

Shifting Gears: Re-framing the International Discussion about Inclusive Education

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Abstract

Kauffman, Felder, Ahrbeck, Badar, and Schneiders (this issue) call for a more temperate approach to inclusion, arguing against its use in educating *all* students with disabilities. We argue in response that the issue should not be framed as “inclusion versus non-inclusion,” asserting that our field would benefit by examining the alternatives that actually exist across the globe for educating children with and without disabilities. We first provide four concepts that are central to understanding how education is conceptualized and practiced on a global scale: (a) education for all (EFA), interpreted as nations valuing an educated citizenry; (b) primary and secondary education, discussed to make clear real differences in how these two periods of schooling are handled across nations; (c) tracking, the worldwide practice of ability grouping that affects the education of all students; and (d) comprehensive local schools, regionally centralized facilities educating all children, which offer the potential for greater equity. We follow the latter with five schooling “models” that represent the major educational options worldwide: (a) the selective schools model, which controls educational access, often with academic criteria; (b) the separate schools model, which tracks students into different facilities; (c) the tracked schools model, which stratifies students within the same facility; (d) the multi-tiered schools model, which starts with general education settings and curriculum, then provides interventions or programs as needed; and (e) the equity schools model, which uses general education settings and curriculum, providing supports as needed. We conclude with four points: (a) neither resource scarcity nor presumed limitations in general education capacity should preclude inclusive education; (b) the comprehensive local school provides a good base for enhancing equity in educational opportunity for students with and without disabilities; (c) special education is tracking,

seriously impacting equity; and (d) inclusive schooling provides the best approach to EFA in the long run.

Key Words: Inclusive Education, Tracking, Special Schools, International Issues, Education for All (EFA)

Throughout history, inequalities in protection and opportunity, whether related to education, employment, political decision making, or other fundamental human rights, have been an ongoing source of disagreement and conflict. Hence, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR, 1948), which was adopted by the United Nations in Paris on the heels of World War II, can be considered a milestone in the struggle of people from all walks of life to live in a world that expresses common standards of conduct and respect across nations and cultures. As noted by Jackson, White, and Ryndak (2015), since its inception, there have been numerous international conventions and treaties intended to “assert and to protect fundamental human rights and to hold States accountable for the treatment of their citizens” (p. 60).

In 2006, the United Nations adopted the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UNCRPD, 2016). As Banerjee (2014) has stated, this represents the first comprehensive treaty within our century that is designed for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, asserting the rights of people with disabilities to “equality and non-discrimination in all areas of life” (p. 9). The treaty is also noteworthy in that it presents an inclusive perspective on education: Article 24, ensures “an inclusive education system at all levels” affirming “access [to] an inclusive, quality, and free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live,” and to “effective individualized supports . . . consistent with the goal of full inclusion” (Jackson et al., 2015, p. 61).

In their recent paper, Kauffman, Felder, Ahrbeck, Badar, and Schneiders (this issue) question the wisdom of inclusive education as an approach to the education of *all* students with disabilities, and they call for a more temperate approach to inclusion. Among their arguments is an assertion that the most important aspect of special education is its focus on the specialized learning needs and educational outcomes of its students, and that since inclusion is less an issue of instruction and more an issue of setting, it should not drive educational practice. They also argue that “full inclusion” appears to have the potential to replace what is known in the United States of America as the “continuum of alternative placements” option, thereby threatening the availability of services to meet the individual needs of these students. The authors also use selected literature to suggest that inclusive practices are failing around the world, concluding that it does not work and should not be viewed as a viable approach to education.

They reinforced their arguments by suggesting that increased heterogeneity within classrooms, brought on by inclusion, burdens general education teachers as they are not trained to address the range of learning needs when there are students with special education needs in their classes. Kauffman et al. conclude that “full inclusion” impedes the capacity of teachers to make sound educational judgments about what is needed to meet the educational needs of diverse and different learners and, without alternative placements, the educational system is more susceptible to human error when attempting to meet the needs of all students, including those with special education needs.

The Kauffman et al. paper is not the first to express concern for educating all children with disabilities in general education settings (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994), and we can anticipate that this debate will continue for some time. Nevertheless, what might prove useful for the long-term discussion of these issues is for this paper, a response to Kauffman et al., to offer a different and unique perspective on the issue of inclusive education, focusing on actual educational service system structures from around the globe. Three of us (Jackson, Alazemi, and Rude) have observed in our professional capacities schools in a number of countries other than the United States, in Asia, Central America, Australia, the Arab Gulf Region, and Europe. And, all four of us know from experience the different placements typically used for students with disabilities within the “continuum of alternative placements” option in the United State.

