

Seção do Professor

Teachers' Section

Inclusion: Still an Evolving Term from an International Perspective

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Artigo recebido em 05/03/2009

Aprovado em 28/06/2009

The term 'inclusion' has slowly become part of the vocabulary of contemporary society. Each country has taken its own journey towards identifying how it might meet the needs of all the members of its community. However, it is safe to say that when the United Nations prepared a policy statement in 1989, and another in 1993, this was going to be an International issue. In fact, in 1994 the UNESCO statement on Special Education was an important international initiative which stated that we should consider "enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise" (ATTFIELD; WILLOW, 2003). Midway through the first decade of this new century, it is appropriate that we take a look at where we've been and ponder where we may be headed. A Position statement from the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children states that: "Inclusion, as a value, supports the right of all children, regardless of their diverse abilities, to participate actively in natural settings within their communities. A natural setting is one in which the child would spend time had he or she not had a disability" (SANDALL & OSTROSKY, 2000, p.1). This article will explore

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how different cultures are meeting this challenge, and will identify resources for all communities still struggling to develop or put into place a feasible plan.

Brief Historical Review of U.S. Special Education Policies

The United States has long struggled with the issue of special education in the public school system. “Indeed, since the mid-1800’s, the nation has struggled to accord to the public the responsibility for educating children with disabilities” (LIPSKY & GARTNER, 1997, p. 73). We can look to the writings of Horace Mann (1846), and recognize that even in the early stages of education in the United States, it was contemplated how to educate *all* children.

The will of God, as conspicuously manifested in the order of nature, and in the relations which he has established among men, places the *right* of every child that is born into the world to such a degree of education as will enable him, and as far as possible, will predispose him, to perform all domestic, social, civil and moral duties, upon the same clear ground of natural law and equity, as it places a child’s *right*, upon his first coming into the world, to distend his lungs with a portion of the common air, or to open his eyes to the common light, or to receive that shelter, protection and nourishment which are necessary to the continuance of his bodily existence. (CREMIN, 1957, p. 64).

It has been a long battle, with a rich and complex history; nevertheless, it is admirable that in the United States the recognition of a need for special education programs has existed for so long. Public education for children/adults with disabilities can be traced back to the founding of institutions such as Gallaudet University (1857). In fact, there were several small schools in the Northeastern section of the United States that were established to educate children with hearing problems or visual impairments. At that time, the schools were largely private, and the federal government did not intervene with recommendations or standards. It was not until 1945 that a panel was established at the Council for Exceptional Children, to discuss the preparation of objectives for children with educable mental retardation, in order to consider educating them within the public

school systems. This led to the piloting of programs, and of course, to some studies that questioned the benefits of this implementation. Hocutt, Martin and McKinney (1991) summarized the results thus:

- α. there was no evidence to suggest that special education classes benefited children more, in relation to the progress of these children in general classrooms;
- β. the labels that accompanied the placement of these children were stigmatizing;
- χ. placement in general education classes was sufficient to meet the needs of pupils in need of special education, and lastly;
- δ. there was a disproportionate number of African American children enrolled in special education classes by virtue of IQ testing results, which unintentionally segregated a large number of schools.

These findings in the late sixties led the ‘Education Congress’, under the Lyndon B. Johnson administration, to take action. The landmark Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (PL 89-10 or ESEA) was the first act passed by Congress that allotted federal funds for general use in elementary and secondary schools. Although there were some stipulations attached to the Act, this type of aid was finally made possible because the financial assistance went directly to the students, enabling the American Congress to assist even students in non-public schools. “With authorizations totaling over \$1.3 billion, this act contained five ‘Titles’, with provisions of great significance for the future of American education” (RIPPA, 1997, p. 350). The enthusiasm and support for this act was not left unnoticed, therefore in 1966, the American Congress added Title VI to aid states in educating students with disabilities and making Johnson’s War on Poverty proposal a more encompassing program that could provide a variety of services to children in need. Part of Title VI was the establishment of the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (BEH), as a significant addition to the U.S. Office of Education. This marked a very important advancement for those in the field of special education, because it recognized the educational needs of the handicapped at the

federal level. As a result, many changes were imminent, and it provided the impetus for involvement at the federal level. The landmark legislature passed in the mid-seventies as a result of lobbying from parents (Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens or PARC) and special interest groups, who together were preparing to take legal action, has left a legacy that has decisively effected great change in the school systems of America and ultimately their society.

