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## SUCCESSFUL INCLUSION IN LEADER'S ATTITUDE

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### ABSTRACT

People see differences through changes; and change is brought through leadership. How changes transform to efficiency is through attitude in the leadership. Inclusion would always need optimistic spirits in leaders. This review has done comprehensive analysis of how school leadership can be a driving force to bring forth significant transformation in implementation inclusive education in terms of policy, practice and culture. Without such spirit and conscience of school leader, policies on full inclusion of diverse learners will remain ideally ineffective.

**KEYWORDS:** Attitude, inclusion, leadership, policy, practice

### INTRODUCTION

As an endeavor to address various social and educational needs around the world holistically, experts, organizations and researchers are in the quest of a best solution to realize by everyone. The inclusive model which has emerged in the recent decades with a sublime perspective of having equity, rights based, legislated and justice in the developmental processes of a child is being pursued optimistically around the globe. What would constitute for the success of inclusion then? The research has found that commonly, the resources, infrastructure, knowledge and environment play critical roles for the success of inclusion. To embrace the scope of inclusion with all above factors productively, "a positive attitude in leadership" is further accentuated by experts. In this literature, the question: "How important are leaders' attitudes in successfully facilitating inclusion" will be discussed. The reference will be made particularly to the leaders' attitude and impact in facilitating inclusion in a school scenario.

In analyzing the literature, the readers would understand that the "attitude" is emphasized as the ultimate quality in leadership for inclusive schools. Schools to be inclusive involves change and for such whole-school reform to realize, a principal's leadership is seen as the key factor to success (Hipp, & Huffman, 2000; Vernon-Dotson, 2008). Invoking inclusiveness in a school would demand for the improvement of educational opportunities and social conditions in the locality. School being the

pivotal for all these developments, the principal's leadership must display a positive attitude and commitment to inclusion (Praisner, 2003, Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). Through the question, it is also expected that the readers concede to the humanistic behaviours in evaluating the success of inclusion in a school apart from the external and physical factors.

### **Move Inclusion with Three Dimensions**

The research findings have indicated that a better attitude to foster inclusion is developing policies, cultures and practices in the educational system and institutions to address the diverse needs of the students (Booth & Ainscow, 1998; Sharma, et al. 2006). Therefore, in this literature, some relationship between the attitudes of the leaders towards these three dimensions will be elaborated

### **Producing Inclusive Policies**

As research suggests, enforcing the policy and aligning to the vision of the organization strongly would be one of the prime characteristics of a true leadership. In an inclusive school, it is essential that the principal develops the ambiance of "School for All" and guided by a proper vision, policies, plans and underlying values (Halinen, & Järvinen. 2008; Shorter-Gooden, 2013). The studies revealed that in some schools, the behaviours and perceptions of the principal influenced greatly in the placement decisions of the students although it evolved through the IEP team. Such attitude of the leaders would have adverse impact on student's educational processes and distress for the family. It was found that the principals with more positive attitudes towards inclusion supported less restrictive placements for students with disabilities (Praisner, 2003). As the teachers started implementing the inclusive programmes, they greatly felt the need of proper guidance and positive support from the principal which otherwise would lead to the failure of inclusion and demotivation for the teachers (Goodman & Burton, 2010). The lack of collaboration, team work and coordination between the general and special teachers in the schools in 1980s have been also accounted to the cold attitude and lack of policy regard by the school leaders (Shay et al. 1994). Mayrowetz (1999) states that the school leaders initiating active leadership from individuals, aides, teachers and community beyond just at administration brings greater success to inclusion. Mayrowetz also explains that although it's emphasized on vision, support and collaboration in the process of inclusion, challenges are faced when opposition arises during the implementation if the leaders cannot relate to a sustainable principles and policy of inclusion framed for the school.

