**Philosophy, Principles and Practices of Inclusive Education for Diverse Learners of Queensland**

***Abstract***

*This article will examine legislations that are emplaced globally and nationally in relation to the inclusive education for diverse learners. Other information included will relate to the policies that are held by the government for all schools in the state to abide by. Lastly how I as a teacher will implement and help students with their learning depending on the sort of learning disability that they may have. This could also help other teachers to broaden their perspective on how to teach for an inclusive educational experience.*

**Introduction**

An inclusive education for diverse learners should be a mandatory thing, however it isn’t, and as such students who have any mild to severe cases of a disability immediately get transferred into special schools. As a result these students will not be able to fully socialise as they would at a regular school, which will have an impact on their development and life past school with the way they react and socialise with others in the community. Throughout this article you will read of how inclusive education is adhered to at an international level and what legislations impact on an inclusive education for diverse learners, this will then lead on to the national level and how different school policies and department policies affect the whole school approach and the learning of diverse students. Recommendations for my own classroom will be made and how I will obtain to do my best at accommodating for any students with a learning disability.

**Global Level**

Inclusive practice as described by Shaddock, Giorcelli, & Smith (2007) is the welcoming from the school and the community to a student and their family. It also involves the participation of the student within school activities, however if this becomes too much the decision is not simply to place the student in a special program but to accommodate for that student by changing the thinking of the activity at hand. Some simple ways of inclusive practice are creating a supportive classroom environment, grouping students with other students who best can help them with their learning and lastly positive feedback is a must (Shaddock et al., 2007).

From this there are specific legislations at the international level that relate specifically to the inclusion of students including;

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2010)

- Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2010)

- Salamanca Statement (1994)

Also legislations at the national level that relate specifically to the inclusion of students which include the;

- Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (1992)

Lastly legislations at the state level that relate specifically to the inclusion of students including;

- Education Queensland (1998)

- Archdiocese of Brisbane Catholic Education Council (2007)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) has three main articles which relate specifically to what we will be discussing throughout this article, they are;

Article 23 (Children with disabilities): Children with any sort of disability have the right to special care and support.

Article 28 (Right to education): Schools should be run in a logical way for students to advantage from their learning. Children are encouraged to achieve their highest capable level of education.

Article 29 (Goals of education): Children should be able to develop their own individuality, abilities and talents to the fullest from their education. They should learn what is right and wrong, respect and responsibility for themself and others.

The Salamanca Statement (1994) has two articles in which relate to this topic, which are;

Article 2: Schools that have an inclusive direction on learning will be the most successful in ruling out discrimination within the school.

Article 18: All students including children with disabilities should attend the closest school to their home, no matter if the child has a disability or not.

The Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (1992) Section 22 Education covers the discrimination against a person due to disability, relating to refusal, expulsion, detriment, and exclusion. Education Queensland (1998) are dedicated to the students and them having achieving excellence from enhancing educational opportunities. From this schools create an environment which is respectful, the feeling of acceptance, the awareness and value of diversity and the active role of family. The Archdiocese of Brisbane Catholic Education Council (2007) insists that even though students with disabilities may require special care whilst at school, it will be obtained with the support and care of the school community for the inclusion of that student.

**National Level**

From the information gained about legislations and how they relate to the school setting, it is now possible to read about how they are being used for an inclusive learning environment. Xu & Filler (2008) state that teachers when planning should focus on what it is the student can do, rather than what they can’t effectively do. This statement can relate to what Education Queensland (2005) define as an inclusive education, they are’

- “fosters a leaning community that questions disadvantages and challenges

social injustice

- maximises the educational and social outcomes of all students through the

identification and reduction of barriers to learning, especially for those who are

vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion

- ensures all students understand and value diversity so that they have the

knowledge and skills for positive participation in a just, equitable and

democratic global society” (para. 5).

Education Queensland (2005) also have set commitments in which they have made to families and the school communities. It includes things such as responding when necessary to disadvantaged students, making sure curriculum is diverse with enough resources to help all students learning. Students, teachers and community members are to feel safe within their school community from any discrimination and the knowledge that students will have a diverse learning experience and that all policies are made known for a quality education.

