

**+ INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:
FROM REFLECTION TO ACTION**

[GOOD PRACTICES MANUAL]

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

MODULE

01



MODULE 1

1. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION	9
1.1. From Special Education to Inclusive Education	10
1.1.1. Diversity in Education	11
1.1.2. Diversity vs Difference	12
1.1.3. Equity, Equality and Inclusion	14
1.2. A NEW EDUCATIONAL PARADIGM	16
1.3. EUROPEAN GUIDELINES	20
1.4. THE IMPORTANCE OF AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION	24
1.4.1. How to achieve an Inclusive Education?	25
1.5. BARRIERS AND FACILITATING FACTORS	26
1.5.1. Inclusive Education: Imposition or a School Culture?	31
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	32
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES	33

MODULE 1: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Quality education is a right for every child. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) clearly express the aim of ensuring quality education for all and the importance of providing the holistic support necessary to develop each child's potential.

Quality education can only be achieved when each and every child, including the most marginalised and excluded, attends school and receives quality Inclusive Education that provides them with the learning necessary for life.

While Inclusive Education is a broad concept that includes all groups of children, this Handbook will focus specifically on children with physical, intellectual and sensory impairments.



1.1. FROM SPECIAL EDUCATION TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

For decades the organisational models of attending students with Special Educational Needs have resorted to Resource Centres which allowed the School to provide additional skills to be able to welcome students with difficulties.

Nevertheless, Special Units/Schools were also created, allowing students, even with more severe conditions of disability, to attend and share their education with other students from their community. The challenges were also cross-cutting: insufficient resources, sometimes inadequate resources, lack of organisation with the School, a whole set of circumstances that led to these responses becoming more and more “separate structures”, structures of “special education”. In some countries like Portugal, the Special Education teacher was seen as the only responsible and knowledgeable person for the teaching-learning processes of students with disabilities.

The use of the International Classification of Functioning (ICF) for the assessment and planning of students’ intervention was (and still is, in some countries) used to label students and to assess their educational potential.

For these and other facts in the history of the School throughout Europe, it is transversal the importance of:

- Assume the paradigm shift from “special education” to “Inclusive Education”
- To stop using the term Special Educational Needs (SEN), assuming that categorisation can be useful but is not essential to find ways of intervention (*See Module 2*)
- Creating support measures that can be extended to all students.
- Creating in schools structures or functionalities that serve as “Learning Support Centres
- Creating and assigning competencies to multidisciplinary teams.

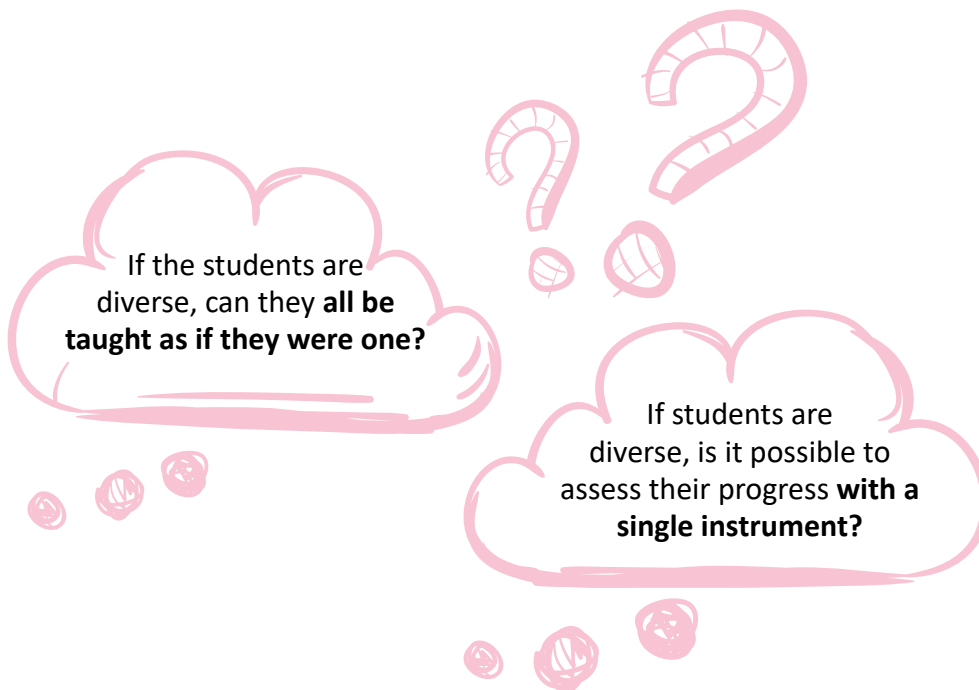
In almost all European countries, the area of Special and Inclusive Education has undergone rapid and profound changes that have altered the nature of an area that, for many years, was associated with a welfare perspective. “Thinking about the education of students with disabilities, within strictly educational parameters is a recent fact and still in many aspects constitutes an innovation”. (Nogueira & Rodrigues, 2010) Disability is part of human diversity and people with disabilities are a heterogeneous group.

1.1.1 DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION

The creation in the 19th century of the school as we know it today sought an ethic of equality. It sought to welcome different people and, by giving them all the same rights, to establish a fair social regime as opposed to social regimes of brutal inequality and the absence of any measure promoting the rights of the poorest and most vulnerable.

The awareness of the need to make the school a structure that serves all students equally came up against the dimension of diversity.

If the school had been created to ‘give everyone the same’, how could it differentiate what it ‘gave’? Would this not be a violation of the students’ rights? (Rodrigues, 2018).



Many questions that draw our attention to an important turning point that must be assumed in a logic of Inclusive Education, that is, of “not leaving any student behind”. In this sense, it is essential to “respond to the diversity of needs of all learners by increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion in and from education.” (UNESCO, 2005).

*“You can only value diversity if you know this diversity and it is not possible to have this knowledge without an ethic of valuing the participation of all in school.”
(Rodrigues, 2018)*

1.1.2.DIVERSITY vs. DIFFERENCE

Martha Minow in her book “Just schools: Pursuing equality in societies of difference” says that, we should question the way things are and look at difference as being a relationship with someone or something else and that we need to be very critical when we think about who we are judging to be different. Difference in itself is not a negative thing, nor does it cause inequality. Differences between people make societies more interesting. However, it is the meanings and values applied to these differences that make them harmful. (ORE, T. quoted in “Diversity and Inclusion in Education”, Inês Alves and Eliot from the University of Glasgow, Cousera online course). The problem lies in the attention and importance attached to some of these ‘differences’.