This paper has three major sections. First, we introduce a number of essential concepts, drawn from international discussions of education. These are the concepts of *Education for All*, *primary/secondary*, *tracking*, and the *comprehensive local school*. These concepts provide tools for characterizing the activities and likely student outcomes of different educational service system structures. Then, in the next section, based both on experience and selected literature, we offer a description of five distinct service system structures that we suggest represent the primary ways *all* children and youth across the world are educated in schools today. We call these service system structures “models,” acknowledging that numerous in-between states probably exist in schools across the globe. The third and final section of this paper summarizes the implications of this discussion for the education of students with disabilities, and it examines how inclusion

should be framed in relation to the five service system models.

THE PLACE WE CALL SCHOOL

In democratic societies, there is a tendency to define the purpose of government as a system that provides “public goods and services to all citizens under the rule of law,” and is subject to the voice of the people (Thomas, 2015, p. 199). Hence, education becomes a “right” that promotes equal opportunity for all citizens, defined as: (a) a free education, up to the point in which citizens enter the labor market; (b) access to the same curriculum, independent of background; (c) access to the same schools, based on geographic region; and (d) providing equality within the same locality, given the available tax support (Coleman, 1968). The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR, 1948), and later conventions and treaties, have advanced the idea of education as a right at the international level, asserting that people everywhere have a right to education, benefiting both the individual and society. For example, the *Education for all summit of nine high-population countries* (UNESCO, 1993) asserted:

The relationship between education and society is an interactive one. Through education, we have the capacity to shape the kind of society in which we will live tomorrow. Education transmits values, knowledge, skills and behaviour. It is not only synonymous with the awakening of a human being’s potential but also with social and economic progress (UNESCO, 1993, p. 62).

The dilemma we face when attempting to evaluate the idea of a universal right to education is that there are both ideological and historical factors impeding the enactment of this right internationally, certainly when contrasted with the democratic idea of what this right should look like. Spring (2000) noted that a “right to education” is carried out very differently in schools within an authoritarian versus a non-authoritarian country, and that a right to education in a Buddhist culture may have very different characteristics when contrasted with that of (say) the culture of Confucianism (his comparison).

Historical trends in developed countries may also be worth bearing in mind when viewing the worldwide movement toward education as a right supported by government. In the United States, for example, responsibility for educating a child was once shared between the family unit, religious authority, and schools (Goodlad, 1984). The industrial revolution and modernization changed that, reducing the family’s role and vesting in schools a mandated responsibility for educating the populace (Coleman, 1968). However, with compulsory education, not one but three separate systems of education were instituted: “regular” schools for ordinary students, separate schools for disorderly and truant students, and special schools for students with sensory, physical and

intellectual disabilities (Richardson, 1994). In countries around the globe today, this historical path is potentially repeatable, as school systems are developed or expanded to meet the growing demands of a technologically complex world.

Despite complexities with the concept of a right to education, globally, there is the recognition that a nation’s citizens should all be educated, and that it is unacceptable when many are illiterate and do not have the opportunity to attend school (Jean-Marie & Ryan, 2015). We will refer to placing value on education and school enrollment as *Education for All*, or EFA (Education for All Global Monitoring Report, 2015), and we note that socioeconomic growth benefits from an educated “human capital stock” (Jean-Marie & Ryan, 2015, p. 6).

In the United States and other developed countries, we often think in terms of kindergarten through twelfth grade, covering what is described as the *primary* and *secondary* educational periods. It is typical to describe primary as the period in which essential skills of literacy and numeracy are to be acquired, and secondary as the period in which there is an expansion of these skills into different forms of expression, which could be academic, vocational, religious, the arts, or other ways a society chooses to partition the educational process. But primary and secondary education are not within the rights of children in all nations across the globe. In fact, EFA efforts around the globe have focused heavily on achieving educational opportunity simply at the primary level. Kenya, for example, has been striving to abolish student fees for the first through fourth grades, establishing Free Primary Education (Lelei, Weidman, & Sakaue, 2015), and the “Primary School Completion Rate” is viewed as a major indicator of a county’s success toward EFA (Langsten, 2014).

Regardless of the proportion of citizens provided with a free public education, and regardless of the actual grade levels available, “students are grouped into academic ‘clusters’ in a variety of ways” for their education around the world (Maaz, Trautwein, Lüdtke, & Baumert, 2008, p. 99). When these clusters are based on measures of competence, potential, or achievement, this is described as *tracking*. Tracking – sometimes called “streaming,” “ability grouping,” or “leveling” – can occur via separate schools, separate classes, separate course streams, and even separation based on ability in the same class.

