

Requirements for Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Public Education in Egypt

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Abstract

There is no doubt that paying attention to children with special needs has greatly increased in the recent years. The declaration of human rights in 1948 stressed the right of all individuals to education. The United Nations Program for people with special educational needs stated that the member states should adopt a policy that recognizes the rights of people with special educational needs, and their equal opportunities (article 120). The inclusion of children with special needs has developed since 1989 during the United Nations Conference on child rights. Egypt has recently been more interested in the inclusion of children with special needs in public education. This was clearly shown in speech delivered by the minister of education in the first conference on the inclusion of children with special needs in public schools held in Cairo in March 2002. The minister said that the MOE experimented inclusion in 270 schools at the national level with cooperation with the World Bank, the UNESCO, Save the Children (Britain), City Center and Caritas Egypt. It is hoped that it would be generalized in all Egyptian schools to achieve full inclusion. The MOE tries to provide education for the children with special needs whose number is approximately 7 millions. Consequently, a number of ministerial decrees were issued to apply inclusion of children with disabilities in all public schools at all stages. The children with special need Fund provides them with comprehensive care. For this project to succeed, good planning and determination of the whole requirements are very crucial.

1. Introduction

There is no doubt that interest in people with special needs has grown dramatically in the last decade from the last century. If the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 has affirmed that right "Everyone has the right to education" (UN, 2007, Article 26), the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons stated in Article (120) that: Member States should adopt policies which recognize the rights of disabled persons to equal educational opportunities with others. The education of disabled persons should as far as possible take place in the general school system. Responsibility for their education should be placed upon the educational authorities and laws regarding compulsory education should include children with all ranges of disabilities, including the most severely disabled. And in Article 121: Member States should allow for increased flexibility in the application to disabled persons of any regulation concerning admission age, promotion from class to class and, when appropriate, in examination procedures (UN, 1982). The World Conference on Education for All: Meeting basic learning needs, which was held in Jomtien in 1990, has confirmed that this is a right for all regardless of individual differences. This was considered the beginning of the direct attention to these groups of people with special needs (WCEFA, 1990). In 1993, the United Nations issued the "Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities", which urges the states to make special needs education an integral part of the educational system (UN, 1993).

From those rules: "Persons with disabilities are members of society and have the right to remain within their local communities, they should receive the support they need within the ordinary structures of education, health, employment and social services" (introduction, Article 26). In addition, "States should recognize the principle of equal primary, secondary and tertiary educational opportunities for children, youth and adults with disabilities, in integrated settings. They should ensure that the education of persons with disabilities is an integral part of the educational system" (Rule 6).

In 1994, the World Conference on Special Needs Education issued the Salamanca Statement, which confirmed in Article 2 the following:

- every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning,
- every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs,
- education systems should be designed and educational programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs,
- those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them

within a childcentred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs,

- regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system" (UNESCO, 1994).

Salamanca statement was followed by great efforts of international bodies such as UNESCO, the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, UNDP, the World Bank, the bodies that sponsored the World Conference on Education for All.

In March of 1995, the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen was issued and the sixth Commitment stated that: "We commit ourselves to promoting and attaining the goals of universal and equitable access to quality education, the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and the access of all to primary health care, making particular efforts to rectify inequalities relating to social conditions and without distinction as to race, national origin, gender, age or disability; respecting and promoting our common and particular cultures; striving to strengthen the role of culture in development; preserving the essential bases of people-centred sustainable development; and contributing to the full development of human resources and to social development". The purpose of these activities is to eradicate poverty, promote full and productive employment and foster social integration" (Commitment 6) (UN, 1995). The United Nations Development Programme started the regional program for people with special educational needs concerning their participation in sustainable human development in 1995 (UNDP, 1995). "People with special needs should not be excluded from sustainable human development programs, yet there are certain changes that should be made, and enormous efforts must be exerted to enable them to be successfully included in programs within the mainstream, and provide them with public services to satisfy their needs" (Guide 1) (UNDP, 1995). This was followed by the issuance of the Dakar Declaration of 2000, which emphasized the right of education for all.