Current Practices and Policies in the United States

Once the platform was set in 1975 (with the passing of PL 94-142), it was sure to raise expectations with respect to the education of special needs children. Suddenly, the U.S. was in the midst of a wave of educational reforms that sought to educate all students in the federally mandated ‘least restrictive environment’. Programs began to grow and the U.S. focused on increasing the number of services made available to a unique population. The ‘Education for all Handicapped Children Act’ (PL 94-142) was ultimately so successful that it was re-authorized (PL 101-476) and renamed 15 years after the original legislation. The new law, ‘Individuals with Disabilities Education Act’ (known as IDEA, 1990) was intended to increase the number of places available for special students in classrooms. Not surprisingly, the number of students served has increased by more than 1.4 million (LIPSKY & GARTNER, 1997, p. 3). But, of more significance is the fact that the placement pattern for students with disabilities has been retained. The original legislation (PL 94-142) called for one-third of the students to be served in general classrooms, one-third of the students to be served in ‘pull-out’ resource rooms and one-third to be placed in special classrooms (LIPSKY & GARTNER, 1997, p. 3). An analysis of this pattern today will probably reveal that the proponents of the legislation were in search of a way to implement the model with as little disruption to the existing systems as possible. For if the change was too significant in too short a time span, success would be difficult. To this day, the placement pattern has remained relatively constant, even though federal reports published indicate that over 6.5 million children ages 3 – 21 are being

served under IDEA, which reflects a 30 percent rise over the past 10 years (CHANDLER, 2003).

In 2003, the most recent updates for IDEA were being drafted. There was a push towards aligning the IDEA legislation with the standards being implemented through the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The National Education Association (2003) established priorities for the reauthorization of IDEA and they made specific recommendations which highlighted the areas in which they felt improvement was necessary in the near future for special education in the U.S.:

- Full Funding - in order for quality programs to be implemented, there is a need to assure funds for the provision of the mandated services.
- Workload/Paperwork Standards - there is a need to emphasize efficiency and non-duplication of paperwork which would identify a reasonable workload standard.
- Professional Development - a key element for successful implementation is the preparation of teachers, particularly in cases where students are being included in general education classes.
- Early Intervention - by enhancing early intervention services the students can be served earlier and support services can be established sooner.
- Identification and Eligibility Consistency - common criteria should be applied and consistently maintained across the country.
- Discipline - the safety of all students is of utmost importance and consideration should be given to balancing the best interest of students with disabilities and teachers/staff.

Time will soon tell if the newest version of IDEA takes into account these recommendations and what priorities are established for the U.S. in special education. If inclusion is to continue to be the focus of special education in the U.S., then particular attention must be given to those being affected by this concentration. A study published by Cindy Praisner (2003) focused on the attitudes of elementary principals towards the

inclusion of students with disabilities. She found that 1 in 5 principals had a positive attitude towards inclusion, while most principals remained uncertain. This is something which must be addressed, in that most of the administrators surveyed did admit that their opinions stemmed from a lack of ‘specific training in special education topics’. There is no doubt that teachers/staff/administrators all need to be provided with appropriate professional development and support if there is any chance of a successful inclusion project. Weiner (2003) categorizes schools as being at three different levels (1 through 3) with Level III schools being dynamic, responsive, engaging and dedicated to ensuring that all students succeed. There is no easy road to travel to get a school to the highest level, but Weiner advocates the use of an ‘Inclusion Facilitator’ to work in the context of the teacher’s classroom. This will help teachers discuss their personal situations and bring staff development directly into the classroom.

