Realising Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Case Studies in Mainstreaming and Inclusive Education

The Commonwealth

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Acronyms

ASER	Annual Status of Education Report (India)
CPRD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
EFA	Education for All
GLAD	Global Action on Disability Network
ILO	International Labour Organization
JCPD	Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities
NCSE	National Council for Special Education (Ireland)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
Pacific-INDIE	Pacific Indicators for Disability Inclusive Education
RCI	Rehabilitation Council of India
RTE	Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (India)
SEN	Special Educational Needs
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UK	United Kingdom
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive summary

As part of an ongoing commitment to support the development of a more inclusive education system across Commonwealth countries, the Commonwealth Secretariat commissioned documentation to support good policy and practice, particularly on including students with disabilities in mainstream education. This has been prepared with the objective of initiating a wider dialogue on inclusive practices for mainstreaming disability.

This document provides examples from 11 Commonwealth countries, highlighting the process of change that is underway in these countries and the evolution of policies and strategies to improve access to education for children with disabilities.

It additionally provides models and self-assessment tools to support policy-makers and education professionals as they work towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

This document is intended to provide both working examples and a structure to share information as efforts continue to provide high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people, including those with special learning needs. It describes key factors to consider when it comes to implementing inclusive strategies, and the processes to follow within a policy framework, such as the professional development of teachers, the assessment of procedures, curriculum adaptation and modification, and monitored practice.

As such, Chapter 1 provides a brief account of the landscape of the current situation of learners with special education needs and disabilities across the Commonwealth. The countries covered are Bangladesh, Ghana, Jamaica, Namibia, Sierra Leone and Tanzania. The chapter considers evidence of innovation and promising models that have emerged in some of these countries and beyond, while identifying some of the challenges presented to the further development of inclusive education.

Chapter 2 proposes an in-country analysis as an important process to establish the status of inclusive education and to identify strengths and challenges. It provides guidelines on conducting an analysis based on five factors that have been seen to be influential in the successful delivery of an inclusive education system: professional development; assessment procedures; curriculum modification; implementation advice; and monitored practice.

Chapters 3 and 4 illustrate how some countries, Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth, have addressed inclusive education considering these five factors and identify some common features.

Where national governments have succeeded in promoting a more inclusive education system, they have given attention to several critical factors. Through a positive response to international agreements, including the Sustainable Development Goals, they have initiated policies that have taken account of local needs and developments. Further to this, they have considered how these policies may be implemented, resourced and monitored.

Most critical in resourcing is the provision of committed and well-prepared professionals in both education and therapeutic services who have the skills, knowledge and understanding to assess and teach children with diverse needs. These professionals, when provided with support and recognition, have proven to have a major impact in terms of enabling the enrolment of children who have previously been excluded. With respect to teachers, it is evident that a focus on pre-service training in special and inclusive education for

all potential teachers is important, as is a commitment to continuing professional development for those in service.

Successful inclusive education requires a holistic approach to development, which acknowledges that issues of poverty and discrimination need to be confronted alongside educational development. In the case studies presented above, there has been an important recognition of the influences of culture, caste and gender as issues closely associated with exclusion from access to education, and these have been identified as areas to be addressed through policy and practice.

The development of inclusive education is an ongoing process. For this reason, careful and consistent monitoring of progress, impact and outcomes must be considered essential. Examples of this can be seen in the case study countries presented in this document.

Chapter 5 provides details on how to develop a strategy to promote inclusive education; such a strategy is dependent on establishing a strong foundation of principles and a shared understanding of the purpose and desired outcomes of education for all.

It is hoped that this document will be a useful resource for governments in setting priorities and in ensuring that mainstream education includes learners with disabilities. It will hopefully strengthen advocacy and stimulate debate and further research on the access of disabled learners to quality learning within an inclusive education system.

Introduction

International agreements and national legislation have been a catalyst for the promotion of greater inclusion and equity in education. With the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community pledged to achieve inclusive, quality and equitable education for all by 2030. Yet access to an inclusive, quality education remains elusive for many: children with 'disabilities' are four to five times more likely to be out of school or early leavers compared with learners without 'disabilities', with approximately 32.5 million of them in low- and middle-income countries out of school (there is little consistent data on the number of disabled children and the figure may be much higher). Those who enrol in primary school often do not get to secondary education level (Education Commission, 2016).

However, when they do enrol in secondary school, their completion rates and skill acquisition levels are lower than those for children without disabilities. The Global Youth Development Index and Report notes that, in 17 developing Commonwealth countries with available data, less than 20 per cent of young people with disabilities complete secondary school compared with almost 28 per cent of youth without disabilities (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2021). Similarly, in the 10 developing Commonwealth countries with available data, just over 50 per cent of youth with disabilities had acquired proficiency in functional literacy skills by age 25 compared with almost 66 per cent of young people without disabilities (ibid.).

Exclusion from the education system of children and young people with disabilities represents not only a social injustice but also an economic concern. A 2009 International Labour Organization (ILO) study on the price of economic exclusion of persons with disabilities indicated that countries lose 3–7 per cent of their annual gross domestic product because of their failure to include persons with disabilities in the workforce.

Disability among children and youth is not typically associated with household poverty but is systematically and significantly related to lower school participation. This in turn increases poverty in adulthood, and results in exclusion from opportunities for further empowerment and development and for children with disabilities to grow up and live independently as full citizens in their communities.

Many education systems around the world create barriers to the effective education of children and young people with disabilities.

Negative cultural attitudes, perceptions and identities often reinforce these barriers. This has resulted in 90 per cent or more of disabled children in many poorer countries being excluded from education. In more developed countries, outmoded models of segregated special schools have predominated and have only in the past 30 years begun to be replaced by more reliance on inclusive education.

The implementation of Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) will present challenges to all states, but it will also, if introduced effectively, lead to growth and development of an education system based on human rights where all children and young people will develop their potential. Article 24 of the CRPD provides the right to inclusive education. It proclaims the rights of persons with disabilities to education on an equal basis with other learners. With a view to realising this right without discrimination and based on equal opportunity, state parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels directed to the full development of their potential. State parties will therefore ensure that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability; persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live; and persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education, while receiving individualised reasonable accommodation

and the support required to maximise academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

The Commonwealth Secretariat uses a human rights approach to disability policies in the context of a social model of disability. A human rights approach to disability policy recognises that an individual's impairment or diagnosis is not problematic but rather environmental, and that communication, information and attitudinal barriers are the issues. The social model calls for an emphasis on abilities and capacities rather than on differences or disabilities. It further acknowledges the social context and needs of children and young people with disabilities and the impact that these have on their full participation, inclusion and acceptance as part of mainstream society. It encourages broader systemic and attitude changes in society and promotes children and young people with disabilities as being part of transformation processes that affect their lives.

A common viewpoint among professionals and disability rights-promoting organisations is that an inclusive environment in mainstream schools/ education systems is the best possible way to enrol a maximum of children with disabilities in education. The inclusive education approach entails creating an education system that is responsive to learner diversity, with disability as a component of inclusion but not equalling inclusion. The specific focus on learners with disabilities will ensure that all learners have the best possible opportunities to learn.

Analysis of effective approaches will be built into broader strategies and plans, considering that, when serious efforts are made to include children and young people with disabilities in public schools, an unexpected 'side effect' is often that learning processes of other children and adolescents also improve.

A shift in thinking

Investing in disability inclusion in the education sector causes a shift in thinking as it focuses on what makes the classroom or learning environment and teachers' pedagogical practices inclusive. An equitable system should respond to individual preferences and needs, therefore it should not necessarily entail equal and identical delivery and content for all learners. A paradigm shift will involve addressing barriers to inclusive education that relate to policy and legal support, resources and facilities, specialised staff, teacher training, flexible curricula, supportive leadership, stigmatisation, cultural attitudes and pedagogical techniques.

The post-2015 agenda discourse is largely dominated by measurement and outcomes, yet implementation of a learner-centred pedagogy as a framework for quality education and learning remains inadequate. While a learner-centred pedagogy can be framed as a set of minimum standards in formulating an enabling goal that supports learning and learner rights, an important proportion of children and young people remain outside the educational system.

The Commonwealth Secretariat recognises the urgency to act more concretely and address the rights abuses and educational needs of the most excluded children and adolescents, and to fulfil the CRPD commitments.

Countries across the Commonwealth, in common with others, have taken initiatives and implemented policy changes with the explicit purpose of increasing educational opportunities for those who have previously struggled to access formal schooling. This document considers the situation in terms of the progress made towards a more inclusive education system in Commonwealth

countries. It does so by presenting case studies that illustrate initiative and innovation in a small sample of these countries. Alongside these are examples from non-Commonwealth countries that enable some comparison with respect to the progress made.

It is suggested that policy-makers and professionals working in the field of education require support in the form of assessment tools to assist them in understanding the challenges to address in changing education systems

The journey towards a more inclusive education system may follow differing paths depending on the current in-country situation and the level of resourcing available. Some common factors, including professional attitudes, training of teachers and other professionals, and availability of facilities and support mechanisms, are identified as key to the successful development of inclusive schools. This document provides a focus for discussion that is intended to support policy-makers and professionals as they consider the agenda for inclusion in their own contexts.

Chapter 1: Situational analysis

This situational analysis explores the current situation for learners with special education needs and disabilities and that with respect to inclusive education across the Commonwealth. It further considers evidence of innovation and promising models that have emerged in some of these countries and beyond, while identifying some of the challenges presented to the further development of inclusive education.

The sharing of information and new knowledge is an important process within efforts to ensure the right of all children and their families to gain access to equitable and inclusive education. This situational analysis therefore aims to exemplify developments and practices that may inform policy and future developments in this area in Commonwealth countries.

The situational analysis is based on recent research and literature on those conditions that affect access to quality education and the learning of people with special educational needs and disabilities to better inform on key gaps and critical issues in Commonwealth countries. The countries examined in this chapter are Bangladesh, Ghana, Jamaica, Namibia, Sierra Leone and Tanzania. The case study chapters of the document (Chapters 3 and 4) focus in detail on the experience in five Commonwealth countries—The Bahamas, India, Malta, New Zealand and Sierra Leone—and two non-Commonwealth countries—Cambodia and Ireland.

The United Nations defines inclusive education as 'a process that necessitates a continuing and pro-active commitment to the elimination of barriers impeding the right to education, together with changes to culture, policy and practice of regular schools to accommodate all students' (UNCRPD, 2016). Such a process requires strong leadership by politicians, policymakers and education and welfare professionals at both national and local levels. While the numbers of children denied access to education have decreased in recent years, much remains to be done. Both natural and human-made factors

influence the stability of education and social welfare, and these tend to have a major impact on those countries that face social and economic challenges. Clear evidence of this can be seen when considering the impact of the current COVID-19 pandemic, which has had a disproportionately damaging impact on the educational opportunities of those living in the most disadvantaged situations. Furthermore, attendance at school cannot be regarded as a guarantor of learning, which requires that learners are given access to an appropriate curriculum delivered by well-qualified teachers who have access to appropriate teaching resources and work in an environment that is conducive to learning.

1.1 Inclusive education and the Education for All agenda

While progress towards achieving the goal of Education for All has been made since the production of the Commonwealth report in 2012 on *Implementing Inclusive Education* (Reiser, 2012), it is apparent that the pace of such progress has been inconsistent across different regions and countries. In 2019, more than 90 per cent of primary school-age children were enrolled in school. However, this significant progress is not reflected in all countries. Some areas of sub-Saharan Africa achieved less than 80 per cent enrolment over this period. The global number of out-of-school children of primary school age has fallen significantly, but 59 million primary school-age children continued to be denied access to appropriate schooling for the school year ending in 2018 (UIS, 2019).

The right to free and compulsory primary education, initially recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), has since been endorsed through a succession of international agreements — notably at Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, when world leaders united in a commitment to achieve universal primary education. Establishment of the Education for All targets at the World Education Forum summit in Dakar in 2000 was a significant step forward, with a framework for action established by participants

from 164 countries, and the following targets set to be achieved by 2015:

- Expand early childhood care and learning;

- Provide free and compulsory primary Education for All;

- Promote learning and life skills for young people and adults;

- Increase adult literacy by 50 per cent;

- Achieve gender parity by 2005, and gender equality by 2015;

- Improve the quality of education.

Progress was made on of all the above targets, though none have been fully achieved to date. A further meeting, held at Incheon, South Korea, in 2015, brought together 1,600 participants from 160 countries, including government ministers and representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society, teacher organisations and the private sector. This meeting resulted in a further agreement, the Incheon Declaration for Education 2030, which put forward a 15-year plan related to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4. This goal, with the aim to 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all', gave a commitment to address all forms of exclusion and marginalisation, disparities and inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes.

In many countries, in addition to children with disabilities, girls, rural or remote districts dwellers, and others from cultural or religious minorities are vulnerable to exclusion from formal education. Furthermore, international crises have resulted in increased displacement of people from their homes, with families facing increasing challenges in accessing education. This can be seen in the influx of refugees in Bangladesh from Myanmar or the numbers of displaced persons from Sudan in Kenya. Poverty remains the single most consistent factor in the likelihood of children being denied access to schooling. However, since 2012, there have been several instances in which initiatives taken by governments, often with the support

of NGOs and international organisations, have improved educational opportunities for previously marginalised learners. In the immediate post-COVID period, it will be necessary for national governments to reappraise their economic situations. The pandemic has had a detrimental effect on the economies of countries around the world and this is likely to result in a refocusing of economic priorities. There is a distinct possibility that the allocation of resources for social welfare and for the education of the most disadvantaged learners will decrease, with a subsequent slowing of the rate of progress towards achieving the Education for All goals. Those poorer countries that are highly dependent on aid from the world's wealthiest states may face a significant decrease in the financial and practical support that has characterised recent years.

1.2 Examples of initiatives for the promotion of inclusive education: national case studies

In **Rwanda,** the Inclusive Futures programme has been developed to clarify expected national standards for the education of children with disabilities and other special educational needs (SEN) and to provide a framework for inclusive education. This project has developed and tested a set of national standards to provide a framework for assessing quality inclusive education. The initiative aims to improve school retention rates and learning outcomes and was developed in partnership with parents, education professionals and students. As an outcome of this initiative, the following provision has been made:

- Support to schools to create a supportive physical school environment for children with disabilities;

- Community outreach work to ensure children with disabilities go to school;

- Development and monitoring of individual learning plans for children with SEN;

- Support to teachers to address individual learning needs of children with SEN in mainstream classrooms;

- Assistance to parents to support the education of their children and to engage in education-friendly income-generating activities to help cover the additional expenses for the school;

- Provision of other support and tools to children with SEN.