Indicators of an inclusive education are also found within the Education Queensland (2005) document, including information on systems, districts and schools and teaching and learning. The first set of indicators provides information about making sure of equity and social justice within policies, practices and decision making. The opportunity for professional learning experiences should be given to enhance the understanding of disadvantaged students. The necessary documentation should be taken about effectiveness of inclusive education and an evaluation on participation of those who are from a diverse group, this will help with planning in the future. The second indicator talks about not blaming others, and that assessment and other learning experiences all align with one another to meet the needs of all students in the class. Teachers need to be able to build bridges between the knowledge students have already to what the students need to learn. All students deserve to have the same opportunities as others so there learning experiences are somewhat the same and an evaluation should take place to understand and make central the learning of diverse groups.

Early Childhood Australia (2006) talks about the use of the parents of a learning disabled child as they have firsthand knowledge on how their child works and learns best. By using the parents within the classroom setting it will give them a sense of acceptance and belonging in that community of a regular school environment. From this you could involve the all parents within different areas of learning such as in The Arts where the parents are able to be hands on with whatever the subject matter may be on, also within Health & Physical Education by assisting with the supervision of students and setting up of activities where needed. By using the help of the parents teachers and parents are able to understand where that student is within a certain Key Learning Areas. In addition to having help from the students parents there is also government funding and in 2008 the Australian Government (n.d) funded $814 million over the 2009-2012 period for non-government schools which will assist with the Literacy, Numeracy and Special Needs (LNSLN) Program. This money is allocated through a composite allocating mechanism it includes the following understanding of recurrent component and a per capita component.

**Classroom Level**

Throughout this article you will have read about the global and national levels of inclusive education for diverse learners and what they are involved in, this section is all about the classroom and how I will further my knowledge to help those students within my class when it is needed.

The first example I will give you will be that of a student who has a vision impairment, the Queensland Government (2007a) describes this to be “any diagnosed condition of the eye or visual system that cannot be corrected to within normal limits” (para. 1). With this knowledge it is possible to start planning for what may happen in the classroom, some approaches could be where the student is positioned within the room so that they are able to view the blackboard. Making sure there is appropriate distance from the student to the blackboard, the use of white and yellow chalk and the alternation between blackboard work and desk work (Hyde, Carpenter, & Conway, 2010). Other things that should be taken into consideration is that of the desk the student is working on that everything is at the right height for the particular student. There needs to be time allowance for set tasks so making sure there is other work for fast finishers in the classroom and lastly it is important that myself as the teacher always use body gestures, and also allow added time for verbal discussion when needed (Hyde et al., 2010).

The second example is that of a student who has a physical impairment, the Queensland Government (2007b) also describes this to be “a dysfunction of the musculoskeletal and/or neurological body systems, which affects the functional ability of a student to move or coordinate movement” (para. 1). This student would benefit from extra time during class activities so that they have a better chance at achieving what the whole class is achieving. The classroom environment including how the classroom is set up (making sure there is enough access for that student within the classroom), equipment which can further help the students learning and special consideration for assessment like exams so that they have an equal opportunity just like the other students in the class (Sargeant, 2012).

The third example is a student who has Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Amaze (2011) describes this as “a developmental condition which affects three main areas: the ability of the individual to communicate, to socialise and to think flexibly. It affects the way that individuals are able to interact with others and they often find the world to be a confusing place” (para. 1). The planning for classroom activities would include approaches such as using different sorts of language strategies to involve them in to discussion, for example by saying the students name first and then talking to them there is a greater chance at receiving communication, as they know that you are speaking to them. When giving instructions keep everything to a minimum so that the student does not get lost in all the information given, following this make sure the student is given adequate time to process what has been said and lastly when asking questions it is best to start off with ‘What’, ‘Who’ and ‘Where’ (Hyde et al., 2010).

**Conclusion**

Throughout this article you will have read of three topics which are global, national and classroom level. From these three areas you will have been able to get a better understanding of how different legislations and policies can affect the classroom when it comes to an inclusive education for diverse learners. Throughout the last section you will have read of ways to involve a student, within a regular classroom so that they and the other students can benefit from the learning experiences that lay ahead.

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