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Historical Development of Inclusive Education in the UK

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Abstract

The article seeks to explore the historical progression of inclusive education in the United Kingdom. Given the growing population of students with Special Education Needs (SEN), it becomes crucial to reinforce the principles and teaching methods associated with inclusive education. While the number of students receiving special education in the UK is increasing day by day, concepts such as legislation, rights, and inclusion gain more and more importance for students receiving special education. Hence, it could be crucial to reassert the principles and teaching methods that form the foundation of the UK education system and to ensure that the government follows through on its dedication to introducing inclusive education. A systematic literature review method was used in the study. All the documents needed to understand the implications of the historical development of inclusive education in the UK have been accessed online. Inclusion criteria: It is the evaluation of the regulation considering mainstreaming education policies, laws and articles. Exclusion criteria: documents regarding inclusive education but not legislation, policies and laws. Plus, articles on inclusive education interventions and teaching methodologies were also excluded. It is expected that the article will provide an analytical perspective on legislation by establishing a vision of inclusive education in the UK for other countries as well.

Keywords: inclusive education, legislation, policies, action plans, United Kingdom

Birleşik Krallık'ta Kapsayıcı Eğitimin Tarihsel Gelişimi

Özet

Bu makalenin amacı, Birleşik Krallık'ta kaynaştırma eğitiminin tarihsel gelişimini incelemektir. Özel gereksinimli öğrencilerin sayısı arttıkça, idealleri ve pedagojiyi yeniden teyit etmek önemlidir. Birleşik Krallık'ta özel eğitim alan öğrenci sayısı her geçen gün artarken, özel eğitim alan öğrenciler için mevzuat, haklar, kaynaştırma gibi kavramlar giderek daha fazla önem kazanmaktadır. Bu nedenle, Birleşik Krallık eğitim sisteminin üzerine inşa edildiği idealleri ve pedagojiyi yeniden teyit etmek ve hükümetin kapsayıcı eğitimi uygulama taahhüdünü harekete geçirmek önemli olabilir. Çalışmada sistematik literatür tarama yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Birleşik Krallık'ta kapsayıcı eğitimin tarihsel gelişiminin etkilerini anlamak için gereken tüm belgelere çevrimiçi olarak erişilmiştir. Dâhil edilme kriterleri: Kaynaştırma eğitim politikalarına ilişkin yönetmelikler, kanunlar ve maddelerdir. Hariç tutma kriterleri: kapsayıcı eğitimle ilgili olmayan mevzuat, politikalar ve yasalarla ilişkili belgelerdir. Ayrıca, kapsayıcı eğitim müdahaleleri ve öğretim metodolojileri ile ilgili makaleler de hariç tutulmuştur. Makalenin Birleşik Krallık'taki kapsayıcı eğitimin diğer ülkeler için de bir vizyon oluşturarak mevzuata analitik bir bakış açısı sağlaması beklenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: kapsayıcı eğitim, mevzuat, politikalar, eylem planları, Birleşik Krallık



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Introduction

Research on inclusive education, policies, and practices in the United Kingdom is increasingly recognized (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Norwich & Lewis, 2018; Slee, 2011). In 2022, it was reported that 1.49 million students in the UK were classified as having special educational needs, comprising approximately 16.5% of the student population (Department for Education-DfE, 2022). Understanding the philosophy behind inclusion practices is pivotal for adopting a supportive stance and nurturing inclusive environments. Booth and Ainscow (2002), in their work at the Centre for the Study of Inclusive Education (CSIE), introduced the "Inclusion Index," proposing a perspective shift from focusing solely on "special educational needs" to considering broader "barriers to learning and engagement." This viewpoint challenges the practice of labeling children, emphasizing holistic growth expectations. As the number of students falling into this category continues to rise, concepts such as legislation, rights, and inclusion for students with special educational needs (SEN) become increasingly pertinent.

Inclusive education aims to educate students with SEN alongside their peers in mainstream schools, following the same curriculum to meet their diverse educational needs, physical, cognitive, social, and psychological development (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). This approach involves placing all students, regardless of their individual challenges, into age-appropriate general education classes within local community schools, providing them with education, interventions, and support (Alquraini & Gut, 2012; Bui et al., 2010). This approach prioritizes inclusivity, ensuring the participation of all students in mainstream settings, fostering access to higher-quality education and interventions, and maximizing their potential in academic and daily life endeavors.

