

Chapter 4

Country Reports

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Chapter 4

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The country profiles summarise legislation, policies, good practices, and gaps in inclusive education for students with disabilities in primary and secondary school and are followed by recommendations for ASEAN and East Asia. H

Brunei Darussalam

In line with 2035 Vision, the Ministry of Education aims to provide holistic education to children to help them achieve their full potential through the SPN-21 or Sistem Pendidikan Negara Abad ke-21. Rooted in the vision of 'quality education, dynamic nation' (Ministry of Education, 2018) the 5-year Strategic Plan (2018–2022) prioritises human resource development.

Strategy 2 of the Strategic Plan provides equal and equitable access to quality education, which includes improving inclusion of disadvantaged and at-risk learners (Ministry of Education, 2018). Students with disabilities who cannot attend school, such as those in rural areas, may receive home-based education under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (UNESCO, no date). Under the Strategic Plan, the Ministry of Education has reaffirmed the importance of collecting data to drive education planning. An integrated and real-time educational data collection system is expected to be developed.

Students with disabilities are first mentioned in the 1994 Special Education Policy or the Inclusive Education Policy. Students with special needs are defined as learners with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, behavioural, sensory, communication, emotional, or communication impairments and would, therefore, benefit from individualised accommodations (Ministry of Education, 2009).

As per the Inclusive Education Policy, students with special needs receive education in mainstream classes with the support of special education needs assistance teachers. After a needs assessment, a student may receive an individual education plan (IEP) to highlight strengths and weaknesses in the student's learning profile and match targets and activities to help the student achieve learning goals as set by a team of professionals. IEPs can be used in primary and secondary school. In secondary school, students with special needs can enter a 5-year pre-vocational programme to develop their work-related skills. Based on the IEP, the academic curriculum and learning strategies can be modified and/or adapted to the students' needs.

Under the Special Education Unit of the Ministry of Education, the Centres of Excellent Services for Children were started in primary and secondary schools. The centres are also known as the Model Inclusive Schools Project and made up of nine primary and secondary schools. However, the model schools are equipped with special rooms and other facilities to

help students with special needs practice life skills (Ministry of Education, 2022). Separate rooms may indicate that students with disabilities are segregated, which does not meet the UNCRPD's definition of inclusion.

Another feature of inclusive education systems is supported teachers trained to include students with disabilities in the classroom. The Brunei Darussalam Teacher Academy provides teacher training and continuous professional development to impart the skills to work with students with disabilities (Ministry of Education, 2014).

Recommendations

1. Review the inclusive education framework to fully include students in mainstream education programming. In partnership with the school staff, including support professionals and school administration, adapt the national curriculum to conduct competency and formative assessments of students to create entry points to the mainstream curriculum.
2. Continue to provide ongoing professional development opportunities for all teachers to equip them with the skills and training to include students with disabilities in classrooms, and to train teachers how to work with special education needs assistance teachers to keep the students in the classroom as much as possible. A student with a disability may need to learn self-regulation techniques outside the classroom, away from stimuli, but a carefully constructed plan to bring them back into the classroom should be developed as a part of IEPs.

Cambodia

The Education Law, Chapter 7, Articles 38 and 39 refer to children with disabilities and their right to learn in mainstream education settings with their peers, with support and additional teaching as needed, or to obtain special education through separate classes (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, 2007). Separate classes, however, are not aligned with fully inclusive practices in education under the UNCRPD.

In 1997, Cambodia developed an organisation model: the multi-sectoral Disability Action Council. Its aim is to help coordinate and promote private and public services for persons with disabilities and to bring together agencies, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), local communities, and businesses, amongst others, to uphold the rights of persons with disabilities (UNICEF EAPRO, 2003). Since the council's inception, Cambodia's policies have started to include students with disabilities in education programmes, from kindergarten to higher education.

In 2008, Cambodia introduced the Policy on Education for Children with Disabilities to identify children with a disability and provide training to school principals, village healthcare workers, and other support personnel (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, 2008).

In 2018, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport approved the Policy on Inclusive Education to provide students with disabilities with knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, 2018). The policy has several key strategies:

1. Develop a legal framework and mechanism for purposeful inclusion.
2. Develop inter-ministerial collaboration for early identification of disabilities.
3. Develop a robust data collection and information system.
4. Provide access to students to inclusive and equitable quality education.
5. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for girls and women with special needs.
6. Develop Universal Design Standards for buildings and sanitation.
7. Build teacher and school management capacity.
8. Raise awareness on the policy.
9. Strengthen all stakeholders' knowledge and action.

The policy suggests strong commitment to inclusive education for children with disabilities. However, UNICEF conducted a rapid analysis of the policy and found that it may still encourage specialised curriculum and conditional inclusion of students with disabilities, which contradict the principles of the UNCRPD. The policy, therefore, has room for improvement (UNICEF, 2020).

Overall enrolment in primary and secondary schools of students with and without disabilities remains low. Cambodia has the largest gap in education of students with and without disabilities in ASEAN: 1 in 14 children without disabilities could not attend primary and lower secondary school, and 1 in 2 children with disabilities was not enrolled in school (UNICEF, 2020).