This initiative in Rwanda has incorporated professional development opportunities for teachers and has established a framework of teaching resources to support positive action in schools.

The **Pacific Islands Forum,** which co-ordinates support and action across small, often remote, nations, has worked to consider a joint strategy for addressing the challenges of achieving the Education for All goals. The Pacific Education Development Framework, initiated as a means of improving access to and quality of education across the region, identifies special education and inclusive education as priority areas. Information related to school enrolment and attendance is now more accurately recorded, as are details of performance on literacy and numeracy. Though the collection of data related to the performance of students with disabilities is currently limited, the initiative has raised awareness of the need to progress in this area.

Key to the advancement of inclusive education in the Pacific Islands has been the development and utilisation of the Pacific Indicators for Disability Inclusive Education (Pacific-INDIE) tool, which has provided guidelines to inform policy development and mechanisms for the monitoring of progress towards achieving inclusive education goals. This initiative, which has involved not only national governments but also the support of university researchers and private enterprise, provides a good example of how the pooling of resources, sharing of information and communication of ideas can support the development of greater inclusion for marginalised groups.

In some countries, the development of policy and strategic plans has been advanced, and national targets have been set to improve educational access and opportunities for students who have suffered disadvantage and marginalisation. In **Ghana,** an Education Strategic Plan provided guidelines that included specific targets for the education of learners with disabilities. These aimed to increase in attendance for students with special education needs and to achieve full enrolment by 2015. Similarly, the Government of **Sierra Leone** made a commitment to support the establishment of an inclusive environment for all learners and issued a National Education Sector Plan in 2018.

Both West African nations have faced major socio-economic and political challenges in their recent history but have taken an important step towards achieving improved opportunities for all learners. However, the pace of change in these and other countries that have faced situations of conflict, disease and natural disaster, and inconsistency in governance remains slow, with many children and youth still unable to attend school.

Tanzania's 2010 Persons with Disabilities Act 14 makes provisions for the health care, social support, education and vocational training, employment or work protection and promotion of basic rights for the persons with disabilities. The National Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities includes among its functions monitoring of implementation of the law, yet there is limited awareness and enforcement of such laws. Persons with disabilities are less likely to have attended school and are more likely to be illiterate than persons without disabilities. Girls and rural dwellers are most affected. Primary school-age children with disabilities are sent to special schools or special units within mainstream schools. It is harder for children with disabilities to enter secondary education.

Some countries have prioritised a focus on supporting learners with special needs in the early years of education. In **Jamaica,** the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information has a Special Education Unit that has as its responsibility the island-wide supervision of special education schools and units that are government-owned or government-aided, and those that receive special grants. Here, an Early Childhood Development

Project that concluded in 2018 was supported by the World Bank and organised around four centres. This aimed to improve the monitoring of children's development, the screening of household-level risks, and the risk mitigation and early intervention systems that are especially significant between ages zero and three; enhance the quality of early childhood schools and care facilities; and strengthen early childhood organisations and institutions. The project aimed to provide support for children aged three to six and addressed a range of special needs. It assisted some children with less complex needs to make the transition to Grade 1 in regular primary schools. Funds were made available for specialised training of early child development professionals, including both practitioners and administrators.

An important focus of this work was on improving parent education to better equip them to address the needs of their children and identify any specific difficulties that they perceived their children to be experiencing. An evaluation of the project recorded high levels of engagement and increased confidence and abilities in parents with respect to supporting the developmental needs of their children. The project also achieved an increase in delivery and use of early childhood development services and created new opportunities for better trained early childhood practitioners to deliver an early years curriculum, which it is anticipated will have an impact on poverty reduction in the long term. Evidence suggests that children who have access to improved early childhood education will develop socio-emotional and cognitive skills that will ultimately lead to greater academic outcomes and improved employment opportunities in the future.

In 2017, a partnership between the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Digicel Jamaica Foundation and the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities (JCPD), an agency of the Ministry of the Labour and Social Security, aimed to ensure the full implementation of the Disability Act 2014, which calls for inclusion and aims to reduce the risk of children with disabilities being left behind. The two-year project strived to ensure that more children were registered with the JCPD, with

better data collection and diagnosis allowing children to receive the required assistance across all government services, including education and health. It also supported efforts to promote skills training and co-ordinating the school-to-work transition of youth with disabilities.

The National Disability Act 2014 is a significant piece of legislation within Jamaica. As part of a national drive for inclusion, it states that a person with a disability may not be denied the right to enrolment in or attendance at an educational institution as a result of their disability. Furthermore, such institutions must provide the support necessary to ensure that the person has fair access to the education or training provided, and to facilities in the least restrictive environment and best suited to the needs of the individual. The Act requires that such persons are not disadvantaged and be provided with reasonable arrangements to guarantee the support required to effectively facilitate their education.

For some learners, the situation since 2012 has deteriorated, with opportunities to attend school either limited or completely denied. In **Bangladesh,** the government has struggled to provide adequate education facilities in Rakhine state for an incoming population of Rohingya refugees forced from their homes in Myanmar. With support from UNICEF, approximately 3,000 temporary learning centres were established in 2017/18 to provide education for children up to the age of 14. These centres have provided critical support to children, though access to teachers with appropriate cultural and linguistic understanding remains a challenge.

The Persons with Disabilities Welfare Act 2001 gave children with disabilities in Bangladesh the right to attend mainstream education. Following this, the National Education Policy 2010 sought to address the inclusion of diverse groups of children, including those with special needs or disabilities and those from ethnic minority communities and socio-economically disadvantaged sectors in existing mainstream education. However, a lack of resources, including trained teachers, a friendly school environment and infrastructure, as well as in-service

teachers' attitudes, has jeopardised implementation of the policy.

In 2013, the Ministry of Education of **Namibia** introduced the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education to support all children to learn and participate fully in the education system. Adhesion to this is mandatory for all government bodies and all subsidised institutions responsible for education, from early childhood to the post-secondary level. It sets out seven guiding principles of implementation: the setting of legal frameworks, awareness-raising, support for infrastructure adaptations, accessible learning materials together with a curricular review to reflect the diversity of needs of learners, educational and therapeutic support services, teacher development and a mechanism for the monitoring and evaluation of the policy.

Initiatives such as those described above are important in identifying what might be achieved for all learners. However, it is evident that situations in individual countries and across regions can change quickly, and sustainability is not always assured. It is also important to acknowledge that many of the initiatives deployed have been supported by an initial funding boost; the removal of this may leave projects vulnerable if planning for long-term sustainability is not built into such programmes.

A challenge exists in situations where special education and the provision for children with disabilities come under the jurisdiction of different ministries for health or social welfare rather than through a more cohesive approach managed by the ministry of education (Morgon Banks and Polack, 2014; WHO and World Bank, 2011; UNICEF, 2013). For example, in India, responsibilities are shared between the Ministry of Human Resource Development and the Ministry of Women and Child Development, with additional responsibilities coming under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. Communication between departments can at times be difficult; families and professionals find it problematic to navigate complex systems.

A concern in many countries is the disparity of provision between that available in urban communities and that in more rural regions. The Annual Status of Education Report in **India** 2018 highlights this challenge with respect to provision and opportunities for all learners. Findings from survey data indicate that children living in rural areas have far less opportunity to gain access to quality schooling, and that national levels of literacy and numeracy reflect this. Despite the introduction of national policies to promote the development of inclusive education (the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act—RTE—2009), three-quarters of five year olds with disabilities and a quarter of those aged five to nineteen do not attend school (UNESCO, 2019). The number of children with disabilities enrolled in school decreases at each level of schooling. The proportion of children with disabilities who are out of school is much higher than the overall proportion of out-of-school children at the national level.

1.3 Progress and challenges

A disturbing finding of the most recent United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Global Monitoring Report (2020) is that an estimated 258 million children, adolescents and youth, or 17 per cent of the global total, are not in school, and that, in some regions, including sub-Saharan Africa, this situation has worsened in recent years. The report emphasises that a key barrier to inclusion in education is the lack of belief that it is possible and desirable, and that high levels of discrimination against minorities persist. The report emphasises that segregation of children and placement in special schools remains the preferred option for educating children with disabilities in much of the world.

In 2019, the World Bank launched an Inclusive Education Initiative with support from the UK Department for International Development and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation. The aim of this global project is to co-ordinate inclusive education planning and develop public goods that countries can use to improve access and quality of education for children with disabilities. At country level, it will attempt to ensure that efforts by development partners are co-ordinated and provide

financial resources and technical assistance for the development and implementation of disability-inclusive education programmes. This initiative is at an early stage but is ambitious in its intentions to improve educational opportunities for all learners.

In the period since publication of the second edition of the Commonwealth Guide to Implementing Article 24 of the CRPD in 2012, significant progress has been made in raising awareness of the challenges confronting the Education for All agenda. There are examples of both national and international initiatives that have endeavoured to provide support to children, families and professionals working towards inclusive education. However, challenges persist with respect to socio-economic equality and national and regional stability, which are inhibiting further progress.

Understanding and defining disability remain problematic. For example, in some instances, children who have physical disabilities are more likely to be enrolled than are those with intellectual or sensory impairments (Inclusion International, 2006; WHO and World Bank, 2011). There are many reasons given for the exclusion of children with disabilities from formal education. Inaccessible school buildings and lack of appropriate toilets continue to be a challenge. Studies from **India** indicate that the provision of separate toilets for boys and girls, along with the provision of a mid-day meal, has been important in increasing school enrolment and attendance (Drèze and Kingdon, 2001; Jayaraman and Simroth, 2011). Where accessible toilets have been provided, this has also proven to be an incentive to school attendance. Lack of appropriate media for the development of communication and literacy has also proven to be an obstacle (Limaye, 2016); in some instances, where equipment such as brailling machines has been provided, these have little impact because of a shortage of trained teachers with the capability to utilise them. Children with disabilities who live in rural or remote locations are less likely to attend schools where suitable transport is not available (Malkani and Rose, 2018) and within these rural communities it is often more difficult to recruit well-qualified and experienced teachers.

1.4 Supporting the teaching profession

The professional development of teachers is a key factor in ensuring quality education for all. In some countries, a model of special education teachers has become well established. This has enabled the establishment of a cohort of teachers with skills, knowledge and understanding of the requirements with regard to teaching children with disabilities. However, the investment of this training in a limited number of teachers means that it has not addressed the requirement for all teachers to accept responsibility for teaching all children regardless of need or ability. In **India,** for example, where the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) accredits teachers to teach children with a range of disabilities, this institution endorses training and support provision for teachers working in this area. However, the need to register with the RCI in order to obtain permission to teach children with disabilities has inhibited other teachers from accepting responsibility for such children.

Where professional development focused on teaching for inclusion has been provided—particularly training with a 'hands-on', practical element—this has proven successful in raising teacher confidence and competence (Rose and Doveston, 2015; Tristani and Basset-Gunter, 2020). In some African countries, including **Nigeria** (Ogba et al., 2020), **Kenya** and **Sierra Leone** (Deluca and Carew, 2018) and **South Africa** (Walton, 2017), changes in the teacher training curriculum have ensured greater understanding of the concept of inclusive education and enabled the initiation of some practical approaches to promoting teaching for students of diverse needs. This has not been universally applied in these countries and, while there are now greater numbers of teachers who have improved knowledge on how to address the needs of students with disabilities, these remain in the minority.

Teacher confidence in their abilities to include children with SEN or disability in their classrooms remains low in many countries (Ismailos et al., 2019). The provision of professional development that increases confidence on the basis of improved

teacher skills remains a priority if inclusive schooling is to be achieved. In some of the more economically advantaged countries within the Commonwealth, such as **Canada** and **New Zealand,** radical adjustments to the curriculum in initial teacher training and an increase in professional development opportunities through which serving teachers can improve their pedagogical skills have been an important influence on the promotion of positive attitudes towards children with disabilities (Heng et al., 2019).

1.5 The impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has inordinately affected the lives of many vulnerable groups, including those with disabilities and others living in poverty and already experiencing social and educational disadvantages. The Global Action on Disability Network (GLAD) called urgently for the establishment of strategies and measures to mitigate the impact of school closures on learners with disabilities. According to GLAD, as many as half of the estimated 65 million primary and lower secondary school-age children with disabilities in developing countries were already out of school before COVID-19.

While some may have access to laptops, speech-to-text programmes or specialised technology, most learners with disabilities are the least likely to receive learning support from distance learning solutions. This is especially the case for girls with disabilities, who are among the most marginalised as a result of social and gender norms and bias around both disability and gender, and for those living in rural communities with poor infrastructure.

Ensuring that all learners with disabilities continue to receive quality education requires urgent actions that consider their specific needs for accessible, adapted and individualised learning plans. Blended approaches combining lower-tech or no-tech solutions, captioning and sign language options, and including integrating remedial classes, can better support those who have been excluded from home-based learning and ensure that social and emotional needs are met.

Past studies have indicated the lack of accessibility of digital technology, highlighting that the 'design, development and production of telecommunication services and products and digital literacy can prevent a substantial number of people with disabilities from achieving social inclusion' (Rimmerman, 2013; WHO and World Bank, 2011). The Zero Project finds that it is not only cost that prevents persons with disabilities from accessing digital technology but also lack of political will to define standards for software and hardware (WHO and World Bank, 2011; Fembek et al., 2014). In addition, mainstream devices may be incompatible with assistive devices, especially given the rapid pace of technological change (WHO and World Bank, 2011). For some persons with disabilities living in remote or poor communities, the situation is exacerbated because of poor infrastructure or lack of opportunities to receive appropriate training in the use of technology. Similar issues arise when software or other technological innovations fail to address the challenges facing individuals who work only in indigenous languages (Staley et al., 2019).