One of the most successful aspects of special education legislation has been the prioritizing of funds for the Early Intervention Programs. Given the fact that more and more families are finding their needs met by individual states responding to the U.S. federal legislation, it’s no surprise that special educators in the field of early childhood would ultimately discover a need to fill the gap. Goals 2000 clearly states as the first objective that “all children start school ready to learn”. This statement was a real challenge to the field, and it became an even bigger challenge when you factored in the needs of very young children with special needs. Special laws were passed at the Federal level that would meet the needs of the youngest U.S. constituents - PL 99-457 (1986) had associated with it many ‘Titles’. Title I established the need to provide a program for infants and toddlers with handicaps (birth through age 2) and Title II was dedicated to the Preschool grants program (ages 3 through 5). Title I was largely regarded as the Part H section of the Education of the Handicapped Act. “It creates a discretionary program to assist states in planning, developing, and implementing a statewide system of comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary, interagency programs for all young handicapped children from birth up to three years of age” (TROHANIS, 1989, p. 2).

The United States Congress was clear in establishing the need to develop statewide systems that would address the developmental delays of infants and toddlers before they reached our preschools. Through their federal policy plans, they would make the funding available to all states that would:

- plan, develop, and implement a statewide comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary, interagency program of early intervention services.
- facilitate the coordination of payments from public and private sources.
- enhance the capacity of states to provide quality early intervention services and expand and improve existing services.

Infants and toddlers who experience developmental delays or who show a high probability of developing delays in one or more of the following areas are eligible: cognitive development, physical development, language/speech development, psychosocial development, and self-help skills. In the U.S., each state is currently responsible for developing a system that meets the individualized need for students. Conrad & Whitaker (1997) found that the best approach for developing a plan is to use a team of people with vested interests in the implementation of the plan, and to engage in three important steps: 1) assess needs, 2) determine long-range goals, and 3) create a building plan (with respect to curricular issues). It is clearly a federal intention to include regulations for special needs programs that stress the importance of reaching families as soon as a need is acknowledged.

DeMitchell & Kerns (1997) summarize that IDEA provides that each state must establish:

Procedures to assure that to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities...are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of

supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (20 U.S.C. 1412(5) (B)).

The mandates are open-ended and left for interpretation at the local level, given that not all areas of the United States are able to provide the same types of services. Therefore, traveling from state to state, one can see many different interpretations of the federal legislation, and many unique programs that have been designed as a result. Another aspect that one might notice if analyzing the way in which inclusion has been approached in the United States is that many agencies emphasize the importance of working as a team. “Different perspectives lead to better decision-making; no one discipline can provide everything a child and its family needs... Through transdisciplinary service delivery, professionals from different disciplines work together, with one of them serving as the primary contact with the family (KILGO; ALDRIDGE; DENTON; VOGTEL; VINCENT; BURKE & UNANUE, 2003).

International Perspectives on Inclusion

Living in the United States, it is often easy to view the world from an American perspective. In fact, discussing “inclusion” was quite simple at first - providing a historical perspective, discussing contemporary legislation, emphasizing examples of best practice, identifying resources - until... I recognized that my view of ‘inclusion’ was a purely American one. It was disturbing at first, that I had no frame of reference for the rest of the world. As I struggled to identify more international perspectives on inclusion, I was enlightened to find that others have contemplated this issue as well. Luanna H. Meyer (2003, p. 36) sums it up best: “International and intercultural stories - generating questions that force us outside our comfort zone - might well give us new insights into how to support all of our citizens, those with and without disabilities, whoever they are and no matter where they may live.”

Russia

The educational structure of the Soviet Union shifted in 1991, shortly after all the policies began to be implemented with the changes in government. There was a call for educational reform that was hoped would parallel the social, economic and of course political changes that were taking place. In Russia, they were radically at the forefront of government sponsored special education services. In fact, it has mandated government funded special education from the year 1931, and established a kindergarten for children with disabilities in 1900. At the University level, it even had a “medical pedagogical institute for individuals with mental retardation established in 1854” (AGRAN & BOYKOV, 2003). These are examples of how Russia was one of the first countries to recognize a need for the provision of services for those born with disabilities.