The type of disability can affect the type of educational programming. Five special schools provide education for learners with visual and hearing impairments. Blind students are integrated progressively: from grade 3 to grade 6, they attend mainstream classes for half the day and special schools for the other half. Deaf students are included in schools starting in grade 5. Whilst there are integrated classes for students who are blind, deaf, and with a learning disability, remote areas do not have special needs schools or inclusive mainstream schools, which might exclude students with disabilities altogether. The nine integrated classes for deaf students are in Svay Rieng, Takeo, Prey Veng, and Preah Sihanuk provinces (UNESCO, 2021).

In 2018, Cambodia issued a guideline mandating schools to track students' profiles, including disabilities, to provide accessible education to all students. Despite these good intentions, however, without institutional structures or standards, implementing the mandate has been challenging. Identification and data collection tools do not align with the ICF, which considers the multidimensional and interactive nature of disability. Progress is being made with an inter-ministerial guideline on disability classification (UNICEF, Open Institute, NGO Education Partnership, and MISEREOR, 2018).

Recently, the government released the National Disability Strategic Plan for 2019–2023, which is a sign of great progress: the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport is including students with disabilities in education and other public services. Learner-centred pedagogy, however, remains largely unaddressed (UNICEF, 2021). Teacher training programmes and ongoing professional development opportunities to collaborate on and support inclusive teaching methods will help implement policies and strategic plans.

Cambodia intends to implement the plan. In 2017, a partnership between Cambodia and UNICEF led to the training of 62 representatives from teacher training colleges, NGOs, and the Ministry of Education's Special Education Department and Teacher Training Department on inclusive education for pre-service and in-service teacher training. UNICEF collaborated with Krousar Thmey to help develop specialised training curriculums to allow deaf and blind students to access education. The specialised curriculum is used by the national institute for special education (Pitt and Bohan-Jacquot, 2017).

Recommendations

1. Address the low enrolment numbers of students with disabilities. Investigate the barriers to access to education and implement strategies and incentives to increase enrolment. Students absent from school might miss valuable learning opportunities in formal education and are at further risk of falling behind in skills development for future employment.
2. Increase teacher training to include modules about disabilities to raise awareness of differences amongst learners. Teachers are valuable in creating an attitude of belonging, which might help increase enrolment.
3. Use ICF-aligned tools to collect data on students in the classroom and bring the information to the national government systematically to inform policy development and education planning.

Indonesia

Research from multiple partners, including UNESCO; the United States Agency for International Development; and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology formed a systematic and comprehensive plan to support inclusive education in the Grand Design for National Development of Inclusive Education 2019–2024. The plan gave rise to the 2019–2024 Master Plan on National Development of Inclusive Education, which uses the whole system of inclusive education, and refers to all stakeholders, including administrators, principals, teachers, students, parents, and community and education supervisors. The master plan emphasises their working together to develop a conducive educational environment for children, including those with disabilities, so they can develop their optimal potential (UNESCO, 2021).

The master plan aims to change the attitudes of parents, teachers, and other school members to be more open to inclusive learning. A positive step towards inclusive education is the increased number of pre-service teacher education trainings that have adopted an improved curriculum supporting diverse learners in the classroom (UNICEF, 2017). Another goal of the master plan is to improve collection of data on students with disabilities to assess stakeholders' ability to support inclusive education practices (UNESCO, 2021).

Article 3 of Regulation No. 70/2009 on Inclusive Education lists students with specific impairments who can benefit from inclusive education, including those who are blind, are deaf, have speech impairments, are mentally disabled or have learning difficulties, are

diagnosed with autism, have motor movement–related disabilities, or are affected by drug abuse or addictions (UNESCO, 2021).

Students with disabilities may either attend special education units or special schools. Indonesia has been shifting the number of students with disabilities from special to mainstream schools from preschool to higher education (UNESCO, 2021). Whilst schools are becoming more inclusive, by 2019, only 1,600 schools or 11% of all schools were providing inclusive education from kindergarten to higher education (UNESCO, 2021).

Madrasahs are Islamic schools and governed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. They have become significantly more inclusive, offering teacher trainings and creative teaching methods to provide learning and sports to students with disabilities (UNICEF, 2020).

Partnerships between organisations have been supportive of students with disabilities. OPDs are involved in policymaking, planning sessions for local development, and consultations on developing village regulations (UNICEF, 2021). A local OPD developed a more flexible and responsive assessment tool for students, which is being piloted. Another local OPD, Helen Keller International, has encouraged UDL by supporting the adaptation of individual learning assessment instruments and learning plans (UNICEF, 2021). To ensure that adaptations are inclusive and not segregated, plans to adapt an assessment instrument should be evaluated against UNCRPD principles of inclusion, particularly before the project is considered ready to scale up.

National and local authorities collect data on persons with disabilities based on Law No. 8/2016 on Persons with Disabilities (UNESCO, 2021). Disability has many definitions, but data collection methods have produced varied results. Indonesia is geographically unique as a collection of island provinces and cities. Data collection is more challenging in remote areas, where only 4% of persons with disabilities have access to medical rehabilitation services (Australia Indonesia Partnership for Economic Governance, 2017). The alignment of data collection with the ICF is mixed.