In an interview, Alan Dyson (2021) argues that when we perceive a student as being different, this creates dilemmas. The basis of these dilemmas is an intention as educators to treat all students as essentially the same and an equal and opposite intention to treat them as different. So at the same time we want to be fair and treat everyone the same, but we also want to treat each student as an individual and respond to their needs. This creates dilemmas every day in classrooms for educators.

There are three main areas where educators are faced with dilemmas (Norwich, cit in Alves, 2017):



1. IDENTIFICATION.

Do we identify students we perceive to be different? Do we label them? Do we say they have Special Educational Needs or need additional support for learning or that they are disabled?



2. PLACEMENT:

Is it better to place students we perceive as different in mainstream classes or ‘special’ classes, or is it better to find some kind of special school or a special environment?



3. THE CURRICULUM.

Do we teach everyone the same thing? Do we allow different students to specialise and follow their own interests? Do we have a functional curriculum for some students and a more academic curriculum for others?

These are all dilemmas that educators are faced with. It is important to note that when faced with these dilemmas, teachers can find a solution to the situation, but there is no perfect solution. It is very important that as educators we can understand that inclusion is almost like a never ending process.

In a broader sense, Inclusion is about how we deal with diversity and difference, as well as social justice and equity of vulnerable groups within the education system.

More than developing policies, it is important that these are translated into concrete changes/practices. To this end, it is crucial to see individual differences not as problems but as opportunities for diverse and enriching learning.

Difference should be seen as a means for innovation and enrichment, benefiting all learners, regardless of their specificities.

In an inclusive education system, it is essential that teachers view the diversity present in the classroom in a positive light.

Attitudes towards difference are based on intolerance and abuse of power in order to create and perpetuate inequalities. Making schools inclusive can help make people painfully aware of their discriminatory attitudes and practices (Booth, & Ainscow, 2002).

Diversity is, however, a multifaceted concept that lends itself to multiple interpretations.

When we think about diversity and difference in the school context, other factors such as culture, ethnicity, nationality, gender, ... are added, such as the language of instruction being different from the one spoken by the students, notions of learning ability and style, as well as the notion of Special Educational Needs. (Alves, 2017)

Usually, diversity is presented in a more positive way: We want to value diversity; whereas difference tends to be used in a more negative way. When students' characteristics are problematic, then students are considered different from others.

Educational policies are mediators of the processes of constructing notions of diversity and difference, and present and past policies have a considerable impact on teachers' ways of thinking and acting. The school as we know it was at the origin of exclusion and segregation. The only difference is that student diversity is now everywhere in its many facets.

Inclusion in education implies thinking that the system changes to respond to the diverse characteristics of students. It is not the learners who should be invited into a pre-existing system, but the system that should be aware of and respond to the experiences and needs of the population.

1.1.3 EQUITY, EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

EQUITY AND EQUALITY

The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child (European Commission, 2021) warns of the importance of the role of children as agents of change and the right of children to make full use of their potential. Also in this regard, the Human Rights Council (2019) says that laws and policies should explicitly include a ‘non-rejection clause’, prohibiting refusal of admission to mainstream schools and ensuring continuity in education.

“The ultimate aim of Inclusive Education systems is to ensure that all learners, regardless of age, have meaningful and high quality educational opportunities within their local community, alongside their friends and peers.” (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2015 p. 1).

“Access to any form of education constitutes an equity issue that acts as a prerequisite for all other issues.” (European Agency, 2020).

The responsibility to ensure equal opportunities for those in situations of exclusion lies not only with Governments, those who think and design education policies, but with all actors working in concert to support the lives of vulnerable people.

According to the European Agency, equity can cover:

- ✓ Equity in access to School.
- ✓ Equity in the distribution of learning opportunities and appropriate support.
- ✓ Equity in obtaining opportunities and chances for success in academic and social learning and transition opportunities.
- ✓ Equity in achieving personal autonomy during and after formal education and the integration opportunities offered to learners with SEN Special Educational Needs that support their inclusion in wider society (European Agency, 2011, p. 56).

In order for the principles of Equality and Equity to be integrated in Education policies, the following aspects are necessary:

- ✓ Valuing the presence, participation and achievement of ALL pupils, regardless of their difficulties and personal characteristics.
- ✓ Mapping and assessing barriers to education, participation and achievement, with particular attention to those learners who may be most at risk of underachievement, marginalisation or exclusion.
- ✓ Developing the capacities of teachers, as well as the system, creating learning and support environments, important for improving the quality of Education.
- ✓ Creating synergies between the school and other community stakeholders, with a view to promoting conditions for inclusive learning, as well as fostering a wider understanding of the principles of inclusion and equity.
- ✓ Implement change, recognising that inclusion and equity in Education is a continuous process.

It is stressed that bringing the principles of equity and inclusion into education policies requires the efforts and participation of other agencies, including health, social welfare and child protection services.

INCLUSION

The concept of Inclusion is present, more than ever, in the vocabulary of our society. If we reflect, the concept of inclusion is transversal to any area inherent to the subject’s daily life. It is used in matters related to health, for example, up to education.

“Inclusion cannot exist to put an end to differences, but to make these differences (individual, behavioural, cultural...) find ways to unite in what they have in common and to learn and respect each other in what they are different. Inclusion is not based on needs, but on the rights of the subject.”

(Rodrigues, 2020, p.222.)

Considering Inclusion from a rights-based perspective, we are focusing on the full development of the subject’s personality, reinforcing the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Nevertheless, this perspective guides education towards promoting mutual understanding and tolerance.

“Inclusion can be understood not only as a vehicle to end segregation, but also as a commitment to creating schools that respect and value diversity, effectively address the needs of all children and aim to promote democratic principles. Inclusive Education is a set of values and beliefs related to equality and social justice, so that all children can participate in teaching and learning.” (UNICEF, 2014, p.17)



BEING ‘INCLUSIVE’

- ♥ Means that everyone can access something or something.
- ♥ It is about fostering a sense of belonging in people so that they can be full participants in a particular group or community.