Examining the curriculum, policies, and practices of inclusive education in the UK not only helps understand the effectiveness of inclusive education but also serves as a benchmark for other nations seeking to enhance their inclusive education standards. Research in this field is critical for understanding the development and impact of inclusive education policies, as well as ensuring equality of opportunity and justice. Therefore, exploring the legal framework of inclusive practices in the UK is essential for comprehending its history and current status. This research provides valuable information for policymakers, educators, and other stakeholders involved in promoting equality and justice in inclusive education. Furthermore, a detailed examination of the legal framework can help understand and address current challenges and shortcomings, guiding the development of strategies to improve inclusive education policies and practices.

Aim of the Study

The primary objective of this research is to examine the historical development and current legal framework of inclusive education in the United Kingdom. Within this scope, the study is structured around two fundamental research questions:

1. On what legal grounds are the inclusive education policies and legislation based in the United Kingdom?
2. How has the historical development of these policies and legislation unfolded?

In this context, the study aims to investigate the rights, inclusivity, and discrimination provided in educational environments in the UK for individuals with special educational needs. Accordingly, the examination of existing legislation is intended to contribute to a better understanding of inclusive education practices in the UK and to provide an analytical evaluation of the legislation. Thus, the research may serve as a valuable resource for gaining a deeper insight into the educational content related to inclusive practices in the UK.

Method

In this study, the systematic literature review method was chosen to comprehensively examine the legislations, policies, and acts published regarding inclusive education in the UK. All documents related to inclusive education that serve the research purpose were accessed online and carefully examined. These documents were selected to understand the history of inclusive education in the UK and the effects of laws on inclusive education. All published policies, laws, and regulations were evaluated.

Selection of Relevant Studies for Investigation in the Research Scope

In this article, it was aimed to review the historical development of inclusive education in the UK by investigating the legal framework and legislation established so far. Access to various databases such as the National Thesis Centre (YÖK Thesis Search), SCOPUS, Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC), Web of Science (WOS), and National Academic Network and Information Centre (ULAKBİM) was sought to obtain a richer database by accessing studies conducted by other researchers on inclusive education policies, laws, and regulations not only in the UK but also in other countries.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criterias

For the research, databases were scanned using keywords such as "laws," "legal framework," "discrimination," "inclusive education," "policies," "rights," "actions," and "England." As a result of the search, studies with full-text publications regarding inclusive education, policies, laws, and regulations in England were included without any year limitations. Documents related to inclusive education in England but not directly addressing laws, policies, and regulations; quantitative studies conducted within the context of the topic; and documents concerning interventions and teaching methodologies in inclusive education were excluded from the study.

Findings

The Historical Development of Inclusive Education in the UK

Upon examining the historical progression of inclusive education in the United Kingdom, it becomes evident that initially, the Ministry of Health held the responsibility for the welfare of children with special educational needs (SEN). Subsequently, this duty shifted to the Ministry of Social Welfare. Presently, the Department of Education in the UK is entrusted with the provision of education for students with SEN. Regrettably, a discriminatory attitude towards children with special needs emerged, stemming from the belief that they were "uneducable" (Booth & Ainscow, 1998).

The Ministry of National Education cannot be thought of without policy and legislation. It depends on the statements of politicians and policymakers in the country, the UK. Policy statements are based on and implement what the government promises. These are sometimes published and referred to as Green Papers or White Papers (Neaum, 2019). The documents give a chance to discuss government ideas, proposals, and policies. This discussion is called the Green Papers, while the policy recommendation is the White Papers. If other papers come out of the parliament, the law is passed. If the law passes parliament, the law is then called the Act, for example, the Publication of the National Childcare Strategy. Norwich, (2014) stated that when Law begins to create curricula, policy, and legislation should be guided by frameworks for workforce education and practice. Education sectors should always work with qualified and competent experts in compliance with the Law. This research focuses on Inclusive education in the UK education system, from theory to practice. The history of inclusive education should link special education with early childhood education.

