

THE PUBLIC POLICY HUB

Policy Brief 9

The Inclusion Of Children With Disabilities In Early Childhood Education

2018

Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in Egypt:

Egypt has achieved major developments regarding the collection of data concerning PWDs. For the first time, the 2017 Egypt Census covered the number of PWDs age 5+ years and disaggregated data by the type and severity of disability, gender, and geographic location. The total number of PWDs comprises around 10.7% of Egypt's population⁽¹⁾. In addition, the executive regulations for law 10/2018 on the rights of persons with disabilities covers agreed upon definitions of disabilities and other important matters relating to children with disabilities.

What is the problem?

“The quality of an education system can exceed neither the quality of its teachers nor the quality of its teaching” (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2015).

There has been increasing interest in inclusive education and Egypt has accomplished a milestone in terms of the policies relating to the inclusion of PWDs in society. However, the current context demonstrates a gap between what the policies aim to achieve and the feasibility of operationalizing them. Preparing for inclusion is crucial for a sustainable system that guarantees that all children benefit and that none are excluded. Among these challenges are perceptions and attitudes of teachers towards the inclusion of CWDs, capacity building of in-service teachers, and the preparation of new cohorts of teachers in pre-service teacher training universities. There are other problems pertaining to the lack of resource rooms with trained special education needs teachers, coordination between different government bodies, the absence of data on CWDs under the age of five years, and data disaggregated by age. Accordingly, this research offers a multi-pronged approach to recommendations while focusing on investing in human capacity building, especially in service training as a cornerstone for an efficient and sustainable, inclusive early childhood education system

(1) CAPMAS (2017). Egypt Population Census, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.capmas.gov.eg/>.

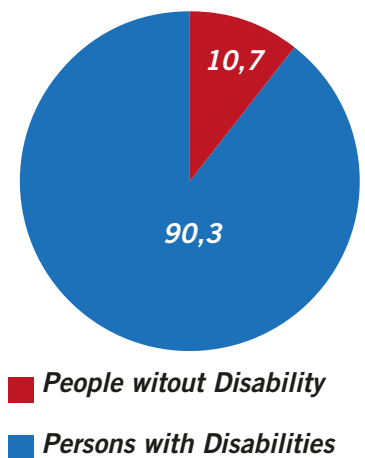


Figure 1: CAPMAS 2017 Census on PWDs
Source: CAPMAS, 2017

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Why Inclusive Education?

- It is an important step towards supporting the rights all children regardless of their abilities.
- It supports their active participation and their inclusion within their communities.
- Comprehensive, inclusive early childhood program can alter a child's developmental trajectory.
- Inclusion has positive social, economic and human rights implications:
 - Social: including children at an early age would potentially contribute to a generation of children who are aware of differently-abled children and would nurture the attitude of accepting differences, which in turn could encourage 'greater acceptance of diversity and the formation of more tolerant, equitable and cohesive societies' .
 - Economic: inclusion reduces future costs of education, medical care, and other social spending by the government . In addition, well-articulated and designed ECD programmes for CWDs can provide caregivers with more time to engage in productive work and enable young children to attend programs that aid them in reaching their full potentials.
 - Human rights: children with disabilities have the right to develop "to the maximum extent possible", and to be included in mainstream educational facilities.

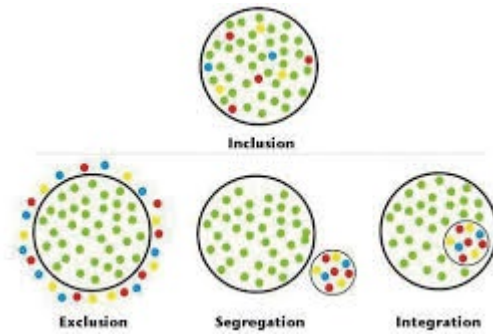


Figure 2: Inclusion Vs. Exclusion Vs. Segregation Vs. Integration

Source: <https://www.special-education-degree.net/what-are-inclusive-special-education-programs/>

Why focus on starting with Early Childhood Education (ECE)?

