



In a Democracy Everyone is “Included”

Narmandakh Adiya

Step by Step Program, Mongolian Education Alliance

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Mongolia: Facts



Area: 1.566,5 sq.km

Population: 3 million

Special Education: History

- A traditional system of specialized, residential schools was set up in 1964
- Teachers for special schools were trained in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries as *defectologists*
- The system was rooted in the **medical model** of disability

A Medical Model of Special Education

- Disability assessed on a purely medical basis by a panel composed of a medical doctor, a representative of local government and members of the community.
- Regarded a disability as a chronic illness and persons with disabilities as *invalids*.
- The services were intended to “correct” or “fix” the disabling condition

Special Education: History

- By 1990, Mongolia had 18 specialized schools serving 6.6 % of the school-age children with disabilities
- No reliable data due to lack of official classification system
- Every agency uses its own numbers dependent on services offered.

The Effect of The Transition on Special Education

- Democratic revolution in 1990
- Economic hardships following transition to a market economy
- Many teachers and defectologists left their jobs, training abroad halts
- Schools closed, children with disabilities sent back to their home areas

Special Education: New Approaches

- Transition marked introduction of new approaches for accommodating the needs of students with disabilities
- Salamanca World Statement on Special Needs Education in 1994
- Inclusive Education Unit at the Ministry of Education in 2001

Inclusive Education

- 2003-- Inclusive Education Program for Children with Disabilities, a joint order of Ministers of Education, Labor and Social Protection, & Health.
- The Mongolian Education Sector Master Plan for 2006-2015 calls for equal opportunities for students with disabilities at all levels of education.

From the Mongolian Education Sector Master Plan

The following provisions have been specified at primary and secondary education levels:

- *Expand educational services for disabled children*
- *Enroll disabled children in regular schools*
- *Study educational needs of disabled children and develop and implement training programs to meet their special needs*

Provision 1.5

Current Situation: Opportunities

- Effects of the intensified human rights movement worldwide
- Adoption of major policy documents
- Basic education (grades 1-8) is compulsory and free for children in Mongolia
- Interest of funding agencies
- Availability of international expertise

Challenges to Inclusion

- No clear definition of what constitutes a disability
- No common system in place to diagnose children
- No statistics or research
- Legacy of “hidden” children

Challenges to Inclusion

- Attitudes favoring segregated education still strong among teachers, parents and students
- No existing infrastructure
 - School buildings and classes not accessible
 - Pre- and in-service training system not in place
 - Absence of the individualized child assessment system
 - Poor educational resources and assistive technology
 - Lack of experience or knowledge

Step by Step -Mongolia Activities

- Child-centered developmentally appropriate teaching
- Inclusive Education course at the Teacher Training College (2003)
- Inclusion and Social Justice trainings with US trainers
- Translation and publication of educational resources on inclusion

New Initiative: Child Development Center

- Goal: To support transition of children with disabilities into schools
- Initiated and implemented by Step by Step-Mongolia since 2006
- Funded by World Vision Inc.,

Child Development Center

- 1st year--30 children with disabilities and their family members, 2nd year—43 children
- Location: suburban secondary school classroom
- Staff members: 1 (+1 volunteer)
- Community support: 11 community volunteers

Outcomes for Children

- Transition to school
 - 13 children have enrolled in their community schools in 2006-2007
 - 25 children in 2007-2008
- New skills and knowledge
- Social-emotional development

Outcomes for Parents

Increased:

- Family involvement, especially fathers
- Parent networking and sharing
- Opportunities for teaching and learning
- Access to educational resources
- Moral support and motivation

Outcomes for Community

- Raised awareness among teachers, parents and other community members about the needs of children with disabilities
- Contributed to promoting social justice
- Promoted community building
- Served as a successful model of transition to inclusion

Lessons Learned

- Teachers need more support on site, training and resources
- Children need to be in programs that are individualized and developmentally appropriate
- Old attitudes are very hard to change: at ALL levels