To gain a brief overview of the historical development of inclusive education, it is necessary to examine the relevant legislation and laws in the United Kingdom. Jackson (2017) highlights that the implementation of The New Poor Law in 1834 aimed to address urban conditions and mitigate economic losses resulting from the high mortality rate among the urban poor. In 1889, a Royal Commission on the Blind, Deaf, and Dumb recommended strict discouragement of interfaith marriages. In 1896, the National Association for the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded was established in Britain with the objective of permanently segregating individuals with intellectual disabilities. These laws and legislations were formulated based on the economic and social statuses of citizens and societies, seeking to improve their economic circumstances. Gunter (2015) and Jackson (2017) further note that the Eugenics Education Society was founded in Britain in 1907, advocating for sterilisation and marriage restrictions for individuals deemed "weak" in order to prevent degeneration of the population. The society also promoted legislative measures to address what it believed to be the primary cause of poverty. Following to manage pauperism, in the 1921 Education Act legislation was prepared to protect a minority group of children as handicapped; had the right to be educated in segregated classes or schools. With this legislation, we can see such words as; handicapped, segregation, and mental deficiency. After this, the 1929 Wood report suggested that segregation schooling and curriculum should be prepared for children who were described as mentally defective. Thus, there were introduced many types of class and overall school segregation (Daniels et al., 2019). This method, however, of institutionalising difference segregated students with SEN into various school types. All children were not regarded as educable and included in the educational system until the Handicapped Children Education Act was passed. Prior to this Act, persons with an IQ below 50 were accepted as uneducable based on the health care provisions (HM Government, 1970).

Subsequently, the Education (Handicapped Children) Act 1970 was introduced, transferring the responsibility for overseeing the education of students with intellectual disabilities from the Department of Health to the Department of Education, following the recommendations put forth by the working group that included Tizard and Mittler. This shift resulted in notable progress and investments being made towards enhancing the provision of health and social services. These advancements encompassed the construction of new schools, the provision of innovative educational resources, and the employment of trained personnel. However, codes of behaviour and legislation were not very innovative ways to carry out policy in education in general and SEN. The Warnock Report was introduced in the same decade as the 1970 Act and released in 1978. The educational options available to young people with SEN in the UK were reviewed in this report. This study marked a significant milestone in the administration of systems aimed at identifying and catering to the needs of young individuals with special requirements. Schools were called upon to actively support the integration of students with special educational needs (SEN) into mainstream classrooms (Norwich, 2019).

The specific arrangements for supporting individuals with special educational needs (SEN) may differ based on local circumstances and available resources. However, the introduction of SEN legislation through the Education Act of 1981 established a clear foundation for professional conduct. The involvement of parents has been an ongoing focus, with the shift from emphasizing needs identification and informed decision-making to prioritizing consumer choice as parental rights expanded. These rights encompass assessments, statement contents, and appeals (Harris & Davidge, 2019). For instance, the 1992 Schools White Paper advocated for granting SEN parents "the same complete voice in decisions regarding their child's education and the same opportunity to express a preference for a specific special or mainstream school within the maintained sector, as any other parent" (DfE, 1992). The SEN and Disability Act 2001 mandated the provision of advice and information and enabled

disability discrimination complaints to be lodged against schools. The Education Act 1993 further expanded parents' rights in terms of choosing placement and appealing decisions. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 necessitated the development of a transition plan, involving schools, local authorities, and relevant services, for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) when they reach the age of 14 (Robinson et al., 2018). Under the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995, individuals with disabilities facing discrimination have the ability to act as complainants and receive support from the Secretary of State in filing a complaint and presenting their case effectively (Howie, 2010). While acknowledging the challenges posed by the formalities of the National Curriculum during the transition to compulsory schooling, the involvement of early-year academics in the working group ensured that their proposals recognised the unique requirements of children under the age of five. In a subsequent study, titled "Aspects of Primary Education: The Education of Children Under Five," Her Majesty's Inspectorate highlighted these considerations (Ryan, 2019). According to the Green Paper, the aim was to establish 3,500 Sure Start Children's Centres by 2010 to provide access to families with young children (Hodkinson, 2009; Webster, 2019).