The data capture methodology is mixed. The Bureau of Statistics has adopted the Washington Group/UNICEF Module on Child Functioning in its National Disability Survey (UNICEF, 2020), which suggests that the data collection system is based on the ICF. However, the criteria for measuring and categorising disability from public schools that the Ministry of Education collects, differ from the ICF. A unified data collection methodology based on a common understanding of disability, a social modal of viewing disability as presented in the ICF, and access to remote areas of all 17,000 islands will help policymakers make decisions based on evidence of needs.

Recommendations

1. Increase the role of local government in delivering inclusive education by encouraging more partnerships with OPDs. This recommendation is aligned with a target from the master plan, which is to increase the role of provinces, districts, and cities in developing inclusive education and increasing the number of cross-sectoral inclusion working groups.

2. Improve data collection methods to reflect the needs of the community more accurately, given Indonesia's geography. Data collection should continue to reflect holistic measures of disability, and a systematic collection and sharing of data with government officials can help create a shared understanding of disability, one based on human rights principles.

Lao People's Democratic Republic

The National Policy on Inclusive Education 2011–2015 has encouraged students with disabilities to enrol in inclusive education schools, but there are still separate schools for complex disabilities (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2011). Under the Ministry of Health, three schools provide education to students with disabilities. They were established in 2016 in Luang Prabang province, Vientiane Capital, and Savannakhet (UNESCO, 2021).

The Education and Sports Sector Development Plan 2016–2020 (ESSDP) sets out strategies for better access to quality education, teacher capacity development, and development of teacher education institutions (Lao PDR, 2015). Lao PDR has started strategic plans to reform mainstream schools' curriculums to be more inclusive. To be effective, however, reforms should be complemented with learner-centred pedagogy in the classroom. To shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred learning, teachers must undergo professional development to encourage an inclusive mindset (UNICEF, 2020). ESSDP outlines a strategy of teacher education curriculums containing inclusive pedagogies (Lao PDR, 2015), to be continued in the forthcoming ESSDP 2021–2025.

The national action plans set priorities and programming for service providers, in addition to guidelines from government organisations. The Education Sector Development Plan has been a reference for NGOs, civil society organisations, and other levels of organisations to continue to advance the government's agenda (Lao PDR, 2015).

Many countries in the region, including Lao PDR, finance segregated education, which implies limited resources for national inclusive education reform (UNICEF, 2020). Partnerships between bilateral organisations and national and non-state actors continue to progress towards inclusive education. Australian AID (AusAID), the Global Partnership for Education, and the World Bank funded the Education for All Fast Track Initiative Programme, which can help implement the Education Sector Development Plan by giving it the ability to mobilise funding (UNESCO, 2021).

For partnerships to continue, awareness and understanding of disability are needed. The National Commission for Persons with Disabilities and the Inclusive Education Centre provide technical assistance such as teacher training materials and development of Lao sign language (Inclusive Education Centre, 2017). The Inclusive Education Centre was established by the Ministry of Education and Sports to reduce barriers to access to education for vulnerable groups such as girls and women, ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and those with socioeconomic difficulties (UNICEF, 2020). Its scholarship programme provides grants for students with disabilities to attend school (Inclusive Education Centre, 2017).

The director of the Inclusive Education Center and a development partner co-chaired the Gender, Inclusion, and Disability Technical Working Group (UNICEF, 2015) not only to advance the right to inclusive education of students with disabilities but also to address gender in strategy and inputs to governments for policymaking (UNICEF, 2020).

Disability identification in and out of school remains an issue, one that is being addressed by ESSDP (Lao PDR, 2018). Disability is detected amongst children up to 18 years of age through the Center for Medical Rehabilitation (UNESCO, 2021). However, the number, frequency, and type of disability are not recorded in the education management information system (UNESCO, 2021). Identifying children with intellectual and development disabilities remains a problem (UNICEF, 2020).

However, templates based on the Washington Group on Disability Statistics Child Functioning Module facilitate data collection and shift the type of data collected from medical to social functioning (Lao PDR, 2018). The Washington Group short set of questions has been used during population and housing census to identify persons with disabilities (UNICEF, 2020). The Ministry of Education and Sports is setting up a data collection system for children with disabilities in early childhood education (UNICEF, 2020), as well as working with AusAID, the World Bank, and UNICEF to collect data on children with disabilities in schools.

Recommendations

1. Continue to increase holistic data collection methods to enable disaggregation by disability and gender. Increased understanding of disability by type and frequency can help plan programming more accurately for students in and out of school.
2. Bullying can discourage students with disabilities and reduce the morale of all students. Therefore, continue to conduct awareness campaigns to reduce the social stigma of disability and encourage students with disabilities to advocate for themselves.

Malaysia

Malaysia has a broad legislative framework that not only fights discrimination against those with disabilities but also supports equitable access to healthcare, social protection, and education. Although Malaysia uses a social definition of disability, some provisions reflect a medical model of disability, such as the segregation of students based on severity of disability. The medical model of disability hinders implementation of the Zero Reject Policy. Whilst the policy supports all students regardless of legal or disability status to attend school, the loose definition of disability does not fully uphold the policy for all students with disabilities (UNICEF, 2018).