- Early childhood facilities are selected as a starting point for interventions based on rigorous scientific evidence and multi-country experiences .
- The timely provision of an optimal nurturing and learning environment can alter the child's longer-term developmental trajectory, and reduce secondary health and psychosocial complications and ease their full inclusion in schools and the society at large (The Royal Australian College of Physicians, 2013).

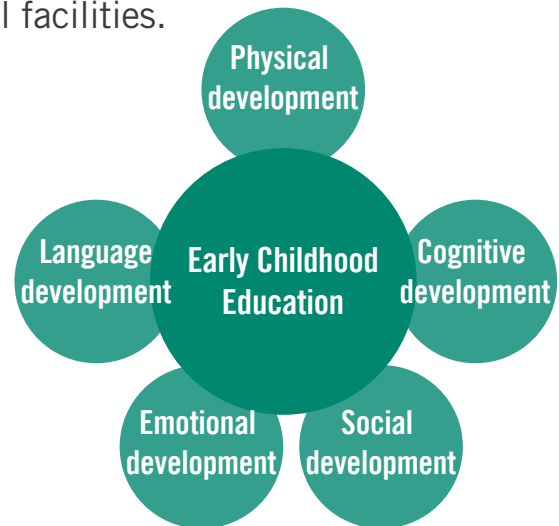


Figure 3: Benefits of Early Childhood Education

Early Childhood Education system in Egypt:

- The Ministry of Education (MOE) supervises 11,524 pre-primary facilities.
- The Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS) supervises 14,300 nurseries and 171 nurseries for CWDs.

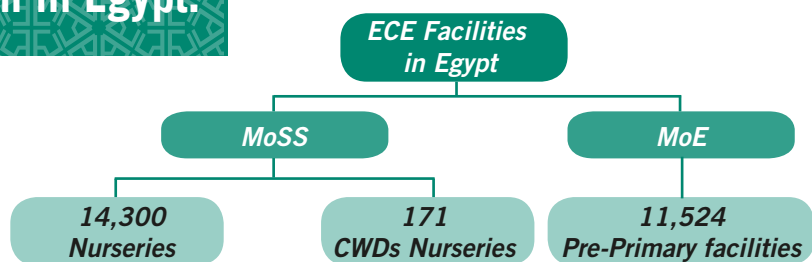


Figure 4: Early Childhood Education Facilities (ECE) in Egypt

(2) Rohwerder, B. (2015). Disability inclusion: Topic guide. Birmingham: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

(3) Heckman, J. (2006), Investing in disadvantaged young children is both fair and efficient. Presented to: the Committee for Economic Development, the Pew Charitable Trusts, PNC Financial Services Group, New York City.

(4) Banks, M. & Polack, S. (2014). The economic costs of exclusion and gains of inclusion of people with disabilities: Evidence from low and middle income countries. CBM, International Centre for Evidence in Disability, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine.

(5) UN General Assembly, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 20 November 1989, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1577, p. 3, Retrieved from: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b38f0.html>.

(6) Irwin, L. G., Siddiqi, A., & Hertzman, C. (2007). Early Child Development: A Powerful Equalizer. WHO. Geneva. Retrieved from: http://www.who.int/social_determinants/resources/ecd_kn_report_07_2007.pdf.

Current Policies of Egypt

- Egypt has signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Rights of PWDs (CRPD).
- The 2014 Egyptian constitution is considered a major shift in guaranteeing the rights of PWDs, especially article 81 highlighting the principles of equality, justice and equal opportunities, and article 53 prohibiting discrimination against PWDs.
- Egypt issued its first comprehensive law on the rights of PWDs in law 10/2018.
- The executive regulations concerning the new law on the rights of PWDs explicitly defines disabilities, the degrees of disability, and criteria for inclusion within the mainstream educational system.