Current acts on Inclusive Education in the UK

The UK Department of Education assumed responsibility for the education of all children, including those with intellectual disabilities, 35 years ago, marking a significant development in the history of inclusive education (Mittler, 2002). The Education for All (EFA) initiative represents a global commitment to ensuring that every child and adult receives a quality foundational education. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) (DFID, 2006) underscores that this commitment is founded on both a human rights perspective and the universally accepted belief that education is crucial for individual well-being and national development. In essence, this commitment recognizes that education not only benefits children but also families, communities, and even nations by enhancing employment opportunities, welfare, public health, and disease prevention. It is therefore unsurprising that the EFA movement and various prominent international non-governmental organisations have been inspired by this rationale, advocating for positive treatment of these children.

In the UK, legislation opposes exclusionary education and prohibits discrimination in the classroom. The country is bound by international human rights law to provide inclusive education to every child. Prior to October 2010, numerous laws were enacted over several years to prohibit discrimination. These laws include the following:

1-Special educational needs and disability act 2001

The legislation guarantees that disabled students have the entitlement to be exempt from any form of discrimination in education, training, and other services primarily or wholly designed for students. This right extends to individuals enrolled in programs provided by "responsible bodies," including sixth-form colleges and higher education institutions (UK Public General Acts, 2001).

2-The disability discrimination (public authorities) (statutory duties) regulations 2005

These statutes have focused on instances where local education authorities, in relation to the schools under their jurisdiction, are required to develop strategies that enhance accessibility. The aim is to ensure the active participation of students with disabilities in the education and associated services offered by schools (UK Statutory Instruments, 2005).

3-Disability discrimination act 2005

The legislation established that any form of discrimination against individuals with disabilities is prohibited in employment, the provision of goods, services, the sale and management of real estate. Additionally, it incorporated various provisions regarding education and granted the Secretary of State for Transport the power to introduce regulations aimed at ensuring

accessible transportation options for disabled individuals, including taxis, public service vehicles, and rail vehicles (UK Public General Acts, 2005).

4-Equality act 2006

It advocated for the dissolution of the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality, and the Commission on Disability while simultaneously establishing provisions for the establishment of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (UK Public General Acts, 2006).

The UK has several current acts in place regarding inclusion and special educational needs. Inclusive practice has been a fundamental aspect of UK law since the Education Act of 1944, with further support from the Human Rights Act of 1998, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act of 2000, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, and the Equality Act of 2010. Many young individuals with special educational needs may be considered disabled under the Equality Act of 2010, which defines disability as a substantial and long-term negative impact on an individual's ability to carry out ordinary daily activities (The Equality Act, 2010). To prevent significant disadvantages for these students, appropriate adjustments should be provided (PHE, 2020).

The Equality Act, which consolidated and strengthened various equality legislation, came into effect on October 1, 2010. The Act prohibits discrimination based on disability, race, sex, gender identity or expression, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, or sexual orientation by any education provider, including private or independent entities. Discrimination on these grounds, known as "protected characteristics," is also unlawful concerning prospective students, current students (including those absent or temporarily excluded), and former students with ongoing contact with the school (CSIE, 2018).

The Act also establishes specific criteria that must be met for someone to be protected by the law. The disability discrimination provisions of the Equality Act of 2010 adhere to the medical model of disability, focusing on an individual's limitations. However, the social model of disability, championed by the British disability movement, has gained significant influence in disability politics in the UK. According to this model, society creates barriers that hinder the full participation of individuals with disabilities, exacerbating impairments (Oliver, 1996).

In English schools, there are approximately 1.4 million students with special educational needs (DfE, 2020). The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code (SEND code) of practice defines a child or young person as having special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty or disability that requires special educational provision to be made (DfE & DoHaSC, 2014:15). For students of compulsory school age, this means that they either have a disability that restricts their use of the facilities available to their peers in inclusive schools or face significantly more difficulty in learning compared to a significant percentage of their classmates.