Tracking, as an educational policy and set of practices, interacts with EFA because students on different tracks may experience different curricular content, or the same content but in different forms or levels. Tracking also interacts with the primary/secondary distinction: “Within-class achievement grouping” tracking is prevalent in the primary years, and explicit school-level tracking (separate schools) occurs more in high schools across many nations (Maaz et al., 2008, p. 100).

Tracking often occurs in conjunction with a regimen of tests at prescribed age levels and tracking decisions can also be guided by academic performance at particular grade levels. In terms of secondary education, systems differ widely in the age in which explicit tracking decisions are made. School-based tracking in Austria, for example, is at age 10, and in Italy, it is at age 14 (Lee, 2014). In recognizing some of the problems created by tracking, especially for students on nonacademic tracks, some systems (e.g., Germany) have introduced “second chance” options, permitting individuals to “switch tracks” after the age in which tracking has become a reality for them (Biewen & Tapalaga, 2017). In the United States, as described by Lucas (1999), track rigidity was largely dismantled in the 1980s by eliminating policy prescriptions that emphasized course streams (e.g., college bound, vocational, remedial), such that students could tailor their high school studies across subject areas (e.g., honors history, mainstream math).

The last essential concept that will guide our discussion in the upcoming review of the five models is the *comprehensive local school*. In some European countries, research is being conducted that compares “between school tracking systems” with “comprehensive education systems,” the latter referring to schools that either do not employ tracking or have eliminated it (e.g., Vieluf, Hochweber, Klieme, & Kunter, 2015). In the United States, this term has been used to refer to schools that serve all students within their geographical boundaries, emphasizing treating all students as valued members of the school community (Sailor et al., 1989). Marrying these two concepts, the European and the American usages of this term, the comprehensive local school (a) serves all students of a particular age- and grade-range within its geographical region, (b) offers a regionally-approved academic curriculum and may offer vocational curriculum as well, and (c) does not have fixed tracks. This concept is developed at the end of this paper.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICE SYSTEM MODELS

Education for All is an inspiring idea, but as we have noted, its realization would likely result in different things in different countries. Reframing this as a question, if EFA were more prevalent in educational systems across the globe, and if existing educational systems expanded but did not change, what would it look like, and how would students with disabilities be educated? This question brings us to the heart of the issue of inclusive education, because it asks, “What are the existing alternatives, and how do they impact children with disabilities?”

We define and describe in this section five distinct school system models that, in our professional experiences, represent the primary ways children and youth are educated in schools across the world. These are (a) the

selective schools model, (b) the separate schools model, (c) the tracked schools model, (d) the multi-tiered schools model, and (e) the equity schools model. As these models are presented, we argue that each comes with possible advantages and disadvantages for a nation’s populace and for a nation as an economic entity. We also propose that each presents a unique set of implications and repercussions for how children and youth with disabilities are educated. We believe that this discussion of model benefits and liabilities can provide insights into what each offers in terms of educational experiences for persons with disabilities and how they measure up against each other for meeting larger societal interests.

The Selective Schools Model

Schools that are selective are those that use competitive or restrictive admissions criteria. Children are admitted or refused admittance based on academic, cultural, intellectual, and/or spoken language criteria. These schools may be private schools, academic standards are often moderate to high, and they typically promote a single curriculum. In the United States, these can include charter schools, which promote themselves via particular curricular, pedagogical, or ideological configurations, and often receive government support, thereby blurring the boundary between private and public. Similar types of schools also exist in other countries. For example, in large urban areas of India, schools can be initiated by “non-government organizations” (NGOs) – well-educated parents making educational provisions for their children that are superior to that which is provided by government (Banerjee, 2014). Finally, in some countries, public schooling itself becomes increasingly selective. Examinations at the end of a grade can result in the separation of students into those who will remain in school from those who will not.

Selective schools reduce student diversity, because they accept children demonstrating an ability to be successful academically, and/or children with specific intellectual, linguistic, and/or cultural similarities. Advantages are associated with the perspective that educating together top ranked students benefits a society by committing resources toward nurturing and developing high levels of intellectual or cultural capital. Such schools could also attract highly skilled teachers, who would be drawn to the opportunity to be engaged in rigorous intellectual pursuits with students who, purportedly, will do well. Such schools would also appeal to families wanting to narrow the avenues of schooling for their offspring toward giftedness, strong academics, cultural identity, and interpersonal connections that, taken together, contribute to the advancement and long-term success of their children. Disadvantages could be that neither the context nor the curriculum of these schools can realistically provide students with the communication, attitudinal

proclivities, or diplomacy skills needed for successfully navigating within a society that is highly diverse in terms of languages, norms of conduct and social interaction, and values.

