Ensuring Inclusive Education within Mainstream Schools with the Provision of Special Needs Materials

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1. Introduction

Thomas Jefferson "recognized the supreme importance, for a democratic government, of universal education. And this education must above all things teach men to think clearly and independently, for only by so doing will they be able to perpetuate a democracy."[1]

education plays an important role in "the initiation of human agents into the rational capacities, values and virtues that warrant our ascription to them of the status of persons."[2]

As per UNICEF/UNESCO, "Governments should support the achievement of a strong base

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[1] Norbert Sand "The Classics in Jefferson's Theory of Education" The Classical Journal, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Nov., 1944), pp. 97-98, 92-98

[2] David Carr-Making Sense of Education_ An Introduction to the Philosophy and Theory of Education (2003) p. 4.

for lifelong learning, through education directed towards responsible autonomy, self-directed learning and preparation for full citizenship." This mandate, from the context of Ethiopia, is left on the shoulder of the Federal and Regional governments of Ethiopia. As one of the composite regional states of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the South Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region is duty-bound to disseminate and assure equal opportunity and inclusive environment of education for all citizens including the disabled.

In this relation, the SNNP Region's Bureau of Education has, for the last few years, engaged in

the purchase and distribution of educational materials for children with disabilities who are of age and joined schools in their vicinity. As is known, after purchasing the materials, the Bureau distributes the Special Education Needs materials through the respective zones and special woredas and under the ladder the schools. It is found out that some zones and woredas are found not distributing the materials to the beneficiaries. Moreover, it is observed that some of the materials are subject to destruction by virtue of mishandling and incorrect positioning. This module is prepared to address these and other issues in pertinence.

Accordingly, the following key issues will be addressed:

First, we will contextualize the main issue with the theoretical and practical issues of special needs education with particular emphasis on inclusive education. Taking note of this year;s Disability Day Celebration motto "empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusivity and equality."

Second, we will situate the human right to education from the perspective of international, regional and national human rights instruments; when so doing, we will discuss the basic principles such as availability, accessibility, adaptability and acceptability.

Finally, we will discuss the needed materials for students with disabilities in their category and the function each material is meant to address coupled with the cautions that should be adopted to preserve the materials.

2. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY

In his most recent book, disability activist and researcher and himself a physically disabled person, Tom Shakespeare has convincingly presented three basic reasons for education:

Education is critical to everyone, but particularly to disabled children. It is critical because having qualifications can make the difference to being included or excluded in employment and society. It is critical because disabled children may have special educational needs, which makes teaching and learning more complicated.

It is critical because self-esteem and social capital are strongly influenced by educational experiences (2018, p. 106).

So to speak, one's exclusion or inclusion within the employable category, the presence of complications for the presence of special needs and self-esteem and social capital are the backbones of life itself; the absence or even depletion of any of these will force the person to live miserably. The concern of this module is the second critical context of education: the presence of special needs and the complications that might ensue. In the following brief paragraphs, we will dwell on the concept and

administration of special education needs within the context of the predominant disability philosophies or approaches.

Researchers in the field of special education tried to define the phrase "special education needs" in the following words: "individual deviation from normal expectation on significant difficulties in learning compared to the majority of children of a given age." Here, the elements that define the presence or absence of the special needs is "normalcy criteria" and the "difficulty of attending classes" with the majority others. In terms of definition, the above understanding seems to locate the speciality of the needs within "individual variations."

Theoretically, researchers propounded two conceptualizations of the nature of the difficulties which stampede children with disabilities: the medical model, the psychomedical model or the individual model and the social model. This, however, doesn't mean that the above-mentioned two conceptual frameworks are the only in this respect. For instance, comparable to "Darwinism" in the natural world, some nineteenth century researchers have introduced the so-called "social-darwinism" which argues, persons with varied disabilities will be wiped out for they will be devoured by the more competent able-bodied part of the community. In succession, the

"eugenics" philosophy was introduced with the main target of exterminating all persons with disabilities by using various grounds including institutionalization followed by sterilization and prohibition of sexual contact for females and intentional killing of mad and feeble-minded persons. Following the second World War, the alarming increase in the number of persons with physical challenge, policy considerations were made and the "medical model" was introduced. Seeing into the failings of the "medical model", some of the distinguished researchers with disabilities, particularly, in Britain proposed the other approach, namely, the "social model."