Social stigma can discourage voluntary disclosure of information about disability. The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education work with the Department of Social Welfare to initially detect a disability, whilst families can volunteer their registration of disability if they choose (UNICEF, 2017). Malaysia has reported that 1.4% of its population (including

adults) has a disability (UNESCAP, 2019), but because of the voluntary nature of disclosing information, the actual number could be higher.

The ministry is responsible for providing education to students with disabilities depends on the severity of disability. For students with severe disabilities, the Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development is responsible. Students classified as having special education needs, including students with mild-moderate disability, receive education under the Ministry of Education (<UNESCO, 2014>). Students with special education needs include those with visual impairments, speech difficulties, hearing impairments, and physical and learning disabilities. Students with special needs are indigenous learners, have specific needs, belong to ethnic groups, or are in under-enrolled schools (Ministry of Education, 2013).

Students with special education needs can access the education system in three ways (UNESCO, 2014):

1. Special education schools receive students with hearing, visual, or learning disabilities. In 2015, the Ministry of Education broadened the definition of disability to include all disabilities regardless of type (Human Rights Commission of Malaysia, 2015).
2. The Special Education Integrated Programme serves students with special education needs in separate classrooms in urban and suburban mainstream schools. As of 2014, 1,315 primary and 738 secondary schools had employed the programme.
3. If teachers deem a student with a disability suitable for a mainstream classroom, the student may join the classroom by way of the Inclusive Education Programme. Joining a mainstream classroom relies heavily on the discretion of teachers, who may be limited by the quality and quantity of their special education training. A positive development is that mainstream and special education teachers receive training that involves tools and strategies for including students with disabilities (Government of Malaysia, 2018).

Teachers may train in special education in many ways. One is through the master trainer course, which trains teachers at the district level on holistic inclusive education programmes, thereby creating a pool of master trainers who can then teach other teachers inclusive education practices; 220 teachers from more than 44 pilot schools participated in the training (Government of Malaysia, 2018).

UNICEF has worked in Malaysia to increase awareness of the importance and benefits of including children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms with their peers, which has encouraged parents with children with disabilities to enrol them in the Inclusive Education Programme (Ministry of Education [Malaysia], 2018). To challenge stigma and discrimination against children with disabilities, Malaysia has used hashtags in social media campaigns, such as #ThisAbility, #StandTogether, and #LetterToMyPM (UNICEF, 2018), which help shift the definition of disability from a medical to a social and holistic model.

The National Policy for Persons with Disabilities and the National Plan of Action for Persons with Disabilities coordinate to regulate access of students to education. The National Policy for Children and Action Plan manages the development, participation, and advocacy of students with disabilities (UNICEF, 2017).

The 2013–2025 Education Blueprint under the Ministry of Education supports students with special education needs in accessing mainstream curriculums and assessments. The 15 special education service centres – *pusat perkhidmatan pendidikan khas* – provide services to learners with special education needs (Ministry of Education, 2013).

The Education Blueprint implements inclusive education in stages (Government of Malaysia, 2013):

1. Early identification of special needs (2013–2015)
2. Inclusive education programme (2016–2020)
3. Review of initiatives and progress (2021–2025)

The Ministry of Education allocates financing to schools to pilot inclusion programmes; the successful ones are scaled up and supported (Government of Malaysia, 2013).

Unlike some countries that have one curriculum with different entry points for students with disabilities, Malaysia has created a special education curriculum for blind students (Human Rights Commission of Malaysia, 2015). Students with disabilities should have the right to study the same national curriculum as other students, according to the UNCRPD. However, Malaysia is trying to make mainstream education accessible to learners with special education needs, as seen in the Inclusive Pedagogy Implementation Guide of 2016 (UNESCO, 2021).

Malaysia collects data about disabilities through a cross-departmental and ministerial network, through the Department of Social Welfare, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Education (UNICEF, 2017); and the Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development developed the disability classification system (UNICEF, 2021). Data collection and maintenance of the database of students with disabilities are not, however, consistent; Malaysia is reviewing its identification systems, and a holistic model that has inter-operability between all sectors and ministries will, it is hoped, be developed.

Recommendations

1. Support teachers, support school staff, and administrators with strategies to adapt the national curriculum to make it accessible to students with disabilities, rather than create a separate curriculum for students with disabilities.
2. Make data collection holistic, systematic, and consistent in definition and understanding so that it can be used interchangeably between ministries to create holistic programming for students with disabilities. The bridge between education policy and policies in other sectors will help students with disabilities access other domains in an inclusive way.
3. As Malaysia has strong inclusive education policies and practices, it is encouraged to showcase them at regional conferences to promote cross-country collaboration and teacher networking to share inclusive education strategies.