INCLUSION IS NOT A PATH, A RIGHT.

INCLUSION IS TRANSVERSAL TO ALL RIGHTS; IT IS A VALUE, A CHOICE, AN ATTITUDE.

The function of Inclusive Education is therefore to lead the education system to create values and models of intervention that lead the whole school community to appropriate instruments (e.g. interaction, participation, communication, symbolic,) that allow everyone to participate and feel a sense of belonging to different communities in effective conditions of equity.

(Rodrigues, 2018)

1.2.A NEW EDUCATIONAL PARADIGM




According to the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

(...) Inclusive Education requires a change of mentality at the societal level, moving from seeing certain children as a problem to identifying existing needs and improving the education systems themselves. It is crucial that society at large, decision-makers and all actors involved in the field of education fully understand the need for this paradigm shift.

(European Council Commissioner for Human Rights, 2017, p. 20-21).

The transition to effective Inclusive Education undoubtedly requires a change at the policy level. It is important to stress that the rights of all learners must be ensured, not only through education, but also within education. To this end, it is crucial to define a single framework at the level of Inclusive Education.

A MORE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM REQUIRES:

-  Policies at the level of teacher training
-  Policies on organisational, human and material resources in order to educate all students competently
-  New curricular perspectives that give new meanings to teaching and learning. Policy practices which focus on the participation of all learners and the success of all learners.

Changes at legislative and policy level are fundamental to the promotion of Inclusive Education, however, we cannot neglect that this change also requires a change in language, especially with regard to students with disabilities. We must abandon medical/technical terms that may contribute to the exclusion of these students.

Raising awareness of all stakeholders about the benefits of Inclusive Education is also a step towards ensuring commitment and successful implementation Inclusive Education.

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

Making the concept of Inclusive Education more inclusive is a challenge that implies an effort on the part of schools to combat differences, as well as overcoming barriers to learning on their part.

A quality Inclusive Education for All requires a more inclusive school organisation, curriculum, implementation of assessment processes, pedagogy and support.

We know that this change is really a challenge for everyone, but another challenge is to 'respect the rights and meet the needs of some learners', such as learners with specific educational needs that require additional support (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2021).

It is therefore essential that schools and the community are given greater flexibility to take account of intersectionality, i.e. the link between various factors that can underlie discrimination against individuals, such as: 'gender, distance, wealth, disability, ethnicity, language, migration, displacement, incarceration, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion and other beliefs and attitudes' (UNESCO, 2020, p. 4).

Schools must force themselves to change school structures and processes, rather than focusing on pupils' difficulties.

Teachers should have a range of strategies to use flexibly, so that pupils do not need to experience difficulties or failures before they can access support. Students with more complex support needs may require additional resources and specialist input. However, the most important form of support can be provided from resources that are available to all schools - that is, learners supporting learners, teachers supporting teachers, parents as partners in their children's education and communities as supporters of schools and other learning centres (UNESCO International Bureau of Education, 2016 cited in European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2021).

Structures and processes to facilitate co-operation between schools, parents and community members are essential to support inclusive school development and enhance learners' progress. Schools can act as a resource for communities, providing services or becoming a base for other stakeholders. In addition to the family, co-operation with the local community helps schools to enrich learning experiences and outcomes, and further supports young people in developing the skills they need.



THE ROLE OF FAMILIES

Family involvement in the education process is crucial. However, as UNESCO (2017) notes, parents may not have enough trust and it may require an effort to develop their capacity and build networks. This happens due to variables such as the value that families give to schooling, the (lack of) trust they have in the institution School and/or the hyper-protection they have with their learners, which ends up creating noise, hindering or delaying the inclusion process.

The UNESCO International Bureau of Education underlines some key points to be taken into consideration when working with families:

- Families and communities have the right to be involved and can contribute in various ways. In particular, they know their children, unlike professionals.
- Developing family and community involvement is a gradual, trust-based process. Exceptional efforts are needed to promote the involvement of marginalised groups.
- Families and community groups can sometimes take the lead as activists for Inclusive Education.
- Families' rights to be involved can be integrated into legislation or the school governance system.
- Communities can also be effectively involved in the governance of schools or the wider education system.

THE ROLE OF SPECIALISED SERVICES

Parents are too often forced to choose between ensuring that their child's needs are met (which sometimes means placing them in special schools) or ensuring that they have the same rights and opportunities as other children (which, according to the Salamanca Statement, means placing children in mainstream schools). The aim should be to create a system where these choices are no longer necessary.

During the transition period, specialised services (speech therapy, occupational therapy, psychology, among others) can play an important role by becoming resource centres to support mainstream schools (UNESCO, 2017).



Specialised services should:

- Develop their capacity to meet the varied needs of learners.
- Develop the skills of local leaders and school headmasters, as well as teachers, to strengthen collaboration with other professionals to ensure high quality support for all learners.

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education carried out a survey among member states in order to assess their priorities for action.

The following aspects were highlighted as gaps to be addressed:

- Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of policies for Inclusive Education.
- Development of cross-sectoral collaborative working strategies (including monitoring and evaluation) across all levels and sectors.
- Development of multi-level/stakeholder quality assurance and accountability frameworks for Inclusive Education.
- Ensuring effective translation of national policies to regional, local and school levels.
- Development of cultures and competences for Inclusive Education across professions, system levels and sectors.



1.3. EUROPEAN GUIDELINES

Education is a right of every individual. This is enshrined in the **UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**, article 26:

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary stages of basic education. Elementary education is compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available; access to higher education shall be open to all on the basis of merit.
2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and racial or religious groups, as well as the development of the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
3. Parents have the priority right to choose the kind of education they wish for their children (United Nations, 1948).