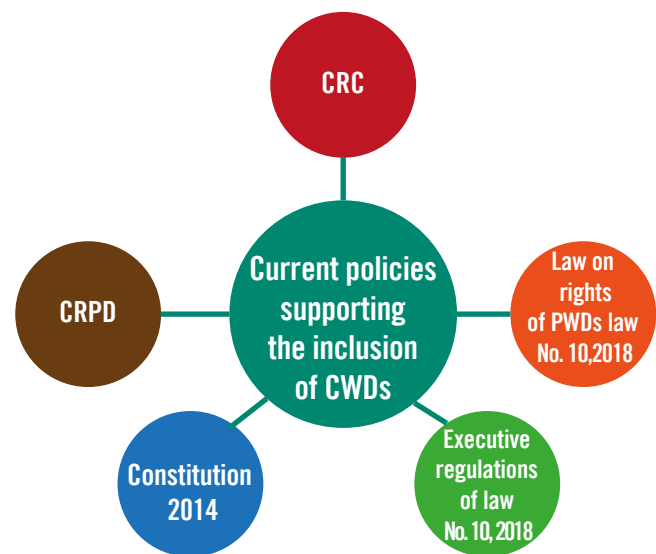


Figure 5: Current Policies in Egypt

Recommendations

Due to the intricacy of the issue, we have divided recommendations into two categories. The first category, core recommendations, focuses on human capacity building. The second category, complementary recommendations, addresses some of the existing gaps and challenges to creating a comprehensive, efficient and sustainable model of inclusion in Egypt.

Core recommendations:

Key elements of human capacity building:

- The attitudes/knowledge of teachers towards inclusion
- In-service training to improve the capacity of teachers already working in the field
- Pre-service training programs to help ensure that future generations of teachers enter the profession with the necessary skills and knowledge⁽⁷⁾.

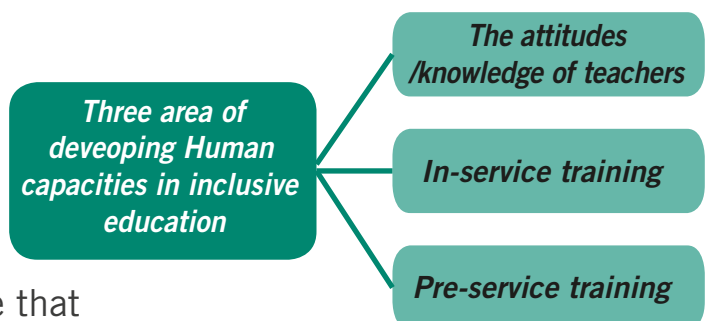


Figure 7: Pillars of Developing Human Capacity

Recommendations to address these areas:

1. Changing attitudes/knowledge of teachers

- For inclusive education to succeed, it is critical that teachers, principals, students, and other stakeholders maintain positive attitudes/perceptions and accurate knowledge regarding the inclusion of children with disabilities and its benefits.
- Social and behavioral change communication must be utilized⁽⁸⁾.
- Stakeholder awareness is key to the realization of such change⁽⁹⁾.
- Make use of multiple communication channels:
 - Mass media
 - Community-based awareness
 - Religious leaders and community leaders

(7) Nguyet, D.T., Ha, L.T. (2010). Preparing teachers for inclusive education, Catholic Relief Services, Vietnam. Retrieved from: : http://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/752898/9984320/1296500580270/edhowto_vietnam2.pdf?token=QTzwaA4yAOc48EQEQvqI01uwozHM%3D.

(8) Gaad, E. (2011). Inclusive education in the Middle East. New York: Routledge.