The general statement issued by GLAD recommends five key principles and calls for greater mobilisation to ensure the right to education of learners with disabilities. These principles comprise the following: include all learners' needs in COVID-19 responses through education investments; optimise the use of principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in education programmes; address the growing number of out-of-school children and recognise that persons with disabilities, often girls, in developing countries were more likely to be out of school before the COVID-19 crisis. GLAD states that planning for the provision of equitable access to education and learning for all persons with disabilities must be a critical part of schools' reopening strategies. They also call for stronger support to learners, families, educators and curriculum developers to implement an inclusive pedagogy and use a variety of gender-responsive, accessible virtual or broadcasted and printed learning materials for distance learning and contact teaching to support learners during lockdown and when schools reopen. A key principle recommends

providing support to leaders at different levels of education systems, from ministries of education to school leaders, to facilitate collaboration with line ministries (such as ministries responsible for finances, social protection, health, data collection, transport, water and sanitation, infrastructure, etc.) and a variety of relevant stakeholders in the community and private sector supporting inclusive education and building an inclusive society.

The full impact of this pandemic cannot currently be anticipated, though it is likely that redistribution of resources by governments and NGOs will slow the rate of progress towards the creation of a more equitable system of education. Without urgent action, the impacts of COVID-19 risk reversing global commitment and progress — albeit slow — towards addressing inequalities, exclusion and stigmatisation experienced by persons 'disabled' by society (Salamanca Declaration, UNESCO, 1994; The Global Disability Summit, 2018).

Several long-term implications are associated with a lack of access to education for children and youth with disabilities. For instance, there are well-established links between illiteracy or marginal literacy and poverty and the likelihood that poorly educated parents will raise their own children in poverty (Groce and Bakhshi, 2011; WHO and World Bank, 2011). Adults with disabilities find it difficult to break the links between disability and poverty in part because of the limited employment opportunities available to them. Similar challenges exist in respect of opportunities from community engagement and access to adequate medical, social, nutritional and developmental resources (Trani et al., 2011; WHO and World Bank, 2011; Morgon Banks and Polack, 2014).

1.6 Defining appropriate schooling

A systematic review of relevant literature is inconclusive on the full extent of the cost-effectiveness of approaches to increasing inclusive education (Bakhshi et al., 2013). However, the World Report on Disability noted that it is generally agreed that inclusive schools are more cost-effective than special schools (WHO and World Bank, 2011). Inclusive education has become part of an international agenda and has been further endorsed through the principles of Education for All and specifically Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which aims to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'. Wherever possible this should be interpreted as 'providing meaningful learning opportunities for all students within the regular school system' (UNICEF, 2013).

However, for some children with disabilities who currently have no access to education, specialist provision may be seen as an important stepping-stone towards acceptance in mainstream schools. It has been argued that tensions between the inclusion agenda and a standards agenda that emphasises academic performance — in some instances with league tables of schools based on examination results — have slowed progress towards the implementation of more inclusive school provision (Shaw, 2017). While in many countries a reduction in the number of special schools has been seen, it is likely that they will continue to play an important role in the education of children with disabilities for the foreseeable future. The development of special–mainstream school partnership links, seen in some countries, may prove to be a practical bridging mechanism towards greater inclusion (Gibb et al., 2007). Such partnership links should be a transition phase from special education approaches to mainstream inclusive education. Effective transitions require careful planning and structural changes to ensure that learners with disabilities are not placed within the mainstream education system without the appropriate support system to ensure an inclusive learning environment.

Chapter 2: Guidelines on undertaking a national situational analysis with respect to inclusive education provision

When considering progress towards the development of educational systems that are inclusive and equitable, it is necessary to look beyond policy implementation and to consider those factors that make education for all a reality. It is also important to acknowledge that one single model of education cannot be applied to all countries, and that any situational analysis must be undertaken in the context of the socio-political and economic climate that pertains.

All Commonwealth member countries have recognised the need to ensure that equity in education is assured for their citizens. The influence of international agreements such as the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994), the Education for All goals (2015) and the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (2015) is evident throughout the Commonwealth nations and, as a result, governments have issued policy documents with the aim of ensuring greater access for all learners to relevant educational provision.

Policy alone cannot ensure that the education system provided in any country is inclusive and welcoming to all learners. UNESCO has defined inclusion in the following terms:

Inclusion is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all learners (UNESCO, 2005).

The emphasis within this statement on changing and/or modifying content, approaches, structures and strategies is important in ensuring that national policies are implemented and have beneficial effects for all learners. Monitoring progress towards inclusion at national level is essential and requires that education administrators work in close partnership with school principals, teachers and parents in order to oversee those factors that contribute to the provision of equitable schooling.

An in-country analysis is an important process for establishing the current status of inclusive education and identifying those strengths and weaknesses within existing provision. In order to conduct such an analysis, it is suggested to consider the effectiveness of implementation of policy through an examination of five factors that have been seen to be influential in the successful delivery of an inclusive education system. These five factors have been incorporated into illustrative case studies of Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth countries (see Chapters 3 & 4).

The model in Figure 2.1 places policy at the core of promoting inclusive education within a national context. Commonwealth member countries have all developed such policies and have expressed a commitment to the development of education systems that are equitable and accessible for all learners. Policies in Commonwealth member countries have been developed in consultation with a range of service providers and users, such as NGOs, teacher organisations, parent groups and specific interest groups, including those with a focus on disability.

It is important to recognise that, in order to challenge exclusion and disadvantage, policy development is an initial point of development, and that it will be necessary to consider and address the five factors surrounding policy in this model so that progress towards inclusive education can be achieved and sustained.

The following guidelines consider those characteristics of each of the five factors surrounding the development and implementation

Figure 2.1. Model of interrelated factors in developing inclusive education

of policy that need to be considered when working towards an inclusive education system. The means through which these will be achieved will inevitably vary in each country, depending upon the current socio-economic and political priorities and needs. It is also important to recognise that all Commonwealth member countries have made progress across these five factors, though most will acknowledge that work needs to continue to secure the conditions required for the implementation of an education system that is truly inclusive.

The five factors are discussed below along with a series of key questions that might be usefully asked as policy-makers endeavour to make progress towards the goal of achieving Education for All. Each of the five factors has been identified through a review of literature that has demonstrated how success has been achieved in the promotion of inclusive education. It is not intended that these guidelines be prescriptive in terms of defining the methods to be adopted in each country, and it is important to recognise the need to build on existing good practice rather than to begin anew.

2.1 Professional development

Inclusive education requires a professional workforce that is well trained and confident in its ability to address the needs of all learners. Where teachers and other professionals have been confronted with students who challenge their traditional and established ways of teaching, they may lose confidence and in some instances challenge the concept of inclusive schooling. In administrations where inclusive education has been successfully promoted, a high level of commitment to the development of a professional workforce has been key to ensuring that children and other learners are not only enrolled in schools but also able to thrive both academically and socially.

The professional development of teachers needs to be seen as a long-term commitment. It must begin with initial teacher training courses, which are important as a formative period in the lives of new professionals, but must also continue through further in-service training and other professional development opportunities throughout the career of the teacher. Our knowledge and understanding of how children learn, and especially those who face difficulties, have developed and continue to progress. It is therefore essential that opportunities are afforded to all teachers to keep abreast of developments and have access to opportunities that promote their own professional learning.

In situations where teachers feel confident in the management of learners with diverse needs, this has generally been achieved in part through the promotion of high-quality training and opportunities to put learning into practice. This leads to the following questions relating to initial teacher training provision:

- Do all initial teacher training courses have content related to the education and management of students with diverse learning needs?

- Do students in initial teacher training have practical opportunities to plan for and teach students with diverse needs in a range of educational environments?

- Are tutors who deliver initial teacher training courses experienced in teaching students of diverse needs?

- Do initial teacher education courses provide opportunities for student teachers from all communities, including those with disabilities?

The promotion of inclusive education is dependent on a commitment to lifelong learning opportunities for its teachers. In countries where inclusive education is progressing well, a range of both longer post-graduate accredited courses and short-term specifically focused training (e.g., related to a specific disability or need) are in place.

- Are opportunities provided for teachers to continue their development as inclusive professionals through postgraduate courses?

- Is there a range of short-term courses available focused on the needs of specific population groups (e.g. children on the autism spectrum, children of refugees)?

- Do opportunities exist for teachers to engage in school-based inquiry (e.g. using action research) to gain greater insights into the efficacy of teaching in inclusive classrooms?

Some countries have adopted systems of deploying specialist teachers to manage provision and systems in schools for the promotion of inclusive education. These may be variously described as inclusion managers, SEN co-ordinators or resource teachers. Where these professionals operate most effectively, their role is often acknowledged and verified through a professional qualification that signifies their status and authority in a school.

- Do schools and other institutions have named individuals with overall responsibility for managing the effective inclusion of learners of diverse needs?

- Are professional development opportunities available for the support and promotion of the role of such professionals in schools?

Teachers are often not the only professionals working in schools in support of learners who face challenges. Many countries deploy a range of paraprofessionals to work alongside teachers in classrooms. These may be operating as teaching assistants or classroom aides and normally work under the direction of the teacher. Where such posts exist, their professional development is similarly important to that afforded to teachers. The provision of such training is often managed by localised education authorities, though in some instances universities and other institutes of higher education have offered accredited pathways for such training.

- Do schools deploy paraprofessional staff in their school? If so, are professional development opportunities provided to enable them to develop knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to learners of diverse needs?

Effective schools are vibrant learning organisations for whole communities. The promotion of inclusion is best achieved when schools make a commitment to the training of their whole staff. School-focused in-service training has proven beneficial in enabling schools to examine their own procedures and practices in a critical manner and to work together to develop these for the benefit of all learners.

- Do schools regularly discuss the challenges facing all learners (students, teachers and other staff) and use in-service training to examine and improve their approaches for the promotion of education for all?

In addition to professional development, many schools provide support for parents through parent workshops and other activities to assist parents in developing effective management skills for working with their own children. Such workshops can be an effective means of ensuring that parents are conversant with the practices deployed in schools

and are thus able to support their own children more effectively.

- Do schools provide support for parents in the form of training related to the procedures being deployed with their children?

2.2 Assessment procedures

Effective assessment occurs at several levels in inclusive education systems. It begins with the identification and diagnosis of the specific needs of the child and progresses through both formative and summative assessment procedures related to those interventions put in place to support the learner. Assessment is essentially an ongoing process and one that is essential to the monitoring and modification of teaching and learning approaches.

The initial stages of assessment are essential to ensure that children who are likely to have difficulties with learning or in accessing school can be identified early and receive appropriate support. Where such a procedure has been carried out well, partnerships across disciplines (including education, health and social care), and with families, have ensured that appropriate provision is made and that entry to schools is effectively managed. Good communication across all parties is essential, as is a common understanding of inclusive education policy and the intentions to provide for the holistic needs of the child. In some administrations, the initial assessment procedures are managed by specific professionals or services, such as educational psychology services or officers appointed to oversee assessment procedures. Where this is the situation, it is often possible to ensure a cohesive overview of procedures and to promote good communication across all interested parties.

Children entering school with a diagnosis of, for example, a learning disability may require additional resources. This may take the form of personnel, such as a teaching assistant; specialist equipment, such as a wheelchair or hearing aids; or access to professional input from a therapist or other specialist. Where assessment has been seen to

be effective, such facilities are recorded and their provision discussed with schools and families.

To understand the effectiveness of this stage of assessment, a number of key questions should be asked:

- Is there a named individual or organisation that oversees procedures related to the initial assessment and diagnosis of the learning needs of children?

- Are professionals from across disciplines (education, health and social care) involved in initial assessment and diagnostic procedures?

- Are there effective methods of communicating and reporting established between all parties involved in assessment and diagnosis?

- Are the views of parents sought and respected during assessment and diagnostic procedures?

- Is there an effective process through which professionals involved in initial assessment and diagnosis communicate their findings to schools?

- Do schools value and make use of assessment information provided to them during this initial assessment period?

- Does the initial assessment and diagnosis process release resources and funding for the support of children with special needs in schools?

Within schools, assessment that is both summative (recording the progress of the individual learner) and formative (using assessment information to plan for the learner's needs) is essential. Where inclusive education has succeeded, these processes are well established, with teachers being aware of the needs of learners and supported by resources and systems that enable the student to make appropriate progress. In some systems, the use of individual education plans has been found to be helpful in setting targets for learners that can be reviewed

regularly. Where such procedures exist, they require effective communication between professionals, families and the student to monitor progress, plan for learning and assess the effectiveness of interventions.

In addition to assessment that is specifically designed to support individual learners in the classroom, inclusive education systems have well-established provision to support learners during statutory examination procedures. These may include additional time for completion of papers or the use of scribes in formal examination situations.

- Does the school plan for the individual needs of learners who may have difficulties in school?

- Is assessment information used to plan for the needs of the individual who experiences difficulties with learning?

- Are families involved in school assessment procedures?

- Are students involved in the assessment of their own learning?

- Is provision available to support students through the examination process?

2.3 Curriculum modification

Access to learning in schools for all learners is dependent on the ways in which the curriculum is developed, managed and delivered. With increased diversity in school populations, the need to ensure that the curriculum is well balanced, relevant and accessible is critical. Where students have been accepted into mainstream classrooms without modification to the curriculum, they have often failed, and teachers have expressed frustration. Evidence suggests that lessons need to be well differentiated in order to meet the needs of learners who may be working at different levels within the same subject. This requires considerable skill on the part of the teacher and should be an important consideration when designing both initial teacher training and professional development programmes (as above).

Differentiated instruction and delivery of the curriculum through a variety of media and supported in some instances by specialist resources is important if all learners are to be encouraged to learn together. In some instances, access to technology (such as adapted keyboards, switch access or specialist programmes) may be important. These resources clearly depend on funding and economic stability and may be provided more readily in some countries than in others.

Assessment of learning related to the curriculum, including that conducted through statutory examination procedures, is most successful when available at a number of levels. In some administrations, specific vocational pathways enable students to demonstrate practical and applied skills that employers recognise. These assessments often operate in parallel with examinations that aim to assess academic outcomes for those intending to pursue education at a higher level. In such situations, discussions between education officials and employers are necessary in order to both increase understanding of the needs of individuals and inform educators with respect to the demands of workplaces.

In countries where there exists a national curriculum, national education ministries have greater likelihood of managing content and providing advice on how the curriculum might be delivered. Standardisation in the curriculum has been seen to be advantageous in some countries that have made progress in the development of inclusive schools, not least because of the opportunity that exists for teachers across schools to share planning, materials and pedagogical methods. In this situation, it is often more practical for governments at national and local levels to issue advice and guidance to schools (see implementation advice below).

To understand the effectiveness of curriculum implementation for inclusion, a number of key questions should be asked:

- Does national documentation related to the school curriculum at all levels provide advice on access for diverse learners?