In the United States, some students with disabilities are admitted into charter schools. However, their numbers are low compared to public schools, and selection processes still limit admittance, based on a school's perceptions of its capacity and resources (Miron, 2014). In global terms, children with disabilities, notably intellectual disability, are unlikely to benefit from the existence of selective schools because they would routinely fail to meet entrance requirements. Additionally, resources in societies in which these schools are prevalent are likely to be disproportionately committed to these schools. The so-called Matthew effect (e.g., Stanovich, 1986) could be a result, whereby highly educated graduates of selective schools could increasingly reap societal benefits as they proceed through life, and those not part of that group, including many persons with disabilities, could lose ground as they move into and through adulthood. A further consequence for society is that significant proportions of its population would be undereducated, adversely affecting the capacity of the workforce, thereby limiting economic development, and assuring that a relatively large proportion of citizens would be dependent on others, likely including many citizens with disabilities.

The Separate Schools Model

When a system relies on an array of separate schools to educate its children, it means that students are placed in different and distinct physical facilities based on perceptions of different educational needs, or projections of what they can or should contribute to society when they enter the labor force. As practiced in general education, an argument for this type of system is that different schools can offer children different curriculum (e.g., academic versus vocational) based on assessed educational needs or their expected contributions to society upon attaining adulthood; simultaneously, schools of lower tracks can still provide aspects of the academic curriculum, but now adjusted to meet learner capability or need. In addition, if there are procedures for students to shift direction between academic and vocationally-oriented schools, or to move at will from schools they perceive as having low expectations to ones they perceive as having higher expectations, all the better for the system and the students. One might also assert that teachers and other specialists could be drawn to one type of school or another, adding value and expertise to the education of children within particular physical facilities.

In terms of possible disadvantages, tracking of any type places students at risk for three forms of inequality identified by Jacobs (1996): inequality associated with educational access (e.g., choice of curriculum), inequality

associated with the educational process (e.g., achievement opportunities), and inequality associated with adulthood outcomes (e.g., skilled or adequately paying jobs). When separate facilities are used for educating students with disabilities, the problems of tracking mentioned here are magnified.

To illustrate the foregoing, in the case of countries that track regular education students into different secondary schools, the presumed benefits are associated with different kinds of preparation for adulthood; for example, specialized vocational options can be offered in the nonacademic track schools. However, when physically different schools exist for children with disabilities, especially intellectual disabilities, separate schools tracking is likely to begin not in the secondary period when educational needs may require diverse options but in the elementary period when basic skills are the needs of all students. Moreover, in some countries, tracking into secondary programs is not likely to happen at all for students with disabilities, because they are tracked out of school altogether. Finally, if school attendance for students with disabilities does continue into the secondary period, they are now in a special school offering programs that differ even from those of the vocational schools. At least in the United States, our experiences suggest that the vocational opportunities offered in special schools are often of the same ilk as those offered for adults in activity centers and sheltered workshops. Special schools base their very existence on the idea that their clientele cannot obtain regular employment, an argument that runs contrary to the empirical evidence for the processes and outcomes of supported employment (Agran, et al., 2018). The latter brings into question whether the provided vocational options of the special school have any value at all for the preparation of their students to contribute as workers in adult society.

Experience also suggests that between-school mobility for students with disabilities is unlikely. Special schools preserve their identity and purpose not by the movement of their students to higher track schools but by showing that, within the confines of their curriculum, students give evidence of learning what they are taught. Consequently, graduating their most competent students to a regular school would bring down their averages. These schools also tend to base their existence on the medical model of disability, which promulgates the notion that problems with learning are “the result of personal characteristics resulting from quasi-disease states” and that diagnosis and treatment are the required actions on the part of the educational system (Sailor, 2008, p. 210). As noted in a speech given by the late Gunnar Dybwad, at the 1977 Third Asian Conference on Mental Retardation in Bangalore India, when financial and manpower resources for disability are allocated under the auspices of the medical model, its constituents are treated as patients as in hospitals, impacting their access to all aspects of services

within society (Allard, Howard, Vorderer, & Wells, 1999). In addition, with respect to the argument that special schools can attract and utilize highly qualified personnel, the empirical evidence supports the opposite: Staffing of special schools is of a lesser quality when compared to comprehensive schools that serve all children (Mason-Williams, Bettini, & Gagnon, 2017).