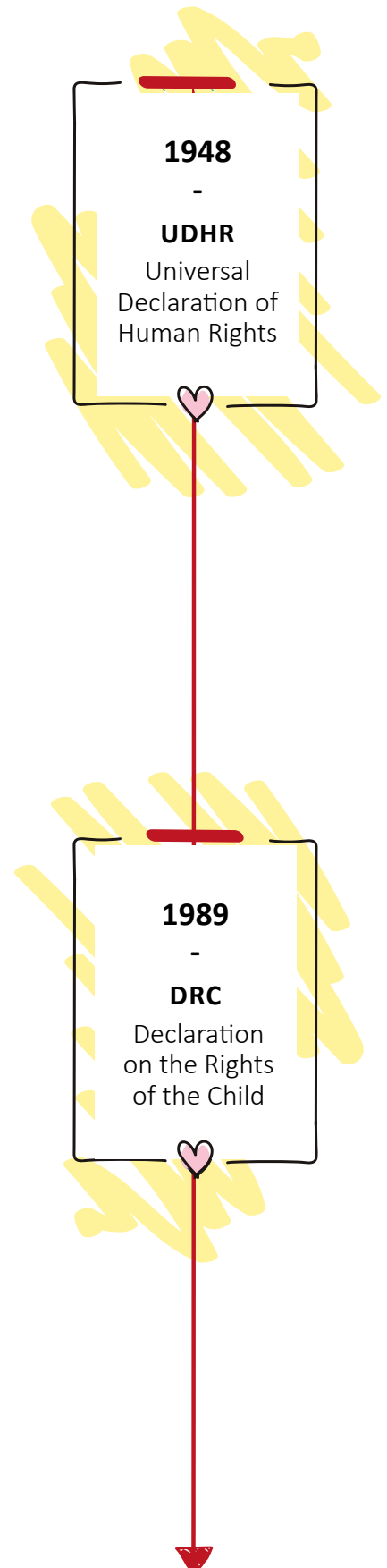
The **DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD** (1989), also focused attention on Education in Article 28, stressing that:

States Parties recognize the right of the child to education and with a view to achieving this right progressively on the basis of equal opportunity:

- a. Make primary education compulsory and free for all.
- b. Encourage the organization of different systems of secondary, general and vocational education, make them public and accessible to all children and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and the provision of financial assistance in case of need.
- c. They make higher education accessible to all, according to each one's abilities, by all appropriate means (United Nations, 1989).

This Diploma introduced an important concept, 'the best interests of the child'. This is important when considering the development of Inclusive Education:

"All decisions concerning children, adopted by public or private social protection institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, shall take into account primarily the best interests of the child." (United Nations Organization, 1989).



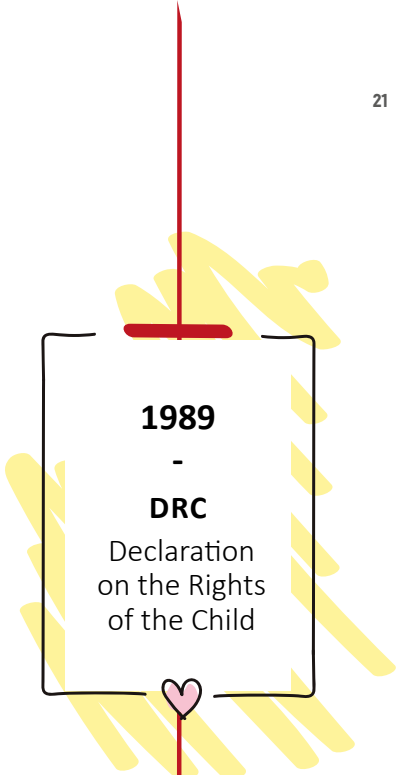
Therefore, when we are faced with some situation of assessment, curriculum, support to a student, we must always have in mind his/her interest.

In 1990, the initiative “Education for all”, presented 6 goals to be achieved by 2015. Some of which were **aimed specifically at a particular group of students**:

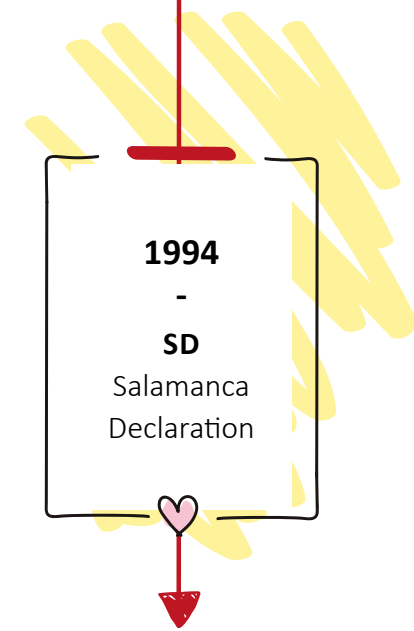
- a. Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
- b. Ensure that by 2015, all children, especially girls, those in difficult circumstances and those from ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
- c. Ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.
- d. Achieve a 50% improvement in adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equal access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
- e. Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieve gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and success in good quality basic education.
- f. Improve all aspects of the quality of education and ensure excellence for all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills. (World Education Forum 2000, cit in UNESCO, 2022).

In 1994, representatives from 96 Governments and 25 International Organisations formed the **World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca**. The aim was to develop the objectives addressed in the “Education for All” initiative, where this time, the focus would be on Special Education and the need for the presence and participation of students with specific educational needs in mainstream schools:

- a. Every child has a fundamental right to education and should have the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning.
- b. Each child has characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs that are unique to him or her.



1989
-
DRC
Declaration
on the Rights
of the Child



1994
-
SD
Salamanca
Declaration

- c. Education systems should be planned and educational programmes implemented with the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs in mind.
- d. Children and young people with special educational needs should have access to mainstream schools, which should be adapted to them through a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs.
- e. Regular schools, following this inclusive orientation, are the means to fight discriminatory attitudes, creating open and caring communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; furthermore, they provide an adequate education for the majority of children and promote the cost-efficiency of the whole education system (UNESCO, 1994).

The **DECLARATION OF SALAMANCA**, a binding document resulting from that Conference, was considered a crucial step towards the development of Inclusive Education.

Finally, another Diploma of international scope, concluded in 2006 and in force internationally since 2008, **THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**, should be highlighted. In the principles of the convention, the “respect for the developmental capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities” is highlighted.