Russian special education has traditionally placed an emphasis on the need to separate from their society those individuals who were born with special needs. “Inherent to the Soviet system has been promulgation of the discipline ‘defectology’, which has served as the primary approach for serving persons with disabilities in Russia throughout the seventy or so years of Soviet rule” (AGRAN & BOYKOV, 2003, p. 92). It was quite common to have newborn infants separated from their families and sent to institutions. In contemporary Russia, it is not a topic that is widely discussed or publicized. “Because individuals with disabilities were isolated, they achieved a certain ‘invisibility’ in Russian society, and this status appears to be maintained, at least in terms of public knowledge” (p. 92).

At Herzen University, the oldest teaching college in Russia, they have renamed the Department of Defectology to indicate a shift in their approach – it is now the Department of Corrective Pedagogy. A recent survey of students from their department indicates that there has been a shift in the way in which Russian society views individuals receiving special education. Survey results indicate a swing in thinking, however, the changes will take time, and even a majority of those surveyed still believe that individuals with disabilities are currently segregated rather than included, even though they are aware of the inclusive practices of the U.S. and Western Europe.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has a long history of establishing policies for those in need of special education. In 1928, the Wood Committee set the precedence for unifying special education with other educational policies. Later, in the mid 1940's, the Education Act debated the need to educate as many students in the normal stream as possible. Throughout the 1970's, the UK struggled to apply various policies aimed at promoting inclusive practices, but it is clear that there is a push towards meeting the needs of all citizens.

Most recently, the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) has been the driving force behind inclusive practices in the United Kingdom. It was adopted by delegates representing 92 governments and 25 international organizations. "Inclusive education is now firmly established as the main policy imperative with respect to children who have Special Educational Needs (SEN) or disabilities. It is championed as a means to remove barriers, improve outcomes and remove discrimination" (LINDSAY, 2003, p. 3). Even though inclusion has been the key policy effecting practice, citizens are aware of the fact that two major models exist when discussing inclusion as it is implemented in different areas of the UK. Some areas lean toward a 'medical model' of inclusion, where those in the medical profession view inclusion through a lens that focuses attention more on the impairment based on the medical diagnosis. A second model is considered to be a 'social model' of inclusion, which takes more into account the environmental factors that may come into play when educating children with SEN.

Like the U.S., the UK struggles with issues of policy vs. practice. There are various interpretations of policy, and it is difficult to keep the teachers abreast of how to best implement new policies. "There is evidence of considerable variation in the ways in which local authorities are taking forward the inclusion agenda" (ATTFIELD & WILLIAMS, 2003, p. 32). In the UK, it seems there is a movement towards better research in order to provide more accurate data on how to implement inclusive practices successfully. As is the case in many efforts for change, "...more research is needed that

addresses a broad range of child, teacher and school variables, and the interactions between them, in terms of their impact upon inclusion for children with special needs” (HASTINGS & OAKFORD, 2003, p. 93).

Italy

In 1971, Italy established National Law 118 to address educational inclusive practices. This law formally mandated the need for compulsory education for children with disabilities in regular classes of public schools. “Prior to the passing of the law there were school districts already integrating students with disabilities such as Parma and Florence, and as the Italians say, ‘The law followed the practice because the practice was right.’ In the beginning, the emphasis was on socialization and acceptance. The Italians now call this early period ‘*integrazione selvaggio*,’ or wild integration” (BERRIGAN, 2005).

A good example of how inclusion evolved naturally due to a need would be the preschools in a small municipality of Northern Italy – Reggio Emilia – where they were known for providing developmentally appropriate practices in a natural environment, for many years prior to the National mandate. “Fundamental to the Reggio Emilia approach is the relationship between the child, the teacher and the knowledge to be learned” (VAKIL; FREEMAN; SWIM, 2003, p. 188). Time is built into the school day for reflection on student work and dialogue of the day.

In the Italian perspective, “...the foundation of successful inclusive classrooms rests on the implementation of effective practices recognized in the literature for children with special needs. The recommended practices for inclusive early childhood environments are already embedded in the Reggio Emilia approach” (VAKIL, FREEMAN; SWIM, 2003, p. 188). Italy has a strong foundation with the Reggio model in early childhood education, and this country can highlight the importance of also including parents in the process of successful inclusive education, as they have already been successfully implementing for many years.

