2: Evidence on teacher education and classroom practice

Photo credit: Albert González Farran / UNAMID.

Summary of research evidence on inclusive classroom practice and learning outcomes

- The evidence base has been primarily focused on advocacy, access and attitudes.

- There is a lack of reliable data on prevalence of disability and difficulties in learning in school-age populations.

- There is a lack of reliable data on attendance at pre- and primary schools.

- Evidence focuses on concepts and definitions of 'inclusive education', access to basic education and policy recommendations but evidence on implementation and on learning outcomes is patchy.

Effective teaching for all

Photo credit: *Bart Verweij / World Bank.*

In Lao PDR, teacher attitudes were found to be fundamental in developing innovative and inclusive practice. In particular:

'… where teachers engage with the idea of changing lessons so that all children are participating and achieving, then their attitudes begin to change. As well as enjoying their teaching more and becoming increasingly motivated, they are also enabled to understand how children with disabilities and special needs can be included in ordinary lessons in mainstream schools.'

Grimes, 2009: 139

In-service teacher education plays a key role in tackling stigma, reducing discrimination and raising teachers' expectations of learners with disabilities and those with difficulties in learning.

Photo credit: Dominic Chavez / World Bank.

Training and resources needed

A school-based survey of knowledge, attitudes and beliefs and barriers to inclusive education in the north of Zimbabwe found that:

- Attitudes and beliefs were generally positive.

- Long distances between home and school, a lack of assistive devices and lack of adequate transport and direct and indirect costs of schooling were major barriers to school attendance

- Large class sizes and poor sanitation arrangements were additional barriers

- Teachers need specific training on inclusive approaches for teachers and head teachers in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning outcomes for girls and boys with disabilities.

Deluca et al. (2014)

Impact of training

A doctoral study which analysed the impact of a national teacher education programme in Lesotho in 21/82 primary schools found that many teachers can adequately screen student academic and sensory functioning, and have positive attitudes.

However, the training had not prepared them to differentiate or accommodate the educational needs of a diverse range of learners in the context of large classes.

Inadequate Ministry capacity to provide sustained support to ongoing teacher development was identified as one of the major barriers to the development of teachers' skills in differentiation.

Photo credit: John Hogg / Maseru Qoaling School, Lesotho

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Inclusive pedagogy
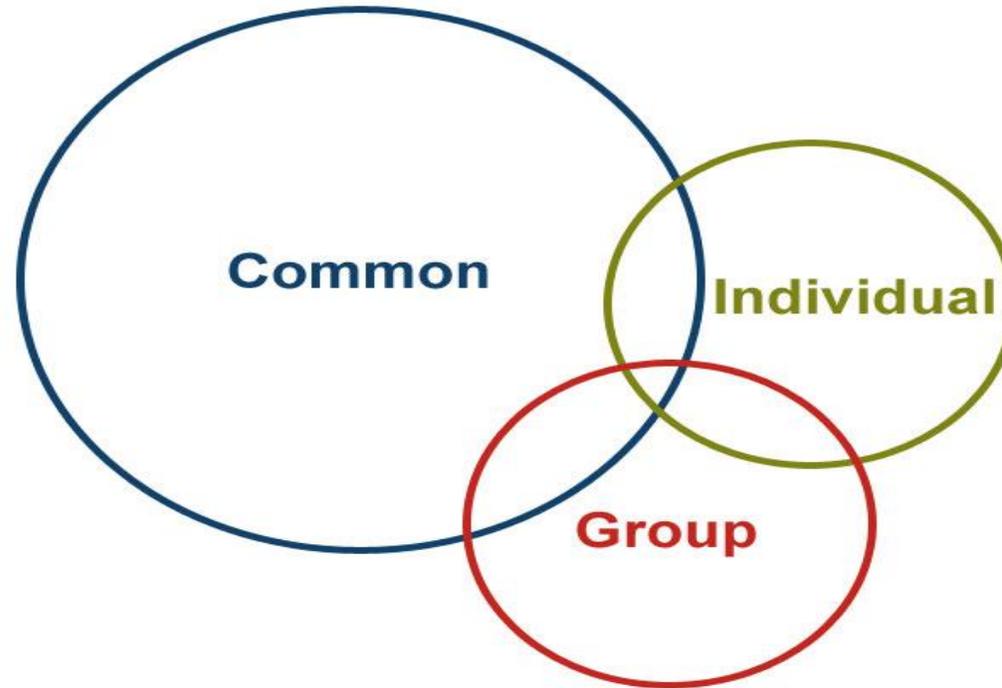
Inclusive pedagogy - a dynamic relationship between responding to learners as having common characteristics; as sharing the characteristics of a sub-group; and as a way of understanding individuals.