The Tracked Schools Model

The tracked schools model has much in common with the separate schools model simply because it also stratifies children for their education based on ability and achievement, but within the physical and social structure of a single school facility or system. As Lucas (1999) notes, explicit tracking is widespread throughout Europe, however, it has been largely dismantled in the United States. Yet, tracking remains a stalwart of the educational process in the United States in less obvious (implicit) forms (Maaz et al., 2008). For example, in secondary schools, it is not uncommon for there to be classes for high achievers and gifted students; a much larger set of classes for most other students; and classes focused on topics like “consumer math” for less academically-inclined students. These lower level classes may serve as electives for some students, but they are also likely serving many at-risk students and students with mild disabilities, providing versions of general education curriculum that are leveled and targeted based on perceptions by adults of learner capabilities.

Within-school tracking, especially with the possibility for students to take classes across tracks, would have the same benefits described for the separate school model, but with the added advantage of potentially greater fluidity when all tracks are in the same school. Problems with educational tracking as practiced with the general population have been repeatedly documented in the literature over the last several decades (e.g., Oakes, 1985), and they fall within the three inequalities identified earlier: inequalities in educational access, process, and adult outcomes.

Special education for students with disabilities as a separate educational system within a school exacerbates these concerns, especially when it involves self-contained classrooms. Students with disabilities are placed in these classes presumably based on assessed learning needs. In the United States, placement is ascribed to the individualized education planning process associated with Federal Law (IDEA); however, as Jackson (2014) has noted, student placement often reflects available program options rather than individualized education needs.

Students with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities are very likely to be placed in self-contained programs (Kleinert et al., 2015), and they stay in these classes throughout their school careers. As portrayed by Kurth, Born, and Love (2016), the programs offer low level academic instruction (e.g., puzzles, looking at books),

communication skills instruction but with limited access to authentic communication partners or supports, repetitive self-care and independent living instruction such as money identification skills (“functional skills”), infrequent instructional opportunities with licensed teachers, and high proportions of non-engagement and passive learning activities. Another downside is that, if across-track opportunities exist, they are often limited to specials (art, music, physical education). Opportunities to participate in regular academic classes are often nonexistent, rare, or variable across a student’s educational career.

The educational rationale that is used to justify placement in these programs is based on three positions: (a) they cannot learn and/or benefit from general education curriculum; (b) they need a special curriculum to enhance their independence, success, and potential contribution to adult society; and (c) they need a structured, special setting to be able to learn. There is, however, no substantive evidence to support any of these positions. Current research shows that students with intellectual disability can learn general education curriculum and in general education classes (Agran et al., 2018), and there is evidence of potential long-term benefits (Ryndak, Alper, Hughes, & McDonnell, 2012). There is also the disturbing possibility that the inherent nature of the self-contained environment does not and cannot result in the kinds of educational experiences or positive outcomes that are possible in general education (Causton-Theoharis, Theoharis, Fernanda, & Cosier, 2011; Jackson, Ryndak, & Wehmeyer, 2008; Soukup, Wehmeyer, Bashinski, & Bovaird, 2007). Moreover, as with special schools, it is difficult to arrange a transition out of one of these programs, even when there are concerns with placement appropriateness or because a student appears “ready” for general education. The rigidity of the placement process associated with special education law in the United States contributes to this, as does a self-contained program’s need to justify its existence. To remove notably competent students would be undesirable when the self-contained class’s status as a viable educational option is enhanced by numbers served and unique cases of success.

The Multi-Tiered Schools Model

The multi-tiered schools model is an extension of Response-to-intervention (RTI), which has been articulated in several different ways in the United States (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2008; Hoover, 2013). A notable difference between the multi-tiered model and the previously described tracking models is that a multi-tiered model assigns a central role to general education curriculum for all students. Secondly, it re-interprets the role of the special educator as both an intervention specialist and a classroom teacher (Brownell, Sindelar, Kiely, & Danielson, 2010). Third, it emphasizes using research-based methods of instruction in all tiers (Hoover,

2013). Fourth and finally, it stresses using academic data, not disability diagnosis, for decision-making regarding within-tier progress and movement between tiers (Brownell et al., 2010).