Costa Rica

Given that it is an economically developing country, Costa Rica surprises many in its progressive outlook towards special education. Costa Rica is a small Central American country that has a long history of making public education an issue of national importance. Furthermore, they have addressed issues of special education for more than 60 years.

A recent statement prepared by Danilo Barrantes Santamaría (2005), the Secretary General of the Ministry of Education in Costa Rica, emphasizes the rights of everyone to an education. Part of his statement reads:

En fin, si aspiramos a una educación inclusiva de calidad, será necesaria una estrecha coordinación entre todos los sectores de nuestra sociedad, con el objeto de analizar la realidad, detectar los aciertos y errores, formular y reformular las soluciones que nos permitan la formación de personas pensantes, responsables, activas y felices.

Clearly, it is an initiative of the country to educate all in the most inclusive of ways possible, with an outlook towards maintaining the quality of the educational experience. Like most countries with an inclusive model, it also recognizes the need to coordinate services, in order to formulate the most successful implementation.

Costa Rica has a history of strong family participation in the education of its children. “Costa Rica never developed the custom of institutionalizing large numbers of individuals with severe disabilities. In part because of the unavailability of residential services, individuals with disabilities overwhelmingly remained at home with their families, regardless of the severity of their disability, which is still the custom today” (STOUGH, 2003, p. 8). It was the Fundamental Law of Education in 1957 that established the constitutional rights of children with disabilities in this country to attain special education services within the public school system. Part of this law also highlighted the need for teachers to be carefully selected, and to receive specialized training to support them in their work. This support model remains today, as the Ministry of Public Education, with the Equal Opportunity Law that was put into effect in 1996,

decided that it was important to create a National Resource Center for Educational Inclusion. It is the purpose of this group to increase access to programs and provide services to those in need.

Nearly 70,000 students in the public education system in Costa Rica receive some type of special education service, with nearly three-quarters of these students receiving services in a general education setting (STOUGH, 2002). Providing services to this many students requires highly trained teachers and a support system to meet the needs of all involved. It is clearly a national priority to provide services in an inclusive setting. “In the past decade, Costa Rica has seen profound changes - from creating primary segregated services to developing innovative service models that promote the inclusion of students with disabilities” (STOUGH, 2002, p. 34).

People’s Republic of China

Children with special needs in the People’s Republic of China did not begin to be served on a national basis until the passage of the 1986 Compulsory Education Law. In fact, although some children with disabilities were served in the late 1970’s, due to the period of Reform and Opening (Deng Xiaoping), the National People’s Congress did nothing but encourage local governments to provide compulsory education to children with and without disabilities. It has been a slow moving process, as responsibility has been shifting and the country has struggled to serve those with a wide variety of needs.

“Recent efforts toward inclusive service delivery have promoted integration (yiti hua jiaoyu) or inclusion (quama xing jiaoyu) as an appropriate educational model for students with disabilities in general education classrooms (suiban jiudu)” (McCABE, 2003, p. 16). These recent changes have come about as a result of the 1990 law of the National People’s Congress – ‘The Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities’ and the 1994 ‘Regulations on Education for Persons with Disabilities’ passed by the State Council. Both of these documents called for 9 compulsory years of education – placing the responsibility of meeting this initiative on the schools, families and all fields of society. The 1990 law specifically encouraged

the use of special schools to meet these needs, but recently there has been a push towards the use of general education classrooms (suiban jiudu) to meet these requirements (McCABE, 2003). Given the fact that the People's Republic of China is moving towards a model of education that encourages the inclusion of special needs children in a general education classroom, there are still issues to be resolved regarding the practical implementation of this model. The UNESCO report (1998) highlights the fact that there is a basic lack of places for children with special needs. In 1996, 1.8 million new places had to be identified in order to fulfill the National goal of providing educational services to 80% of the special needs population. Many other practical issues would also need to be addressed – class sizes (many average 40 – 75), transportation (how to get special needs students in rural settings to the classrooms), testing (would they report scores for those included) and most important of all: teacher training! “Teachers are often not trained to work individually with students of varying abilities; they have been trained to address a large group of students. Efforts have been made to provide increased opportunities for special education training, and to use special education schools as resource centers for teachers of suiban jiudu classes, so that teachers can learn how better to teach students with and without disabilities together” (McCABE, 2003, p. 19).

