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Teacher Competencies for Inclusive Education

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Abstract

Inclusive education means that all students in a school, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area, become part of the school community. They are included in the feeling of belonging among other students, teachers, and support staff. Inclusive Education believes that every child has the right to education in the regular school including the child with special needs. Inclusive teaching means recognizing, accommodating and meeting the learning needs of all students. It means acknowledging that all students have a range of individual learning needs and are members if diverse communities. Inclusive teaching avoids pigeonholing students into specific groups with predictable and fixed approaches to learning. Experience has demonstrated that adjustments made for disabled students can often benefit all students

Keywords: *Inclusive Education, Teacher Competencies, Special Needs Education, Inclusive Teaching, Learner Diversity, Classroom Management, Universal Design for Learning, Educational Inclusion*

Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right that aims to provide every learner with equal opportunities for growth, development, and participation in society. In recent decades, the concept of inclusive education has emerged as a transformative approach that ensures all children, irrespective of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other differences, learn together in regular classrooms. Inclusive education promotes equity, diversity, and social justice by creating learning environments that respect individual differences and eliminate barriers to participation.

The success of inclusive education largely depends on the competencies of teachers who are responsible for addressing the diverse learning needs of students. Teachers are expected to possess not only sound subject knowledge but also the pedagogical skills, positive attitudes, flexibility, and collaborative abilities necessary to create an inclusive classroom environment. They must be capable of adapting curriculum, modifying instructional strategies, assessing learners according to their individual needs, and fostering a culture of acceptance and mutual respect among students.

Competencies required for general education teachers and special education teachers:

- Ability to solve problem, to be able to informally assess the skills
- Ability to take advantage of children's individual interests
- Ability to set high but alternative expectations that are suitable for the students
- Ability to make appropriate expectations.
- Ability to determine how to modify assignments for students.
- Ability to learn how to value all kinds of skills that students bring to a class.
- Ability to provide daily success for all students.

Inclusive education means that all students in a school, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area, become part of the school community. They are included in the feeling of belonging among other students, teachers, and support staff. Inclusive Education believes that every child has the right to education in the regular school including the child with special needs. A child with special needs does not have to be segregated and enrolled in special schools. His needs can be served in a natural setting that is the regular school. Thus, the goal of every teacher in an inclusive classroom is to make learning meaningful for every learner in his/her class.

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The requirement that a teacher should have the competence to make learning meaningful to a diversity of learners that includes children with special needs.

Inclusive teaching means recognizing, accommodating and meeting the learning needs of all students. It means acknowledging that all students have a range of individual learning needs and are members if diverse communities. Inclusive teaching avoids pigeonholing students into specific groups with predictable and fixed approaches to learning. Experience has demonstrated that adjustments made for disabled students can often benefit all students.

Inclusive Teaching

- Takes a coherent approach
- Has a strategy for delivering equal opportunities and diversity policies
- Involves the whole institution
- Matches provision to student needs
- Incorporates regular reflection, review and refinement of strategies and methods that actively involve disabled students.

Inclusion is about school change to improve the educational system for all students. It means changes in the curriculum, changes in how teachers teach and how students learn, as well as changes in how students with and without special needs interact with and relate to one another. Inclusive education practices reflect the changing culture of contemporary school with emphasis on active learning, authentic assessment practices applied curriculum, multi level instructional approaches, and increased attention to diverse student needs and individualization. The claim is that schools, centers of learning and educational systems must change so that they become caring, nurturing, and supportive educational communities where the needs of all students and teachers are truly met. For this to happen, teachers, schools and systems may need to change so that they can better accommodate the diversity of needs that pupils have and that they are included in all aspects of school-life. It also means identifying any barriers within and around the school that hinder learning and participation, and reducing or removing these barriers. Inclusive education is a process of enabling all students, including previously excluded groups, to learn and participate effectively within mainstream school systems. Placing excluded students within a mainstream setting does not of itself achieve inclusion.