As described by Hoover (2013), in a multi-tiered system, students start their education in general education classes. Student differences are handled in the general education classroom by providing adaptations to the curriculum, by using varied instructional approaches, and by offering brief supported learning opportunities via peer and adult tutoring, or pull aside. If these are not successful based on assessment of progress, students can be pulled out for more intense, second tier interventions, which should remediate learning and performance problems so that the effected students no longer need the pullout service. Special classes (third tier) are reserved for those students who are not adequately responsive to a history that included general education instruction and second tier interventions.

The multi-tiered model is presented in the literature as a model for students at-risk and/or with learning disabilities, including second language learners with special education needs (Hamayan, Marler, Sánchez-López, & Damico, 2013). It has the potential for use with students who have more severe disabilities (Copeland & Cosbey, 2008); however, this is rare in the United States. These students are typically placed in self-contained classes based on disability without an initial RTI placement in general education.

Multi-tiered models are relatively new, and more research is needed on their effectiveness (Gersten, Jayanthi, & Dimino, 2017). They have the potential for reducing inappropriate placements into special education by keeping students in academically challenging classes who, in the past, may have been moved prematurely into special education (Hoover, 2013). However, since tiered models have been superimposed on existing systems of general and special education, it remains open to question whether schools are actually implementing with fidelity the fluidity of student movement between tiers, the general education curriculum emphasis, or the instructional rigor demands of multi-tiered processes. As observers of these practices over the last decade, we have seen students being provided second tier services without adequately considering first tier supports and instruction; we have seen students “stuck” in remedial tiers for prolonged periods; and we question whether any real change has occurred in the instruction provided in special education, which is typically viewed as the third tier (Brownell et al., 2010; Fuchs et al., 2008).

Despite its promises, the multi-tiered model also expresses a familiar dichotomy, in which students are either successful general education students or they are not, and herein lies its similarity with the previously

presented models. Its operation can be likened to a sifting process: first tier activities reveal which students are successful in general education and distinguishes them from those who are not; second tier activities intervene with the latter students, returning those who are now successful back to general education and recommending more intense services for those who are not; and third tier activities are special education, now legitimized as the appropriate service for the latter individuals (e.g., Gilbert et al., 2013). Hence, the multi-tiered model is, in a sense, a cautious and carefully planned path to tracking.

The Equity Schools Model

When a school system uses an equity model, students are placed together in age- and grade-level general education classes, providing all students with ongoing and long-term opportunities to learn the same essential skills, curriculum content, and social norms. Differences in student capabilities are handled in the general education classroom in a variety of ways, including: (a) providing material adaptations (Kurth & Keegan, 2012); (b) augmenting the classroom’s instructional approaches (McDonnell, Jameson, Riesen, & Polychronis, 2013); and, (c) using peer collaboration strategies (Huber, Carter, Lopano, & Stankiewicz, 2018). This model is called the equity model because it emphasizes equal access to whatever educational opportunities are being offered by a system, based on the perspective that all students can learn and should have opportunities to excel when curriculum and placement are defined based on age/grade-level and not on disability as an educational construct.

The model is supported by research on inclusive education practices. For example, in a comprehensive analysis of learning theory, research evidence, and historical practices, Jackson, et al. (2008) highlighted the benefits of general education placement for students with significant support needs and raised critical concerns regarding the value of other placements used in special education today. The model can also be resource efficient, because it reduces the need for separate transportation systems and separate physical facilities. Additionally, in an age in which multicultural and second language acquisition issues are factors in learning, these specialists can be concentrated in one system rather than dispersed across two or more educational systems.

In countries with existing special education systems, support can also come via collaboration of classroom teachers with special educators who, as intervention specialists, can be inclusion facilitators and skilled short-term interventionists (Fisher, Frey, & Thousand, 2003). As inclusion facilitators, their roles are to provide the supports that students with intensive learning concerns need to be successful in general education. As interventionists, they may offer short-term skill instruction that has specific end

results, augmenting, but not replacing, grade-level curriculum and general education participation.

Applying an equity model does not rule out vocational options. School districts might offer vocational courses but would not restrict these to one set of students or another based on ability/disability criteria. However, we suggest that a central issue here is *age-of-onset* regarding alternative curriculum pathways; that is, at what age/grade does a unified curriculum become a diversified one, in which students select from vocational and academic options that could turn into pathways toward adult outcomes? Does this process begin in high school? Middle school? Or, is it best to stay with a rigorous academic curriculum until the end of high school? Such questions as these pose challenges for early age-of-onset tracking practices, but they also challenge the “18-21 transition programs” used in the United States for students with disabilities: Should the career and independent living options offered to students with disabilities in transition programs be offered to *all* students, and does this mean changing the age-of-onset for offering career-related public education options to eighteen? Or, should a society invest more in post-secondary options that are inclusive, as is happening in the United States with community college and university programs (Grigal, Hart, Smith, Domin, & Weir, 2017)?

