

GRENADA

Caribbean Symposium on Inclusive Education

Kingston, Jamaica, 5 – 7 December 2007

UNESCO
International Bureau of Education



Grenada Country Report

Ms. Agnes St. John-John, teacher, Special Education Needs, attached to the Ministry of Education

(i.) Inclusive Education: Approaches, Scope, and Content:

Grenada's conceptualization of inclusive education can be seen more as that of 'integration'; which means the placing of special needs students into the mainstream school with little or no provision of support services which is required for the child to maximize their full potential and be able to make a significant contribution to society.

Presently in Grenada a SEN 'pull out' programme is used as the means of facilitating inclusive education in at least 12 mainstream schools. The special needs students are sent to special resource room which is attached to the mainstream school, tutored by Special Education Needs Teachers (SENT) who have been locally trained. The Special Education Needs Teacher collaborates as well with the school community on Special educational needs which to some measure promotes inclusive practice.

The means of placing the special needs students in the mainstream, mainly for the scope of breaking down social barriers which can presently be given as a definition of inclusive education in Grenada. This definition was arrived at based on a research done by a Grenadian researcher on, 'Teachers attitudes to inclusion in Grenada' her findings indicated that a fair percentage of teachers are of the opinion that special need students should be integrated into the mainstream more for the purpose of socialization.

However, there has been a positive movement over the last ten years (10) to the concept of inclusive education. A paradigm shift is occurring.

Evidence of this claim can be attributed to:

The Ministry of Education's Strategic plan for Educational Enhancement and Development Revised edition (2006- 2015). It specifically stated as one of its objective "ensuring the adequate provision for all with Special needs in mainstream day-care centers, nursery, Primary schools and Secondary schools'. This initiative is a high priority of the Government of Grenada and has targeted 2010 as when full support systems will be made available place for these children.

The concept of inclusion among educators can also be said to have seen adjustment based on the said study alluded to previously. It was found that the teachers who were locally trained in dealing with SEN students display positive attitude to the concept. A Special Education needs teacher commented that her attitude may have remained the same had she not gained exposure to understanding that population. Another finding indicated that many teachers are of the opinion that all students can learn in the inclusive setting with the appropriate accommodations.

One of the sub strategic objective suggests that Grenada will “Re/integrate previously excluded children, truants, intra-cycle dropouts and provide support for participation’. This highlights another meaningful attempt at inclusive education by 2010.

The Ministry of Education has started the process of Instituting Early Identification and Diagnostic Screening programmes in mainstream schools to allow for the assessment of learning needs of children and routing into appropriate learning-support environments within mainstream schools or elsewhere. In addition, a recent proposal was approved and will commence in 2008.

For this to work effectively the Ministry of Education is in the process of developing a Special Education Unit by the end 2007 with a fully trained staff by 2008.

The Ministry of Education has trained two educational practitioners in the area of Inclusive education through the European Union’s Erasmus Mundus MA SEN Programme 2005 -2007. This will allow for best inclusive practice.

Due to the initiative of the two Erasmus Mundus MA SEN practitioners, presently a bid which was offered to the ACP countries to submit proposals is before the EU (for approval) the programme is entitled ‘Train the trainer in inclusive practice’.

Grenada’s Education Act 21 Part VI Division suggests that the SEN Child must receive his or her educational programme in ‘the least restrictive environment’. This reflects the policy of the Salamanca Statement (1994) which Grenada was a signatory to and the most recent Education for All Action Plan Framework (2000)

Grenada is presently reviewing the UN convention of the rights for persons with Disabilities.

The main focus of inclusive education at present is students with auditory and visual disabilities (sensory impairment). Children with sensory impairments tend to be perceived as less of a problem in mainstream environments.

These students with sensory impairments are provided with assistive devices and other support services from primary to tertiary level of education, their main support being Itinerant teachers of the Deaf and Blind. However exclusion of many at -risk children are still high.

Physical and social, cultural, and economic barriers are the main sources of exclusion. Persons with physical disabilities face major challenges in gaining access to the mainstream schools. In order to counteract this barrier, schools may change the classroom from year to year to make it accessible to these students. The physical means of exclusion can be expanded to the general layout of the environment, transportation to and from institutions of learning can be a challenge. Societal means of inclusion sees lack of awareness as the major contributing factor. The medical model instead of the social model is still been practiced in Grenada therefore not fully moving from institutionalization to normalization.