In Article 7 of the Convention, entirely devoted to “**Children with disabilities**” it is stressed that:

- a. “States Parties shall take all necessary measures to ensure to children with disabilities the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children.” (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2008).
- b. “In all actions concerning children with disabilities, the best interests of the child shall have primary consideration.” (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2008).
- c. “States Parties shall ensure to children with disabilities the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, their views being given due consideration in accordance with their age and maturity, on an equal basis with other children, and to receive assistance appropriate to their disability and age for the exercise of this right.” (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2008).

2006

-

CRPD

Convention on
the Rights of
Persons with
Disabilities



In Article 8 (**Awareness**) it warns of the need to “promote, at all levels of the education system, including in all children from an early age, an attitude of respect for the rights of persons with disabilities.”

Also in Article 24 (**Education**), it is reiterated that:

- a. Persons with disabilities are not excluded from mainstream education on the basis of disability and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary or secondary education on the basis of disability.
- b. Persons with disabilities are able to access inclusive, quality and free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live.
- c. Reasonable accommodation is provided according to individual needs.
- d. Persons with disabilities are provided with the necessary support within the general education system to facilitate their effective education.
- e. Effective individualised support measures are provided in environments that maximise academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion. **"The assurance that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is provided in the languages, mode and means of communication most appropriate to the individual and in environments conducive to academic and social development."** (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2008).

Finally, in Article 30 of this Convention (**Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport**), that which is fundamental for effective Inclusion in the school context is safeguarded:

- f. **"Ensure that children with disabilities have, on an equal basis with other children, to participate in play, recreation, sports and leisure activities, including those within the school system."** (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2008).

The struggle for education and the implementation of inclusive education systems continued, first with the 8 Millennium Development Goals (2000) and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (2015).



1.4. THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

As we see, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) is clear in its 26th article, when it establishes Education as a right across all subjects: “Everyone has the right to education (...)”. Besides this mention, it is also referred to in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959) “The child has the right to education (...)”. Nevertheless, in the same Diploma it is specifically referred to the Right of the child “mentally and physically handicapped or suffering from some social impairment, shall benefit from special treatment, education and care required by his particular condition.” However, why do we talk about Inclusive Education, when the Right to Education is enshrined in international documents of utmost importance and undisputable? The answer lies in the fact that, still all over the world, there are children who do not enjoy the school space, for a variety of reasons. For this reason, the educational systems speak of the importance of an Inclusive Education where, according to UNESCO,

***“All children matter and they really matter.
(UNESCO, 2017).***

When we address the issue of the importance of Inclusive Education, we can perspective it considering two aspects: ensuring Education for All and, on the other hand, the transmission of values that respect the values of tolerance and inclusion of diversity. Well, considering the first perspective, Inclusive Education assumes an essential role, because it aims to ensure that All have access to an education, not only of quality, but also equal (UNESCO, 2019), through the creation, by the education system, of values and models of intervention that allow “participation and a sense of belonging to different communities in effective conditions of equality for all”. (Rodrigues, 2018). On the other hand, we must emphasize that

***Inclusive Education is a tool that contributes to the creation of communities
built according to the values of tolerance and Inclusion
(UNESCO, 2019).***

When we address the issue of Inclusive Education, we cannot neglect that it is also a response to students with disabilities. This assumes a crucial role, as it prevents not only isolation, but also social exclusion, allowing them greater independence, not only from the point of view of Education, but also throughout their lives (UNESCO, 2019). Also on this point, note that the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights thematic study on the Right of Persons with Disabilities to Education revealed that Inclusive Education contributes to quality education (UNESCO, 2019).

1.4.1. HOW TO ACHIEVE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

Achieving Inclusive Education is perhaps the biggest and most challenging goal of the current educational systems. According to Rodrigues (2018), there is a set of resistances that hinder the inclusive reform of education: “The instability that the frequency of students with difficulties causes in a system that (...) should be coherent and predictable”; “The fact that there are educational spaces of greater inclusion coexisting with spaces of exclusion and the preparation of schools to develop inclusive practices”. Now, in this circumstance it is essential to ask how can we achieve an Inclusive Education System? The answer lies firstly in the promotion of and respect for those values that are the values of an Inclusive Education which involves creating the necessary conditions of access, participation (aimed at a sense of belonging) and, finally, success.



According to the International Office of Education -UNESCO (2016, p. 13), we must consider four keys aspects when we practice Inclusion:

- 1. Inclusion is a process,** perceived as a path, whose goal is to find the best responses to the diversity present in schools. It is a long, never-ending path, where learning to live with difference and learning from difference triggers positive experiences, in the sense that these are seen as a stimulus to encourage learning.
- 2. The identification and removal of barriers is a concern of Inclusion.** When we talk about barriers we are considering different barriers, which present themselves in different ways, which in turn, hinder the inclusion process. The relevance of this step leads to its development later in this Handbook.
- 3. It is inevitable to talk about inclusion without mentioning the presence, participation and success of all learners.** These concepts are deeply connected. Presence” refers to the space where children’s learning takes place and to their regular attendance. When talking about presence, the idea of creating the necessary conditions of access is implicit (Rodrigues, 2018). On the other hand, “participation” (focused on the sense of belonging), is related to the experiences had by the student him/herself in the school/classroom context, where his/her opinions are considered. Finally, “success”, which is related to the learning outcomes achieved through adaptations of the curriculum.
- 4. Inclusion is a process aimed at a group of learners who, for whatever reason, are at risk of exclusion, marginalisation and/or underachievement.** To this end, it is essential to implement measures adjusted to the needs of each one of them, so that their presence, participation and success are ensured within the educational system.

In the previous paragraphs we have addressed the four key aspects that guide us towards achieving Inclusive Education. In fact, it is also important to highlight the very important role of the International Diplomas mentioned earlier in this manual, which together with the values and pillars mentioned earlier, drive educational systems to change this paradigm.

