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Editorial

Inclusive Education: A Strategy to Address Diversity to Ensure Equal Right to Education

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Globally inclusive education has gained the acceptance as a process to reform education systems for ensuring quality education for all learners. As a result of its success to address equal rights to education in different parts of the world, inclusive education is now considered as a viable strategy to create learning friendly environments for children/persons with disabilities, children from different ethnicity and language diversity, children who are from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and also gender issues. UNESCO (2009) defined inclusive education as a:

... process aimed to offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination (p. 18).

Cultural and contextual factors are found to have significant impact on the process of interventions taken in different parts of the world (Ahsan, Deppeler & Sharma, 2013; Sharma, 2011). Further to this, cultural, contextual and geographical locations seem to have impact on the selection of target groups for inclusive education. The articles selected for publication in Volume 2, Number 1, the April 2014 issue of the Asian Journal of Inclusive Education (AJIE) shed light on the diversity in conceptualisation of inclusive education based on geographical contexts.

The first article, reports on a contextual issue regarding inclusion in Hong Kong that was authored by Eddi Li. In this article, the author focuses on the impact of an English bridging program for immigrant children in Hong Kong. The author puts light on the importance of achieving quality English proficiency as a prerequisite of inclusion of these children into mainstream schools. Hence, this article has contributed in understanding the issue of inclusion beyond disability as it focused on the significance of the removing linguistic barriers to ensure inclusion of newcomers in the context of Hong Kong. Based on the research data analysis specific recommendations are made to further improve the curriculum, revise the teaching-learning approaches and widen the geographical locations of the program to cover more immigrant children.

The second article, authored by Joseph S Agbenyega and Deborah Tamakloe discusses how parents of children with disabilities negotiate kindergarten choice dilemmas between special and inclusive settings in an Australian context. They explore several contextual challenges regarding parental decision making on Kindergarten settings and make suggestions in light of these findings for the inclusive Kindergarten educators to shift their approach of parental dealing from the traditional focus of kindergarten-community partnerships to a more participatory focus based on dialogue with parents that is known as ‘contact zone’.

The third article, focuses on the importance of quality early childhood inclusive transition programs for successful and joyful enrolment of students with diverse needs in regular schools. Based on the review of literature, this article identified several factors that may have potential, in general, to define characteristics of a quality early childhood inclusive transition program for all and based on those findings, specific recommendations are made to improve the inclusiveness of the transition services in the early childhood programs.

Finally the fourth article, which is a practitioner paper, discusses the outcomes of a project run by the German Cooperation (GIZ) Bangladesh for promoting the UN Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The author Sifat-E-Islam describes the process that was followed by the GIZ Bangladesh in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Welfare to raise awareness about the UNCRPD. It also presents the impact of these interventions on people at the project locations in Bangladesh. Based on critical analysis, the author concluded that

remarkable change has occurred by creating mass awareness among the key stakeholders in the project locations about the rights of persons with disabilities and their inclusion strategies in the society and therefore recommended to replicate the project learning in other geographical locations of Bangladesh.

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