- Have teachers received training and advice on differentiating the curriculum for a wide range of learning needs?

- Can students access curriculum assessment at a range of levels?

- Do students have access to appropriate resources and materials to enable curriculum engagement?

- Are national examinations appropriate to the needs of a diverse range of learners?

- Is communication between education policy-makers, schools and employers well focused on ensuring the appropriate delivery and content of the school curriculum?

2.4 Monitored practice

The placement of students with a range of needs in schools does not provide a guarantee of effective or appropriate learning. Particularly in the earliest stages of implementation, where teachers and others are adapting to a change in school population, it is necessary to monitor procedures and support schools in addressing any challenges that emerge in their efforts to promote inclusion. Such monitoring should consider the delivery of the curriculum, the social and academic support provided to students, the competence and confidence of professional staff, and the provision of resources.

Systems for monitoring the effectiveness of schools exist in many countries. For example, in the UK, a system of regular school inspection based on a set of well-established standards enables inspectors to make judgements about the quality of education provided to learners with special needs. In India, block education officers oversee groups of schools, assessing quality and offering advice. Such approaches vary in their ability to identify the effectiveness of the education being provided to the most vulnerable learners, but in many instances they can assist in promoting school improvement.

For monitoring procedures to be effective, it is necessary to be clear about the objectives of

provision made for all learners. Furthermore, it is essential that those conducting monitoring procedures have a good understanding of the needs of those with a diverse range of abilities and backgrounds and an appreciation of the challenges facing teachers.

Sound monitoring must be allied to the provision of clear advice and the ability to access additional support and training for teachers and other professionals working in schools. It should be sensitive to the needs of whole school communities, including teachers, school principals, other professionals, families and students. Reporting on quality without the ability to offer support results in an inspection regime that is critical without being constructive. It is therefore essential to closely associate monitoring access for learners from diverse backgrounds and with a range of needs with ensuring professional development opportunities (see above) and the availability of implementation advice (see below).

In order to ensure a monitoring system that is well focused and supportive of the development of inclusion, a number of key questions should be asked:

- Have written and agreed procedures for the monitoring and assessment of school quality and with reference to inclusion been provided?

- Are those who are conducting monitoring procedures aware of the needs and challenges presented by all learners?

- Do those conducting monitoring of schools have access to and the ability to support schools with additional resources?

- Do those conducting monitoring of schools have access to and the ability to support schools through access to further professional development?

2.5 Implementation advice

Schools across the Commonwealth have made a commitment to increase the enrolment of previously marginalised and disadvantaged learners.

To successfully achieve this, they require clear advice on what their national government expects, along with exemplary materials to enable them to develop appropriate procedures and pedagogical practices.

In some countries, specific advice related to the development of good practice has been welcomed by school principals, teachers and families. For example, the Ministry of Education in New Zealand has developed a website containing advice to teachers and others related to specific disabling conditions, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, curriculum accessibility and appropriate digital technologies to support learners. Where these have been initiated, teachers and other professionals have a clear point of reference from which they can obtain important information. A similar system has been implemented in Malta, where there are examples of advisory documents available for downloading from a ministry website. In the UK and other countries, websites that encourage the sharing of differentiated lesson plans, individual education plans and activities for the support of learners have become a critical source of advice for teachers. Within the same administration, a SEN co-ordinators' on-line forum is accessible as a source of support and advice and has proven popular with schools.

Professionals and families need to know where they can obtain advice on all issues related to assessment, provision, education and support for learners with special needs. This should include contact details of support organisations, for example those related to specific disabilities, how to obtain legal representation and a clear description of the educational rights of children and young adults.

In order to support families and professionals in the delivery of their responsibilities for inclusive education, a number of key questions should be asked:

• Are teachers and other professionals able to access advice related to the education and management of their students with SEN?

• Is advice to parents and families available in clear and accessible language, including local languages where necessary?

• Are there forums and websites where teachers can share advice and practice for the benefit of all who work in schools?

• Do local administrators maintain a compendium of local service providers and parent support groups that families can access easily?

The checklist in Table 2.1 can be used by policy-makers and others who wish to gauge the current level of support for inclusive education within their country, state or local administration. This could form the basis of an action plan to be taken forward in consultation between policy-makers, professionals and families.

It is suggested that, for each of the statements made, those using this list should be required to provide evidence for their assessment.

Table 2.1: Guidelines checklist

Critical factor	In place	Under review	Not yet	Evidence
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT				
All initial teacher training courses have content related to the education and management of students with diverse learning needs				
Students in initial teacher training have practical opportunities to plan for and teach students with diverse needs in a range of educational environments				
Tutors who deliver initial teacher training courses are experienced in teaching students of diverse needs				
Initial teacher education courses provide opportunities for student teachers from all communities, including those with disabilities				
Opportunities are provided for teachers to continue their development as inclusive professionals through post-graduate courses				
There is a range of short-term courses available focused on the needs of specific population groups (e.g. children on the autism spectrum, children of refugees)				
Opportunities exist for teachers to engage in school-based inquiry (e.g. using action research) to gain greater insights into the efficacy of teaching in inclusive classrooms				
Schools and other institutions have named individuals with overall responsibility for managing the effective inclusion of learners of diverse needs				
Professional development opportunities are available for the support and promotion of the role of such professionals in schools				
Schools who deploy paraprofessional staff in their school provide professional development opportunities to enable them to develop knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to learners of diverse needs				
Schools regularly discuss the challenges facing all learners (students, teachers and other staff) and use in-service training to examine and improve their approaches for the promotion of education for all				
Schools provide support for parents in the form of training related to the procedures being deployed with their children				

(Continued)

Table 2.1: Guidelines checklist (contd)

Critical factor	In place	Under review	Not yet	Evidence
ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES				
There is a named individual or organisation that oversees procedures related to the initial assessment and diagnosis of the learning needs of children				
Professionals from across disciplines (education, health and social care) are involved in initial assessment and diagnostic procedures				
There are effective methods of communicating and reporting established between all parties involved in assessment and diagnosis				
The views of parents are sought and respected during assessment and diagnostic procedures				
There is an effective process through which professionals involved in initial assessment and diagnosis communicate their findings to schools				
Schools value and make use of assessment information provided to them during this initial assessment period				
The initial assessment and diagnosis process releases resources and funding for the support of children with special needs in schools				
The school plans for the individual needs of learners who may have difficulties in school				
Assessment information is used to plan for the needs of the individual who experiences difficulties with learning				
Families are involved in school assessment procedures				
Students are involved in the assessment of their own learning				
Provision is available to support students through the examination process				
CURRICULUM MODIFICATION				
National documentation related to the school curriculum at all levels provides advice on access for diverse learners				
Teachers have received training and advice on differentiating the curriculum for a wide range of learning needs				
Students can access curriculum assessment at a range of levels				

(Continued)

Table 2.1: Guidelines checklist (contd)

Critical factor	In place	Under review	Not yet	Evidence
Students have access to appropriate resources and materials to enable curriculum engagement				
National examinations are appropriate to the needs of a diverse range of learners				
Communications between education policy-makers, schools and employers are well focused on ensuring the appropriate delivery and content of the school curriculum				
MONITORED ACCESS				
Written and agreed procedures for the assessment of school quality and with reference to inclusion have been provided				
Those who are conducting monitoring procedures are aware of the needs and challenges presented by all learners				
Those conducting monitoring of schools have access to and the ability to support schools with additional resources				
Those conducting monitoring of schools have access to and the ability to support schools through access to further professional development				
IMPLEMENTATION ADVICE				
Teachers and other professionals are able to access advice related to the education and management of their students with SEN				
Advice to parents and families is available in clear and accessible language, including local languages where necessary				
There are forums and websites available where teachers can share advice and practice for the benefit of all who work in schools				
Local administrators maintain a compendium of local service providers and parent support groups that is easy for families to access				

Chapter 3: Case study model — inclusive education in Commonwealth countries

Most Commonwealth countries have developed and published policies that suggest a move towards inclusive and equitable education. These have been influenced by international agreements such as the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994), the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All (2000) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015).

The success and sustainability of inclusive education is dependent not only on clearly defined policies but most particularly on the ability of education administrators, schools and other professionals to deliver these policies.

The five areas of the policy model outlined in Chapter 2 can be used to evaluate current progress towards the development of inclusive education in each country. The five areas are further expanded with definitions in Figure 3.1 to show priorities for moving from policy to successful implementation of inclusive schooling. Each of the five areas interacts with the others when successful inclusive education is achieved.

The model presented in Figure 3.1 has been used to consider current provision of inclusive education in the selected Commonwealth countries below. It provides an analytical framework for examining five Commonwealth country cases and two non-Commonwealth country cases. Each of the five areas has been applied consistently when considering the current position of Commonwealth countries.

3.1 Case study 1: India

3.1.1 Policy

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) was enacted in August 2009

Figure 3.1. Definitions of five related cells critical for delivery of inclusive education
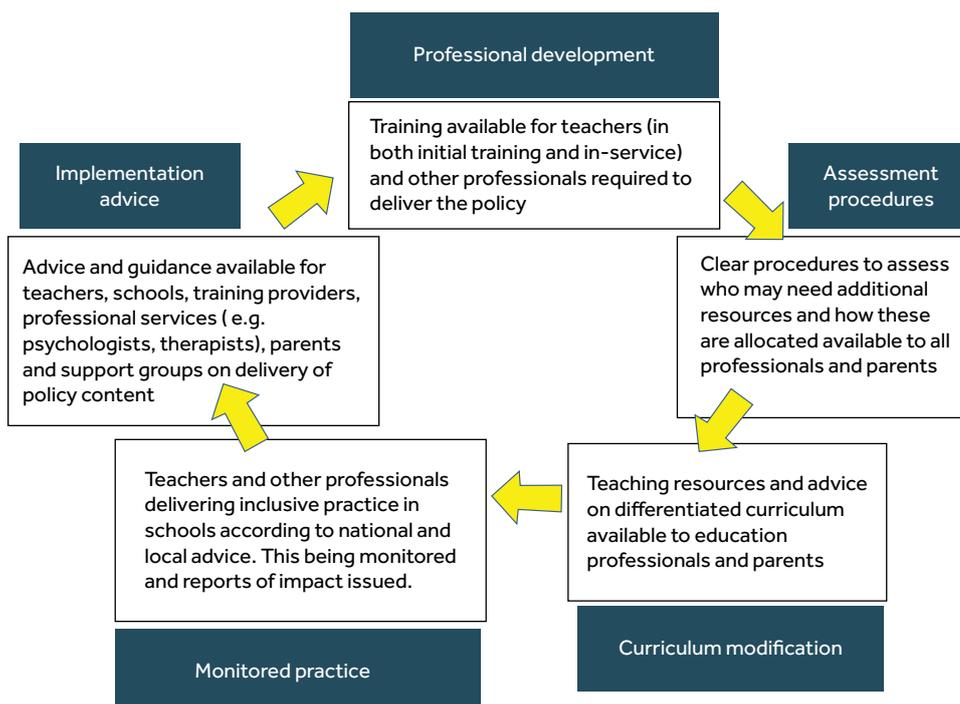
and ensures the right of every child between the ages of six and fourteen to receive an education. The wording and terminology used within the Act are important. It states that 'compulsory education' means that the government is obliged to provide free elementary education and ensure compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education to every child between the ages of six and fourteen years. 'Free' means that parents are not required to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses that may prevent their child from pursuing and completing elementary education.

The RTE has established expected standards with respect to pupil-teacher ratios, the provision of appropriate classrooms, safe drinking water, separate toilets for girls and boys and the number of school attendance days. Every elementary school in India is expected to comply with these standards.

The RTE prohibits discrimination based on gender, caste, class and religion, screening procedures for admission of children and the opening of unrecognised schools. All private schools are required to obtain a certificate of recognition to be allowed to function. Government schools are automatically deemed as recognised. This has been seen as problematic, as the same rules and regulations do not apply to schools under different management structures, with discrepancies between private and government schools. However, the RTE has been successful in increasing school enrolment throughout the country.

The Act mandates for all private schools to reserve 25 per cent of their seats for children belonging to socially disadvantaged and economically weaker sections of their local communities. This has been the most controversial aspect of the Act and, in May 2014, the Supreme Court of India ruled that the RTE was not applicable to Minority institutions including missionary schools and madrassas (the Minority System is further subdivided into Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes based on economic backgrounds).

Some separate schools for children with SEN are provided in India and these come under the direction of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. Whereas, the Ministry of Human Resource Development has responsibility for the promotion of inclusive education in regular schools. The two ministries share responsibility for overseeing the RTE, which has at times led to some overlap and confusion in terms of policy direction and may be seen as inhibiting a smooth passage towards inclusive education.

Responsibility for oversight of implementation of the RTE has been given to the Samagra Shiksha (formerly the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan for Primary Education and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan for High Schools). Duties encompass monitoring and support from pre-school to school-leaving age. The programme is funded by central government and administered at state level.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 is the disability legislation passed by the Indian Parliament to fulfil its obligation to the United Nations and is therefore aligned with the CRPD. It builds on the earlier Persons with Disabilities Act 1995, which aimed to ensure that people with SEN were supported and had their rights met. The 2016 Act covers education, employment, vocational training, reservation and rehabilitation of disabled persons. The implementation of this legislation is of particular importance as young people with SEN or disabilities transition from school to adult life. The recently enacted National Education Policy 2020 has placed a renewed emphasis on the promotion of equity and inclusion. The policy states that no child should be denied the opportunity to learn and excel because of circumstances of birth or background. A significant decline in enrolment of students from socio-economically disadvantaged groups at the secondary level of education is acknowledged alongside recognition that girls and those with disabilities or from Scheduled Tribes are most likely to be out of school. The Government of India has published its intentions within this policy to establish several initiatives, including a Gender Inclusion Fund and increased opportunities for children with disabilities to fully participate in the regular schools.

3.1.2 Professional development

Teacher education in India has been regulated since 1993 by the National Council of Teacher Education. New legislation for the regulation of teachers was introduced in 2014, designed to reflect changes initiated through the RTE 2009 and the National Curriculum Framework 2005. Initial teacher education is dominated by the private sector, with around 85 per cent of teacher education institutions falling within this category. The intensity of focus on the development of an inclusive education system varies significantly across the teacher training sector: there are some examples of innovative thinking and opportunities to develop inclusive pedagogical skills but some institutions give little attention to this area.