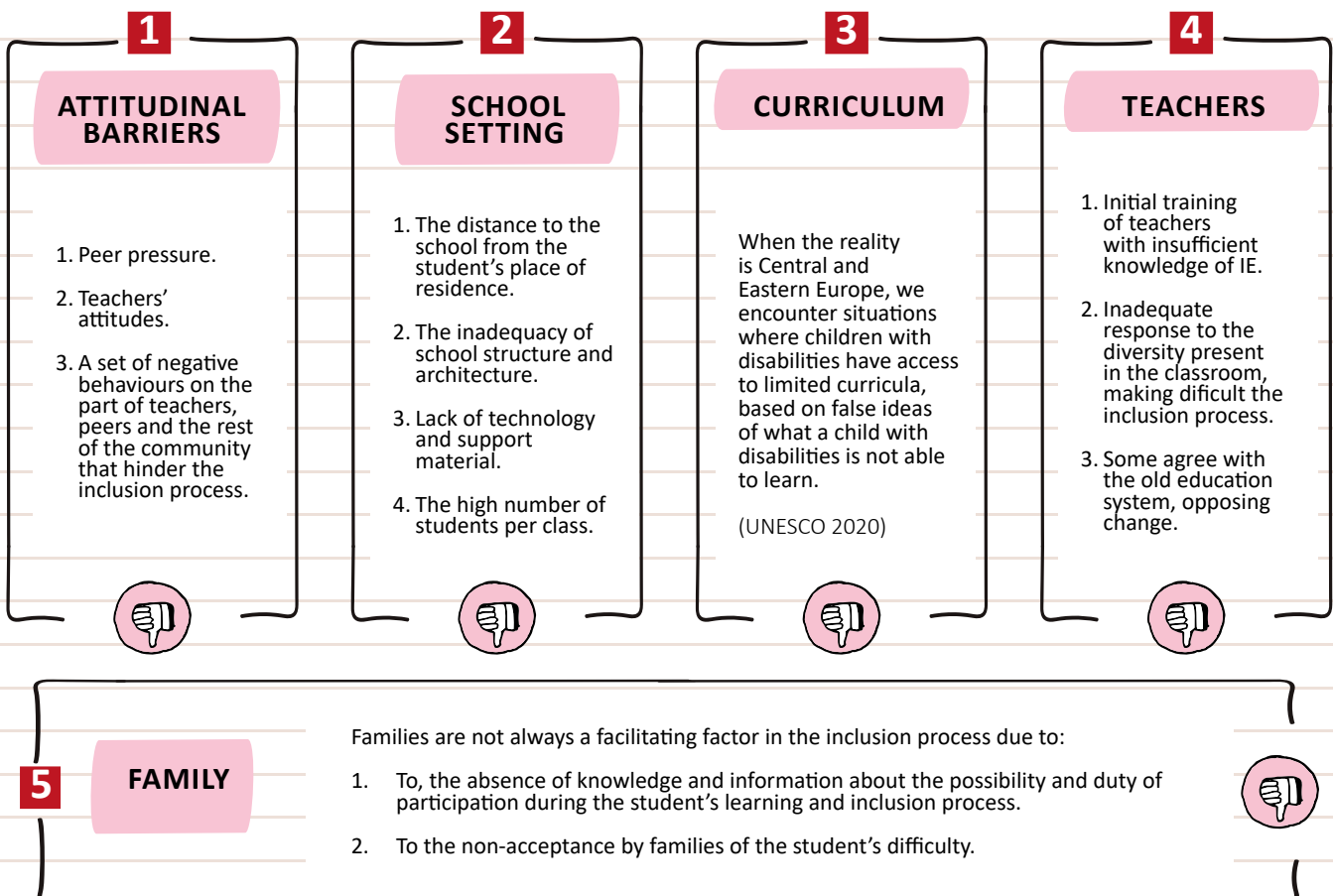
1.5. BARRIERS AND FACILITATING FACTORS

The Salamanca Statement (1994) drew the attention of the international community to the inclusion of children with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. It recognises the importance of a child-centred pedagogy as a principle for recognising and responding to the educational needs of each student, thus ensuring a quality education that provides learning, participation and success through the use of all necessary strategies.

According to UNESCO (2021), “people with disabilities are two and a half times more likely than their peers never to have attended school”, i.e. millions of children/young people are missing out on the opportunity to take their place at school.

Despite the existence of international standards, it is undeniable the presence of obstacles that hinder the inclusion and learning process. For Booth and Ainscow (2002), the concept of “barriers to learning and participation” can be used to draw attention to what can be improved in order to provide quality learning for all children.

Barriers can take many forms and can be found at any time in the school, in the school setting, in communities and at the policy level. Furthermore, barriers to learning and participation may arise in the interaction between students, and students and teachers, namely in what they are taught and how they are taught (Booth Ainscow, 2002). According to the same authors, school architecture, cultures, policies, the curriculum, the teaching method, the place where students sit and the way they interact are some examples of barriers that may hinder the teaching and learning process, but let us look concretely at how these barriers may be present at school. **We can identify the following barriers:**



1. Use of the term “Special Educational Needs”.

According to Booth Ainscow, (2002) the use of the expression “Special Educational Needs” constitutes a barrier to the learning and participation process, hindering the development of inclusive practices. Although the use of this expression is still an integral practice in the culture of some schools, the truth is that it is still present in some situations. Let us look at the following situations where “Special Educational Needs” is present: in the preparation of reports, in the identification of pupil difficulties and even “in the information that schools have to provide regarding expenditure on “Special Educational Needs” (Booth Ainscow, 2002).

2. ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS. These are understood as a set of negative behaviours on the part of teachers, peers and the rest of the community that hinder the inclusion process. Among others, we can highlight:

a) Peer pressure

Peer acceptance is a challenge for inclusion, namely when we talk about the inclusion of children with disabilities. There is a consensus in the scientific community that children who are not accepted by their peers are more likely to face risk situations during their lives (Dua & Dua, 2017 cited in. Ochoa & Olivarcz Jr., 1995).

b) Teachers’ attitudes

There are several studies that mention the attitude and beliefs of mainstream teachers as one of the barriers to the learning process and inclusion of students with disabilities. They conclude that the following attitudes of teachers affect their commitment and behaviour in implementing Inclusive Education: considering the teaching and learning process of children with disabilities the responsibility of Special Education teachers; viewing the presence of the student with disabilities in the classroom as a disturbance causing distraction to the other students in the class (Dua & Dua, 2017 cit in, Kattumuri 2013).