### **Creating Inclusive Cultures**

According to Ainscow et al., (2006, p. 25), "an inclusive school is one that is on the move, rather than one that has reached a perfect state". Inclusive education is a continuous process, not an end goal to be reached by a specific point in time. (Angelides, 2012) The differences experienced are considered as sources of learning rather than regarding them as problems. Therefore, the principal has to be with a positive attitude towards creating a common philosophy and culture in valuing diversity by all. The literature has found that the development of an inclusive school largely depends upon the leader's values and beliefs that he/she adheres to (Ainscow & Miles, 2008). The aptitudes

of the leaders in organization of the staff, physical surroundings, commitment, their relationship models, thoughts and personalities immensely impact the success of inclusion. It is realized that the main barrier for collaboration in the school is the attitude of teachers and the type of leadership prevailed (Angelides, 2012). The principal must endeavor to create inclusive cultures in the school community characterized by the values of safety, acceptance and collaboration. He/she must ensure that the developmental process is continual with shared values and responsibilities amongst teachers, staff, aides, students, officers of educational authorities, parents and the community members. To have an inclusive school with inclusive cultures, the leaders must have uncompromising commitment (Kugelmass, 2003).

### **Evolving Inclusive Practices**

It is not enough just to endorse for policies and cultures for a school to align its name for inclusion. The inclusive policies should be practiced and the cultures valued by all members of the school. Once embarked on the concept of inclusion, the school/institution must facilitate to equal access and opportunity; create an accommodating environment and extend services to all regardless of racial, ethnic, social, or economic backgrounds. Practices are actually solutions to practical problems and are explained by inquiry into the problem-solving processes that gave rise to them (Milem et al., 2005). The scope of fostering practices lies in the leaders and policies without practice become relics construing “inclusion” in mere fame.

The resource allocations, staffing, structures, information flows, and operating processes in schools are directly influenced by the principals as leaders (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014). With their leadership position, principals' attitudes about inclusion could result in either increased opportunities for students to be served in general education or in limited efforts to reduce the segregated nature of special education services. Therefore, for inclusion to be successful, first and foremost, the school administrator must display a positive attitude and commitment to inclusion (Praisner, 2003). It is realized that the expectations of the principals and teachers influence student achievement, behavior and self-esteem. To have a beneficial experience in inclusion especially for students with disabilities, it is essential the leaders and teachers do not persist any negative perceptions and attitudes. Why did the research find out that there exist considerable gaps in general education classroom for team work, consultation and collaboration between general and special teachers in helping students with disabilities? One could argue that it could be mainly due to aptitude of the leaders and lack of motivation in teachers. Zollers et al. 1999). stated in their study that inclusive leadership (involving democratic approaches and value-based practices) is a determining factor for the development of inclusive education. If we want to move toward more inclusive practices, we need school leaders who believe in inclusive education and are able to find the means to transfer this belief to all their teachers. The research says that in order to have successful inclusion, the school leaders and teachers should have knowledge on the specific manifestations of student's disabilities and it is thereby evident that the leaders and teachers should inherit the learning attitudes continually to facilitate inclusion.

Although the idea of inclusive education is highly revered and prioritized in the recent educational reforms, its scope and opportunities would suffer limitations if the schools do not maximize the participation of all children in their cultures, curricula, and communities (Dyson et al., 2002). For instance in the study, Leadership for Inclusion conducted for three types of schools (primary, intermediate and middle) by Mayrowetz & Weinstein (1999), no sense of inclusion could be integrated in the middle school because the principal had the belief that school had been “doing inclusion all along” when they mainstreamed special education students into nonacademic classes (such as music, art, and physical education). He further remarked that: “I think we do a disservice to students by broadcasting the programs so much . . . I think we make it an issue by highlighting inclusion. Just do it and keep quiet about it.” (Mayrowetz, 1999). A complete inclusion refers to addressing the diverse needs in the school through curricula and the ways which can acknowledge the abilities of all learners (Day, 2005).

