

# How inclusive is our education system education essay

[Education](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Maria Cutajar University of Malta How inclusive is our education system? What are the factors which hinder and or facilitate inclusive education in Malta?

Support your answer with the relevant literature. Inclusive education can be defined as " a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion from education and from within education" (Acedo). In order for inclusion to take place, the school must welcome and accept all children not matter what their abilities are. With regards to the Maltese environment, it can be defined that inclusive education " is based on a commitment, on the part of the learning community, to fully acknowledge individual difference and to professing as well as implementing inclusionary politics" (Creating the Future Together; National Minimum Curriculum, 1999, p. 28). From this definition, one can notice that with inclusive education the National Minimum Curriculum (1999) is presenting inclusion as a " responsibility" where one has to adopt a system where different cultures are integrated as well as defending " the basic rights of children" (Creating the Future Together; National Minimum Curriculum, 1999, p. 28). This means that through the NMC (1999), the Maltese system has engaged in a process in order to start including everyone in the year 2000 where with principle 8, it was defined that the educator should " recognise the full range of educational interests, potential and needs of pupils" (NMC, 1999 as cited by Bartolo, Agius Ferrante, Azzopardi, Bason, Grech, & King, 2002, p. 2). According to Bartolo et al. (2002), there are " three dimensions of the inclusive education process". The first dimension is " cultures" where it " entails the promotion of those beliefs and value systems

that create a secure, accepting, collaborating, and stimulating community for all students" (Bartolo, Agius Ferrante, Azzopardi, Bason, Grech, & King, 2002). This 'dimension' is also presented in the NMC (1999) where in principle 2 it states that we should "respect for Diversity" (Creating the Future Together; National Minimum Curriculum, 1999). Such a principle defines that students in the Maltese Educational systems should be presented with "the best possible educational experiences" not matter what their family background is (Creating the Future Together; National Minimum Curriculum, 1999). In fact, the issue of 'culture' in the NMC (1999) is referred to as "celebration of difference" where according to Bartolo et al., (2002) this "celebration of difference" entitles "children without disability [to] have a right for an opportunity to be educated with children with disabilities" (Special Education in Malta: National Policy, 1993, Para 2, as cited by Bartolo, Agius Ferrante, Azzopardi, Bason, Grech, & King, 2002). Another dimension for inclusive education are "policies" where its main aim is to encourage "inclusion in School Development Plans...for practice in the management, teaching and learning in our schools" (Bartolo, Agius Ferrante, Azzopardi, Bason, Grech, & King, 2002, p. 2). This means that through the NMC (1999), it is the "responsibility of schools" to make use of inclusion in order to provide education for all. This means that in order for inclusion to take place, the "individualised educational programme for a student" must be the "responsibility of the class teacher, the facilitator and the parents" and not only of the learning support assistant (Bartolo et al., 2002, p. 2). Through such collaboration, the teacher together with the learning support assistant as well as the parents will be able to "implement the programme"

(Bartolo et al., 2002, p. 2). Therefore, in order for proper inclusion to take place, Bartolo et al. (2002) states that " there is a need for the whole school together with its school council to make a written commitment to and assure formal responsibility for fostering the school's inclusive Education programme" (p. 5). Consequently, as the NMC (1999) states that " the educational community must ensure equality of access to the educational system without discrimination on the grounds of ability, gender, religion, race or socio-cultural and economic background" (Creating the Future Together; National Minimum Curriculum, 1999, p. 19). The last dimension for inclusive education is the " inclusive practices" where one must ensure that " classroom and extra-curricular activities encourage the participation of all students and draw on their knowledge and experience outside school" (Bartolo et al., 2002, p, 22). Therefore, as the NMC (1999) states that our schools should " provide the context wherein all children, without exception, participate in the continuous enhancement of personal and collective knowledge and the development of those attitudes and skills which the community regards as basic and necessary for a person's holistic development" (Creating the Future Together; National Minimum Curriculum, 1999, p. 23). Likewise, it can be stated that " Inclusive education provides an environment where all children and their parents are made to feel valued and welcome" (Bartolo, Mol Lous, & Hofsäss, 2007, p. 67). Such an environment can be said to " promotes a spirit of collaboration among all partners involved in the education of the child and it provides support provisions that enable all students to access and participate fully in the school's curriculum" (Bartolo, Mol Lous, & Hofsäss, 2007, p. 67). In order for