(ii) Inclusive Education: Public Policies:

To benefit from inclusive education system the curriculum needs to see major adjustments. In this light the Ministry of Education has an objective which states 'the revision and development of multiple intelligences and aptitudes'. This revision is carded to be implemented by 2009 and is deemed of high priority to the relevant stakeholders.

Secondly, development\ revision of the pre-primary schools curriculum and implementation of the primary school curricula based on OECS harmonized learning outcome to reflect greater quality focus on basic literacy and numeracy through the implementation of the Caribbean CETT.

The significance of the reformed curriculum place impetus on the differentiated styles of its students to be catered for. Data collected from educational practitioner in addressing the special needs of their students, indicated that training is needed in the area of curriculum adaptation if they are to make significant contribution to their students' needs. These teachers, who have received some level of local training in special educational needs, indicated that the provision made for the students are said to have enhanced self esteem which eventually emerge in their work. These objectives mentioned above are all given high priority by the Ministry of Education.

(iii) Inclusive Education: Systems, Links and Transition:

The concept of inclusive education is being integrated in the curriculum structure of basic education through:

1. Early screening and intervention programme
2. The provision of support services for the special education needs students in the mainstream schools
3. The provision of assistive technological devices and materials.
4. The provision of braille text books and large prints books.
5. The movement of students from special schools into the mainstream schools.

This is also evident in the activities of remediation which caters for the child receiving instructions to meet his or her individual need. It is another initiative of the Ministry of Education to have placed such early assessment and identification program.

The Ministry of Education has as one of its high priority; support system in place for children with SEN in the inclusive setting by 2010. This will ensure the adequate provision made for these students.

Another initiative is Universal education as the country's aim of transition from primary to secondary education according to SPEED (2006- 2015: 21).

'Access to and participation in secondary education remains low, notwithstanding the recent increase in transition rates from primary to secondary school. Although Grenada has strongly developed and publicly supported early childhood education on sub-sector and achieves

universal Primary education many years ago, access to secondary education is limited to about 80% of the Cohort.

Inclusive education can be envisioned as a means of democratizing opportunities for life long learning. This is said and can be backed by plans set out in the educational strategic plan of the country. It was stated that formal education should become inclusive then this diversification is needed. Additionally, there is development of relevant knowledge and skills to strengthen human resources and contribute to development as a nation. Emphasis should be placed on the wide range of skills and attitudes for each individual to demonstrate their engagement as members of human family in society. The relevance of inclusive education for living as highlighted by UNESCO 'Learning goals by 'Learning to be and Learning to live together'.

(iv) Inclusive Education: Learners and Teachers:

'Reconfigure the learning environment to establish learner-centred, child-friendly, health promoting schools' is the one of the core strategic objective of Ministry of Education SPEED (2006-2015). This shows ongoing processes of curriculum change which will foster better learning environments which facilitate inclusion at the school and classroom levels.

Underpinning this core strategy are the sub strategic objectives which highlights the following:

1. Modernise and secure day-care and nurseries, pre-primary, primary , secondary and tertiary education facilities, providing adequate safety and health protection, environments with aesthetically pleasant ambience and access for children with disabilities ;

The learning process can be activated with children of theses varied abilities in Grenada by "Introducing and strengthening the application of initial and ongoing diagnostic assessment, differentiated instruction, flexible grouping and individualized instruction as a basic aspect of the instructional programme in schools' and (SPEED, 2006-2015:49). These are measures put in place in order to assist in the implementation of inclusive education.

Therefore, being mindful of the differentiated needs of students, the following have been high priority objectives set out in the Strategic Plan in Education;

1. Develop/revise pre-primary school curricula and implement primary school curricula based on OECS harmonized learning outcomes to reflect greater quality focus on basic literacy and numeracy through the implementation of the Caribbean CETT programme.
2. Provide adequate capacity to address macro curriculum development needs with stakeholder participation involving policy development and the review and definition of appropriate curricula.
3. Institutionalize a Remedial and accelerated Learning Programme as a basic part of primary and secondary education.

Teachers' competencies are at present a need and a growing concern, but in its attempt to meet their needs, there are on going training aimed at providing the relevant pre-service and in-service training leading to a better equipped teaching staff competent in offering programmes to their differentiated learning needs of the students in their care.

The Ministry of Education has embarked on developing "a teacher centred professional development and support strategy for improvement in teacher services. Provide relevant pre-service training and in-service training leading to a fully qualified pre-primary to secondary teaching staff and trained graduate for tertiary. It is the intention of the Ministry of Education to have all teachers qualified in their respective area by 2008. This therefore leads to the provision of quality education and the move towards inclusive education.