(9) Hassanein, E. E. (2015). Changing teachers' negative attitudes toward persons with intellectual disabilities. Behavior Modification, 39(3), 367-389. doi:10.1177/0145445514559929

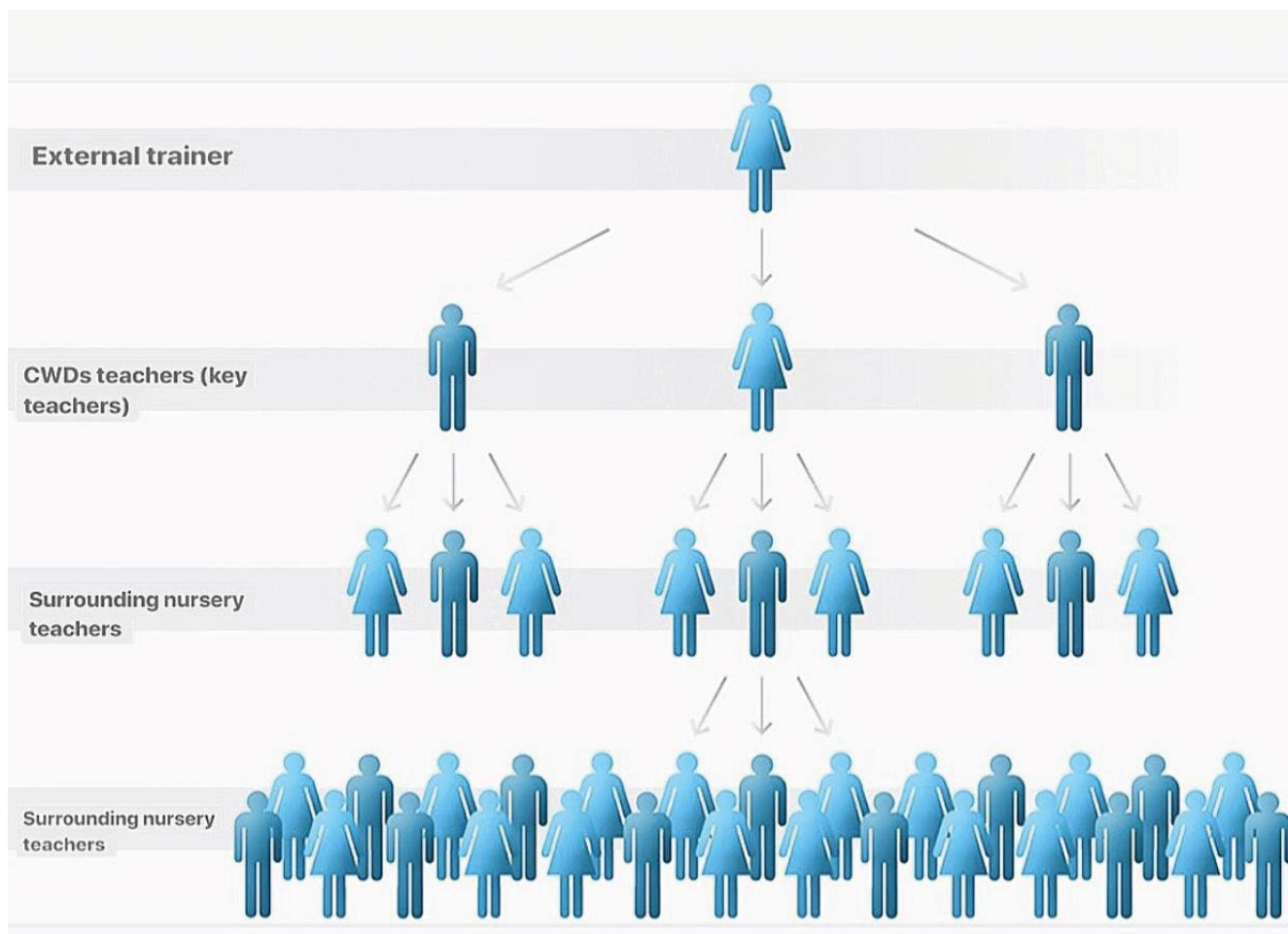


Figure 5: Demonstration of the Cascading Model in Teacher Training
Source: <https://knowledgetranslation.co.za/pack/>