The RTE emphasises the need to appoint appropriately trained teachers who have the requisite entry and academic qualifications. However, at the time of the Act's passage, it was estimated that approximately 1.2 million additional teachers would be required to ensure the proposed pupil–teacher ratio in government schools (KPMG, 2016). It was also suggested that there were around half a million unqualified teachers who, under the terms of the Act, would need to obtain the mandatory qualifications for teachers.

The Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) was established as a statutory body in 1993. The RCI Act was amended by Parliament in 2000 to enable the regulation and monitoring of services provided to persons with disabilities and maintenance of a Central Rehabilitation Register of all professionals recognised as qualified to work in the field of rehabilitation and special education. Since 2000, the authority of the RCI has been extended in an effort to become more sensitive to the changing climate towards inclusive education. The RCI has the power to take action against unqualified persons delivering services to persons with disabilities.

Despite having recently acknowledged the importance of the RTE and the need to increase the capacity of mainstream schools to address the needs of a more diverse population, the RCI

continues to offer accreditation to teachers and other rehabilitation professionals who work within a categorised model of provision — for example providing recognition for those working with children on the autism spectrum or with children who have specific learning disabilities.

3.1.3 Assessment procedures

Workers of centres providing care for mothers and young children in rural areas, known as Anganwadi workers, who work under the Ministry of Women Development & Child Welfare have responsibility for identifying children who may have disabilities through a system of home visits. They are responsible for referring such children to the nearest primary health centre. Anganwadi workers have a wide range of duties that include the provision of community support, conducting family surveys, organising pre-school activities, providing health and nutrition advice to families, and educating parents about childcare and development. Many of these professionals have large caseloads and are therefore limited in the intensity of service that they can provide. Changes in the role of Anganwadi workers are expected as the proposed New Education Policy 2020 includes early childhood education in the fold of the Ministry of Education and therefore it will be in the school system.

India operates a system whereby the issuing of a disability certificate that certifies the type and extent of an individual's disability may assist in the procurement of facilities and resources, including scholarships. This certificate is usually issued by medical boards especially formed for this purpose and is often administered through government hospitals.

To gain access to a regular school under the RTE quota scheme, parents are required to complete an application form and to provide evidence of need — that is, the certificate of disability. In some areas of the country, this procedure has operated effectively; however, many parents have encountered difficulties in completing the forms and gathering the documents required by schools, leading to frustration and some children being denied places.

The RTE requires that schools base their assessment procedures on learning outcomes, rather than age or completion of the syllabus. Students may be maintained in lower classes relative to their age, provided that their learning levels are commensurate to that class. The RTE has stressed the need to guard against the stigma of failing children, while also ensuring that they are learning at appropriate levels and being assessed in relation to their individual needs.

The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities has issued guidelines on support to students undertaking written examinations in Grades 10 and 12. This document states that:

Persons with benchmark disability should be given, as far as possible, the option of choosing the mode for taking the examinations i.e. in Braille or on the computer or in large print or even by recording the answer. And that candidates should be allowed to use assistive devices like talking calculators (in cases where calculators are allowed for giving exams), tailor frame, Braille slate, abacus, geometry kit, Braille measuring tape and augmentative communication devices like communication chart and electronic devices.

3.1.4 Curriculum modification

In accordance with the requirements of the RTE, the Government of India has instituted a number of initiatives to assist schools in the modification of the curriculum. These include a reassertion that schools should be organised in a manner that allows for diversity and acknowledges individual learner needs.

There are examples of initiatives to encourage learning for all children. For example, the National Council of Educational Research and Training has initiated a programme called Barkha, which provides a graduated reading series for children who are experiencing learning difficulties. The organisation also advocates and has given advice on the introduction of UDL, and has provided developed manuals on 'Including Children with Special Needs' for both primary and upper primary stage teachers. At present, there is little indication about the adoption of these approaches in schools.

The National Institute of Open Schooling provides vocational, life enrichment and community-oriented courses in addition to general and academic courses at secondary and senior secondary level. It also offers elementary level courses through its Open Basic Education Programmes. The institute defines its mission as being:

- To provide relevant, continuing and holistic education up to pre-degree level through its open and distance learning system;

- To contribute to the universalisation of school education;

- To cater to the educational needs of the prioritised target groups for equity and social justice.

One of the key functions of the institute is to develop an action plan to ensure equitable and inclusive education for all marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

3.1.5 Implementation advice

The use of special educators approved by the RCI is common practice in many schools. These special educators have received additional professional development, and many are skilled in providing support to children with difficulties. In addition, the use of resource rooms for the withdrawal of individuals or small groups of learners with difficulties for additional support from such special educators is seen in many schools.

Samagra Shiksha is a programme aimed at supporting the education sector extending from pre-school to Grade 12. The programme has responsibility for overseeing school effectiveness measured in terms of equal opportunities for schooling and equitable learning outcomes. Samagra Shiksha aims to cover Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste groups, Minority girls and children with SEN, and is seen as a critical approach in the promotion of inclusive schooling. The Samagra Shiksha also has responsibility for overseeing teacher education with respect to minorities and children with SEN.

3.1.6 Monitored practice

A system of administration based on Block Resource Centres and Cluster Resource Centres has been established and is responsible for establishing performance indicators to track and enhance school performance. This includes performance in relation to the RTE, with an expectation that the provision of education for all learners and the quality of resourcing and pedagogy should be reported on. This approach builds on Ministry of Human Resource Development earlier initiatives, including the Project for Integrated Education for the Disabled (1987) and the District Primary Education Programme (1994). Both of these moved the debate on provision for excluded children forward and served to increase the awareness of professionals and policy-makers. In particular, they initiated debates about the nature of schooling and the need to work towards more equitable distribution of resources to enable those learners who had been marginalised to gain greater access to quality schooling. There is little evidence of the effectiveness of this at either state or national levels. The national institutes for various disabilities are established in different parts of the country with the objective of developing service models, human resource development, and research and documentation and dissemination. These institutes conduct pre- and in-service professional development programmes from diploma to Master's level.

3.2 Case study 2: Malta

3.2.1 Policy

In Malta, the Respect for All Framework was established in 2014 and as an addition to the existing National Curriculum Framework 2012, which had established a commitment from government to promote active citizenship and the holistic development of the individual regardless of need or ability. The Respect for All Framework is based on principles of equity, social justice, diversity and inclusivity, and places an emphasis on students learning and living together in Maltese society. It proposes a strategy to ensure that all children,

young people and adults can obtain the necessary skills and attitudes to be active citizens and to succeed at work and in society. Differences in socio-economic, cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, gender and sexual status should pose no obstruction to achieving this aim.

The Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools subtitled 'Route to Quality Inclusion,' has been developed within the context of the values identified in the Respect for All Framework. This document defines inclusive education as promoting a system that is:

> … available and accessible to all learners of all ages, including those facing challenges, such as those with special needs or who have a disability, those originating from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, migrant backgrounds or geographically depressed areas or war-torn zones, regardless of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion of belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

The policy draws on several international commitments to the provision of Education for All, to which Malta is a signatory, including Article 24 of the CRPD. Indeed, it proposes accessible education without discrimination, based on equitable opportunities being provided within an inclusive education system at all levels.

The following four targets have been established and underpin the inclusion policy:

1. All learners have access to opportunities for participation in educational systems and structure.

2. All educators employ effective teaching approaches that are more representative of and responsive to diversity that foster a UDL environment.

3. All schools are supported through well-organised support structures that embrace shared cultures and an ethos of diversity.

4. All educators have access to flexible education and training that supports their work in delivering quality inclusive education.

3.2.2 Professional development

The Faculty of Education at the University of Malta, established in 1978, is the only teacher education institution in Malta. It currently provides a four-year Bachelor of Education degree, a one-year Post-Graduate Certificate in Education and three-year part-time Master of Education and Master of Arts courses for qualified teachers.

In addition to inclusive education training input in initial teacher education, the faculty has developed four areas for Master's programmes to support inclusive education. These include Master of Education programmes in responding to student diversity in inclusive education. The faculty provides professional development specifically for inclusion co-ordinators for primary and secondary school, and a Master's in inclusive education and community, promoted for both teachers and other service providers. An additional higher degree programme has a specific focus on management of children with socio-emotional and behavioural difficulties, which has been identified as an issue for some Maltese schools.

Data collected by researchers for the 'Special Needs and Inclusive Education in Malta External Audit Report' (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2015) noted that a high number of educational professionals were committed to undertaking specialised studies and courses at a distance or overseas as they did not feel adequately prepared through their training to implement inclusive education. Less than 20 per cent considered that their initial training had fully enabled them to effectively meet learners' diverse needs.

3.2.3 Assessment procedures

Malta has a highly structured set of procedures for first identifying individual learning needs and then considering support allocation. The importance of early identification of needs for learners' long-term achievement is recognised. In addition, there is an ambition to improve multi-agency working and ultimately learners' access to inclusive education.

A system operates whereby students can be issued with a formal Statement of Individual Educational Needs, which provides access to additional resources, including in-classroom assistance. The allocation of the Statement of Individual Educational Needs is managed by a Statement Moderating Panel and an Appeals Board, which has the authority to grant recognition of a child as having SEN and to award additional support resources. A system of Learning Support Assistants operates within Maltese schools for the support of children who experience difficulties. These actors work closely with teachers to ensure monitoring of progress and to assist in further identification of specific support needs.

3.2.4 Curriculum modification

The National Curriculum Framework sets out to:

•   Enable young people to work towards the acquisition of a formal qualification;

•   Help young people gain key competences as the foundation for lifelong learning;

•   Provide more flexible and diverse pathways for all learners, increasing engagement in education;

•   Address the gaps in the education system that have led to absenteeism, high rates of early school leaving, and low skills and competences for a proportion of learners; and

•   Create a Learning Outcomes Framework that moves away from standalone subjects to learning areas that form the entitlement for all learners towards inclusivity, citizenship and employability.

Schools are gradually transforming into inclusive settings with a move from a 'one-size-fits-all' educational model towards a system that aims to increase the ability to respond to all learners' diverse needs. Curriculum guidance and expectations have been established with a significant focus on SEN and disability. However, there have been criticisms regarding the narrow focus of the documentation provided. The Malta Union of Teachers' response to

the 2011 National Curriculum Framework (MEDE, 2011) underlined its belief that the document did not consider the wider definition of inclusion (moving beyond disability) and raised the need to distinguish between mixed-ability teaching and inclusion. It further suggested that, for successful implementation, there was a need to support the policy with pedagogical guidance to address the tension between increasing academic outputs and meeting individual learning needs.

3.2.5 Monitored practice

The Directorate of Educational Services and the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education have a statutory responsibility to ensure that Maltese society develops as a more inclusive community. Maltese schools are assessed on 10 specific targets with regard to achieving and creating true inclusive learning-friendly environments.

1. To anticipate, value and support diversity and learner differences;

2. To nurture a conviction among all educators and families that every learner has the capacity to learn and achieve with the appropriate educational strategies;

3. To create a sense of belonging for all learners and their families by developing welcoming, understanding, caring, respectful and safe learning environments;

4. To hold high expectations commensurate with the potential of learners and to provide meaningful and relevant learning experiences that maximise the potential of learners;

5. To focus on strengths, promote established and successful practices, and encourage individual initiatives;

6. To assume collective accountability for all students' learning by encouraging collaborative school cultures and climates while sustaining independent relationships;

7. To co-construct evidence-based solutions to respond to the needs of all learners;

8. To consider alternative educational routes to eliminate barriers within learning environments;

9. To discover flexible and responsive learning communities;

10. To highlight success to enhance motivation and autonomy among all educators and professionals supporting schools

3.2.6 Implementation advice

There is evidence that the majority of stakeholders in Malta believe that inclusive education is the right approach for their education system and that their school policies, in line with national policy, promote inclusive education.

There are five special needs resource centres in Malta and on Gozo, which offer a range of professional services and advice to schools, parents and professionals. This includes the development and overseeing of early intervention programmes, home tuition and hospital education support, assistance with communication technology, and support for children with hearing difficulties. The Ministry for Education and Employment has issued strategy documents aimed at assisting schools in the implementation of policy and practice. These include a National Literacy Strategy, advice on managing behaviour in schools and guidelines on sexuality and relationships education.

3.3 Case study 3: Sierra Leone

3.3.1 Policy

Sierra Leone, situated on the Atlantic coast of Africa with a population of approximately 6.1 million, has a proud history of education but for many years has been devastated by warfare, an outbreak of Ebola and both natural and manmade disasters that have had a negative impact on the country's infrastructure and economic and social stability. As a result of this situation, many children have been denied access to school. Education in Sierra Leone is officially compulsory for all children

between the ages of six and fifteen, though this ambition has not as yet been achieved and many children, particularly those from poorer rural areas and others with disabilities or SEN, are not enrolled in school.

In 2009 the global report *Better Education for All* (Inclusion International, 2009), which reviewed progress towards the achievement of inclusive education and included representation from Sierra Leone, acknowledged that, while significant progress had been made towards achieving universal primary education in the country, much remained to be done. The Government of Sierra Leone, in making a commitment towards achieving a more inclusive approach to education, has recognised the need to establish a policy framework and plan of action to address shortcomings in this area.

Legislation in Sierra Leone has indicated an awareness of the need to address provision for children with disabilities and from other minority groups and demonstrates a commitment to achieving equity. The Education Act 2004 identified the need to address discrimination against women and girls and those with disabilities. The Child Rights Act 2007 reiterated the right of children with disabilities to have access to appropriate care and education in order to develop personal potential and to be self-reliant. The same Act outlawed child labour. The national Education Sector Plan 2014–2018 identified significant weaknesses in provision, including poor academic attainment and an inadequately trained teaching profession, and established a series of objectives for improvement. These included the ability to identify children with SEN and to provide them with suitable support.

More recently, the Ministry for Education Science and Technology has collaborated with several NGOs and national bodies, including the Education for Children with Disabilities Network, to conduct an analysis of national needs with respect to creating a more equitable education system. Following a review of provision conducted in 2017, a new Education Sector Plan 2018–2020 acknowledged that there were more children with disabilities who

did not attend school than there were children with disabilities enrolled. However, a lack of reliable data means that it is impossible to provide accurate figures on how many children are denied their right to education. Overall, this sector plan demonstrates a steady increase in enrolment for the general school population and indicates parity of enrolment between boys and girls during the primary school years. The plan reports progress in the provision of improved physical access to schools for children with disabilities but identifies lack of specialist training for teachers as an obstacle to making progress.