3. BARRIERS IN THE SCHOOL SETTING

The United Nations Children’s Fund highlighted in 2019 that at least “75% of the 5.1 million children with disabilities are excluded from quality Inclusive Education in the regions of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia.” (UNICEF, cited in UN 2019). It highlights that thousands of children attend ‘special’ schools, segregated from their peers. Nevertheless, there are a number of barriers, linked to the school itself, that hinder the inclusion process, mainly:

a. The distance to the school from the student’s place of residence

Sometimes, the lack of adequate transport, aggravates this situation further, hindering the access and inclusion of the student. (Dua & Dua, 2017).

b. The inadequacy of school structure and architecture

Schools must be designed to welcome Everyone. In this sense, it is of the utmost importance to think about disabled children and their mobility. School buildings can be a barrier if, for example, facilities such as toilets, library, doors, passages, etc, are not sufficiently developed to receive these children.

c. Lack of technology and support material

UNICEF acknowledges the lack of technologies to support inclusion, namely “special readers and tablets and lightweight wheelchairs that help children with disabilities gain more independence and therefore attend school” (UNICEF, 2019). It also highlights that the exact proportion of children with access to these technologies and materials is unknown, but reveals that there is a higher proportion in underdeveloped countries.

The use of these assistive technologies, as well as pedagogical materials that facilitate learning acquisition and participation, are fundamental to the inclusion process of children with disabilities.

d. The high number of students per class

Is a challenge to respond to the diversity present in the classrooms. This situation hinders the learning and participation of disabled children. Thus, there is difficulty both for students in adjusting to the classroom reality and for teachers who, due to the number of students, cannot respond in a positive way to their specific needs, thus hindering their learning process, participation and inclusion.

4. THE CURRICULUM

The traditional curriculum is a barrier to the development of Inclusive Education Systems. Inclusive Education is based on the assumption that a curriculum is able to respond to the potential and needs of each learner. Therefore, it is a means to promote the quality of learning.

When the reality is Central and Eastern Europe, we encounter situations where children with disabilities have access to limited curricula, based on false ideas of what a child with disabilities is not able to learn (UNESCO 2020, cited in. Baglieri & Shapiro, 2017).

Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities highlights that traditional views of learning for children with disabilities, as well as assessment systems, which aim to evaluate academic success are a barrier to the implementation of Inclusive Education.

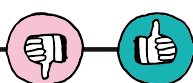
5. TEACHER TRAINING

Teachers are one of the most important resources in the inclusion process. Insufficient knowledge about Inclusive Education acquired during initial teacher training is an obstacle to the process of educational inclusion. “The most common approach to teacher education for inclusion is to introduce Inclusive Education in initial teacher education in individual units of study infusing the existing content with concepts and knowledge often disconnected from a conceptual framework of Inclusive Education.” (UNESCO, 2020). This reality, can lead to an inadequate response to the diversity present in the classroom, thus hindering the inclusion process. However, teachers can also be hindered by agreeing to the old education system, opposing change through dialogue, and refusing to collaborate with other professionals. Nevertheless, the refusal to accept children with disabilities, for example, in the classroom, is also a barrier by the behaviour of teachers (UNESCO, 2020).

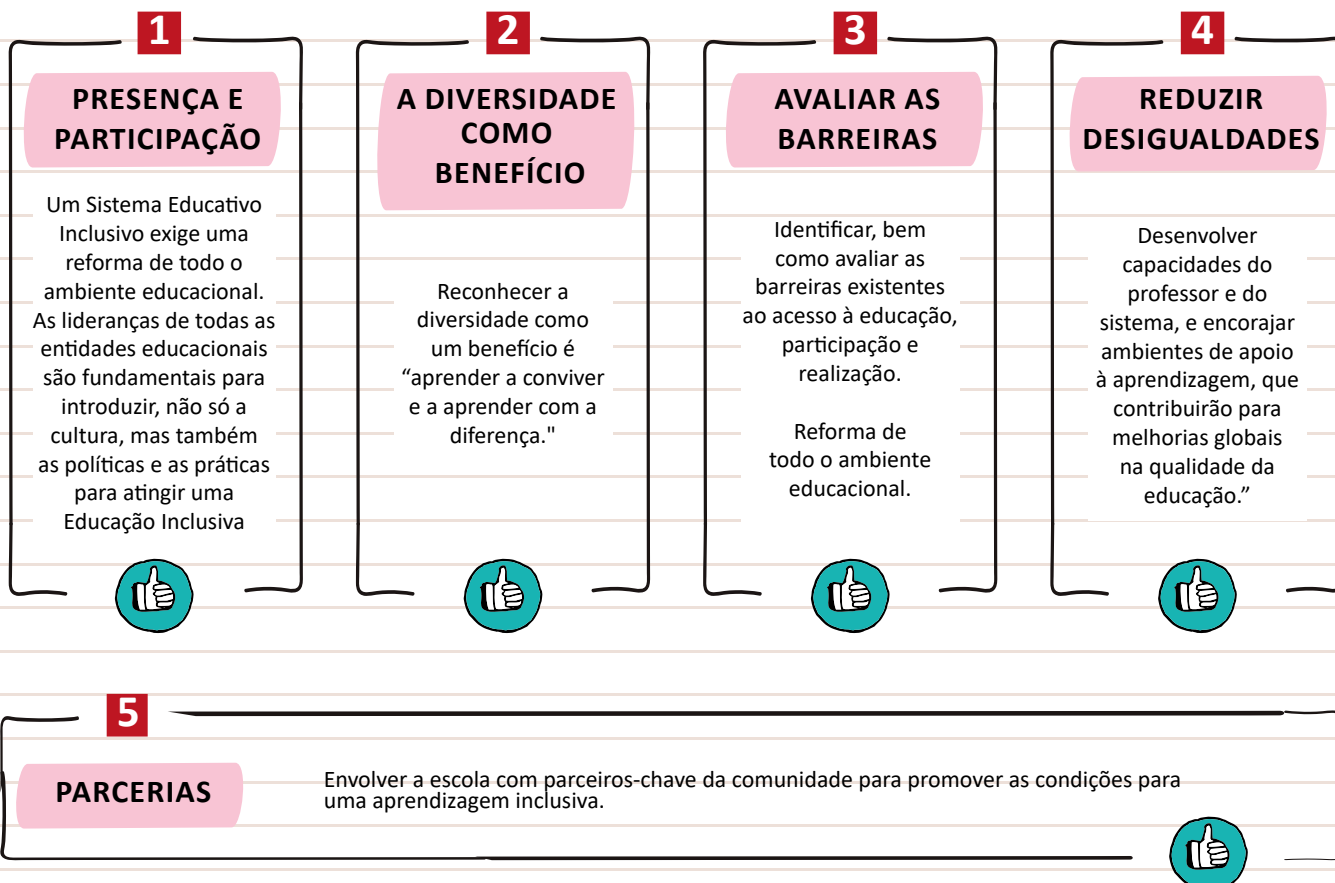
6. LACK OF INFORMATION ON THE PART OF FAMILIES.

