

PROCEDURES FOR ENGAGING CHILDREN IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Abstract: *This article explores the procedures and strategies necessary to ensure the active engagement of children with disabilities in inclusive education systems. Based on global frameworks and recent educational reforms, it provides a scientific analysis of effective practices for identifying, enrolling, and supporting children in inclusive environments. The article also highlights key challenges and innovative solutions implemented across various educational contexts to promote equity and participation.*

Keywords: *Inclusive education, children with disabilities, engagement, educational access, equity, participation*

ПОРЯДОК ПРИВЛЕЧЕНИЯ ДЕТЕЙ К ИНКЛЮЗИВНОМУ ОБРАЗОВАНИЮ

Аннотация: *В статье рассматриваются процедуры и стратегии, необходимые для активного вовлечения детей с инвалидностью в инклюзивное образование. На основе глобальных рамок и современных образовательных реформ проводится научный анализ эффективных практик по выявлению, зачислению и поддержке детей в инклюзивной среде. Особое внимание уделяется основным проблемам и инновационным решениям, направленным на обеспечение равноправия и участия.*

Ключевые слова: *Инклюзивное образование, дети с инвалидностью, вовлечение, доступ к образованию, равенство, участие*

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has become a pivotal element in achieving global educational equity. Children with disabilities represent one of the most marginalized and underserved populations in education systems worldwide. **According to UNICEF**, "There are an estimated 240 million children with disabilities worldwide. Like all children, children with disabilities have ambitions and dreams for their futures. Like all children, they need quality education to develop their skills and realize their full potential"¹⁸. However, systemic

¹⁸ UNICEF. *Inclusive Education*. UNICEF, 2021. <https://www.unicef.org/education/inclusive-education>

barriers often prevent these children from accessing meaningful learning opportunities. This article aims to examine and outline the specific procedures involved in attracting, admitting, and supporting children with disabilities in inclusive educational settings.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Inclusive education has evolved significantly over the past few decades, moving from a model of segregation toward one of full participation and equality. The foundational literature in this field reflects a paradigm shift: from viewing disability as an individual deficit to understanding it as a result of systemic and environmental barriers. The social model of disability, which gained prominence in the 1990s, asserts that societal attitudes, inaccessible environments, and institutional structures are the primary sources of disability-related exclusion.

One of the most influential global declarations supporting inclusive education is the **Salamanca Statement**¹⁹, which emphasized that mainstream schools with inclusive orientations are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes and building inclusive societies. The Statement recommended that inclusive education should be the norm, not the exception, and called on governments to reorient their policies and practices.

Ainscow and Booth proposed the *Index for Inclusion*, a tool designed to help schools self-assess their inclusivity and promote cultures and practices that embrace diversity²⁰. According to Ainscow and Miles, inclusive education is not a fixed destination but a continuous process of identifying and removing barriers to learning.²¹ **Lani Florian** added to this by introducing the concept of a “*pedagogy of inclusion*”, which challenges the notion of planning separate strategies for students with and without disabilities. Instead, she advocates for teaching methods that are flexible and responsive to all learners. This approach encourages teachers to embrace uncertainty, vary instruction, and assume all students can learn when given the right supports.

Mitchell outlined several critical components necessary for successful inclusive education: political will, adequate funding, teacher education, parental involvement, and curriculum flexibility.²² His research underscores that policy must be matched by practice, and inclusion cannot succeed in the absence of systemic support and long-term investment. Recent global reports have highlighted the **implementation gap** between policy and practice. For instance, UNESCO’s Global Education Monitoring Report states that although 90% of countries have some form of inclusive education policy, less than

¹⁹ UNESCO. *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*. UNESCO Publishing, 1994, pp. 1–24.

²⁰ Ainscow, Mel, and Tony Booth. *The Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools*. Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE), 2002, pp. 1–45.

²¹ Ainscow, Mel, and Susie Miles. *Developing Inclusive Education Systems: How Can We Move Policies Forward?* UNESCO, 2009, pp. 5–27.

²² Mitchell, David. “Inclusive Education is a Multi-Faceted Concept.” *Center for Educational Policy Studies (CEPS) Journal*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2015, pp. 9–30.

10% have successfully embedded these policies at the classroom level.²³ This points to a need for professional development, multi-sector collaboration, and inclusive accountability systems.

Country-specific case studies offer insights into successful models. **Italy**, for example, abolished special schools in the 1970s and adopted a policy of full inclusion, supported by co-teaching models and individualized support plans.²⁴ In **Finland**, a multi-tiered support system ensures that every student receives timely assistance, regardless of the nature of their needs. Despite these successes, the literature also notes persistent barriers: insufficient teacher training, limited access to assistive technologies, social stigma, and infrastructural limitations. Scholars such as Forlin (2010) and Sharma (2018) emphasize the importance of **attitudinal change** among educators, as negative beliefs about disability remain one of the most significant obstacles to inclusion.²⁵

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The successful inclusion of children with disabilities into mainstream education systems requires structured procedures supported by strong policy, professional capacity, and community participation. Based on global research and practical applications in various countries, several key procedural stages emerge in the engagement of children with disabilities in inclusive education.

