



Understanding Learning Differences Across Schools 2030 Contexts

Executive Summary

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This report presents an analysis of policies and practices on learning differences and inclusion across Schools2030 programme countries – Afghanistan, Brazil, India, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Portugal, Pakistan, Tanzania and Uganda. The report aims to document for each of the countries studied: the current policy landscape relating to inclusion and learning differences, current conceptualisations and definitions of inclusive education and learning differences, attitudes to disability, teacher training provision on inclusive practice, service provision for learners with disabilities in schools, and diagnostic practice for learning disabilities and challenges faced.

Schools2030 is a ten-year participatory learning improvement programme based in 1,000 government schools across ten countries. The programme operates in some of the most remote and marginalised communities characterised by low learning outcomes and low resources, where recognition of learning differences is typically limited. Many students in these communities face multiple, overlapping factors that too often constitute barriers to their learning including gender, ethnicity, language and disability. Whilst intentional efforts to meet Sustainable Development Goal 4 have brought about increased attention to matters of inclusion, laws remain in place in many countries around the world that make provisions for educating learners with disabilities in either segregated or integrated settings. This report seeks to address gaps in our understanding about how learning differences are understood and what provisions are in place to support students with learning differences through national-level policies and school-level practices.

The report comprises findings from a literature review of academic and grey literature as well as qualitative data gathered through questionnaires, focus group discussions and key informant interviews with teachers, Schools2030 programme staff and learning assessment experts across each context studied. The report is organised into nine chapters, one for each of the Schools2030 programme countries studied.

Each country chapter includes the following sections:

1. Introduction and overview of terminology and definitions commonly used in that context
2. Quantitative data on the number of students with learning differences in the country
3. Policy and legislation on inclusive education for students with learning differences
4. Teacher training provision in support of students with learning differences
5. Diagnostic approaches and tools available
6. Attitudes and awareness about learning differences
7. School-level provision for students with learning differences
8. Country-specific challenges and priorities

Each chapter is also strengthened with the addition of quotes and reflections from teachers and other key informants based in each country.

This research has found that inclusive education features prominently as a policy priority across the countries studied, and that there is a general movement across these geographies towards conceptualising inclusive education in policy as the removal of barriers to learning for all children. Nevertheless, initiatives across these contexts to operationalise inclusive learning, including the systematic support of those with learning differences, are largely not yet commensurate with the ambitions laid out in policy. This is due to many common factors, including limited awareness of learning differences within schools and the wider communities, a lack of adequate support and training for teachers, a lack of funding for education more broadly and for inclusive education specifically, as well as the presence of other compounding socio-economic challenges.

As a result, this report makes five key recommendations to bridge the policy-practice gap:

1. **Strengthen teacher training provision**
Teacher professional education models should incorporate content on inclusive education in compulsory pre- and in-service teacher training, and should be oriented towards practice in the classroom.
2. **Engage with parents and the community**
Awareness raising activities on the rights of children with disabilities should be increased to combat stigmatising attitudes towards those with disabilities amongst parents and communities.
3. **Invest in human resource, infrastructure and equipment for schools**
Attention should be given to address teacher shortages, and investment directed at creating accessible learning environments.
4. **Invest in data reporting, evidence and research to guide interventions**
More research on disability and inclusion is needed in the given contexts, as well as investment in developing data reporting infrastructure and a commitment to acting on evidence.
5. **Strengthen diagnostic systems**
Investment should be made in strengthening diagnostic systems – specifically in better integrating health and education services, in developing context appropriate tools and in building expertise of specific learning disabilities.



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