3.3.2 Professional development

Teachers in Sierra Leone are now required to be licensed with the national Teaching Service Commission. Training is available for teachers at the pre-primary and primary levels leading to the award of a Teachers Certificate or the more advanced Higher Teachers Certificate. Bachelor of Education degrees can be awarded to those teachers who complete the appropriate course two years after gaining a Higher Teachers Certificate through colleges affiliated to the University of Sierra Leone.

Specialist training to teach students with SEN or disabilities is limited in the country. The University of Makeni has a Department of Special Education (founded in 2005), which provides a short-term course for teachers in mainstream primary schools in special education. The university has a long-established course in sensory impairments working closely with special schools and NGOs to provide training related to visual and hearing impairments.

Most teachers in Sierra Leone have no specific training in SEN, disability or inclusion.

3.3.3 Assessment procedures

The process of obtaining diagnoses and knowing where to go for support in beginning assessment processes for parents who have a child with a disability is critical. Much of the access to assessment and provision for early support is provided by NGOs, though for families living in poorer communities and particularly those in

country districts such provision is often difficult to obtain. In Freetown, families of children with disabilities or SEN are more likely to receive support, and there are examples of a co-ordinated response between NGOs, government departments and national organisations, including the Education for Children with Disabilities Network.

Few teachers have had training in the management of assessment as a diagnostic tool or in planning appropriate learning programmes for children who are experiencing difficulties with learning. Recent changes in teacher training, and in particular the developments in specialist courses such as that provided at the University of Makeni, are gradually increasing both awareness of SEN and inclusion and teacher competences in identification, planning and monitoring in relation to this population.

The Education Sector Plan 2018–2020 acknowledges that the monitoring of teacher performance and processes for inducting teachers into the profession are not yet established and has begun to develop plans to address this shortcoming.

3.3.4 Curriculum modification

The Education Sector Plan 2018–2020 acknowledged that there is a lack of facilities, including teaching resources and trained teachers, to provide an appropriate curriculum for children with disabilities and SEN. Low literacy rates have been identified as a major challenge for Sierra Leone's schools, and an initiative to identify and address shortcomings in this and other curriculum areas, the Revitalising Education Development in Sierra Leone project, sets out a plan to address these issues.

The Government of Sierra Leone has issued a Framework for Basic Education. This provides guidance on assessment and specifically targets the identification of learning difficulties in children but makes little reference to the full range of SEN. This has been supported by examples of differentiated lesson plans for teachers in primary schools in the areas of mathematics and English.

3.3.5 Implementation advice

Advice related to the implementation of teaching, assessment and curriculum management procedures in relation to special and inclusive education is limited and more likely to be provided by NGOs than through government departments. Sierra Leone has a network of inspectors, but their experience and knowledge of special education and inclusion is limited and has minimal impact on the provision of advice to schools.

Expertise is invested in some specialist schools, particularly those offering provision to children with sensory disabilities. These schools have access to good professional support and advice from charitable organisations and NGOs but limited support from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

3.3.6 Monitored practice

The Education Sector Plan 2018–2020 states that all schools should be registered and that those that do not currently have government approval should be closed or brought under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. Sierra Leone deploys a Quality Assurance Directorate/Inspectorate to oversee performance and quality in schools, but as yet this has had little focus or impact on provision for students with SEN or disabilities.

3.4 Case study 4: The Bahamas

3.4.1 Policy

In 2011, The Bahamas' Ministry of Education implemented a policy of inclusive education throughout its primary and secondary schools. This initiative builds on the Education Act 1996, which guarantees free education to all children between the ages of five and sixteen years regardless of socio-economic background, gender, physical or intellectual ability.

In accordance with this policy objective, the government issued an inclusive education manual in 2013, developed by the National Standards Committee for Inclusive Education, which operates

under the auspices of The Bahamas Ministry of Education. This focuses on six areas aimed at achieving a more equitable education system: identification; planning; an individual education programme and individual family service plan; parent participation; access to specialised supports; and provision and accommodation.

The government has acknowledged that the public school system has not yet developed to a point where it is possible to address the primary and secondary education needs for all children and adolescents in The Bahamas.

3.4.2 Professional development

The Ministry of Education has established partnerships with the University of the Bahamas for teacher certification in order to ensure an appropriately trained teacher workforce. In 2011, the Ministry offered grants to public educators to pursue Master of Science degrees in reading, with a focus on its importance in increasing national literacy and thereby promoting inclusive education.

The Ministry has also promoted teaching strategies and methodologies for teachers working in inclusive classrooms. For example, it provides assistance for children with special needs in regular classes, such as those who have visual impairments. The government also supports a Special Service Unit that organises workshops and training opportunities for administrative personnel and new and serving teachers. To support pedagogical practices for the promotion of inclusion, the Ministry provides teachers with time and opportunities to work with colleagues, to revise the curriculum and to reflect current trends in good practice.

A National Task Force on Disabilities and a National Commission on Special Education have been established to examine all aspects of special education initiatives and to provide guidance, support and supervision to schools and other educational institutions across The Bahamas to ensure compliance with current educational laws. These bodies also examine teaching and learning requirements, while designing and developing curriculum materials for national use in inclusive classrooms.

3.4.3 Assessment procedures

A Special Services Unit within the Ministry of Education assists students whose physical or intellectual abilities present challenges in terms of accessing mainstream schooling. A range of services have been established, co-ordinated by the Special Services Unit; these aim to provide guidance and counselling, support to attend school, speech therapy, school psychology and support teachers. In particular, the Special Services Unit provides speech, auditory and visual screening; physical health interventions; psycho-motor evaluations; and diagnosis and remediation of learning and behavioural problems.

This service also provides support for physically and sensory challenged students, parental and family awareness, and teacher education. Teams of service providers, including special education teachers, school psychologists, guidance officers and school social workers, are available throughout the school system to provide support to staff in all schools.

In order to access these services, a child must have been assessed as requiring special education as a result of his or her different abilities and learning style. Parents of children with complex needs can contact the Unit to seek help with school admission in approved special education schools in their area. Children with any of the following diagnoses may be deemed eligible for special education: autism, traumatic brain injury, intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, specific learning disabilities, speech or language impairment, hearing impairment including deafness, visual impairment including blindness and partial sight, orthopaedic impairment, other health impairment, multiple disabilities and developmental delay.

3.4.4 Curriculum modification

In recent years, the Government of The Bahamas has moved away from a special needs education deficit model approach with specialised institutions

towards the promotion of inclusive education in mainstream schools. This initiative has focused on inclusive practice in part through support provided by trained teachers working in resource rooms.

Ongoing curriculum reform aims to promote inclusion in The Bahamas taking account of the diversity of cultures, ethnicities and learning disabilities that exist within classrooms. The government has stated an aim to develop a curriculum that is student-centred and caters to children of all abilities. Current work in this regard is focused on ensuring that the curriculum includes the provision of technology and other specialist equipment for the visually and hearing impaired as well as for learners who experience cognitive difficulties.

There has been a change of emphasis away from simply considering the academic performance of high achievers in national examinations towards development of a curriculum that allows students with diverse needs to participate in public examinations. To facilitate meeting the needs of children with SEN, the Ministry of Education has involved special education teachers as experts on curriculum development in revision teams in the drafting of curricular documents.

3.4.5 Monitored practice

The Research and Planning Section within the Ministry of Education has responsibility for overseeing the implementation of education policy and compiling data on the performance of all aspects of the education system. This includes monitoring progress towards the achievement of the Ministry's policies on inclusive education.

The Research and Planning Section has developed and utilised a series of questionnaires for teachers working in special schools. This provides comprehensive statistical information related to provision, nature of the student population and teaching staff. Information from these instruments is used to inform planning and professional development. However, a specific focus on inclusive education has not yet been developed.

3.4.6 Implementation advice

The government has recognised that it is possible to further develop inclusive education through capacity development for better use of human and material resources, provision of adequate infrastructure, parental support, and increased funding. The roles and responsibilities of teachers have been clearly defined but there is limited availability of specific advice on the development and management of inclusive classrooms. Similarly, there is a lack of specific guidance material on approaches for the promotion of inclusive classrooms, although the establishment of professional services to support schools has moved closer towards ensuring teacher confidence in implementing a more inclusive curriculum.

3.5 Case study 5: New Zealand

3.5.1 Policy

Inclusive education in New Zealand is established as a right for all learners under the Education Act 1989, which states that 'people who have special education needs (whether because of disability or otherwise) have the same rights to enrol and receive education at state schools as people who do not.'

Inclusive education is defined within New Zealand policy and asserts that all learners are welcomed by their local early learning service and school, and are supported to play, learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of life at the school or service. Guidelines produced by the Government of New Zealand recognise the advantages of inclusive education as providing opportunities for all learners to:

- Foster a learning culture of respect and belonging;

- Positively affect understandings and expectations about inclusion in their community and in wider society;

- Learn about and accept individual differences, lessening the impact of harassment and bullying;

- Be both teacher and learner (tuakana teina model);[1]

- Experience diversity as a source of strength and a catalyst for innovation;

- Develop wide-ranging friendships;

- Develop strengths and gifts, with high expectations for each child beyond formalised assessment;

- Work on individual goals and pathways while participating in the life of the learning community alongside their peers;

- Involve family, whānau[2] and community in their education and in the activities of their local school or early learning service.

The New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016–2026 is an important document that is founded on a set of three guiding principles:

1. The principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi;[3]

2. The principles of the CRPD;

3. Ensuring disabled people are involved in decision-making that has an impact on them.

It has two approaches:

1. Investing in our whole lives: a long-term approach;

2. Specific and mainstream services: a twin-track approach.

The Disability Strategy refers to the need to ensure an inclusive learning community, one that:

- Equips educators with knowledge and strategies to deliver a rich, engaging curriculum in an adaptive and personalised way;

- Harnesses collective knowledge, wisdom and experiences of parents and whānau and members of the community;

- Actively seeks, values and respects diverse representation, views and experiences in learners, staff and boards;

- Builds collective curiosity, intelligence, inquiry and critical thinking to engage all learners in meaningful learning.

3.5.2 Professional development

Professional development with a focus on inclusive education is available at a range of levels. Approved teacher education providers offer undergraduate degrees of three or four years, undergraduate diplomas of three years (in early childhood education with some special and inclusive education content) and one-year graduate diplomas for those have already reached a graduate level. Courses are delivered on both a full-time and a part-time basis.

Several universities offer postgraduate degrees that focus specifically on SEN and inclusion.

Paraprofessional staff can gain a Certificate in Special Needs and Teacher Support that enables them to follow and implement inclusive education plan goals and assist teachers of children with special needs in class. The Ministry of Education has emphasised that all qualified teachers must have an understanding of and competence in addressing diversity in classrooms. They are required to demonstrate:

- Effective pedagogy;

- Teacher actions promoting student learning, which include being able to:

  - Create a supportive learning environment;

  - Encourage reflective thought and action;

  - Enhance the relevance of new learning;

  - Facilitate shared learning;

  - Make connections to prior learning and experience;

  - Provide sufficient opportunities to learn;

  - Inquire into the teaching-learning relationship

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1   Tuakana teina: the relationship between members of older and younger generations in a learning context.
2   Whānau is a term referring to an extended family.
3   Te Tiriti o Waitangi is New Zealand's founding document. It is an agreement, in Māori and English, that was made between the British Crown and about 540 Māori rangatira (chiefs) and informs national laws and policy today.

New Zealand has adopted a code, established by the Teaching Council, that is designed to inspire and guide teachers through four principles:

. **Whakamana**: empowering all learners to reach their highest potential by providing high-quality teaching and leadership

. **Manaakitanga**: creating a welcoming, caring and creative learning environment that treats everyone with respect and dignity

. **Pono**: showing integrity by acting in ways that are fair, honest, ethical and just

. **Whanaungatanga**: engaging in positive and collaborative relationships with learners, their families and whānau; colleagues; and the wider community

3.5.3 Assessment procedures

Education in New Zealand has adopted principles of assessment for learning, which expect that assessment be formative, based on the needs of individual learners and aimed at providing all necessary support for effective academic and social progress. This is based on the concept that students who understand what is required of them and are involved in planning and assessing their learning will achieve effective learning outcomes.

Assessment for learning is seen as promoting inclusive principles by demanding a process whereby teachers use assessment information to plan and adjust their teaching strategies according to learner needs. Where deemed necessary, students are provided with individual education plans. These are devised in partnership with the students and their parents, family, whānau and community, and incorporate goals relating to the National Standards associated with the National Curriculum.

3.5.4 Curriculum modification

New Zealand has adopted a National Curriculum that allows flexibility for Māori schools to apply the principles of Māori culture through modifications established, in an approach called Te Marautanga o

Aotearoa. The Ministry of Education documentation provides detailed guidance to assist schools in curriculum design, implementation and review.

With specific reference to ensuring a curriculum that is inclusive, the Ministry of Education has provided advice on the presentation of a differentiated approach and the development of a UDL framework, intended to enable schools to offer an open and accessible environment for all students. A broad range of guidance materials available to all schools supports an emphasis on enabling learners to independently customise the learning environment to meet their own needs.

The National Curriculum is mandatory for all English-medium state schools and is to be accessible to all students 'irrespective of their gender, sexuality, ethnicity, belief, ability or disability, social or cultural background, or geographical location'. Schools that offer Māori-medium programmes may if they wish use Te Marautanga o Aotearoa as the basis of their curriculum. The National Curriculum aims to reflect New Zealand's cultural diversity and values and the histories and traditions of all its people, and thereby to respect individual and community learning needs.

3.5.5 Monitored practice

Students with SEN or disabilities are monitored and their progress is reported in the same manner as for all learners in a school. Each school is governed by an elected Board of Trustees, which includes the school principal. These boards are responsible for reporting on school-level progress and achievement for all students, including those with SEN, in relation to the National Standards. In the case of students with more significant learning difficulties, the boards may issue separate reports focused on their individual needs and progress against any targets that might have been agreed.