2. In-service training:

- Due to the centralization of trainings and cost, training of teachers in Egypt is highly expensive and logistically complicated as it requires teachers to travel to other governorates to receive training modules.
- Based on that, we geared our recommendations towards investing in current employees, specifically those working in nurseries for CWDs, to serve as key teachers, and coaches for other teachers in their communities through a cascading model of training.
- Nurseries for CWDs will serve as the nucleus of the cascading model for supporting inclusion in all nurseries eventually, so after the first tier of surrounding nurseries is well-trained, the circle will expand and more surrounding nurseries will be trained and so on.
- This rationale focuses on creating a best fit that is implemented and tested on a small, controllable sample and that acts as a beacon that influences the development of mainstream ECE educational facilities and assists significantly in the development and the reinforcement of human capital.

3. Pre-service training

- Currently, graduates of special departments are not yet qualified to lead inclusion initiatives.
- Working on pre-service training in specialized universities will help to develop a generation of teachers who are equipped to lead such initiatives in their work as nursery teachers.
- In-depth teacher-training modules in inclusive education must be developed and included in the curriculum of teacher training universities.
- The pre-service curriculum needs modules for tackling the philosophy of inclusion, response to intervention (RTI), different teaching strategies and accommodations, and knowledge regarding how to identify developmental delays at an early age⁽¹⁰⁾.
- This may, in turn, allow teachers to provide students with the educational support needed and create a qualified cohort that will eventually strengthen the system at large.

(10) El-Ashry, F. R. (2009). General education pre-service teachers' attitudes toward inclusion in Egypt (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Florida.



Complementary recommendations:

1. *Creating resource rooms with Special Education Needs trained teachers in all-inclusive nurseries:*

The placement of resource rooms with qualified and trained teachers is indispensable when including children with disabilities. This ensures that children with disabilities receive the necessary support for their full inclusion.

2. *Coordination between different stakeholders to ‘craft’ efficient policies with well-coordinated implementation mechanisms:*

Strengthening the coordination mechanisms between relevant stakeholders is necessary in order to craft integrated, evidence-based policies. In order to ease the transition to an inclusive model, identify gaps from a holistic approach, avoid the duplication of efforts and create efficient channels of communication.

3. *The availability of data disaggregated by age and data for CWDs under the age of five:*

Existing data needs further improvement to inform policy making in the area of early childhood education and interventions programming.



Conclusion

In conclusion, Egypt has achieved positive developments relating to the inclusion of CWDs in education, however; Egypt still has a long way to go to ensure the mainstreaming of an inclusive education system beginning from early childhood years to different levels of education. Policy recommendations highlight the importance of investing in the human capital working in ECE as a cornerstone to launch a new system with individuals who hold positive attitudes towards CWDs and their inclusion. These individuals must also have the necessary qualifications to create a strong cohort of teachers to lead the way into a new sustainable, comprehensive inclusive system. Furthermore, many areas would require in-depth planning to create a strong system. All the components of a successful inclusive ECE model could not be possibly addressed in one policy paper; therefore, areas such as operationalizing a strong coordination mechanism between different stakeholders, collecting more in-depth data, developing infrastructure accommodations, fostering institutional readiness and curriculum development would require more policy research to address each issue rigorously.

The Public Policy HUB Where Rigour Meets Creativity

The Public Policy HUB is an initiative that was developed at the School of Global Affairs and Public Policy (GAPP) in October 2017. It was designed to fill in the policy research gap. It provides the mechanism by which the good ideas, plausible answers, and meaningful solutions to Egypt's chronic and acute policy dilemmas can be nurtured, discussed, debated, refined, tested and presented to policymakers in a format that is systematic, highly-visible and most likely to have a lasting impact.

The Public Policy HUB provides a processing unit where policy teams are formed on a regular basis, combining experienced policy scholars/mentors with young creative policy analysts, provide them with the needed resources, training, exposure, space, tools, networks, knowledge and contacts, to enable them to come up with sound, rigorous and yet creative policy solutions that have a greater potential to be effectively advocated and communicated to the relevant policy makers and to the general public.

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