1. Early Identification and Comprehensive Assessment

The first and most critical step in engaging children in inclusive education is the **early identification** of disabilities. Effective inclusion begins with recognizing diverse developmental needs through **multi-disciplinary assessment teams** including medical professionals, psychologists, and educators. For example, in Sweden and New Zealand, early childhood screening programs identify physical, intellectual, and emotional needs before formal schooling begins. These assessments are not intended to exclude but rather to design **Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)** that tailor education to each child's strengths and needs.²⁶

²³ UNESCO. *Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and Education – All Means All*. UNESCO Publishing, 2020, pp. 9–86.

²⁴ Giangreco, Michael F., Mary B. Doyle, and James C. Suter. "Italy's Inclusive Education System: Teachers and Students Working Together." *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, vol. 16, no. 10, 2012, pp. 1135–1149.

²⁵ Forlin, Chris. "Developing and Implementing Quality Inclusive Education in Hong Kong: Implications for Teacher Education." *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, vol. 10, Supplement 1, 2010, pp. 177–184.

²⁶ UNESCO. *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*. UNESCO Publishing, 1994, pp. 1–24.

2. Legal and Institutional Frameworks

A major determinant of successful inclusive practices is the presence of **legal mandates** that promote non-discriminatory access to education. Countries like **Canada** and **South Africa** have developed comprehensive national policies that explicitly recognize the right of children with disabilities to study in mainstream schools. These legal frameworks are enforced through guidelines for schools, funding schemes, and inclusive curriculum standards. Without such frameworks, inclusion remains a theoretical concept rather than a practical reality.

3. Teacher Training and Professional Development

Inclusive education depends heavily on the preparedness of teachers. Studies consistently show that many teachers feel underqualified to work with children with disabilities. Therefore, **pre-service training** and **continuous professional development** are essential. In **Finland**, for instance, all teacher education programs include compulsory courses on inclusive pedagogy and special education. Professional learning communities and in-school mentoring programs further support teachers in applying inclusive strategies in real classroom settings.

4. Curriculum Differentiation and Resource Adaptation

Curricula must be **flexible and differentiated** to meet a wide range of learning needs. This includes adapting instructional materials, providing **assistive technologies**, and using **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** principles that allow multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression. For example, in **Singapore**, mainstream schools utilize multimedia content, tactile materials, and peer support systems to enhance learning for students with visual, auditory, or cognitive impairments.

5. Infrastructure and Accessibility

Physical access is a precondition for inclusion. Many schools in low- and middle-income countries still lack ramps, elevators, accessible toilets, or transportation for children with disabilities. In contrast, **Japan** has made considerable progress by integrating barrier-free design principles in all public schools, ensuring that children can navigate the learning environment independently.

6. Parental and Community Engagement

Inclusion does not occur in isolation—it requires the **active involvement of families and communities**. Schools must engage parents in the planning and monitoring of their children's learning. **Awareness campaigns, community dialogue forums, and parent education programs** can reduce stigma and foster a culture of inclusion. In **India**, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a crucial role in bridging the gap between families and schools, particularly in rural and marginalized communities.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

Inclusion is a dynamic process that requires **continuous evaluation**. Monitoring systems should track not only enrollment rates but also learning outcomes, participation levels, and student well-being. Countries like **Australia** use inclusive education indicators in

national data systems to inform decision-making and allocate resources where they are most needed.

CONCLUSION

Inclusive education is not merely a pedagogical method but a **moral, social, and legal imperative** rooted in the principles of equity, human rights, and democratic participation. The process of engaging children with disabilities into general education requires a **systematic and coordinated approach** that encompasses early identification, legal support, trained personnel, curriculum adaptation, accessible infrastructure, and community engagement. Evidence from countries that have successfully implemented inclusive education—such as Finland, Italy, and Canada—demonstrates that **when inclusive practices are supported by strong policy frameworks, adequate resources, and a culture of acceptance**, the academic and social outcomes for children with disabilities improve significantly.

This study reinforces the idea that inclusive education must be viewed as a **dynamic and evolving process**, not a one-time structural adjustment. Simply placing children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms without modifying teaching methods or ensuring appropriate support will not yield the desired outcomes. Instead, schools must develop **responsive learning environments**, where all students—regardless of their physical, intellectual, sensory, or emotional differences—can thrive and contribute meaningfully. Furthermore, the importance of **teacher training** cannot be overstated. Teachers are the cornerstone of successful inclusion, and their beliefs, attitudes, and competencies directly impact its effectiveness. Ongoing professional development programs, coupled with practical tools and peer collaboration, can foster inclusive mindsets and strategies in classrooms. Ultimately, inclusive education is a **reflection of society's commitment to justice and equality**. It benefits not only children with disabilities but the entire student body, promoting empathy, diversity awareness, and collaborative problem-solving.

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