The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice provides guidance to organisations working with and supporting children and young people (from 0 to 25 years old) with special educational needs and disabilities. It explains the requirements and regulations outlined in the Children and Families Act of 2014, the Equality Act of 2010, and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations of 2014 for schools, academies, and local government (DfE, 2014).

SEND Code of Practice: What, Why and How

The regulation stipulated that each school has the responsibility to identify and address the special educational needs (SEN) of the students they serve and that all children and young people have the right to receive an appropriate education. To achieve this, schools must:

- Encourage the participation of children with SEN in school events alongside their peers without SEN.
- Designate a teacher to oversee the provision of SEN.
- Ensure that parents are informed when a child is receiving special education services, through the Special Education Coordinator (SENCO) who creates an information report detailing admission policies for children with disabilities and measures taken to prevent any unfavourable treatment.
- Provide facilities and an accessibility strategy to allow disabled students access to the school, with plans for gradual improvement over time.
- Maintain an SEN Register that includes provision mapping, which includes recording information about children with special needs.
- Provide training to staff members to enable them to identify and support children with special educational needs at an early stage.

The code then identified four major categories to provide schools with a general understanding of the breadth of requirements they should anticipate:

- Communication and interaction: This category includes students with speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN), as well as those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), such as Asperger Syndrome and Autism.
- Cognition and learning: This category focuses on students who have slower learning abilities compared to their peers, as well as those with specific learning difficulties (SpLD) such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dyspraxia.
- Social, emotional, and mental health difficulties: Students who may exhibit withdrawn, isolated, challenging, disruptive, or distressing behavior, which could be indicative of underlying mental health issues, fall into this category.
- Sensory and/or physical needs: Students with sensory impairments, physical disabilities, or conditions that limit their ability to use educational facilities typically provided, including vision or hearing deficiencies and multisensory impairments, fall under this category (DfE, 2014).

Therefore, it is crucial to reaffirm the ideals and pedagogy on which the UK education system is built and to implement the government's commitment to inclusive education as outlined in Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) or the Children and Families Act 2014. This requires replacing high-stakes testing, rewarding schools for the success of all students, and implementing practical measures to promote inclusivity, combat exclusion, and prevent bullying. While most identified students are categorized as needing "SEN help" provided by schools, those with more severe or complex needs should have an Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plan and undergo a multi-agency statutory assessment. An EHC plan is a legally binding document that outlines the support required for a student or young person and specifies the actions the local authority must take to support their success. The Children and Families Act 2014 established EHC plans based on the recommendations of the Lamb Inquiry (Lamb, 2009). The Act has undergone revisions (Ofsted, 2010; Lenehan, 2017; Ofsted & Care Quality Commission, 2017) to ensure prompt identification of needs and active participation of students, young people, and their families in discussions and decision-making regarding the support they require (National Audit Office, 2019).

Discussion

The discussion is presented under two separate headings: Findings on legislation and laws, and Observations on inclusive practices in England by researchers.

Discussion on Research Findings

Despite the encouragement of inclusive approaches in UK education policy, Roma children often face negative school experiences due to social isolation that persists within the classroom. Although there are some signs of improvement, Roma children remain the most marginalised and least successful ethnic group in schools, with Gypsy/Roma students lagging behind their peers by over 2 years in terms of educational attainment (Hutchinson et al., 2018). The educational achievement of white British children also remains disproportionately low, with only 11.8% reaching expected levels at the end of secondary education (key stage 4), compared to 67.6% of females and 60.3% of males. Exclusion rates are highest among Gypsy/Roma boys (120.4 per 1000) and Gypsy/Roma girls (54.8 per 1000), with White British students also experiencing high exclusion rates (24.2 per 1000) (Andrew et al., 2017; Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018).

When examining the SEND Codes, it becomes apparent that measurement-focused approaches are applied to inclusive practices. However, the measurement-driven approach of current education policy often hinders schools from empowering underperforming students, including those from Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller backgrounds, to fully participate in their educational experience. This creates tension between inclusion ideologies, which aim to improve outcomes for underachieving students and promote their involvement in schools (Bhopal, 2011; Ryder & Cemlyn, 2016). While inclusion upholds ideals of equality, rights, and participation, these very principles can sometimes contribute to exclusion. To address this, it is essential to analyze both exclusion and the existing tension between inclusion and exclusion (Booth and Ainscow, 2011; Borkett, 2019; O'Connor and Bolshaw, 2018). Merely being present in the same setting does not guarantee inclusivity; inclusive practices encompass a sense of belonging, empowerment, and involvement (Borkett, 2019).