The family is a fundamental part in the development of the child and should assume a role of partnership with the school (Oliveira et al., 2015, cited in Costabile., 2005). However, families are not always a facilitating factor in the inclusion process due to:

- a. To, the absence of knowledge and information about the possibility and duty of participation during the student’s learning and inclusion process.
- b. To the non-acceptance by families of the student’s difficulty (Oliveira et al., 2015, cit. in Costabile., 2005).



Faced with so many barriers, we should think about facilitators for the inclusion of students with specific educational needs, which immediately involves minimising the barriers mentioned above, through the mobilisation of a set of resources, not only material, but also human, political, among others.



Firstly, we must be aware of the importance of including the values of Equity and Inclusion in the Education System, because without them, it is difficult to achieve an Inclusive Education for All. Thus, and according to UNESCO (2019), we must consider the following aspects:

- a. Valuing the presence, participation and achievement of all students, regardless of their contexts and personal characteristics.
- b. Recognize diversity as a benefit of “learning to live together and learn from difference”.
- c. Identify as well as assess existing barriers to educational access, participation and achievement.
- d. “Build common understanding that more inclusive and equitable education systems have the potential to promote gender equality, reduce inequalities, build teacher and system capacity, and encourage supportive learning environments, which will contribute to overall improvements in the quality of education.” (UNESCO, 2019).
- e. “Engage the education sector and key community partners to promote the conditions for inclusive learning and a broader understanding of the principles of inclusion and equity.” (UNESCO, 2019).

On the other hand, also mention that Education Policy influences and supports, not only ideas, but also inclusive practices, establishing the equal right of everyone to access quality and equitable education (UNESCO, 2019, cit in. UNESCO, 2015).



This is an idea well present in the documents issued by UNESCO when addressing the issue of Inclusive Education. The use of the expression “Special Educational Needs” constitutes, as we had the opportunity to explore, a barrier to the development of an Inclusive Education System. In this sense, the expression mentioned should be replaced by “educational difficulties” (Booth; Ainscow, 2002).

In addition to the mentioned, we should consider the following points as factors that facilitate the development of an Inclusive Education:

- a. An Inclusive Education System requires a reform of the whole educational environment. The leaders of all educational entities are key to introduce, not only the culture, but also the policies and practices to achieve an Inclusive Education.
- b. The recognition that Everyone has the ability to learn must be present, including those with disabilities. This can be achieved through a flexible curriculum, the use of appropriate teaching and learning methods. Furthermore, to mention the importance of Early Intervention (so that those who benefit from this response can develop their potential), as well as personalised educational responses according to the needs and goals of each student.
- c. The acquisition of knowledge about the Inclusive Education approach by teachers and non-teaching staff are essential for the implementation of inclusive learning environments.
- d. Fostering environments where everyone feels supported, safe and where they feel able to participate are important for building an inclusive school community.

1.5.2 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: IMPOSITION OR A SCHOOL CULTURE?

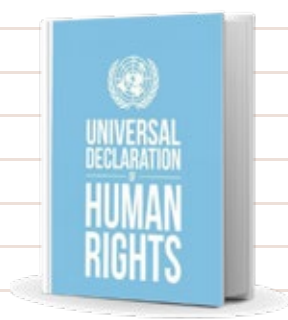
Education is, as we have already had the opportunity to observe, a right that applies to all human beings and is enshrined in international texts (Convention on Human Rights, 1948; Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1984). However, for decades the school has not responded to the educational needs of disabled children, excluding them from the regular education system. Faced with this scenario, children had to rely on Special Schools. In other words, there was no concern on the part of the educational systems to include disabled children. However, the Salamanca Statement inspired governments to make legal and regulatory changes which governed the education of students segregated from mainstream education. In this event, it became clear the need for a paradigm shift in mainstream schools, suggesting the creation of schools able to receive children, regardless of their personal characteristics (UNESCO, 1994).

Despite the need for regulations for the development of inclusive education, it is important that the school community has openness and creativity, as well as resources to support the application of inclusive learning strategies and methods. The implementation of an Inclusive Education System is not possible without an inclusive school culture.

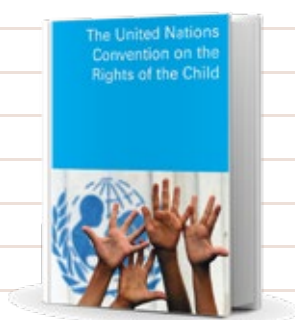


ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

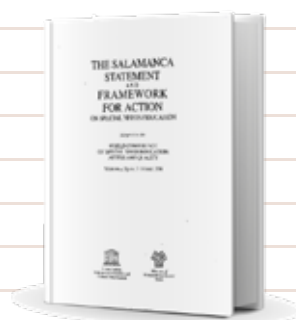
LEGAL RESOURCES



[Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)



[Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)



[Salamanca Declaration](#)



[Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)



VÍDEOS



[+Inclusive Education: From Reflection to action!](#) - Taking into account the 4th SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) - "Ensure access to inclusive, quality and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." - EDUPA, a Portuguese organization, together with AGIFODENT, a Spanish organisation, launch here, in the context of the Erasmus +Inclusive Education Project, a set of six videos aiming to end stigma, inform, clarify and educate for a society where each and every one counts!



[The strength of diversity](#) - What would the world be like if we were all the same? In this video, diversity is sought as an advantage in educating everyone. If we are all different, why do we learn in the same way?

The video addresses disability and incapacity, seeking to define, demystify, and convey the message that all students have the potential to learn, even while living with physical, intellectual, or sensory disabilities. School is for everyone, with respect and response to all differences. Difference is synonymous with diversity and richness.

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