2.1 The Medical Model

This model understands special needs as emanating from debilities in the mental or psychological composition of the child, assimilating it to an illness or medical condition. This model locates the problem in the individual. Consequently, the parents of the child must look for a medical professional to cure their child; thereby making the problem inside.

Elsayed Elshabrawy Ahmad Hassanein (2015) wrote the following about this model:

This conceptualisation assumes that children deemed to have difficulties in learning should be segregated from others and subjected to an

alternative form of educational provision. Those children who appear unable to learn "normally" are first grouped into different categories according to their problems and then prescribed special treatment or special pedagogical programmes from specialist practitioners in order to make good the deficit. Pedagogical solutions aim at helping people with disabilities to better cope with society. The children must be changed if they are to benefit from education or they have to be changed to fit into the system.

Continuing his attack on this model, Elsayed Elshabrawy Ahmad Hassanein claims that

it [model] has been criticized for ignoring the important role of social and educational

contexts. Where the educational context contributes to the problem, focusing on the individual will not make a broader contribution to improving the context. He further argues that the education system is not equally favourable to every child who participates in it and urges that instead of asking how education can change the individual, we should be asking how the education system itself can be changed to accommodate the characteristics of all children, regardless of the degree to which they are atypical. This reflects in a way the belief that inclusion is about the individual child and his or her response to the world and also the response of others to the particular child.

This model has given precedence to the medical professionals and sought the solution not from the educators or the general society. Accordingly, the model put the individuals with disabilities in the category of ill persons.

2.2 The Social Model

On the contrary to the medical model, the social model can be succinctly put as follows as per Tom Shakespeare: "the social conceptualization of SEN marks a sharp break with the hypothesis of special needs as arising from neurological deficits inherent in the student which typifies research in the psycho-medical paradigm. This model locates the source of difficulties within

the educational environment rather than within the child."

Michael Oliver, in his well-read book of 1996, argues that "The social model prescribes change. Not on changing the child to help her/him fit into the "normal" classroom, but on rethinking and changing the whole school's teaching and learning environment so that it can genuinely welcome all children and accommodate pupil diversity.."

On the whole, it is no longer possible to assume a priori consensus around the idea that children deemed to have difficulties in learning should be segregated from others and subjected to an alternative form of educational provision. In

addition, it plays an important role in "sensitizing practitioners to the potentially damaging effects of attaching negative diagnostic labels to pupils."

The basic issue that ensues from our reading of the above two models instills in us that both have their own inherent defects. For instance, the medical model totally excludes the role of the environment, social and other structural barriers put at odds with the success of the children with disabilities. On the contrary, the social model excludes in blanket the minimal role that can be played by the existing impairment in the individual students. In order to set off these difficulties, some researchers

such as Lani Florian and Margaret J. McLaughlin recommended the adoption of another model, the interactional model.

2.3 Interactional Approach of SEN and Disability

The interactional approach, which is based on a critique of both medical and social models of conceptualizing disability and SEN, views the level of need as the result of a complex interaction between the child's strengths and weaknesses, the level of support available and the appropriateness of the education being provided. This conceptualization is premised on reported importance of the dynamics of the interaction between teacher and student in

facilitating or impeding learning (Skidmore, 1996; Frederickson & Cline, 2002). It is interesting to note the fact that at least the impairment has some role to play in the problems he suffers from. For instance, deafness, physical challenge or blindness have their own part to play in their inability to attend in the ordinary learning set ups. Moreover, the social outlooks, structural arrangements, communication strategies and teachers attitudes towards these children have their own negative parts to play. That is why, we have to have a wider look into the problem of education of these groups of children. The perusal of various researches in the area of special needs education

culminated in the adoption of inclusive life for children with disabilities. Now, everything is gyrating towards this philosophy, inclusive health, inclusive education, inclusive social development and inclusive employment. It is important to underline the attempts of the Education Bureau in this respect. The purchase of all of the materials expending millions of public money for the interest of the category of this children is taking note of the plight of these.

3. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: MOVES FROM SEGREGATION TO INTEGRATION/INCLUSION

3.1 historical development

Although there were historically chronicles that reported the ineducability of disabled children, this unhistorical views have commenced eradication with the Enlightenment. Particularly, the introduction of the specialized schools for the deaf in 1760 in Britain in Edinburgh, Meanwhile, the opening of the first institute for deaf education in 1784, using sign language, and the invention of the Braille system by Louis Braille in 1829 have played a irreplaceable role

in opening up possibilities for the formal education of deaf and blind people.

The inclusion of students with SEN/disabilities in regular classrooms is a major challenge facing countries throughout the world. It is a distinct departure from the special education model, which calls for integration into regular classes for only some students with disabilities and retains the possibility of segregation if progress is seen as insufficient (Bunch & Valeo, 2004).

Frederickson & Cline, 2002) while recounting the incidence of special education for persons with disabilities said,

Historically, children with disabilities or SEN were educated in special units or schools based on the belief that they have similar problems that can be met in these units or schools. The early provision of SEN services began with residential schools for blind and deaf students which were first established in the eighteenth century in Europe. Later on, these schools grew rapidly during the 19th century. Special schools for children with mobility impairments came later around the turn of the 20th century. At the same time, children with mental impairments were largely institutionalized as uneducable in both Europe and North America .

By far, the specialist schools are thought to have resulted in the segregation of the groups of these students from other pupils of their age, and hence has been stigmatizing and restriction of access to important educational opportunities. This somehow has further marginalized the students and, in fact, pathologized their families. With this understanding, efforts were made to replace special units or settings for students with disabilities by more favourable schooling method: inclusive education around the 1970s. it must be reminisced, at this juncture, that the move to abolish and replace the medical model by the social model has commenced in UK by this time.

This shift is justified with the proliferation of human rights as an international yardstick of modernity of any nation and the equal opportunity for all motto espoused by the United Nations. Particularly, the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and the international covenants on civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights in 1966 placed a relentless push on states to improve the life of the persons with disabilities.

Elsayed Elshabrawy Ahmad Hassanein (2015) has put this move, in usual elegance, as follows:

In this view, people with disabilities should have the right to the same opportunities and

options as other members of society based on the belief that inclusion will result in stronger social and academic achievement, advance citizenship and the development of a stronger community. It was also argued that integrating children with SEN into mainstream schools would facilitate their access to and participation in society, both as children and adults, and that continued segregation could no longer be justified, from either a "research" or a "rights" perspective.

Pushed with the adoption of various human rights documents, the conceptualisation of children with significant disabilities as being "special" and requiring "special education" has

been challenged and there has been a strong movement away from placement in segregated settings for children with SEN towards greater integration in mainstream schools internationally. Proponents of inclusion drew attention to the stigma attached to withdrawal programmes and the fragmentation of the learning experiences offered to children receiving withdrawal programmes; especially where communication and cooperation between mainstream and special needs teachers was limited. Everyone should keep in his mind that effective and efficient inclusion needs to take account of the needs and differences of all children (Reid, 2005). In spite of these

developments, inclusion remains a complex and controversial issue which tends to generate heated debates (Ainscow, 2007; Brantlinger 1997; Farrell, 2004). For example, there is a great deal of uncertainty about the definition of inclusion as it means different things to different people in different places and to this point I will turn.