In line with this, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2015 was developed as a revision of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001. The aim was to strengthen the right to participate in inclusive practices for everyone, offering guidance for children, young adults, and their families regarding SEN. The involvement of children, parents, and young people in discussions and decisions about their support and provision was also emphasized. The intention was for most children and young adults with SEN to have their needs met in mainstream early childhood programmes, schools, or colleges (DfE & DoH, 2015).

Therefore, it is crucial to reaffirm the ideals and pedagogy on which the UK education system is built and to implement the government's commitment to inclusive education under Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) or the Children and Families Act 2014. This requires a shift away from high-stakes testing, the promotion of school success for all students, and practical measures to foster inclusivity, combat exclusion, and address bullying. While most identified students are classified as requiring "SEN help," which is typically provided by schools, those with more complex needs should have an Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plan and undergo a multi-agency statutory assessment. An EHC plan is a legally binding document that outlines the support and assistance needed by a student or young person, specifying the responsibilities of the local authority in supporting their success. The Children and Families Act (2014), building upon the recommendations of the Lamb Inquiry (Lamb, 2009), has undergone revisions (Lenehan,

2017; Ofsted, 2010; Ofsted & Care Quality Commission, 2017) to ensure timely recognition of students' needs and to enable active participation of students, young people, and their families in decision-making regarding the support they require (National Audit Office, 2019).

Observations on Inclusive Practices in England

During observations in England, significant efforts to promote inclusive practices were witnessed by both teachers and administrators. In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on student-centered approaches that recognize the uniqueness of each individual. Many teachers believe that for inclusive practices to be successful, every child should be considered. However, despite their determination to include students with special needs, teachers and support staff still face concerns and barriers to full participation (Wah, 2010).

For example, concerns about meeting the specific needs of students with emotional and behavioral disorders within mainstream schools were expressed by teachers in an after-school education support program in Belfast, England, affiliated with Solas Charity, where the researcher worked as a volunteer teaching assistant. Workload and stress may be underlying factors that hinder meeting the needs of these students in inclusive environments. Stressful work settings characterized by heavy workloads and performance pressures can impact teachers' motivation, self-efficacy, and dedication, thereby affecting the entire educational system. Recognizing the current challenges faced by special education and general education teachers regarding inclusive practices can inform the development of teacher education programs (Schleicher, 2018). Many schools in the UK adopt a progressive inclusion approach to support students with special needs, implementing programs such as School Action and School Action Plus as recommended in the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfES, 2001b). Additional internal programs, such as the Reading Improvement Program for students with literacy needs, the Gifted and Talented Program for English as a Second Language learners, and the Learning Counsellor Program, are offered in some schools. External support is also available from organizations such as the Local Education Authority and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Wah, 2010).

The inclusive education policies in the UK have seen a prolonged period of development, evidenced by clearer implementation strategies. Studies indicate that consistent and well-defined legislation supports inclusion (Booth, 1999). Teachers in the UK highlight the importance of resources and funding for successful inclusive practices, as inclusion is deemed challenging without adequate support. This emphasis on resources aligns with the argument put forth by Lloyd (2000) that inclusion is now seen as a matter of responding to diversity based on social justice and equity, rather than mere resource provision and displacement. In my visits to schools in Plymouth, England, I witnessed efforts to maximize funds, resources, and support to serve diverse student populations from various backgrounds. However, despite these efforts, the success of inclusive practices in schools cannot be guaranteed. It is important for teachers to receive more information and education on students from different socio-cultural backgrounds and those with challenging behaviors arising from their special needs. This can help meet the specific requirements and ensure inclusion. Teacher education programs can be developed to address this need, allowing students with different backgrounds to receive education alongside their peers in inclusive classrooms, supported by inclusive policies. This can serve as a starting point for developing inclusive policies in other countries, particularly England, to promote social justice and equal opportunities in education (considering cyclical structures).