3.5.6 Implementation advice

Advice for teachers and parents is available from a Specialist Teacher Outreach Service, which works to support students to receive additional funding based on their needs. To obtain this form of support,

students must be enrolled in their local school and have been assessed and recognised as requiring assistance from the Outreach Service. Specialist teachers work as part of a support team, which includes the student's class teachers, support staff, and family or whānau. They may engage in a range of activities, which include:

- Teaching students in class or in small groups;

- Assessing a student's learning needs;

- Putting together individualised student programmes;

- Monitoring the student's progress and planning their next steps;

- Modelling different strategies for teachers and teacher aides;

- Helping teachers work with the curriculum;

- Reworking materials so they meet a student's needs;

- Asking for support from the Ministry of Education;

- Contributing to a student's individual education plan.

The New Zealand Ministry of Education maintains an inclusion website that contains practical advice and guidance on procedures and available support for teachers, parents and communities.

Chapter 4: Case studies—non-Commonwealth countries

4.1 Case study 1: Republic of Ireland

4.1.1 Policy

In the Republic of Ireland, education is compulsory from age six to sixteen and comprises primary and post-primary education. Though this is not compulsory, children can be enrolled in infant classes from age four and this option is popular, with almost all five year olds attending infant classes in primary schools.

The 1998 Education Act provides the statutory basis for education provision for children of compulsory schooling age and states that it is the responsibility of the government '… to ensure… that there is made available to each person resident in the State, including a person with a disability or who has other special educational needs, support services and a level and quality of education appropriate to meeting the needs and abilities of that person.'

The Equal Status Act 2000 further endorses this, requiring schools to provide reasonable accommodation including special treatment, facilities or adjustments to meet the needs of the child with disability if that child would find it unduly difficult to participate in school without it.

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 is the most significant piece of legislation passed in Ireland with, inclusion as a core principle as stated in the Preamble, which identifies a responsibility:

> To provide that the education… shall, wherever possible, take place in an inclusive environment with those who do not have such needs, to provide that people with special educational needs shall have the same right to avail of, and benefit from, appropriate education as do their peers who do not have such needs.

and

> To assist children with special educational needs to leave school with the skills necessary to participate,

> to the level of their capacity, in an inclusive way in the social and economic activities of society and to live independent and fulfilled lives.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), under the auspices of the Government of Ireland, was created to oversee:

- The planning and co-ordination of education for children with SEN and making sure that a continuum of provision is available;

- Direction and authorisation of research related to SEN;

- Providing advice for the minister for education and skills on special education;

- Distributing information on special education to stakeholders and interested parties;

- Conferring with voluntary bodies to enable their contribution to the development of policy advice by the NCSE;

- Evaluating the educational provision available for adults with disabilities (further, higher and/or continuing education) and informing educational institutions about best practice in relation to the education of adults with disability

In addition, the NCSE has explicit responsibility for assessment and employs Special Education Needs Organisers, who work regionally and have a role to support the assessment and resource allocation process in schools.

The majority of children with SEN attend mainstream schools, though within those schools some are withdrawn to resource rooms for intensive support from specialist teachers. Special schools for children with complex needs such as sensory impairments or severe intellectual impairments are to be found across Ireland.

4.1.2 Professional development

Initial teacher education in Ireland leading to a Bachelor of Education qualification is long established, and all courses are required to have an element that addresses SEN. Universities across the

country offer higher degrees with a focus on SEN, and there are additional specialist diploma courses, which in some instances focus on specific needs such as autism spectrum disorder or dyslexia. On these latter courses, there is a requirement for a practicum element, which provides students with an opportunity to apply the pedagogical skills taught on courses.

Training is available through the university system for paraprofessionals providing classroom support to children with SEN. The role of Special Needs Assistants is to support care and personal needs, though increasingly they have become involved directly in pedagogical activities. Some have been recently redesignated as Inclusion Support Assistants.

4.1.3 Assessment procedures

Procedures for assessment leading to the allocation of resources are clearly defined within the Irish education system. The National Educational Psychology Service plays a key role in statutory assessment and works closely with professionals from the Health Executive to conduct initial assessments of children who may need additional support. The NCSE allocates resources, including additional teaching support, to schools based on assessment advice provided.

Within schools, a rigorous system of both formal and non-formal assessment is in place. This process includes the deployment of standardised tests, whole school screening, diagnostic testing of literacy skills and whole school formative assessment measures. Assessment within both primary and post-primary schools has three main purposes: whole school screening tests, diagnostic testing and assessment for learning practices.

4.1.4 Curriculum modification

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment has overall responsibility for the school curriculum; aided by an inspection service, it oversees a curriculum that has a specific set of aims:

- To enable the child to live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual;

- To enable the child to develop as a social being through living and co-operating with others and so contribute to the good of society;

- To prepare the child for further education and lifelong learning.

Elements of the curriculum are defined in documentation that includes details on how to provide a modified and differentiated curriculum for learners with SEN. Arrangements for additional support for examinations are clearly defined.

Towards the conclusion of post-primary education, students undertake programmes of learning leading either to a Leaving Certificate (Established), through which they study at least five subjects, a Leaving Certificate (Applied), focused on the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge, or a Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, which combines academic strengths with an additional emphasis on engagement with work, enterprise and the community. This tripartite approach to final assessment has provided flexibility for many students with SEN.

4.1.5 Monitored practice

An inspectorate body in Ireland has responsibility for conducting whole school evaluations that include an assessment of provision for learners with SEN and those from minority communities. In addition, schools have been provided with advice on self-assessment procedures. The inspectorate has produced a series of documents providing commentary and advice on SEN provision within Ireland.

4.1.6 Implementation advice

The NCSE has established an Inclusive Education Framework, which functions as an interactive tool to assist schools to plan, measure and improve how pupils with SEN are supported. This document provides a five-step process, starting with preparation for the developmental pathway and

moving through self-analysis and reflection, action planning, implementation and review. In addition to detailed advice on each stage, a series of templates have been issued to support schools.

NCSE also has a brief for commissioning research and issuing reports identifying strengths and needs within the Irish special education system. These have recently included reports on initial teacher education for pupils with SEN, an evaluation of provision for students with autism spectrum disorders and an evaluation of assistive technology.

4.2 Case study 2: Kingdom of Cambodia

4.2.1 Policy

Inclusive education is at an early stage of development in Cambodia, though progress has been made since the end of a devastating period of civil war and social unrest.

In 2008, the Government of Cambodia issued a Policy on Education for Children with Disabilities, which acknowledged shortcomings in the availability of quality education for some students and set out its intentions to ensure improved access for all learners. Through the Policy, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport aimed to provide access to basic education for all learners, regardless of economic status, gender, geographic location, physical appearance or ethnicity. The policy stated an intention to provide a strategic plan to ensure that all Cambodian children would be guaranteed the right to a nine-year basic education.

The policy aimed to:

• Increase awareness and acceptance of disabilities among communities, institutions and stakeholders;

• Provide early identification and intervention through rehabilitation services, such as physiotherapy, and health services;

• Provide quality education, life skills or vocational training to children and youth with disabilities equitably and effectively;

• Increase enrolment, promotion and survival rates in schools.

The Education Strategic Plan 2019–2023, issued by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, reasserts the intention to develop a 'quality, equitable and inclusive education system'. This plan has as an immediate objective to ensure that all Cambodian children and youth have equal opportunities to access quality education, consistent with the Constitution and the Government of Cambodia's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, regardless of social status, geography, ethnicity, religion, language, gender or physical need.

The document identifies five policy priorities:

• All girls and boys have access to quality early childhood care and education and pre-primary education, and complete free, equitable and quality basic education (primary and lower-secondary) with relevant and effective learning.

• All girls and boys complete upper-secondary education with relevant learning outcomes, and a substantial number of youth have increased access to affordable and quality technical and vocational education.

• Equal access is ensured for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

• All youth and adults achieve literacy and numeracy, and learners in all age groups have increased lifelong learning opportunities.

• Governance and management of education improve at all levels.

4.2.2 Professional development

Courses in education, including those leading to undergraduate and post-graduate degrees, are offered in several universities and colleges of education within Cambodia. Recent developments have included the introduction of four-year courses in Teacher Education Colleges in parts of Cambodia; however, these offer limited content in the areas of inclusive or special education.

Some NGOs provide in-service training related to SEN, disability and inclusion, though there is no

co-ordinated system for increasing overall teacher competences in this area.

4.2.3 Assessment procedures

Procedures for the assessment and identification of disabilities in children are not widely available outside of the cities of Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, where a number of NGOs provide assessment services and support for parents.

Within the country, nine categories of disability have been recognised: visual impairment, hearing impairment, speech impediment, movement disorder, behavioural disorder, learning disability, intellectual disability, emotional disturbance and others (ill defined but appears to include those autism spectrum disorders).

In schools, teachers carry out the assessment of disability, using a checklist prepared by the Special Education Division of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. In some instances, these assessments can be used to access additional support or resources.

4.2.4 Curriculum modification

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport oversees the curriculum framework for general education and technical education. This document identifies those subjects that are mandatory at each phase of education. The goal of the framework is to ensure all citizens develop their full potential. An aim is that every Cambodian should progress with balanced physical capabilities, knowledge, behaviours and love of nation and humankind so they can contribute to national development and Cambodia's integration in the international community.

Curriculum documentation within Cambodia makes no reference to potential modifications,

adaptations or exemptions for students with disabilities or SEN.

4.2.5 Monitored practice

The Education Quality Assurance Department within the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport is responsible for monitoring quality and standards in schools through a process of school inspection. Its brief is to:

*   Conduct studies, research, analysis and evaluation on the quality and effectiveness of the education sector;

*   Monitor the implementation of curricula and use of learning materials in all public and private education institutions;

*   Monitor and evaluate the implementation or fulfilment of national education standards by education institutions;

*   Measure equivalency levels and capacity;

*   Monitor youth- and sport-related skills application;

*   Monitor and propose solutions to irregularities related to education.

There is no specific reference within inspection documentation to monitoring of provision for students with SEN or disabilities.

4.2.6 Implementation advice

Advice and support for the care and management of children with SEN and disabilities are provided in Cambodia by a range of local, national and international NGOs. The intentions of the Government of Cambodia are clearly articulated in the Education Strategic Plan but formal advice for teachers on inclusive educational practices have not as yet been issued.

Chapter 5: A strategic framework for inclusive education

The successful development of a strategy to promote inclusive education is dependent on the establishment of a strong foundation of principles and a shared understanding of the purpose and desired outcomes of education for all. Evidence suggests that some countries have achieved a degree of success in the promotion of a more equitable education system but that this has at times been limited to a specific phase of education and that a lack of co-ordination across services and educational phases has limited progress towards achieving inclusion in society.

For a strategy to succeed, it is vital to develop and maintain effective channels of communication between all service users and providers. The lives of learners with disabilities or SEN and their families are generally touched by many professionals throughout their education and beyond. A failure of communication between these professionals and with families has, at times, resulted in a breakdown of services and can be a major impediment to the achievement of an inclusive service.

Offering a professional service in support of the education of learners from any marginalised group, including those with disabilities and SEN, requires a strategic framework that is based on partnership and respect at all stages of the provision. This must begin from the point at which a child and their family receive an additional assessment and diagnosis of need, and be maintained until such a time as the learner has achieved a level of independence whereby they are able to make decisions about their own management needs.

Figure 5.1 presents a framework that indicates the link between phases of education; critical management and development procedures; key stakeholders and providers; and those attitudes, knowledge attributes and skills required for the effective development of inclusive practice. The model presented here for a strategic framework

Figure 5.1. Model for a strategic framework in support of inclusive education
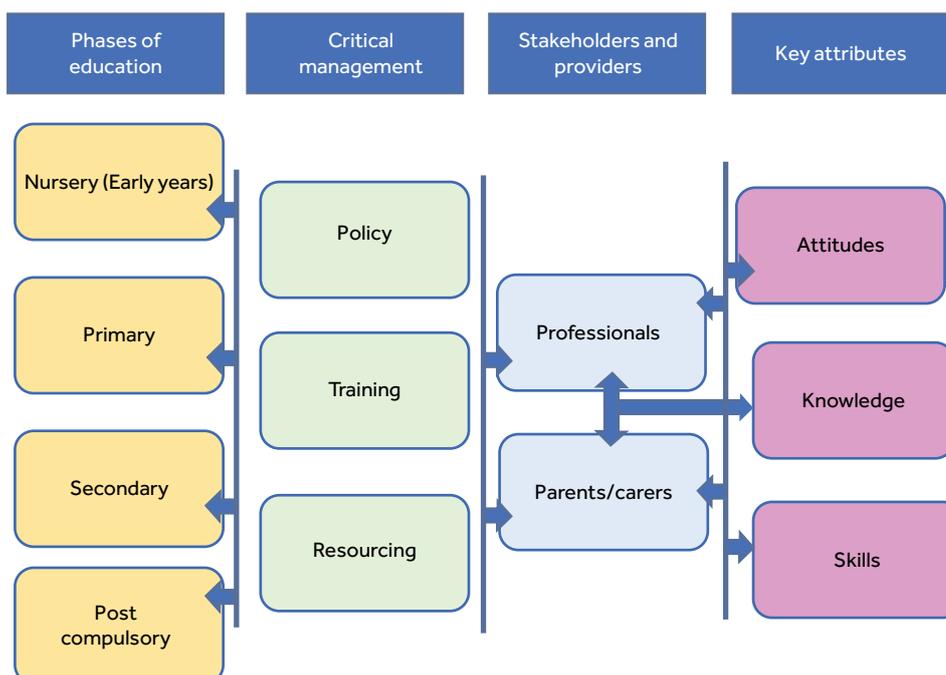
needs to be considered alongside the guidelines for policy-makers in Chapter 2, which suggest ways to establish and evaluate policy for practice.

This chapter describes the interrelationship between these critical areas and provides examples on how best to work with them in order to be able to produce a strategy for the development of inclusive education that is democratic and practicable. The chapter should be read in conjunction with the guidelines for a national situational analysis in Chapter 2, which may be used to inform progression through this strategic framework.

5.1 Inclusion through the phases of education

There is evidence to suggest that, as some students with disabilities progress through the phases of education, the likelihood of them dropping out increases (Wood et al., 2017; Schwalb, 2018). For those with the most complex learning needs, their attainment levels begin to fall further behind those of their peers as curriculum challenges increase and the need to address abstract concepts in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and other subjects becomes greater. Periods of transition, and especially that from primary to secondary education, are seen as a time of potential challenge for students, parents and teachers (Hebron, 2018; Van Mieghem et al., 2020). In some instances, during these critical times of transition, students who have progressed with difficulties through primary school transfer to local segregated specialist provision. This situation often results in a breakdown of relationships with their peers and may also lessen opportunities to be taught by specialist subject teachers and to have access to specialist secondary teaching resources. In the case of a suitable special school not being available, the student may drop out of the education system and fail to complete statutory requirements for schooling.