Myanmar

Unlike other ASEAN members, Myanmar does not have an explicit definition of inclusive education, although the 2016–2021 National Education Strategic Plan refers to it (Ministry of Education, 2016). The education of students with disabilities falls under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and not the Ministry of Education (Hauschild and Htet, 2015). A common understanding of inclusive education is needed. Pre-service and in-service training programmes must reflect a rights-based, social model of disability and not a medical model that can foster exclusion from education services.

Under Article 41b of the 2014 National Education Law, a student with a disability has access to special education programmes and services that use a special curriculum (ILO, 2014). A student with special education needs has a disability such as visual impairment, hearing impairment, or mental disability, or is a diverse learner.

The 2016–2021 National Education Strategic Plan is committed to helping students with disabilities transition towards inclusive education programmes (Ministry of Education, 2016). One way it has done this is by establishing the National Curriculum Framework in which reflective teaching practices and learner-centred pedagogy can enable students with diverse learning needs to learn under the same curriculum (UNICEF Myanmar, 2018). Myanmar has also started a child-centred kindergarten curriculum that has been rolled out nationally (UNICEF Myanmar, 2018).

The Strategic Plan emphasises the importance of pre-service and in-service teacher education (Government of Myanmar, 2016), and the government has developed the national framework for Continuous Professional Development (UNICEF Myanmar, 2018) and finalised the Teacher Competency Standard Framework (UNICEF, 2020). The Strategic Plan has specific targets:

1. '[D]evelopment of a specialist knowledge base including higher education specialisation and specialised teachers, through development of degree courses and inclusive education modules.
2. [I]dentification of a number of existing basic education schools to become resource schools for inclusive education.
3. [R]oll-out of a general training module on inclusive education (including for children with disabilities) for education colleges and in-service teacher training programmes' (Ministry of Education [Myanmar], 2016).

These developments are well positioned to strengthen teacher skills and training. However, teacher training colleges and education universities and the programmes do not include courses on inclusive education (Hauschild and Htet, 2015). Therefore, a shortage remains of teachers who have the knowledge and skills to teach students with disabilities, and, importantly, an open attitude towards them.

Teacher education is key to assess students' needs and to develop students' individual learning plans. Without teacher training and knowledge, children with disabilities might not be able to access the curriculum and opportunities to socialise with their peers, which is

necessary to develop socio-emotional skills. Students with disabilities might be excluded from formal education altogether.

To address the lack of teachers with knowledge of and training on special education, the Ministry of Education aims to develop resource schools to help teachers include children with disabilities (Hauschild and Htet, 2015), but support needs to be consistent, with ongoing professional development opportunities; students with disabilities are diverse, and successful inclusion requires ongoing teacher training. Resource schools are separate from mainstream schools, which does not meet the UNCRPD's definition of inclusion, although Myanmar has begun to incorporate inclusive education into national education frameworks.

Various partnerships between NGOs foster inclusive education; for example, Voluntary Services Overseas, Save the Children, and Catholic Relief Service train teachers to teach children with disabilities.

Myanmar plans to review its assessment system to be more inclusive of children with disabilities (UNICEF, 2020). To develop and sustain such changes, the country needs policy reform, a multi-sector and multi-disciplinary assessment system, and ongoing student support services. Awareness of the importance of such systems is lacking (UNICEF, 2020). Transitions from early childhood education to primary, and primary to secondary school are poor given that initial assessment and inclusive education practice lack policy support. Advocacy efforts are ongoing, however, for effective transition of students with disabilities from inclusive kindergarten to primary school (UNICEF, 2020).

Myanmar lacks a systematic data collection method that includes education outputs for students with disabilities. The country does not have a monitoring system to evaluate national educational programmes, or a central computer-based database to monitor the programmes' performance (Ministry of Education, 2016). Situational analysis reports provide information about children with disabilities, which does not support strong evidence-based decision-making (UNICEF, no date b).

Recommendations

1. Formally define inclusive education. The definition can guide policymaking and ensure that it is in line with UNCRPD commitments, and a common definition for the country and across countries can allow cross-country analysis of progress and goals to include students with disabilities in education.
2. Provide pre-service and in-service teacher training on disability, including types of disability, how learning is affected, and how learning can reach students with disabilities through differential instruction, UDL, and student-centred pedagogy.

Philippines

Much progress has been made to include students with disabilities in education programming. The Magna Carta for Disabled Persons of 1997 led to institutionalising special education programmes in all schools by way of resource centres inside mainstream schools to support students with special needs (Department of Education, 1997). The document was

amended in 2007 (National Council on Disability Affairs, 2007) to mandate the state to provide students with disabilities – including those with visual and/or hearing impairments, intellectual disabilities, and other exceptional needs – access to quality education.

In 2010, Strengthening Special Education Program at the Basic Education Level financed a programme to train secondary school educators to teach students with disabilities and provide teachers with adequate teaching material (Department of Education, 2010).

In 2013, the Early Years Act promoted inclusion of children with special needs by using Filipino sign language to teach the deaf community. In the same year, the Enhanced Basic Education Act encouraged use of the Alternative Learning System for deaf students.

In 2015, the Education Plan encouraged including learners with disabilities in existing mainstream classes (UNESCO, 2015), which was a step towards making schools fully inclusive.