The Egyptian society has paid attention to the special status of people with special needs in order to continue to work to take care of them, taking into account their rights, freedom and human relationships. This has been crystallized in the issuance of Law No. (39) for the year 1975 on the rehabilitation of disabled persons. Article IV stated the formation of the Supreme Council for the rehabilitation of the disabled, headed by the Minister of Social Affairs and the membership of representatives of concerned ministers and agencies. The Minister of Social Affairs issued the executive regulations of this law in 1976.

This law, in particular, stressed the rehabilitation services and the right to work and offered them many facilities such as exemption from customs duties for the necessities of living of prosthetic devices and some other concessions and exemptions. The Egyptian legislator in this context, addressed the Children's Act No. 12 of 1996 as amended by Act 126 of 2008 to include a special chapter for disabled children in articles (75-86), which include:

- ensuring the protection of the child from disability and all types of work that would harm his health, physical, mental, spiritual, social development through early detection of disability, rehabilitation and employment of the disabled at the working age.
- the contribution of the media to offering awareness programs and guidance in the field of prevention of disability, and the rights of children with disabilities and their caregivers in order to facilitate their inclusion into society.
- the right of the disabled child to be provided with social, health and psychological care to foster self-reliance and facilitate inclusion and participation in society.
- the right of disabled child to education, training, vocational rehabilitation in high schools, colleges and training centers available for the ordinary children, and except in exceptional cases arising from the nature and degree of disability, in which the state is committed to ensure special education and training classes or schools, institutions or training centers related to the formal education system and suit the needs of disabled children, and also close to their place of residence.
- The state's obligation to render services, rehabilitation and prosthetic devices at no charge to the amounts included for this purpose in the public budget, and provided for disabled children and their families to enable them to overcome the effects of disability.
- commitment of the concerned ministries to provide necessary facilities for the provision of rehabilitation services for disabled children.
- commitment of the workforce offices to help the disabled to be enrolled in work that suits their age, capabilities, areas and places of residence.
- state's obligation to identify specific jobs in the administrative system of the state, public and private sector

units, allocated for the disabled children who obtained the rehabilitation certificate.

- commitment of businessmen to employ disabled children with a minimum of 2% of the 5% stipulated in Law No. (39) for the year 1975.
- Establishment of a fund for the care and rehabilitation of children with disabilities have legal personality and its resources fall within the prescribed fines for the offenses set forth in this section.
- Exemption of prosthetic devices, assistance and spare parts, equipment and means of production and means of transport for the use of a disabled child and rehabilitation of all types of taxes and fees.

The Egyptian prime minister established the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA) in 2012, to give the presence of laws, associations and programmes to support disabled people.

Egypt has contributed to international efforts that culminated in the issuance of the International Convention for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities, and joined it by the Presidential Decree (400) for the year 2007.

Regarding education, Article (24) of the Convention stated that: "State parties are required to ensure persons with disabilities have equal access to an inclusive education and life-long learning process, including access to primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational institutions. This includes facilitating access to alternative modes of communication, providing reasonable accommodation and training professionals in the education of persons with disabilities".

In the context of promoting care for people with disabilities and the implementation of Egypt's international obligations, the Egyptian government has prepared a national program to reduce the disability is being handled by a number of ministries and specialized program is based on the health, media, social solidarity, sports and education sectors.

The project of including children with special needs in the public education in Egypt is considered one of the most important Egyptian efforts that have been taken the following procedures:

- Allowing students with special needs to be enrolled in public schools and including them with their ordinary peers in regular classes.
- Issuance of the regulations for special education schools and classes by the Ministerial Decree 37/1990.
- Formation of a committee for inclusion in the MOE to be responsible for policy making for the project of inclusion of disabled students in public schools by the Ministerial Decree 42/2008.
- Issuance of the Ministerial Decree 94/2009 on the admission of students with mild disabilities in schools that are configured and prepared to receive those students.
- Issuance of the Ministerial Decree 264/2011 on the admission of students with mild disabilities in schools that are configured and prepared to receive those students.
- Increasing the number of schools suited for inclusion of students with disabilities to 796 schools by the end of 2012/2013.
- Developing objective exams for students with disabilities included in public schools to suit the conditions of their disability.

