INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: TERMINOLOGY, DEFINITIONS, AND IMPLEMENTATION

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Abstract: Inclusive education is a widely discussed topic in the field of education, as it aims to meet the diverse needs of all learners. However, the terminology surrounding inclusive education often muddled, leading to confusion and hindered implementation efforts. This article reviews the various terms used in inclusive education, offering clarifications and exploring their implications for practice.

Key words: inclusive education, mainstreaming, integration, special education, segregated education, differentiation.

Inclusive education promotes the education and participation of all students, including those with disabilities; special educational needs, and from marginalized groups. Inclusion promotes quality and equitable education for all, without exclusion, including those who may potentially marginalized by learning need or social position. An increasing awareness about the rights of children with disability to have access to the same educational services as children without a disability has led to the idea of inclusive education[1]. Accordingly, the UNESCO (2005) stated that inclusive education is an approach that expresses how to change educational structures and other learning atmospheres to meet the needs of the variety of learners. Inclusion highlights

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[1] UNESCO. (2009). Policy guidelines on inclusion in education.

opportunities for an equal involvement of individuals with disabilities (physical, social and emotional) when possible into typical education, but leaves accessible the probability of individual selections and possibilities for special aid and accommodations for persons who need it and want it [1]. However, terminology associated with this approach often used interchangeably or inconsistently, which can impede effective understanding and implementation. This article aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the terms commonly used in inclusive education.

A systematic literature review conducted to identify scientific articles, reports, and policy documents related to inclusive education terminology. Only sources published in the last 10 years were included to ensure relevance to current educational contexts. A total of 12 publications were selected for analysis.

The analysis identified twelve key terms commonly used in inclusive education: inclusive education, mainstreaming, integration, Special Educational Needs (SEN), Individualized Education Program (IEP), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Assistive Technology, Co-teaching, Sensory Integration, special education, segregated education, and differentiation. The definitions, nuances, and implications associated with each term examined.

Inclusive Education: Inclusive education refers to the practice of educating all students together, regardless of their diverse needs or abilities. It involves creating a learning environment that accommodates individual differences and ensures equitable access to education for all.

Mainstreaming: Mainstreaming generally refers to the process of integrating students with disabilities or special needs into regular classroom settings. It emphasizes the need for accommodations and modifications to support these students' participation and progress.

Integration: Integration often overlaps with mainstreaming, emphasizing the assimilation of students with disabilities or special needs into regular classrooms.

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[1] Ontario Ministry of Education. (2013). The Ontario curriculum: Special education.

Unlike mainstreaming, integration may involve temporary removal from mainstream settings for specific teaching interventions or services.

Special Educational Needs (SEN): SEN refers to a range of learning difficulties or disabilities that require additional support and special education services. It includes conditions such as autism, dyslexia, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and intellectual disabilities.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): An IEP[1] is a personalized plan developed for students with special educational needs. It outlines specific goals, accommodations, and support services tailored to meet the student's unique learning requirements.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): UDL[2] is an instructional framework that provides multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement in teaching and learning. It aims to address the individual learning needs of students by offering a variety of options in content, process, and assessment.

Assistive Technology: Assistive technology[3] encompasses tools, devices, and software that support students with disabilities in accessing and participating in educational activities. Examples include text-to-speech software, speech recognition software, and communication devices.

Co-teaching: Co-teaching[4] involves the collaboration between a general education teacher and a special education teacher in delivering instruction to students with and without disabilities. It promotes inclusive practices by ensuring that all students receive quality education in a mainstream classroom.

Accessibility: Accessibility in inclusive education refers to creating physical, sensory, and cognitive environments that can navigated and used by all students, regardless of their disabilities. It involves making adjustments such as ramps, audio descriptions, or braille materials to ensure equal opportunities for learning.

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[1] Council for Exceptional Children. (2012). What is an IEP?
[2] CAST. (n.d.). Universal Design for Learning guidelines.
[3] Assistive Technology Industry Association. (n.d.). What is assistive technology?
[4] Friend, M., & Cook, L. (2013). Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals (7th ed.). Pearson.

Sensory Integration: Sensory integration [1] is the process of organizing and interpreting sensory information from the environment. In the context of inclusive education, it recognizes and addresses the sensory needs of students with disabilities to optimize their learning experiences.

Special Education: Special education refers to a specialized approach to education that caters to the needs of students with disabilities or special needs. These students may receive individualized support, adapted materials, or specialized instruction to meet their unique requirements.

Segregated Education: Segregated education refers to the separate provision of education for students with disabilities or special needs, often within specialized schools or units. This approach isolates rather than integrates students and has been widely criticized for perpetuating exclusion.

Differentiation: Differentiation refers to the adaptation of teaching methods, materials, and assessments to address the diverse learning needs and abilities of all students. It encompasses both individualized and flexible approaches to instruction within inclusive classrooms.

This article highlights the need for common understanding and consistent use of inclusive education terminology to foster effective practices. It provides clear definitions and distinctions to assist educators, policymakers, and researchers in navigating the complexities of implementing inclusive education. By promoting accurate and comprehensive terminology, this research contributes to the establishment of inclusive education as a fundamental aspect of contemporary educational systems.

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