



# MINISTRY OF EDUCATION TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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**1. Policy Title:** Inclusive Education Policy

**2. Policy Statement:**

In recognition of the global commitment of providing access, equity and quality to education, and in support to its efforts to reform, expand, and modernize the education system, the Ministry of Education in Trinidad and Tobago shall support the delivery of inclusive education in all schools by providing support and services to all learners, and by taking appropriate steps to make education available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable to all learners.

**3. Rationale / Background**

The policy context established by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, such as the National Policy on Persons with Disabilities (2000), and its Vision 2020 particularly on the Chapter on Poverty Alleviation and Social Services (2008) outline the provision of an adequate and appropriate support services for children with disabilities in an inclusive education system from early childhood care up to tertiary levels. Moreover, Education Act No. 7 of 1966 and the Equal Opportunity Act No. 69 of 2000 also call for inclusive education services for students with disabilities, aside from its international agreements and commitments.

At the international level, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN,1948) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN,1989) clearly grant the right for all children to receive education without discrimination on any grounds. The United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities 1993, Rule 6 not only affirms the equal rights of all children, youth and adults with disabilities to education, but also states that education should be provided in an integrated school setting and in general school setting. It also mentions that the State should recognize the principle of equal opportunities. Further, the principle of inclusive education was adopted at the Salamanca World conference in 1994 and the urgency of reaching the marginalized groups was reinforced in the Dakar World Education Forum 2000.

The specific goal set in Dakar to ensure “that by 2015 all children have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality” cannot be reached without a focus on children who may be excluded from or marginalized within education systems because of apparent difficulties. These may include: (i) those who are enrolled in education but are excluded from learning; (ii) those who are not enrolled in schools but who could participate if schools were more flexible in their responses and welcoming in

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their approach; and the relatively small group of children with more severe impairments who may have a need for some form of additional support to address the need of these learners.

To address the needs of these learners, the education system in Trinidad and Tobago must be inclusive, actively seek out children who are not enrolled, and responsive to the varying circumstances and needs of all learners.

**4. Scope.** This policy applies to:

- 4.1 all government, government-assisted, and private schools offering early childhood, primary and secondary education and special education institutions;
- 4.2 all learners;
- 4.3 all school administrators, school supervisors, teaching and non-teaching personnel;
- 4.4. parents, school organizations; and
- 4.5 all divisions, units and departments within the Ministry of Education

**5. Definition of Terms.** As used in this policy, the following terms are defined as follows:

- 5.1 Curriculum is what is learned and what is taught (context); how it is delivered (teaching-learning methods); how it is assessed (exams, for example) and resources used (e.g., books used to deliver and support teaching and learning).
- 5.2 Inclusive education is a developmental process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities.
- 5.3 Marginalized disabled persons refer to disabled persons who lack access to rehabilitative services and opportunities to be able to participate fully in socioeconomic activities and who have no means of livelihood or whose incomes fall below the poverty threshold.
- 5.4 Non-formal education is any unstructured educational activity which takes place outside the established formal education system. It is designed to complement or extend as well as provide an alternative to the formal education.
- 5.5 Special education is that type of education specifically designed for learners with special needs who cannot profit maximally from regular education such that they require trained personnel, modifications in the curricula, teaching methods, instructional materials and adaptations in facilities and equipment.
- 5.6 Special education needs refer to one or more of the following: (i) the provision of special means of access to the curriculum through special equipment, facilities or resources, modification of the physical environment or specialized teaching techniques; (ii) provision of a special or modified curriculum; (iii) particular attention to the social structure and emotional climate in which education takes place.

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## 6. Goal

The goal of this policy is to provide an inclusive education that is available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable to all learners throughout the education system.

## 7. Relevant legislation / Authority

### 7.1 At the National Level

- 7.1.1 Education Act, Numbers (7), (39) and (40) of 1966
- 7.1.2 National Policy on Persons with Disabilities (2005), Ministry of Social Development, Trinidad and Tobago
- 7.1.3 Equal Opportunity Act No. 69 of 2000, Trinidad and Tobago

### 7.2 At the International Level

- 7.2.1 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)
- 7.2.2 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1996)
- 7.2.3 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1990)
- 7.2.4 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- 7.2.5 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)
- 7.2.6 International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965)
- 7.2.7 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960)
- 7.2.8 Other International Human Rights Agreements (these agreements are not legally binding but are considered to have moral force and practical guidance), like the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993); and the UNECSO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994)

## 8. Related Policy (ies)

NONE

## 9. Policy

### 9.1 General Provisions:

- 9.1.1 All schools shall accommodate or admit all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, or other conditions. This includes disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic, or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups.
- 9.1.2 All schools must recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnerships with their communities.

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There should be a continuum of support and services to match the continuum of special needs encountered in every school.”