Vietnam

The Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) was responsible for incorporating a change in the provision of services for those with special needs. Analyzing the Asian countries, Vietnam is the most inclusive when it comes to educating children and youth with disabilities (VILLA; TAC; MUC; RYAN; THUY; WEILL & THOUSAND, 2003). Most Vietnamese point to the early 1990's as the beginning of inclusive education in their country. This was shortly after the UN statement requiring compulsory primary education based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Villa et al. (2003) document the fact that Vietnam instituted several pieces of legislation in order to work through the implementation of new practices. The Law of Protection and Care for Children discussed the integration of services, but there was need for more.

Traditionally, children with disabilities were cared for by their families, who often viewed the children as burdens to society or sources of shame and pity. In response to this prevailing situation, in 1991 the Center for Special Education (CSE) of the Vietnamese National Institute for Educational Sciences began developing and disseminating training materials to support the inclusion of primary school-aged students with mild, moderate, and severe disabilities in general education classrooms.

Inclusive practices have slowly evolved in Vietnam. Originally, most children with special needs were educated in special schools, however through the implementation of various pilot projects, the country has come to accept the need to implement these projects on a larger scale. In 1998, MOET indicated that up to 90% of special needs children should be educated in regular schools - this drastic change from the previous models of special education would require an increase in awareness of support in order to provide community resources, as well as extensive training of teachers. As with many other countries struggling with inclusive education, there are issues which must be resolved in Vietnam. There is a general lack of awareness that educational policies do exist with respect to inclusive education, and there is a lack of collaboration among organizations which must be supportive of this change. The Ministry of Education and Training has a research branch: the National Institute for Educational Services...which will ultimately be responsible for establishing the inclusive framework that will serve the communities in Vietnam.

As inclusive education becomes the more predominant model, the Vietnamese family structure will come to envision inclusive practices as the natural choice. Katherine Seelman (2005) provided a ‘snapshot’ of current inclusive practices in Vietnam as she traveled across the country in search of the policies being implemented. She cited that in 1998 there were approximately 1 million children in need of special education services, but less than 50% of them were attending schools. Although this scenario has improved, the Vietnamese attitudes towards disability are slow to change. “While Vietnam has a deep cultural commitment to education, there appears to be a lingering

predisposition in some people to explain disability as the result of a wrong act by an ancestor. Therefore, children may be kept from school because of feelings of shame among family members” (SEELMAN, 2005). Clearly, the private groups that are investing much time and energy in educating the Vietnamese public are aware of the need to cultivate positive experiences and a commitment to further education.

Israel

The Israeli education system is complex. It is divided into four directorates: Jewish Secular, Jewish Religious, (Non-Jewish) Israeli-Palestinian and Independent (Jewish Ultra-Orthodox). Although public education is managed at the National level, the types of special education services available depends on the district in which you live. In 1988, the Special Education Law was passed in Israel, and served to create certain guidelines upon which the education system would base decisions with respect to the special educational needs of most children. Five subsections were outlined in the Special Education Law (SEL) of 1988: Definitions of Terms, Free special Education, Diagnosis and Placement, Education in a Special Education Institution and Miscellaneous (MEADAN & GUMPEL, 2002). The law states that special education in Israel has the following goals:

To advance and develop the skills and abilities of the special-needs child, to correct and enhance his or her physical, mental, emotional, and behavioral functioning, to impart to him or her knowledge, skills and habits, and to help him learn acceptable social behavior with the goal to facilitate his or her integration into society and employment circles. (SECTION B.2).

Goldberg (2005) summarizes that the SEL in Israel states that children should be educated in the least restrictive environment. He emphasizes that this can be difficult to determine in Israel because although integration is emphasized, it is not always feasible in the region where the child lives. He clarifies by stating that “Practically speaking, as is the case anywhere else in the world, what is written in the law and what actually happens might be different in reality.” Until now, few cases have made it to the court systems and until this happens it remains to be seen how the implementation of this law becomes a

reality when a family is unsatisfied with the level of services available to them in their particular region.