inclusive education to be successful, one must keep in mind some key points that are needed as a base for inclusive education. Such ideas are that inclusive education requires " a change in attitudes" where personally I think that the Maltese society suffers a lot from it (KNPD). This is because from observations made and from work carried out with disabled children and people, I found that that for some of the Maltese population, they do not consider the disabled person as a normal person but as a person with a disability. Such thinking means that they make use of " medical model of disability" where they view disabled " people as the problem" (National Commission Persons with Disability, 2007). This attitude should be changed because in inclusive education not only the disabled children will benefit but also the other children where through " cooperative learning", ideas are shared amongst the group and thus one will be able to " gain exposure to different modes of thinking and action" (Bartolo et al, 2002, p. 6). Another key point is that inclusive education should be supported by " reducing... the proportion of children selected out for special school education" (KNPD). This is because when disabled children are integrated into the mainstream, they are said to gain more than when they are in special schools. This is because when they are integrated in a mainstream school, these children hear, see and feel other children and thus they will be encouraged to do like them. In fact, Vianello and Lanfranchi declare that " children with intellectual impairment gain more when educated in ordinary settings" (Vianello & Lanfranchi, 2009 as cited by Tanti Burlo' 2010). Similarity, it can be argued that another issue is that we must discard the " medical model of disability" since as stated earlier; it implies that the person is the problem. Instead, we

must make use of the "social model" where it clearly indicates that "it is not the medical condition or the biological impairment of the people themselves which creates the disability, but the various barriers" (National Commission Persons with Disability, 2007, p. 15). Therefore, we must avoid these 'barriers' such as "physical, legal, information, [and] communication systems" which are usually implied by the society itself (National Commission Persons with Disability, 2007, p. 15). Over the years, it can be concluded that Malta and its society are aware of inclusive education. This is because Malta is one of the countries that "recognise that inclusive education is a right" (Spiteri, Borg, Callus, Cauchi, & Sciberras, 2005, p. 15). In fact, article number 23 found in the "UN convention on the rights of the child" declares that "it is the right of disabled children to enjoy a full and decent life in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance, and facilitate the child's active participation in the community" (Spiteri, Borg, Callus, Cauchi, & Sciberras, 2005, p. 15). Therefore, it can be concluded that "Maltese society has become increasingly aware that inclusive education is not only a human right but can be an asset to society as a whole" (Spiteri, Borg, Callus, Cauchi, & Sciberras, 2005, p. 16). On the other hand, I personally believe that more needs to be done in order to have totally inclusive schools and therefore to have an inclusive educational system. This is because I believe that in order for inclusion to take place, there must be collaboration with the class teacher as well as with the LSA and Parents so that the child with disability is not sent to a special school, but s/he is given all the help and support needed in order to continue with his education in a 'mainstream school'. I am referring to this because according to Tanti Burlo'

(2010), " children with disability are often taken out of class to work on a one-to-one basis in resource rooms" (p. 205). Such a situation gives the idea of a ' segregated school' rather than an ' inclusive school' and thus inclusion must take place in the classroom with other children (Tanti Burlo', 2010). In fact, Tanti Burlo' (2010) declares that " children with disabilities are teachers' responsibility" and " they have the right to be educated with their peers" (Tanti Burlo', 2010, p. 205). Therefore, to conclude all, " segregation" must be avoided and instead we should aim at developing strategies through which we can " include all students in our classrooms" (Tanti Burlo', 2010, p. 205). To conclude all, although " mainstream education of children with disabilities has brought about a complete change in mentality" where " teachers and facilitators now have learned to appreciate the diversity of the human family", I personally think that the current educational system in Malta is not an inclusive one (Bencini, as cited by Bartolo et al., 2002). This is because as Tanti Burlo' (2010) declares, the reform in the Maltese educational system is not an inclusive one but it can be considered as a system which provides " segregated differentiated classrooms" (Tanti Burlo', 2010, p. 207). This is because although " children will be attending the same...school", they will be divided " according to their abilities in the core subjects" and thus " segregated differentiated classrooms" are created rather than inclusive classrooms where different abilities are present (Tanti Burlo', 2010, p. 207). To sum up, the main aim of inclusive education is " is that all children should have the opportunity to learn together" (Peters, 2003) and we should try our best to achieve this in Maltese schools.