- 9.1.3 School districts and individual schools shall define their vision of inclusive education through a mission statement, which lends credence and concrete goals to an inclusive philosophy.

**9.2 Underlying Principles.** In order to build on inclusive practice in education, the following principles must be observed:

- 9.2.1 **Equal Opportunity.** Inclusive education provision is based on equality of opportunity. All learners irrespective of ethnic origin, gender, disability or additional educational needs shall have access to opportunities that develop their skills and abilities.
- 9.2.2. **Valuing Diversity:** All children can learn and should be equally valued. Diversity is not viewed as a problem to be overcome, but a rich source to support the learning of all. Inclusion is most likely to be achieved when this diversity is recognized and regarded positively.
- 9.2.3 **Access.** At the heart of educational inclusion is the removal of physical, social and environmental barriers to living and learning in the community. Schools are an integral part of that community.
- 9.2.4 **Rights:** The right to education involves four key actors: (i) the government and its institutions as a provider of public education and duty bearer; (ii) the child as the holder of the right to education, whose duty is to comply with compulsory requirements; (iii) the parents as manager of this child’s education, whose duty is to keep the child’s best interests as guiding principle, and (iv) the teachers, as both rights-holders and duty-bearers.
- 9.2.5 **Participation:** Inclusion is concerned with fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and communities. All children and their parents are entitled to be treated with respect and should be actively encouraged to make their views known so that they can be taken into account.
- 9.2.6 **Individual Needs:** Inclusion is concerned with the learning and participation of all children and young people vulnerable to exclusionary pressures, not only those with impairments or those categorized as having ‘special educational needs’. Inclusion involves reviewing the cultures, and practices in schools taking into account the diversity of children and young people in their locality.
- 9.2.7 **Continuous Professional Development:** All staff who work in and with the Ministry of Education in the education of children, youth and adults with special needs will have access to a coherent and appropriate program of continuous professional development. At the core of this training will be effective teaching and learning strategies augmented by a range of “needs” specific training.
- 9.2.8 **Partnerships.** Inclusion is not only an educational concern, therefore provision for children, youth and adults with additional educational needs will be developed through partnerships within the education sector and across other divisions / units and external ministries or organizations.

- 9.2.9 **Resourcing.** A mechanism must be transparent and be developed to ensure that the resources available are targeted effectively and equitably at all learners especially those with additional educational needs. Optimum use will be made of resources to support mainstream schools in achieving more effective inclusive education. Resources are limited and this needs to be recognized and seen as a spur to creativity and cooperation.
- 9.2.10 **Quality Assurance.** The Ministry of Education, through its school administrators, supervisors, and teachers have significant roles to play in the development of monitoring and evaluation of the quality of what is provided for learners.

### **9.3 Institutionalization of the Special Education Programs in All Schools.**

- 9.3.1 All districts shall organize at least one Special Education (SPED) institution which will cater to children with special needs. Programs organized shall adopt the inclusive education concept. The institutionalization aims to provide access to basic education among children with special needs, namely, the gifted/talented, the mentally retarded, the visually impaired, the hearing impaired, the orthopedically handicapped, the learning disabled, the speech defectives, the children with behavior problems, the autistic children and other alternative delivery services in education.
- 9.3.2 The SPED institution shall function as a Resource Center for Inclusive Education which shall (i) support children with special needs integrated in regular schools; (ii) assist in the conduct of school-based in-service training; (iii) produce appropriate teaching materials; and (iv) conduct continuous assessment of children with special needs. Please refer to Appendix 1: Resource Centre for Inclusive Education.
- 9.3.3 Children, youths, and adults with special needs shall be educated in classrooms with their typical peers and be provided with the necessary supports to meet their intellectual, social, physical, emotional and other developmental needs.
- 9.3.4 If the child, youth and adult is removed from the classroom setting, the school and the child's team (the teacher, the parents, guidance counselor, etc) must ensure an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is put in place that addresses the issues with the intent to return the student to the regular classroom.
- 9.3.5 Assignment of children, youths and adults to special schools, or special classes or sections within a school on a permanent status, shall be the exception, to be recommended only in those infrequent cases where it is clearly demonstrated that education in regular classrooms is incapable of meeting a child's educational or social needs or when it is required for the welfare of the child or that of other children.

**9.4 Provision for Continuous Professional Development .** All school administrators and teachers shall receive adequate levels of training, professional development and on-going support to ensure the success of all learners in an inclusive setting.

**9.5 Provision for Information and Research.** The dissemination of examples of good practice could help to improve teaching and learning. Information on relevant

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research findings would also be valuable. Classroom teachers shall participate actively in both the action and reflection involved in such inquiries. Pilot experiments and in-depth studies shall be launched to assist in decision-making and in guiding future action.