Croft, 2013

The role of specialist itinerant teachers

- Kenya has the most well-developed and successful system of itinerant teachers for visually-impaired children in sub-Saharan Africa – initiated by Sightsavers

- Itinerant teachers are trained in inclusive and/or special education

- in Kenya and Uganda they are employed as mainstream class teachers who carry out itinerant teacher duties.

- In Malawi they work full-time in their role as specialist itinerant teachers

- Itinerant teachers aim to ensure that assistive devices are working, provide advice to teachers on classroom practice, and raise community awareness.

- They liaise with resource rooms (units) where they exist.

Glasses – a straightforward intervention?

Eye glasses are one of the most straightforward and least expensive assistive devices and in China's Gansu province the economic benefits of giving glasses to children has been shown to outweigh the costs, as well as to improve test scores:

'A randomized control trial was implemented in 25 townships of two counties in Gansu, which included about 19,000 children in 165 schools, of whom about 12% had poor vision. The results indicate that offering eyeglasses to children with poor vision increases their test scores (averaged over three subjects) by between 0.11 to 0.16 standard deviations of the distribution of those test scores, depending on the estimation method used'

Glewwe et al., 2012: 34-35

Low-cost assistive devices

Photo credit: Viktor Dobai

Programmes in southern Africa which address the particular needs of children with albinism routinely address extreme stigma, alongside delivering practical help to address poor eye sight and reduce the risk of skin cancer. In Malawi, it is reported that:

'The most effective, cheapest and most accepted form of 'aid' is a wide brimmed hat and dark glasses. If children with albinism are allowed to wear a hat both inside and outside the classroom, this will help protect their very sensitive eyes from bright light and improve their vision. Hand held magnifiers are also useful, but compliance may be low. Prescription spectacles will correct some visual problems such as astigmatism, which will improve visual performance, but these are relatively expensive, may get broken and require regular check-ups at optometrists' [italics added]

Lynch and Lund, 2011: 38

Physical accessibility

Photo credit: Bryan Lupton / The Advocacy Project

The cost of building physically accessible schools is generally less than 1% of total construction cost.

The cost of making adaptations after a building is completed is far greater.

Steinfield, 2005

Ideally school buildings should have wide, wheelchair accessible doorways, ramps, large windows, reflective classroom walls, but teachers can adapt classroom furniture to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Community support for inclusive learning

Community-based Rehabilitation (CBR)

Like itinerant teachers, CBR workers can advise on accessibility, challenge negative attitudes, galvanise community support in building low-cost ramps for wheelchair access, provide assistive devices, campaign for inclusive sanitation, arrange medical treatment, and secure training and employment as learners prepare for the transition to employment.

Community support in Vietnam (religious leaders, unions, the Communist Party etc) was identified as being key to encouraging parents to send their children to school and to sustaining school attendance.

Parent support

In Bushenyi, Uganda, parent involvement in learning sign language and supporting deaf children to attend school for the first time was a critical factor in the success of the specialist units attached to mainstream school