By 2016, the Basic Education Research Agenda promoted an inclusive and learner-centred teaching and learning strategy (Department of Education, 2016). Inclusion covers special education, indigenous peoples' education, madrasah education, and the Alternative Learning System, which is a parallel learning system offered in community learning centres for those not in school (Ministry of Education, no date).

The Special Education Act of 2019 intends to set up the Bureau of Special Education to institutionalise special education and manage its delivery. The law aims to institutionalise at least one special education centre in each school division, and about three centres in larger divisions. The law aims to design a curriculum and adapt programming for children and youth with disabilities under the Department of Education (Office of the Secretary, 2019). A separate curriculum, however, would segregate students with disabilities from others and prevent access to the mainstream education curriculum.

The National Council on Disability Affairs manages the development of programmes and service delivery for students with disabilities, coordinates activities for public and private organisations that tackle disability issues and formulates policy (National Council on Disability Affairs, n.d.).

The country has created diverse activities and programmes to create knowledge systems, enhance skills, and improve attitudes in government and education institutions towards inclusive education, including through training of support teachers, heads of schools, and supervisors. Stakeholders are discussing the Inclusive Education Bill, which aims to make schools fully inclusive (Philippine Network for Inclusive Education, no date). The Department of Education is developing a national inclusive education framework to replace the traditional model of learning in the classroom with one that will include vulnerable children, including those with disabilities (UNICEF, 2020).

The small number of developmental paediatricians, who formally assess disability, hampers inclusion of students with disabilities in education. Without adequate information, policymakers and education professionals find it difficult to create inclusive environments or use ICF identification system tools or design and implement appropriate intervention programming for students with disabilities. While the formal assessment measures need

improvement, there are some initiatives such as the Digital Accessible Information System (DAISY), which is being used to help learners with visual impairments access learning materials in the classroom (Box 2).

Box 2: Digital Accessible Information System in the Philippines

To include learners with visual impairments in classrooms, the Department of Education distributed Digital Accessible Information System (DAISY) audiobook readers and Swell Form Graphics Machines all over the country. To teach educators how to use the technologies, the department held capacity-building workshops where special education teachers, education specialists, and illustrators produced tactile materials for use in classrooms (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2019). A hands-on approach to building teachers' capacity can raise awareness of disability, but progress must be monitored regularly to ensure that materials and knowledge benefit the students.

Source: National Council on Disability Affairs (2003).

While taking courses on disability inclusion at university, teachers build their capacity through school and cluster groups or professional learning communities that are part of the Building Inclusive Education Champions Programme. Selected teachers undergo training and mentoring, including on inclusive attitudes and practice, challenges and success, and classroom strategies to include students with disabilities (UNICEF, 2020).

Whilst the Basic Education Information System (BEIS) collects data on students in the education system (Department of Education, no date), it could enhance its disability data collection methods by using Washington Group data questions.

Parents of children with disabilities are closely involved in helping implement government and NGO programmes. Strong advocacy for students with disabilities can have a lasting impact on their learning and sense of belonging in the classroom.

Recommendations

1. Change cultural attitudes towards disability through awareness campaigns that normalise disability and highlight strengths of persons with disabilities.
2. Adapt the curriculum to the needs of students in the classroom, even if a formal diagnosis of disability has not been made.
3. Ensure effective transitions between preschool, primary, and secondary education for students with disabilities.

Singapore

The third Enabling Masterplan 2017–2021 guides the country to becoming more inclusive, including in education (Ministry of Social and Family Development, 2016). Singapore does

not have a formal definition of inclusive education, as it recognises that inclusion goes beyond the education system (UNESCO, 2021).

The 2018 Professional Practice Guidelines define students with special education needs as those with a disability; learning difficulties; or social, academic, physical, or sensory needs; or requiring different kinds of support than their same-aged peers (Ministry of Education, 2018). Developmental needs are those that are physical (e.g. cerebral palsy), sensory (e.g. hearing loss), cognitive (e.g. autism spectrum disorder), and learning (e.g. mild language delay).

Education for students with disabilities depends on the type and severity of disability. Students who have the cognitive abilities and adaptive skills to learn in large groups enter mainstream schools and access the curriculum in inclusive settings. Students with moderate-profound visual impairment and hearing loss receive resources and support from trained teachers in seven mainstream schools (Ministry of Education, no date). More than 80% of students with special education needs learn in inclusive classroom settings in mainstream schools (UNESCO, 2021). The rest, who require more intense programming or a lower student-to-adult ratio, learn in government-funded special education schools. Twelve social service agencies run a total of 19 special education schools across the country (Ministry of Education, 2018). Some special education schools provide opportunities for academic integration to students with disabilities. Entry into a special education school is permitted after a psycho-educational assessment evaluating the student's learning needs and capacity.

The Ministry of Education oversees training of teachers in special education and mainstream schools. The Disability Office at the Ministry of Social and Family Development works closely with the Ministry of Education to provide thought leadership and advice on policy issues that concern students with disabilities. As the Disability Office also provides services to inclusive preschools and to young adults with disabilities to prepare them to work, the groundwork has been laid for the transition between preschool, school, and adult intervention through a common advocacy organisation.