3.2 The Meaning of Inclusion

Generally speaking, inclusion or full inclusion is meant to address the equal treatment and opportunity all persons should be given within the economic, employment, or educational

settings without taking into account their ethnicity, race, class or social background. It is of prime import to indicate the existing differences with regard to the definition of the term.

Some definitions focused on valuing children and celebrating differences regardless of their abilities or disabilities. For example, Oliver (1996) defined inclusion as "set of principles which ensures that the child with a disability is viewed as a valued and needed member of the community in every respect" (p. 88). Similarly, Tom Shakespeare defined inclusion as "the extent to which a school or community welcomes pupils as full members of the group

and values them for the contribution they make. This implies that for inclusion to be seen to be "effective" all pupils must actively belong to, be welcomed by and participate in a mainstream school and community – that is they should be fully included" (p. 107).

The perusal of various definitions might at large boil down to the requisite rearrangement of organizations or schools, bigger political changes and and adaptation of the social melieu for the effective inclusion of students with disabilities. If we talk about inclusion, it refers to all people at all stages and it should be known that there always exists no partial inclusion.

According to M. Cole (2006), Inclusive education means education that is non-discriminatory in terms of disability, culture, gender, or other aspects of students or staff that areassigned significance by a society. It involves all students in a community, with no exceptions and irrespective of their intellectual, physical, sensory, or other differences, having equal rights to access the culturally valued curriculum of their society as full time valued members of age-appropriate mainstream classrooms. Inclusion emphasises diversity over assimilation, striving to avoid the colonization of minority experiences by dominant modes of thought and action.

In general, inclusion requires effective participation in the culture of the community, overall school culture and the development and expansion of the curriculum. Students with disabilities should be made part of the whole school culture through the adoption of appropriate teaching methods and availability of teaching aids.

To conclude, despite the lack of definitional consensus, most definitions and conceptualizations discussed above reflect common themes and elements. Some definitions focused on practical issues in the school level, while some others concentrated on the

philosophical and ideological premises of inclusion. We should keep in mind that inclusion embodies a range of assumptions about the meaning and purpose of schools which are quite different from those which have informed the integration movement. In this sense, clarifying differences between integration and inclusion may be useful.

3.3 Inclusion Process: Inclusion within a Continuum of Provision

In hindsight, education for disabled students has moved from complete segregation to full inclusion. So to speak, "firstly, there was segregation in special schools; secondly,

integration which means that the school accepts the child but he/she has to fit in with the school; and finally inclusion where the school accepts the child and all those in the school, adults, pupils, and the institution as a whole will adapt as best as they can in order to meet the child's needs. This may mean adapting attitudes and thinking, the curriculum, classroom organization, and the physical environment."

According to the understanding presupposed, there could be various types of integrations which I am going to provide in the following paragraphs:

– Locational integration refers to physical location and exists where special classes are

located in mainstream schools or a special school is located on the site of a mainstream school. In reality, many children who are locationally integrated experience little or no curriculum integration. In addition, being locationally integrated does not mean that the children in the special unit interact on a social basis with the rest of the school.

– Social integration means social interchange between children with and without special needs and includes eating, playing and engaging in out-of-classroom activities together.

– Functional integration refers to joint participation in educational programmes which have been carefully planned to ensure that all

the children benefit. It also means full integration as a member of the school community with as much time as is deemed possible in an ordinary classroom.

In the light of the above integrational mechanisms, we can forward the following six levels of integration:

1. Physical integration. The architectural arrangements facilitate contact between disabled and non-disabled.

2. Terminological integration. Labelling and discriminatory expressions for the disabled are not used.

3. Administrative integration. Disabled students are encompassed within the same legislative

framework as other students (there can of course be large differences between regulations on, for instance, support arrangements, transport and achievement levels).