The educational equity model represents innovation when contrasted with actual practices, mainly in countries with existing special education systems, and herein lies its disadvantages. As implied by Kauffman, et al., general education teachers must have expertise in universal design for learning and collaboration; such teachers may be scarce given what skills are emphasized in today’s university programs. Likewise, special education teachers must have expertise in supporting students with different learning needs in general education classes and in collaboration with general educators. Such teachers may also be difficult to recruit under present circumstances given what is emphasized in many university special educator preparation programs. Additionally, school systems relying on any of the foregoing models would need to re-configure their services, requiring re-tooling all teachers. Both general and special education teachers would likely have problems initially with distinguishing their respective responsibilities, and deciding who should handle which learning issues and concerns. Finally, although many parents we know are ecstatic when their children with disabilities are treated as members of the general student population, there are other parents who prefer their children to be in separate classes or facilities, believing them to have different needs or convinced of safety concerns.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Kauffman et al. (this issue) argue for a more temperate approach to inclusion, questioning its value and feasibility

as an educational process. Our response to Kauffman has been to reframe the issue, exploring larger patterns in education of all children to provide a context for evaluating inclusion for students with disabilities. We offered four concepts that are useful when surveying educational values and practices on a global scale: (a) education for all (EFA); (b) the primary/secondary distinction; (c) tracking; and (d) the comprehensive local school. We followed this by describing five models that characterize schooling practices today, delineating possible benefits and disadvantages for each. We conclude this discussion by presenting four points, drawn from our analysis, that bring to the forefront our support of inclusive education.

Our first point requires us to re-construct our analysis of the selective schools model. We have previously noted that the model is counterproductive in terms of EFA, because it tends to result in an educated elite at the expense of an educated populace. Yet, central to understanding how this model operates in a nation is the economic principle of *scarcity*, defined as “resources are limited but wants are not” (Riggs, 2015, p. 579). As described by Riggs, scarcity requires that governing bodies make choices and trade-offs, and this would be true in education as in any other area of resource allocation.

We suggest that when resources are sparse, the selective schools model may seem advantageous. However, contrary to this point of view, we suggest that scarcity can actually encourage innovation in resource allotment, providing a context in which inclusive education may germinate. As noted by Charema (2010), some of the poorest countries in the world are showing “more commitment and more enthusiasm” toward inclusion than that expressed in developed countries (p. 89). He reports on a program evaluation of an inclusive pilot program in Lesotho, a country in sub-Saharan Africa, which found full commitment to inclusion among teachers in its ten rural schools. In addition, despite class sizes of 50 to 100 pupils, “a wide range of teaching strategies was noted,” and the “teachers never lost track of including all children all the time” (p. 89).

There are also two features of the selective schools model that are worth examining further when considering the issue of equity: reliance on a uniform, rigorous curriculum and reliance on general education teachers. With respect to the former, as described by Jackson (2014) a concern with special education for persons with intellectual disability in the United States is that their educational experiences are often based on a potpourri of individualized goals that, when viewed collectively over time, can reflect limited breadth, depth, or direction. With respect to the latter, we have acknowledged what Kauffman et al. (this issue) have stated, that inclusive practices require more of general education teachers. Could a takeaway from the selective schools model be that a rigorous, uniform

curriculum for all, delivered by classroom teachers, is more possible than one might imagine?

While it is true that selective schools typically use entrance requirements designed to maintain population homogeneity at the high achievement end, in reality, their student populations can be more diverse than might be expected. First, privilege itself sometimes leads to the acceptance of students in these schools who do not fully meet academic requirements. Second, selective schools will sometimes accept qualifying students when they are young, then later discover that they have significant learning problems, and yet retain them, possibly because of their initial commitment to the students' families. Third and finally, some selective schools offer educational opportunities to some proportion of the larger population of their region, regardless of whether these individuals meet entrance requirements, and these students may come with learning and second language acquisition difficulties. Given greater heterogeneity, general educators do rise to the demands these situations present, accommodating and even modifying curriculum, providing additional opportunities for learning and practicing, and defining student learning outcomes that are individualized yet adhere to the general rigor of the uniform curriculum. As Charema (2010) states, "Teachers already have much of the knowledge and skills they need to teach inclusively," what they often lack is confidence to do so (p. 89).