The transition from secondary to post-compulsory education may also present challenges. However, where students successfully complete secondary education, there are often opportunities for employment or vocational training. Going to university almost halves the gaps in employment rates between disabled and non-disabled people in the UK (Office for Students, 2019). A concerted effort to increase participation of students from poorer backgrounds and those from minority groups or with disabilities has had some impact in the UK. The Higher Education Statistics Agency (2020) reports that the percentages from low-participation neighbourhoods have risen steadily over time across the UK, and that there have been increases in the numbers of students with disabilities and those from ethnic minorities gaining university places. Similar progress has been reported from Australia (Australia Disability Clearing House, 2020), New Zealand (Government of New Zealand, 2020) and Canada (Government of Canada, 2019). Where students gain appropriate school qualifications, university places may be on offer, though access to university for students with disabilities is variable across and within countries. In India, for example, the Higher Education for Persons with Special Needs scheme has enabled a number of students with disabilities to gain access (University Grant Commission, 2014) but this has been inconsistently applied and has had minimal impact in some states. In other countries, such as South Africa, prejudicial attitudes to disability, poor physical access and a lack of awareness of the need to differentiate instruction and assessment procedures have deterred many students from entering higher education (Mutanga, 2018).

Education in the early years has been acknowledged as a critical phase for all children, including those with disabilities or learning difficulties. Early intervention services that work closely with families and co-ordinate education with health and social provision have been well developed for many years in some countries, such as Canada and New Zealand. Elsewhere, for example in Botswana and some Caribbean countries, there have been positive developments towards achieving access and inclusion in early years provision, though here developments are inconsistent and the need for additional professional development has been emphasised (Chhabra et al., 2018; Kinkead-Clark et al., 2019).

Progress in relation to enrolment in all phases of education is dependent on the development and maintenance of effective critical management structures (Column 2 in Figure 5.1). Many Commonwealth countries have declared their intentions to achieve universal primary education through the issuing of policy, for example Kenya and Tanzania (Zigler et al., 2017), Sierra Leone (Rose et al., 2019) and Trinidad and Tobago (Charran and Seetahal, 2018). Some have made clear statements about issues of transition and progression for students with disabilities or those from minority groups. This is an area that has caused concern for many teachers, students and families. As the demands of the curriculum increase at the secondary school level, many students with disabilities drop out and the ability of national education systems to address this issue is variable (Jindal-Snape et al., 2019).

5.2 Policy for inclusion

Policy is important in determining national intentions and establishing a route forward to inclusion. However, in many instances where policies have been developed, they have been limited in their impact because of a lack of effective guidelines for implementation. Where progress has been made towards the achievement of a more equitable education system, policy has been accompanied by investment in and changes to the provision of training of teachers and other professionals and the resourcing of schools. Furthermore, effective policy-makers have ensured that all involved in the delivery of an education service have a shared conception of inclusion and of the purpose and intended outcomes of the policy during both development and implementation (Meijer and Watkins, 2016).

5.3 Training for inclusion

The move towards inclusive schooling has required a significant shift in attitudes towards previously marginalised and disadvantaged groups of learners. Research has indicated that initial teacher training courses play an important role, not only

in providing teachers with the skills needed to work in heterogeneous classrooms but also in shaping attitudes and beliefs about students who experience learning difficulties (Sharma et al., 2008). Changing attitudes and expectations has been a challenge in all countries, and continues to be a critical factor in many. In India, Das and colleagues (Das et al., 2013; Bhatnager and Das, 2014) have identified negative attitudes towards children with disabilities as a contributory factor in the slow rate of achieving inclusive schooling, and acknowledge that professional development has a key role to play in addressing this issue. Studies conducted elsewhere, for example in Kenya (Kiriungi et al., 2014), Pakistan (Ismail et al., 2016), South Africa (Makoelle, 2014) and Trinidad (Parey, 2019), have reached similar conclusions.

In countries where inclusive education has progressed successfully, the professional development of teachers has been significant in changing attitudes and equipping teachers and other professionals with the skills, knowledge and understanding that is required for teaching students with diverse needs and abilities. Furthermore, such training has considered the needs of teachers at all phases of education (Pit-ten Cate et al., 2015; Crispel and Kasperski, 2019) and has been provided not only during initial training but also throughout each stage of the teacher's career (Forlin and Sin, 2017).

In some administrations, the use of specialist teachers in school means individuals are equipped with specific training and skills to manage a range of student needs. However, where this approach has been adopted, this often results in the investment of expertise in an individual rather than in equipping all staff with a level of competence to provide for all learners. Whole school collaborative training models have proven effective in enabling a more consistent approach to teaching students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms (Waitoller and Kozleski, 2010). The development of inclusive education demands that all professionals who come into contact with learners be appropriately trained and encouraged to take responsibility for all students. This includes

those paraprofessionals who support students in classrooms and therapists who may engage with students on only an occasional basis.

The development of inclusive learning environments should also provide development opportunities for parents, to gain greater understanding of those approaches that may enable their children to gain greater independence and to learn more effectively (Okyere et al., 2019. Where approaches have been adopted to provide training to both professionals and parents, together this has often yielded positive results (Francis et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2018).

5.4 The resourcing of inclusive education

Socio-economic conditions vary considerably across countries, with resources inequitably distributed internationally. It should therefore be recognised that the pace of change towards a more inclusive education system will differ across Commonwealth member countries. Change cannot come about without adequate resourcing, and it is essential that any development plans give proper consideration to the financial, material and personnel resources required at each stage (Johnstone et al., 2019).

The Salamanca Statement (1994) recognised the need for clear statements of intent with regard to financing inclusive schooling in stating that changes in policies and priorities would not be addressed without a reappraisal of the resourcing requirements of schools and those who support them. It has been suggested that local situations may best be addressed through decentralised approaches that provide some flexibility with respect to distribution and use of resources. However, such an approach requires careful monitoring to ensure accountability and fair distribution (Meijer and Watkins, 2019).

The barriers to implementing inclusive education in economically disadvantaged countries have been well documented (Schuelka, 2018). It is widely recognised that change in this area requires a complete reappraisal of how education is funded.

Examples of innovation in this area, such as the Disability-Inclusive Education in Africa Programme (World Bank, 2018), demonstrate how partnerships between governments and private education can enable a realignment of financial management and distribution to ensure more efficient use of resources. However, such large-scale programmes are not readily available in all situations, and it is possible that, in the post-COVID world, there will be calls for a further redistribution of existing resources, with a negative impact on the development of inclusive schooling.

In order to move ahead in this area, it is essential that policy-makers and education officers at national and local level re-examine the use of existing resources to maximise their effectiveness in promoting a more equitable education system. In 2013, UNICEF provided advice on how the more efficient use of resources might enable local development of provision to support a more inclusive learning environment. It was suggested that progress had been made in countries with scarce resources through a process of developing:

- Multi-age and multi-ability classrooms;

- Initial literacy in mother tongue;

- Trainer-of-trainer models for professional development;

- Linking of students in pre-service teacher training with schools;

- Converting of special schools into resource centres that provide expertise and support to clusters of regular schools;

- Capacity-building of parents and linking of community resources;

- Use of children themselves in peer programmes.

Such arrangements may be possible in many circumstances but will require a significant commitment on the part of policy-makers at national and local levels.

5.5 Utilising the strategic framework for inclusive education model

The strategic framework for inclusive education model presented in Figure 5.1 demonstrates how the four factors — phases of education; critical management; stakeholders and providers; and key attributes — are interlinked and interdependent. In order to develop an education system that is inclusive and equitable, it is essential that this interdependency be recognised and that all plans for development and provision be addressed holistically.

In many societies, schools are the most inclusive and accepting institutions with respect to provision for marginalised communities, including persons with disabilities. There is evidence to suggest that, in many education systems, teacher attitudes towards disadvantaged and minority groups and individuals have improved. However, this varies according to the age and experience of teachers, and the phase of education in which the student with disability is located (Ahsan et al., 2012; Costello and Boyle, 2013).

Professional development, and particularly pre-service training for teachers, has been shown to have a positive impact on teacher attitudes and

on the development of skills and knowledge in the area of inclusive education. Improving teacher attitudes, skills and knowledge is a critical factor but it will not succeed in achieving more inclusive provision unless the same attention is provided to other professionals and focused across all phases of education. The establishment of a critical link between ensuring positive attitudes and developing skills and knowledge and the roles played by managers demands the collaborative involvement of all interested parties in a framework for the development of inclusive education, as Figure 5.2 shows.

Policy development for inclusion is well advanced in many countries, influenced by international agreements. Within the framework put forward here, it is essential to use policy effectively to generate action for the benefit of all service users and providers. The link between policy, resources and the actions taken to promote inclusive education is clearly established within the framework model in Figure 5.1 and is further elaborated in Figure 5.3.

The model presented here for a strategic framework needs to be considered alongside the guidelines for

Figure 5.2. Collaboration for the development of positive attitudes, skills and knowledge for the promotion of inclusive education
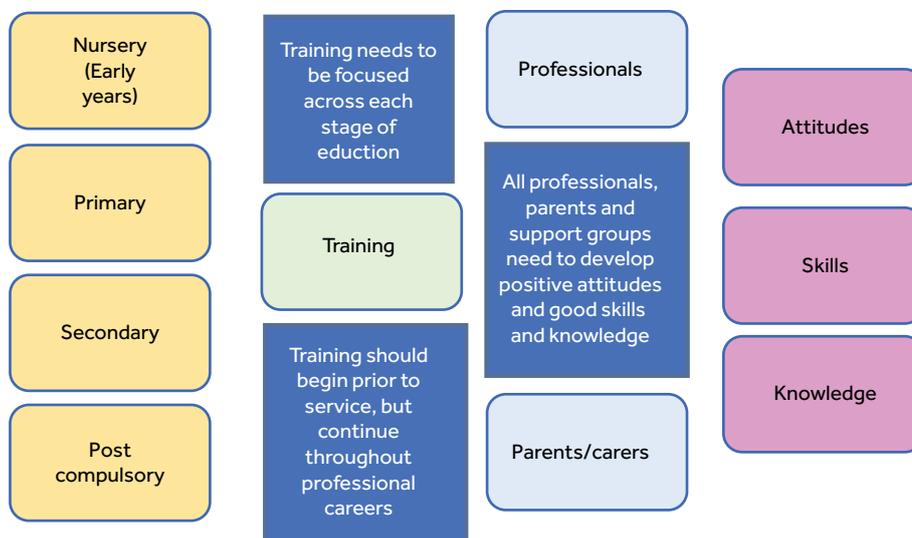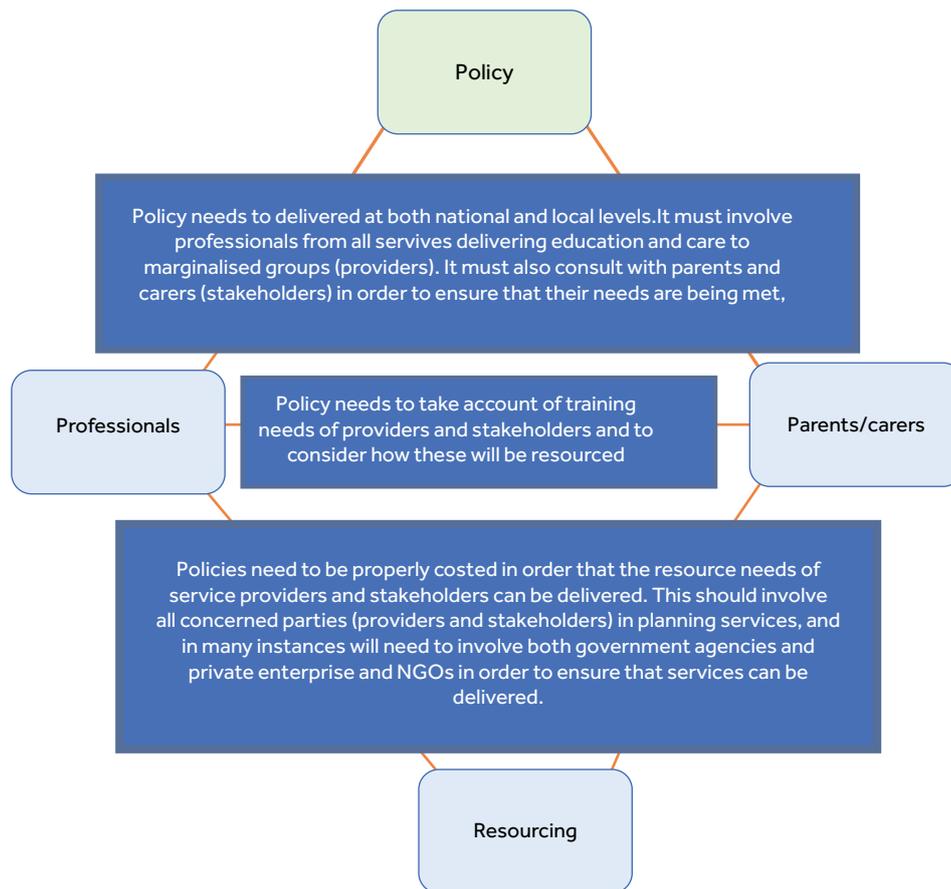
Figure 5.3 Ensuring a relationship between policy and service delivery

policy-makers in Chapter 2, which suggest ways to establish and evaluate in which policy for practice.

Coming to a final conclusion, a holistic approach to education, one that addresses the learner's social, emotional and learning needs, is crucial. Five key areas need to be addressed to move from policy to successful implementation of inclusive schooling: professional development; assessment procedures; curriculum modification; implementation advice; and monitored practice. Each of these areas interacts with the others when successful inclusive education is achieved. Looking at these five areas can assist in ensuring that systemic shocks that disrupt schooling, such as school closures, do not further hinder the inclusion of learners with disabilities in education systems.

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Appendix A1. Table of literature references

For additional information on other countries, see the following chart of literature references.

Nation	Literature
Botswana	Chhabra, S., Srivastava, R. and Srivastava, I. (2010) 'Inclusive Education in Botswana: The Perceptions of School Teachers'. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies* 20(4): 219–228.
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Nation	Literature
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