The first child decade was issued (1990 - 2000), followed by the second decade (2000 - 2010). Both included care for those with special needs.

Finally, the new constitution for Egypt in 2014, Article 80 stipulates that: "The state guarantees the rights of children who have disabilities, and ensures their rehabilitation and incorporation into society". Besides, Article (81) states that: "The state shall guarantee the health, economic, social, cultural, entertainment, sporting and education rights of people with disabilities and dwarves. The state shall provide work opportunities for such individuals, and allocate a percentage of these opportunities to them, in addition to equipping public utilities and their surrounding environment. The state guarantees their right to exercise political rights, and their integration with other citizens in order to achieve the principles of equality, justice and equal opportunities".

2. Problem of the Study

The experience of including children with special needs in the public schools represents the pride of the Egyptian Ministry of Education after starting seriously in the process of inclusion of these children gradually since 1998. It seemed that in the political discourse of the Minister of Education in the "First Conference on Education for All in including people with special needs in public schools" held in Cairo in March 2002. He pointed out that the ministry is experimenting with the principle of inclusion in 270 schools nationwide in collaboration with the World Bank, UNESCO, Save the Children Agency (UK), the City Center and Caritas Egypt. It is hoped that this experiment would be successful to be implemented in all schools in Egypt in order to achieve full inclusion of students with special needs.

The Minister of Communications, in collaboration with the Minister of Education, started an initiative to develop technology for a thousand schools for students with disabilities all over Egypt, in the framework of the implementation of a strategy pivot of the Ministry of Communications to enable persons with disabilities (Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, 2013).

The project will start with the support of 500 schools for students with mental disabilities, and 199 schools for the deaf and hearing impairment, and 301 inclusion schools for students with mild disabilities in public schools. The project will support all schools with all requirements of hardware and software, in addition to providing training on specialized software for more than a thousand teachers, at a cost of 30 million pounds for the year 2013/2014. Twenty six schools for people with vision disabilities have already been supported, which are all public schools specialized in this field, as well as supporting 35 schools during the experimental stage of the project of inclusion schools in the last year 2012/2013.

The number of these schools increased from 700 schools in 2010 to 762 schools in 2011, and 796 schools in 2013, with 3697 students included, and 3420 teacher and specialist coach, and 29 specialists trained in the application of measures of intelligence, and 70 resources rooms . Yet, the inclusion lacked the provision of moral and material requirements needed by those with disabilities to be enrolled in public schools positively and appropriately, because they are an important segment of society, that has every right to education and participation in the development processes (MoE, 2014).

The state also is working to provide education for children with disabilities whose number in Egypt is about 7 millions (CAPMAS, 2013). Financial and social barriers hinder their full participation in social and cultural life. The percentage of the disabled who enrolled in schools does not exceed 1% (MoE, 2013). Therefore, there is an urgent need for good planning to work on the inclusion of students with disabilities in public education in Egypt, in order to achieve the desired success. Also we should outline the requirements and essential components necessary for success.

So, the research problem is determined in the following question: What are the requirements for including students with disabilities in public education in Egypt?

This question includes the human, financial, and legislative requirements necessary for the inclusion of children with disabilities in public education in Egypt.

3. Terminology

3.1 *including people with disabilities in public education:*

The philosophy of inclusion is based on equality of all individuals, which must be respected and appreciated. Opportunities to participate fully in all aspects of society should be made available to people with disabilities. Thus schools must accept all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, or linguistic disabilities. This means that the education of the disabled children should take place in the same schools where they will learn in case they have no disabilities (Saleh, 1999, 1).

