

Editorial

Meeting the Challenges of Inclusive Education

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Asian Journal of Inclusive Education (AJIE) is pleased to publish its second issue (Vol 1, No. 2; July 2013) that covers a special issue based on several papers selected from the first conference held on inclusive education organized by the Asian Centre for Inclusive Education (ACIE), Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Inclusive education has now gained the acceptance of the Global development agenda all over the world. The Post EFA 2015 (UNESCO, 2013) and the Post MDG 2015 (UNSDSN, 2013) goals have also considered inclusive education as a viable strategy to reduce exclusion in the society. While making inclusive education happen in the reality, both developed (Croser, 2004; Mittler, 2004) and developing (Ahsan, Sharma & Deppeler, 2012; Daniels, 2010; Sharma, Forlin, Deppeler & Guang-xue, 2013) countries are facing several challenges. For understanding the nature of those challenges experienced in different parts of the world and also to gather ideas of strategies to meet those challenges, the broad theme of the ACIE conference was set as “Meeting the Challenges of Inclusive Education”. This event was enriched by the involvement of around 300 participants, which include about 30 international delegates from 20 countries from different continents. Action Aid Bangladesh, Aga Khan Foundation Bangladesh, British Council Dhaka, Manusher Jonno Foundation Bangladesh, Muslim Aid, Plan Bangladesh and Sightsavers Bangladesh were the proud partners of the event. In the ACIE 2013 conference, after following a peer-review process 67 abstracts were selected for the presentation. The organizers further offered that interested participants could submit their full paper for review in the AJIE for publication. In response to this offer two key note papers and also seven other papers were received representing experiences of inclusive education challenges in different parts of the world. After following rigorous reviews, two key note papers and one other paper have finally been accepted for publication in this issue of the AJIE. In addition to that one more article has also been included in this issue as a regular selection of the AJIE.

The Key note paper-One was written by Professor Roger Slee. Professor Slee’s paper aimed to focus on the challenge related to international agreements and conventions in regard to Education For All. Through a critical analysis of global experiences, Roger Slee concludes that the movement towards inclusion is prominent but conceptions and practices of inclusive education have been found to be inconsistent and disengaged from various aspects of social and education policy that actually promote exclusion.

The Key note paper-Two was written by Professor Chris Forlin. Professor Forlin’s paper aimed to focus on the impact of the international trends for adopting inclusive educational approaches on the developing country contexts. While critically analyzing the issue, Professor Forlin mentioned about the uniqueness of the challenges of developing countries that include massive diversity in students, resource challenges, teacher readiness,

accessibility related challenges, curricula and pedagogy reform and also the reluctance of the systems to accept reforms related to inclusion. Based on the analysis Professor Forlin made several future directions for developing countries to move forward for inclusive education.

The third paper has not been selected from the conference presentations. It went through the regular review process of the AJIE. The paper has been prepared by Dr. Brenda Peters and Professor Chris Forlin from the Hong Kong Institute of Education. They shared the Hong Kong experiences of inclusion of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) into regular classrooms. Their mixed method study reported that inclusive classroom practices and opportunities for social interaction and communication can facilitate learning experiences of children with ASD in regular schools in Hong Kong.

The fourth paper is the other paper that has been selected from the ACIE conference 2013 presentations. This paper, written by Nusrat Zerine, has provided the editorial board of AJIE an opportunity to offer a new platform for the practitioners along with the academics who are working to promote inclusion. Therefore, this 'practitioner paper' section will be a regular part for this journal from now on together with the regular academic and research papers to promote evidence-based practice for inclusive education. In this paper, Nusrat Zerine discussed about the experiences of Sightsavers Bangladesh utilizing the community resource persons termed as the 'Braille champions' in supporting visually impaired community members into education. The author, with the evidence from this practice-model, claimed that this community resource person approach has contributed in creating mass community awareness and ensuring more active participation of community people in implementing inclusive education for persons with visual impairment and children.

In the end, we are also delighted to share the message with the readers and followers of the AJIE that the Asian Centre for Inclusive Education (ACIE) is now a proud partner in the journal initiatives offered by the Inclusion Initiatives for Special-needs Bangladesh (IISB), Bangladesh. Therefore, from now on the logo of ACIE would be visible on the cover page of the AJIE along with the IISB.

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