Special education teachers receive pre-service training, a diploma in special education from the National Institute of Education (NIE). Teachers may avail themselves of ongoing professional development through customised in-service courses by the NIE and other training institutions. Teachers in mainstream schools have special education training in their courses. Students with disabilities in mainstream schools may receive support from allied educators, who provide learning and behaviour support to students with special education needs. Teachers trained in special needs are able to use differential learning in the classroom to capture all students' learning. The Ministry of Education provides student support services such as educational psychologists to meet with the school team and support students' individual learning needs in the mainstream classroom. Cluster interest and applied training workshops are offered to increase collaboration and cooperation between mainstream and special education professionals and practitioners (UNESCO, 2021).

Through government agencies, Singapore collects data on students with disabilities if they use services. If they do not use services, they might not be counted in overall data collection.

Therefore, the government is developing a method to collect accurate data on the needs of persons with disabilities and to contact them and/or their caregivers to provide holistic support such as access to schemes and services (UNESCO, 2021).

Recommendations

1. Ensure that students in special education schools have access to the mainstream education curriculum. Whilst it may be adapted to the learning needs of students, they must receive equitable access to the curriculum as per the UNCRPD.
2. Build in-school capacity for teachers to work alongside teaching assistants to form inclusive education programming that will shift students from special education back into mainstream schools. Segregated learning environments do not allow students with disabilities to interact with mainstream students, and students with disabilities miss out on academic and socio-emotional learning. An integrated setting also allows mainstream students to learn how to interact with their peers with disabilities, form social and pro-social behaviours, and create an open attitude towards learners with different needs.

Thailand

Providing education for students with disabilities falls under the Ministry of Education. The 2008 Education Act for Persons with Disabilities defines inclusive education as a process of ‘providing persons with disabilities access to general education system, at any level and in various settings, including enabling education provision to enable schooling of all groups of persons, including persons with disabilities’ (The Office of the Council of State, 2008: 3). The act includes access to assistive technologies and support services to meet students’ needs. The 2017–2036 National Education Plan defines inclusive education more widely to include students at a socio-economic disadvantage, which is particularly helpful in Thailand, where low-income families whose children might drop out of school receive cash grants to keep them in school (UNICEF, no date). The plan defines students with special education needs as having a physical, mental, intellectual, social, emotional, communication, and/or learning impairments, and sets policy goals to meet the learning needs of these diverse students (Office the Education Council, 2017).

Thailand has several strong bodies of governance to support students with disabilities, such as the National Committee for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities and the Elimination of Unfair Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (UNESCO, 2021). The presence of these committees, the offices within the Ministry of Education, and laws protecting the rights of persons with disabilities shows strong national commitment to provide and support equitable access to quality education for all students and marks the political tone as inclusive.

Despite the intentions of the 2008 Education Act for Persons with Disabilities and the 2017–2036 National Education Plan policy goals, however, Thailand is still transitioning to fully including students with disabilities in education. The reasons include low staff training and lack of facilities, including infrastructure to support transport of students to school (Vorapanya and Dunlap, 2014).

Inadequate teacher education is a key factor in not fully achieving inclusive education standards. Whilst the 2003 Teacher and Educational Personnel Council Act regulates teacher recruitment and training, the Teachers Council of Thailand sets standards for the teaching profession and criteria for accreditation during pre-service teacher education. Standards still do not incorporate inclusive education practices (Siribanpitak, 2018). Whilst the 2008 Education Act for Persons with Disabilities mandates that special education teachers have university qualification in special education, they do not always have sufficient pre-service training in how to deal with students with special needs or receive adequate in-service training (Vorapanya and Dunlap, 2014), which affects not only teaching but also assessment.

Most assessment practices are inflexible and unresponsive to diverse learning needs (UNICEF, 2020). Thailand is, therefore, planning to review its assessment system so that it becomes more inclusive. A rigid assessment and examination system can leave students with disabilities out of the data collection process, inadequately assess their skill set, and create a misleading benchmark of academic success that does not allow for individual learning styles and outcome.

Several initiatives, however, encourage formal education for students with disabilities, including 43 special schools, 76 provincial special education centres, and 13,786 inclusive schools. The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration provides inclusive education through 100 schools around the city (UNESCO, 2021). Schools could become more inclusive by recognising Thai sign language as an official language of deaf students. It is used in pre-primary and primary school curriculums in 17 schools for students with hearing impairments (CRPD, 2015).

Data on all students, including those with disabilities, in the education system are collected through the office of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education via annual educational statistics and the education management information system. However, only one mention of students with disabilities was in the latest report available online: 'physical education for the disabled' (Ministry of Education, 2016: 59). Students who are not in school are not captured in the data set because data are collected at schools (UNICEF, 2018). Data on all children with disabilities in and out of school must be collected to prioritise needs, provide social services, bridge gaps in knowledge, and guide education policy.

In 2018, the Child Functioning Module was included in the national disability survey (UNICEF, 2018), which informed policy and strategic planning for students with disabilities. The module provides questions that shift the thinking about persons with a disability from a medical to a social model.