Inclusion means the integration of children with ordinary peers educationally and socially according to a plan, a program and a methodology with regard to the needs of each individual child, which requires the clarity of responsibility among the administrative, educational and technical officials in public and private education.

3.2 *People with disabilities*

Disability in children means "All the deficiencies in human potential: mental, psychological, or physical that make him/her unable to exercise his expected natural life within the limits of age, sex and environmental conditions" (Al Sibai, 1987).

A person with disability is "every person who cannot secure his/her basic needs in whole or in part or in his social life due to the disability, congenital or otherwise, that influences the eligibility of physical or mental power" (Law No. 39, 1975).

In Egypt, "a disabled person" means a person who need rehabilitation service to meet the basic needs in society because impairment such as movement-related function, sensory function and mental function brings physical, social, economical and psychological disability (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2000).

4. The Theoretical Framework of Research

The new strategic plan for the pre-university education in Egypt, 2014 - 2030 put a strategic goal to provide learners with disabilities with educational opportunities of high quality, and include people with mild disabilities in all pre-university

schools. To achieve this goal, the strategic plan developed a program to improve the quality of education provided to those learners gradually in 600 schools targeted for inclusion annually. Also, it is looking for equipping the targeted schools structurally and technically by the General Authority for Educational Buildings and the Committee of the inclusion of the ministry annually at the beginning of the academic year 2013/ 2014.

The plan stressed the need to form a committee in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, and the National Council of Disability to develop standards and criteria for diagnosing students with disabilities in the academic year 2013/2014, and preparing the international schools for people with disabilities in the annual plans. Such schools should be obliged to that, in collaboration with the MoE Commission for the inclusion at the beginning of the academic year 2013/2014.

The plan also stressed the necessity of equipped sources rooms in public, private and international schools, and providing instructional aids to the targeted schools by 480 resources rooms per year. In addition, train 480 resource rooms teachers in the targeted schools for inclusion of all levels of education by the beginning of the academic year 2013/2014 gradually.

The plan stressed also the forming a committee of specialists and administrators to pose executive roles for the inclusion sub-committees and the inclusion staff in the year 2013/2014, and providing chances for professional development for 18000 teachers, and 960 psychiatrics and social workers per year in the pre-university education.

Accordingly, requirements needed for inclusion in public education should be available, which will be dealt with in the following pages.

5. The Main Obstacles to Inclusive Education

1. Shortage of the number of schools required to meet the needs of children in rural, deprived urban, remote areas and slums.
2. Working conditions in this type of education is not conducive to the retention of trained personnel such as supervisors, principals, and facilitators.
3. Lack of parents' and civil society institutions awareness about the importance of inclusive education.
4. Weakness of management and systems of monitoring and evaluation in such schools and classes.
5. The disabled child does not receive enough attention by the public education teacher, as he does not get adequate services in the context of this type of education.
6. Children with disabilities do not often receive good treatment by ordinary peers in public education.
7. The disabled child does not benefit mostly from the surrounding environment in public education, but it has confused them.
8. The disabled child may be young, and needs much care.
9. The disabled child needs being among other children with similar disabilities in order not to feel different.
10. Teachers in public education did not receive appropriate training to deal with the needs of the disabled child.
11. Lacking the enthusiasm necessary for the inclusion of these children in regular classes among teachers and the school administration.

6. Requirements for Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Public Education

The much care directed to people with disabilities within the pre- university education sector requires the awareness of public opinion of its importance, benefits, models at the local, Arab, and international levels through supporting media. Besides equipping schools, and providing sources rooms, teachers and specialists, as well as the development of curricula and tools for educational measurement, and developing systems and legislation that support the implementation of the policies of care for people with disabilities and do reward incentives for workers in the care of the disabled at various levels.