Disabled adults as role models
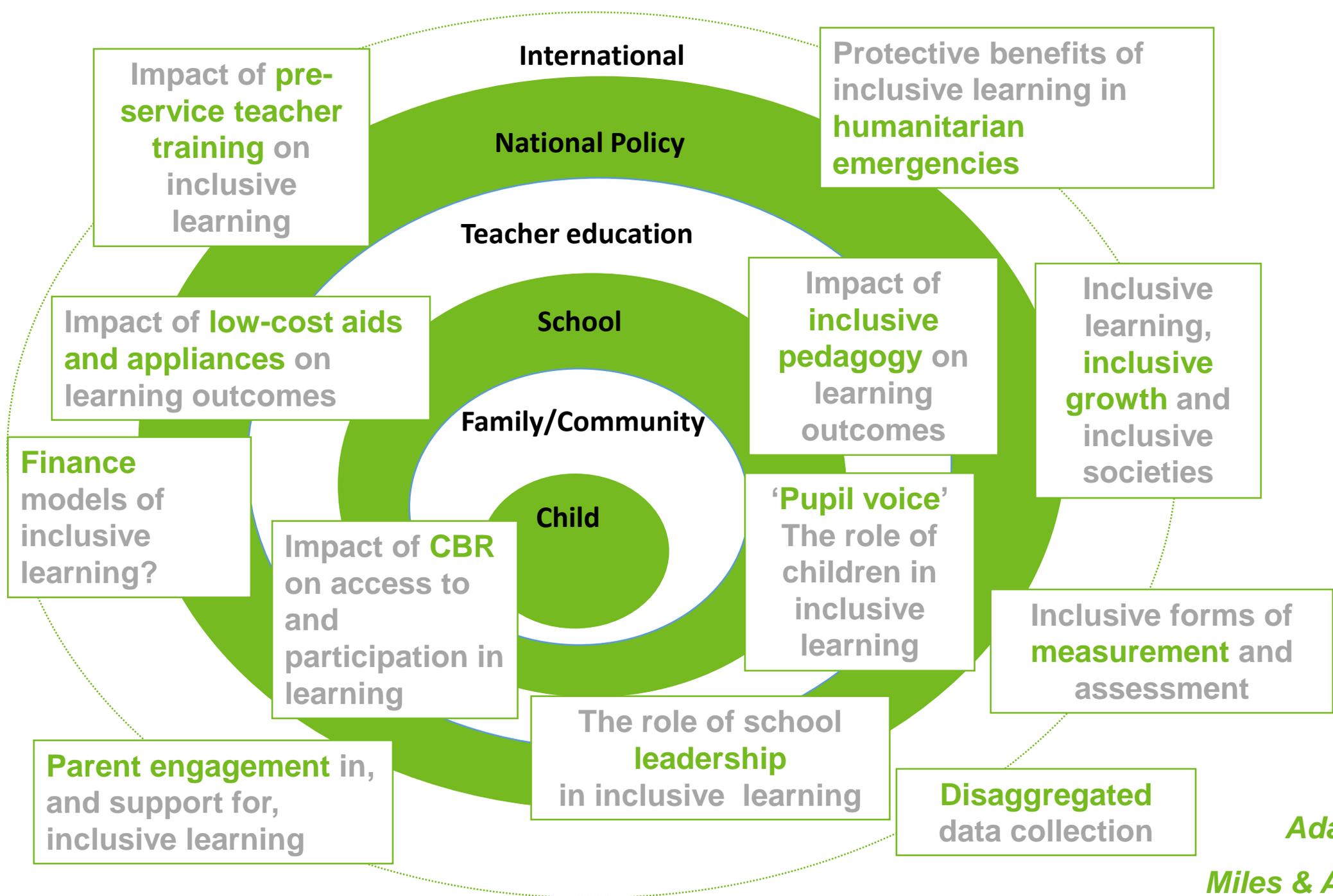
Disabled people's organisations encourage parents to send their children to school, building confidence and providing role models which address stigma and discrimination (this has happened in Southern Africa for the last 15 years).

In Nepal DPOs lobbied for visually impaired people to train as teachers – there are now 400 employed in mainstream schools

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Discussion

- With increased focus on learning for all, how can we ensure that our learning strategies meet the needs of children with additional learning needs or disabilities?

- What role can assessment and data play?

- What classroom practices have been most successful in your context?

- What are the implications of inclusive learning for teacher education in your context?

- How can assistive devices (e.g. spectacles) be made more affordable and accessible?

- What are the implications for research, policy and practice?

Adapted from

Miles & Alves, 2011

Concentric circles (center to outer): Child, Family/Community, School, Teacher education, National Policy, International

Surrounding text boxes:

- Impact of **pre-service teacher training** on inclusive learning
- Protective benefits of inclusive learning in **humanitarian emergencies**
- Impact of **low-cost aids and appliances** on learning outcomes
- Impact of **inclusive pedagogy** on learning outcomes
- Inclusive learning, **inclusive growth** and inclusive societies
- **Finance** models of inclusive learning?
- Impact of **CBR** on access to and participation in learning
- 'Pupil voice' The role of children in inclusive learning
- Inclusive forms of **measurement** and assessment
- The role of school **leadership** in inclusive learning
- **Parent engagement** in, and support for, inclusive learning
- **Disaggregated** data collection