**9.6 Provision for Curriculum and Assessment.** The development of inclusive curriculum is the most important factor in achieving inclusive education.

- 9.6.1 To have maximum participation of learners in appropriate programs, schools are expected to offer programs and services that are: (a) being inclusive of the range of abilities of learners; (b) being responsive to learner needs; (c) providing programs for those with potentials as well as recognized talents or skills; (d) providing continuum of programs and approaches; and (e) maintaining flexibility in participation and delivery of programs.
- 9.6.2 Curricula shall be adapted to children's needs. Schools must therefore provide curricular opportunities to suit children with different abilities and interests.
- 9.6.3 Children with special needs shall receive additional instructional support in the context of the regular curriculum, not a different curriculum. The guiding principle shall be to provide all children with the same education, providing additional assistance, and support to children requiring it.
- 9.6.4 In order to follow the progress of each child, assessment procedures shall be reviewed. Formative evaluation shall be incorporated into the regular educational process in order to keep learners and teachers informed of the learning mastery attained as well as to identify difficulties and assist learners to overcome them. The assessment of children needs to be related to the way in which the curriculum is designed and delivered.
- 9.6.5 Appropriate and affordable technology shall be used when necessary to enhance success in the school curriculum and to aid communication, mobility and learning. Technical aids can be offered in a more economical and effective way if they are provided from a central pool in each locality, where there is expertise in matching aids to individual needs and in ensuring maintenance.
- 9.6.6 For children with special educational needs a continuum of support shall be provided, ranging from minimal help in regular classrooms to additional learning support programs within the school and extending, where necessary, to the provision of assistance from specialist teachers and external support staff.

**9.7 Provision for School Funding.** School budgets include a per capita allocation for each learner and all schools are currently required to prepare strategic plans which show the application of their budget to the effective education of all learners by ensuring equal opportunity for all. Thus, the education of all learners must be considered in this plan, (i. e., the Inclusive Education Plan is an essential component of the strategic plan) and will include: (i) overall plans for inclusive approaches to curriculum and school organization; (ii) recognition of groups within the school population that are at risk of exclusion or limited participation; (iii) development of

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explicit plans for the inclusion of at risk groups within curriculum and life of the school; and (iv) accountability and evaluation strategies.

### **9.8 Provision for School Management**

- 9.8.1 School administrators have a responsibility in promoting positive attitudes throughout the school community and in arranging for effective cooperation between class teachers and support staff. Appropriate arrangements for support and the exact role to be played by various partners in the educational process shall be decided through consultation and negotiation.
- 9.8.2 School administrators shall develop flexible management procedures, to redeploy instructional resources, to diversify learning options, to mobilize child-to-child help, to offer support to learners experiencing difficulties and to develop close relations with parents and the community.
- 9.8.3 Every school shall be a community collectively accountable for the success or failure of every learner.

**9.9 Provision for Internal and External Support Services.** An effective support system is essential if schools are to give every learner the opportunity to become a successful learner. “Support” includes everything that enables learners to learn. The most important forms of support are available to every school: children supporting children; teachers supporting teachers; parents becoming partners in the education of their children and communities supporting their local schools. Other formal types of support include teachers with specialists (e.g. educational psychologists, speech and occupational therapists), resource centers, and professionals from other sectors. All these forms of supports must be coordinated at the school level.

**9.10 Provision for Parent Partnership.** The education of children is a shared task of parents and professionals. Both parents and teachers may need support and encouragement in learning to work together as equal partners. A cooperative, supportive partnership between school administrators, teachers and parents shall be developed and parents regarded as active partners in decision-making. Parents shall be encouraged to participate in educational activities as well as in the supervision and support of their children’s learning.

**9.11 Provision for Physical Access and Learning Environment.** Where physical factors pose barriers to learning and participation, simple ramps and internal classroom arrangements may help the situation. Furthermore, improvements in the physical environment of the school, such as the design of the building, the availability of water, electricity and toilet/sewerage facilities will enable students to participate in the range of learning activities in and out of the classroom.

**9.12 Provision for Non-Formal Education.** Alternative special delivery systems to complement formal education shall include but not limited to community-based, home-based, hospital-based, and other non-school based programs and services for learners with special needs. Radio, TV video, print and other distance teaching

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approaches shall be utilized to reach out to those who cannot avail of institution-based programs and services.

**9.13 Provision for Access to Public Transport Facilities.** The Student Support Services Unit, in coordination with the Schools Supervision Division shall develop a program to assist marginalized disabled persons gain access in the use of public transport facilities. Such assistance may be in the form of subsidized transportation fare.