From the literature (Mohammed, 2012; Ghoneim, 2002; NCLD, 2000; Al Shakhs, 1986; Al Khatib, 1996; Haddon & Merbler, 1995; Santelli et al., 1996), there are six basic requirements necessary to achieve the inclusion of children with disabilities in public schools concerning the following elements:

1) Child and Family

- Developing awareness of disabled child rights to be included in regular schools,
- Training parents to deal with the disabled child, to know his/her needs and problems, and how to include him/her with brothers and family,
- Training parents how to deal with the school staff and administration.

2) School:

A) The School as an Environment for Inclusion:

- Review the design, equipment, specifications and facilities of the school building.
- Rethinking the potential and suitability of the school for children,
- Rethinking the form of classroom, its capacity and equipment,
- Providing the resources rooms,
- Rethinking the curriculum, school schedules and plans to be flexible enough to allow the disabled child to participate in an active way.

A) The Teacher Should:

- know the warning signs (diagnosis),
- have effective classroom management,
- have a good record system,
- participate in workshops and continuing professional development programs,
- design a learning profile for each disabled student,
- develop effective teaching methods,
- provide individual instruction,
- build self-esteem of the disabled students,
- interviewing parents to discuss their children's problems at school,
- collaboration with parents and guardians in their children's educational achievements,
- understanding the laws and procedures governing the inclusion programs,
- supporting the disabled students.

B) Specialist and Staff:

- developing positive attitudes towards inclusion,
- developing cooperative teaching,
- master of individual programs, its planning and implementation,
- use of appropriate and diversified technology,
- functional and reference evaluation,
- diversity of activities which allow the participation of the disabled child, his/her family, colleagues and the local environment,
- educational entertainment.

3) School and Educational Management:

A) Leadership:

- developing positive attitudes among leaders towards inclusion,
- providing communication between school staff and departments,
- providing the necessary resources for the inclusion,
- providing appropriate and diversified technology,
- having good human relations,
- training of multidisciplinary cadres.

B) Participating in the Responsibilities and Performance Standards:

- providing opportunities for parents and families to participate,
- orientation to the local environment when developing the standards,
- providing an opportunity for experts to estimate the return.
- inclusion of disabled students in the local environment to provide a regular rhythm of life for them.

4) Universities, Higher Institutes and Specialized Centers:

A) Rehabilitation and Training of Cadres:

- Preparing qualified teachers and specialists to bear the burden of this big responsibility,
- introduce educational materials and programs for people with disabilities in teacher preparation programs,
- a multi-disciplinary specialized training that should be done in workshops, and work teams.

B) Programs and Models:

- development of methods and techniques,
- development of resource required for projects,
- consultation system to ministries, centers and associations.

C) Conducting Field and Empirical Researches:

- field researches,
 - evaluation researches.
- D) Development of an Information System Include:**
- database,
 - models and performance standards,
 - internal and external review.
- 5) Private Associations and Non-Governmental Bodies:**
- A) Facilities:**
- delivery of services to the disadvantaged, including those with the most difficult circumstances,
 - integration of these services.
- B) Supporting Governmental Efforts:**
- Contact the family and the child to satisfy their needs,
 - establishment of schools, institutions or hospitals supported by non-governmental organizations for people with disabilities.
- 6) Political and Legislative Leadership:**
- A) Reviewing the Current Rules and Regulations:**
- the rights of the disabled children,
 - setting operational definitions of services, its sources and responsibilities,
 - paying attention to services (health - education - rehabilitation - family - community),
 - reviewing enrollment procedures- promotion- evaluation- moving to a higher stage- employment- involvement in the community as an adult and as a citizen.
- B) Characterization of Supportive Services for the Family:**
- specialized services,
 - consultation and environmental services standards,
 - material and moral assistance,
 - legal support in life, civil and criminal cases.
- C) The Stage of Employment:**
- procedures for employment,
 - the type of work - depending on the capabilities of the disabled,
 - discussing the functional treatment, factors of stability and work problems.
- D) Life in the Community and Social Defense:**
- the possibility of marriage and building up a family.
 - providing the necessary financial and social support.
 - access to services of the local environment.
 - participating in the protection of their rights.

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