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## UNIT:01

### ➤ What is inclusive education?

UNICEF's State of the World's Children provides this description: "Inclusive education entails providing meaningful learning opportunities to all students within the regular school system. It allows children with and without disabilities to attend the same age-appropriate classes at the local school, with additional, individually tailored support as needed. It requires physical accommodation – ramps instead of stairs and doorways wide enough for wheelchair users, for example – as well as a new, child-centred curriculum that includes representations of the full spectrum of people found in society (not just persons with disabilities) and reflects the needs of all children. In an inclusive school, students are taught in small classes in which they collaborate and support one another rather than compete. Children with disabilities are not segregated in the classroom, at lunchtime or on the playground."

### ➤ What are the differences between exclusion and inclusion?

*Exclusion* occurs when students are denied access to education.

Exclusion happens when students with disabilities are not permitted to register to attend a school, or when they register but are told not to come to school or when there are conditions placed on their attendance. Sometimes, students are registered but told they will receive their education from a teacher who will visit them at home – so effectively they are still excluded from school.

*Inclusion* involves a transformation of the education system with changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures, strategies, and review mechanisms in place.

In an inclusive system teachers are trained in initial/pre-service education and ongoing professional development to respond to different learning styles and present lessons in different ways so that all students can learn. Resources are available to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities, such as modified curricula and adapted materials.

> ➤ **What are some of the stepts towards achieving inclusive Society and Education?**

The steps toward implementation of inclusive education may be different depending on the specific country, and may also occur in a different order. Not all the steps below are necessary in all countries, but are some of the most commonly taken

a) Eliminate laws, policies, and/or practices which exclude children from school based on disability.

- This is sometimes called a "zero rejection policy". That means that schools cannot deny access to students based on disability and there are clear consequences or accountabilities in place if they do so.

b) Ensure that one ministry is responsible for educating all students of the same age and level of education.

- In many countries, a social ministry rather than an education ministry is responsible for educating children with disabilities. This needs to change.

c) Re-allocate or re-distribute resources currently supporting segregation or integration to strengthen the mainstream system.

d) Train educators – teachers, school administrators, ministry officials – to respond to diversity.

This means adopting new teaching practices which foster cooperative learning and peer tutoring; recognizing different learning styles which call for differentiated instruction; fostering a respect for diversity and a culture of inclusion; and encouraging collaborative approaches between teachers.

e) Address teaching conditions so that teachers are well and reliably paid and are given time for professional development and planning.

e) Invest in inclusive early childhood education (ECCE) that is supported by a variety of professionals knowledgeable about early identification of children at risk of delay or disability.

f) Provide training to parents of children with disabilities.

g) Engage organizations of parents, persons with disabilities, and other allies in policy development and implementation.

> ➤ **What are the obstacles or barriers to Inclusive Education?**

Inclusive education does away with the practice of segregating students with learning and/or physical challenges from the rest of the student body. While the practice of inclusion places extra demands on students and facility logistics, there are numerous benefits to all students, both disabled and non-disabled. Despite the benefits, there still are many barriers to the implementation of inclusive education. Some of the barriers are cited below:

- ❖ **Attitudes:** Societal norms often are the biggest barrier to inclusion. Old attitudes die hard, and many still resist the accommodation of students with disabilities and learning issues, as well as those from minority cultures. Prejudices against those with differences can lead to discrimination, which inhibits the educational process. The challenges of inclusive education might be blamed on the students' challenges instead of the shortcomings of the educational system.
- ❖ **Physical Barriers:** In some districts, students with physical disabilities are expected to attend schools that are inaccessible to them. In economically-deprived school systems, especially those in rural areas, dilapidated and poorly-cared-for buildings can restrict accessibility. Some of these facilities are not safe or healthy for any students. Many schools don't have the facilities to properly accommodate students with special needs, and local governments lack either the funds or the resolve to provide financial help. Environmental barriers can include doors, passageways, stairs and ramps, and recreational areas. These can create a barrier for some students to simply enter the school building or classroom.
- ❖ **Curriculum:** A rigid curriculum that does not allow for experimentation or the use of different teaching methods can be an enormous barrier to inclusion. Study plans that don't recognize different styles of learning hinder the school experience for all students, even those not traditionally recognized as having physical or mental challenges.
- ❖ **Teachers:** Teachers who are not trained or who are unwilling or unenthusiastic about working with differently-abled students are a drawback to successful inclusion. Training often falls short of real effectiveness, and instructors already straining under

large workloads may resent the added duties of coming up with different approaches for the same lessons.

❖ **Language and communication:** Many students are expected to learn while being taught in a language that is new and in some cases unfamiliar to them. This is obviously a significant barrier to successful learning. Too often, these students face discrimination and low expectations.

❖ **Socio-economic factors:** Areas that are traditionally poor and those with higher-than-average unemployment rates tend to have schools that reflect that environment, such as run-down facilities, students who are unable to afford basic necessities and other barriers to the learning process. Violence, poor health services, and other social factors make create barriers even for traditional learners, and these challenges make inclusion all but impossible.

❖ **Funding:** Adequate funding is a necessity for inclusion and yet it is rare. Schools often lack adequate facilities, qualified and properly-trained teachers and other staff members, educational materials and general support. Sadly, the lack of resources is pervasive throughout many educational systems.

❖ **Organization of the Education System:** Centralized education systems are rarely conducive to positive change and initiative. Decisions come from the school system's high-level authorities whose initiatives focus on employee compliance more than quality learning. The top levels of the organization may have little or no idea about the realities teachers face on a daily basis.

❖ **Policies as Barriers:** Many policymakers don't understand or believe in inclusive education, and these leaders can stonewall efforts to make school policies more inclusive. This can exclude whole groups of learners from the mainstream educational system, thereby preventing them from enjoying the same opportunities for education and employment afforded to traditional students.

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