Exploring into the factors influencing success to inclusion for about recent two and half decades through literature from Phillips, Alfred, Brulle, and Shank (1990) to Shorter-Gooden, Kumea (2014), it is found that the attitudes of the leaders in schools have great impact. Move in inclusion certainly involves change and to bring beneficial reforms, the leadership of principal is the key factor to success (Hipp & Huffman, 2000). To prove that the quality of leadership is critical at different educational an transitional processes for students, the analysis of information has been attempted from elementary schools to University scenarios.

### **Leaders and Educators must have Positivity**

Through the literature, it has been indicated that “a positive attitude” in leaders is the most important factor in facilitating the success of inclusive education. It is therefore essential that the schools stepping into inclusion must have a principal exhibiting behavior that advance the integration, acceptance, and success of students with disabilities (Eldar et al, 2010). It is evident that to have successful inclusion in the schools benefiting all learners and the community, the educational authorities must ensure to place leaders with appropriate quality and right aptitude for the schools. The literature shows that the leadership is also influenced by the type of experience the leaders have with the disabilities. The more positive the experiences, the more positive a principal's attitude was toward inclusion (Praisner et al., 2003). The reality is that school administrators need to take part in the development and implementation of inclusion programs and therefore need to be adequately prepared to do so. Mamlin (1999) says that it was not that leadership was lacking at Watkins rather, the type of leadership present did not allow inclusion to occur. There should exist a shared responsibility between administrators, parents and all stakeholders in instituting inclusion and making it practical.

Since inclusive education is identified as the best model to answer the diverse needs and with the increasing statistics of disability population in the world, it is imperative that educators consider the nature and sources of leadership required for successful change. The administrators and teachers

believe that the students with disabilities have every right to access educational opportunities in a general education classroom but realize that it is extremely challenging to provide education effectively when attempted with basic inclusive notions. The studies have therefore recommended educators that teacher education programme must have appropriate modules to prepare general education teacher candidates in accommodating all types of students. The pre-service programmes must contain opportunities for both quality field experiences and academic course work in teaching students with diverse needs. It is also essential that the educators provide regular professional development or in-service programmes on leadership and contemporary developments in inclusion to the school leaders and community members. As Booth and Ainscow (1998) suggest, the leaders emerging through inclusion guide better through the policies and every day school practices supporting all learners in the continuous process of development.

## CONCLUSION

In this literature, affords have been made to discuss how cultures; the love and care with which teachers treat students; the involvement and collaborative practices of all stakeholders, the key determinants of inclusion are dependent on leadership of the school. As the principals uphold the “beam-balance” to sway inclusion in success or failure, it is regurgitated that the “positive attitude” of the leaders for inclusion must be engraved in their heart, head and hands always. It is essential for the principal to cultivate a mindset of continuous learning that encompasses not only the students but also the administration, and to establish a culture of cooperation that supports staff in adapting to new developments. (Mamlin, 1999). Unfolding leadership as the supreme factor for a successful inclusion, the following questions get aroused.

What kind of leadership model should the leaders take? Which system of organizational function would be best for a complete inclusion? How can we find leaders having superb leadership qualities and recruit them? What could be the best option to retain leaders if they are found really productive and avoid attrition? The literature would suggest that it would be worth studying how far granting autonomy to schools would be effective in succeeding inclusion. Associating inclusive journey with the approaches of “appreciative Inquiry” where the organizational function is explored through past experiences to plan of action with continual information processes. Whether “adhocracy” would be reliable for inclusion as suggested by MacKinnon and Brow (1994). or rely on the institution of inclusion that led to “a redundancy” which was observed to be more resilient and continual in services during the inevitable personnel turn over and consequences from the policies and programmes in the process of reforms. In the literature review, it is also realized that the principles of transformational, competent and post modernity leaderships could also enhance the scope of inclusion becoming more realistic in its philosophy through the dimensions of policy, culture and practice. As culture is created in the first instance by the actions of the leaders; culture is embedded and strengthened by leaders, the literature would like to emphasize that the “Success of Inclusion” is through the will of the leaders entrenched in their “positive attitudes” for the purpose and if had the “will”, certainly there will be “ways” in celebrating the “success”, be it in abundance or dearth of factors around.

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