Education must help learners live their lives with greater competence and greater confidence. Education is also about developing behavior based on positive values-understanding and respect for other people. It will only do this if it is of good quality. It is difficult to pin down exactly what makes for good quality education or what needs to be done to promote it. One of the important factors that contribute directly to higher quality education is the good teaching, well trained teachers using methods focusing on the learner's needs. Above all, a quality education is for everyone, not only for elites or for those in larger towns but also for the poor, disadvantaged and disabled. Quality education for everyone will mean special approaches for those with disabilities and addressing to their needs. The emphasis is therefore laid on inclusive education that uses the existing the infrastructure / institutions and professionals to the extent possible.

Inclusion demands for preparing teachers with initial induction and sensitizing them through in-service education programmes to help them attend to the special needs of the learners with various special needs of the learners with various challenges and equipping these teachers with skills, competencies and strategies required to cater to the diversity in an inclusive setting control. Inclusive education is claimed by its advocates to have many benefits for the students. Instructional time with peers without need helps the learners to learn strategies taught by the teacher. Teachers bring in different ways to teach a lesson for special needs students and peers without need. All of the students in the classroom benefit from this. The students can now learn from the lesson how to help each other. Socialization in the school allows the students to learn communication skills and interaction skills from each other. Inclusive Education believes that every child has the right to education in the regular school including the child with special need. A child with special needs does not have to be segregated and enrolled in special schools. His needs can be served in a natural setting – the regular school. Thus, the goal of every teacher in an inclusive classroom is to make learning meaningful for every learner in his/her class. The requirement that a teacher should have the competence to make learning meaningful to a diversity of learners – a concept that includes children with special needs.

Inclusive schools don't ask "how does this student have to change in order to be a fourth standard?" but rather. "How do we have to change in order to offer full membership to our students with disabilities?"

The practice of developing inclusive schools involves:

- Understanding inclusion as a continuing process, not a one-time event.
- Strengthening and sustaining the participation of all students, teachers, parents and community members in the work of the school.
- Restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools to respond to the diversity of pupils within their locality. Inclusive settings focus on identifying and then reducing the barriers to learning and participation, rather than on what is "special" about the individual student or group of students, and targeting services to address the "problem".
- Providing an accessible curriculum, appropriate training programs for teachers, and for all students, the provision of fully accessible information, environments and support.
- Identifying and providing support for staff as well as students.

Teacher competency is the ability to plan, control and facilitate interaction in the classroom that is appropriate to the activity and which takes into account the different needs and abilities of learners. It enables the teacher to manage the energy levels, ensure appropriate learners participation and create pairs and groups that have a positive impact on learning. It helps to motivate learners and ensures that different styles of learning are catered for and different needs are met.

What competencies do general education teachers and special education teachers need to be competent inclusive teachers?

- Ability to solve problem, to be able to informally assess the skills a student needs rather than relying solely on standardized curriculum.
- Ability to take advantage of children's individual interests and use their internal motivation for developing needed skills.
- Ability to set high but alternative expectations that are suitable for the students, this means developing alternative assessment.
- Ability to make appropriate expectations for **EACH** student, regardless of the student's capabilities. If teachers can do this, it allows all students to be included in a class and school.
- Ability to determine how to modify assignments for students; how to design classroom activities with so many levels that all students have a part. This teaching skill can apply not just at the elementary or secondary level, but at the college level as well. It will mean more activity-based teaching rather than seat-based teaching.
- Ability to learn how to value all kinds of skills that students bring to a class, not just the academic skills. In doing this, teachers will make it explicit that in their classrooms they value all skills, even if that is not a clear value of a whole school.
- Ability to provide daily success for all students. Teachers have to work to counteract the message all students get when certain students are continually taken out of class for special work.

Other competencies that will help general education teachers in an inclusive environment include:

- A realization that every child in the class is their responsibility. Teachers need to find out how to work with each child rather than assuming someone else will tell them how to educate a child.
- Knowing a variety of instructional strategies and how to use them effectively. This includes the ability to adapt materials and rewrite objectives for a child's needs.
- Working as a team with parents and special education teachers to learn what skills a child needs and to provide the best teaching approach.
- Viewing each child in the class as an opportunity to become a better teacher rather than a problem to be coped with or have someone else fix.
- Flexibility and a high tolerance for ambiguity.

Thus to conclude we can say that a competent teacher only can handle children of all categories in the classroom and provide maximum satisfaction for the child.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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