Recommendations

1. Continue to provide pre-service training to teachers on special education needs, neurodiverse learning, and how to tailor learning to students.
2. Shift from standardised assessments, which can be rigid and exclude learners with disabilities, to formative assessments based on performance and competency metrics.

Viet Nam

The 2010 Law on Persons with Disabilities states that inclusive education should be standard for students with disabilities unless they have needs that cannot be met in an inclusive environment, in which case an integrated approach may be taken (National Assembly, 2010). The Ministry of Education and Training leads the provision of education to students with disabilities, including planning of special education programmes and inclusive education support and development centres. The Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Training implement special education programmes (National Assembly, 2010).

In Viet Nam, education for students with disabilities can take three forms (National Assembly, 2010):

1. Special education. Students with disabilities are taught in separate schools and classes. Article 63 of the 2005 Education Law supports them for 'disabled and handicapped people' (National Assembly, 2005: 28) and encourages prioritising the provision of state funding and infrastructure to specialised schools.
2. Semi-inclusive or integrated education. Students with disabilities attend special classes in mainstream schools. If a student has an individual education plan, the curriculum may be modified to support the student.
3. Inclusive education. If they meet the requirements, students with disabilities may attend mainstream schools.

Whilst 'inclusive' is used to describe the learning option for a student with a disability, education is not fully inclusive if only a special group of students with disabilities can attend a mainstream school and have a learning plan. Students with disabilities with stronger cognitive abilities will likely participate in mainstream schools, which implies a level of exclusion of other students with more significant disabilities.

The inter-ministerial Circular 58/2012 seeks to replace specialised schools with support centres that advocate and promote inclusive learning. Support centres in all provinces are being planned (UNESCO, 2021). As of 2019, 107 specialised education facilities and 12 education centres were operating the country. In 2019, various stages of inclusive education development were being supported in 20 provinces and cities (OHCHR, 2019).

The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, in compliance with the 2010 Law on Persons with Disabilities, provides early identification of disability (National Assembly, 2010). In schools, administrative staff and educators have the skills to screen for a disability (OHCHR 2018), but diagnosis needs formal assessment. Since Decision No. 23/2006 was issued, 'disabled and handicapped people' have had the right to an inclusive education whereby schools are responsible for admitting students with disabilities, promoting inclusive education through appropriate classes, and identifying students' needs. Articles 9.1 and 9.2 of the decision provide that inclusive education support and development centres are responsible for early identification of disability and provision of counselling on education approaches, including teaching methods and technical support (UNESCO, 2021). Assessing and labelling disability holistically are encouraged rather than defining it medically.

In 2016–2017, the Washington Group/UNICEF Module on Child Functioning was used in the national census survey (UNICEF, 2018). However, reported disability rates in children aged 2–17 were much lower than expected at 2.79%, which may indicate an issue in the data collection method (UNICEF, 2021).

The national curriculum is being revised to a competency-based model, which can offer flexibility in teaching methods and student assessment. Viet Nam engages in policy dialogue on reforming the Law on Education and has made specific plans for inclusive education (UNICEF, 2018). Local government units allocate resources for inclusive education (UNICEF, 2015) and have created guidelines for school districts and for schools on allocating funds to inclusive education, which has increased inclusive education in all districts and schools (UNICEF, 2015).

Teacher education still needs much improvement. Decision No. 9/2007 pushed for teachers and education management to receive training on inclusive education, and provincial training modules have been created in Ninh Thuan and Kon Tum (UNICEF, 2013). Universities such as the Hanoi Pedagogy University, Ho Chi Minh City Pedagogy University, National Pedagogy College, and the National Pedagogy Ho Chi Minh City have provided national training on special education (UNICEF, 2015). A pre-service curriculum that teaches teachers how to help students with disabilities transition from special to mainstream schools has been developed, piloted, and finalised (UNICEF, 2018). However, 65% of teachers have reported that they did not receive training on inclusive education, special education, or disability (UNICEF, 2015). Whilst the government is exerting good effort to create teaching modules and programmes, reaching teachers across the country to provide them with training remains difficult. If teachers are not well trained, a disability advisor in schools could help them work with students with disabilities. However, 86% of schools did not have a disability advisor as of 2015 (UNICEF, 2015). Despite the good intentions to create programmes for educators, the low level of teachers' awareness and knowledge will result in variable and insufficient teaching practices.

Collection of data on children with disabilities is guided by provincial departments of the Ministry of Education and Training (UNICEF, 2015). The Washington Group/UNICEF Module on Child Functioning has been the focus of national and provincial policymakers. The work requires coordinated efforts of the Ministry of Education and Training, Health, Labour, and Social Affairs and of participating universities and development partners (UNICEF, 2017).

Recommendations

1. Increase teacher training courses on inclusive education. The infrastructure for the courses is strong as seen in the work in universities, but teachers must receive training to ensure that classroom practices reflect inclusive education.
2. Transition more students from separate to mainstream schools, with better support to help them integrate. The already improved competency-based curriculum is a strong step in this direction, and better teacher training can help shift more students to inclusive settings in mainstream schools.