Considering all these factors, collaborative problem-solving and critically reflective practice play a crucial role in the success of inclusive education in the 21st century. They contribute to creating an educational environment focused on students, education, and a barrier-free

learning environment, rather than just professional school management. Recognizing that the current dominant view of education sometimes hinders equity is essential. Teachers need to critically evaluate and improve their work to make this recognition a reality. Increased participation in collaborative and participatory research that challenges assumptions in policy, judgment, and practice is necessary. Although it may not create a perfect and equitable educational model for all students, it can serve as a starting point for reshaping pedagogical ideas and promoting active, critical thinking in education (Lloyd, 2000).

Conclusion

Since its emergence in Salamanca, the term "inclusive education" has acquired diverse meanings worldwide. In England, it is occasionally used to describe practices in special schools, while in certain UK contexts, inclusive education is no longer limited to special needs or disabilities but also encompasses behavior and school attendance. Specialised organisations argue that they need to prioritize children with special educational needs (SEN) or single impairments like blindness because disabled children are often overlooked in mainstream development programs. However, there is a growing consensus among international organisations that action must be taken to address the needs of the millions of disabled children who are not in school, fostering better communication and collaboration between specialized organizations and those focused on broader development issues. Save the Children UK has been advocating for a more inclusive approach to disability, education, and development for the past two decades. Meanwhile, the concept of inclusive education has gradually shifted away from its original radical meaning, which rejected psychological and medical explanations for academic difficulties, and is now used in various contexts, according to Slee (2004).

In the UK, the Education Act of 1981 firmly established the belief that inclusion in regular classrooms benefits students with SEN. More recently, the Green Paper titled "Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs" has supported the UK government's stance on inclusion. This policy has been further strengthened in subsequent programmes and legislation, such as the Programme for Action and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act of 2001. These initiatives aim to provide stronger rights for children with SEN to receive education in mainstream schools. The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice offers guidance on policies and procedures, presenting a comprehensive framework for identifying, evaluating, and meeting students' needs. Statutory guidance on inclusive schooling has also been developed to aid the implementation of the new inclusion framework. The government's SEN strategy, "Removing Barriers to Achievement," was introduced in 2004 and focuses on early intervention, addressing learning difficulties, improving standards and attainment, and fostering partnerships to drive progress.

The UK government has demonstrated a clear commitment to promoting the inclusion and participation of students with SEN in mainstream education through the enactment of legislation and the implementation of policies. However, these measures have faced criticism. Lloyd (2000, 2008) argues that the Green Paper oversimplifies inclusion as a process of relocation, resource allocation, and minor curriculum adjustments, failing to address broader issues such as social justice, equity, and diversity. Instead of fostering a flexible curriculum that can accommodate diverse needs, inclusion is often viewed as a process of achieving uniformity with the mainstream. Lloyd (2008) further criticizes the government's SEN policy for being based on normalisation, compensation, and deficit remedies, without acknowledging the complex and divisive nature of inclusion.

Recommendation

The implementation of inclusive education is significantly influenced by teachers' experiences and competencies. Nevertheless, the attitudes of school administrators towards teachers' suggestions for maximising inclusive education practices play a crucial role in the implementation process. If school principals restrict or ignore these suggestions, the achievement of inclusive education suffers. Consequently, children with special educational needs (SEN) may not always be recognised as part of an inclusive society. The responsibility for educating all children, including those with intellectual disabilities, was assumed by the UK Department of Education 35 years ago, as highlighted by Mittler (2002).

The concept of Education for All (EFA) represents a global commitment to ensuring that every child and adult receives a high-quality foundational education. The UK Department for International Development (DFID, 2006) asserts that this commitment is grounded in a human rights perspective and the universally accepted belief that education is crucial for individual well-being and national development. In other words, this commitment emphasises that education benefits not only children but also families, communities, and even nations. Education leads to increased employment and welfare opportunities, while also contributing to public health by preventing diseases. Therefore, it is not surprising that the EFA movement and numerous influential international non-governmental organisations have been inspired by this line of reasoning and have advocated for a positive approach towards these children.

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