## **10. Roles / Responsibilities**

- 10.1 The Student Support Services, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Finance is responsible for:
- 10.1.1 proposing the allocation of funding for nation-wide services and initiatives(e.g., professional development trainings/workshops) on the basis of needs/priorities for inclusive education and those identified in the individual educational program for each student;
  - 10.1.2 developing a system of organization and administration for inclusive education to facilitate the achievement for children with disabilities of the same educational goals as those pursued by other children without disabilities;
  - 10.1.3 provide strategic oversight and management of inclusive education nationwide;
  - 10.1.4 providing the necessary technical assistance, support and services for the implementation of this policy ; and
  - 10.1.5 undertaking continuing research by itself or in coordination with the Division of Educational Research and Evaluation or in association with accredited organizations to identify and design a comprehensive inclusive education program that will improve the acquisition of knowledge, skills necessary to empower them for a better quality of life.
- 10.2 The Special Education Unit shall be responsible for providing assistance to the District Supervisors in the institutionalization of the SPED programs.
- 10.3 The Division of Curriculum Development in collaboration with the Offices of Student Support Services and Schools Supervision Division, is responsible for:
- 10.3.1 establishing general objectives and content common for every student, leaving an autonomy for schools to enrich and adapt the common curriculum to the individual characteristics of the learner;
  - 10.3.2 providing an extensive and flexible curriculum, balanced in terms of competencies and content, diversifiable and adaptable to all individual differences.

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- 10.4 The Division of School Supervision through its District Offices is responsible for:
- 10.4.1 promoting this policy in the context of the district, with particular regard to the professional development needs of principals and teachers;
  - 10.4.2 overseeing that students are placed in inclusive schools in accordance with a well documented placement process which involves consideration of relevant, documented educational information on the student from the current classroom teacher, any specialist support staff, the principal of the current school, parents and outside agencies;
  - 10.4.3 monitoring the implementation of the provisions on quality inclusive education for all, a quarterly report of which shall be submitted to the Office of the Permanent Secretary, through the Office of the Educational Planning Division.
- 10.5 The Human Resources Management Division is mandated to coordinate with pertinent MOE Offices for the continuing training of school administrators including teachers and staff on inclusive education.
- 10.6 The Distance Education Unit, in coordination with the Student Support Services Unit and the Division of Curriculum Development shall develop alternative delivery systems intended for the total human development of those who cannot attend formal education.
- 10.7 The Principals of all schools will be responsible for:
- 10.7.1 promoting this policy in the context of their school ;
  - 10.7.2 negotiating with the District Supervisor and the Student Support Services Unit on the advice, support and resources believed to be required to cater appropriately for all students within their school;
  - 10.7.3 notifying district office if it is believed that the school is unable to provide an appropriate curriculum or to cater for the needs of a student already enrolled or a student requesting enrolment; and
  - 10.7.4 overseeing that, where the establishment of or modifications to inclusive education provision is planned, parents of affected students and the wider school community are consulted
- 10.8 Teachers will be responsible for:
- 10.8.1 reviewing their own level of competence and effectiveness and to seek necessary improvements as part of a continuing process of professional development, and an obligation to do what is best for students as they engage in the teaching-learning process that is designed to meet the needs of the learner;
  - 10.8.2 promoting the goals and requirements of this policy; and
  - 10.8.3 adopting teaching strategies which support the inclusion of a range of students in their classrooms, where possible.

10.9 Parents of students will be responsible for:

- 10.9.1 seeking information on the resources and curriculum provision that are available to support their child in a particular school;
- 10.9.2 visiting any schools being proposed as suitable for their child before placement is confirmed; and
- 10.9.3 participate in decision-making such as the following : (a) involving the child in activities outside of school that contribute to an overall development process; (b) participating in school-related decisions (e.g., collaborating with teachers and administrators to set realistic goals for students); (c) participating in all school activities, not only the ones the child is involved in; (d) promoting inclusion at the school and community; and (e) acting as interpreter / facilitator between child and school staff

### **11. Implementation.**

- 11.1 The Student Support Services shall be responsible for the administration and implementation of these provisions in coordination with pertinent Divisions, Units, or Departments within the Ministry of Education. An implementation plan is necessary.
- 11.2 The Manager of the Student Support Services is hereby authorized to organize a group under his/her Office to intensify the supervision and development efforts on inclusive education at the early childhood care, primary and secondary education levels, and to promulgate and issue the necessary procedures and guidelines, in consultation with the Offices concerned in the implementation of this policy, within 60 days from its approval.

**12. Monitoring and Review/Evaluation.** The Educational Planning Division, in coordination with the Schools Supervision Division shall monitor the implementation of this policy. A monitoring scheme machinery shall be formulated to provide regular and up-to-date information on the progress of its implementation.

**13. Effective Date.** This policy shall commence in School Year 2009-2010.

**14. Review Date.** This policy will be reviewed at the end of every school year, or at any earlier time as deemed necessary by the Minister or the Permanent Secretary.

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix 1: Resource Centre for Inclusive Education

