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Technical paper on education and disability (inclusive education)

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Summary

Access and participation in education service rate of people with disabilities is generally lower than the rest of the population; similarly, it is also noted disparities among those who are going to school, these disparities are based on the type of disability and the contexts. Approaches of schooling persons with disabilities also depend on the definition of disability and the choice made between the medical model and the social model. Few statistics on the education of persons with disabilities are available which sometimes makes their needs unseen.

The education of individuals with Disabilities has experienced various forms; today, with a view to the inclusion of persons with disabilities and the achievement of development goals, progresses are initiated with a view to accommodate the needs of all components of the society. Inclusive education is the form of education presented as likely to take into account, in the context of education for all, the diverse needs of all learners.

However, in the absence of a common understanding of this concept and other concepts that are associated to it on one hand, and ownership of the problem of the education of persons with disabilities by ministries responsible for education matters

on the other hand, the development of indicators and tools for collecting data and information and planning relating to persons with disabilities remains a challenge for the development and monitoring of progress of educational policies on disability.

Introduction

Initially, the education of people with disabilities was a denial, leading to exclusion (some children cannot attend education), schooling of children with disabilities has evolved into acceptance corresponding to the segregation (special schools, special educational institutions, which generally targeted a specific disability), then toleration that allow the integration and the emergence of the concept of special educational needs and current, understanding that must lead to inclusion.

Inclusion is based on the principle that education is a right and it is the responsibility of education systems to adapt and respond to the diverse needs of learners. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) of the United Nations recognizes the right of all children with disabilities not to be excluded from the general education system and to benefit from the coaching they need. Inclusive education aims school for all, based on participation, equality and insertion in the community.

However, challenges, barriers and gaps at various levels preclude the development of indicators for the definition, implementation and monitoring of policies. These challenges are due to the absence of consensus on concepts and terms; models and methods used and the emphasis on disability in public policy.

In this paper, we present these different aspects.

I.   Education and Disability: Theoretical Considerations

The concept of inclusive education is based on the principle of equal opportunities, an idea that all children and young people, despite their differences should have the same learning opportunities regardless of the type of schools and it is for the education system to make every effort to achieve this vision. This requires, for the sake of equity, the definition of coherent educational policies that take into account the specificities of the groups identified as vulnerable and exposed to exclusion, the establishment of an educational approach tailored to learners and development of

programs relevant and flexible education that allow groups with different characteristics to learn together.

Initially oriented on consideration of specific educational needs of learners with disabilities, inclusive education has become a cross-cutting theme designed to take into account the diverse needs of all learners marginalized or likely to be marginalized of the education systems.

Inclusive education aims at detecting, removing barriers and providing reasonable accommodation to enable all learners to be integrated and succeed into a common framework.

It involves the definition of policies and the implementation of programmatic actions that make effective the rights (universal access to universal school education). It serves a social project with the community as one of the stakeholders; it plays a key role in promoting inclusive and equitable societies. It needs to be under the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education.

However, this form of education involves a number of unknown targets, a broader category that education of children with disabilities, making difficult delimitation of the concept of special educational needs and consensual definition of inclusive education.

In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, understanding of inclusive education is broad, due to the recognition of several groups involved in educational marginalization or exclusion of education systems. These groups share a common characteristic of being the least privileged in all aspects of human development (slum children, street children, teenage mothers, orphans…). In this region of the world, inclusive education has been identified as likely to contribute to the achievement of universal primary education and poverty alleviation. This design has an implication on the formulation of educational policies and target identification.

The statistical data on students with disabilities are rare in this context because these children are less likely than others to go to school.

II.   Models and methods used

Usually, persons with disabilities are schooled either in special schools and specialized institutions, integrated schools or inclusive schools. Different approaches are used for the education of persons with disabilities: one track, two track or multi-track approach.

These approaches are based either on the medical model or the social model of disability. However, several countries deviate from the medical model of identification of health problems and disabilities, which is the difference in the individual, to adopt an approach based on interactions within the education system, which takes into account environment, according to the International Classification of Functioning, disability and health (ICF).

These choices could also be explained by economic reasons or the level of development of countries; in low income countries of the sub-Saharan Africa for example, there is a predominance of private educational opportunities for people with disabilities by type of disability. The most represented are the institutions for persons with sensory disabilities.

Definitions and methods of measuring disability vary from one country to another depending on assumptions about human diversity and disability, as well as according to the importance given to the various aspects of disability impairments, limitations activities and participation restrictions, health related and environmental factors.

Enrollment rates also vary depending on the type of disability; they are generally better for children with physical disabilities than for those with an intellectual or sensory impairment.

In sub-Saharan Africa for example, data on the education of students with disabilities are rare; estimates indicate that only 2% are in school. Disaggregated data are not available; this does not make it easy to identify needs and take them into account.

III.   Education, Disability and Public Policy

Disability is a cross-cutting issue which generally is handled between different sectors of public services. This situation meant that in some low-income countries,

the education of children with disabilities is sometimes subject to a specific strategy, alongside the overall strategy of the education sector.

IV. Discussion

If the international movement advocated by UNESCO called on countries worldwide to promote inclusion, it still tied to historical, social and economic conditions for the development of these countries; it has not yet been translated into educational policies in all contexts. The lack of consensus on the concept of disability and its measurement and the definition of inclusive education and concepts associated with it appear to be the factors that hinder the development of methodological approaches to collect statistical data on people disabilities.

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