4. Social integration. Social contacts between disabled and non-disabled students are frequent and intensive.

5. Curricular integration. The same curriculum framework and long-term goals apply for disabled and non-disabled students.

6. Psychological integration: All students are instructed together: that is in one room, at the same time and using the same programme.

In general, inclusive education aspires for the achievement of principles espoused by the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted in 1989 and ratified by Ethiopia. The principles are availability, accessibility, adaptability and acceptability. The realization of these principles require the placement of educational materials geared towards each category of person with disabilities. In the following sub-section, we will consider the effort made by the SNNPR Bureau of Education. From the outset, I recognize the massive and considerate effort of the Bureau.

4. an obligation under execution: special education needs materials and their distribution, and peecautions to be adopted

In the last few years, the Bureau of Education (BED) has engaged in the purchase and distribution of Special Education Needs (SEN) materials for students with disabilities within the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region. The Bureau, through its Special Needs wing and Education Dissemination Department has made a strenuous effort to enable all children with disability to get education equitably and equally with their non-disabled mates. A cursory view of the materials evince

that the Bureau has focused on (1) blind students; (2) deaf or partially deaf students; (3) physically disabled students). In the following short paragraphs, I will discuss the nature, importance and measures to preserve the materials.

4.1 Materials for the blind students

Various materials are purchased for the benefit of students with visual impairment. For instance, abacus, slate ans stylus, books of various use, white canes, audio devices; and tactile maps.

1. slate and stylus

In the life of the blind, one name takes primacy: the name of Louis Braille. This Frenchman, blind from age three, has made his maximum effort in the invention of the writing system of the blind, Braille in 1829. The Braille system has got an international recognition by the United Nations Scientific, Educational and Cultural Organization in the 1950s. presently, 133 countries have adapted the Braille system in their languages. In the Ethiopian context, Amharic is written in Braille and this has secured the permit of the Standards Authority of the country.

The two-lined Braille writing system has six dots whose positional changes do give sixty-three different representations.

The most important material used for the effective writing of Braille is slate and stylus. The video will show you how to use slate and styluses. It is of greater import to instill you with the following invaluable contribution of Braille practitioners:

A qualified learner can facilitate reading and writing in Braille for blind individuals. The qualification is not limited to becoming competent in the teaching of Braille, but includes broader aspects such as transcribing and adapting texts, proof reading, using code,

maintaining equipment and modifying text to prepare it for use. The qualified Braille practitioner thus aids blind individuals to enhance the quality of their lives, promote inclusion in schools and benefit the economy by adding to the national competency pool.

Make sure that the writing frame (the slate) should not be broken easily for it is brittle. As such, take care of it for it serves as the lifeline of blind students. If the stylus goes blunt, you can sharpen it.

2. abacus

In most schools of a boarding type, elementary mathematics is taught to blind children. Particularly, the four scales: addition, multiplication, division and subtraction, is delivered to blind children. Some schools use abacus as a tool of delivering mathematical education.

The standard abacus can be used to perform addition, subtraction, division and multiplication; the abacus can also be used to extract square-roots and cubic roots. The beads are manipulated with either the index finger or the thumb of one hand.

The abacus is typically constructed of various types of hardwoods and comes in varying sizes. The frame of the abacus has a series of vertical rods on which a number of wooden beads are allowed to slide freely. A horizontal beam separates the frame into two sections, known as the upper deck and the lower deck. Each bead in the upper deck has a value of 5; each bead in the lower deck has a value of 1. Beads are considered counted, when moved towards the Beam— the piece of the abacus frame that separates the two decks.

The video you will see will help you understand the technique.

In relation to the preservation of the tool, it must not fall out of the hands of the students for it does fall, the beads will be destroyed. It must be borne in mind that this tool will make the students competent not only in mathematics but also in their other mental exercises.