Currently, there is a system in place whereby the child in need of special education services seeks an appointment at the age of three with the Vaadat Hasama (placement committee) identified for their area, according to their particular religious affiliation. This committee is responsible for identifying the services available and informing the families of what is provided. The Ministry of Education is responsible for establishing the committees and informing the families of the appeals process, in case that they are not satisfied with the placement decisions. This committee formally decides eligibility and placement, and helps develop the initial individualized education plan (IEP). What is controversial about this process is the fact that the families have no representation on the committee that is making educational recommendations for their child, and parental consent is not required.

Although there is a current emphasis on inclusive practice in Israel, not all regions are able to provide this option. Therefore, it is quite common to see children being served at Local Support and Resource Centers (LSRC) where teachers trained in special education services are often placed in order to meet the needs of as many students as possible in one setting. Furthermore, they have found that by placing well-trained teachers in special education at these centers, they are able to provide training and models for teachers needing resources and support. In essence, out of necessity, they have established a collaborative network which they have found meets the needs of many students, as well as others in need of support. It is a time of great change in Israel, and many services will evolve as a result of the implementation of the latest legislation and the many interpretations.

Conclusions

Unfortunately, an article such as this one could not possibly provide an all-encompassing view of how inclusive practices are being addressed around the world. A comprehensive study would require years of research and would require the expertise of

many perspectives from across the globe. By summarizing *some* of the approaches to special education, my hope is to enlighten others to the fact that there are alternative practices to consider, as each community reflects on the changes and challenges that policies require in practice.

As an educator, I was challenged in my second year of teaching to include a child with Cerebral Palsy in my 1st grade classroom. I carefully chose the word ‘challenged’, because I was not prepared for the many of the issues I would face when I so casually responded ‘no problem’ to my administration. I had never seen an IEP (Individualized Education Plan), I had never had a course in special education, I had never had to schedule around PTs (physical therapists) and OTs (occupational therapists), and it had never crossed my mind to consider the amount of adaptations we as a class would have to make. This article provides you with a brief summary of how the U.S. has handled the special education legislative journey. It also attempts to establish the fact that internationally, this is an issue that every culture must also address, even if it is difficult to summarize another country’s perspective of how they might be meeting these needs.

But ultimately, I want this article to remind us of the fact that each and every person faced with a disability is a unique individual with an important story to share. I’m not so certain of the educational gains made by “Luis” that year in which he ended up in my 1st grade classroom. He was Brazilian and I spoke Spanish - the administration felt that this would be helpful as we attempted ‘inclusion’ for the first time at our school. Ultimately, what was helpful was my recognition of the fact that I had so much more to learn! There is no ‘one’ right way to address our questions, it was a journey that we all had to travel individually. I often wonder what type of young adult “Luis” has become. By my calculations, he must be turning ‘21’ very soon - an adult with many educational adventures to share - his opinion would matter so much to me - he was my first experience with inclusion - one whom I will never forget!

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Web-Based Resources

Canadian Association for Community Learning
www.cacl.ca

Council for Exceptional Children
www.cec.sped.org

Federal Resource Center for Special Education
www.dssc.org/frc

International Journal of Special Education
www.internationaljournalofspecialeducation.com

International Special Education Resources
www.iser.com/index.shtml

Special Educational Needs and Disability
www.teachernet.gov.uk/sen

TASH
www.tash.org

Circle of Inclusion
www.circleofinclusion.org

Early Childhood Research Institute on Inclusion (ECRII)
www.fpg.unc.edu/~ecrii/

Keys to Natural Environments and Inclusion
www.nectas.unc.edu/inclusion/

The Information Network on Education in Europe
www.eurydice.org

China Online for the Special Needs
www.cosn.net

Disability World: A bi-monthly web-zine of International Disability News and Views
www.disabilityworld.org

World Institute on Disability
www.wid.org

Frequently Asked Questions on Israel, Inclusion and Special Education
www.hagshama.org.il/en/resources/view.asp?id=433

Mercaz Harmony International Center for Inclusion
www.ganharmony.org