Our second point is that we believe that EFA is best realized when states, regions, and localities strive toward providing access to the same schools based on geographic region, thereby making it feasible for students to access the same curriculum options, independent of their backgrounds and learning characteristics. We believe that the comprehensive local school concept is of value here, especially when aligned with the equity model (Sailor, 2008). We recognize that a comprehensive local school may mean something different in a society in which within-school tracking is prevalent, or where multi-tiered systems are in place. In fact, in terms of intellectual disability, a "neighborhood school" idea was proposed decades ago by Lou Brown and colleagues (Brown et al., 1989). If this had ever been adopted on a large scale, it would have resulted in children within the same region being in schools together, but in different programs.

If the comprehensive local school is to move toward the equity model, there must be some level of congruence in the collective activities of administrators, educators with differing roles, parents, and the students themselves in relation to the ideals of equal educational opportunity. As Jackson (2018) has pointed out, special education teachers who try to "include" their students in general education are sometimes working at cross purposes with others in the school, who would like to see special education operate as a separate set of services. Inversely, general educators who

welcome students with disabilities as members of their classes sometimes face special educators who remove students from their classes without consideration of the educational activities and goals of the general educators. Because different agendas will invariably be present in the social milieu of a school, leadership is key to the success of a school in which equity is an aspect of the school's mission. We cannot stress the latter point enough, since it is through leadership with a vision toward equal opportunity that a school can maintain a semblance of equity given the numerous and often disparate agendas of its membership.

Our third point relates directly to our discussion of tracking, whether that concept means different schools or within-school separation of students. Tracking is an educational practice across the globe that is likely to continue. What we must come to terms with is that special education is tracking, and should not be viewed as distinct from it. This means, for example, that in a country with three reported tracks, and in which there are also special schools for people with disabilities, there are really at least four tracks operating in that country.

As a form of tracking, special education significantly impacts students with disabilities. This is due to multiple factors: (a) tracking often starts during the primary period, and either continues unabated into the secondary period or ends in premature termination of school access and opportunities; (b) it is likely to be fixed and nonnegotiable for the entire school careers of these students; it can result in these students receiving instruction in content that is not valued by other populations of students; and (c) the ecological and interpersonal contexts of special schools and classes results in these students receiving lower quality educational experiences (Jackson et al., 2008; Powell, 2006). This means that both tracking reform initiatives and tracking research activities should include the track of special education as part of what is considered in defining the impact of tracking on a society's population.

With respect to our fourth and final point, we agree with Kauffman et al. (this issue) that changing systems of education toward inclusive schooling requires time and resources. However, we disagree with these authors as to the implications of this. Our analysis raises troubling concerns, indeed alarm, regarding school models that separate. Our analysis indicates to us that EFA is best realized by the equity model, which embodies the principles of inclusion.

Implementing the equity model poses different issues for countries that have special education in place versus those that do not. In countries where special education exists, an important focus is on rethinking the training of school personnel (Zagona, Kurth, & MacFarland, 2017). Teacher and school administrator training programs typically separate general education training from special education training, usually with different departments,

different faculty, different facilities, and little to no interaction or collaboration between the faculty of these two training programs. As a result, from the very beginning, universities are modeling exclusion, building up expectations in teacher and administrator candidates in both programs of separatism and territorialism. In addition, because this model of separatism is so pervasive, when these individuals enter the workforce, their resistance to change is strong, further inhibiting the concept and practices of inclusive education. If we are to work toward equity in our educational practices, we should begin considering how best to blend these programs, training school personnel to have the competencies for working in schools that excel toward equity. With respect to teachers, this means providing them in their programs with a richer understanding of how the roles of “classroom teacher,” “interventionist,” and “inclusion facilitator” can work together to achieve high educational outcomes for a larger proportion of students in today’s schools.

In countries where special education systems do not exist, contrary to the views expressed by Kauffman et al., our analysis promotes skepticism regarding the wholesale adoption of the separate special education systems of the developed countries. As noted by Powell (2006), “In contrast to abundant good intentions and compensatory investments, special education settings – authorized to offer *different* educational opportunities – seem to legitimately *reduce* individual access to opportunities to learn” (pp. 578-579, emphasis his). Countries currently without special education services should, of course, address how they will educate students across a wide spectrum of abilities, to realize EFA. This could very well involve the promotion of specialized teacher roles for universal design for learning and intensive intervention processes. However, these countries should consider very carefully our recommendations for more closely integrated, even unified, educator preparation programs.

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