3. books and the tactile map

Three or four years ago, the BED has engaged in the printing of Braille textbooks within its headquarters. To my understanding, this printing/duplication has stopped by now. However, this lacuna is being filled with the purchase of dictionaries, and alphabets from

other publishers or duplicators. The tactile map that represents the map of the Regional State and the whole globe is of real import for the tender age students. Except the capital cities of the countries, the name and geographical location is included in the map. This material, for it is plastic, not easily destroyed. On the other hand, other books are easily destroyed and care should be taken. Firstly, the books must be given to the students quickly for the letters can be debased very quickly. When the books are kept in a store, nothing should be put on the cartoons that contain the books. The books must be kept away from wet places. In addition, the

plastic holder should be kept clean and unbroken.

4. audio player

This tool is used to play audio recordings that were made by the students themselves or some audio books. Their importance is unquestioned. However, students should not be allowed to spend much more time for it will have its own effect on the ability of students to know words with their spelling.

5. watches

Principally, the Bureau purchased Braille and talking watches. I believe these tools will help

students to raise from their beds early in the morning and go to their schools and attend the sessions as alert as possible.

Caution must be taken for instilling the students to use the watches. Particularly, Braille watches must be taught beforehand to the students. And tutorial must be given to students on how to use the watches. In addition, the watches must be kept away from water for they are not waterproof.

6. talking calculator

This is a modern device that has multiple purposes. It can serve as a calculator; in furtherance, it needs battery which, I believe,

might be available by the help of the Bureau or schools or educational offices. It is invaluable since it has screen reader and will have an immense importance and might have its own importance in lieu of the abacus.

The only cautionary thing that should be taken is not to leave the device in wet places.

7. white cane

Next to the invention, the introduction of white cane to the life of the persons with visual impairment has received a global acceptance. It must be from this stand that "white cane" is given an international day as is true in the case of women,AIDS, or peace. October 15 is the

international day of white cane. This stick has at least two important functions: first, it helps the blind person walk confidently. Each footstep of the blind person is determined by the cane he held. Second, white cane serves as a zebra cross sign of the road traffic. If a blind child shows the cane above his head, all moving cars must stop and enable the blind child cross the road. However, the children must be cautious for the stick is a hardened plastic and hence, it can be broken easily. Accordingly, utmost care is needed.

In addition, the students must get a mobility training before they use the cane. The video I will show next will evince the technique for

those teachers who assume the responsibility of teaching the children the technique of mobility.

4.2 materials for children with physical challengechildren

These groups of children find themselves in a really difficult situation when they go to the mainstream ordinary schools. The difficulty commences with the geographical inaccessibility of the schools or even classrooms. To ease the difficulty, the Bureau has purchased wheelchairs and walking sticks. These up to the standard devices will help the students attend their classes in a proper

environment. However, in relation to wheelchairs, the topography might be a challenge. And hence, the Bureau must seek and work in collaboration with the road authority of the region or below.

In essence, the walking stick is so flexible in that it can be adjusted along with the shortness or tallness of the child.

4.3 materials for deaf and partially deaf students

Various materials are bought for these groups of students. Prominently, the hearing aid device for partially deaf students is an axe-in-a-hand. This is because, this device will help them listen to the lectures delivered within the class. In

furtherance, there are materials that aid the teacher to teach these groups of students the alphabets which are represented by furnitures. Accordingly, the teachers must equip themselves with the necessary knowledge about these instruments.

5. conclusion

In conclusion, persons with disabilities have passed through strenuous times: from segregated schooling to inclusive educational centers. The important thing is the effort of couples of persons has enlightened their lives.

Particular homage should be given to individuals in France and UK who have developed systems of educating disabled persons. I believe that were it not for their effort, the life persons with disability enjoy by now wouldn't have taken root.

In the Ethiopian context, a splendid effort is under exertion in Hawassa and other parts of the regional state. The Bureau of Education is investing a lot on availing materials for the children with various disabilities. Caution should be taken with the timely availability, accessibility, adaptability and acceptability of the materials to the needy.