



Taking Action to Delivery Inclusive  
Education



## Taking Action to Deliver Inclusive Education

A Parents Perspective  
19<sup>th</sup> June 2010  
Vanessa dos Santos  
Down Syndrome South Africa

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- My son and I have faced many challenges and discrimination.

This has lead me to face these challenges head on and strive for change for people with Intellectual disabilities and their families.



Steven 2003 aged 8

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### Taking Action to Deliver Inclusive Education

Lobbying and Advocacy for change is one thing but taking action is another.

Some countries like South Africa have policies in place yet budgets, strategies and implementation thereof is virtually non existent!

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- **Human Rights Instruments**
- **Challenge policies**
  - Policies are written in ink and not cast in stone. Get them changed if they are not enabling;
  - Inclusive education cannot always be done by the book and one size does not fit all;

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#### **How can we take action to ensure the rights of our children:**

- Know and understand your rights;
- Use the Human rights commissions or Equity courts to take on your case;

Individual cases

Class action

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#### **Major Factors which lead to children not being able to access education.**

- **Poverty**

In many instances parents cannot even think about education when they are struggling to put food on their table. All they can think about is where they are going to get their next meal. This often results in parents putting their child into special schools and institutions. These places are not safe for our children and there are constantly massive cases of abuse and neglect.

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- **Attitudes**

Studies have shown that many mothers of disabled children experience a high degree of negative social attitudes from other community members and so have very low expectations of their own capabilities.

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**Some parents:**

- “I feel my child does not need to go to school as he cannot learn because he is disabled”;
- Hide their children;
- Feel intimidated by the schools attitudes;
- Are tired of having to plead to have their children accepted into a school;
- Do not see education as a need.

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#### **What educators say:**

- No we don't take children like that;
- We do not cater for them;
- We don't have the facilities to accommodate them;
- The teachers cannot cope;
- They need special education and teachers who have been specially trained.

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#### **Before we can advocate for the rights of our children we need to ask ourselves some questions:**

- Is Inclusion a priority for me?
- Do I think it can be a reality in my country?
- Do I feel that inclusion works?

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#### **Why do we as a parents advocacy organisation want inclusive education?**

- We have been listening to the **voices of our member's** (parents and people with disabilities).

**Why have we listened?** – Because segregated and mainstream schools have failed to promote the rights of our children.

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#### **Other factors that lead to discrimination:**

- Lack of confidence (parents);
- Stigma;
- Bullying;
- Professionals / Therapy;
- Accessing information;
- Resilience

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**Inclusive Education is not a destination  
but a journey.**

Buy in;  
Give it power;  
Drive;  
Ask for directions;  
Two way street;

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- It is a long and hard road.
- But most of all – be positive and stay strong!

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